A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty
Of
Xavier University
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Psychology
by
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July, 2006

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Through the Eyes of the Father:

A Qualitative Look at the Supports of and

Barriers to African American, Adolescent-Father

Involvement with their Children
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank Mr. Calvin Williams and the Fatherhood Initiative for presenting me with the opportunity to pursue this area of research. I am also grateful to Mr. Williams for his devotion and continued support in the recruitment phase of this project despite the challenges with which we were presented. I admire his dedication to reaching out to young fathers and providing them with the opportunity to strengthen their relationship with their children.

Second, I would like to acknowledge the members of my dissertation committee. Thanks to Dr. Janet Schultz for assuming the role of my dissertation chair and for providing me with constant guidance, support, and feedback throughout this process. I would like to thank Dr. Christine Dacey for her valuable contributions and suggestions during the completion of this work. I am also grateful to Dr. Lisa Mills for her sincere interest in my dissertation topic and for sharing her insightful comments related to her research experience with adolescent parents. A special thanks goes to my data coders, Sara and Shannon O., and to Shannon M. for her assistance in conducting some of the interviews.

Most of all, none of this would have been possible without the continued support and encouragement from my family and friends to finish this major undertaking. I would like to acknowledge my good friends Cara Inglis and Karen Tabern without whom I would not have made it through the trying times of graduate school. I would also like to thank my family including my mother Rhona Markin, my father Joel Samson, my sister Sara Samson, and my grandparents Herman and Lucille Simon for always believing in me and for their unconditional love and support.
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Chapter I

Review of the Literature

"The decline of fatherhood is one of the most basic, unexpected, and extraordinary trends of our time" (Popenoe, 1998, p. 33). Over the past two decades, there has been a significant growth in the public, political, and academic attention directed at fathers, addressing their roles in families, their rights and responsibilities, and their influence on children (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Lamb, 1997a).

The research that has been done in this area has primarily focused on married, middle-class fathers. There has been less focus on low-income, unmarried, minority fathers, although this appears to be an emerging area for research (Coley, 2001). There is a significant need for further clarification of the range of normative roles that low-income, minority, and unmarried fathers fulfill as well as the obstacles that may be influencing their fathering behaviors (Coley, 2001).

Demographic trends in the United States have led to a situation in which a significant proportion of fathers are marginal members of their children's households and minimal or unstable financial providers (Coley, 2001). In 1997, 32% of all children born in the United States were to unmarried mothers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). In just three decades, between 1960 and 1990, the percentage of children living apart from their natural fathers more than doubled from 17% to 36% (Popenoe, 1998). Nonmarital childbearing is particularly prevalent among low-income and minority populations and is commonly recognized as a social problem contributing to family instability and problematic child development (Coley, 2001).
**Impact of Father Involvement on Children's Well-Being**

It is clear that the absence of the biological father reduces children’s access to important economic, parental, and community resources. The loss of these resources affects cognitive development and future opportunities. Thus, the evidence strongly suggests that family disruption plays a causal role in lowering children’s well-being.

- (McLanahan, S., 1998, p.91)

The role of fathers in child well-being is more theorized than studied (Mosley & Thomson, 1995). "Within most of the work on fathering lies the assumption that fathers’ presence in their children’s lives represents an important source of support for children’s healthy development" (Coley, 2001, p. 749). However, there is little evidence to support the assumption that fathers’ involvement enhances children’s development especially with low-income and minority fathers or fathers who do not reside with their children (Coley, 2001). The majority of the studies on father involvement and children’s development have used small, middle-class, European-American samples of two-parent families (Amato, 1998; Lamb, 1997b).

Amato (1998) reported data from a longitudinal study, which began in 1980, of approximately 2,000 married individuals and their children to assess the importance of fathers in the lives of their children. In 1992, 384 young adult offspring who lived with both biological parents in 1980 were interviewed. At the time of the interviews, the offspring ranged in age from 19 to 31 years and only 7% were non-white. Since only 7% of the offspring were non-White and only 10% experienced parental divorce, it was not possible to examine variations by race or family structure. The relationship between paternal involvement and child well-being was assessed through an analysis of the effects
of human capital, financial capital and social capital on child’s well-being. Human
capital was reflected in fathers’ education, financial capital was reflected in fathers’
earnings, and social capital was reflected in the quality of the marital and father-child
relationship. Results of this study suggested that fathers influence their children’s well-
being in terms of education, psychological distress, and self-esteem through a
combination of human, financial, and social capital. These results also indicated that it is
difficult to empirically separate the effects of fathers and mothers on children’s well-
being because their individual characteristics tend to be positively correlated. However,
these results also suggested that fathers are about as important as mothers in predicting
children’s long-term outcomes.

In recent years, a small but growing number of studies have focused specifically
on low-income and minority fathers and their children, using a variety of measures of
paternal involvement and considering the context and process of family relationships
(Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999; Coley, 1998; Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Mosley &
Thomson, 1995). Research that has investigated the relationships among father
involvement and children’s outcomes in low-income, minority, and unmarried-parent
families focused on children’s cognitive and educational attainment as well as children’s
social and emotional functioning. Research has shown links between the strength of
father-child relationships (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993); fathers’ satisfaction with being a
parent; fathers’ nurturance (Black et al., 1999); father-child activities (Mosley &
Thomson, 1995); and parenting style (Coley, 1998) with the provision of child support
(Graham, Beller, & Hernandez, 1994; Greene & Moore, 2000) and children’s cognitive
development (Black et al., 1999); academic attainment (Coley, 1998; Furstenberg &
Harris, 1993; Graham et al., 1994; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Mosley & Thomson, 1995); social functioning (Coley, 1998; Greene & Moore, 2000; Thomas, Farrell, & Barnes, 1996); and emotional functioning (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Greene & Moore, 2000; Zimmerman, Salem, & Maton, 1995).

As part of a longitudinal study of low-income and predominantly unmarried African American parents who were less than 18 years old when their first child was born, Furstenberg and Harris (1993) interviewed 253 children of adolescent parents at a 20-year follow-up. They examined the extent and quality of male involvement in the lives of children of teenage mothers and analyzed the effects of that involvement on children's development and well-being as they became young adults. Results of this study indicated that children who demonstrated a strong bond with their fathers, regardless of whether or not the father resided in the home, had higher educational attainment than those children who demonstrated weak bonds with their fathers. Father's education may have mediated this relationship; however, it was not mentioned as a variable in this study. In addition to influencing children's cognitive outcomes, the strength of the father-child relationship was also found to be associated with children's social and emotional functioning (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993). Results of this study indicated that a strong attachment to a father or father figure was related to fewer symptoms of depression among adolescents. They also found that having a poor father-child relationship or having a close relationship in childhood or early adolescence that later decreased was more detrimental than having no relationship at all.

A study of 254 low-income, inner-city African American male adolescents examined the relation between psychosocial outcomes and family structure (with whom
the youth lived), youths’ relationships with their fathers and with male role models (Zimmerman et al., 1995). Regarding family structure, five household types were used in this study: single mother (n = 108), one biological parent and a stepparent (n = 26), mother with extended family members (n = 33), both biological parents (n = 44), and extended family with neither parent present (n = 27). This study found that, regardless of family structure, both time spent with father and emotional support from the father were associated with higher self-esteem, lower depression and anxiety, and marginally lower delinquent behavior and marijuana use. The results suggested that parental support may have more meaningful influences on African American adolescent male development than family structure (Zimmerman et al., 1995). The results of this study question the belief that dual-parent households are necessary for the healthy development of inner-city African-American male adolescents.

Black et al. (1999) examined the relationship between paternal roles, regardless of residence, and the well-being of 175 3-year-old children from low income, African American families. Paternal parenting satisfaction, paternal financial contribution, and paternal nurturance during play were found to be positively associated with children’s cognitive and language development. The significant associations found between children’s cognition and parenting satisfaction and between children’s receptive language development and paternal nurturance during play illustrate the importance of considering paternal roles beyond economic contributions. Black et al. (1999) hypothesized that fathers who are satisfied with their parenting role and nurturant in their interactions with their children have children who exhibit better cognitive and language skills because the children feel comfortable with their fathers and are able to benefit from the
environmental opportunities the fathers provide. Although this interpretation suggests that paternal roles influence children's well-being, the opposite direction of effect should be considered (Black et al., 1999). It is possible that fathers are more nurturant during play and are more likely to be involved when their children are more competent and well behaved.

Mosley and Thomson (1995) used data from the 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) to investigate effects of poverty and race on mothering, fathering, and child well-being in two-parent families. The NSFH is based on a nationally representative sample of the U.S. adult population, which includes oversampling of selected minority groups and family types (N = 13,014). This study was comprised of 204 African American families, and 1,024 Caucasian families. Father activities with girls in poor families produced reports of girls doing better in school, but father activities produced no differences in nonpoor families. This result offers evidence for the hypothesis that parenting behaviors have stronger positive effects for poor children than for other children (Mosley & Thomson, 1995). However, this study was conducted with two-parent families, and therefore, it is not possible to generalize these findings to children who do not live with both parents.

Coley (1998) considered the importance of biological fathers on child well-being in unmarried-mother families based on the reports of 111 third and fourth grade children and their teachers. The sample was evenly split with regard to gender, SES, and race. After controlling for demographic characteristics and family variables, children who reported warmer and more responsive interactions with their nonresidential biological fathers performed better academically in school. This study also found a "marginally
significant” interaction between race and the effects of father’s warmth. Children’s reports of warmth and control from nonresidential biological fathers predicted fewer behavioral problems and higher prosocial ratings, particularly for African American children. Greater control from fathers predicted lower rates of problematic school behaviors for African American children but higher rates for Caucasian children. Therefore, results suggested that relationships with biological fathers, encompassing both warmth and control, are more positive influences on African American than on Caucasian children. These findings suggest that, for single-parented African American children, which is the majority within the African American community, the provision of warmth and control from fathers appears to be paramount (Coley, 1998). These findings intensify concerns over the lack of a consistent father in the lives of many African American children.

Large-scale studies have found a positive association between child support and child outcomes, both in the domains of cognitive development and academic achievement, as well as in the domains of social and emotional development among school-age children (Graham, Beller, & Hernandez, 1994; Greene & Moore, 2000). To study the impact of family structure and child support on children’s education, Graham et al. (1994) created a special mother-child survey that was extracted from the 1988 March/April Match File of the Current Population Survey (CPS), a nationally representative sample. Overall, 5,038 children between the ages of 16 and 20 years who lived in a family unit that included their mother were observed. It was estimated that 69.6% of the sample lived in a family with both parents present (an intact family), while 30.4% of the sample lived in a family with a mother, but not a father (a non-intact
According to the results of this study, in more than 8 out of 10 cases, the father’s absence was thought to be due to a marital disruption or an out-of-wedlock birth. In the other cases, father absence was due to death or children being adopted by their mother’s current husband. As a result, most children who lived in a nonintact mother-only family were eligible for child support, but only 1 in 3 actually received any. Results suggest that, among children in mother-only families, those who were eligible for child support obtained the least schooling. It was also found that, among those eligible for child support, children who received support from their father obtained significantly more schooling than those who did not receive support. Additionally, this study found that increases in child support payments appeared to have stronger effects than equal increases in other sources of income.

An association between nonresident father involvement and child emotional and behavioral functioning involving the provision of child support has also been found (Greene & Moore, 2000). Early descriptive data from the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies (NEWWS) Child Outcomes Study were used to explore three forms of father involvement (formal child support, informal child support, and father visitation) as correlates of child outcomes for a sample of preschool-age children in never-married African American families that receive welfare. Formal child support refers to the cash payments that mothers who have voluntary or court-ordered award agreements receive from fathers through the formal child support enforcement system. Informal child support indicates cash and/or in-kind contributions fathers offer directly to mothers in addition to or in place of formal child support payments. Results of this study indicated that both formal and informal child support are associated with higher scores for the
children on the personal maturity scale (PMS), a measure of emotional and behavioral
development compared with children whose fathers did not contribute formally or
informally. Mothers who received formal or informal support from fathers reported
fewer behavior problems and higher levels of social and emotional adjustment for their
children. This suggests that children benefit from the monetary and material support
fathers provide (Greene & Moore, 2000). The extent to which fathers meet their financial
responsibilities can indirectly affect their children by influencing the economic
"structure" of the household (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb,
2000). The financial support of a nonresident father can make a difference as to whether
his child lives in poverty (Cabrera et al., 2000). It is also possible that child support may
be a proxy for unmeasured characteristics of the father (Greene & Moore, 2000). These
can include a sense of responsibility for and commitment to the child that enhance child
well-being and are unique to fathers who are able and willing to provide for their
children. Children of divorced parents, as well as those born to unmarried parents, may
benefit from knowing that their fathers contributed to their support (McLanahan, Seltzer,
Hanson, & Thomson, 1994).

McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) used data from four different nationally
representative data sets – Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), National
Longitudinal Survey of Young Men and Women (NLSY), High School and Beyond
Study (HSB), and National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) – to provide
evidence that children who grow up apart from their biological fathers are disadvantaged
across a broad array of outcomes. Data from the 1979 NLSY, indicated that children
from one-parent homes are about twice as likely to drop out of high school, 2.5 times as
likely to become teen mothers, and 1.4 times as likely to be idle (out of school and work) as children who live with both biological parents. Children in one-parent families were also found to have lower grade point averages, lower college aspirations, and poorer attendance records. As adults they had higher rates of divorce (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). The consequences of father absence are not necessarily the same in all kinds of families (McClanahan & Sandefur, 1994). In their study, McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) investigated the effects of father absence on differing racial and ethnic backgrounds with respect to educational achievement. They found that father absence had the most harmful effects among Hispanics and the least harmful effects among African Americans. Family disruption increased the risk of school failure by 24 percentage points among Hispanics, 17 percentage points among Whites, and 13 percentage points among African Americans. The effect of father absence on African American children may be smaller because single mothers in African American communities are more common, more widely accepted and, therefore, perhaps provided with more support from neighbors and family (McLanahan, 1998). It is possible that this extended support system substitutes for the role of the father in providing African American children with warmth and control that is paramount in positive adjustment (Coley, 1998). Racial differences were also found in this study for teenage childbearing. The effects of father absence were most harmful among African Americans, followed by Hispanics and then Whites.

Research has also found father involvement to be linked to positive outcomes for some children and adolescents, but to negative behavioral outcomes for others, particularly among low-income, African American children (Thomas, Farrell, & Barnes,
1996). This study examined the impact of single-mother families and nonresident father's involvement in single-mother families on delinquency, heavy drinking, and illicit drug use. The study was based on a representative household sample of 503 adolescents and their parents. The sample consisted of 361 Caucasian adolescents and 142 African American adolescents, of which 281 were females. The results of this study indicated that nonresident father involvement protected Caucasian male adolescents from the negative effects of living in single-mother families. It was also found that Caucasian male adolescents without father involvement were far more likely to drink heavily, use illicit drugs, and engage in delinquent behavior compared to white teens in single-mother families who have a nonresident father involved in their lives and white teens from two-parent families. However, for African American male adolescents, it was found that, compared with those living with two biological parents and those living with isolated single mothers, adolescents who lived in single-mother families with nonresident fathers involved in their socialization reported higher levels of delinquency, heavy drinking, and illicit drug use. Thomas et al. (1996) discussed two possibilities for this increased risk of problem behavior with African American boys who maintained contact with an involved nonresident father. First, African American single-mother families that are isolated from the nonresident father may have the support of other networks. When the nonresident father is around, extended family and friends are likely to distance themselves; however, when there is no father involved, the single mother's support system may be more active. Another possibility is that African American fathers who are involved with single-mother families may contribute to negative outcomes in their sons. If they are demonstrating problematic functioning themselves, such as involvement with illicit drug use, they may
provoke conflict and provide negative role models for their children. This study also found that single-mother families had more negative consequences for sons than daughters. These negative effects of family structure vary by race and father involvement.

Since it has been found that some fathers’ absence may have detrimental impacts on their children’s development and well-being, specifically low-income, African American fathers, it is imperative to explore the path leading from father absence to poor child outcomes. It is also important to explore the changes that need to occur within these fathers’ lives in order to demonstrate a positive rather than detrimental impact on their children. The proposed study will aim to clarify this issue further.

Unwed Fathers

Furstenberg (1988) described the patterns of today’s fathers in terms of two contrasting visions of fatherhood: the “good dad-bad dad complex.” According to Furstenberg (1988), fathers feel that they have the freedom to be involved with their children, and some are, but they also feel that they have the freedom to leave, and many do. Fatherhood has become more of a voluntary activity in which fathers can choose to play a greater role or no role at all (Cherlin, 1988). According to Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998), responsible fatherhood encompasses four tasks: providing financial support, providing care, providing emotional support, and establishing legal paternity. Research indicates that some or all of these tasks are often unfulfilled by fathers in the United States today, specifically by low-income, unmarried, and minority fathers (Coley, 2001).

Unmarried families have only recently attracted the interest of researchers and the U.S. Census because of their dramatic increases (Dudley & Stone, 2001).
U.S. Census statistics, the percentage of divorced parents has remained fairly stable since 1960 while the percentage of unmarried parents has soared. In 1960, less than 4% of single mothers had never been married. In 1994 about 30% of single mothers were never-married (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1994). In 2000, 41% of all children under 18 years of age lived with just one parent, usually the mother (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2000). This figure strongly suggests that the major increases in nonresidential fathers over the past three decades have been among unmarried families (Dudley & Stone, 2001). Unwed fathers appear to constitute a group that is rapidly growing, but at the same time, has been somewhat neglected in the literature. More research is needed to determine why the numbers of unwed fathers are increasing and how this trend appears to be affecting children and their development (Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Hanson, 1998).

The absence of fathers from their children's lives is demonstrated by many nonresidential fathers' lack of contact with, financial support of, and involvement with their children (Lerman, 1993). According to Dudley & Scott (2001), levels of contact with children appear to be lower for unmarried nonresidential fathers when compared with divorced fathers. One study used data from the 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households based on maternal reports from households with children under 18 whose parents were separated, divorced, or never married to describe three components of nonresident father involvement with children: social contact, economic involvement, and participation in childrearing decisions (Seltzer, 1991). Results indicated that 40% of unmarried fathers had no contact with their children in the past year compared to 18% of previously married fathers. This study also found a considerable difference between unmarried fathers and divorced fathers with regard to financial
participation. It was found that 28.5% of unmarried fathers and 64.1% of divorced fathers reported paying child support in the past year. Another study used data from the National Survey of Families and Households (N = 410) to investigate the parental roles of fathers of various marital statuses: divorced, never-married, separated due to marital problems, and remarried based on paternal report (McKenry, McKelvey, Leigh, & Wark, 1996). Results indicated that unmarried nonresidential fathers had less frequent visits with their children and felt that they exercised less influence in decisions regarding their children compared to divorced and separated fathers. This study also found that there were several active unmarried fathers who were involved in a wide range of activities with their children like the other fathers, including leisure, religious, school, and highly interactive activities. This study’s findings suggested that, although some unmarried nonresidential fathers are less involved in their children’s lives than are divorced and separated fathers, there are some unmarried nonresidential fathers who are actively involved with their children and are an important part of their lives.

At the time of their child’s birth, most unmarried fathers appear to have intentions of being involved and active fathers (Johnson, 2000); however, studies have found that approximately only half of nonresidential fathers have regular contact with their children during the first few years after birth (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Lerman, 1993). Coley and Chase-Lansdale (1999) used 135 maternal reports to assess urban African American fathers’ involvement with their children born outside of marriage. They found that, during children’s preschool years, approximately half of the fathers in the sample contributed financially, took responsibility for the care and raising of their child, and provided emotional support to their child. Emotional support was based on maternal
ratings of father-child closeness that ranged from not very close to extremely close. The other half of the fathers were uninvolved in some or most of these dimensions and seemed to have removed themselves from active fathering. These findings demonstrated support for the concept that nonresidential fathers tend to “bundle” their time and are rarely highly involved in one area of parenting while uninvolved in others.

It is important to take into consideration the fact that many nonresidential fathers see their primary role in the lives of their children as the breadwinner. However, some do not have the means to engage in this role. Johnson (2000) conducted a field-based study that used eight poor African American men, ranging in age from 15 to 43 years, who became new fathers within a couple days preceding the initial paternal interview. In this study Johnson examined the work preparation and labor market experiences of these nonresident, unwed fathers. Although this study presented a broad age range, the men were similar in their areas of labor force participation and areas impacted by their employment status. For all of the fathers in this study, fatherhood was equated with financial support, although the majority of them were either unemployed or had low-income jobs that did not allow them to provide ongoing child support. These fathers also acknowledged their responsibility to provide their children with various forms of instrumental support (e.g., money, milk, diapers for their newborns) and complementary support for their older children, but provision of financial support was contingent on their success in obtaining and sustaining employment. There may, however, be more fathers contributing financially than indicated in formal systems such as the Census Bureau. Detailed ethnographic and survey data indicate significant amounts of paternal financial support, both cash and in-kind aid that may go unreported. For example, in their study on
urban African American mothers of preschool children, Coley and Chase-Lansdale (1999) found that 46% of the mothers who did not reside with their children's father reported receiving financial support. It is possible that the discrepancy between data from the Census Bureau and from intensive ethnographic and survey studies may derive from parents' willingness to divulge sensitive information to the government (Coley, 2001). This discrepancy may also be related to the tendency of ethnographic and survey studies to use a broader definition of financial support than does the Census Bureau.

A review of the literature on unwed fathers indicates the importance of looking at this group as an entity, separate from the larger group of noncustodial fathers. The majority of the research thus far has researched unwed fathers as part of the larger group of noncustodial fathers that includes divorced, separated, and remarried fathers. However, as research has demonstrated, unmarried fathers tend to differ on several aspects from other noncustodial fathers. Therefore, the proposed study will aim to further clarify the characteristics that distinguish unmarried fathers from other noncustodial fathers.

*Young Unwed Fathers*

"In the absence of solid information vivid images have emerged portraying the typical unwed father as a high school dropout, unemployed or working in the underground economy, having a number of children with several partners, and bearing little or no responsibility for the outcomes."

- (Lerman, 1993, p. 27)

This perception of teenage fathers is reflective of societal stereotypes that depict teenage fathers as psychologically maladjusted youths who first sexually exploit
adolescent girls and then abandon them and their children. This perception is at odds with the cultural expectation that fathers accept the responsibilities of emotionally and financially supporting their children (Kiselica & Sturmer, 1993). In order to determine whether or not the societal stereotypes mentioned above depict an accurate picture of young unwed fathers, Lerman (1993) used information from a national sample of youth, ages 14-21 years in 1979, to present national estimates of fatherhood patterns of a cohort of American young men who reached their 20s during the 1980s. Lerman (1993) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Behavior (NLSY), which provides information on childbearing, household and family status, educational attainment, employment and earnings, and family background for a national sample of 12,686 youths who were 14-21 years old in 1979. Since the NLSY oversampled blacks, Hispanics, and poor whites, the survey included a higher absolute number of young absent fathers than would have resulted from a representative sample. Lerman (1993) used the information from this survey to examine the extent to which the characteristics of young unwed fathers differ from other young men in terms of ability, achievement in school, work experience, and involvement in crimes, drugs, or alcohol.

According to Lerman (1993), a national profile of young unwed fathers suggested that most teen unwed fathers are generally less well-educated than non-parental teens. The NLSY data demonstrated that high school drop out rates and unemployment rates were substantially higher among those who became unwed fathers than among those who had not become unwed fathers at ages 24 – 26 years. These fathers were found to have started sexual activity at earlier ages. They were also more likely to be raised in a low-income family. Many of these fathers spent time with their children, but this mostly
occurred soon after their child's birth. The NLSY data provided an opportunity to examine the financial support and involvement in fathering among a nationally representative group of over 600 unwed fathers (Lerman, 1993). In 1986, the proportion of young fathers, ages 21 to 25 years, who visited their children more than once a week was 57% among fathers with a child 2 years or younger, 40% for ages 2 to 4.5 years, 27% for ages 4.5 to 7.5, and 22 percent for 7.5 years and older. The young unwed fathers who rarely or never visited their children were least likely to pay child support. In 1985, about one third of unwed fathers reported paying child support, but they reported paying it at low levels.

Among these young unwed fathers there are striking racial differences in marriage and fatherhood as indicated by NLSY data (Lerman, 1993). The incidence of unwed fatherhood among African American young men was dramatically higher than among all other young men. Twenty percent of African American 19–27 year olds were unwed fathers in 1984. This rate was four times the overall average rate of unwed fatherhood (4.4%) and nearly four times as high as the next highest rate (5.7% among Hispanics). In 1984 African Americans made up about 13 percent of the young men, but accounted for about a third of the nation’s unwed fathers. Some African American young men become unwed fathers as teenagers, but peak rates do not occur until ages 24–26 years, when about one of four young African American men are never married fathers (Lerman, 1993). NLSY data also revealed some variation by race in visitation, but very little difference in the support payments. Of the young unwed fathers in the sample, African Americans were more likely to live close to their children and to visit them than were white and Hispanic fathers. Based on the NLSY data, Lerman (1993) suggested two
broad patterns of fathering. Half or more of unwed fathers live near their children, visit them often, and make child support payments while most of the remaining group only rarely visit and usually make no payment. Unfortunately, as the children age, it is likely that the highly involved fathers lose contact (Lerman, 1993). By the time children reach 6 or 7 years old, over one-third have stopped visiting. According to Lerman's (1993) interpretation of NLSY data, there are some young unwed fathers who challenge societal stereotypes, but there are also some young fathers who provide some support for them.

Pirog-Good (1995) used NLSY data to obtain nationally representative estimates of the family background and attitudes of adolescent fathers ages 14-21 years at the beginning of data collection. With regard to family background, teen fathers of all races came from households with more siblings compared with households of teens who did not become fathers. In 1979 and 1987, teen fathers were approximately twice as likely to live in households below the poverty threshold than young men who became parents at or after age 20. NLSY data also demonstrated that family instability was more prevalent among the teen-father population. Only 45.4% of teen fathers lived with both parents until age 18, in contrast to 68.3% of other young men. This result was found to be most pronounced among White teen fathers, of whom 46.9% lived with both parents until age 18, compared to 71.3% of White men who delayed parenting. A smaller but significant difference existed among African American teen fathers. It was also found that White and African American teen fathers were more likely to have lived in a children's home, group care home, detention center, or other institution than were teens who delayed parenting until or after age 20. Compared to White men who delayed parenting, White adolescent fathers were about three times more likely to have stopped living with a
biological, step, or adoptive parent prior to age 18. Among African American men, adolescent fathers were approximately 60% more likely to have stopped living with a biological, step, or adoptive parent prior to age 18 than men who delayed parenthood.

