Appalachian Women's Expectations and Experiences of Fatherhood in Low-Income Families: A Life Course Perspective

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This thesis titled
Appalachian Women's Expectations and Experiences of Fatherhood in Low-Income Families: A Life Course Perspective

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ABSTRACT

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Concerns over the roles, expectations, and responsibilities of fathers are rising among scholars, policymakers, and the public. The outlook of fatherhood is changing socially, as well as in families. The current study examines the personal experiences with fatherhood for Appalachian, rural, low-income mothers. Data were collected through Rural Families Speak (RFS), a longitudinal multimethod project examining family well-being in the context of welfare reform. This qualitative study focuses on the data collected in counties located in West Virginia and Kentucky, consisting of 44 rural, Appalachian, low-income mothers. Findings will have implications for future scholarship on fathers in low-income families and will aid practitioners who work with rural, low-income families.

Approved: ________________________________

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ABSTRACT............................................................................................</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..................................................................................</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .......................................................................</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ........................................................</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatherhood: An Historical Overview</td>
<td>Fatherhood: An Historical Overview .........................................................</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Current Sociohistorical Context of Fatherhood</td>
<td>The Current Sociohistorical Context of Fatherhood ................................................</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewing the Role of the Father</td>
<td>Viewing the Role of the Father ................................................................</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal Involvement</td>
<td>Paternal Involvement .................................................................................</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father-Daughter Relationships</td>
<td>Father-Daughter Relationships ...................................................................</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>Conceptual Framework .................................................................................</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ..........................................................................</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rural Families Speak Project</td>
<td>The Rural Families Speak Project ................................................................</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Recruitment ........................................................................................................</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Selection</td>
<td>Participant Selection ..................................................................................</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed Consent Process</td>
<td>Informed Consent Process ..........................................................................</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>Data Analysis ..............................................................................................</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</td>
<td>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ..............................................................</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants’ Experiences with their Fathers over Time</td>
<td>Participants’ Experiences with their Fathers over Time ........................................</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Biological Fathers</td>
<td>Consistent Biological Fathers ..................................................................</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consistent Biological Fathers Who Remained Married to Biological Mothers ...... 50
Consistent Biological Fathers Divorced or separated From Participants’ Mother ... 52
Transitional Fathers ...................................................................................................... 54
Multiple Fathers ............................................................................................................ 59
Summary ....................................................................................................................... 61
Participants’ Experiences with Their Partners over Time ............................................ 63
Consistent Across Both Waves..................................................................................... 66
Consistent Partners Parenting Biological Children Only.......................................... 66
Consistent Partners Parenting Biological and Nonbiological Children.................... 72
Consistent Single Participant Who Has Contact With Nonresident Father .......... 79
Consistent Single Participant Who Has No Contact With Nonresident Father...... 80
Change Across Both Waves........................................................................................ 83
Resident Father is Now Nonresident Father ............................................................. 83
Children had Nonresident Father Now Have Resident Father ............................... 87
Resident Father to Different Resident Father ........................................................... 89
Summary ................................................................................................................... 92
Fathers, Partners, and Gender Expectations: ............................................................ 94
Rural, Low-Income Women’s Experiences with Men across the Life Course......... 94
Men’s Roles as Providers.......................................................................................... 95
Men as Fathers ........................................................................................................ 101
Economic Pressures and Family Relationships ...................................................... 108
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION ....................................................................................... 112
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participants by Category ............................................................................. 45
Table 2: Description of Participants’ Fathers and Father Figures ......................... 48
Table 3: Fathers and Father Figures as Providers ....................................................... 49
Table 4: Description of Participants’ Partners .............................................................. 65
Table 5: Partners as Providers .................................................................................. 66
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Scholarly investigations of family well-being focusing on fatherhood in low-income families is typically overlooked and critically needed. In this study, I am exploring the personal experiences of fatherhood for Appalachian, rural, low-income mothers in West Virginia and Kentucky. Although past research has focused more on motherhood rather than fatherhood, a few recent scholarly investigations have focused specifically on fathers. At a time when men are spending less of their lives as resident fathers than ever before, researchers are starting to learn more about what fathers do in families and how this affects their children (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Nelson, 2004). The research suggests that fathers are important contributors to both positive and negative child outcomes (Silverstein & Auerback, 1999).

The interest of policymakers to strengthen families with a focus on fathers is another indicator that the examination of fathering roles is important. Researchers, policymakers, and the public have exhibited a growing concern about the increasing rates of nonmarital births, marital dissolutions, unmarried fathers’ contact with children, public policies regarding paternity establishment, child support, and public support provided for the children of nonresident fathers (Coley & Morris, 2002). In 1996, Congress found that marriage is the foundation of a successful society and is an essential institution of a successful society which promotes the interests of children (United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2007). In order to encourage states to strengthen marriage, the government is funding $150 million each year from 2006 through 2010 for healthy marriage promotion and activities supporting

A particular concern of both researchers and policymakers is the well-being of children in families with limited economic resources which is linked to the role of fathers in low-income families. Both residential and non-residential fathers have important influences on family outcomes. What is known about low-income families is not necessarily positive, as economic resources critically influence the role expectations and experiences of fathers. The numbers of low-income fathers are increasing (Nelson, 2004), and the overall lack of income and poor job opportunities for low-income fathers appear to have a particularly negative effect on fathering (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). Due to high levels of family instability in low-income households, poor children are more likely to develop relationships with male parental figures other than biological fathers, such as a stepfather, their mother’s current partner, or other male kin (Nelson, 2004). Living in poverty, also, may lead to the use of authoritarian parenting styles (Evans, 2004; Paquette, Bolte, Turcotte, Dubeau, & Bouchard, 2000, The Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996) that have the potential for poorer child outcomes (Evans, 2004; Leyendeeker, Harwood, Comparini, & Yalcinkaya, 2005; Paquette et al., 2000).

Historically, several barriers have prevented fathers from being involved parents. Throughout history, fathers have held rigid and specific roles that have changed over time. In the past, fathers were viewed as teachers and moral leaders (Waller, 2002), master of the family (Coltrane, 1998, Coontz, 2004), and the influential parent on
children (Coltrane, 1998). The Industrial Revolution removed fathers from the home and rural farms, which in turn left the majority of childrearing and discipline to mothers (Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Coltrane, 1998; Coontz, 2001; Stearns, 1991; Waller, 2002). At this time, men emerged as primary breadwinners (Coontz, 2004). Men began spending less time interacting with families and more time working to provide family economic support (Coltrane, 1998; Waller, 2002). Because fathers were more likely to work outside of the home, many assumed that the father-child relationship had little influence on child development (Cabrera et al., 2000).

Recent evidence suggests that the role of fatherhood is shifting from that of breadwinner to equal co-parent in many families in which both parents are active in the labor force (Doherty et al., 1998; McBride, Shoppe, & Rane, 2002; Summers, et al., 1999; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). Currently, fathers are expected to participate more in household responsibilities due to both societal and family pressures while they are often expected to meet unchanging employment demands (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). From a broader perspective, parenthood and family life have been influenced by several social trends. Men and women often share expectations regarding the allocation of family responsibilities (Seward, 1991), however, the actual behaviors of men and women in families often do not reflect these co-parenting beliefs (Coltrane, 1998; Seward, 1991). Scholars agree that fathers devote significantly less time than mothers to child rearing (Amato, 1994; Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Coltrane & Parke, 1998;
Coontz, 1997; McBride et al., 2002; Paquette, 2004; Yeung, Duncan, & Hill, 2000; Yeung et al., 2001).

As stated earlier, until recent decades most research has neglected fatherhood (DeFrain, LeMasters, & Schroff, 1991), although there was a significant increase during the 1990’s (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; McBride et al., 2002). The majority of research on fatherhood has focused on White, middle-class men (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004; Marsiglio et al., 2000). Including other ethnicities and class levels in research is necessary to gain a better understanding of fatherhood (Coltrane et al., 2004).

This qualitative study will explore the expectations and experiences with fatherhood for Appalachian, rural, low-income mothers across the life course. By using the life course perspective, I will examine participants’ early experiences with fathers (biological fathers or father figures) in addition to their current expectations and experiences with fathers as well as partners as fathers. Current policy efforts and scholarly attention have focused on the importance of fathers in families and the absence of many men in the lives of their children, especially in low-income families (United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2007). Additionally, research has suggested that the father-daughter relationship has significant and influential effects on daughters including school performance, job choice and achievement, levels of confidence and independence, relational competency, and choice of significant partners (Sharpe, 1994). Acknowledging the importance of this relational tie, the vulnerability of low-income families, and the need to aid healthy outcomes for rural, low-income families, the specific objectives of the
current study are: (a) to explore childhood and young adult experiences of fatherhood for Appalachian women; (b) to understand how limited economic resources influence the expectations and experiences of fathers generally, and the specific ways that fatherhood is viewed and experienced within families from the perspective of daughters; (c) to understand the change and stability of fathering roles in Appalachian, low-income families over time.

This project resulted from a personal need to understand more about experiences of daughters with their fathers and how these experiences may play a role in their relationships with the partners of their own children. I am a young Appalachian woman who experienced the divorce of my parents when I was a child. My childhood included the experience of having a non-resident father, the presence of a step-father, as well as the presence of several father figures in the form of grandfathers. As a consequence, the relationship between daughters and fathers has always been of interest. Furthering the interest in the relationship played by fathers in their daughters’ lives was my time spent working with young children in classrooms, afterschool programs and babysitting opportunities. With future plans of working with families from Appalachia, the need to understand family relationships and how the influence of fatherhood shapes women, specifically daughters, over time also was a factor in shaping my study focus. With plans to stay in this region to work with families, I feel that conducting research for and with Appalachian families will help me to further understand the complexities and difficulties facing this population as well as contribute to my professional and personal growth.
The conceptual framework that will be used in the current study derives from the life course perspective. This approach provides important insights as to change and stability in the lives of individual members and families over time, thus involving both micro- and macro-social levels of analysis (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Price, McKenry, & Murphy, 2000). The research questions posed for this qualitative study include: (a) How do Appalachian, rural, low-income mothers describe their experiences with father figures during childhood?; (b) what are mothers’ current experiences with the fathers of their children?; (c) and how do mothers’ current expectations of and experiences with fatherhood, both among fathers, father-figures, and fathers of participants’ children express change and continuity when economic resources are scarce?

The current study has the potential to offer several benefits to individuals, families, social services agencies, and researchers alike. Bringing attention to the father-daughter relationship, especially in low-income, rural families can suggest a framework for analysis and provide information for future research in this area. The study’s findings may also aid practitioners who work with rural, low-income families, especially regarding the strengthening of family ties, the negotiations of family parenting roles, and the influence of fathers on the life course development and experiences on daughters. While this study has the potential for several benefits, study constraints may involve the use of secondary data, potentially limiting the amount of information gathered on the topic of fatherhood during interviews. In addition, because I am utilizing data collected by a large team of researchers, I am limited by the variability of interviewer expertise, choice of protocol questions, and lack of opportunity to probe deeper with participants.
regarding their experiences with fathers and partners. Finally, fathers’ voices are absent from these data, underscoring the need for future studies to include the experiences of multiple family members.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In trying to understand the experiences and expectations of fatherhood for rural, low-income Appalachian women, there are several areas of importance which need to be examined. First, an historical overview of fatherhood will be explored in the context of pre and post-industrialization. Second, the current sociohistorical status of fatherhood will be addressed, including social trends which have influenced the structure and function of fatherhood today. Third, attention will be given to the role of fathers within the context of family, culture, and socioeconomic context, including a discussion on parenting in low-income families. Fourth, the tasks and contributions regarding child care and household labor for fathers will be outlined followed by a description of paternal involvement, particularly in low-income families. Finally, an overview of the father-daughter relationship will be highlighted.

Fatherhood: An Historical Overview

Pre-industrial Fatherhood

Historically, fathers have been viewed as having specific roles and expectations. Throughout pre-industrial America, the father’s role was as teacher and moral leader (Waller, 2002). During this time, fathers assumed many responsibilities and were the religious and moral educators of their children (Coltrane, 1998; Waller, 2002) as well as the masters of their families (Coltrane, 1998; Coontz, 2004). As moral teachers and family heads, fathers were thought to have a greater responsibility and influence on their children than mothers (Coltrane, 1998). Fathers were the directors of most of the household work at the time, both inside and outside the home, reinforcing their authority
in the family (Coltrane, 1998). Because women were viewed as less rational and more vulnerable to emotional urges than men, women were assigned the responsibility of caring for children and fathers were encouraged to impose moral standards and promote children’s rational development (Waller, 2002). After schooling for all children became mandatory, however, fathers were no longer seen as the moral and practical teacher of their offspring as previously assigned (Stearns, 1991).

*Post-industrial Fatherhood*

As a result of the industrial revolution, work removed fathers from the home and rural farms, which in turn left the majority of childrearing and discipline to mothers (Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Cabrera et al., 2000; Coltrane, 1998; Coontz, 2001; Stearns, 1991; Waller, 2002). Men became known as breadwinners for the first time in history (Coontz, 2004). Male gender roles began to revolve around the importance of breadwinning, while female gender roles focused on domestic life in the private, nuclear family (Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Waller, 2002). Men spent less time interacting with their families, which in turn, led to the decline of their direct authority over other family members (Coltrane, 1998). The status of men as breadwinner instead of moral leader and teacher was seen as justification for the privileged position of the man in the home (Waller, 2002). The emergence of a “cult of domesticity” which glorified motherhood and supported the division of men’s and women’s family roles emerged during this time (Waller, 2002).

Because fathers worked outside the home, the father-child relationship was thought to have little influence on child development (Cabrera, et al., 2000). As large
corporations emerged in the twentieth century, so did the “masculine ethic” which emphasized rational and unemotional decision-making (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). Since rationality was viewed as a masculine characteristic, the “masculine ethic” began the exclusion of women as managers, simply limiting their work opportunities to supporting roles (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). At the same time, the “masculine ethic” became the basis for excluding men from being actively involved participants in child care and child rearing (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). The overall economic shift of married men working outside the home, with married women remaining in the home, created the expectation of “separate spheres” between women and men and their place of work (Coltrane, 1998). As Coltrane (1998) explained, “A woman’s place is the home, and her true calling is to serve a husband and raise children” (p. 62).

Other barriers historically have prevented fathers from being considered involved parents. Seward (1991) suggested several issues that have influenced how fathers were viewed as parents. First, societal expectations emphasized the husband’s role as the primary breadwinner and wife’s role as homemaker/mother which in turn hindered fathers’ ability to be seen as an important asset in the parenting role. Second, developmental theorists and professionals focused exclusively on the mother-child relationship and failed to acknowledge any “direct caring role for fathers with infants and young children” (p. 229). The marital dyad of mother and father was largely ignored and focus was put solely upon mothers. Fathers also were delegated to the periphery of parenthood. Due to the absence of parenting advice for fathers, they were given little guidance. Fourth, scholarly research and thought focused on mothers’ experiences.
Methods to complete studies, even when examining fathers or fatherhood, did not gather information from fathers themselves but rather from wives or children. Most research neglected fatherhood until recent decades (DeFrain et al., 1991). Finally, professionals and scholars viewed infants and very young children as having the capability to interact and bond with no more than one person, emphasizing mothers as the important and constant caretaker of children (Seward, 1991).

Although recent studies have suggested that men are becoming less traditional in their father roles, current gendered expectations for fathers and mothers typically follow a traditional family model with fathers viewed as disciplinarians (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). In addition, fathers are viewed as contributing to the socialization of gendered roles among children especially in reinforcing ideals of manhood for sons and expectations of their roles in families as sons mature (Stearns, 1991). The meaning of gender is reflected in and reproduced through family values and practices (Coltrane & Parke, 1998). In the early and mid-twentieth century, the emphasis on fathers as sex role teachers came to a forefront as more fathers were away from home due to World War II (Waller, 2002). Concerns emerged regarding the consequences of mothers’ influence on children with no father figure present to balance these parenting roles (Waller, 2002).

**Fathers as Breadwinners**

The central role typically assigned to fathers in industrialized society has been as the breadwinner of the family (Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Cabrera et al., 2000; Doherty et al., 1998; Parke et al., 2005; Seward, 1991; Stearns, 1991; Waller, 2002; Yeung et al., 2000; Yeung et al., 2001). Men were expected to provide economic support for their
families (Waller, 2002) and fathers cared for their children by devoting time and energy to paid work (Townsend, 2002) and succeeding in their occupation and work roles (Seward, 1991). As a consequence, children became the motivation for dedication to paid work roles among men (Townsend, 2002). Success as a breadwinner emerged as the accepted standard for measuring a good father (Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Stearns, 1991). “Good” fathers expressed care for their children specifically by providing allowances and opportunities for education, and by supporting them to start their own successful adult careers (Stearns, 1991).

With fathers’ increased absence from households and decreased daily care of their children, the emphasis on “bad” fathers increased (Stearns, 1991). Work tensions influenced father-child interactions as fathers exhibited harsher parenting practices due to work-induced strain and fatigue. Delinquency and abusiveness, pressures from work, inadequacies in lower-class housing, and behaviors such as alcohol consumption or other non-family involvement after work and on weekends also increased (Stearns, 1991).

The Current Sociohistorical Context of Fatherhood

Scholars have highlighted several social trends as influencing the structure and functions of parenthood and family life today. As wages of men began falling in the 1970s and families had difficulty surviving on one income, women’s labor force participation increased (Coltrane, 1998), which contributed to the decline of fathers as sole breadwinners (Amato, 1994; Cabrera et al., 2000; Stearns, 1991; Waller, 2002). Married women and mothers have entered the workforce in record numbers. For example, the rate of women in the paid labor force who were mothers to children under

Concurrent with these demographic changes, the feminist movement during the 1970s motivated the reconsideration of gendered differences in families regarding paid and unpaid labor and the division of power between men and women within families (Bowen & Orthner, 1991; King, Harris, & Heard, 2004; Waller, 2002). Current higher rates of divorce and non-marital childbearing influences fatherhood as more families are headed by mothers, especially in low-income families (Amato, 1994; Coley & Morris, 2002; Waller, 2002).

Increased cultural diversity in the United States, additionally, is shaping the roles of fathers today as the growing number of race and ethnic groups within the United States is changing the racial and ethnic structure of the population (Cabrera et al., 2000). Accompanying this increasing cultural diversity are new or different views on what constitutes appropriate roles and behaviors for mothers and fathers (Cabrera et al., 2000).

When compared to mothers, fathers have had discretion in defining their parental roles and responsibilities (Cabrera et al., 2000; McBride et al., 2002) and have been bound by few formal parental requirements (Seward, 1991). These expectations, however, have changed significantly over the past thirty years (Yeung et al., 2001). New expectations, beliefs, and attitudes for fathers are emerging (Cabrera et al., 2000; Yeung et al., 2000). The role of fatherhood is shifting from breadwinner to equal co-parent
Generally, scholars agree that fathers lack clarity about their role expectations (Doherty et al., 1998; Seward, 1991; Summers, et al., 1999), as their roles are complex (Peterson & Steinzman, 2000) and undergoing change (Coltrane & Parke, 1998; King et al., 2000).

**Men’s Work**

Work culture in America remains traditional in its view toward work and family roles for men (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). Although work hours for fathers have dropped (Stearns, 1991), the work role still takes priority over the parental role in regard to men’s prestige and power (Seward, 1991). Work roles remain central to men’s psychological health, and play a part in establishing and identifying self-worth (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). Because of traditional gender ideals still held by many, men fulfill their family commitments by working and being financial providers and often appear reluctant to accept women as equal providers even when both are working full-time (Coltrane, 1998).

Men appear hesitant about shifting the primary source of personal gratification from work to the family, although there is research that shows men are heading in that direction (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). Many fathers desire to redefine their family roles, yet avoid taking advantage of opportunities such as paternal or family leave for fear they will appear uncommitted to their jobs (Coontz, 1997; Silverstein & Auerback, 1999; Stearns, 1991). Men who take too much time off for their families often are overlooked in the promotion and merit process (Bowen & Orthner, 1991.) Tension emerges as fathers currently are expected to participate more in household responsibilities from both societal and family pressures while still attempting to meet unchanging employment demands.
(Bowen & Orthner, 1991). Men who work longer hours are less available for parental or marital activities (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). As a consequence, many fathers depend on wives to mediate the relationships they have with their children (Townsend, 2002).

Viewing the Role of the Father

Family Context

A critical examination of fatherhood requires an understanding of family, community, culture, as well as historical and economic contexts (Cabrera et al., 2000; Coltrane et al., 2004). Scholars agree that a father’s own experiences as well as other role models in his family of origin affect the role he will play in his family (Seward, 1991; Cabrera et al., 2000). Cabrera et al. (2000) added gender identity as a factor in a father’s role performance. Fathers tend to parent more like their fathers than their mothers, however, few will say they learned to parent from their fathers (Cabrera et al., 2000). Coltrane and Parke (1998) added that not only the impact of a relationship with his own father, but also that with both parents and grandparents, will influence the way a man chooses to look at his fathering role. Also, the expectations for men as husbands and women as wives and mothers in marriage must be taken into account when understanding fatherhood (Coltrane & Parke, 1998).

Cultural Context

Many scholars agree fatherhood and fathering roles are strongly bound to cultural context (Coltrane et al., 2004; Doherty et al., 1998; Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Garbarino, 2000; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Summers, et al., 1999). While the roles for mothers and fathers are culturally scripted, the roles fathers will perform are less scripted than those of
mothers (King et al., 2000). Expectations for and duties of fatherhood vary across cultural groups (Summers, et al., 1999) as each cultural group constructs role expectations or a “family culture” for member expectations and behaviors such as those associated with fatherhood and motherhood (Cabrera et al., 2000). Waller (2000) described family culture as:

A repertoire of beliefs, knowledge, skills, and experiences that are as likely to strengthen as to debilitate its members, depending upon the family’s access to resources and upon the family’s ability to rise above the constraints, social practices, and laws that circumscribe opportunities. (p. 46)

Families are not isolated units operating separately from their cultural surroundings, but instead influence and are influenced by social systems including legal, economic, political, and cultural units (Coltrane & Parke, 1998).

Several models of fatherhood are offered through dominant American culture that come from various sources such as law, religious traditions, and social movements, as well as media and popular culture (Waller, 2002). Images of both involved and uninvolved fathers are present, (Coltrane & Parke, 1998; Waller, 2002), although most typically portrayed are White, middle-class, and professional (Waller, 2002).