Recent findings from ethnographic studies challenge the societal stereotypes of young unwed fathers (Sullivan, 1993; Johnson, 2000). Sullivan's (1993) study was based on case studies of 24 young fathers, ranging in age from 15 to 22 years at the time they were interviewed. Fourteen of these individuals lived in a low-income, primarily African American neighborhood and the other 10 lived in a low-income, primarily Hispanic neighborhood. The data collected in this study included the self-reports of these young men in addition to observations of their interactions with the mothers of their children and with other members of their families and communities. Ethnographic methods were used to describe individuals in the context of naturally existing communities. Sullivan (1993) came to know young unwed fathers who frequently visited their children and who paid child support when they were able to find jobs. Many times, if the father was not able to find a job, this was easily forgiven by the young mother and her family if the young father demonstrated his commitment in other ways, such as providing regular child care, attempting to invest in education and training in order to be better able to provide support in the future, and staying clear of heavy drug use and incarceration. The data presented in this study suggested that many young fathers want to take long-term responsibility for their children, but are hampered by their lack of educational and employment opportunities.

Johnson (2000) conducted a pilot study of the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, a national longitudinal study that examines unwed African American,
white, and Latino fathers’ capabilities, their attitudes about fathers’ rights and responsibilities, and their relationships with their mothers and children. The Chicago pilot study included eight poor African American men ranging in age from 15 – 43 years who had become fathers within days of their interviews. Johnson (2000) compared the older and younger fathers’ experiences of fatherhood on several issues including paternal readiness, the competing demands of paternal presence and financial support, and commitment to the family of procreation. The fathers in this study acknowledged their responsibility to provide various forms of instrumental support (i.e. money, milk, diapers for their newborns) and complementary support for their older children. However, provision of financial support was contingent on their success in obtaining and sustaining employment. These findings are similar to those found in Sullivan’s (1993) study. These fathers have the knowledge and desire to contribute to their children both financially and emotionally; however, their contributions are dependent upon their abilities to obtain employment. Russell, a 25 year-old participant in Johnson’s (2000) study, expressed his concerns that his efforts are not recognized and fully valued in saying,

“No one helps fathers who want to do the right thing. I know men who do not care about their children. But fathers like me do not get any props or help. The government only wants us for what money we can give and that’s not much. I would like to be the one who supports my children – not the government – but I need help to get to that point.” (p. 250 – 251)

Although there is not a substantial amount of research on young unwed fathers, recent research is challenging the stereotypical images of young fathers. According to recent research, the stereotype of young fathers as uncaring and uninvolved is not always true.
This research has found that, given the chance, many fathers reported that the fathering experience is a central event in their young lives (Johnson, 2000; Rhoden & Robinson, 1997; Sullivan, 1993).

Although several research findings challenge the societal stereotypes of young fathers, other studies of young fathers reveal findings that support these stereotypes. Weinman, Smith, and Buzi (2002) conducted a risk behavior assessment using a large sample of 128 inner-city young fathers, ages 15-31, who were interested in a male-involvement program. The risk behaviors identified in this sample of young fathers were consistent with those found in other studies of young fathers (Cochran, 1997; Lerman & Sorenson, 2000). Seventy-three percent of the participants were unemployed, 69% dropped out of school, over 60% were poor users of contraceptives, over one-third used alcohol and drugs, and 30% had been convicted of a felony. Forty percent of young fathers had more than one child and less than half had declared paternity.

In another study demonstrating support for the societal stereotypes, Furstenberg (1995) conducted lengthy interviews with 20 low-income, inner-city young fathers and mothers in their mid-20s, all African American. As in the other studies mentioned previously, he found examples of both “good” and “bad” fathers, but found more examples of “bad” fathers (Furstenberg, 1995). One recurring theme found in this study involved broken promises to their children and the mother, such as failing to provide financial help and failing to be present on a consistent basis. The mothers offered a number of reasons men often do not deliver on their promises to do for their children:

- “That’s how most of them are. I mean they get scared.”
• I guess failing, maybe failing the child or not standing up to the mother’s standards or something. It takes too much for them.”

• “He wasn’t scared. He’s just spoiled and he always had everything his way.” (p. 134)

Several of these fathers agreed with the women and admitted that they were “used to being indulged or spoiled by their mothers” (p. 134). Other fathers admitted that it was difficult to put the needs of their children or partners before their own needs. According to Lionnel, “I do what I can, but I’ve got to live too” (p. 134).

What predicts the age at which men become fathers? This question was answered by 499 male participants who were part of the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study, a longitudinal study of the health, development, and behavior of a cohort of children born between April 1, 1972 and March 31, 1973 (Jaffee, Avshalom, Moffitt, Taylor, & Dickson, 2001). It was found that by age 26, 19% of the 499 men studied had become fathers. The men who became fathers were divided into three groups: those who lived with their child “full-time” (N = 39), those who lived with their child “part-time” (N = 36), and those who lived with their child “no-time” (N = 18). Results indicated that being born to a teen mother, living with a single parent, early initiation of sexual activity, low interest in school, and a history of conduct disorder increased the likelihood of becoming a young father. It was also found that fathers who had experienced a stressful rearing environment and had a history of conduct disorder spent less time living with their first-born child. Compared to fathers who lived full-time with their children, those who lived only some or none of the time with their child had lower SES, more unemployment, and experienced more symptoms of anxiety and alcohol
and marijuana dependency. These findings present individual and family-of-origin characteristics that might be targeted in order to increase levels of paternal involvement.

The literature on young unwed fathers is mixed and does not present a clear description of young unwed fathers. Some of the research supports the societal stereotypes of young unwed fathers as being a high school drop out, unemployed, and having little involvement with their children (Furstenberg, 1995; Weinman et al., 2002). Other research has provided support against these stereotypes indicating that many young unwed fathers have a desire to be a part of their children’s lives and do what they can with the resources available to them to make this happen (Johnson, 2000; Sullivan, 1993). One problem area with this research is the broad age range that has been applied to identifying young fathers, usually 15-25 years. It is likely that there are many characteristics that differentiate those falling in the low end of this age range from those falling at the high end. The proposed study plans to address this issue by breaking down this broad age range and focusing on unwed adolescent fathers ranging in age from 14 to 19 years.

Theoretical Models and Fatherhood

Parenting theory points to a number of possible influences on fathers’ behaviors (Coley, 2001). Belsky’s (1984) model of the determinants of parenting proposes the importance of three levels of influence: personal characteristics of the child, personal characteristics of the parents, and social and contextual influences. The model assumes that parenting is directly influenced by forces originating from within the individual parent (personality), within the individual (child characteristics), and from the broader social context in which the parent-child relationship is embedded (marital relations, social
networks, and occupational experiences of parents). The model also assumes that parents' developmental histories, marital relations, social networks, and jobs influence their personality and general well-being, which in turn, influences child development. The contributions of parenting theory to factors influencing father involvement is seen in both theories applied to research on African American fathers as well as in conceptual theories of fatherhood.

Several theories have been applied specifically to research on African American fathers to explain the varying parenting experiences observed among this population. Cochran (1997) discussed several theories used in the research on African American fathers. In reviewing these theories, Cochran (1997) placed an emphasis on contemporary theories that operate on the assumption that sociocultural context is important. The contemporary theories include the ecological and the choice or exchange perspectives. The ecological approach emphasizes the importance of examining the parenting experience in its environmental context and according to the value system of a family's subculture. This theory allows researchers to explore the historical, political, and social influences on African American fathers. According to McAdoo (1993), this theory allows one to "evaluate the relationships between external social systems and internal family functioning" (p. 28). Research findings of ecologically-oriented studies have changed the picture of African Americans' parenting behaviors by providing information that corrects stereotypes (Cochran, 1997). For example, Miller (1994) used an ecological approach in a study that explored several factors related to the parental involvement of 29 African-American unwed adolescent fathers ranging in age from 15 to 20 years. The factors included: social support, father-role readiness, stress, and
involvement in the decision-making process. Findings of this study suggested that these adolescent fathers exhibit a level of parental involvement that is not generally perceived by the public. These findings also suggested that parental involvement is influenced by factors present in the father's immediate environment. Contrary to societal stereotypes, many adolescent fathers are attempting to assume responsible roles, but may encounter obstacles that prevent them from doing so.

According to McAdoo (1990), choice and exchange theory "leads us to believe that adolescents will choose to become fathers when other social rewards (i.e., jobs, higher education) are perceived as unavailable to them" (p. 231). African-American adolescent fathers are disproportionately confronted with societal-structural barriers that limit their accessibility to social rewards. The combined effects of cultural values, institutional racism, and marginal status were identified as barriers to social and economic opportunities needed to become a viable member of society (McAdoo, 1990). Choice or exchange theory has five key components: it lends itself to a multidimensional analysis, examining African American fathers from a micro and macro level; it can easily capture the variability often ignored among African American fathers; Afrocentric cultural values are accommodated by this theory; the multidimensional aspect of the model is flexible enough to examine changes in the parenting role of African American men over time; and the theory enables the researchers to explore critically some of the choices African American men make regarding family and parenthood (Cochran, 1997).

Several conceptual models are frequently used in the fatherhood literature; however, very few of these models consider the factors related to nonresident father involvement. Doherty et al. (1998) developed a conceptual model of influences on
fathering, but unlike prior work, presented a model that was inclusive of fathering inside and outside of marriage and regardless of co-residence with the child. The focus of this model is on the factors that help create and maintain a father-child bond. The model highlights individual factors in the father, mother, and child; mother-father relationship factors; and larger contextual factors in the environment (see Figure 1). Within each of these five domains the model outlines a number of specific factors that can be supported by the research literature. The center of the model is the interacting unit of child, father, and mother, each engaging in beliefs and behaviors that influence others. The father-mother-child triad is embedded in a broader social context that affects them as individuals and the quality of their relationships. The proposed study will use this model in combination with the sociocultural emphasis of the contemporary theories on African American fathers as a foundation for determining the major factors that influence unwed adolescent father involvement. This model will also be helpful in determining which factors play a larger role in father involvement compared to others. Unlike other conceptual models, this model provides the opportunity for exploring the factors related to nonresident father involvement. Therefore, this model seems to fit best with the objectives of this study.

*Facilitators of and Barriers to Father Involvement*

The research reviewed thus far has made clear that there are some unmarried fathers who play a major role in their children’s lives and there are other fathers who do not. The question remains as to what factors are facilitating fathers’ involvement with their children and what factors are standing in the way of fathers becoming involved with their children. Another important question that is related to the purpose of the proposed
study is why are men not consistently fulfilling their own or others’ expectations as fathers? (Coley, 2001). Several factors used in the conceptual model constructed by Doherty et al. (1998) will be used to present the research that has attempted to answer these questions.

Child Characteristics

Certain characteristics of young fathers’ children may be associated with father-child interactions (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997). However, the child factors studied in the research literature do not appear to be as salient as other dimensions in influencing parenting (Doherty et al., 1998). The age of children may mediate young fathers’ influence on their children’s development. Nonresidential fathers tend to see their children less often as their children get older (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Lerman, 1993). NLSY data from 1986 indicated that 57% of nonresident young fathers with a child two years of age or younger visited more than twice a week (Lerman, 1993). This percentage decreased for each progressively older age group of children. In a study of young, low-income, urban African-American women assessing fathers’ involvement with their children through maternal reports, nearly 40% of the fathers reported on by the sample showed instability in their involvement with their children over a time period of 3 years, either significantly increasing or decreasing their level of involvement between the child’s birth and their preschool years (Coley, 2001). This pattern has been found to be a function of the timing and quality of fathers’ romantic relationships with the mothers of their children, rather than the age of the children (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997). Although Cooksey and Craig (1998) found age of the child to be unrelated to frequency of paternal visits, they found that fathers were much more likely to talk on the telephone with older
children. With regard to gender, Seltzer (1991) found a slight tendency for fathers to see daughters more often than sons. Evidence concerning the effects of child's age and gender on paternal visitation is mixed (Cooksey & Craig, 1998).

More research is needed on the influence of the child's temperament and developmental status on relations with nonresidential fathers (Doherty et al., 1998). Lamb and Elster (1986) suggested that young fathers may have less patience with children they perceive to be temperamentally difficult. This issue appears to be particularly important for infants since some are much easier to be around and less demanding than others. Since young fathers tend to be less knowledgeable about child development and less emotionally mature than older fathers, they are more likely to have difficulty interpreting and responding to demanding infant behavior in a constructive manner (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997).