Socioeconomic Context

Each social class has different values, life styles, opportunities, and approaches to childrearing (Seward, 1991). Individuals in all social positions actively interpret and redefine ideas and expressions of paternal responsibility in ways which are appropriate to their social, economic, and personal circumstances. They also draw their ideas,
justifications, and practices regarding fatherhood from various sources, including their families and communities, other institutions, and the general culture (Waller, 2002). The availability and use of resources additionally, as shaped by parents’ membership in race, gender, and generational groups, influences the experiences of fatherhood in families (Waller, 2002).

The participants in this study reside in rural Appalachian West Virginia and Kentucky. In Appalachia, family members typically follow traditional roles, with the husband as breadwinner (Coleman, Ganong, Clark, & Madsen, 1989; DeFrain et al., 1991; The Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996; Tickamyer & Tickamyer, 1987). These expectations also are present in low-income households (Summers, et al., 1999). However, most men without a dependable source of income lack the resources to adequately fulfill their roles as fathers (Seward, 1991).

Overall, the lack of income and poor job opportunities for low-income fathers appear to have a particularly negative effect on fathering (Doherty et al., 1998). Men who negatively evaluate their ability to provide for families typically feel demoralized which contributes to the deterioration of their relationships with children (Doherty et al., 1998; King et al., 2004; Summers, et al., 1999). Job loss and underemployment have serious effects on family life, contributing to negative outcomes in marital and parent-child relationships, as well as child adjustment (Parke et al., 2005).

For families with few economic resources, the focus of this study, poverty creates marital tension between partners. During times of economic crisis, marital and parent-child relationships suffer, especially in low-income families, as conflict between partners
and parental harshness increases (DeFrain et al., 1991; Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn, & Smith, 1998; Simons, Whitbeck, Melby, & Wu, 1994). Conflict in the marital relationship may lead mothers and fathers to exhibit harsh and explosive discipline toward their children (Sobolewski & Amato, 2005). In low-income families, parents experiencing marital conflict may display harsher punishment, greater unresponsiveness, and more punitive parenting styles that contribute to lower quality parent-child relationships when compared to those of parents in other families (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Evans, 2004; Pinderhughes, Nix, Foster, & Jones, 2001; Simons et al., 1994). These early parenting experiences may also have long term outcomes over the course of the parent-child relationship. For instance, early non-optimal parent-child relationships “may so reduce the intimacy of the relationship between parent and child that no subsequent events later in life may activate an increase in warmth and closeness between generations” (Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Huck, 1994, p. S86).

Parents living in poverty are more likely to use authoritarian parenting styles (Evans, 2004; Paquette et al., 2000, The Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996). Authoritarian parenting can be defined as parent-centered, with a high level of parental control while placing value on parental authority (Leyendecker et al., 2005; Paquette et al., 2000). Authoritarian parents may use control to ensure obedience and respect for authority, oftentimes through threats and physical force (Paquette et al., 2000). Authoritarian parents also exhibit low parental responsiveness with no attempt to discuss or reach mutual agreements with children (Evans, 2004; Leyendecker et al., 2005).
When parents are under high economic stress, disciplinary practices may be affected (Simons et al., 1994). These parents are more apt to be preoccupied and minimally involved with their parenting role, in turn responding to their child’s needs in an inconsistent manner (Simons et al., 1994). Fathers who lose their traditional role as breadwinner due to loss of employment or unemployment frequently engage in punitive parenting practices (Garrett, Ng’andu, & Ferron, 1994) and are more inclined to use irritable and arbitrary disciplinary practices when disciplining their children (Simons et al., 1994). Fathers who are involuntarily pushed into child care or parental chores because of job loss while their partners remain employed, tend to use harsher parenting styles (Cabrera et al., 2000).

Father’s Tasks and Contributions

According to Seward (1991), men and women both agree that sharing family responsibilities is important, especially childcare. Some researchers have suggested that husbands and young men desire more involvement with their children, yet their actions typically do not reflect these co-parenting beliefs (Coltrane et al., 2004; Seward, 1991). Many scholars agree that fathers devote significantly less time than mothers to child rearing (Amato, 1994; Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Coltrane & Parke, 1998; Coontz, 1997; McBride et al., 2002; Paquette et al., 2004; Yeung et al., 2000; Yeung et al., 2001), even in intact dual-earner and dual-career households (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). Mothers continue to carry a disproportionate level of responsibility for the daily care of children, even though fathers may be spending more time in one-on-one interactions with their children (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). Many couples describe a husband’s contribution to
housework and child care as “helping” the wife (Coltrane, 1998) and many men still behave as the secondary or “back-up” parent (Peterson & Steinzmetz, 2000). Often, when couples become parents, there is a shift toward a more traditional, gender-based division of family work (Coltrane, 1998). Typical male tasks for fathers include sustaining the life of their children, teaching children basic survival skills, modeling means of accommodating to life, coping with perceived or actual family crises, and cooperating with other people in routine survival tasks (Seward, 1991).

Today, fathers typically spend less time providing care for children and more time interacting with them through play activities, particularly physical play (Coltrane, 1998; Coltrane et al., 2004; Paquette, 2004; Parke et al., 2005; Sharpe, 1994). According to Yeung et al. (2001), children in intact families spend most of their time with fathers in play and companionship activities. In contrast, mothers tend to interact with their children while performing the caregiving role (Yeung et al., 2000). In many instances for men, child care is a pleasurable distraction, while for women it is a constant and often taken for granted task (Coltrane, 1998).

The type of interaction parents have with children differs by sex of the parent (Yeung et al., 2000). Studies of fatherhood have shown that men are more involved with their sons than their daughters and give more attention to their sons than their daughters (King et al., 2004; Coltrane, 1998; Coltrane et al., 2004) and, when compared to mothers, treat boys and girls differently (Coltrane, 1998; Sharpe, 1994). The level at which fathers interact with sons as well as the influence fathers have on sons is noticeably different than the level at which they interact and influence their daughters (Yeung et al., 2000).
While the majority of men have increased their contributions to child care, contributions in housework are considerably less (Coltrane, 1998). Women undertake the majority of housework activities, even when employed outside the home (Coltrane & Parke, 1998; DeFrain & Olson, 1999). Husbands who are unemployed still do much less housework than wives (DeFrain & Olson, 1999). Generally, men’s chores tend to be intermittent and voluntary, as compared to women’s (Coltrane, 1998).

Paternal Involvement

Based on data collected between the 1960-1980, paternal involvement has increased (Yeung et al., 2001). The reasons fathers choose to be involved with their children vary widely, as there is no single predictor of whether a father will choose to be involved or uninvolved with his children (Yeung et al., 2001). According to Belsky (1984), three predictors shape paternal behaviors or involvement of fathers which include: characteristics of the child, characteristics of the father, and social and contextual influences (Coley & Morris, 2002; McBride et al., 2002). Personal characteristics of the child which may influence paternal involvement include the age of the child (Yeung et al., 2001), gender (McBride et al., 2002; Yeung et al., 2001) and child’s temperament (McBride et al., 2002).

Another predictor which may influence paternal involvement includes the personal characteristics of the parent (Belsky, 1984; Coley & Morris, 2002; McBride et al., 2002). Examples of personal characteristics may include the father’s life-course stage, income, health status (Yeung et al., 2001), education, life style (Coltrane & Parke, 1998; Yeung et al., 2001), timing of entry into fatherhood (Coltrane & Parke, 1998), and
occupation (Coltrane & Parke, 1998; Coltrane et al., 2004; Parke et al., 2005). A father’s individual and family background, (Parke et al., 2005), overall attitude toward being involved with children, self-confidence in parenting, level of parental competence, and formal supports from the workplace (Peterson & Steinmetz, 2000) also are factors which affect his involvement with his children. The quality of the father’s relationship with his spouse or partner (Parke et al., 2005; Peterson & Steinmetz, 2005; Yeung et al., 2001), attitudes of his child(ren)’s mother (Parke et al., 2005), maternal employment (Parke et al., 2005; Peterson & Steinmetz, 2000) and the type of activity in which the father and child are engaged are additional critical factors (Parke et al., 2005).

Involvement Among Low-Income Fathers

Overall, little data exists on the topic of low-income married fathers and mothers and how much time they spend with their children (Nelson, 2004). One viewpoint shown through data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (1997) specified children under the age of 13 in poor two-parent families spend less time with their fathers than children in higher-income two-parent families (Nelson, 2004). However, researchers disagree about father involvement in low-income families. For instance, fathers who are better off financially spend less time with their children than do low-income fathers; however, involvement of the fathers who are better off financially is more positive (Cabrera et al., 2000). Conversely, one study suggested that less educated, White working class fathers spend less time with their children than their middle-class counterparts, as they spend longer hours at work and are more involved in non-family leisure activities (King et al., 2004).
Paternal involvement among low-income men is strongly shaped by the residential status of the father. As a whole, resident fathers are more closely involved in their children’s lives over time (Nelson, 2004). For nonresident parents, daily exposure to children is missing, which in turn causes the parenting role to lose some of its significance (Nelson, 2004). Barriers to low-income, nonresidential father involvement have been identified and include economic instability, general difficulties of nonresidential parenting, strained relationships with the child’s mother and her extended family, as well as competing demands of children by more than one mother (Nelson, 2004). Because children benefit from a high level of father involvement, children who do not live with fathers may be at a disadvantage (Amato, 1994). On the other hand, a father’s economic contributions may supersede other father contributions to child well-being and development (Amato, 1994). Due to the economic instability of low-income households, poor children are more likely to develop relationships with male parental figures who are not their biological fathers (Nelson, 2004), such as a stepfather, the mother’s current partner, or other male kin such as an uncle or grandfather (Nelson, 2004).

For nonresident, low-income fathers, most of the support they provide to children is the result of unofficial agreements between the father and mother and often goes unreported to collection and welfare agencies such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF; Nelson, 2004). If the informal agreements between mother and father are in jeopardy, some mothers may block fathers’ access to children (Coley & Morris, 2000). When fathers do not have official child support orders, have regular contact with
children, live in close proximity, have active roles in parental decision-making without
the additional presence of a stepfather to children, they are more likely to pay child
support (Nelson, 2004).

Father-Daughter Relationships

The relationship between fathers and daughters has received much less attention
than the relationship between mothers and daughters (Sharpe, 1994). Possible
contributing factors for this include: (a) the view of the mother as the essential childcare
provider; (b) the view of the mother-daughter relationship as closer than either daughters
or sons with fathers; (c) the mother-daughter relationship representing “sameness” as
both individuals in the relationship are female; and (d) the set of established rules and
expectations around mothering which do not apply to fathers (Sharpe, 1994). Typically,
children identify more often with the same-sex parent, finding it easier to share activities
and interests. Thus, mother-daughter relationships are found to be closer than other dyad
types (Kaufman & Uhlenber, 1998; Lye, 1996; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). The father-
daughter relationship has significant and far-reaching effects for daughters, as the
relationship quality a father has with his daughter as well as the approval and attention he
gives can play a crucial role in her development (Sharpe, 1994).

Positive father-daughter relationships do not necessarily depend on having an
ideal nuclear family. In a study conducted by Sharpe (1994), daughters stressed the
nature and quality of the father-daughter relationship, rather than the biological link or
quantity of time spent together. Daughters tend to put more emotional work into the
father-daughter relationship when compared to their fathers as women typically have a
greater investment in family relationships in general (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). Among adult children, women are more involved than men in maintaining intergenerational relationships (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Lye, 1996) and mothers frequently mediate the relationships between daughters and fathers (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). Adult children typically report less contact with their fathers than with their mothers (Lye, 1996).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that will guide the analysis of data is derived from the life course perspective (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Peterson, Madden-Derdich, & Leonard, 2000; Price et al., 2000). This approach provides important insights into change and continuity in families over time. A central feature of the life course perspective is the multiple temporal contexts of development that focus on how individuals and families are influenced by ontogenetic, generational, and historical time (Bengston & Allen, 1993). Ontogenetic time refers to a person’s chronological age or periods of one’s life, and focuses on how people are characterized and directed into positions and roles based mainly on their chronological age (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Price et al., 2000). For example, the age at which a man becomes a father or a daughter experiences a paternal absence will prove influential in their own development and their development as a family unit. Generational time refers to the order of positions that individuals hold in families as well as the roles, expectations, and identities associated with those positions (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Price et al., 2000). The rural Appalachian women interviewed for this study fill several roles, such as daughter and mother, each role having its own set
of expectations. Their understanding of fatherhood is also influenced by their fathers’ and partners’ understanding and role behaviors as parents. Historical time focuses on the societal or macro-level changes over time, assessing how changes in society affect the lives of individuals and families (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Price et al., 2000). For example, low-income families are vulnerable to social policy changes over time, current economic trends, and current rates of unemployment.

A second central theme in the life course perspective is the four social contexts of development, which is essential for understanding individual lives and development (Bengston & Allen, 1993). First, the sociostructural location refers to how location within the broader social structure influences individual development (Bengston & Allen, 1993). Low-income, rural Appalachian mothers are members of a socioeconomic status group that faces hardships due to its status which consequently influences their development. The relationship between macro and micro levels on development is important in the life course perspective.

A third theme in the life course perspective is the focus on process and change in both individual and family life courses (Bengston & Allen, 1993). This focus on change and continuity is important to address in this current study of mothers’ experiences with fatherhood. For example, an Appalachian mother’s earlier experiences with fathers may shape her adult relationship with her father as well as her expectations of fatherhood for her partner.

A fourth and final theme in the life course perspective is the importance of addressing heterogeneity in the structures and processes associated with development
(Bengston & Allen, 1993). Not only should average trends in development be considered over time, but diversity in development is critical to address, underscoring the variability across individual and family development. Low-income Appalachian women will have diverse and different experiences over their life course, which affect their current expectations, behaviors, and outcomes as individuals and within their families.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to incorporate a life course perspective in understanding Appalachian low-income mothers’ expectations and experiences with fatherhood over time. The research questions posed for this qualitative study include: (a) How do Appalachian, rural, low-income mothers describe their experiences with fathers or father figures during childhood?; (b) what are mothers’ current expectations and experiences with the fathers of their children?; and (c) how do mothers’ current expectations of and experiences with fatherhood, both among fathers, father-figures, and fathers of participants’ children express change and continuity when economic resources are scarce? The methodology planned to execute this study is outlined in the following sections.

The Rural Families Speak Project

The data for this study were from a national research project, *Rural Families Speak* (*RFS*). This longitudinal, multi-method project focused on assessing changes in the well-being and functioning of rural low-income families in the context of welfare reform. Specific objectives were to: (a) Track individual and family circumstances, functioning, and well-being of rural, low-income families with children over time; (b) track the changing welfare policy environment as well as the community factors that facilitate community support for rural, low-income families with children; and (c) analyze the interactions between welfare policy, community infrastructure, and individual and family circumstances, functioning and well-being that affect the ability of rural, low-income
families with children to function in a changed environment of policies and program (University of Minnesota, College of Education and Human Development, Department of Family Social Science, Rural Families Speak, 2009). Since 2000, data have been collected from rural low-income families living in 25 counties in 16 states representing all regions in the United States. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected on numerous topics including: household demographics, community characteristics and housing, employment and training, individual and family well-being, transportation and childcare, family of origin experiences and intergenerational relationships, health, economic well-being, parenting, and social support. Three years (waves) of data were collected in the national study. Appendices A and B include the interview protocols for the first round of interviews (Wave 1) and second round of interviews (Wave 2). The current study focused exclusively on two waves of mothers’ interviews from two rural, Appalachian states, West Virginia (n = 29) and Kentucky (n = 15) that occurred over a two-year period.

Recruitment

Due to the interest in focusing on rural America and families with limited economic resources, an effort was made to find participants in specific geographic regions. The counties chosen for this study were part of northern and central Appalachia. As a life-long resident of Appalachia and having resided in the southeastern portion of Ohio my entire life, an effort was made to focus on participants from this geographic region. Having grown up in the tri-state area of southeastern Ohio, western West Virginia and northeastern Kentucky, the familiarity of families and individuals in this
region of the United States played a role in choosing the counties for the project. Originally reading transcripts of interviews from all three states—Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky, the decision was made to focus solely on West Virginia and Kentucky to ensure a manageable number of participants for the data set.

Using an inductive approach to the research, transcripts from the two states were read multiple times. Through the inductive approach, the experiences the participants described regarding their fathers and partners were especially interesting. Having had personal experiences similar to many of the participants who described their fathers and father figures, this theme continued to show itself as one to further explore. Further encouraging the study on this topic was the fact that regional and national initiatives as well as a research focus on fatherhood are gaining importance. Incorporating a life course perspective, having the availability of two waves of interviews was important to gain a better understanding of participant experiences over time. Also, most information regarding partners and non-resident fathers was discussed during the participants’ second interviews.

Recruited nationally through a convenience sample, participants were low-income rural mothers with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty line, who had at least one child under the age of 13 living at home at the time of first interview. They were recruited primarily through social service providers from programs such as Head Start, Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and other social services offices. The participants were interviewed by a team of interdisciplinary researchers for approximately 2-3 hours, either at their homes or in another mutually
agreed-upon location, and in a semistructured format they answered questions on individual and family well-being.

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC; 2002) utilizes an index-based county economic classification system to identify and monitor the economic status of Appalachian counties, including five category designations. The counties are classified based on a comparison of county and national rates for three economic indicators: three-year average unemployment rates, per-capita market income rates, and poverty rates. The five status designations include: distressed, at-risk, transitional, competitive, and attainment (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2004). Distressed counties are those which are the most economically depressed and rank in the worst 10% of the nation’s counties. At-risk counties are considered at risk of becoming economically distressed and rank between the worst 10% and 25% of the nation’s counties. Transitional counties have rates worse than the national average for one or more of the three criteria, but do not meet the criteria for the distressed or at-risk level. They make up the largest economic status designation and rank between the worst 25 percent and the best 25 percent of the nation's counties. Competitive counties are those that are able to compete in the national economy but are not in the highest 10 percent of the nation's counties. Lastly, the status of attainment occurs in counties which are the economically strongest and are ranked in the top 10 percent of the nation's counties. Based on the criteria set forth by the ARC, the three counties in this study fell under the following designations: 1) distressed; 2) at-risk; 3) transitional.
Since 1974, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has utilized Rural-Urban Continuum Codes as a form of classification to distinguish metropolitan counties by size and nonmetropolitan counties by degree of urbanization and proximity to metro areas (USDA, 2004). These codes subdivide regions according to three metro and six nonmetro categories, resulting in a 9-part county codification (USDA, 2004). The three counties chosen for the current study fell into three categories on the Rural-Urban Continuum coding scheme. One county was categorized under Code 8, which is described as a nonmetro county completely rural or a population less than 2,500 urban population, adjacent to a metro area (USDA, 2004). A second county was classified under Code 6, which is described as a nonmetro county with an urban population of 2,500-19,999, adjacent to a metro area (USDA, 2004). A third county was categorized under Code 3, described as a county in a metro area with a population of fewer than 250,000 (USDA, 2004).

The three counties in the current study had a large population range. Based on 2005 data, the population in the counties are 11,626; 28,403; and 5,896 (United States Census Bureau, 2007). In 2003, the respective median household income for each county was $28,398; $34,275; and $32,012 (United States Census Bureau, 2007). The respective percentage of persons in each county living below the poverty level in 2003 was 18.5%, 14.9% and 16.7% (United States Census Bureau, 2007).

Participant Selection

The current study targeted 44 mothers who participated in RFS over the period of two waves of interviews. Participants targeted for this study had the following criteria: (a)
mother of at least one child; (b) completed two waves of interviews (c) identified experiences with a father-figure during childhood; and (e) resided in the Appalachian regions of West Virginia and Kentucky.

Participants in the study averaged 2.18 children per family. At time of entry into the study, the participant’s average age was 29.13. At the time of entry into the study the majority of participants were partnered (n = 27; 61%), either in a marriage, long term relationship or cohabitating. Other participants (n = 17; 39%) were single at the time of entry into the study, with no partner or due to the death of their partner.

Informed Consent Process

Each participating institution conducting research for RFS was responsible for obtaining informed consent from all participants. Individuals who took part in the project over the period of several years were asked to sign consent forms for each interview to which they contributed.

Data Analysis

All interviews were read multiple times to ensure the investigator was familiar with the contents. Data was analyzed by the principal investigator with the support of the major professor. A coding strategy was developed to identify key themes that emerged from participant interviews using an inductive approach based in grounded theory (Berg, 2007; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). Since the interviews were part of the larger RFS project, they had already been transcribed and coded according to a broad coding scheme to assist researchers in organizing the data. These broad codes included: childcare, family issues, family of origin, housing, well-
being, making ends meet, food security, current jobs, education and training, job history, transportation, welfare, health, mental health, social support: agencies, social support: friends and family, community, and future. Given that the interviews had been coded into broad categories, the focus of the current study included the family issues and family of origin categories. The broader category of family issues included comments made by participants during the interviews related to relationships with family of procreation and partner or co-parent of child; challenges and positive aspects of family; important events; comments on parenting; what they enjoy, their perceived strengths; partner’s parenting, if appropriate; and family violence. The broader category of family of origin included comments on the history or current relationships with members of family of origin. Other categories were reviewed as well to ensure all relevant comments made by participants were included in the collection of data.

After each interview was analyzed, the primary investigator reviewed the data for patterns and developed a subcoding strategy based on the research questions. Subcodes were developed and used to analyze and categorize data by different topics and patterns which emerged from the data. The subcodes in the Resident Father category included: presence in household, parenting effectiveness, discipline, activities with children, partner relationships, gender expectations, abuse/addiction, mental/physical health, and provider. Subcodes for the Non-Resident Father category included: relationship with children- contact, relationships with children- no contact, parenting effectiveness, discipline, visitation, activities with children, child support, co-parenting relationship, gender expectations, abuse/addiction, mental/physical health. Subcodes for the
participant’s father or father figure included: presence in household, activities with children, relationship with children—currently, relationship with children—childhood, parenting effectiveness, discipline, relationship with partner, provider, abuse/addiction, mental/physical health, and gender expectations. Additionally, data were analyzed with attention to the contextual framework outlined in the life course perspective. Using the gathered data and current literature, explanations were provided as to how Appalachian, rural, low-income mothers describe their experiences with father figures, their children’s experiences with father figures, and how these are similar or different from each other.