Father Characteristics

One factor that research has demonstrated as playing a role in father involvement is human capital, which is most commonly operationalized as years of education and employment status (Coley, 2001). Many studies have found that fathers who have jobs and higher levels of education will be highly involved with their children post-divorce or with a nonmarital birth (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Cooksey & Craig, 1998; Stier & Tienda, 1993; Sullivan, 1993). It appears that both employment and a high school education serve to discourage a decrease in involvement over time (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Employment appears to encourage high levels of paternal involvement, perhaps through the availability of financial resources to help provide for the child, whereas education seems to protect against fathers removing themselves from their
children's lives after having been initially involved (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Another explanation for this finding is that among low-income, urban African American communities, in which unemployment and low educational attainment have become more prevalent, men who are employed and adequately educated may have different psychological resources or social competencies than unemployed and less educated men (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Inability to find work was a frequent cause of "stepping off" or neglect of paternal responsibilities (Sullivan, 1993). "In order not to step off, you got to have a job...'cause, if you don't get a job, and you're not supporting the baby, you ain't see the baby," (p. 62) says Ollie, a young, minority father.

Paternal beliefs about fathering and parenting responsibilities, influenced by familial, moral, religious, and cultural influences, may also play an important role in determining father behaviors (Coley, 2001). Fathers with a stronger commitment to parenting and who see their role as integral to their image are more involved fathers, regardless of their marital or residential status (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999). Furstenberg (1995) used Ricky's case as an example of a young father who, in the face of many obstacles, became a dedicated father. When asked why he was such a dedicated father, Ricky responded with these words, "I don't know. Maybe I believe in [it]. When the child started calling me daddy. God! Pretty special" (p. 142).

One factor that appears to play an important role in the formation of parenting beliefs and practices is cultural environment (Doherty et al., 1998). For example, different patterns of paternal involvement and behavior are apparent across racial and ethnic groups (Lerman, 1993). Although African Americans have nonmarital birth rates significantly higher than those of Caucasians and slightly higher than those of Hispanics,
unmarried African American fathers are more likely to live close to their children and to visit them and demonstrate a slightly higher frequency of support payments than are white and Hispanic fathers (Lerman, 1993; Seltzer, 1991). Sullivan (1993) found differences between young Hispanic and African American low-income fathers concerning community assumptions of fathers' responsibilities. Hispanics reported considerable pressure for young fathers to marry, establish co-residence, and find full-time employment, but little support for continuing to invest in education and training for themselves. African American men reported family and community pressure to play a somewhat involved nonresidential father role, providing some financial and child-care support (Sullivan, 1993).

Another characteristic that is likely to play a role in father involvement is the likelihood of young fathers to be involved in various problem behaviors such as drug use and criminal behavior (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997). In his analysis of NLSY data, Lerman (1993) concluded that higher rates of hard drug use and criminal behavior were found among young unwed fathers, ages 14 – 21 years, compared to other young men (never married, married with children, married without children). Criminal behaviors that were prevalent among this group included being charged in adult court and serving time in prison. Within racial groups, Lerman (1993) found that the difference in the incidence of problem behaviors between unwed fathers and other adolescents was typically larger among whites than among blacks or Hispanics. Although research has not yet documented the direct link between young fathers' problem behaviors and their children's development (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997), it is reasonable to assume that children will experience adverse consequences based on paternal involvement in criminal
behaviors. It is highly likely that fathers with these problems will generally be limited in their ability to contribute financially to their children’s support (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997).

**Social and Contextual Influences**

The family environments and relationships of men have a significant impact on their level of involvement with their children (Coley, 2001). Research findings demonstrate that a major social influence on father involvement is the quality of the mother-father relationship (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Furstenberg, 1995; Johnson, 2001). “A man’s allegiance to his children is maintained in part by the bond established with his children’s mother. When that bond dissolves, men sometimes have difficulty establishing a direct relationship with their children” (Furstenberg, 1995, p. 137).

Johnson (2001) conducted a study based on first wave data collected for the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Survey (FFCW), a national birth cohort study of unmarried parents and their children of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Based on 1780 unmarried maternal reports and 1276 of their partners’ reports, this study provided strong evidence for the hypothesis that romantic involvement is a principal determinant of paternal involvement.

Research has also found that courteous or close relationships encourage active fathering (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Cutrona, Hessling, Bacon, & Russell, 1998). Coley & Chase-Lansdale (1999) found that, although fathers who were married to or cohabiting with the mother at the time of the interview were significantly more involved than nonresidential fathers, this relationship was mediated through the quality of the parents’ emotional relationship. Once the closeness of the mother-father relationship was
accounted for, residential and marital status did not relate to the pattern of paternal involvement (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Lamb & Elster (1985) found similar results in their study involving home observations of 52 adolescent mothers, their partners (16-29 years of age), and their six-month-old infants. They found that the quality of the father-infant interaction was significantly correlated with all measures of mother-father interaction although this connection was not found between mother-infant interaction and mother-father interaction. Therefore, these findings indicate that, in couples comprised of adolescent mothers and young fathers, the father’s, but not the mother’s, involvement with the child varied with the status of the mother-father relationship. If the couple’s relationship is good and the father has stable employment, the father’s presence may help alleviate some of the mother’s stress and positively affect the child by indirectly facilitating quality maternal care (Lamb & Elster, 1985). In a longitudinal study conducted with a sample of 105 low-income, primarily European American adolescent mothers and their infants over an 18-24 month period, the quality of the relationship between the young mother and the baby’s father six weeks after delivery predicted continuing involvement (Cutrona, Hessling, Bacon, & Russell, 1998). The more supportive and intimate the relationship, the more likely the baby’s father was to remain involved. If the mother-father relationship can maintain positive qualities throughout this highly demanding time and critical time of adjustment, it may be a sign of significant relationship strength (Cutrona, Hessling, Bacon, & Russell, 1998).

Extended family members, especially grandmothers, can also be important players in nonresidential fathers’ involvement with their children (Coley, 2001). Qualitative research conducted in low-income African American neighborhoods found
that adolescent mothers' parents and other female relatives may restrict young fathers' access to their children, if the fathers’ prospects for employment are uncertain (Sullivan, 1993). Empirical work does not support the hypothesis that, among unmarried-parent families, support from extended family members might decrease the desire or need of mothers for paternal involvement (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Danziger & Radin, 1990). In a study examining the effects of several predictors of father involvement in a large sample of single-parent, teen mother families (N > 400), it was hypothesized that involvement of the absent father with his child would be lower when the teen mother was living with both parents because the grandfather’s presence in the home would reduce parental role-taking by the absent father (Danziger & Radin, 1990). However, this hypothesis was refuted, having neither significant negative nor positive influence on the young men’s paternal involvement. The results of Coley and Chase-Lansdale’s (1999) study also refuted this hypothesis finding that neither the child living with other father figures nor with grandmothers prohibited paternal involvement.

"Historically, public policies have tended to constrain the positive development of fathering behaviors, especially in non-traditional families, because they were constructed through the lens of the traditional nuclear family” (Cabrera & Peters, 2000, p. 301). One policy that appears to acts as a major barrier to father involvement is payment of child support. In reviewing the literature, Cabrera and Peters (2000) found a large body of evidence showing that child support itself may influence parent-child and mother-father relationships, which, in turn, affect child’s well-being. The payment of child support is an indicator of a fathers’ success in the economic provider role and this success is likely to enable nonresidential fathers to become involved with their children in other beneficial
ways. If child support payments are not made, mothers who are gatekeepers may only allow the father access to the children if child support is paid (Cabrera & Peters, 2000). McLanahan et al. (1994) argued that child support payments influence the degree of conflict between the two parents either positively or negatively. When fathers fulfill their financial obligation, conflict is likely to decrease. However, an increase of father involvement through the payment of child support may also increase opportunities for conflict between the parents.
Chapter II
Rationale and Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers to and facilitators of the involvement of unwed, adolescent, African American fathers with their children. Research has demonstrated that father involvement impacts children’s development and well-being whether or not the father resides with the child. Although it is not clear as to what factors play a role in adolescent father involvement, research has demonstrated the importance of looking at factors on both an individual and contextual level to get a complete picture. Through qualitative research this study will aim to gain a better understanding of the role that these factors play in contributing to adolescent father involvement.

In reviewing the literature, it is apparent that adolescent fathers are a population that has been somewhat neglected in the research. In the majority of the literature, adolescent fathers are included under the broader category of young fathers ranging in age from 14 to 25 years. However, it is likely that younger adolescent fathers have different experiences than those fathers ranging in age from 19 to 25 years. Also, much of the literature focusing on unwed fathers has used maternal reports to gather information about the fathers. The proposed study will gather information based on self-reports in order to get a first-hand account of these individuals’ experiences.

The intention of this study is to provide an in-depth look at a group of fathers who have received little attention in the literature previously. Insight into the barriers and facilitators of African American adolescent father involvement, will aid professionals, especially those working in social service organizations, to create more effective
programs for adolescent fathers. Additionally, it is hoped that the findings of this study will help professionals to better understand the needs that are unique to adolescent fathers for creating change in their lives.

The proposed study has several specific objectives that were developed based on the conceptual model of influences on fathering (Doherty et al., 1998) in combination with the sociocultural emphasis of the contemporary theories on African American fathers (Cochran, 1997). The first objective is to determine the influence of societal and contextual factors on African American adolescent fathers and their relationship and involvement with their children. What expectations do adolescent fathers perceive the African American community has for them in their paternal role? What factors prevent them from meeting cultural expectations? The contextual factors that will be explored have been derived from the factors presented in the conceptual model (Doherty et al., 1998) and the sociocultural approach of contemporary theories on African American fathers. The factors that will be considered include the racial and age-related challenges that impact economic factors and employment opportunities for African American adolescent fathers. The social support these fathers receive from the community, extended family, and friends will be explored as well. According to the conceptual model (Doherty et al., 1998), the father-mother-child triad in the center of the model is embedded in a broader social context that affects them as individuals and the quality of their relationships. Therefore, the influence that these contextual factors have on how adolescent fathers conceptualize fatherhood and engage in the father role will be considered as well.
The second objective is to gain an understanding of how African American adolescent father involvement is influenced by paternal factors and child factors. The paternal and child factors that will be explored are based on those presented as influences on fatherhood in the conceptual model (Doherty et al., 1998). Paternal factors that will be explored include role identification, commitment to parenting, psychological well-being, relations with their own father, employment characteristics, and residential status. Child factors will include age, gender, and residential status. Additionally, the father-child relationship will be explored in terms of visitation arrangements and the frequency of contact fathers have with their children. The conceptual model supports the idea that the father-child bond is influenced by the interaction that occurs among contextual factors and individual factors (Doherty et al., 1998). Therefore, the interaction that occurs between contextual factors and paternal factors in order to facilitate or prevent father involvement will be explored.

The third objective will be to explore the relationship between the adolescent father and the child’s mother. The coparental relationship is another domain that is presented in the conceptual model (Doherty et al., 1998). The impact this relationship has on father involvement will be investigated. The quality of the father-mother relationship will be explored by factors presented in the conceptual model that include the amount of conflict present, relationship commitment, and the custodial arrangement. Which contextual factors and paternal characteristics are likely to impact the mother-father relationship and, in turn, influence the father-child relationship?

The final objective will be to gain an understanding of what goals African American adolescent fathers have with regards to father involvement. What factors will
facilitate the achievement of these goals? What changes need to be made in the lives of adolescent fathers to foster increased involvement with their children? Also, what resources do these fathers have access to in order make these changes occur? What role do adolescent fathers see service programs as having to guide them in increasing their involvement with their children? It is hoped that, by allowing adolescent fathers to voice their opinions on these issues, service programs will gain better insight into increasing the effectiveness of the services that they can provide to adolescent fathers.
Chapter III

Method

Overview

This study will use qualitative methodology with data collected in a semi-structured interview format. The use of qualitative methodology will allow for an in-depth exploration of the facilitators of and barriers to African American adolescent father involvement. This format will also provide these fathers with a unique opportunity to freely share their thoughts and experiences related to fatherhood.

Participants

Participants in this study will be unwed, adolescent, African American fathers. The fathers must be between the ages of 14 and 20 years. The fathers included in this study will be residents of low-income, African American neighborhoods in the Greater Cincinnati community. Low-income will be defined by participant’s mother’s level of education, eligibility for Medicaid by the participant and/or his family of origin, and the neighborhood in which the participant resides. The target number of participants in this study is 20 to 25. The number of participants included in previous qualitative studies on young unwed fathers has varied from 9 (Johnson, 2000) to 24 (Sullivan, 1993).

Participants will be recruited from fatherhood-related organizations in the Greater Cincinnati area which are committed to helping recruit through their involvement in the Greater Cincinnati Fatherhood Coalition. Community centers and schools are other possible sites for recruiting. A recruitment advertisement (Appendix A) will be placed in the newsletters of the local organizations and community centers. Efforts will also be made to recruit participants through community-based networks in order to avoid
recruiting all participants from a self-selected population of program users. The Greater Cincinnati Fatherhood Coalition will be providing an incentive to individuals who participate in the study. Each participant will be given a free pass for two movie tickets, two popcorns, and two drinks in exchange for his participation.

Measures

Demographic information form. All participants will be asked to provide demographic information prior to the interview. Information to be gathered includes education level, employment history, current financial status, current living arrangements, living arrangements of their children, ages of their children, and any services or treatment programs in which they are currently involved (Appendix B).