Interviews had already been coded through the RFS project using MAXQDA qualitative software. The MAXQDA software assisted the researcher in creating and organizing textual material. Additionally, MAXQDA facilitated data analysis and allowed the researcher to assign a code system which was used to select certain parts of each interview and isolate these sections for further analysis. MAXQDA was used in the current study to subcode the interviews and manage data. Pseudonyms previously were assigned to the participants through the national RFS project.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on two waves of interviews involving 44 Appalachian low-income mothers residing in two states, Kentucky and West Virginia. The research questions for this qualitative study included: (a) How do Appalachian, rural, low-income mothers describe their experiences with fathers during childhood?; (b) what are mothers' current experiences and parenting expectations of the fathers of their children?; and (c) how do mothers’ current expectations and experiences of fatherhood, among fathers, father-figures, and fathers of participants’ children express change and continuity over time? For this study, the life course perspective provided a lens for understanding how participants’ experiences with fatherhood has been shaped over time. Participants’ experiences with fathers both during childhood and currently are explored. Additionally, participants’ current experiences with men who are fathers to their children also are investigated with attention to how fatherhood has been constructed and experienced over the course of participants’ lives (Bengston & Allen, 1993; Price, McKenry & Murphy, 2000).

In the following chapter, I divide my results into three sections. First, I organize and address data regarding participants’ experiences with their fathers over time. In the second section, I describe participants’ current experiences with partners and non-resident fathers. In the final section, I illuminate themes that connect the ways that fatherhood and gendered expectations of family life are experienced among participants. Attention is given to family contextual issues such as socioeconomic constraints, family
instability, and the gendered construction of parenting. Table 1 outlines the categories for each participant regarding their father/father figure and partner status.

Table 1

*Participants by Category*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Father/Father Figure Category</th>
<th>Partner Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Chaotic</td>
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<td>Reconnected</td>
<td>Consistent- Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Relationship Consistency</td>
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<td>Nova</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>Consistent- Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudence</td>
<td>Consistent Biological</td>
<td>Consistent- Partnered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reagan</td>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>Consistent- Partnered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rona</td>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>Chaotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalyn</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>Consistent- Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sueann</td>
<td>Consistent Biological</td>
<td>Chaotic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ Experiences with their Fathers over Time

Participants experienced a variety of father roles within their families of origin. When analyzing the data over two waves of interviews, categories of fathers/father figures emerged that aided in organizing the diverse family experiences represented in the sample. The participants’ fathers/father figures were divided into the following categories: (a) **Consistent Biological Fathers**, (b) **Transitional Fathers**, and (c) **Multiple Fathers**. The first category, **Consistent Biological Fathers**, includes those fathers who remained the same across the participant’s life course at the time of the interview. These fathers included those who were either married to or divorced from participants’ mothers and no stepfathers or other father figures were present in their lives. These fathers were identified as consistent but not necessarily involved fathers. The second category, **Transitional Fathers**, experienced a transition from the biological father to a stepfather or father figure due to divorce, death, or separation. New fathers included relatives, mothers’ new partners, or unrelated father figures. The third category, **Multiple Fathers**, excludes
include those participants who had multiple step-fathers and father figures. Categories of fathers are highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2

*Description of Participants’ Fathers & Father Figures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category name</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consistent Biological Fathers</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological fathers during childhood and adulthood still married to biological mothers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological fathers who died during childhood or adulthood with no other father figures emerging for participants</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological fathers, who were divorced or separated from participants’ mothers with no step-father or other father figure</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological fathers who were divorced from participants’ mothers and acted as primary, residential parents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transitional Fathers</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother remarried or found new partner</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative stepping into the role of father figure</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated father figure through adoption or foster care</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiple Fathers</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relevant to understanding the context of fatherhood for this sample and the ways fatherhood is perceived in terms of provider roles, fathers’ education, employment status, and financial vulnerability are outlined in Table 3. In many cases, participants were
unable to report fathers’ or father figures’ employment or disability status, or whether the family was receiving assistance or not.

Table 3

_Fathers & Father Figures as Providers_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Obtained High School Diploma</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Unable to work/on Disability</th>
<th>Received Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Biological Fathers (24)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Fathers (17)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Fathers (3)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Not all participants reported on each topic.

Consistent Biological Fathers

The majority of participants’ fathers in this study (n = 24; 54%) were identified in this category. They included: (a) biological fathers during childhood and adulthood who were still married to biological mothers (n = 8 ); (b) biological fathers who died during childhood or adulthood with no other father figures emerging for participants (n = 3); (c) biological fathers, who were divorced or separated from participants’ mothers with no step-father or other father figure (n = 11); and (d) biological fathers who were divorced from participants’ mothers and acted as primary, residential parents (n = 2).
Consistent Biological Fathers Who Remained Married to Biological Mothers

Eight of the 44 participants (18%) had a biological father and mother that were together during the participant’s childhood and who currently remain together. These fathers typically lacked education and either worked in low-pay positions or were unable to work due to a disability, which is outlined in Table 3.

Regarding marital and parenting stability for participants, consistency generally predominated with marital relationships intact and fathers present in families when participants were young. Relationships, however, between the participants and their fathers during their childhood varied with only two participants describing instances of shared activities with their fathers. For instance, Kaleah provided details of her positive relationship during her childhood with her father, “Just that it was fun, you know. Just everybody hanging out and Mom and Dad, they was the cool parents of the neighborhood. Everybody else's parents was nasty, but my parents was cool.”

Two participants described mixed or negative relationships with their fathers during childhood. Marsella depicted a particularly difficult time with her parents while she was growing up. Marsella stated:

Well, not too good because I mostly did things to spite 'em. But there was this one time, I met one of my friends who was older than I was and I just started hanging out with her and I was hanging out with the wrong crowd. I used to come home drinkin' and being mean. But I was my sister's age. I look back at this and like, I should not have did that. If my dad, if I would come in the house, he would always gripe at me and I would throw something at him. So, I mean, it was okay
sometimes, but sometimes I was just...it was just when I started getting' in the
teenage years. I just blew it after I turned 16.

For some participants, a consistent father did not always translate into a visible
presence in the household. One participant, Lysette, discussed her father’s involvement in
the household when she was growing up. She stated, “My dad was a truck driver. He was
gone all the time. He was home on weekends and when he was home, he slept. Due to the
nature of his work and the rural location of homes, participants like Lysette experienced
fathers as predominately invisible to the family.

Current relationships between participants and fathers were typically described as
close and positive. As Macie asserted, her current relationship with her father was “real
good, real good.” One exception, Marsella, shared that she had conflict currently with her
biological father. Feeling closer to her mother, Marsella explained the tension that
currently existed between her father and her current partner created problems in their
father-daughter relationship. She illustrated this point by explaining that her father “just
talks about him. And it makes me mad.” Her feelings about her father also may be
connected to the general lack of closeness and support that Marsella feels from her family
in general.

They act like they don't want me to have anything. They tell me they do want me
to have it, but then they gripe about it. I'm trying to get me a truck so I can haul
people around and stuff and move people. But they seem like they get mad about
it. And they've already got a truck. So I don't know. I think they are kind of
jealous.
Of importance, participants who had consistent fathers over time were likely to receive instrumental support from their fathers including money, housing, and transportation assistance. Financial assistance, bartering services, co-residence with parents, and transportation were identified as ways participants received instrumental support from their fathers.

**Consistent Biological Fathers Divorced or separated From Participants’ Mother**

Eleven participants (25%) had parents who were no longer together due to divorce (n = 6), separation (n = 2), or death of a mother (n = 1), and had no other father figure enter their lives. For participants whose parents were divorced, four divorces occurred during participants’ childhood with one of these fathers remarrying after the parental divorce. More information regarding these fathers is outlined in Table 3.

Six participants discussed their relationships with their father during childhood. Most of these participants described positive relationships; however, Marnie, Rona, and Lynnea specifically mentioned the difficult times they faced when fathers were no longer present once the divorce occurred. Marnie remembered, “I just became depressed, real depressed”. While Rona described that time in her life as “very hard” because “her dad wasn’t in our life.” Maylin discussed similar experiences of father absence, although she described her father’s lack of presence as occurring before her parents divorced due to his job as a 24-hour mechanic.

Although participants in this category had parents who were separated or divorced, none of the participants talked about their relationships with their fathers growing up as negative. When asked about memories regarding their fathers or specific
activities they shared with their fathers when growing up, four participants shared examples. Marnie reminisced about the close relationship she had with him when she was a child:

Actually, she [her cousin] was daddy's little girl and I was daddy's little boy. I was a tomboy to the end. Yeah, I wanted to bring home the animals; I wanted to help Daddy on the tractor. I was a regular tomboy. Mud and everything. And mom said I clinged to my dad then. I wanted to be exactly like him. I took my shirt off to be a boy. And Dad would get mad at me. ‘You're a girl.’

Regarding their current relationships with fathers, 9 participants described these relationships with fathers as mostly positive and supportive. There were two participants, Sueanne and Hadley, who described having a difficult relationship with their fathers at the time of the interviews. Both Sueanne and Hadley suggested that their stepmothers were responsible for their rocky relationships with fathers. When asked who was making life harder for her, Sueanne named her father and described her feelings toward her father since the time her parents divorced:

Her and my dad divorced, it’s been 7 years. Me and my dad hasn’t spoke this time, last time we hadn’t spoke for almost a year, we haven’t spoke for 5 months. And he makes it feel like I’m a burden or something to ask him for anything. He’ll just put me down so low that I don’t want to be around him. And his wife talks about me really bad and stuff and I just don’t want to be around them. They make me more upset being around them, so I just figure it’d be better off not to go around.
In the second wave of interviews, she recounted the continuing deterioration of her relationship with her father,

We just don’t really speak. He won’t even wave at me when he sees me or nothin’. I can wave at him and he won’t even look at me. He’ll turn the other direction. Even face to face with him in a store he won’t say a word. He’s so strange. I told him I don’t understand you.

She explained that the last time she spoke with her father they had a “fallin’ out” and she and his wife had gotten into an argument. Her father had “tried to pitch [her] off the porch” and told her not to come back. She told her father, “I don’t appreciate you doin’ me like this. I don’t need this. I don’t need to be around you.”

Of the nine participants who reported their current relationships with their fathers as positive, eight participants were receiving instrumental support from their fathers including financial assistance, housing, and emotional support. As reported by the women, consistent biological fathers were more likely to offer support broadly across all support categories. All fathers were more likely to provide instrumental support, such as transportation or home repairs, over financial or emotional support.

Transitional Fathers

Seventeen participants identified fathers in this category. They experienced one event in their life, either the divorce of their parents or the death of their father, which led to another man entering their life as a father figure. This could have been due to their mother remarrying or finding a new partner (n = 11), a relative stepping into the role of
father figure (n = 4), or an unrelated father figure through adoption or foster care (n = 2). More detailed descriptions of these fathers and father figures are outlined in Table 3.

Typically, these participants did not describe activities or memories of either their biological fathers or father figures during childhood. One participant, Fern, did describe her relationship with her great uncle who later assumed the role as her father. Although Fern felt that he was absent due to holding down two jobs simultaneously, she also told of how he made time for her. She recalled,

I wasn't his daughter and I was so, so sick when I was little. My dad would work two jobs. In between jobs, he would come home and set underneath a sheet with a vaporizer rubbing stuff on my chest so I could breathe.

Fern considered herself a “daddy’s girl” and explained her commitment to him by saying, “My dad could ask me to jump off a ten-story building and I'd fight my way up the ladder to be the first one off of it. I'm a huge Daddy's girl.”

Four participants (9%) had a biological father and mother who were no longer married, and, as a consequence, had a man who acted as a father figure come into their lives. These men were related biologically to participants and were identified as uncles or grandfathers. For instance, London explained that when she was 3 years old, her mother had given her up for adoption to her grandparents. Her biological father would not take her in at the time because of her stepmother who “didn't want me so my dad couldn't take me so I had no other option.” When she was 17, both grandparents passed away. She moved in with her biological father and stepmother, but later was kicked out of the house when she was 18.
For the participants who were within the transitional father category, current relationships between participants and their biological fathers and father figures varied greatly. Some relationships between participants and their biological fathers were described as strained or non-existent. Two participants described difficult relationships with their biological fathers, while three participants in this category still had contact with their father figures and described their relationships as “good” or “close.” When asked about her biological parents, Fern described them as “disrespectful” and “spoiled brats.” She identified her biological parents as people who were making her life most difficult at the time of the interview. Their most recent struggle emerged over the discipline she used with her daughter. At the time of the interview, her parents had not spoken to her for two weeks because they were “pouting.” She explained that it made her “a little stressed” and “it hurts [her] feelings a little”, “but [she’ll] deal with it.” Concerning the current relationships with their father figures, three participants still had regular contact.

Eleven of the 44 participants who experienced father transitions (25%) had parents who were divorced, separated, or were no longer together due to death of the father. In each case, the participant’s mother remarried and the participant gained a father figure in the form of a stepfather. Of the participants in this category, 4 of the biological fathers had passed away and 7 of the participants reported that their parents had divorced. Six participants referred to their stepfathers as “father” or “dad” in their interviews.

Participants in this category did not report much information regarding activities, memories or their relationships with their fathers or stepfathers during their interviews. One participant in particular, Maxine, described details of her childhood in general. She
reported that her family was “worse off” than her peers’ families and she was made fun of at school because of her clothes and being dirty because she could not shower since they did not have running water. She reported that she “really wasn’t a very happy child.” On the other hand, Kirsty reported mostly a positive childhood, giving examples of activities she would do with her family, such as eating out, shopping and Saturday family outings. However, Kirsty also reported the “hard times” she had during her childhood because her biological father was an alcoholic and “drinks like a fish.”

For participants who had parents who were no longer together and the participant had gained a father figure in the form of a stepfather due to a remarriage, current relationships between the participant and their biological father were typically sporadic. The majority of participants no longer had biological fathers living. Five participants reported their fathers had passed away either during childhood or even more recently. Jolene shared that she had not heard from her father recently and “didn’t know if he was dead or alive.” He was living in the western part of the United States and she received periodic updates about her father from her grandmother. Rona was the only participant to describe a close, happy relationship with her biological father. She also reported that her father and mother had recently reconnected and had decided to remarry after being apart for 26 years.

While the majority of participants reported mostly sporadic relationships currently with their biological fathers, the relationships they currently reported with their stepfathers were described as close and positive. For Jolene, her relationship with her stepfather had changed over time. As a child, she explained that she “never did get along
with (her) step-dad” and that is why she “moved out in the first place and got married at a young age.” Her mother “wouldn’t make him leave” and she “wasn’t about to stay there” so she left. However, she currently reported that she sees her mother and stepfather “everyday, all day long.” Having her mother’s only grandchild and the participant’s maturity may promote the involvement Jolene has with her stepfather. On the other hand, when describing the relationship Wren had with her stepfather, she said, “We tolerate each other.” She also named her adoptive father as someone who is making her life harder for her because of his critical attitude toward her and her husband. She explained, “He's always putting my husband down in front of him. And we fight a lot.” She explained that his idea of a family is very different than hers and this has an effect on their relationship. She believed a family should be “close-knit” and able to depend on each other in times of need “like a give and take” relationship. Her adoptive father “wants to take and not give anything back.” At the same time that Wren described the strain in the relationship between her adoptive father and herself, she also indicated that he and her mother lived next door and were a major source of support in her life. Wren’s situation highlights the complicated family experiences that were common in this sample.

Two of the 44 participants (4%) transitioned from biological fathers to father figures in ways that were unique. One participant, Jessalyn grew up in a foster home while another participant, Brenda was adopted. Neither participant specified whether or not their biological parents were divorced or remained married during their childhood. One participant did state that her biological father had passed away in recent years, so her biological parents were no longer together due to this death. The other participant did not
state whether or not her biological parents were still together. Each participant left their biological home at a young age for different reasons. Jessalyn was placed in foster care at an early age and described being taken from her parents because of “unfit housing,” her identification of her father as “an alcoholic” and her large family with “a lot of kids…eleven.”

Multiple Fathers

Three participants had experienced a divorce or separation of their parents which led to multiple men entering their lives in the form of a partner for the biological mother. Among these three participants, two experienced three different father figures and one experienced two different father figures. These families appeared chaotic and the change in relationship status between participants’ mothers and other men occurred often. For instance, Rosalyn’s mother was married to Rosalyn’s biological father. They later divorced, remarried each other, and then divorced again. Her mother married another man only to experience another divorce, and then remarried once more. More information about these men is outlined in Table 3.

The participants in this category did not give many examples of specific activities or memories from their childhood regarding their biological fathers. Nova explained that her father was in prison during part of her childhood and she was able to speak to him on the phone once a week. Regarding childhood relationships with their father figures, Nova is the only participant to recall specific memories. She described her mother’s third husband and her current stepfather as “just angry…just angry all the time.” Although he didn’t drink or smoke, she said he was “just mean.” In her description, she recalled that
“they would like whip us for nothing…I mean for nothing at all.” Her step-father had strict rules for her family to follow. For example, homework was not allowed to be done at home and the only book she was allowed to read was the Bible. Everyone in the house “ate what Bud [stepfather] wanted to eat.” She recalled never being allowed to date as a teenager, nor allowed to “speak to people, speak to boys or nothing.” If one of the rules were broken, “there was a big huge fight.” Nova described her chores which included getting breakfast, building the fire, cleaning, doing dishes, carrying firewood, carrying water from the creek, working in the fields, and washing clothes in an “old wringer-type washer.” She said, “If we had time to get ready for school, fine. If we didn't, sorry about your luck, wear what you had on or just stay home and clean the house the rest of the day.”

On a particularly interesting note, Nova described watching pornography with her stepfather during her childhood. She said, “I was not molested by Bud (her stepfather) or anything like that. He was never like that toward us. He was never sexual toward us…” She told of wearing dresses “that at least went to (her) knees with sleeves at least shoulder width” and “no spaghetti straps, no tank top” shirts. Even though they “went to church every Saturday and Sunday” they would also “set and watch pornos” with her stepfather. She described the pornography they watched as not being “just like a soft-core kind of thing,” but as “hard-core porn” that was fine for them to watch on television. She finished by saying, “No, I didn't have the big classic childhood. I had a rather warped childhood. Honestly.”
For the participants who experienced multiple father figures growing up, the relationship between the participants and their biological fathers were not classified as close, but all three were in contact in some way with their biological fathers. For instance, Hattie’s father and his wife typically visited on holidays or in the summer and sent gifts or money for Christmas or birthdays. She explained, “My dad and I, we get along better. He used to run bars all the time, was never home. I was always spending more time with my mom than with my dad.” While Hattie was in contact with her father, when describing her relationship with him, she explained her goal of wanting to go back to school for a teaching degree. When she told her father about this goal, he “kind of discouraged [her] and said that [she] was too stupid for college” so “[she] tore up [her] papers.”

Summary

Upon analyzing the data, the majority of women involved in this study had more than one father figure in her life. Of the 44 participants, only eight women (18%) had parents who remain married or partnered and 36 women (82%) had parents who experienced some type of marital disruption. Across all 44 cases, approximately 65 different father figures mentioned over the course of two waves of interviews in the lives of participants. Research shows that for families with few economic resources, such as those in this study, poverty creates marital tension between partners. During times of economic crisis, marital and parent-child relationships suffer, especially in low-income families, as conflict between partners increases (DeFrain et al., 1991; Duncan et al., 1998; Simons et al., 1994).
Common experiences emerged among a majority of the sample regarding the participants’ fathers and father figures. In most cases, fathers were largely poor, worked primarily in low-wage occupations, had low education levels, and received some form of government assistance. Low income families in Appalachia typically follow traditional roles, with the husband as breadwinner (Coleman et al., 1989; DeFrain et al., 1991; The Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996; Tickamyer & Tickamyer, 1987). The majority of the fathers in this sample had low paying jobs without a dependable source of income, possibly lacking the resources to adequately fulfill their roles as fathers (Seward, 1991).

Though most of the participants had fathers or father figures who worked, a large number of participants reported receiving assistance of some kind. This could be due to the fact that many of the participants’ parents were divorced and the mother never remarried, leaving her with a family who would most likely qualify to receive government assistant, as well as having fathers or father figures who worked in low-paying, inconsistent or seasonal jobs. Job loss and underemployment have serious effects on family life, contributing to negative outcomes in marital and parent-child relationships, as well as child adjustment (Parke et al., 2005). In this study, marital relationships were unstable, as seen from the numbers of participants who experienced a parental divorce.

An interesting finding which deviated from the typical statistics was found in the category of fathers who were the primary caregivers of their daughters. Of these fathers,
all had high school educations, all of the men worked, and none of these families received any government assistance.

The majority of participants mostly reported currently having positive relationships with their biological fathers and/or their father figures. Interestingly, all of the participants in the subcategory of divorced parents reported having a positive relationship with their father, while only a small portion of participants in the subcategory of biological parents who are still together reported a positive relationship. This finding deviated from the research, which states that because children benefit from a high level of father involvement, children who do not live with fathers may be at a disadvantage for having close paternal relationships (Amato, 1994). Positive father-daughter relationships do not necessarily depend on having an ideal nuclear family. In a study conducted by Sharpe (1994), daughters stressed the nature and quality of the father-daughter relationship, rather than the biological link or quantity of time spent together. Several participants reported receiving instrumental support from their fathers and/or their father figures which may influence their positive feelings regarding fathers. For a group of mothers who are in desperate economic need of a variety of supports, fathers played an important role, which communicated to their daughters their interest and care for their situations. More participants whose parents were divorced reported receiving instrumental help from their fathers than those whose parents were still married.

Participants’ Experiences with Their Partners over Time

To gain a better understanding of how participants’ expectations and experiences of fatherhood were shaped over time, data related to men who were fathers to
participants’ children also were analyzed. In this analysis, categories of partners emerged that aided in organizing the diverse partnerships represented in the sample. Participants’ past and current partners who were resident or non-resident fathers to their children were divided into two categories: (a) *Consistent over Both Waves* and (b) *Change Across Both Waves*. The first category, *Consistent over Both Waves* included women who remained consistently married, cohabitating in a long term relationship with the same man over both waves of interviews, or remained single over both waves of interviews. The second category, *Change Across Waves* includes participants who had a partnership change over the two waves of interviews. Participants in this category had varying circumstances leading to a change of resident to non resident fathers or vice versa. Categories of partners are highlighted in Table 4.
Table 4

*Description of Participants’ Partners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category name</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consistent Over Both Waves</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with Consistent Partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident father parenting only biological children</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent partners parenting biological and non biological children</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with non-resident fathers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact with non-resident fathers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Across Both Waves</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident father is now non-resident father</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children had non-resident father now have resident father</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident father change to different resident father</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information can be found in Table 5 regarding the participants’ fathers and father figures as providers. This information includes level of educational attainment, employment status, and if the family received assistance.
Table 5

**Partners as Providers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Obtained High School Diploma</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Unable to work/ On Disability</th>
<th>Received Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consistent Over Both Waves (37)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Partners</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Women</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Across Both Waves (7)</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Not all participants reported on each topic.

Consistent Across Both Waves

The majority of participants’ were involved in stable situations. Thirty-seven participants (84%) were consistently partnered or consistently single over the two waves of interviews. *Women with Consistent Partners* included those families where: (a) resident father was parenting only his biological children (n = 14); and (b) resident father was parenting his partner’s children only or his partner’s as well as his own biological children, with a non-resident father in the picture as well (n = 10). *Single Women* represented those who had contact (n = 3) or no contact (n = 10) with the non-resident fathers of their children.

**Consistent Partners Parenting Biological Children Only**

Fourteen of the 44 participants (32%) were married, cohabitating, or in a romantic partnership over the course of the two interviews. These participants and their partners
were parenting their shared biological children. These fathers typically lacked education, and if working, were employed in low-paying, seasonal, or inconsistent positions, as outlined in Table 5. Several fathers were unable to work due to disability or illness. Even while working, the inability to provide enough income for the family caused the majority of participants to receive some sort of government assistance. The participants in this category had varied examples of the resident father’s ability to provide for their family. For instance, Lynnea described her partner as “a very good provider and father.” On the other hand, when asked what her husband does during the day, Maxine responded “I don’t know what he really does, to tell you the truth. He’s not a very reliable person.”

Regarding relationship stability between the participants and their partners, nine of the 14 reported their relationships as “good” or “fine.” Sunny did not discuss any details regarding her relationship with her husband, one reported mixed emotions by saying they got along well although they “pushed” each other often. Three participants, Maxine, Marnie, and Marsella, described their relationships with their partners as “not good” and elaborated further by stating that they “fight about money” or “argue a lot.” Marsella mentioned trying to get her husband to go to counseling, which he refused.

When asked to describe the role the resident fathers play in their families, participants gave a wide variety of answers. Eight of the 14 responded that they talked with their husband about parenting issues. These talks mainly included discussions around discipline and consequences for their children. Marnie had an example of a situation in which she and her husband had discussed discipline issues. She explained:
At nighttime when he's asleep, it's kind of like our time...we talk and say, you know, what we would do if he was in this position. He got in a fight in church last night. We try and figure out why he did that, you know. What should we do if he hits somebody again? And today he hit somebody again.

In Layne’s family, parenting discussions center on expectations they have for their children. She explained:

“We talk about things cropping with older children...what we like and don't like for (them) to do. We're not to be holding hands; we're not to be sitting in the same seats, and things like that. Because that's becoming an issue. We expected for that to happen. So we prepare. We talked about it, you know.”

Other issues discussed between the participants and the resident fathers included school and medical issues.

According to participants, a second parenting task completed by resident fathers was assistance with the physical care of the children. Four participants described particular activities resident fathers were involved in when caring for their children including baths, diapers, dishes, housework, cleaning, laundry, and cooking. Gilda detailed her husband’s help with caring for their children, stating that “he does everything” including “changing diapers in the middle of the night” and “he even cooks.” She explained that she “couldn’t ask for a better husband” and he understands “that it’s stressful for me to be here and take care of the kids. So he comes home from work and helps me with laundry or dishes, sweeps and mops, run the sweeper, whatever needs done, he comes home, he’ll start doing it.”
A third parenting task performed by partners included stepping in when the participant needed a break or was stressed. As one mom, Marnie, explained, “I just wish … I love my son but sometimes I need a break.” For example, she explained that her husband will watch their son when she is worn out, would like to nap, or take a bath. However, she also reported she often worries about her partner leaving their son unattended. “I would wish that he wouldn't fall asleep on the couch and leave Alex... I come back in and … I said…he can find something from out of the blue and get choked on one of his toys.” While she does give examples of him assisting her when a break is needed, she also expressed how she would like her partner to be more involved with their son. When asked what her partner does to help with parenting, Hadley responded “Saturdays and Sundays.”

A fourth parenting task described by participants focused on engaging children in play activities. Maxine specified the only co-parenting task her partner was involved in was playing with their children. She described her partner as “a real good parent,” although when asked how he contributed to parenting she responded, “…he just pretty much wrestles with them. He just plays with them whenever he comes home, but he, that's pretty much all he does, just plays with them.” When asked about how her husband contributed to physical care of the children, she responded, “…I've never asked him to. He would if I asked.” Maxine reported her husband only playing with their children, while Wren had a different experience. She described her husband as “a great guy” who not only plays with the boys, but would also “come down to the school and volunteer” and “come to the parent meetings for the kids.” She is the only participant to mention any
involvement from her partner with her children’s schooling. She expressed her satisfaction with her husband for being so active “especially for a father . . . because not very many fathers nowadays are real active.” Wren described her partner as “very hands-on…in some respects he’s probably better than I am.” She considered herself more strict and her partner as the “more easy going” parent.

In analyzing the parenting tasks of partners in this category, certain fathers participated in circumscribed ways, only focusing on particular activities, while others were mentioned being involved in several ways. Four main tasks emerged from the responses concerning the parenting tasks partners were involved with including — physical care of the children, talking with the participant regarding parenting issues, giving the participant breaks or stepping in when she needed help, and engaging in activities and playing with their children. After analyzing the data, more fathers were reported helping with the physical care of the children than predicted. Research shows that fathers typically spend less time providing care for children and more time interacting with them through play activities, particularly physical play (Coltrane, 1998; Coltrane et al., 2004; Paquette, 2004; Parke et al., 2005; Sharpe, 1994). While this was true for many families, the answer reported most by these participants was that fathers helped with physical care of the children, followed by engaging in conversation with the participants about parenting issues. Though the majority of participants discussed parenting with their partners, it seemed as if the data did follow the research in that fathers devoted significantly less time than mothers to child rearing (Amato, 1994;
Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Coltrane & Parke, 1998; Coontz, 1997; McBride et al., 2002; Paquette et al., 2004; Yeung et al., 2000; Yeung et al., 2001).

The subject of discipline was a common topic among the participant’s responses in regards to how their husbands contributed to parenting. Four common themes surfaced from answers pertaining to discipline—shared discipline, resident father as disciplinarian, participant as disciplinarian, and resident father as disciplinarian when participant is unavailable. Most participants reported sharing the task of disciplining their children with their partner. When asked who acted as the disciplinarian in their home, Tia explained, “Oh, both of us, whoever's there. On weekends and stuff when he's home, he's usually the main meany of the house.” Three participants reported their partner as the disciplinarian in the household. As Layne explained, she “is the teacher and he’s the principal.” She also described the “balance” she and her husband have regarding disciplining their children, “Neither one of us loses our cool at the same time.” While Layne described the balance she and her partner have when disciplining their children, Marnie specifically gave examples of how they share discipline regarding their son, yet she was “trying to get him to let up” because her partner was “very strict.” She recalled, “…if he brings his juice and he accidentally spills it, he gets punished for it.” She explained to her partner that he “need(s) to have (his) son trust (him)” but “right now he’s afraid of you.”

Two participants reported themselves as the primary disciplinarians in the household. London reported her partner as “the one that plays with him,” but she has to discipline. She stated, “Daddy don’t spank. Mommy’s the one that does that.” The last category includes Brenda, who described her partner as only disciplining their child if she
was not there to do it herself. She explained, “If Reese gets in trouble and I’m not there, he has to deal with it.” She also stated that disciplining her son when she was unavailable to do so was the only parenting task her husband assumed with their son.

The majority of the partners followed traditional gender expectations, as reported by the participants. Five participants had partners who would have liked for the participants to stay in the home and not work. However, several participants did not share the same beliefs or it was not possible for the participant to stay home since the family depended on participant income for survival. This proved to be the case for Wren and her partner. She explained, “He doesn't like for me to work.” However, while her husband was attending school to be a nurse, they, “both have to make sacrifices.” She added, “Once he gets a job as a nurse, I won't work anymore again.” She also explained her husband having a new job would make life better for their family, “Because we would have more money to provide for the family…and if he had a better job, we’d probably have more time because we wouldn’t have to work.” Layne and her partner were in agreement about her role in the family. She explained, “…any grocery shopping that is done, I do it. I take care of it. Anything dealing with the home, that's my responsibility to take care of it. He's out earning the money.”

Consistent Partners Parenting Biological and Nonbiological Children

Ten participants (23%) were married, cohabitating, or in a romantic partnership over the course of the two interviews with a partner who was a resident father parenting his own biological children with the participant as well as parenting children who were
not his. A non resident father was also present in the lives of children. Concerning resident fathers, most were not employed, had low education levels, and the majority of families received some form of assistance, as outlined in Table 5. Several participants were discouraged with their husband not meeting the provider role of the family. Prudence explained that even though her husband worked, “it’s not enough” to pay the bills for her family. Several participants discussed the stress they were under due to their family’s financial situation. Kellyan reported “resentment” and “problems” because her husband “doesn’t work and everything is falling on (her).” Malina was the only participant in this category to express satisfaction with her partner meeting the provider role. She explained that not only did he work his full time job, but he also picked up jobs on the side to supplement their income. Most participants did not receive consistent child support from the non-resident fathers of their children. Prudence in particular discussed the difficult issues she has had trying to get child support payments. She stated, “If he paid his child support like he's supposed to, my kids would be able to have the clothes that they need and stuff like that. It would help.”

Regarding relationship stability between the participants and their partners in this category, five of the 14 participants described their relationship with their partner as “fine” or “great” while the majority of participants expressed negative relationships with their partners. The majority of the issues between these partners involved financial stress and parenting issues. Kellyan, Kirsty, and Maylin all discussed their financial situation as causing stress on their relationship. Kirsty’s partner had been injured and she was the sole income earner for their family for almost a year, just making over $6 an hour. Maylin
expressed her frustration with her partner and their “money situation.” She had been working very few hours, he did not work, and they had a difficult time throughout the past year providing for their family.

Family responsibilities were another common theme which emerged in the negative relationships between the participants and partners. Several participants expressed their frustration with partner’s lack of help with parenting and day-to-day household responsibilities. Kellyan explained, “When I want to get out of the house, I want to get out. With him, it’s easy for him. He just goes fishin’ or huntin’. One of his nephews comes and gets him and I’m stuck at home.” She was responsible for much of the daily care of the children and providing for the family. She stated, “What he makes is his and what I make pays the bills…cigarettes and food and milk and stuff like that.” She continued, “He’s here and stuff like that, but it all falls on me. Because he wouldn’t know how to pay a bill. He wouldn’t go to the store unless you gave him a list. But a lot of the responsibility is mine.” She also mentioned the “resentment” she felt and reported they were “having some problems” because “he doesn't work and everything is falling on (her).” Kellyan often worried about the outcome of their marriage and stated, “There's been a lot of times that I've told him to leave, and he doesn't. I take a lot of my anger out on him.”

Participants provided little information regarding relationships between themselves and the non-resident fathers of their children. The majority had no contact with the non-resident father of their children. Prudence did have contact with the non-resident father, but reported that they “don't get along very well.” The majority of their
conflict involved fighting “over him having to pay child support.” Their children were no longer allowed to spend the night with their father “because they catch head lice from him…things like that.” She also explained her ex-husband was making life difficult for her family for several reasons. She stated, “By comin' down and harassing me and telling me I have to do something when I don't have to do it. Not paying his child support.”

When asked to describe the role the resident fathers play in their families, participants gave a wide variety of answers. While the majority of the participants in this category reported resident fathers who were active in the lives of their children in some fashion, most participants reported their partners contributed little to parenting tasks.

When asked to describe what kind of parenting tasks their partner completed, the most common response given by participants was talking about parenting issues. These talks revolved around a variety of topics in each household. For example, Treasure and her partner discussed “ways to approach problems with the kids.” Other participants reported discussing issues regarding children’s activities, peer relationships, and discipline issues.

The second parenting task most reported by the participants in this category was the resident fathers engaged in play or activities with the children. Examples given by participants included outdoor activities such as lawn work, chopping wood, and gardening. Other activities included participants playing games, cooking, or doing activities with them around the house.

The third most common parenting task reported by participants in this category underscored how partners assisted with the physical care of children. Common answers to this question included cooking, putting them to bed, bathing children, and doing
laundry. Two participants discussed having an equal relationship as far as caring for the children and parenting. When asked what parenting tasks her partner typically completed, Iva answered, “We're just even/even pretty well.” She described parenting with her partner by saying, “Everything's together with our kids.”

The fourth most common response regarding partner involvement in parenting focused on watching the children when the participant was unable to do so. Partners appeared to take on a babysitting role when needed. For Kirsty, this was very much the case in that her partner is currently unemployed and home during the day. However, “because he's on high blood pressure pills and he can't handle all three of them at the same time,” they attend day care. Kirsty’s partner is the “back up” to the day care provider and “watches” the children at night while she works. She explained, “He watches them at night when I go to (work), I put them to bed when I go to work, and he is here when I go to work.

Three participants gave unique answers when asked what parenting tasks their partners completed. When Prudence was asked what type of things her husband did to help take care of the children, she laughed and responded, “He turns it over to me.” Treasure described her husband only contributing to parenting by discussing issues with her over the phone and engaging in activities with the children when he was home, as she was the only participant in this category who had a partner gone most of the time due to work. While this participant fell into the category of having a resident father in the home, it appeared to resemble a non resident father situation for her children. Kellyan was the only participant in the category to report that her partner did nothing to help with
parenting the children. Kellyan felt her husband needed to “spend more time with (his
daughter).” She also stated her daughter had expressed her interest in spending more time
with him.

As in other partner categories, the subject of discipline was a common topic.
Most participants reported themselves as the primary disciplinarians in the household.
Prudence took care of the discipline in the household “most of the time.” Three
participants reported their partner stepping in to discipline the children only when they
would not listen to her. Interestingly, each of these three participants made the comment
that their children “listen better” to their partners. Hattie continued, “If I can't get 'em to
straighten up, he settles 'em. He'll just go outside and get a switch, and once he tells 'em
that, they straighten up.” The least common answer, reported by two participants, was
splitting the task of discipline with their partner. These two participants were also the two
who reported having an equal parenting relationship with their partner as far as parenting
tasks. None of the participants in this category reported the resident father as the primary
disciplinarian in the household, differing from participants whose resident fathers were
only parenting biological children.

Concerning the commitment to parenting of the non-resident fathers of
participants’ children, there were two areas which emerged from the interviews,
visitation/contact, and the interest of pursuing a relationship with their children. Non-
resident fathers were diverse in their contact with children, with some visiting
sporadically and others not at all. Most participants reported that children had no contact
with non-resident fathers. Malina explained her feelings regarding the non-resident father of her children:

But right now if he would decide right now that he wants to see them, I wouldn't let it happen. It would just...when he did visit them before, he would come like today and then not show up for seven months. And that's not good for them.

Only two participants reported contact between children and non-resident fathers. Iva’s son was able to see his father “every other weekend” and at other times when “he [son] wants to go.” She did feel, “up till he was 9 years old, his dad didn't want nothing to do with him at all. Then when he become old enough to take care of his self, you know, then it's time for him to be Daddy.”

Several participants reported that they believed the non-resident fathers of their children did not want any kind of a relationship with their children. Malina responded that desire to not have a relationship was mutual between the non-resident father and children. She reported that her children could have a relationship “but they just choose not to.” She gave the example that several years ago her daughter wanted to move in with her father, which she agreed to knowing her daughter would come back home. The non-resident father “was all excited” until “the day it was supposed to have happened, he disappeared.” However, there were participants who did suspect the non-resident fathers wanted to have a relationship with their children. Iva stated “at times” she thought the non-resident father did want a relationship with their son and she tried to encourage him to be a part of his father’s life too.
As reported, most partnerships followed traditional gender scripts. While only four participants in this category discussed the gender expectations of their partners in their interviews, the majority of the partners preferred the participant follow more traditional roles such as staying home and caring for their children. Maylin described similar feelings from her partner, although she was currently working to help support her family. When asked if her partner wanted her to stay home, she answered, “Oh, yeah. But that's just the way men are.” Kellyan did not respond to whether or not her husband would like her to stay home. She did explain, however, how she was responsible for household and parenting responsibilities while often times he was doing activities for himself.

**Consistent Single Participant Who Has Contact With Nonresident Father**

Three participants (7%) were single over the course of the two interviews. These participants did have contact with the non-resident father of their children. Of the three participants in this category, there were four non-resident fathers. Madra considered her child’s biological father as one non-resident father and also considered the child’s ex-stepfather another non-resident father.

None of these participants reported the educational attainment of the non-resident fathers of their children, nor did they report the work status of any of the non-resident fathers. Other information about these participants’ partners and former partners is outlined in Table 5. All participants in this category were currently receiving child support from the non-resident fathers. One participant explained that the child support for her child was “split between seven kids” by the state and she believed at the time it was
being sent to “five different mothers.” As for the relationships these woman had with their ex partners, two participants reported having no conflict with their ex-partners. For Morgana, however, she and her partner “left on bad terms.” To communicate with her child’s non-resident father, she stated, “We go through his sister, she comes and gets my daughter and keeps my daughter with her and takes my daughter to see him and that... he doesn’t get her by himself.”

Of the non-resident fathers in this category, each had varying degrees of commitment to children. Even though Morgana’s child saw her non-resident father “every weekend, just about,” she was not able to see her father alone, due to his history of abuse. Consequently, visitation occurred at the non-resident father’s sister or mother’s house. Kira did not report a high level of commitment from the non-resident father of her daughter. When asked, she replied, “Yeah, when he’s got her. But he just don’t, I don’t know, he’s one of those guys who just don’t want to do it all the time.” She explained that he was typically only around “whenever he thinks it’s convenient.”

**Consistent Single Participant Who Has No Contact With Nonresident Father**

Nine participants (20%) were single across both interviews, and had no contact with the non resident fathers of their children. Thirteen non-resident fathers were involved with children in this category due to participants’ multiple partners. Nova had a unique experience in that the father of her biological child had recently passed away; therefore there was no contact with him. However, she was caring for several of her nieces and nephews over the course of both interviews and had no contact with the father of those children. Information regarding these partners is outlined in Table 5.
Regarding their economic situation, four participants reported currently receiving assistance, while six participants were not currently receiving child support from non-resident fathers. Rosalyn received child support when her ex partner worked, but at the time of the interviews she explained he “can't keep a job...he can’t hold a job” therefore no support was being paid. She also talked about the difficult time she was having trying to contact her ex partner and get the necessary forms for the support:

I talked to him and I told him I was going to get child support. He said, "I'm not paying a penny if I don't see my daughter." I don't know where he is. I called his dad. His dad doesn't know where he is, but I think he's lying because he don't want me to find (him). He works at J C Penny's at the mall, as far as I know. I haven't talked to him for a few months now. I'd like to get child support from him. But I need a social security number and I don't have that. And they want her birth certificate and I don't have a birth certificate.

Two participants mentioned possible abuse and neglect issues which occurred when they partnered with nonresident fathers. While trying to find her husband so she could collect child support, Lysette explained, “…the U.S. Marshall showed up there looking for him. He's wanted as a child molester.” She continued, “So I didn't know at the time that he was a child molester. They told me that later.” She also explained:

I always feel a little nervous anyway because her father's out there. He has made the comment that he could sell her [daughter] because she's pretty. He's seen pictures of her that I sent to his parents. So, he has made the comment that she's
pretty and he could probably get some money for her. So I'm always a little paranoid anyway.

Lysette also reported that she was close to going hungry when she was married. She was the only participant to report any information regarding her ex partner and the gender roles he expected her to follow. When asked if she had ever worked, she responded, “No. I quit work when I got married.” She continued, “That’s what my husband wanted.” She added that she briefly worked at a day care while married but “he wanted me to quit that too, so I did.”

The majority of information regarding non-resident fathers centered on the lack of commitment to parent children. Participants had various reasons as to why their children did not have contact with their fathers. According to Lysette, when she found out she was having a child with her partner, she recalled, “He wouldn't even look at the ultrasound.” As her daughter has grown, Lysette reported, “She's [daughter] never seen him. She's never met him. He's never shown any interest.” Laila explained the non-resident father’s attitude about having a relationship with his child, “He doesn't care about his own son. He never did when he lived there.”

Deb reported that she did not receive any child support from the three non-resident fathers connected to her children; however, in the second wave of interviews, she reported that one of them “tries to buy diapers and milk when he’s out.” As far as her relationship with the men, she had problems getting along with the father of her three youngest children. She elaborated, “He's just, he drinks a lot. He's just overbearing. He don't want nobody else to have me, don't want no other guys around me or anything, you
know.” She continued, “He wants to beat on me and stuff.” When asked about the nonresident father’s involvement with her children, she felt they were “interested enough,” explaining that she felt the oldest two children had a good relationship with their father.

**Change Across Both Waves**

The second category, *Change Across Both Waves* includes participants who had partnership changes over the two waves of interviews. Participants in this category had varying circumstances leading to a change in the status of resident and non-resident fathers for children. Changes included situations where resident fathers transitioned to non-resident fathers, participant families experienced the transition of a non-resident father to a current resident father, or resident fathers changed within the household.

*Resident Father is Now Nonresident Father*

Three participants had a resident father living with the family during the first wave of interviews and by the second wave of interviews had transitioned to having no resident father. Two participants had experienced a separation or divorce and one participant had experienced the death of the resident father. Both Sueanne and Kami reported their former husbands had received high school diplomas and both were working through the two waves of interviews. More information about these fathers can be found in Table 5. Even though Sueanne’s partner was working, she also reported receiving assistance. She explained, “I’ve had to draw them almost the whole time I’ve been married to Norman cuz like I said he’s been on and off with jobs and I’m just not going to do without for my kids.”
Regarding relationship quality for the two participants and their resident father partners during the first wave of interviews, Kami answered, “Don’t go there.” She elaborated on her frustrations regarding her partner and their economic situation. Even though her partner was working, he did not contribute money to paying bills or for household essentials, such as food. When asked about his salary, she replied, “I don’t have any idea” and continued to explain that her husband doesn’t tell her anything about his salary or wages. She had to “beg him” for money to buy food and pay bills, although they were currently behind on their rent. When asked what her partner used his money for, she answered, “For his truck and car. When the baby needed diapers, he spent it on the truck and car and I had to get the money somewhere. Sell cans or something.” She classified her family’s income as “not adequate at all.” Looking ahead to the future, Kami explained that in three years, her family situations would “probably be happy” because “he’ll be gone and out of the picture” and she and her children will “just be happy ever after.” At the time of the first interview, she was hoping her husband would be gone “by the summer.”