Interview form. The interview questionnaire (Appendix C) was created specifically for this study. It is based on a thorough review of the literature and input from professionals in the community who have direct contact with African American, adolescent fathers. Prior to beginning formal data collection, the interview will be reviewed by a focus group of Fatherhood Coalition members for feedback on the cultural and developmental appropriateness of the questions. Following this focus group, a pilot interview will be conducted with two to three fathers to further assess the appropriateness of the interview questions. The interview was developed based on a combination of the conceptual model of influences on fathering (Doherty et al., 1998) and the sociocultural influences of the contemporary theories on African American fathers (Cochran, 1997). The questions included in this interview have been organized according to several of the domains present in the conceptual model (Doherty et al., 1998). The domains of this conceptual model from which the interview questions were developed are as follows:
paternal factors, societal and contextual factors, child factors, and the mother-father relationship. The domains are represented in the interview as general categories. Under each domain, are questions related to the specific factors related to that domain based on the factors presented in the conceptual model (Doherty et al., 1998).

Numerical rating scales. Twelve items in the interview are supplemented by 5-point numerical rating scales. These items deal with respondents' feelings about their level of involvement with their children, the influence of certain factors on their involvement with their children, their level of commitment to assuming their fathering responsibilities, and the expectations others have for assuming their role as a father. When the rating scale questions are asked, participants will be presented with a graphic representation that includes the anchors or verbal labels for each end of the scale. Research has shown that a scale of five to nine points is optimal in giving accurate ratings without the respondents becoming overwhelmed with too many scale points to be able to use it effectively (Whitley, 2002).

Quality of Relationships Inventory. The QRI (Pierce, 1994) is a 25-item self-report measure designed to assess levels of support, conflict, and depth in dyadic relationships (Appendix D). Respondents are instructed to rate each item using a 4-point scale, ranging from (1) not at all to (4) very much, regarding their perceptions of a specific relationship. It takes approximately four minutes to complete (Pierce, 1996). Higher scores on the QRI indicate more positive appraisals of the relationship. For example, a study examining relationship factors associated with parental dysfunction among young African American and Latino couples used the QRI to assess the quality of relations these fathers perceived with their partners and parents (Florsheim et al., 2003).
Scores on the QRI ranged from as low as 25 (describing a very negative relationship) to 99 (describing a very positive relationship). The QRI has been found to have high internal consistency (average $r = .71$) and test-retest reliability (average $=.75$), as well as high levels of construct, convergent, and discriminate validity (Pierce, 1996; Pierce, Sarason, Sarason, Solky-Butzel, & Nagle, 1997). This instrument can be used in a variety of contexts, including research, clinical, and other applied settings. The QRI will be used as a descriptor to provide additional information regarding how adolescent fathers perceive their relationships with their children’s mothers.

**Procedure**

Fathers who agree to participate in this study will be given an informed consent form that needs to be signed (Appendix E). If the participant is less than 18 years old, a parental consent form will be given to his parent or legal guardian to be signed. This will be signed prior to the interview. Fathers who are under the age of 18 will be given an assent form, at the time of the interview, to be signed that describes the purpose of the research and what their participation will involve. It is the intention of the primary investigator to seek parental consent for all participants under the age of 18. However, adolescent fathers are a group that is at risk for having unstable family relationships and possible estrangement from parents or legal guardians. Therefore, for fathers aged 15 to 17 the primary investigator will make every attempt to obtain consent from both the adolescent and his parent/guardian. If, however, a parent/guardian is unable to be reached, consent will be obtained from the adolescent only.

Prior to the interview, each participant will also be asked to fill out the demographic information form. They will also be given a short summary of the study.
(Appendix H) prior to beginning the interview that will provide them with an overview of the topic areas that will be covered in the interview. All forms will be read aloud by the interviewer as the participants read along in order to ensure that the instructions and the participant’s role in the study are clearly understood.

Interviews will be conducted in various settings that include: fatherhood-related organizations, community agencies, schools, and the participants’ homes. A contact person will be set up at each of the recruitment sites. These individuals will aid the primary investigator in setting up the interviews. Their roles will include recruiting participants through networking and distribution of the recruitment advertisement, providing necessary contact information for participants, and establishing on-site space in which the interview can be conducted. These individuals will act as liaisons between the primary investigator and participant in establishing interview appointment times and places. The interviews will be conducted at times that are mutually acceptable to the participant and the interviewer. There will be a team of interviewers, which the primary investigator of the proposed study will lead. The primary investigator will ensure training of the interviewers for consistent use of the interview protocol. The interviewers will need to establish an environment in which the participants feel comfortable responding to the interview questions in an open and honest manner. The interview progresses from general questions that cover several broad areas to more specific questions under each broad area that will be asked if they are not addressed in the responses to the more general questions. The general categories are Paternal Factors in Father Involvement, Societal and Contextual Factors in Father Involvement, The Child, The Mother-Father Relationship, and Facilitators of Father Involvement. In addition, several of the questions
are supplemented with 5-point numerical rating scales. A visual representation of the scales will be provided to the participants to ensure that they understand the rating process. It is estimated that the interview will be one hour to an hour and a half in length. Fathers will be asked to complete the Quality of Relationships Inventory regarding their relationship with their child’s mother during the interview. For fathers who have children with multiple mothers, they will be asked to complete a separate QRI regarding their relationship with each of the children’s mothers.

The data to be collected are the responses to the interview questions, the responses to the numerical rating scale supplemental items, and the scores on the QRI. All data from the interviews will be audio-recorded using standard cassette tape recording equipment. As interviews are completed, all recordings will be transcribed by an independent transcription service. Transcribers may be asked to sign a separate statement of confidentiality. Transcripts will be provided in both paper and electronic formats. Data in electronic form will then be easily imported into the data analysis software that will be used. Once transcriptions are completed, all identifying information will be replaced with a code. All information will be locked up and will be kept confidential. Audiotapes will be stored separately from any identifying information. The audiotapes will be destroyed at the completion of the study.
Chapter IV

Proposed Data Analysis

Information obtained in the interviews will be analyzed using a combination of techniques. According to Esterberg (2002), qualitative data analysis typically involves three phases: recognizing patterns (or categories) in the data, generating ideas about what these patterns might mean, and exploring potential meanings in the data. Computer software programs can help in this process (Esterberg, 2002). The TextSmart (SPSS, 1997) software program will be used to aid in the first phase of data analysis that involves recognizing patterns in the data. The transcribed data will be cut-and-pasted into the program and imported into TextSmart in plain text form.

As the transcribed data is imported into TextSmart, several features will be utilized prior to the analysis including automatic stemming, excluded terms list files, and alias files. Each time the data are reported, the program will automatically use a stemming process that searches for derivations of common root words. The user also has the option of importing excluded terms and alias files into the program. An excluding process filters trivial words and irrelevant utterances such as “umm,” and “uh.” These terms can be added to this file and the program will automatically exclude them from analysis. In using the aliasing technique, the user will define terms that have similar meanings or are synonyms (i.e., smart, wise, intelligent). These terms are then grouped together into aliases automatically in subsequent analyses. Through the use of these features, a list of terms that are suitable for categorization will be created.

Once the data are imported into the program, TextSmart’s automatic categorization feature will be used. The program automatically clusters terms that tend to
occur together in responses. This categorization of the terms provides general themes and patterns that emerge from the data. Independent raters will use focused coding to review a portion of the transcripts to confirm or change the categorization offered by SmartText to ensure that all themes and patterns are identified (Esterberg, 2002).

Once the automatic categorization and independent ratings are compiled, revisions can be made to the coding of the data to meet the proposed study's specifications. Revising the coding criteria will provide a more accurate categorization by TextSmart that will ensure more confidence that the patterns and themes of the data are accurate.

Data will be analyzed to determine the themes that emerge regarding African American, adolescent fathers' responses about the barriers and facilitators that influence their involvement with their children. Data analysis will provide insight into which societal, contextual, paternal, child, and mother-father relationship factors play a role in influencing adolescent father involvement with their children. Data analysis will also determine themes regarding the interactions that occur among these factors in contributing to father involvement. Finally, data analysis will determine themes regarding adolescent fathers' hopes, intentions, and goals for their future involvement with their children and what resources they feel will help them in achieving these goals.

Data will be reported in terms of percentages of respondents whose answers fall into each category. The numerical rating scales will also be analyzed and results will be reported in terms of frequency ratings.

Scores on the QRI will be added together and then averaged in order to determine a mean rating for the adolescent fathers. In order to determine whether or not there was a
wide variation among the responses, the scores will be analyzed in terms of standard
deviations from the mean. Therefore, the scores on the QRI will be reported in terms of a
mean rating and variation among the scores. These data will be used as a descriptor for
the relationships this sample of fathers is likely to have with their children's mothers.


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Figure 1

Influences on Fatherhood
A Conceptual Model

Father Factors
- Role Identification
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Commitment
- Psychological Well Being
- Relationships with Own Father
- Employment Characteristics
- Residential Status

Contextual Factors
- Institutional Practices
- Employment Opportunities
- Economic Factors
- Race/Ethnicity Resources and Challenges
- Cultural Expectations
- Social Support

Child Factors
- Attitude toward Father
- Behavioral Difficulties
- Temperament
- Gender
- Age
- Developmental Status

Coproductive Relationship
- Marital/Nonsensual Status
- Dual or Single Parent
- Custodial Arrangement
- Relationship Commitment
- Cooperation
- Mutual Support
- Conflict

Mother Factors
- Attitude toward Father
- Expectations of Father
- Support of Father
- Employment Characteristics

Doberit, William J., Edward F. Koneski, and Martha Farrell Erickson

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Appendix A

Content of Recruitment Advertisement

Through the Eyes of the Father: A Study of Adolescent Fathers

What? A study conducted by a Xavier University psychology graduate student interested in your attitudes and beliefs about being a father.

Who? Fathers between the ages of 14 and 20 who are not married

How? Fathers participate in confidential interviews about what it's like to be a father.

Why? The information gathered from the interviews will be used to help services understand the needs of fathers and may allow us to help other young fathers. Your privacy will be protected.

Each father who participates in this study will get a Showcase Cinema coupon good for two movie tickets, drinks, and popcorn. If you are interested in taking part in this experience, please contact:

Jessica Samson 521-1154 (ask for Jessica Samson’s voicemail box)
Appendix B
Demographic Information Form

Age: ____

Who do you live with? ______________________________

How many children do you have? ______

Age(s) of child(ren): ________________

Who does your child live with?
☐ Their Mother
☐ Their Mother's Parents
☐ Your Parents
☐ Foster Home
☐ Other ________________

What is the highest level of education you have completed? ________________

What is the highest level of education your mother has completed?
☐ Elementary School
☐ Some Middle School
☐ Completed Middle School
☐ Some High School
☐ Completed High School
☐ Some College
☐ Completed College

Do you currently have a job or have you worked in the past? ______

If you are employed or have been employed, please list the kinds of jobs you have or had:
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

Are you and your family eligible for Medicaid? ______

Referral Source ______________________________________
(filled out by primary investigator)
Appendix C

Father Interview

Paternal Factors in Father Involvement

Education (refer to demographic form)
- Are you currently enrolled in school?
  - What grade are you in?
  - Have you had sex education in school?
- What plans do you have for continuing your education?
  - Graduate from high school?
  - Go to college?
  - Get GED?
- Have your decisions about your education been affected by your desire to be involved with your child? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
  - How?

Employment Characteristics
- What kind of flexibility does your current job provide?
  - Is it possible to plan your schedule around spending time with your child?
- How do you think your job interferes with the amount of time you can spend with your child?

Role Identification
- What goals do you have for yourself as a father? (short-term and long-term)
- What responsibilities do you think you have to your child(ren)?
- What kinds of steps do you think you need to take to be part of your child’s life?
- What do you think makes it difficult to take these steps? What do you think makes it easier for you to take these steps?
- How committed are you to being a father? (1 – not committed……5 – very committed)
- How important is it for you to be or continue to be an involved father? (1 – not important….5 – very important)

Relationship with Own Father
- Please describe to me your relationship with your father?
  - What was your relationship like when you were growing up?
  - Was your father around a lot?
  - Was he married to your mother?
  - Who do you feel raised you?
  - How much involvement did your father have in raising you? (1 – none…5 – a lot)
  - How did he discipline you?
  - How do you think your father show that he loved you?
  - What kinds of things do you remember doing with your father?
• How do you think your behaviors as a father have been influenced by your relationship with your own father?

**Residential Status**
• Where are you currently living? (refer to demographic form)
• Do you have a room of your own?
• How long have you lived there?
• How do you think these living arrangements have affected your relationship and involvement with your child? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
  - Please explain

**Psychological Well-Being**
• Have you ever been to a counselor or therapist?
  - How helpful was this experience for you? (1 – not at all....5 – very much so)
• Did you have any trouble adjusting to the news of becoming a father?
  - What was your reaction when you were told that you were going to be a father?
• What do you think makes it difficult to adjust to the news of being a father?
  - Not being ready/ prepared to be a father?
  - Feeling like you are too young to be a father?
  - Not having enough money?
• What has helped you in getting used to the idea of your being a father?
  - Support from family and friends?
  - Talking to a counselor/therapist?