Regarding co-parenting activities, variations existed across the two cases. For Sueanne, her husband “does a lot,” by helping with physical care of the children, cooking, bathing children, caring for them when they are sick, and picking them up from school. She explained that he also “spends a lot of time with (their) son” and is “really good to the kids.” She specifically mentioned the time he spent with their son and how “he’s more close to him” than their daughter and that “he's got a special spot in the woods that he'll take him to and if our son gets angry, he'll take him up there and talk with him.”
Kami, however, reported her husband did not help in parenting their children. She explained, “I have the kids all the time. I don’t mind but they’s his kids too and I get aggravated sometimes. But somebody’s got to take care of them.” As far as his commitment to parenting, she explained he would come home from work, eat dinner, and go straight to bed. She added, “He takes the food out of the kids’ mouth for his self. When I buy for the kids, he gets it.”

The changes which occurred for Sueanne between the two waves of interviews included her separation from her husband. When asked about her decision to separate from her husband, she explained, “This time nothing is going to stop me cuz (he) don’t do enough for my kids. They’re better off without me even being married to (him) anyway.” She stated, “I will get more help with stuff than what I did with him, instead of doin’ without.” She expressed her interest in getting a job so she could “feel better that I’m doin’ stuff” for her children. She explained she was unable to get an apartment because her husband “owes so many debts” and the landlord is “holdin’ that against (her).” She continued, “Everywhere I go to try to get anything, they hold it against me cuz of (her husband) and I’m like well, I’m goin’ through a divorce.” Sueanne reported that the father of her children’s commitment to parenting remained strong. She explained, “He does a lot with his kids” and she had “no problem with him seein’ my kids” and “he can come down any time he wants.” She felt that he wanted a close relationship with the two children although her husband had yet to pay any child support.

The change Kami experienced between the two waves of interviews was similar to that of Sueanne in that she too was now divorced. Regarding the divorce, Kami
commented, “I am happy. It’s the best thing that ever happened to me.” She explained that it was a combination “from things building up” and now she’s “happy with (her) three girls and (her)self.” In regards to her relationship with her ex husband, they “get along for the kids’ sake” and when conflicts start to arise with him, she will “walk away.” Concerning his relationship with the children, he was seeing them “every other weekend” although she did report, “He’s supposed to come once a week but he don’t do that.” When asked if she thought he wanted a close relationship with his children, she responded, “I have no clue what he wants.” She was receiving child support for the two children they had together. It had been arriving regularly, as she explained, “If he don’t pay, he’ll go to jail.”

The last participant in this category experienced the death of her partner, through suicide, between the two waves of interviews. While a tragedy, the children now experienced the return of non-resident fathers into the lives of two of the children in the household. When asked about her relationship in the first interview, Juniper replied, “I don't know. That's part of my personal problems because we haven't been getting along.” Throughout her interview, she discussed the stress she felt with her partner and the financial situation the family was currently facing. When asked to describe what parenting tasks her partner participated in, the only task she reported was her partner watching the children while she worked during the evening or sometimes on weekends.

At the time of the second interview, Juniper discussed the drastic changes her family had experienced in the past year, including finding out that her partner had been molesting her oldest daughter so she had “left him, left everything” and later her partner
committed suicide. The impact of the suicide and sexual assault allegations proved difficult for her children. She specifically mentioned being worried about her older son due to the fact that her former partner “was there from the time he was born” and was the only father her son knew. ” During the period after the suicide, a change occurred in the relationships of the three non-resident fathers with the other three children in the family. Regarding her son, Juniper explained, “He just recently got to meet his real dad. I think he seen him when he was two or three and he hadn't seen him until now. He just up and called him the other day. She also explained the misunderstanding that had been occurring between her son and his father regarding their relationship, “He said he just didn't want to interfere. He felt like (their son) had his dad and he didn't want to interfere.” Two of her other daughters also gained contact with their biological fathers after the suicide of her partner.

Children had Nonresident Father Now Have Resident Father

Over the course of the two waves of interviews, 3 participants transitioned from having only biological non-resident fathers to now including a resident father living in their home. Of the three women in this category, there were seven different men involved in the lives of the participants. None of the resident fathers in this category were parenting their own biological children with participants. Other information regarding educational attainment and employment is outlined in Table 5. Participants receiving child support from the non-resident fathers of the children in this category varied by family. Regarding relationships between participants and their former partners, two
participants had little to no contact with their ex partner, while one participant “got along fine.”

The commitment to parenting of the non-resident fathers in this category varied. Two participants’ ex partners did not have contact with their children. Both of these participants also reported little interest on the part of the non-resident fathers to have a relationship with their children. When asked if her son’s father seemed interested in having a relationship with him, Alyne responded, “Probably not. He’s not a house-bound person. He’s more of an adventure-type guy.” The remaining participant in the category has little contact with her ex partner due to his recent incarceration. Her child had limited opportunities for contact, but visited him in jail on occasions. Jolene did not have concerns over whether or not her former partner would want to have a relationship with their son, but rather if her son would want to have a relationship with him. She explained, “I don't really know how he feels without his dad around ‘cause I don't really talk to him that much about it, but I don't how he's goin' to be when he gets out and his dad wants to see him and stuff like that, I don't know how he'll want to go with him or not.” As Jolene’s situation suggests, partners appeared to be transitory and their first interest was determining what was best for children.

By second interviews, families included a resident father. Two participants discussed parenting tasks the new resident fathers were involved with. For Alyne, her partner works later so she usually does “the majority of things” with the children. Kaleah on the other hand, reported her partner as the “playmate.” She described him as “the wrestler, the Barbie playing with her, the whole nine yards.” When asked to describe how
often they discuss parenting and what the discussions included, she explained that they
talked daily regarding “me telling him he needs to correct her more so I can do it less.”

*Resident Father to Different Resident Father*

One participant transitioned between interviews from the family having a resident
father to having a different man as a resident father. In the first interview, Rona was
married to the biological father of her three children. At the second interview, she
reported being in the process of a divorce and dating and living with another partner.
During Rona’s first interview, she described the relationship she had with her husband as
“pretty good.” When asked to describe how her husband helped her with parenting, she
replied, “He does his own thing.” She explained they were “total opposites when it comes
to the kids.” She continued, “Basically, I'm the only parent. He doesn't bath; he doesn't do
diapers; he doesn't get them ready for bed; he doesn't tuck them in; he doesn't check their
play. He does nothing.” She did go on to say that he did take their oldest daughter
hunting, but “that’s about it.”

When Rona was interviewed a second time, her family had experienced dramatic
changes. She was in the process of a divorce from the man who was the resident father at
the time of the first interviews and was also the biological father to their three children.
He was now considered the non-resident father. Her current partner lived with her and the
children, and had assumed a father role in the household. When asked to describe the
biggest challenges her family was currently facing, Rona recalled the events of the past
year which included violent behavior and physical abuse by her husband, his attempted
suicide, the change in the relationship with his children, and his alleged health issues. She
detailed several of the events leading up to the divorce and explained that the children experienced things “they should never have seen; stuff that should never have been done.” Rona and her three daughters had also been involved in several domestic violence situations since the last interview. During one domestic violence episode at her house, Rona recalled:

He was really bad and screaming and cussing…When the cops did come, (her middle daughter), which I don't think she was five yet, she was on my deep freezer in the laundry room hanging her head out the window screaming. My oldest daughter was holding me, screaming. My youngest daughter was laying in the floor screaming. And the cops saw all of it.

When asked to describe how the changes with their father had affected her children, she mentioned one daughter in particular. She felt as if her husband had tried to pull their daughter into the middle of the issues they were having. She explained, “He even told Luanne one time that he needed her to be his best friend. And he needed somebody to talk to and it was things that he shouldn't have talked to her…” She continued, “Things like, ‘You've got to get Mommy to realize that Daddy still loves her’ and all this stuff.”

Regarding visitation with the non-resident father, there was a court order against visitation rights for him. At the time of the interview, they had not seen him in several months. She stated, “They’re supposed to see him this weekend if he shows up.” Child support was also court ordered during the divorce proceedings, although she had yet to receive a payment since they were still in the divorce process. When Rona was asked if
she felt safe where she currently lived, she did have concerns regarding her ex partner. She reported feeling safe “sometimes,” but she recently learned her former husband had repaired his car and she had “started getting worried.” She was asking herself, “Is he going to come up here? Is he going to hide up here?” In explaining what would make life better for her family, she responded, “Get their dad under control and let the kids have a good relationship with him.” She continued:

I don't want them to grow up without him. I mean as much as I do not like him.

It's not even that I don't like him. He has done so much. It's hard for me and I think that's what messes up my head, because sometimes it's hard for me to even be mad at him. Just because I know he had a really bad childhood and I don't know. I think he's got some major issues. He needs to get really his life together and be there for his kids.

During the second interview, Rona described her new relationship as “great” although she was trying to take things “pretty much day-to-day.” She reported, “We get along great. There’s no arguments. Kind of like we’re 50/50 instead of one person pulling all the weight.” She also reported he was “great to the kids” and they kept telling her she needed to “marry him and that he can be their dad.” When asked if she and her partner discussed parenting, she replied, “Oh, my gosh. That's all we talk about is kids.”

Concerning other parenting tasks, Rona reported he helped with “everything.” For example, she came home from work one day and he had “done like four loads of laundry, (the) kitchen was spotless, the whole house was spotless.”
Summary

Similar to their experiences with father figures, participants had more than one traditional husband and biological father to her children. Of the 44 participants, 14 women (32%), were currently married and parenting only their biological children. Thirty women (68%) were either single parents which led to the presence of a non resident father or were partnered with a man who was not the biological parent to all the children he was parenting with the participant. For the 44 total participants in this study, this resulted in approximately 68 different partners or former partners with whom they shared a child over the course of two waves of interviews. The majority of the children whose mothers participated in the two waves of interviews were not living with their biological father and mother in a traditional household. Thirty participants reported at least one of their children having a non resident father. Of those, not all resident fathers were reported as involved or consistent.

As expected from the low-income, rural population of the sample, the majority of men had low education levels, worked low paying jobs, and the families received some form of government assistance. The partners in this sample were similar to the fathers and father figures described by the participants in the first section in that they had little education, were underemployed, and received a form of assistance. Relationship quality reported between the participants and their current partners varied. Seventeen participants mostly reported positive relationships with the resident fathers of their children, three participants had mixed feelings regarding their relationships and seven participants reported negative relationships. While many of the women were in their second or third
marriage or significant relationship, the quality of relationship reported may have been higher due to the fact that they had removed themselves from their first unfulfilling relationships and had found more satisfying partnerships. Because the interviews occurred over a two-year period and some women made a transition during this time period, participants may have been more positive about their relationships because they were experiencing the early phase of their new relationships. Of the participants who had remarried or were involved in new partnerships, several were balancing the relationship between their new partners and her children, as well as the relationships between the non-resident fathers and their children. Factors which can affect a man’s involvement with his children include the quality of the father’s relationship with his spouse or partner (Parke et al., 2005; Peterson & Steinmetz, 2005; Yeung et al., 2001) and the attitudes of his child(ren)’s mother (Parke et al., 2005). This was evidenced by the relationships between the participants and the non resident fathers in the study. Several participants chose not to involve the non-resident father in the lives of their children.

Participants also reported that most fathers were more likely to discuss parenting issues with participants, followed by engaging children in activities or play, and helping with the physical care of children. There were also participants who reported their partners as stepping in or giving them breaks when they needed help, watching the children when they were out or at work, some played with children and did not help in other ways. Discipline was often discussed during the interviews and continued to be an important aspect of family life where participants needed support or expected fathers to do more frequently. Fathers parenting their biological children were more likely to help
with the physical care of their children, and also more likely to act as the primary
disciplinarian. Men in homes who were parenting non-biological children were more
likely to be involved in play and activities with the children, while letting the mother’s
take the lead in disciplining the children. In Appalachia, family members typically follow
traditional roles, with the husband as breadwinner (Coleman et al., 1989; DeFrain et al.,
1991; The Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996; Tickamyer &
Tickamyer, 1987). The participants in this study generally reported their relationships
with partners were traditional, with expectations for traditional roles. Most stated that
their partners would rather they stay home and not be employed outside of the home.
Many participants who experienced a change in partnership, either through a divorce or
separation, expressed their frustration with their original partner about the ability to
provide financially for the family. Other frustrations reported included feeling
responsible for child care, household chores, and other responsibilities.

Fathers, Partners, and Gender Expectations:

Rural, Low-Income Women’s Experiences with Men across the Life Course

After analyzing the interviews regarding participants’ experiences with
fatherhood across their life course and current experiences with partners, common themes
emerged across all interviews regarding participants’ experience with fatherhood in their
families of origin and in their experiences with partners as fathers. Much of the
information provided by the participants centered on their father figures and partners as
providers for their families. They discussed the roles and responsibilities their fathers and
partners played as father figures, as well as their expectations around these tasks. It also
became evident that the poor economic situation faced by these families played an essential role in shaping their experiences and expectations of fatherhood.

*Men’s Roles as Providers*

Appalachian families typically follow traditional gender roles, with the husband as breadwinner (Coleman et al., 1989; DeFtain et al., 1991; The Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996; Tickamyer & Tickamyer, 1987). In following traditional gender roles, men are expected to provide economic support for their families (Waller, 2002), care for their children by devoting time and energy to paid work (Townsend, 2002), and succeed in their occupation and work roles (Seward, 1991). In following traditional gender roles with men as the primary bread winner, providing financial security for the family allows the partner to stay home, care for the children, and complete tasks typically associated with the household. As evidenced in this sample, because of traditional gender ideals still held by many, men fulfilled their family commitments by working and being financial providers and often appeared reluctant to accept women as equal providers even when both were working full-time (Coltrane, 1998). These expectations are also present in low-income households (Summers, et al., 1999). However, most men without a dependable source of income lack the resources to adequately fulfill their roles as fathers (Seward, 1991). This sample supports families following traditional gender roles; however, few of the men in the sample were successful as breadwinners, causing stress in the partner relationships. Table 3 outlines the participants’ fathers/father figures as providers, while Table 5 outlines their partners as providers.
Participants’ first experience that shaped their expectations and beliefs about breadwinning began in their family of origin. In this sample, four (9%) of participants described their fathers as meeting the expectations of breadwinning in the family. For example, Hadley’s father was a schoolteacher who eventually held the position as an assistant principal at a high school and who had earned a master’s degree from West Virginia University. Another example included Kellyan’s father whom she described as “blue collar.” Her father “worked two jobs and they owned their own home.” Other examples included the two fathers who were the custodial parents of their children. Mimi’s father worked two jobs, second and third shift at separate occupations to provide for the family. Although Layne’s “never talked much about the finances with (us) kids” he worked and her family was never dependent on government assistance.

More likely in this sample, fathers were deemed unsuccessful regarding breadwinning due to a number of reasons, such as alcohol addiction and their lack of qualifications for a higher paying job, or unemployment. Of the 33 participants who reported their fathers or father figures working, 16 of them specifically remembered receiving assistance growing up, although several other participants did not report whether their family received assistance or not. Examples in Table 3 outlined participants varied; however, it was clear that fathers’ inability to provide family income created risks for family well-being. Wren’s biological father often was fired from jobs because of his drinking and she could not recall what his different jobs had been. Her adoptive father owned his own construction company, but since it was seasonal work, they were often low on money. She remembered from her childhood that, “we were always poor. I’ve
been poor my whole life.” Kira explained that although her father worked, the family “didn’t have a lot” and described her childhood as the “typical trailer park kinda life.”

Other examples of fathers who were underemployed were described by Deb and Maylin. Both of their fathers worked, but the families still received assistance while they were growing up to supplement their incomes.

Participants also carried similar expectations of breadwinning into their relationships with partners. As with the participants’ fathers, there were examples of successful breadwinners although the majority of men had failed to meet the expectations of provider in the family. Lynnea emphasized the importance of the breadwinning role for partners when she described her partner as “a very good provider and father.”

Throughout the interviews, there were several examples as to how partners were failing to provide even the most basic needs for their family. While the majority of men were working at the time of the interviews, most were employed in occupations that only offered seasonal/temporary work, part-time work, a job where benefits were not offered to help support the family, a job earning minimum wage or a low-paying wage, or in a job that was unreliable due to changes in hours or work load. Other men in the sample depended on odd jobs from neighbors, friends, or employees to help supplement their family income. For example, Prudence shared that even though her husband worked, “it’s not enough” and with her having no job it is “hard for (her) to pay the bills” and they are “dependent on (her) dad for money.” A common theme that emerged also was the stress participants experienced from their financial situation. Kellyan reported “resentment” and “problems” because her husband “doesn’t work and everything is falling on (her).” The
same problems emerged for Maylin and Kirsty. Maylin explained “they were under a lot of stress this winter” and it has been a “drain on the family.” One family in particular, Maxine, described the poor living situation of her family. She explained, “I hand wash clothes in my bath tub. Then I wring them out and hang them up on clothes hangers…” She also commented that she often times does not have money for diapers for her son, but “if he ain’t got diapers I can always find something to put on him. A t-shirt or something. I’ve used them before.”

When asked about the relationship quality experienced between themselves and their partners, several participants responses centered on the impact their economic status had on their relationships. Lynnea for example reported that her relationship with her partner had changed for the better in the previous year because of his improved job situation. Lynnea described her husband as “a very good provider and father and a very good friend.”

Other responses included those which focused on the improvement of family life if the partner could become a more effective breadwinner. For Wren, her husband had been unable to provide for their family in a way they felt was adequate, so he enrolled in school to become a nurse. She explained that her husband getting a new job would give “the whole family a lot of hope that things are going to be better.” She also believed her family would have a better life once her husband got a new job and they were able to spend more time together as a family. The high hopes her family held for his new job also included “more money to provide for the family, not just the things that they need, but some of the things they want.” It also allowed him “more time because we wouldn’t have
to work as many hours and I wouldn’t have to work.” The promise of a better job and
easier economic conditions for the family gave the participant hope that not only their
economic situation would improve, but so would the quality of relationships in her family.

Most men in this sample were unable to provide a dependable source of income,
therefore lacking the resources to adequately fulfill their roles as fathers (Seward, 1991).
With a sample comprised of rural, low-income individuals in an area where dependable,
living wage jobs are scarce, it was evident in the current study that a lack of income and
poor job opportunities for low-income fathers appeared to have a particularly negative
effect on fathering (Doherty et al., 1998). Specifically, job loss and underemployment
had serious effects on family life, contributing to negative outcomes in marital and
parent-child relationships (Parke et al., 2005). For example, Nova specifically described
her experience of growing up in poverty, saying she “still remember(s) to this day” that it
was “so embarrassing.” Her stepfather was a logger who “didn’t make a lot of money.”
She also mentioned the absence of childhood support that should have been paid by her
biological father. She said, “Of course if my biological father had paid child support of
any kind, we would probably never have had food stamps, in all honesty.” She
remembered receiving food stamps that “came in the 4th of every month.” She reported,

I remember it vividly thinking that they would make one major trip to the grocery
store every month. When the food stamps came in, Mom would go out and she
would buy like a bunch of groceries all at once and we had food until the end of
the month it started getting low. And we would always be waiting for those food stamps. That's awful.

Participants also gave examples of how their partners were unable to provide for their families, impacting the relationships they had with their children. In Kami’s case, her frustration with her partner’s inability to provide for her family was evident. He chose not to use any of the money he made from his job for bills, groceries or in other ways that would have benefited the family. She described their income as not at all adequate and explained having to beg him for money for rent and groceries, but instead he chose to use the money he made on his truck or car. She highlighted how she felt that food was taken “out of the kid’s mouth for his self.” After returning home from work, he does not assist with child care at all. Kami explained, “I have the kids all the time. I don't mind but theys his kids too and I get aggravated sometimes.” She continued by explaining, “…he acts like he just don't care.” Another example of a partner’s inability to provide for his family due to his inability to work is described by the poor living conditions for Maxine’s family. She was often times unable to purchase necessities for her small son and did not have access to a washer and dryer. Research shows that women undertake the majority of housework activities, even when employed outside the home (Coltrane & Parke, 1998; DeFrain & Olsen, 1999) and even husbands who are unemployed still do much less housework than wives (DeFrain & Olsen, 1999). This was true for several participants in this sample and their frustration with their situations were evident.

Overall, the Appalachian men in these families were unable to follow the traditional gender roles set before them by their culture by successfully completing the
role as primary breadwinner. Inability to provide adequate income for their families was a major obstacle for both the fathers of the participants as well as their partners. A variety of reasons contributed to the inability of the man to fulfill his breadwinning role including the lack of lucrative job opportunities, seasonal or temporary work, lacking the qualification to obtain employment or higher paying positions, or alcohol abuse. Few participants expressed hope that their current economic situation would improve, instead expressing the frustrations and stress their current financial crisis had on their relationships, as well as the toll it took on their parents’ relationships as well.

**Men as Fathers**

Many scholars agree that fathers devote significantly less time than mothers to child rearing (Amato, 1994; Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Coltrane & Parke, 1998; Coontz, 1997; McBride et al., 2002; Paquette et al., 2004; Yeung et al., 2000; Yeung et al., 2001). The current sample supports the idea that fathers do not assume as much responsibility for child care or activities with children when compared to mothers. Mothers continue to carry a disproportionate level of responsibility for daily care of children, even though fathers may be spending more time in one-on-one interactions with their children (Bowen & Orthner, 1991), particularly through physical play activities (Coltrane, 1998; Coltrane et al., 2004; Paquette, 2004; Parke et al., 2005; Sharpe, 1994).

In the current sample, women provided more day-to-day care of their children, although the activities fathers engaged in varied with the status of their family composition. Resident fathers in a relationship with the participant and only parenting their biological children were described as participating in more physical care activities
such as bathing, feeding, and diapering children when compared to men in a relationship with their partners but parenting children who were biologically his as well as those who were biologically not his. This group of resident fathers was described as engaging in more play and activities with the children. For example, several participants specifically described their husband participating in outdoor activities with the children such as lawn work, chopping wood, and gardening. Prudence shared how her husband “plays with the kids more than (she) does.” For Maxine, the only co-parenting task her partner performed was playing with their children. She described her partner as “a real good parent,” although when asked how he contributed to parenting, she responded, “…he just pretty much wrestles with them. He just plays with them whenever he comes home, but he, that's pretty much all he does, just plays with them.” When asked about how her husband contributed to physical care of the children, she responded, “…I’ve never asked him to. He would if I asked.”

This was also evident in the activities described by the participants with their own fathers or father figures. For example, Maylin, Lynnea, and Laila all described activities such as camping, theme parks, fishing and vacations in which they participated with their fathers or father figures. Laila recalled camping and spending time outdoors with her father. Lynnea recalled spending time with her father at construction sites during weekends and during the summer. Marnie also described engaging in outdoor activities with her father which included “mud and everything” as she went “fishin’ with him and (rode) the tractor with him.”
Many couples described a husband’s contribution to housework and child care as “helping” the wife (Coltrane, 1998) and many men still behave as the secondary or “back-up” parent (Peterson et al., 2000). The majority of fathers in this sample confirmed that the mother was primarily responsible for the physical care of the children and the father was often seen as a “helper” to the mother. Several participants described their partners as only stepping in to help when they were not available or acting as a back up to both the mother and when the day care or a babysitter was unavailable. For example, Hadley, “If he (her husband) sees that I’m getting stressed out about something, he'll take over.” Marnie shared similar examples of her partner assisting her when she needed a break from the children.

While the majority of fathers fit into the roles portrayed in the literature as not providing equal physical care of the children, there were a few fathers who were described as sharing the responsibility of child rearing. Wren in particular was described by his partner as a “great guy” who “spends as much time as possible with his boys.” Although he was currently working and attending a nurse training program, he had previously been involved not only in the physical care of the children such as bathing, diapering, and feeding, but also as a volunteer at Head Start and engaging his children in activities such as swimming and fishing. Wren also explained that her “husband feels guilty because he's afraid that (their younger son) is going to grow up and not be as close to him as (their older son) is because he's not going to be able to spend that time with him.” Other examples included Malina and Iva, who both discussed having an equal relationship as far as caring for the children and parenting. When asked what parenting
tasks her partner typically completed, Malina answered, “We split it, like, it depends on who's got what day off or who’s home first, so we split everything.” Iva gave a similar answer, “We're just even/even pretty well.” She described parenting with her partner by saying, “Everything's together with our kids.” The examples provided by these participants were not typical cases. The majority of participants had experiences with fatherhood during their own childhood and currently that mostly followed traditional norms.

Most fathers and partners fit into the role described in the literature as secondary caregiver behind the mother, yet there were two examples of fathers who were primary, residential caregivers to the participant. Both participants described close relationships with their fathers during childhood. Mimi described her childhood as “very fun” and remembered attending Bible study and Church together on Sundays. Layne’s father was married twice after her parents’ divorced but she described her father’s commitment to his children, “We were his life and we maintained to be his life until he moved on. We'd have problems with stepmothers and he would say, ‘They were in my life before you were.’” Layne recalled many life lessons she learned from her father including managing a household, budgeting, and the importance of strong family ties.

There were also fathers in the sample who did not fit into the role described in the literature in that they did not participate in parenting activities at all. For example, when Prudence was asked what type of things her husband did to help take care of the children, she laughed and responded, “He turns it over to me.” Another example can be found in the case of Kami, who also reported her husband did not help at all in regards to
parenting their children and had an overall lack of commitment to parenting their children.

Research suggests paternal involvement among low-income men is strongly shaped by the residential status of the father. As a whole, resident fathers are more closely involved in their children’s lives over time (Nelson, 2004). For nonresident parents, daily exposure to the children is missing, which in turn causes the parenting role to lose some of its significance (Nelson, 2004). The current sample supports these findings. Barriers to low-income nonresidential father involvement have been identified and include economic instability, general difficulties of nonresidential parenting, strained relationships with the child’s mother and her extended family, as well as competing demands of children by more than one mother (Nelson, 2004).

The majority of the participants in this sample spent some part of their childhood not living with their biological father, as did many of the children of the women who participated in the study. Only 9 participants had parents who remained married up until the time they were included in this sample. For example, Gilda experienced a lack of presence from her biological father because of her parents’ divorce that occurred when she was 3 or 4 years old. She spent most of her childhood “without (her) dad.” Eighteen participants had another man, either a relative, non-relative or partner of their mother play a role as a father figure at some point in their life. Thirteen participants had children who, at the time of the study, were experiencing the presence of a father figure other than their biological father. None of these men were relatives, but were partners of the mother
at the time of the study. Rona described how “hard, very hard” her childhood was “because (her) dad wasn't in our life, but “we had a pretty good childhood besides that.”

As stated in the literature, relationships between non-resident fathers and children may suffer from lack of contact. This was the case for the majority of families in this study. Nearly 62% of the participants who were parenting children that had non-resident fathers did not have consistent, reliable contact with their children. Many participants felt that the non-resident fathers did not want relationships with their children and several made a point not to encourage relationships between their children and the non-resident father. For example, Rosalyn did not think her daughter’s father wanted a close relationship with her because “he doesn’t try to.” Laila made a similar statement regarding the non-resident father’s attitude about having a relationship with his child. She explained, “He doesn't care about his own son. He never did when he lived there.” It was evident in this sample that the non-resident fathers, for various reasons, were failing to meet fathering expectations.

While there were many non resident fathers that fell into the category the literature described, there were a few who defied typical expectations of a non-resident father. Three children with a total of four non-resident fathers had contact with their non resident fathers although each was engaged with their child to varying degrees. For example, Morgana’s child saw her non resident father “every weekend, just about.” Sueanne’s ex partner continued his involvement with his children even after their separation. She reported, “He does a lot with his kids” and she had “no problem with him
seein’ my kids” and “he can come down any time he wants.” When asked if she thought he wanted a close relationship with the two children, she responded, “Oh yeah.”

From a life course perspective, participants experienced the absence of their biological father during childhood, similar to their children currently. The relationships of the participants appeared to follow the trend of divorce or separation set by their families of origin, introducing father figures into the lives of their children that are biological fathers. The majority of these men appeared to reflect traditional gendered norms that suggest that men not equally co-parent children, but rather act as parent helper or playmate to children. While there are a few exceptions, most men had minimal physical, day-to-day care of their children while the participant was primarily responsible for child care. The majority of participants who experienced a non-resident father in their own life, as well as the children of the participants who were experiencing non-resident fathers at the time of the interviews had little to no contact with their biological fathers. Many participants did not feel the men wanted to be involved in the lives of their children, perhaps similar to their own experiences as children. Across family of origin and family of procreation, many men were typically holding the secondary caregiving role in households that included his own biological children as well as children who were not biologically his. Many other men were in a non-resident father role, having little contact with his children, and according to the participants, showing little to no interest in having a relationship with his biological children. Overall, most participants in the sample were not satisfied with their current situation in regards to sharing parenting, family, and
household responsibilities. The partners and former partners of the participants failed to meet expectations in regards to parenting and household responsibilities.

**Economic Pressures and Family Relationships**

During times of economic crisis, marital and parent-child relationships suffer, especially in low-income families, as conflict between partners and parental harshness increases (DeFrain et al., 1991; Duncan et al., 1998; Simons et al., 1994). This sample supports findings that for families with few economic resources, poverty created marital tension. For the 44 participants, there was a total of approximately 65 father figures who came into their lives. Concerning their relationships with partners, the 44 participants had approximately 70 different men who had come into their lives as intimate partners and fathers of their children. The nature of the relationships across the family of origin and the family of procreation was filled with conflict and change. For the majority of participants, the unstable, chaotic model of marriage learned in their childhood was repeated by the participant in adulthood. The nature of the chaotic relationships in the sample made categorizing the data difficult for analysis.

Nearly 80% of the participants in the study experienced the separation of their parents either through divorce or death of their father during their childhood. Of the participants whose parents did not stay partnered, half of them had at least one other man enter their lives as a father figure, while several of them had more than one father figure in their life as a child. The trend of chaotic partnerships is carried into the participants’ relationships when examining how many of them have also experienced a marital disruption. Like the participants’ own childhoods, some of their children are being raised
in a single mother household with no resident father figure current at the time of the
interview, while many of the children are experiencing the presence of a father figure
who is not their own biological father. Only 32% of the participants in the sample were
partnered with the biological father of their children and currently raising those children
together in the same household. There were participants in the sample who were in
relationships with men raising children that were biologically his and those that were not.
Of the 34 children who were included in this study that had a resident father in their
home, only 26% were being parented by both of their biological parents. 76% of the
children who had resident fathers/father figures were being raised by a man who was not
their biological father.

The children of the participants in this sample remained the constant force in the
women’s lives, as was the case with the majority of participants’ mothers. The
experiences of the women in this sample throughout childhood and adulthood were that
men come and go. Many had relationships that seemed insecure due to economic
instability and unmet expectations. The participants, much like their mothers, seemed to
be seeking a better partner for themselves and a better father figure for their children.
However, with few positive male role models to model stable relationships, successful
provider and committed parenting, participants appeared to have trouble finding a partner
to meet their expectations. It was not evident if participants were searching for a partner
who was more like their father figure or less like their father figure. Throughout the
sample it seemed as if participants and the participant’s mother were searching for a man
to fulfill the traditional role of breadwinner, but continued to find men who failed to meet
these expectations. However, in several instances, it seemed as if the participants were not actually seeking a better partner. They appeared uncertain as to exactly what they needed as they never had an example of a partner who was a provider and helped with household and family responsibility. Often, participants expected their husbands to follow traditional roles as the provider, but also wanted a partner who would assume the role as equal co-parent and help with the family and household responsibilities as well.

Participant’s experiences with their own fathers and the experiences they were currently having with the fathers of their children were not unlike each other. The men were typically failing the traditional gender role of breadwinner for the family. The men contributed little to caring for the children, mostly engaging in activities of play or in a helper role to the mother. Participants mostly experienced changes in relationships with their partners in the form of separation or divorce, while introducing other men into the lives of their children, much like what they experienced growing up as children.

Overall, this study suggests that participants in this sample of rural, low-income families; typically followed the characteristics implied in the research. Traditional gender roles are expected, but rarely followed, as the man as the breadwinner in the family. Women complete the majority of family and household responsibilities and men participate in the form of play or engaging the children in activities. The dire economic conditions of many of these families contribute to the stress and marital disruption the majority of participants encountered. As a whole, participants experienced similar circumstances in regards to the parenting roles of their fathers and parenting roles of their
partners, including the unstable partnerships over time, the inability of the men to meet the women’s fathering expectations, and inability to fulfill the provider role.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to explore childhood and young adult experiences of fatherhood among Appalachian women. In this study, the expectations and experiences of fatherhood among Appalachian, low-income women varied. Whether they highlighted situations that were positive or negative, the experiences of the women played a role in their expectations and feelings of satisfaction with the fathers of their children. Understanding how limited economic resources influence the expectations and experiences of fathers in general, and the specific ways in which fatherhood is viewed and experienced within families from the perspective of daughters were also examined. Attention was paid to understanding the change and stability of fathering roles in Appalachian, low-income families over time.

Study Findings

Participants’ Experiences With Their Fathers Over Time

A common theme throughout the majority of interviews was that participants experienced multiple father figures during childhood. Typically these men were largely poor, worked in low-wage occupations, had low education levels, and received some form of government assistance. When faced with poverty conditions, such as the families in this study, marital tension occurred. With the number of parents who were divorced or separated in this sample, the majority of marital relationships were unstable at best, similar to findings presented by other scholars (DeFrain et al., 1991; Duncan et al., 1998; Simons et al., 1994). Participants reported mostly positive current relationships with their biological fathers and/or father figures. Many fathers or stepfathers provided instrumental
support due to the participant’s low-income situation. This support enhanced the positive relationships between fathers/father figures and daughters. Following traditional expectations, with fathers currently providing support to daughters, participants felt their fathers were providing for them and expressing care through the exchange of support.

Participants’ Experiences With Their Partners Over Time

Similar to participant’s experiences with father figures, most women had more than the one traditional husband and biological father to her children. In turn, many children were managing relationships with non-resident fathers to their children. The majority of the children whose mothers participated in the two waves of interviews were not living with their biological father and mother in a traditional model. Again following the pattern of the biological father and/or father figures of the participants, most partners had low education levels, worked low paying jobs and the families received some form of government assistance. Similarities between the participants’ fathers and partners included having little education, being underemployed, and receiving a form of assistance. Relationship quality reported between the participants and their current partners varied. The participants in this study generally reported their relationships with partners were traditional, with expectations for traditional roles. Most stated that their partners would rather they stay home and not be employed outside of the home, following the traditional roles many low-income families practice with the husband as the primary breadwinner (Coleman et al., 1989; DeFrain et al., 1991; The Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996; Tickamyer & Tickamyer, 1987).
The relationships that participants had with their partners often were strained due to the stressful economic situation their families were facing. When partners were unable to provide for the family, participants’ frustration and resentment were evident. Women searched for a man to successfully provide for her and her children. Being able to find a man who could effectively provide not only for the basic needs of the children, but also for items the children wanted such as toys or birthday gifts, was emphasized and described by participants in a negative light. Most participants’ partners did not want them working outside of the home; however, in some cases it was necessary for the survival of the family. Breaking the mold of the traditional values typically held by Appalachian, low-income families, participants were forced to work outside the home to provide for their children in the way they thought was necessary. Compounding their partner’s inability to provide for the family and the participant taking on jobs outside the home for economic survival, participants were more than willing to express their dissatisfaction with their partner’s ability to provide for the family.

Most participants reported positive relationships with the resident fathers of their children, while the majority of participants reported negative or no relationships with the non-resident fathers of their children. With the majority of participants being involved in their second or third significant relationship, women were balancing the relationships between their new partner and her children as well as the non-resident father and her children. Participants held high expectations of their partners and fathers of their children in regards to parenting. Fathers were expected to perform the typical provider role, as highlighted in literature, as well as perform an equal co-parenting role in regards to
childrearing and household responsibilities. They wanted their partners to do it all, provide for the family, assume half of all child rearing responsibilities, and split household responsibilities. According to participants, their partners were failing in two important categories—breadwinning and parenting. Participants also appeared to have conflicted feelings about what they wanted from their partners, expecting them to be both breadwinner and an equal co-parent. Participant’s inability to let go of their own responsibilities and child care activities to give fathers more responsibility in raising the children and completing household tasks may have contributed to their lack of participation in these tasks.

Fathers, Partners, and Gender Expectations:
Rural, Low-Income Women’s Experiences with Men across the Life Course

Men’s Roles as Providers

Over time, the majority of participants in this study experienced a male figure who was unable to meet gender role expectations as the provider for the family. Because Appalachian families typically follow traditional gender roles, with the husband as breadwinner (Coleman et al., 1989; DeFrain et al., 1991; The Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996; Tickamyer & Tickamyer, 1987), most fathers did not measure up to typical fatherhood expectations. The majority of biological fathers and/or fathers figures worked, as did most of the participant’s partners, but many were employed in occupations that only offered seasonal/temporary work, part-time work, low-paying jobs, or jobs with unreliable hours. The inability to provide adequate income for their families was a major obstacle for both the fathers of the participants and their
partners. Most participants discussed the stress their current financial situation had on their partnerships, much like the stress they described when discussing their parent’s relationships and the lack of financial security in their childhood homes. When asked about the relationship quality experienced between themselves and their partners, several participants responses centered on the impact their economic status had on their relationships and used economic means of measuring relationship quality first and foremost in their descriptions. Other responses included those which focused on the improvement of family life if the partner could become a more effective breadwinner.

**Men as Fathers**

Participants in the sample experienced the absence of their biological father during childhood, similar to their children currently. Most participants followed the example of their parents, in that they too experienced divorce and separation, introduced to men brought into their lives that were not biologically connected. The majority of these men, both father figures and partners, followed the traditional gender roles that men do not equally co-parent children. The current sample supports the idea that fathers do not assume as much responsibility for child care or activities with the children when compared with mothers (Amato, 1994; Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Coltrane & Parke, 1998; Coontz, 1997; McBride et al., 2002; Paquette et al., 2004; Yeung et al., 2000; Yeung et al., 2001). Typically, participants assumed the primary responsibility for child care and other household and family responsibilities. While some fathers, typically resident biological fathers, engaged in physical care activities, the majority were described as
taking on a helping role to child rearing. This was apparent in the activities described by participants regarding their own fathers and father figures as well.

The majority of participants who experienced a non-resident father in their own life, as well as the children of the participants who were experiencing non-resident fathers at the time of the interviews had little to no contact with their biological fathers. For nonresident parents, daily exposure to the children is missing, which in turn causes the parenting role to lose some of its significance (Nelson, 2004). The current sample supports these findings as many participants did not feel the men wanted to be involved in the lives of their children and was a source of frustration for them.

Economic Pressures and Family Relationships

The unstable, chaotic examples of marriage learned during childhood were repeated by the majority of participants in this study in adulthood. Participants’ experiences with their own fathers and the experiences they were currently having with the fathers of their children were similar in several ways. Most of the men were failing in the traditional gender role of breadwinner for the family and they contributed little to caring for the children, mostly engaging in activities of play or in a helper role to the mother. The children of the participants in this sample remained the constant force in the women’s lives, as was the case with the majority of participants’ mothers. The repeated life course pattern for most women in this study was that men, in the form of father figures or as partners, were unable to meet their expectations as a father figures and provider. Women continued to seek out suitable partners to meet their expectations. However, for many women, the expectations they had for men were not clear. Most
women discussed the importance of the traditional male breadwinner, while also expressing a desire to have a partner who was more of an equal co-parent.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

In order to better understand the fatherhood experience for the participants and the participants’ children, input from their biological fathers and/or father figures as well as the fathers of their children would offer much more insight into these relationships. To supplement the information gained from the participants, revisiting the participants to ask for further clarification or elaboration on interview questions, as well as gathering information from other family members, specifically the fathers/father figures and partners would enhance future studies on this topic.

Additionally, researchers hoping to gain insight into the topic of fatherhood, particularly fatherhood experiences in low-income, rural families might benefit from the information gained in this study. Fatherhood remains largely under researched in comparison to motherhood and other family relationships, particularly in rural regions. In addition to researchers, human service agencies and those in education may benefit from the information gained throughout this study.

From a personal perspective, having grown up in the Appalachian area and having my own personal experiences of fatherhood to draw from, I brought my own perspective into the research process. With such a personal topic as a relationship with a father, I found it difficult at times to remove my own experiences and opinions from the process. I often found myself comparing my own fatherhood experience with the participants in the interviews, particularly those who experienced a divorce during childhood or as an adult.
When beginning this process, I found it difficult to focus on only certain topics to cover my research questions, because the information provided by the participants was so complex and unique. I found myself wanting to share their experiences and stories with other people, so others could have the privilege of becoming part of the participants’ lives through reading their interviews. The stories told by many of the participants read like intricate novels of hardships and triumphs. I was amazed at the resilience and determination of the majority of these women to continue on in the face of economic crisis and instability and the level of concern they held for their children.

Limitations

The current study has several limitations. The interviews used for this study were not conducted by the primary investigator, but rather by a large team of interviewers who participated in a national research effort (Rural Families Speak) that involved multiple locations and interdisciplinary research interests. Analyzing interviews that were not conducted by the primary investigator, resulting in secondary data analysis, proved difficult in several instances. Several times throughout the interview, there were questions where asking for more participant elaboration would have proved beneficial to the data and subsequent analysis used for this study. Since the RFS project was collecting data across multiple topics, when answers were given regarding experiences with fatherhood as a child or issues with current partners, participants were not asked to elaborate or explain further. Additionally, completing secondary data analysis prohibited me from meeting participants or their families in person, as well as experiencing the interview process with them which would have included seeing their homes or places of
residence. Case notes at the end of several interviews helped me to better understand the circumstances under which the interviews took place, but these notes were not present on the majority of interviews. Being able to see their faces, reactions and nonverbal cues to questions would have increased my understanding of their family experiences.

Participants also represent a convenience sample, recruited through agencies that serve low-income families such as Head Start; Women, Infants and Children; and other various social service offices. Therefore, results will not be generalizable. Because of the variability across states and interviewers, there may have been factors during interviews which influenced the willingness of each participant to respond honestly to various questions. For instance, as a result of the interview setting, the presence of children, partners, or other family members, in some cases, may have influenced the participants’ answers. Finally, the current study focuses on fatherhood and the experiences of fatherhood from the perspective of a daughter and mother. By only analyzing data from this viewpoint, fathers’ voices are absent and their perspectives are missing from the analysis.

Despite limitations, the current study highlighted the experiences and expectations of fatherhood among rural, low-income Appalachian women. More research regarding rural, low-income fatherhood is needed, especially given the current economic climate and the increasing number of families who will be experiencing economic hardships. The complexity of relationships between the participants and their biological fathers and/or father figures, as well the relationships with their partners were clearly apparent. Participants appeared to care for their children and were attempting to do the best for
their families while poverty and economic hardships worked against them. Challenges to provide a secure family environment for themselves and their children exerted pressure on their expectations and experiences of fathers both during childhood and in their current families. The personal experiences of fatherhood shaped the way participants viewed their partners and their own children. The impact the fatherhood experience made on the participants was evident in their relationships with family members, their partners, and their children.

From a personal perspective, completing this study proved to be beneficial in several ways. First, the information gained through the interviews as well as the scholarly research conducted regarding low-income, rural families and fatherhood has proven to be beneficial to my professional career. Reading about the experiences of the families, paired with the knowledge from the research has been useful in working with low-income, rural, Appalachian families, often during times of crisis and chaos within the family. Analyzing the situations the families faced and how they handled the various situations have often come to mind while working with families in my professional role. On a personal note, having experienced a non-resident father, a stepfather and two related father figures in the form of grandfathers, becoming more knowledgeable about fatherhood and the roles of fathers has proven extremely beneficial in my personal life. The information gained through researching non-resident fathers led me to a better understanding of many of the experiences I had growing up with my own non-resident father. I have been able to share this information with other family members as well.
In conclusion, participants included in this study had a wide array of experiences with fatherhood, both personally growing up and currently with the fathers of their own children. The chaotic conditions under which many participants were raised, as well as the context in which they were raising their own children, were due to the unstable economic situations the majority of the families experienced. Unstable relationships between their parents and between themselves and their own partners contributed to chaotic relationships and many changes in relationship status for their parents and themselves. Overall, the participants in this study appeared unsure of what role they expected their partner to meet, as they described both the importance of being the traditional, primary breadwinner, as well as their desire to an equal co-parent.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL-WAVE ONE

Interviewer: _______________         ID:  ___________________

Date: ___________________

PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

YEAR 1

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important research on family life. As you probably know, we are part of a big study that is looking at how families living in rural parts of the country are managing on a limited income. We are talking to families living in small towns and rural areas all over the United States. Not all of the families we will talk to are currently receiving welfare. In fact, we will talk to some families who have never received cash assistance from the government, but nevertheless have trouble making ends meet each month. There are no “right” answers to any of our questions; we just want to hear what life is like for you and your family. Remember, this interview is voluntary. If you don’t want to answer a question, you don’t have to. All information you give us will be kept confidential. (Do not proceed unless you have a completed informed consent document.)

Let’s begin by talking about who lives in your household. Besides you, who lives in your house?