**Societal and Contextual Factors in Father Involvement**

**Community/Societal/Family Expectations**
• How did your friends and family react to your being a father?
  - What kind of pressure did you feel from them to be a part of your child’s life?
  - Are you getting any help from anybody to be part of your child’s life?
    - What kind of emotional help are you getting from family and friends?
    - What kind of financial help are you getting from family and friends?
  - What kind of support did your family offer to you? (emotional, financial, etc.)
  - Has anybody in your family discussed sex and birth control with you?
• How much have you been encouraged by your family and friends to be a part of your child’s life? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)

**Employment Opportunities/Challenges**
• Are you working right now? (refer to demographic form)
  - If so, tell me about your job.
  - What jobs have you had before?
  - How long did you stay at each job?
  - What were your responsibilities?
  - How much were you paid?
  - How many hours did you work?
• Was there ever a time when you had trouble finding a job?
Tell me about it
What made it hard to get a job?

- Do you think your jobs have affected your relationship with your child? How so? (1 – not at all... 5 – very much so)
- Do you think your jobs have affected your relationship with your child’s mother? How so?
- Does any of the money you make from your job go toward supporting your child? How much? What is it used for?

Child Support
- Have you been ordered by the court to pay child support?
- Are you able to pay what you have been ordered to pay?
- If you are not able to pay, what makes this difficult? Was there ever a time when it was easier to pay?
- What do you think would make it easier to pay child support?
- Is anybody paying child support for you such as your parents?
- How do you feel about being ordered by the court to pay support?

Peer Relationships/Perspectives
- What do your friends have to say about your being a father?
  - Do they know?
  - Are any of them fathers?
  - Is this a common experience (being a father) among your friends?
  - Is your relationship with your child(ren) like the relationship they have with their children or different? How so?

Criminal Activity
- Have you ever used drugs or alcohol?
- Were you under the influence when your child was conceived?
- Have you ever been arrested? Have you ever served time in a facility? For what? How many times?
- How have these experiences affected your relationship with your child?

The Child
- Tell me about your child(ren) – (refer to demographic form)
  - Age
  - Sex
  - Where does he or she live?
  - With whom does he or she live?
- Is your name on your child’s birth certificate?
- Was your child named after you (first name or last name)?
- What is your current relationship with your child(ren)?
  - Are you permitted to see your child?
  - How often do you see your child(ren)?
• Do you have a scheduled time to see your child?
  - How many hours do you spend together during a visit?
  - Do you spend time alone with your child?
  - What kinds of things do you do together?
  - How do you feel when you are spending time with your child(ren)?
  - How involved do you feel that you are with your child(ren)? (1-not involved at all...5 - very involved)
• At what point were you most involved with your child? (at birth vs. more recently)
  - What was your relationship like with your child(ren)’s mother at this time?

The Mother-Father Relationship

• Describe for me the relationship you have with your child(ren)’s mother(s).
  - How long did the two of you know each other before your baby was born?
  - How do the two of you get along now?
  - Has your relationship changed since your child was born? How so?
  - How supportive do you feel your relationship is? (1 – not supportive…..5 – very supportive)
  - If the relationship is supportive, how do you think this influences your involvement with you child?
  - If the relationship is not supportive, how do you think this influences your involvement with your child?
  - (If have more than one child with different mothers) What are your relationships like with each of your child’s mothers?
    • What makes them different?
• Where does the mother of your child live?
  - What difference do you think this makes in your relationship with your child?
  - Do you think things would be different if the living arrangements were different? How so?
• What expectations does your child’s mother have for you as a father?
  - How involved do you think she expects you to be? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
  - What kind of financial support does she expect you to provide?
  - Does she expect other support as well such as spending quality time with your child?
• Has your involvement with your child ever been restricted either by the child’s mother or by her parents?
  - If so, what limits have been placed on your involvement?
  - How does it feel to be restricted from seeing your child?

Facilitators of Father Involvement

• Overall, what changes do you think you could be made in your life to become more involved with you child(ren)?
• What kind of help do you feel you might need in making these changes?
- How hopeful are you that these changes are possible? (1 - not hopeful....5 - very hopeful)
- Have you ever or are you currently participating in any service programs that help you to increase your involvement with your child? (refer to demographic form)
  - What about these programs have you found to be most helpful?
  - What other services do you feel you need in making these changes?
  - Do you feel that you have access to these services in order to make the necessary changes?
### Appendix D

#### Quality of Relationships Inventory

Please use the scale below to answer the following questions regarding your relationship with your child(ren)’s mother(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>Quite a bit</td>
<td>Very Much</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?  
   1 2 3 4

2. How often do you need to work hard to avoid conflict with this person?  
   1 2 3 4

3. To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?  
   1 2 3 4

4. How upset does this person sometimes make you feel?  
   1 2 3 4

5. To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it?  
   1 2 3 4

6. How much does this person make you feel guilty?  
   1 2 3 4

7. How much do you have to “give in” in this relationship?  
   1 2 3 4

8. To what extent can you count on this person to help you if a family member very close to you died?  
   1 2 3 4

9. How much does this person want you to change?  
   1 2 3 4

10. How positive a role does this person play in your life?  
    1 2 3 4

11. How significant is this relationship in your life?  
    1 2 3 4

12. How close will your relationship be with this person in 10 years?  
    1 2 3 4

13. How much would you miss this person if the two of you could not see or talk with each other for a month?  
    1 2 3 4

14. How critical of you is this person?  
    1 2 3 4

15. If you wanted to go out and do something this evening,  
    1 2 3 4

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how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something with you?

16. How responsible do you feel for this person’s well-being? 1 2 3 4

17. How much do you depend on this person? 1 2 3 4

18. To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else? 1 2 3 4

19. How much would you like this person to change? 1 2 3 4

20. How angry does this person make you feel? 1 2 3 4

21. How much do you argue with this person? 1 2 3 4

22. To what extent can you really count on this person to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress? 1 2 3 4

23. How often does this person make you feel angry? 1 2 3 4

24. How often does this person try to control or influence your life? 1 2 3 4

25. How much more do you give than you get from this relationship? 1 2 3 4
Appendix E

Consent and Assent Forms

Participant Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted through Xavier University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. This is a research project designed to look at the things that influence adolescent fathers in being the father they want to be. Your participation in this project will involve responding to questions in an interview about your relationship with your child(ren) and what factors have influenced this relationship. The interview will be audio recorded and the information transcribed.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in this study. However, some people get upset when discussing personal issues. The possible benefits to you include the opportunity to think about your experiences as a father and to help professionals better understand the issues related to adolescent fatherhood.

If you have any additional questions about the purpose of this project, please contact Jessica Samson at 521-1154 or Dr. Janet Schultz at the Xavier University Psychology Department at 745-3248.

I will be keeping the information gathered from our interview, but this information is strictly confidential. Your name and other identifying information will not be connected with your responses. Tapes and transcriptions will be kept separately from consent and demographic forms. Tapes may be used for professional or educational purposes but will at no time be matched with any identifying information. This information cannot be released to any agency involving issues such as child support without your explicit written permission. You are under no obligation to participate in this study, and you are free to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty for withdrawing from the study. If you complete this project you will be given Showcase Cinemas coupon good for two movie tickets, two drinks, and for your participation.

If you decide to participate in this project, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant Signature (age 18 and older) Date

Investigator Signature Date
Parental/Legal Guardian Consent Form

Your son is being asked to participate in a research project through Xavier University. This is a research project designed to look at the things that influence adolescent fathers in being the father they want to be. Your son’s participation in this project will involve responding to questions in an interview about his relationship with his child(ren) and what factors have influenced this relationship. The interview will be audio recorded and the information transcribed.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with your son’s participation in this study. However, some people get upset when discussing personal issues. The possible benefits to him include the opportunity to think about his experiences as a father and to help professionals better understand the issues related to adolescent fatherhood.

If you have any additional questions about the purpose of this project, please contact Jessica Samson at 521-1154 or Dr. Janet Schultz at the Xavier University Psychology Department at 745-3248.

I will be keeping the information gathered from the interview, but this information is strictly confidential. Your son’s name and other identifying information will not be associated with his responses. Tapes and transcriptions will be kept separately from consent and demographic forms. Tapes may be used for professional or educational purposes but will at no time be matched with any identifying information. This information cannot be released to any agency involving issues such as child support without your explicit written permission. Your son is under no obligation to participate in this study, and he is free to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty for withdrawing from the study. At the completion of your son’s participation in this project, he will be given a Showcase Cinemas coupon good for two movie tickets, two drinks, and popcorn.

Please sign below if you give your son permission to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

________________________________________  _________________________
Legal Guardian Signature                  Date

________________________________________  _________________________
Investigator Signature                    Date

Appendix G

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Minor Assent Form

I, ______________________________ understand that my parents/guardian have said it's okay for me to take part in a research project about the things that influence young fathers in being the father they want to be.

I am taking part in the project because I want to. I have been told that I can stop at any time I want to and that nothing will happen to me if I want to stop. I also understand that this information cannot be released to any agency involving issues such as child support without my written permission.

If I complete this project, I will be given a Showcase Cinemas coupon good for two movie tickets, two drinks, and popcorn for my participation.

In signing below I am willing to participate in this research project.

______________________________      ________________________
Participant Signature                      Date

______________________________      ________________________
Investigator Signature                   Date
Appendix F

Description of Study for Participants

Hello! Thank you for your interest and willingness to participate in my project on adolescent fathers. Before we begin, I want to provide you with a description of what we will be doing. I am going to start by reading an introduction to you. Because this is research, it’s important that we say the same thing to everyone. I also need to be sure that I don’t forget to tell you something.

In participating in this project, you will be taking part in an interview that will include questions about your experiences as a father so far. If you find any of these questions upsetting, or if you would prefer not to answer any of them, please let me know. Some of the things I will be asking you about include your current relationship with your child or children, your relationship with your child’s mother, and other issues that have influenced your relationship with your child. It is my hope that you will feel comfortable sharing your experiences related to these issues. It is also my hope that the information you and other fathers provide will be helpful in developing programs that are more effective for young fathers.

I want to remind you, that the information you discuss in this interview will remain confidential – that means that no one will ever associate your name with any of your answers. If you have any questions about this research please feel free to ask. I look forward to working with you and appreciate your help in advance.
Chapter V: Dissertation

Abstract

Eighteen African American, adolescent fathers, ranging in age from 14 to 20, were interviewed in a qualitative study about the various factors that play a role in preventing or facilitating their involvement with their children. Participants shared their experiences as adolescent fathers and responded to questions related to paternal factors contributing to father involvement, societal and contextual factors contributing to father involvement, child factors and aspects of the father-child relationship, impact of the mother-father relationship on father involvement, and facilitators of father involvement. The themes that emerged from participants' responses, as derived by two independent raters, are presented and are further illustrated using the participant's own words. Limitations of the current study and suggestions for future research are discussed. Implications for clinical application of the results are also suggested.
Through the Eyes of the Father: A Qualitative Look at the Supports of and Barriers to African American, Adolescent-Father Involvement with their Children

"The decline of fatherhood is one of the most basic, unexpected, and extraordinary trends of our time" (Popenoe, 1998, p. 33). Over the past two decades, there has been a significant growth in the public, political, and academic attention directed at fathers, addressing their roles in families, their rights and responsibilities, and their influence on children (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Lamb, 1997).

The research that has been done in this area has primarily focused on married, middle-class fathers. Research has not focused as much attention on low-income, unmarried, minority fathers, although this appears to be an emerging area of study (Coley, 2001). There is a significant need for further clarification of the range of normative roles that low-income, minority, and unmarried fathers fulfill as well as the obstacles that may be influencing their fathering behaviors (Coley).

Demographic trends in the United States reflect a situation in which a significant proportion of fathers are marginal members of their children's households and minimal or unstable financial providers (Coley, 2001). Nonmarital childbearing is particularly prevalent among low-income and minority populations and is commonly recognized as a social problem contributing to family instability and problematic child development (Coley; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). In 2001, African American females had the highest percentage of nonmarital births at 68.6 percent compared to Asian and White females with the lowest percentage of nonmarital births at 14.9 and 22.5 percent, respectively (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).
Impact of Father Involvement on Children's Well-Being

It is clear that the absence of the biological father reduces children's access to important economic, parental, and community resources. The loss of these resources affects cognitive development and future opportunities. Thus, the evidence strongly suggests that family disruption plays a causal role in lowering children’s well-being.

- (McLanahan, S., 1998, p.91)

In recent years, a small but growing number of studies have focused specifically on the relationships between father involvement and children’s outcomes in low-income, minority, and unmarried-parent families (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999; Furstenburg & Harris, 1993; Mosley & Thomson, 1995; Zimmerman, Salem, & Maton, 1995). This research has indicated that children who have stronger bonds with their fathers, regardless of whether or not the father resided in the home, had higher educational attainment (Furstenberg & Harris). Additionally, the strength of the father-child relationship was also found to be associated with children’s social and emotional functioning (Furstenberg & Harris). Research has also found that both time spent with the father and emotional support from the father are associated with higher self-esteem, lower depression and anxiety, and marginally lower delinquent behavior and marijuana use (Zimmerman et al.). Since research has found that some fathers’ absences may have detrimental impacts on their children’s development and well-being, specifically low-income, African American fathers, it is imperative to explore the changes that need to occur within these fathers’ lives in order to improve the strength of the father-child relationship. One purpose of this study was to clarify this issue further.
Unwed Fathers

Furstenberg (1988) described the patterns of today’s fathers in terms of two contrasting visions of fatherhood: the “good dad-bad dad complex.” According to Furstenberg, fathers feel that they have the freedom to be involved with their children, and some are, but they also feel that they have the freedom to leave, and many do. Fatherhood has become more of a voluntary activity in which fathers can choose to play a greater role or no role at all (Cherlin, 1988). According to Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998), responsible fatherhood encompasses four tasks: providing financial support, providing care, providing emotional support, and establishing legal paternity. Research indicates that some or all of these tasks are often unfulfilled by fathers in the United States today, particularly by low-income, unmarried, and minority fathers (Coley, 2001).