CURRENT HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child (First Name)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>DOB</th>
<th>Relation to A ***</th>
<th>Relation to B ***</th>
<th>Contact w/ bio parent (Y, N)</th>
<th>Receives child support (Y,N)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ____________________  ________  ________  ___________  __________   _______</td>
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<td>2. ____________________  ________  ________  ___________  __________   _______</td>
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<td>3. ____________________  ________  ________  ___________  __________   _______</td>
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<td>4. ____________________  ________  ________  ___________  __________   _______</td>
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<td>5. ____________________  ________  ________  ___________  __________   _______</td>
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<td>6. ____________________  ________  ________  ___________  __________   _______</td>
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</table>
Do you have any children not currently living with you? (If yes) Who are they, and where are they living?

Other Household Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to A</th>
<th>Length of Time in Household</th>
<th>Permanent or Temporary Arrangement</th>
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Interviewer Notes:_______________________________________________________________

LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Tell me about how this neighborhood/area is as a place to live. Does this neighborhood/area have everything that you and your family need? If not, what sorts of things are missing? (Probe if necessary: Do you have easy access to a grocery store; a mini-mart or convenience store; other household shopping; medical care; a gas station; church; school; child care; a library?)

2. Families may need to know how to find many different services available in the community. The services needed are different for each family. I have a list of resources that are often available in communities. I’d like to know about the kinds of community services you know about. Shall I read the list to you, or would you like to fill this out yourself? *(Administer: Knowledge of Community Resources Measure)*
TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTE: IF THE INTERVIEWEE ASKS YOU TO READ THE MEASURE, ASSUME THAT ALL FURTHER SURVEY MEASURES SHOULD BE READ ALOUD.

3. What’s the best thing about living where you do? The worst?

4. Is your housing adequate for you and your family’s needs? Why or why not? (Probe: size, quality, price, landlord.)

5. Have you moved in the past two years? If so, why? How does this place compare with where you lived before? (If not addressed) How has your family responded to these changes? How do you feel about this?

6. (Optional, ask if not addressed in #5) In the last two years was there ever a time when you and your family were homeless? For how long were you homeless? What did you do? How did you get housing again?

EMPLOYMENT/CURRENT WORK

1. Let’s talk about your employment situation. Are you currently working? (If not employed, skip to Question #2) What do you do? How much are you paid? When did you start working there? How many hours do you generally work each week? How many weeks do you work during the year? Have you ever had a raise? When? How much? (List only current employment; space provided for up to three jobs)

Participant’s Current Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Wage/Salary</th>
<th>Date Started</th>
<th>Hours/week</th>
<th>Weeks/Year</th>
<th>Amount Raise</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>

2. (Ask only if not currently employed) Are you looking for a job now? (If yes) How are you going about it? Have you ever worked for pay? (If answer is no, ask the appropriate questions in this section, but skip work history section)
3. What about your partner? What does your partner do? How much is your partner paid? When did your partner start working there? How many hours does your partner generally work each week? How many weeks does your partner work during the year? Has your partner ever had a raise? When? How much?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job 1</th>
<th>Wage/Salary</th>
<th>Date Started</th>
<th>Hours/week</th>
<th>Weeks/Year</th>
<th>Amount Raise</th>
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<td>Job 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job 3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Is there anyone else in the household who has a job? (If yes) Tell me about that.

5. (Ask if currently employed) What problems, if any, do you currently face at work?

6. (Ask if currently employed) Do you get any benefits from your job(s)? How about your partner? What about health insurance…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Provided by Mother’s Job(s)</th>
<th>Provided by Partner’s Job(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health insurance for self</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health insurance for children</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick leave</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation pay</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement plan</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
<td>Y Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. What would be your ideal job for supporting your family? What would help you to get that kind of job?

8. In the last several years welfare regulations have changed. There is now more of an emphasis on getting a job, and there are now time limits (talk about specific state programs, if appropriate). What do you think about these changes? Has your family been affected by them?
WORK HISTORY

1. We also want to know about the kinds of work that people have done in the past. Tell me about your work history. How old were you when you got your first job?

2. About how many jobs do you think you’ve had since then? Have you been more likely to work full-time or part-time? Why?

3. What kinds of jobs have you had? What were some of the reasons you left these jobs?

4. Tell me about the job that you held the longest, not counting your current job. When did you have this job? What did you do? What did you like about it? Why did you leave?

TRANSPORTATION AND CHILDCARE

1. What about transportation? How do you usually get around? (If not addressed: Do you own a car or have one you can borrow? How do you and your partner get to and from work?)

   a. (If the family has no car) How do you get your groceries, take your children to the doctors, run errands?
   b. (If the family has a car) How reliable is your car? When was the last time your car broke down? What happened?

2. What do you do when you really need transportation and it’s not available to you?

3. When you are working (or participating in a job training program or the state’s welfare-to-work activities) who takes care of your children? Tell me how you get them there, and about how long they stay every day. Is it different if you have to work evenings or weekends?

4. (If appropriate) What about your older children? What do they do after school? What about school holidays and summers?

5. How many childcare arrangements do you have each week/month? Overall, how much do you pay for childcare each month?

6. How do you like your childcare provider? Why do you feel this way? Have you ever changed providers? Why?
7. Is there ever a time when you need someone to take care of your children outside your time at work? Who does that? How does it go?

8. Tell me about a situation when you needed emergency childcare. What did you do? Have you ever had to miss work or a training program because of a childcare problem? How did your supervisor react?

9. What do you do for childcare if your child gets sick? What happens if your provider is sick?

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**FAMILY OF ORIGIN CHARACTERISTICS**

1. Tell me a little bit about your background. What was your family like when you were growing up? Who was in your family? Where did you live? What do you remember about your childhood?

2. Did your parents work? What kind of work did they do?

3. How much education did your mother have? _____ Your father? _____

   1 = 8th grade or less  
   2 = some high school  
   3 = high school or GED  
   4 = specialized technical, business or vocational training after high school  
   5 = some college, including Associate’s Degree  
   6 = college or university graduate  
   7 = one or more years beyond college  
   8 = graduate degree  
   9 = don’t know

4. Do you know if your family ever received welfare or other assistance? Y Yes Y No Y Don’t Know

5. How often did your family move when you were a child? Why did you move?

6. **(Optional)** How much contact do you have with your family now? Who are you in contact with? Where do they live? What is your relationship like now?
FAMILY WELL-BEING

1. Tell me about a typical day (a working day, if appropriate). What time do you get up? When do your children get up? Then, what happens next? And then…? (The goal here is to get through a typical weekday for the family.)

2. What sorts of things do you do for fun with your family? How often do you get to do them?

3. Overall, how would you say things are going for your family right now? (If not addressed) How are things going for you personally? (If appropriate) How are things going between you and your partner?

4. Here is a checklist that asks about how things have been in the last week. (Administer: Feelings About How Things Are Going)

5. Parents need lots of skills to help their families get by. Everyone has certain skills and abilities, but it’s usually not possible for someone to have every single skill needed. We’d like to know what sorts of skills you have. (Administer: Life Skills Assessment)

6. Family members often have health problems. Sometimes these problems don’t have much of an impact on day-to-day life, while at other times they can be a big problem. We’d like to know about any health problems the members of your family might have. (Administer: Adult Health Survey; Administer: Child Health Survey; use more than one if needed to get info about all children)

7. (If there are other people living in the household) Do any of the other people in your household have any health problems? (If yes) What kinds of health problems?

8. (If applicable) Do any of these health problems affect everyday life in your family? If so, how?

9. What things about your family make you proud and happy right now? What are the biggest challenges for your family as a whole?

EDUCATION AND INCOME

1. What is your current educational level? _____ (use scale below)

   1= 8\textsuperscript{th} grade or less
2 = some high school
3 = high school or GED
4 = specialized technical, business or vocational training after high school
5 = some college, including Associate’s Degree
6 = college or university graduate
7 = one or more years beyond college
8 = graduate degree
9 = don’t know

2. How much education did you have when you first became a parent? ____ (use scale)

3. **(If no high school diploma)** Why did you leave high school before finishing?

4. **(If appropriate)** What about your spouse/partner-how much education does he have? ____ (scale)

5. In the last few years have you had the opportunity to get further education or develop new job skills? What kind? How were you able to do this?

6. We’d like to know a bit about your family’s sources of income. Remember, all of this information is completely confidential. From which of the following sources do you receive income?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Income</th>
<th>Take Home Pay</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Bi-Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages and salaries (self)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages and salaries (partner)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips, commissions, overtime</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Retirement/Pensions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSI (Supplemental Security Income)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>TANF</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment Compensation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worker’s Disability Compensation</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Veterans’ Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child or spousal support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s wages</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stamps</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular gifts from family/friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Housing is usually the largest expense for families. Tell me about how much you pay per month and what utilities, if any, are included. Is this a rental or do you own? What
utilities do you pay each month? How much? What happens if you can’t pay for utilities?

8. Families sometimes receive assistance from a variety of government or private programs. Do you receive assistance from any of the following? *(Try and record cash value if possible)*

- Y WIC
- Y School Lunch Program
- Y EIC (Earned Income Credit)
- Y Child Care Assistance
- Y Housing Assistance
- Y Energy/Fuel Assistance
- Y Transportation Assistance
- Y Diversionary Assistance (only some states)
- Y Educational Grants or Loans
- Y Medicaid
- Y Other

9. Is there any other assistance you’re getting, such as help with healthcare, food, meals, clothing, holiday gifts, furniture, baby goods, day care, or school supplies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Help</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Type of Help</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>____________</td>
<td>______</td>
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<td>____________</td>
<td>______</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

10. Compared to two years ago, would you say your family’s economic situation has:

- 5 = Improved a lot
- 4 = Improved a little
- 3 = Remained the same
- 2 = Gone down a little
- 1 = Gone down a lot

11. *(Optional)* To what extent do you think your income is enough for you to live on?

- 1 = Not at all adequate
- 2 = Can meet necessities only
- 3 = Can afford some of the things we want but not all we want
- 4 = Can afford about everything we want
- 5 = Can afford about everything we want and still save money

12. In past year, has there been a time when you had a hard time making ends meet or paying for necessities? What did you have trouble paying for? Food? Clothing? Healthcare? Credit payments? Personal care or non-food items? *(If appropriate)* Diapers? What did you do?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Care</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Care</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicines</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Payments</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care Items</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diapers</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Fees or Expenses</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Have you or members of your household ever gone hungry or been close to going hungry? Please describe the situation as fully as you can. What led to it? How did you deal with it?

14. What do you need most to prevent this situation from happening? *(Administer Food Security Module)*

15. When you’ve gone for help from an agency, how were you treated? *(Probe for specific agencies.)*

16. In the past year, have you sold or pawned anything you owned?

---

**PARENTING**

1. Let’s talk about being a parent. What do you enjoy most about being a parent? What are your strengths as a parent? What is the hardest part of being a parent?

2. *(If appropriate)* How does your partner help you with parenting?

   *(Optional)* Here’s another checklist that asks you to describe how you feel about yourself as a parent. *(Administer: Parent Ladder)* Why do you feel that way? Why do you feel that way?
SOCIAL SUPPORT

1. Who are the people who are most important to you and your family? By this, we mean friends or relatives who are important to you for one reason or another. **For each person ask:** Who is this person? Why are they important to you? (If appropriate) How did you meet them? How often are you in contact with them? Is there anyone else?

2. Is there anyone who makes things harder for your family? How so? Tell me about that.

3. Do you ever get to go out with your friends? Have you been able to find the time for any outside activities? What sorts of things do you do?

SUMMARY

1. When you look back over the past few years, what do you think are the most important things that have happened to you and your family?

2. Looking ahead into the future, what are you most looking forward to in the coming year? What do you most worry about? What do you think things will be like for your family in three years?

3. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life right now? **(Use scale below)** Why do you feel that way?

   1 = very dissatisfied
   2 = dissatisfied
   3 = mixed feelings
   4 = satisfied
   5 = very satisfied

4. Is there anything else that you think we should know about how your family is doing right now? Is there anything we’ve missed?
As you know, we would like to visit with you again in a few months to see how your family is doing. To make it easier to contact you in case you move and forget to tell us, will you share the name and phone numbers of three people who will always know where you are? Please be sure to tell them that we may contact them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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</table>

Thank you so much for your time.

NOTES
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL-WAVE TWO/THREE

Interviewer ___________________  ID: ___________________  Date: ____________
W1 Date__________  W2 Date__________

I want to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed again this year. Just like before, we are interested in hearing what life is like for you and your family. I want to remind you that the interview is voluntary. If you do not want to answer a question, you don’t have to. All information that you give us will be kept confidential.

Before we begin, I want to make clear that the time period we want to gather information about is between the date of our last interview, _________ {give date of wave 2 interview}, and today. I will keep reminding us both of this as I ask you the questions.

[DO NOT PROCEED UNLESS PARTICIPANT HAS SIGNED THE INFORMED CONSENT FORM.]

CURRENT HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Mother’s 1st Name_______________________

We’d like to catch up on any changes in your life and in your family since our last interview on ______ .

1. Last time, you said that [GIVE NAMES] __________________ were living in your household.

Have there been any changes since our last interview?

☐ No → [GO TO QUESTION #2]

☐ Yes →
  1A) What has changed?
  [FILL OUT CHART BELOW FOR NEW CHILD/PARTNER]
  1B) [IF CHILD MOVED OUT]  When?  Why?  Where is child living now?
  1C) [IF PARTNER MOVED OUT]  When?  Why?
  1D) [IF NEW PARTNER MOVED IN]  How long has your new partner lived here?
  1E) Any other changes?  Are there any other new members of your household?

Notes from previous interview
Partner/Spouse:

Child(ren):

______________________
______________________
______________________
______________________
______________________
______________________
2. Last year you told us you were ___________________.  {married, separated, divorced, single, living with ________________}. Has that changed?

☐ Yes  □ No

2A) What has changed? ______________ (see chart on previous page for appropriate code)

FAMILY WELL-BEING

1. What is the most important thing that happened to your family since our last interview? Did something good happen to your family? Did something not so good happen to your family?

2. How are things going for your family right now? Tell me about that.

3. [IF HAS PARTNER] How are things between you and your partner? Tell me about that.

3a. Tell me about your kids. Last year we didn’t get much of a chance to talk about them [IF APPLICABLE, Where do they go to school? What grades are they in?] What do they like to do? What are their friends like?
4. Relationships with family members can change over time; get better, get worse, or just be different. Since our last interview, what changes have there been in your relationships with your parents, brothers and sisters, or other relatives?

5. What important events have your parents, brothers and sisters, or other relatives experienced in the last year, or what family news should we know about? [PROBE: births, deaths, marriages, illnesses, moves, misfortunes, etc.]

6. What sorts of things do you do for fun? [PROBE: Do you have any hobbies?]

7. What things about your family make you proud and happy right now?

8. What are the biggest challenges for your family as a whole?

9. Is anyone making it harder for your family right now?

10. Have you made any new friends? Have you been able to get together to do things with your friends? Have you lost contact with any friends? (questions cover the past year)

**SOCIAL SUPPORT**

1. How often during the last month did friends give you practical help?
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

2. [IF APPROPRIATE] What types of things have friends done for you and your family?

3. How often during the last month did relatives (excluding partner) give you practical help?
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Rarely
   - Never

4. [IF APPROPRIATE] What types of things have relatives done for you and your family?

5. How many people (excluding partner) could you call on for help if you were having trouble?
   - No one
   - 1 or 2 people
   - 3-5 people
   - 6-9 people
   - 10 or more

**LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY**

1. Why do you choose to live in this area? What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?
2. Have you moved since our last interview?
   □ No → [GO TO QUESTION #9]
   □ Yes → 1A) How many different places have you lived?

3. (FOR EACH MOVE) Why did you move?

4. How has/have your move(s) affected your family?

5. Is your current home now adequate for your needs?
   □ No → 4A) What makes your current home
   □ Yes

6. Do you have easy access to:
   - Grocery store
     □ Yes □ No
   - Medical care
     □ Yes □ No
   - School
     □ Yes □ No

7. Are there any services you need, but can’t get to?

8. [IF LIVING IN A DIFFERENT COMMUNITY FROM PREVIOUS INTERVIEW]
   There are many community services that families need to know how to access, and what
   each family needs may be very different. I would like to know about the kinds of
   community services you know about.

   [ADMINISTER KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES MEASURE]

9. Were you without your own home (homeless) at any point since our last interview?
   □ Yes → 9A) What happened?
           9B) Where did you live, and with whom?
           9C) How long were you homeless?
           9D) Have you found housing again? [If YES] How?
   □ No

10. Can you tell me about any housing problems that you have experienced since our last interview? (IF
      NEEDED, PROBE WITH FOLLOWING) Leaky plumbing, Faulty electrical system, Exposed wires,
      Broken heating system, Pests (such as mice, rats, fleas, or cockroaches), Leaky roof or ceiling, No hot
      water, Stove or refrigerator that would not work, Environmental problems (such as asbestos, lead paint,
      radon, or mold, broken stairs, doors, etc.?)

   [IF APPLICABLE] Please think back to the worst problem you’ve experienced. Was it fixed?
   □ Yes → 10A) How long did the problem last?
           10B) Who paid for it to be fixed?
           10C) Was your family affected by the cost of the repair? How?
   □ No

11. [IF THEY ARE LIVING IN THE SAME PLACE] Has anything changed in your neighborhood
    since our last interview? Can you tell me about that?
[FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS]

12. Do you feel safe where you live?  
   Yes □  No □  Why or why not?

13. Do you feel that your children are safe?  (PROBE to fill in chart)

   | In your home | Yes □  No □ |
   | In the neighborhood | Yes □  No □ |
   | At their school | Yes □  No □ |

   [FOR ALL “NO” RESPONSES]  
   Why not?

TRANSPORTATION

1. [IF FAMILY OWNED VEHICLE AT LAST INTERVIEW BEGIN HERE]  
   At our last interview, you said … (reliable/unreliable vehicle?)
   Has that changed?

2. Since our last interview, have you had any problems with your vehicle(s)?
   □ Yes →  
   2A) Tell me about what happened.  
   What did you do?
   2B) Do you still own a vehicle?  
      □ Yes → [GO TO QUESTION #5]  
      □ No → [GO TO QUESTION #4]

   □ No →  
   2C) [GO TO QUESTION #5]

   Transportation notes from previous interviews:

3. [IF NO VEHICLE AT LAST INTERVIEW BEGIN HERE]  
   Last time we talked you said…
   Since our last interview, have you gotten a vehicle?

   □ No →  
   3A) Do you still depend on …?  
   [GO TO QUESTION #4]

   □ Yes →  
   3B) [GO TO QUESTION #5]

4. [IF FAMILY DOES NOT CURRENTLY OWN CAR] How does your family’s not owning a car  
   affect how you get to appointments (medical, welfare, etc.), work or training programs? [GO TO  
   QUESTION #6]

5. [IF FAMILY CURRENTLY OWNS CAR] If your car breaks down or is not available to you, how do  
   you get to work, appointments, and the grocery store, etc.?

6. How long does it take you … [Ask also for partner, IF APPROPRIATE]
   a. … to get to work?
   b. … to get to medical appointments?
   c. … to get to welfare appointments?
6a. How do you get there?

7. Have you ever had to miss work or a training program because of a transportation problem?

- Yes → 7A) How did your supervisor react?
- No

7a. Have gas prices affected how you get around?

**EMPLOYMENT/CURRENT WORK**

**A. PARTICIPANT’S EMPLOYMENT/CURRENT WORK**

1. Since our last interview, have you gotten any further education or training?

- Yes → 1A) Tell me about that. What kind was it and where did you do it?  
- No  

1B) How did you pay for it?

[IF RESPONDENT WAS WORKING AT WAVE 2, BEGIN HERE]  
[IF RESPONDENT WAS NOT WORKING AT WAVE 2, GO TO QUESTION #7]

---

Participant employment information from wave 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

1. Participant employment information from wave 2:

participant employment information from wave 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wage/Salary</th>
<th>Started</th>
<th>Hours/wk</th>
<th>Weeks/yr</th>
<th>of Raise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Job 1        |          |          |          |          |
| Health insurance for yourself | Yes | No | DK | Yes | No | DK |
| Health insurance for children | Yes | No | DK | Yes | No | DK |
| Sick leave   | Yes | No | DK | Sick leave | Yes | No | DK |
| Vacation     | Yes | No | DK | Vacation | Yes | No | DK |
| Overtime plan| Yes | No | DK | Overtime plan | Yes | No | DK |

| Job 2        |          |          |          |          |

3. How is your job/work going for you? Has anything changed about your job? Such as:

- Different responsibilities Yes ☐ No ☐
- Different hours Yes ☐ No ☐

Have you had a raise, promotion, or received new benefits?

- No  

3B) Has the raise, promotion, or new benefits changed your family life in any way? (such as new hours or longer hours)
4. Do you have any additional jobs?
   - **Yes** →
     - 4A) Why did you get an additional job?
     - 4B) Tell me about your other job(s).
     - 4C) [FILL OUT JOB 2 ON CHART BELOW [Question #8]]
     - 4D) [GO TO B. Partner’s Employment/Current Work]
   - **No** →
     - 4E) [GO TO B. Partner’s Employment/Current Work]

5. What happened with that job?  **(PROBE: Why did you leave that job?)**

6. Are you currently working?
   - **Yes** → [FILL OUT CHART BELOW [Question #8]]
   - **No** →
     - 6A) Have you looked for work?
       - □ Yes→ How has that gone?
         - Have you held any other jobs since our last interview?
         - Tell me about that/them. **Why did you leave that/those job(s)?**
         - [GO TO B. Partner’s Employment/Current Work]
       - □ No→ For what reasons are you not looking for work?
         - Have you held any other jobs since our last interview?
         - Tell me about that/them. **Why did you leave that/those job(s)?**
         - [GO TO B. Partner’s Employment/Current Work]

**[IF RESPONDENT WAS NOT WORKING LAST YEAR, BEGIN HERE]**

7. At our last interview, you said you were not working.  Are you working now?
   - **Yes** → [FILL OUT CHART BELOW [Question #8]]
   - **No** →
     - 7A) Have you looked for work?
       - □ Yes→ How has that gone?
         - Have you held any jobs since our last interview?
         - Tell me about that/them. **Why did you leave the other job(s)?**
         - [GO TO B. Partner’s Employment/Current Work]
       - □ No→ For what reasons are you not looking for work?
         - Have you held any jobs since our last interview?
         - Tell me about that/them. **Why did you leave the other job(s)?**
         - [GO TO B. Partner’s Employment/Current Work]

7.  **[IF YES, PARTICIPANT IS WORKING AT A NEW JOB]**  Tell me about the job(s) you have now. How did you find this job? Did you know somebody who already worked there?  **(PROBE to fill in chart: Where are you working now? What is it that you do? Are you working full-time or part-time?)**
8. [IF WORKING AT WAVE 1 OR 2] How does this job compare to your old job? Why do you say that? Has the new job made any difference in your family life? (PROBE: wages, hours, etc.)

B. PARTNER’S EMPLOYMENT/CURRENT WORK

[IF RESPONDENT HAS SAME PARTNER WHO WAS WORKING AT WAVE 2, BEGIN HERE]

[IF RESPONDENT HAS SAME PARTNER WHO WAS NOT WORKING AT WAVE 2, GO TO QUESTION #6]

[IF NEW PARTNER, GO TO QUESTION #9]

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant employment</th>
<th>Wage/Salary</th>
<th>Date Started</th>
<th>Hours/wk</th>
<th>Weeks/yr</th>
<th>Amount Raise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job 2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(PROBE to fill in chart: Do you get any benefits with this new job(s)?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOB 1</th>
<th>JOB 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health insurance for him/herself</td>
<td>Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health insurance for children</td>
<td>Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick leave</td>
<td>Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacation</td>
<td>Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td>Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement plan</td>
<td>Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant employment</th>
<th>Wage/Salary</th>
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<th>Weeks/yr</th>
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<td>Job 2</td>
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Partner employment information from wave 2:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job 1</th>
<th>Wage/Salary</th>
<th>Date Started</th>
<th>Hours/wk</th>
<th>Weeks/yr</th>
<th>Amount Raise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Job 2 |             |              |          |          |              |

(PROBE to fill in chart: Do you get any benefits with this new job(s)?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOB 1</th>
<th>JOB 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health insurance for him/herself</td>
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<td>Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement plan</td>
<td>Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

1. Last time we talked, you said _________________ was working at ________________.
   Is he/she still working there?

□ No ➔ [GO TO QUESTION #4]

□ Yes
2. Has anything changed about his/her job? Such as….
   Different responsibilities: Yes □ No □
   Different hours: Yes □ No □
   Has he/she had a raise, promotion, or received new benefits?
   □ No → 2B) Has the promotion, raise, or new benefits changed your family life in any way (such as new hours or longer hours)?

3. Does he/she have any additional jobs?
   □ Yes → 3A) Why did he/she get an additional job?
   □ No → 3B) Tell me about his/her other job(s).
   3C) [FILL OUT JOB 2 ON CHART BELOW [Question #7]]
   3D) [GO TO C. Other Employment]
   □ No → 3E) [GO TO C. Other Employment]

4. Can you share with me what happened and why he/she is not working at the same job? (PROBE: Why did he/she leave the other job?)

5. Is he/she currently working?
   □ Yes → [FILL OUT CHART BELOW [Question #7]]
   □ No → 5A) Has he/she looked for work?
   □ Yes → How has that gone?
   □ No → For what reasons is he/she not looking for work?

   [IF RESPONDENT HAS SAME PARTNER WHO WAS NOT WORKING AT WAVE 2, BEGIN HERE]

6. At the last interview you said _________________ was not working. Is he/she working now?
   □ Yes → [FILL OUT CHART BELOW [Question #7]]
   □ No → 6A) Has he/she looked for work?
   □ Yes → How has that gone?
   □ No → For what reasons has he/she chosen not to look for work?
7. **[IF YES, SAME PARTNER WORKING AT A NEW JOB]** Tell me about his/her job(s).

(PROBE: How did he/she find out about the job? Did he/she know someone already working there? Where is he/she working now? What is it that he/she does? Is he/she working full-time or part-time?)

(PROBE to fill in chart.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner employment</th>
<th>Wage/Salary</th>
<th>Date Started</th>
<th>Hours/wk</th>
<th>Weeks/yr</th>
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(PROBE to fill in chart: Does he/she get any benefits with this new job(s)?)

**JOB 2 information**

- Health insurance for him/herself: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Health insurance for children: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Sick leave: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Vacation: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Overtime: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Retirement plan: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐

[IF RESPONDENT HAS A NEW PARTNER, BEGIN HERE]

9. Is your partner employed?

☐ Yes ➔ **[FILL OUT CHART ON NEXT PAGE] [Question #10]**

☐ No ➔

9A) Has he/she looked for work?

☐ Yes ➔ How has that gone?

- Has he/she held any jobs since you’ve lived together?
- Tell me about that/them? Why did he/she leave those job(s)?

[GO TO C. Other Employment]

☐ No ➔ For what reasons is he/she not looking for work?

- Has he/she held any jobs since you’ve lived together?
- Tell me about that/them? Why did he/she leave those job(s)?

[GO TO C. Other Employment]

10. **[IF YES, NEW PARTNER IS WORKING]** Tell me about his/her current job(s).

(PROBE to fill in chart: Where is he/she working now? What is it that he/she does? Is he/she working full-time or part-time?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New partner employment</th>
<th>Wage/Salary</th>
<th>Date Started</th>
<th>Hours/wk</th>
<th>Weeks/yr</th>
<th>Amount of Raise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(PROBE to fill in chart: Does he/she get any benefits with this job(s)?)

**JOB 2 information**

- Health insurance for him/herself: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Health insurance for children: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Sick leave: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Vacation: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Overtime: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
- Retirement plan: Yes ☐ No ☐ DK ☐
C. OTHER EMPLOYMENT

1. Does anyone else in the household have a job? (PROBE: Do any children have a job?)
   - Yes → 1A) Tell me about that.
   - No

2. [IF RESPONDENT IS CURRENTLY WORKING] How is it combining work responsibilities and family responsibilities? Tell me about any problems you have at home because of work, or any problems at work because of family?

3. [IF RESPONDENT IS CURRENTLY WORKING] Is there anything in your life that makes it more difficult for you to hold down a job (or participate in a training program)? What about … (PROBE to fill in chart)
   - Childcare No ☐ Yes ☑
   - Transportation No ☐ Yes ☑
   - Health issues No ☐ Yes ☑
   - Family issues No ☐ Yes ☑
   - Your partner No ☐ Yes ☑

4. [IF PARTICIPANT IS NOT CURRENTLY WORKING] Since you are not currently working outside the home, is there anything in your life that makes it more difficult for you to work or participate in a training program? What about … (PROBE to fill in chart)
   - Childcare No ☐ Yes ☑
   - Transportation No ☐ Yes ☑
   - Health issues No ☐ Yes ☑
   - Family issues No ☐ Yes ☑
   - Your partner No ☐ Yes ☑

INCOME AND MAKING ENDS MEET

1. We would like to know about your family’s sources of income. Remember, all of this information is completely confidential. From which of the following did you receive income this year? (PROBE for changes in TANF, child and spousal support, food stamps, wages: Has that been the same all year? Tell me about the change.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Income</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Biweekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wages &amp; Salaries (self)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages &amp; Salaries (partner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips, Commissions, Overtime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security Retirement/pensions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary Security Income (SSI)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TANF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Compensation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker’s Disability Compensation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans’ Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child or Spousal Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s wages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stamps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular gifts from family/friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Tax Refund</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, including odd jobs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Have you ever received TANF benefits?

- Yes □  2A) How much time do you have on your TANF clock?
- No □  2B) Is the time limit a concern for you and your family? Why?

3. [IF APPLICABLE] When your child/spousal support doesn’t come, what do you do? How do you manage?

4. Did you receive assistance from any of the following sources since our last interview? If so, how much?

   [RECORD CASH VALUE]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Biweekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WIC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Lunch/Breakfast Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stamps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income Tax Credit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy/fuel Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Grants or Loans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversionary Assistance [IF APPLICABLE]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other [describe]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Tell me about any other regular help you’re getting with child care, food, clothing, car/house repairs, baby goods, furniture and holiday gifts. (PROMPT: from other organizations, friends, family, churches)

6. Housing is usually the largest expense for families.

   Do you…

   - own? → 6A) What is your monthly mortgage bill? ________________
   - OR
   - rent? → 6B) What is your monthly rental bill? ________________
   - 6C) [IF TRAILER] What is your monthly lot rental bill? ____________
   - OR
   - other? → 6D) Please describe.
   - 6C) What is your monthly bill? ________________
7. Since our last interview, did you ever have a difficult time paying for your rent or mortgage?

- Yes  →  7A) What did you do?
- No
- No; someone else paid

8. About how much do you pay each month for the utilities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Included in Rent</th>
<th>Pays</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>In winter?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ how much per month? ____________ ____________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas/Oil/Wood/Coal</td>
<td>Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ how much per month? ____________ ____________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable TV</td>
<td>Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ how much per month? ____________ ____________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ how much per month? ____________ ____________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garbage</td>
<td>Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ how much per month? ____________ ____________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Since our last interview, did you ever have a difficult time paying for the utilities?

- Yes  →  9A) What did you do?
  9B) Was anything disconnected?
    - Yes → What did you do to get it turned on again?
    - No → Who helped?
- No
- No; someone else paid

10. Do you have telephone service?

- Yes  →  10A) About how much do you pay each month? ________________
- No

11. Have you had a problem paying for phone service since our last interview?

- Yes  →  →  →  11A) What happened?
- No
- No, have not had phone service during this time

12. Since our last interview, have you had a problem paying for any specific items? (For example: insurance, loan payments, etc)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes ☐ No ☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical care</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental care</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicines</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit payments</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal care items</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diapers</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School fees or expenses</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property/school taxes</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>No ☐ Yes ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[FOR ALL YES RESPONSES]

12A) What have you done when this happened?
12a. When you think about your bills and the things you need to buy, how do you decide what comes first if you don’t have money for all of them?

12b. What are your favorite money stretching techniques?

13. If you find yourself running short on money, what do you do?

14. Since our last interview, have you borrowed money from a relative or friend?

☐ Yes → 14A) Why did you borrow it?
☐ No → 14B) How much did you borrow?

☐ Yes → 14C) Have you been able to pay it back?
☐ No → 15A) What did you do?

15. When people are having a hard time making ends meet, sometimes they will work for cash by doing different kinds of odd jobs. Since our last interview, have you done anything like that?  


☐ Yes → 15B) For how long? 15C) How much did you earn?
☐ No → 16A) What did he/she do?

16. [IF HAS PARTNER] Since our last interview, has your partner done anything like that?

☐ Yes → 16B) For how long? 16C) How much did he/she earn?
☐ No → 17A) What did you or your partner sell/pawn?

17. Since our last interview, have you or your partner ever sold or pawned anything you owned?

☐ Yes → 17B) With whom?
☐ No → 18A) What did you or your partner trade?

(PROBE: babysitting, food, car/house repairs)

☐ Yes → 18B) How often?
☐ No → 18C) How often?
19. Compared with last year, would you say that your family’s financial situation has...

[CIRCLE NUMBER OF RESPONSE]

5  Improved a lot
4  Improved a little
3  Remained the same
2  Gone down a little
1  Gone down a lot

20. [RESTATE RESPONSE FROM QUESTION #19] What leads you to say that?

21. To what extent do you think your income is enough for you to live on? [CIRCLE NUMBER OF RESPONSE]

1  Not at all adequate
2  Can meet necessities only
3  Can afford some of the things we want but not all we want
4  Can afford about everything we want
5  Can afford about everything we want and still save money

22. [IF CHOOSES 2 OR 3 FROM QUESTION #21] When you think of necessities, what do you think of?

LIFE SKILLS SECTION

1. In general, how often are you able to pay your bills?
   □ Always
   □ Sometimes
   □ Never

2. In general, how often are you able to stick to a family budget?
   □ Always
   □ Sometimes
   □ Never

3. In general, how often are you able to stretch your groceries to the end of the month?
   □ Always
   □ Sometimes
   □ Never

4. In general, how often are you able to prepare a well-balanced meal for your family?
   □ Always
   □ Sometimes
   □ Never

FOOD SECURITY

1. Since our last interview, have you or any members of your household, been close to going hungry or ever gone hungry?

□ Yes  →  1A) Tell me how this happened. What led to your being hungry?
□ No
2. Have you gotten food from a food bank or soup kitchen since our last interview?

☐ Yes  ➔  2A) Tell me about this.
☐ No  ➔  2B) How often?

3. [ADMINISTER FOOD SECURITY MODULE]

HEALTH

A. ADULT HEALTH

1. At the previous interviews you mentioned that you… (describe health conditions from previous interviews) How has your health been since your last interview?

1a. Do any health conditions that you or a family member have affect everyday life for your family?  [IF YES] How so?

2. Have there been any changes in your health?

3. Have you developed any new medical conditions?

☐ Yes  ➔  3A) Please explain.
☐ No

4. Since the last interview, have you had any injuries, surgeries, or serious illnesses?

☐ Yes  ➔  4A) Please explain.

5. Since the last interview, have any of your health problems been resolved?

☐ Yes  ➔  5A) Please explain.
☐ No

6. Have you been pregnant (again) since the last interview?

☐ Yes  ➔  6A) How many times?
☐ No

[FOR SAME PARTNER]

7. At the previous interviews you mentioned that your partner… (describe health conditions from previous interviews). How has your partner’s health been since the last interview?

8. Have there been any changes in your partner’s health?
9. Has your partner developed any new medical conditions?
   □ Yes → 9A) Please explain.
   □ No

10. Since the last interview, has your partner had any injuries, surgeries, serious illnesses?
   □ Yes → 10A) Please explain.
   □ No

11. Since the last interview, have any of your partner’s health problems been resolved?
   □ Yes → 11A) Please explain.
   □ No

12. [FOR NEW PARTNER] We’d like to hear about your partner’s health.

13. [ADMINISTER ADULT HEALTH SURVEY.]

14. [ADMINISTER SF-36 TO PARTICIPANT ONLY.]

B. CHILD HEALTH

1. At the previous interviews you mentioned that ______(C1’s name) … (describe health conditions from previous interviews).

   How has ______’s (C1’s name) health been since the last interview?

2. Have there been any changes in ______’s (C1’s name) health?

3. Has ______ (C1’s name) developed any new medical conditions?
   □ Yes → 3A) Please explain.
   □ No

New Health Conditions:
C1: C2: C3: C4: C5: C6: Etc:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Health Notes from Previous Interviews
Child
C1:
C2:
C3:
C4:
Etc:
4. Since the last interview, has _______ (C1’s name) had any injuries, surgeries, or serious illnesses?
   - Yes  →  4A) Please explain.
   - No

5. Since the last interview, have any of _______ (C1’s name) health problems been resolved?
   - Yes  →  5A) Please explain.
   - No

6. [REPEAT FOR EACH CHILD WHO WAS LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD AT EITHER WAVE 1 OR WAVE 2]

7. [FOR EACH NEW CHILD LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD]
   We’d like to hear about ______’s (child’s name) health. →  7A) Administer Child Health

8. [ADMINISTER CHILD HEALTH SURVEY.]

C. FAMILY HEALTH

1. If Appropriate] You’ve said… (summarize current health problems)
   In what ways do these health problems affect everyday life for your family?
   - 1A) affect how your family gets through each day?
   - 1B) Affect your family financially?
   - 1C) affect your ability, and your partner’s ability, to be

2. [If without a telephone] How do you make medical/dental appointments for your family without a telephone?

3. What would you do in a health emergency without a car/telephone?

4. Since we’ve been interviewing you, have there been any changes in your health insurance or healthcare coverage?
   - Yes  →  4A) What are the changes?
   - No  →  4B) How has your healthcare, or your family’s healthcare, been affected by these changes?

5. Do you have a doctor or other health care professional you usually see for healthcare?
   - Yes  →  5A) Does always seeing the same doctor/healthcare professional influence your health? [If YES] How?
   - No  →  5B) Where do you go for healthcare?
6. [IF APPLICABLE] Does your partner have a doctor or other health care professional he/she usually sees for healthcare?

- Yes
- No

6A) Does always seeing the same doctor/healthcare professional influence your partner’s health? [If YES] How?

6B) Where does your partner go for healthcare?

7. Do your children have a doctor or other health care professional they usually see for healthcare?

- Yes
- No

7A) Does always seeing the same doctor/healthcare professional influence your children’s health? [If YES] How?

7B) Where do your children go for healthcare?

7C) How does having to see different doctors/healthcare professionals affect your children’s health?

8. Have you, your partner, or your children ever had to use a hospital emergency room because you didn’t have a health care professional caring for you at the time?

- Yes
- No

8A) What was this like?
8B) What for?
8C) How many times?

D. COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

1. What kinds of healthcare services are available in your community that you can use?

- Primary care services: [family doctors, pediatricians, obstetricians/midwives, etc.]
- Dental services
- Mental health/counseling services
- Specialist services: [surgeons, doctors specializing in skin, heart, diabetes, cancer, etc.]
- Hospital
- Pharmacy

D. CHILD CARE

1. Last time we talked, you said that (describe care situation for preschool children)… Have you made any changes in your child care arrangements since the last interview?

- Yes
- No

1A) What has changed?
1B) What brought about the changes?
1C) [IF CURRENTLY NOT WORKING] Did your child care arrangements or problems have anything to do with the fact that you are no longer working?
1D) Do you have a new child care provider?
   (PROBE: How is this working out? How do you like your new child care provider(s)? How does your child like the provider(s)?)
1E) [IF MORE THAN ONE PROVIDER] How many? Why more than one?
[IF CURRENTLY NOT USING CHILD CARE, GO TO QUESTION #7]

2. We would like to learn a little more about your current child care arrangements. Are the child care arrangements the same for all of your children who are not yet in elementary school? If so, let’s talk about the youngest child first, then the other children.

3. Who takes care of your children?

4. How do you get your children to child care? About how far is it from your house to your child care provider? How far from your child care provider to work?

5. About how long are your children in child care in an average week?

6. About how much do you pay for child care in an average week?

7. How do you like your child care arrangements? Why do you say that?

8. What happens to your child care arrangements if your child is sick? What happens if your provider is sick? (PROBE: Has a friend or relative helped you out?)


10. Since our last interview, have you had to miss work or a training program because of a childcare problem?

   □ Yes  10A) How did your supervisor react?
   □ No    10B) How many times did you miss in the last month?

10a. Making decisions about child care can be hard. Here is a list of factors that may influence parents’ decisions. They are not listed in any special order. As you read them, think about how important each one has been in YOUR choice of caregivers for your child(ren). Rank the 8 factors from most important to least important using number 1-8, with 1 being the most important.

   _____ Care is affordable
   _____ Care is convenient (near home or work)
   _____ Caregiver is family member of close friend
   _____ Care is available during the hours I needed it
   _____ Caregiver had space available for my child
   _____ Caregiver had training in child development/child care
   _____ Caregiver was recommended by someone I trust
   _____ Caregiver and I have similar values

10b. Have there been any other factors that you have considered in choosing a caregiver?

11a. What do you think would be the ideal child care arrangement for your child(ren)?

11b. If that arrangement were not possible, what would be the next best thing?

PARENTING

1. [IF LIVING WITH SPOUSE OR PARTNER] What sort of parenting talks do you typically do? And what parenting tasks does your partner typically do?
2. Do you and your partner (IF APPLICABLE) get help or advice in parenting from anyone else? What sort of help do they provide? How do you feel about this help?

3. [IF RESPONDENT IS NOT LIVING WITH THE FATHER (MOTHER) OF THE CHILD/CHILDREN] during the past 12 months, how often did your children see their father(s) (mother)? Why? [MAKE SURE THAT THE QUESTION IS ANSWERED FOR EACH NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT]

   a. Overall, what is relationship like with ____________’s [insert name of child] father (mother)? Why do you say that?

   b. Do you think that ____________’s [insert name of child] father (mother) wants a close relationship with the child? What makes you say that?

   c. Do you ever have conflicts with ____’s parent about the child? If yes, What are the conflicts about? -- ex. custody, child support, how child is being raised, visits, etc. How do these conflicts get resolved?

4. (OPTIONAL) How many times have you moved since you became a parent? [IF THEY MOVED AND IF CHILDREN WERE SCHOOL AGE] Did any of the children have to change schools because of the move? How did that work out? Have the children made new friends in the neighborhood? How do you feel about the other children available as friends?

5. What is your number one wish for your children? Why do you feel this way? Has this changed over the last few months? [If yes, why?]

ADMINISTER THE PARENTING LADDER

PERSONAL WELL-BEING

1. Last year, you said the thing you were most looking forward to was ________. How is that going?
   {OR WHATEVER THE APPROPRIATE FOLLOW-UP QUESTION(S) MAY BE.}

2. How are things going for you personally?

3. I’d like to ask you a few questions about how things are going for you personally. [ADMINISTER FEELINGS ABOUT HOW THINGS ARE GOING MEASURE.]

4. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life right now? [CIRCLE NUMBER OF RESPONSE]
   5 Very satisfied
   4 Satisfied
   3 Mixed feelings
   2 Dissatisfied
   1 Very dissatisfied

Now I’d like to ask you a few questions about how things are going for you with the family members living in your household.

1. I am satisfied that I can turn to my family for help when something is troubling me.
   4 always
   3 almost always
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>some of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>hardly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. I am satisfied with the way my family talks over things with me and shares problems with me.
   - 4  always
   - 3  almost always
   - 2  some of the time
   - 1  hardly
   - 0  never

3. I am satisfied that my family accepts and supports my wishes to take on new activities or directions.
   - 4  always
   - 3  almost always
   - 2  some of the time
   - 1  hardly
   - 0  never

4. I am satisfied with the way my family expresses affection and responds to my emotion, such as anger, sorrow, or love.
   - 4  always
   - 3  almost always
   - 2  some of the time
   - 1  hardly
   - 0  never

5. I am satisfied with the way my family and I share time together.
   - 4  always
   - 3  almost always
   - 2  some of the time
   - 1  hardly
   - 0  never

6. What would make life better for your family? Why do you feel that way?

[ADMINISTER THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS]

{NOTE: FIND THIS AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW. TO BE ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER.}

1a. [OPTIONAL] Would you describe yourself as a person with religious or spiritual beliefs? [IF YES]
   Does this play a role in your everyday life? How so?

1b. [ALTERNATIVE WORDING] What do you rely on when times are difficult? Religion? Family? Friends? How does this/do they help you?

2. [OPTIONAL] Do you ever make financial contributions to a church or religious group?

3. [OPTIONAL] Do you ever contribute in other ways, such as teaching religion classes, cleaning the church, visiting people who are sick, etc.?
**SUMMARY**

1. In what ways has participating in this study affected your life?

*{Please note that we have purposely left this section open for each state to design its own summary. Please add whatever additional final questions and concluding remarks you wish, including those relevant to your state’s future research plans.}*

**FUTURE**

1. Would you be willing to participate in the study another year? (Participation would involve another interview of about the same length and involving similar questions.)
   - YES
   - NO

2. Would you be interested in being part of a support group of mothers similar to yourself?
   - YES
   - NO