Unmarried families have only recently attracted the interest of researchers and the U.S. Census because of their dramatic increases (Dudley & Stone, 2001). According to U.S. Census statistics, the percentage of divorced parents has remained fairly stable since 1960. In contrast, the percentage of children living only with their never-married mothers has soared since 1960 (Dudley & Stone), growing from 4 percent in 1960 to about 30 percent in 1994 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1994). This figure strongly suggests that the major increases in nonresidential fathers over the past three decades have been among unmarried families (Dudley & Stone, 2001). Unwed fathers appear to constitute a group that is rapidly growing, but at the same time, has been somewhat neglected in the literature.
A review of the literature on unwed fathers indicates the importance of looking at this group as an entity, separate from the larger group of noncustodial fathers. The majority of the research thus far has studied unwed fathers as part of the larger group of noncustodial fathers that includes divorced, separated, and remarried fathers. However, as research has demonstrated, unmarried fathers tend to differ on several aspects from other noncustodial fathers (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Johnson, 2000; McKenry, McKelvey, Leigh, & Wark, 1996). Therefore, this study chose to specifically explore the experiences of this under researched group.

**Young Unwed Fathers**

The literature on young unwed fathers is mixed and does not present a clear description of young unwed fathers. Some of the research describes young unwed fathers as high school drop outs, unemployed, and having little involvement with their children (Furstenberg, 1995; Weinman, Smith, & Buzi, 2002). Furstenberg conducted lengthy interviews with 20 low-income, inner-city young fathers and mothers in their mid-20s, all African American. As in the other studies mentioned previously, he found examples of both “good” and “bad” fathers, but found more examples of “bad” fathers. One recurring theme found in this study involved broken promises to their children and the mother, such as failing to provide financial help and failing to be present on a consistent basis.

Weinman et al. (2002) conducted a risk behavior assessment using a large sample of 128 inner-city young fathers, ages 15-31, who were interested in a male-involvement program. The risk behaviors identified in this sample of young fathers were consistent with those found in other studies of young fathers (Cochran, 1997; Lerman & Sorenson, 2000). Seventy-three percent of the participants were unemployed, 69% dropped out of
school, over 60% were poor users of contraceptives, over one-third used alcohol and drugs, and 30% had been convicted of a felony. Forty percent of young fathers had more than one child and less than half had declared paternity.

Other research has described young unwed fathers in a more positive light with regard to their desire to be an involved father although obstacles in their life tend to interfere with their involvement with their children (Johnson, 2000; Sullivan, 1993). Sullivan’s study was based on case studies of 24 young fathers, ranging in age from 15 to 22 years at the time they were interviewed. Fourteen of these individuals lived in a low-income, primarily African American neighborhood and the other 10 lived in a low-income, primarily Hispanic neighborhood. Ethnographic methods were used to describe individuals in the context of naturally existing communities. Sullivan came to know young unwed fathers who frequently visited their children and who paid child support when they were able to find jobs. Many times, if the father was not able to find a job, his inability to provide financially was easily forgiven by the young mother and her family if the young father demonstrated his commitment in other ways, such as providing regular child care, attempting to invest in education and training in order to be better able to provide support in the future, and staying clear of heavy drug use and incarceration. The data presented in this study suggested that many young fathers want to take long-term responsibility for their children, but are hampered by their lack of educational and employment opportunities.

Johnson (2000) conducted a pilot study of the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study, a national longitudinal study that examined unwed African American, white, and Latino fathers’ capabilities, their attitudes about fathers’ rights and
responsibilities, and their relationships with their mothers and children. The Chicago pilot study included eight poor African American men ranging in age from 15 – 43 years who had become fathers within days of their interviews. Johnson compared the older and younger fathers’ experiences of fatherhood on several issues including paternal readiness, the competing demands of paternal presence and financial support, and commitment to the family of procreation. The fathers in this study acknowledged their responsibility to provide various forms of instrumental support (i.e. money, milk, diapers for their newborns). However, provision of financial support was contingent on their success in obtaining and sustaining employment. These findings are similar to those found in Sullivan’s (1993) study. These fathers have the knowledge and desire to contribute to their children both financially and emotionally; however, their contributions are dependent upon their abilities to obtain employment. Recent research has found that, given the opportunity to discuss their fatherhood experiences, many fathers reported that the fathering experience is a central event in their young lives (Johnson; Rhoden & Robinson, 1997; Sullivan).

One problem with the research conducted on unwed fathers is the broad age range that has been applied to identifying young fathers, usually 15-25 years. It is likely that there are many characteristics that differentiate those falling in the low end of this age range from those falling at the high end. This study addressed this issue by focusing on the low end of this age range, unwed adolescent fathers ranging in age from 14 to 20 years.
Theoretical Models and Fatherhood

Several theories have been applied specifically to research on African American fathers to explain the varying parenting experiences observed among this population. Cochran (1997) discussed several theories used in the research on African American fathers. In reviewing these theories, Cochran placed an emphasis on contemporary theories that operate on the assumption that sociocultural context is important. One contemporary theory is the ecological perspective. The ecological approach emphasizes the importance of examining the parenting experience in its environmental context and according to the value system of a family’s subculture. This theory allows researchers to explore the historical, political, and social influences on African American fathers. Research findings of ecologically-oriented studies have changed the picture of African Americans’ parenting behaviors by providing information that corrects stereotypes (Cochran). For example, Miller (1994) used an ecological approach in a study that explored several factors related to the parental involvement of 29 African-American unwed adolescent fathers ranging in age from 15 to 20 years. The factors included: social support, father-role readiness, stress, and involvement in the decision-making process. Findings of this study suggested that these adolescent fathers exhibit a level of parental involvement that is not generally perceived by the public. These findings also suggested that parental involvement is influenced by factors present in the father’s immediate environment. Contrary to societal stereotypes, many adolescent fathers are attempting to assume responsible roles, but may encounter obstacles that prevent them from doing so.

Several conceptual models are frequently used in the fatherhood literature; however, very few of these models consider the factors related to nonresident father
involvement. Doherty et al. (1998) developed a conceptual model of influences on fathering, but unlike prior work, presented a model that was inclusive of fathering inside and outside of marriage and regardless of co-residence with the child. The focus of this model is on the factors that help create and maintain a father-child bond. The model highlights individual factors in the father, mother, and child; mother-father relationship factors; and larger contextual factors in the environment (see Figure 1). Within each of these five domains the model outlines a number of specific factors that can be supported by the research literature. The center of the model is the interacting unit of child, father, and mother, each engaging in beliefs and behaviors that influence others. The father-mother-child triad is embedded in a broader social context that affects them as individuals and the quality of their relationships. The study used this model in combination with the sociocultural emphasis of the contemporary theories on African American fathers as a foundation for determining the major factors that influence unwed adolescent father involvement. This model was also helpful in determining which factors play a larger role in father involvement compared to others. Unlike other conceptual models, this model provided the opportunity for exploring the factors related to nonresident father involvement.

*Facilitators of and Barriers to Father Involvement*

Research indicates several factors that likely play a role in father involvement with their children. Age of the child (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Lerman, 1993) and the child's temperament and developmental status (Lamb & Elster, 1986) have been found to be associated with the involvement of nonresidential fathers with their children. Many studies have found that fathers who have jobs and higher levels of education are
highly involved with their children following a divorce or a nonmarital birth (Coley & Chase-Lansdale; Cooksey & Craig, 1998; Stier & Tienda, 1993; Sullivan, 1993). Paternal beliefs about fathering and parenting responsibilities, influenced by familial, moral, religious, and cultural influences, may also play an important role in determining father behaviors (Coley, 2001). Fathers with a stronger commitment to parenting and who see their role as integral to their image are more involved fathers, regardless of their marital or residential status (Black et al., 1999). Another factor that appears to play an important role in the formation of parenting beliefs and practices is cultural environment (Doherty et al., 1998). African American men reported family and community pressure to play an important role in their involvement with their child, providing some financial and child-care support (Sullivan). According to Marsiglio and Cohan (1997), young father involvement in drug use and criminal behaviors is another characteristic that likely plays a role in father involvement. Although research has not yet documented the direct link between young fathers’ problem behaviors and their children’s development, it is reasonable to assume that children will experience adverse consequences based on paternal involvement in criminal behaviors (Marsiglio & Cohan). It is also highly likely that fathers with these problems will generally be limited in their ability to contribute financially to their children’s support (Marsiglio & Cohan).

Research findings demonstrate that a major social influence on father involvement is the quality of the mother-father relationship (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Furstenberg, 1995; Johnson, 2001). “A man’s allegiance to his children is maintained in part by the bond established with his children’s mother. When that bond dissolves, men sometimes have difficulty establishing a direct relationship with their children.”
Extended family members, especially grandmothers, can be important players in nonresidential fathers' involvement with their children (Coley, 2001; Sullivan, 1993). Public policy, such as the payment of child support, has also been found to be a major barrier to father involvement, especially in non-traditional families since they were constructed from the perspective of the traditional nuclear family (Cabrera & Peters, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers to and facilitators of the involvement of unwed, adolescent, African American fathers with their children. By offering to listen directly to adolescent fathers speak about their experiences as young fathers and about the factors that are interfering with their desires to fulfill their own expectations as fathers, we hoped that further insight may be gained into how these factors impact upon adolescent father involvement.

With this goal in mind, the following objectives were set for the current study:

The first objective was to determine the influence of societal and contextual factors on African American adolescent fathers and their relationship and involvement with their children.

The second objective was to gain an understanding of how African American adolescent father involvement is influenced by paternal factors and child factors. Additionally, the interaction that occurs between individual and contextual factors in order to facilitate or prevent father involvement was investigated.

The third objective was to explore the relationship between the adolescent father and the child’s mother. The impact this relationship has on father involvement was investigated. The factors that were explored for these objectives were derived from the
factors presented in the conceptual model (Doherty et al., 1998) and the sociocultural approach of contemporary theories on African American fathers.

The final objective was to gain an understanding of what goals African American adolescent fathers have with regards to father involvement. It was hoped that by allowing adolescent fathers to voice their opinions on these issues, service programs would gain better insight into increasing the effectiveness of the services that they can provide to adolescent fathers.

Method

Participants

Eighteen unwed, adolescent African American fathers between the ages of 14 and 20 participated in this study (mean age = 18.06). The participants’ children ranged in age from 1 month to 2 years old (mean age in months = 10.44). All participants were residents of low-income, African American neighborhoods in the Greater Cincinnati community. Low-income was defined by the participant’s mother’s level of education, the neighborhood in which the participant resided, and the participant and/or his family of origin’s eligibility for Medicaid. Refer to Table 1 for demographic information. Participants were contacted from over 20 community organizations, correctional facilities, and schools in Greater Cincinnati. Participants were also recruited through community-based networks in order to avoid recruiting all participants from a self-selected population of program users. Ten of the participants were recruited from correctional facilities, six were recruited from community organizations, and two were recruited from local high schools. Each participant was given a movie coupon in exchange for his participation.
Measures

Interview Form.

A semi-structured interview questionnaire (see Appendix A) was created specifically for this study. It was developed based on a thorough review of the literature and input gathered from a focus group of professionals in the community who have direct contact with African American, adolescent fathers. A pilot interview was also conducted with two fathers to further assess the appropriateness of the interview questions. Theoretically, the interview is based on a combination of the conceptual model of influences on fathering (Doherty et al., 1998) and the sociocultural influences of the contemporary theories on African American fathers (Cochran, 1997). The interview questions were organized according several of the domains present in the conceptual model (Doherty et al., 1998). The general categories included in the interview as developed from this conceptual model are: Paternal Factors in Father Involvement, Societal and Contextual Factors in Father Involvement, The Child, The Mother-Father Relationship, and Facilitators of Father Involvement. Questions related to the factors associated with these domains were asked to each participant.

Numerical Rating Scales.

Twelve items in the interview were supplemented by 5-point numerical rating scales. These items deal with the participants’ feelings about their level of involvement with their children, their level of commitment to assuming their fathering responsibilities, and the expectations others have for assuming their role as a father. Participants were presented with a graphic representation of the scales that included the anchors for each end of the scale. Refer to Table 2 for all numerical responses.
The Quality of Relationships Inventory.

The Quality of Relationships Inventory (Pierce, 1996; see Appendix B) is a 25-item self-report measure designed to assess levels of support, conflict, and depth in dyadic relationships. Participants were instructed to rate each item using a 4-point scale, ranging from (1) not at all to (4) very much, regarding their perceptions of their relationship with their children’s mothers. This measure was used as a descriptor to provide additional information regarding how adolescent fathers perceive their relationships with their children’s mothers. Refer to Table 3 for participants’ QRI scores. Higher scores on the QRI indicate more positive appraisals of the relationship.

Demographic Information Form.

All participants were asked to provide demographic information prior to the interview (see Appendix C). Information that was gathered included education level, employment history, current financial status, current living arrangements, living arrangements of their children, ages of their children, and any services or treatment programs in which they were currently involved.

Procedure

The 60-90 minute face-to-face interviews were arranged ahead of time and were conducted in places and at times that were mutually acceptable to the participant and the interviewer. Two interviewers, the primary investigator and a psychology graduate student, were involved in collecting the data for this study. The interviewers followed the same protocol during the interview asking more general questions and following up with more specific questions as planned. Fathers who agreed to participate in this study were given an informed consent form to be signed (Appendix D). If the participant was less
than 18 years old, a parental consent form was given to his parent or legal guardian to be signed prior to the interview. Fathers under the age of 18 were given an assent form to be signed at the time of the interview. Prior to beginning the interviews, each participant filled out a demographic information form and listened to a verbal description of the study. The interviewer attempted to establish an environment in which the participants felt comfortable responding to the interview questions in an open and honest manner by conducting interviews in a room in which potential distractions and outside interruptions were minimized. Also, prior to beginning the interview, participants were reminded that their responses would be kept confidential. The interview progressed from general questions that covered several broad areas to more specific questions under each broad area that was asked if they were not addressed in the responses to the more general questions. Following the interview, each participant was administered the QRI. The settings in which the interviews were conducted include fatherhood-related organizations, community agencies, schools, and correctional facilities. The interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed by the primary investigator.

Data Analysis

The collected data included the responses to the interview questions, the responses to the numerical rating scale supplemental items, and the scores on the QRI. Prior to coding the data, transcribed interviews were divided into the responses gathered under each general category (e.g. participants’ responses to questions under The Mother-Child Relationship domain were grouped together). Transcribed responses were then further divided and grouped according to subcategories when appropriate (e.g. Employment Characteristics as a subcategory of the Paternal Factors category). Finally,
relevant text or passages of the transcripts that expressed a distinct idea related to the research objectives were selected from the transcribed responses under each category and/or subcategory.

Two independent raters, graduate students in psychology who were otherwise not involved in the project, completed the coding of the data. The data were analyzed using a coding procedure that was similar to that used by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). First, each coder organized the relevant text from each category and subcategory into repeating ideas, ideas expressed in the relevant text by two or more research participants. In the final step, raters organized the repeating ideas of each category and subcategory into more general themes, implicit ideas that a group of repeating ideas have in common. The raters were provided with a detailed description of the study and its objectives as well as specific guidelines for identifying repeating ideas and themes. The repeating ideas identified by each rater were very similar as was the way in which they grouped the repeating ideas according to themes. The most diversity existed among the raters' labeling of themes, but even here, there was overlap among the raters. The themes were labeled differently but were consistent in content. Therefore, a forced agreement procedure was used to produce the final themes by combining similar themes from each rater (i.e. Rater 1’s theme ‘Positive Outlook on Furthering Education’ and Rater 2’s theme ‘Educational Goals’ were combined to create the final theme of Importance of Furthering Education).

Results

Data analysis revealed a number of themes covering a broad range of responses for factors contributing to African American, adolescent father involvement. The
findings are presented in five sections consisting of themes accompanied by illustrative quotes: (i) societal and contextual factors contributing to father involvement; (ii) paternal factors contributing to father involvement; (iii) child factors and aspects of the father-child relationship; (iv) impact of the mother-father relationship on father involvement; and (v) facilitators of father involvement. The findings also include a description of participants’ responses to the numerical rating scales where applicable. Participants’ responses to the numerical rating scales are reported in terms of the percentage of participants who reported ratings that were on the lower or higher ends of the scale. Therefore, the percentages provided below will not reflect all participants’ responses to each numerical rating scale question.

*Societal and contextual factors contributing to father involvement*

The first research objective was to determine the influence of societal and contextual factors on African American adolescent fathers and their relationship and involvement with their children. There are several societal and contextual factors that were explored during the interviews concerning how they contribute to father involvement: (i) community and family expectations, (ii) employment opportunities and challenges, (iii) child support, (iv) peer relationships and perspectives, and (v) criminal activity.

*Community and family expectations*

Participants were asked about the extent their family and friends encouraged them to a part of their children’s lives. This question was supplemented by a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all...5=very much so). Seventeen participants responded to this question with a resultant mean rating of 4.41 (Range=1-5, SD=1.18). Eighty-eight percent of the
fathers reported that they were very much so encouraged by their families and friends to be a part of their children’s lives while only twelve percent reported that they were not at all encouraged.

Several familial expectations emerged from the data related to how participants should be involved in their children’s lives. First, many participants remarked about the pressure they received from family members to be an involved father. Several fathers described pressure from family members to become more responsible and refrain from engaging in criminal activity. One father stated, “They tell me to ‘stay focused, be strong, because the kids need you. You need to get yourself together to be there for them’.” Another father described the pressure he felt: “Well pretty much the pressure of getting my act straight, you know, start being more responsible and more serious.” One father described his lack of response to this pressure. He remarked, “Yeah, they tried to pressure me. They be telling me don’t have my son on the streets hanging around with me, driving around with me and all that. But I just kept on doing that.”

According to some of the participants, it was important to their families that their children not grow up without a father like they did. One father stated, “She tell me everyday, like ‘you need to stop doing such and such, you don’t want your baby to grow up without a dad, without a father’ and all that kind of stuff.” Another father commented about his family’s fears that he would become an absent father: “My family, they didn’t want me to be like my daddy, because my daddy had me at a young age too but they got used to it.”
Many of the participants described pressure from family members prior to the baby being born to use protection during sexual activity. One father shared a conversation he had with his mother about using protection and being safe:

My mom just always told me if I’m gonna have sex, she say that truthfully she don’t care for real, she says if I’m gonna have sex tell her like and she says she don’t mind going and buying me condoms, she just tells me to be safe.

Although many of these fathers were educated about sex and birth control from their families, they chose not to follow this advice. One participant admitted that he lied to his mother about always using a condom:

She was like “you keep getting these girls pregnant.” She was like, “you need to stop.” She was like “do you use a condom?” I was like “yeah.” But I was lying at the time because we would only use them once or twice.

Participants indicated both supportive and unsupportive reactions from family members concerning their becoming fathers. Some participants reported that their family and friends were happy and supportive about them becoming a father. One father remarked, “They was happy for me. They thought it would give me more responsibility and help me grow up more.” Another father explained that his mother had some initial difficulty adjusting to the idea of him becoming a father, but she eventually became his primary support: “At first my mother, she was like, she wasn’t really angry, she just didn’t expect it, but as the time went on she was like one of the main ones supporting me telling me it’s gonna be alright.” Other fathers expressed feelings of emotional support from their families and friends. As one father described, “A lot of people want to help and stuff. They make sure that everything is ok. Like, family, friends’ moms, they all
make sure that everything is ok.” Several of the participants described family members that helped out financially either by giving them money or by buying things for their child such as diapers and clothes.

Although many of the participants described supportive family and friend reactions, some of the participants identified unsupportive reactions. A small number of participants indicated that they handled things on their own. One father stated, “I really wasn’t encouraged, it was just, it was something I knew I was supposed to do.” Another father said, “I didn’t depend on my family, I depend on me.” Other participants remarked about how their becoming fathers upset family members and friends. One father explained his family’s initial reaction:

To be honest they were really pissed off. I had to leave the house for a couple of weeks because they were so upset. My family kind of took it the wrong way at first but they started looking on the bright side too.

Another father described similar reactions from his family: “They reacted like ‘aww you crazy, like how you do that, what was you thinking,’ stuff like that.” Some participants also expressed pressure from family and friends to get a blood test in order to determine whether he was truly the father. One father described this reaction from his family and friends: “They kept telling me, ‘man, get a DNA test, that ain’t your kid’.”

Employment opportunities and challenges

Participants were asked to identify whether their jobs have affected their relationship with their child using a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all...5=very much so). Twelve fathers responded to this question, resulting in a mean rating of 2.58 (Range=1-5, SD=1.68). Twenty-five percent of the participants reported that their jobs significantly
affect their relationships with their children while 50 percent indicated that their jobs
have no affect on the father-child relationship. The other 25 percent of participants
indicated that their jobs have some effect on their relationships with their children. One
participant described how his job affected the amount of time he was able to spend with
his child: “If I had more leeway and I could spend more time with her I would, but I
have a lot of things to pay for.”

Participants commented on several obstacles to becoming employed. One
obstacle identified is difficulty in finding a job. Some fathers talked about their
frustrations with their lack of success in finding a job despite their efforts. One father
described this experience:

Every time you like go job hunting they say you gotta be a certain age and so I
waited until I turned 18. But like it’s hard for me to find a job now because like
every time I put an application in they say they gonna call you and never hear
from them. I guess I’ll just keep filling out applications.

Another obstacle to employment that emerged from participant responses is lack of work
experience. As one father said, “I had just turned 16 and I was looking and looking. I
didn’t have no experience so I guess that was a big factor.” Other fathers admitted that
they were not putting forth the effort to find employment. One participant said, “I don’t
think I was trying hard enough. I was looking for certain things to do, like certain jobs
they wasn’t doing stuff I wanted to do. They wanted me to mop the floors and stuff.”

The final obstacle to employment that was identified is selling drugs for financial support
instead of searching for legal employment opportunities. One father remarked, “I just
avoided looking for it [employment] because the money was so good selling drugs so I
never looked.” Another father started selling drugs following unsuccessful attempts at finding employment. He stated, “I stopped looking after a couple of times and couldn’t find one so I started selling weed.”

The participants identified two values of employment. First, some fathers commented on using their employment wages for child support. One father talked about how all of his money went to support his child even if he had to make sacrifices in his life: “After bills and everything, all of it. I eat Ramen noodles all the time. I hardly have time for myself any more so all the money I have goes toward her.” Other fathers discussed how employment prevents them from engaging in criminal activity. As one father stated, “If I make honest money I don’t got to worry about police looking for me and kicking in my door. I was living honestly, I was going to work and coming home, providing the right way.”

*Child support*

A small number of participants reported being ordered by the court to pay child support. Among these fathers, most of them indicated that they did not have a problem with being ordered to pay child support. One father stated, “It really doesn’t affect me that much, it’s just making sure that my daughter is still getting the support she needs.” One father discussed how his experience in a correctional facility influenced his perspective on child support:

I mean, this [being incarcerated] changed my whole way of thinking so if I was out there before then, I probably would’ve been paying every once in a while like, but this changed my whole way of thinking, like I could pay child support now and just take care of my baby.
Two of the participants indicated difficulties keeping up with child support payments due to not having the financial means to make payments.

Peer relationships and perspectives

Many of the participants indicated the presence of peer support related to their becoming fathers. One father described a sense of peer support: "Some of the people I do hang around with, they treat my baby like they’re godparents.” Another father remarked on the strong sense of support he receives from his peers: "They all support me. I got a couple of friends that have kids themselves and a couple have some on the way but they’ve all been supportive.” A small number of participants reported a lack of peer support. One participant commented on this: “They don’t really say nothing. They just say that my child’s mother is crazy.”

There was some variability among participant reports regarding the commonality of the fatherhood experience among their peers. Some of the participants indicated that they have many friends who are also fathers. They reported some differences among their fatherhood experiences compared to their peers. Some fathers indicated that they spent more time with their children than their peers spent with their children. One father described how he acts as a role model to his peers who are fathers:

I'm way different than them. I make sure my son is well taken care of. They don’t care. They disrespect their baby mama and their son. They don’t ever kick it with their son like I do. When they see me doin’ that’s when they want to start doin’.

A small number of participants indicated that becoming a father was not a common experience among their peers although it is becoming more common.
Criminal Activity

The major theme that emerged from participant responses on criminal activity is the negative effects of incarceration. Some fathers indicated that they had been locked up numerous times. They remarked on how incarceration affects their ability to "be there" for their children. One father commented on his desire to "get out" and take care of his fatherhood responsibilities: "I need to get out because all I want to do is take care of my son and my responsibilities." Another father reflected on his realization that criminal activity leads to being absent from his daughter's life:

Man, I'm looking like, man, I'm going the wrong way and this ain't the way to go. Being here locked up this long, my daughter she be on my mind every day. All I be thinking about is doing stuff with her and when I'm gonna be able to see my daughter. It's crazy, that's why I want to make a change in myself.

Paternal factors contributing to father involvement

The second research objective was to gain an understanding of how African American adolescent father involvement is influenced by paternal factors. Several paternal factors were explored during the interviews: (i) education, (ii) employment characteristics, (iii) role identification, (iv) relationship with own father, (v) residential status, and (vi) psychological well-being. The themes that emerged among these factors will be described below.

Education

Participants were asked to identify how much their decisions about their education have been affected by their desire to be involved with their children. This question was supplemented by a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all...5=very much so). All
18 participants responded to this question, resulting in a mean rating of 2.72 (Range=1-5, SD=1.60). Twenty-eight percent said their decisions have been significantly affected by their desire to be involved with their children while 39 percent reported that their decisions about education were not affected by their desire to be involved with their children.

Many of the young fathers described a positive outlook on furthering their education by getting their GED, graduating from high school, and going to college or trade school. Some participants expressed a desire to change for the child. One father described how his decision to go back to school is related to his desire to better himself for his child:

As far as me on the education thing I think me wantin’ to go back to school makes me attached to my son a whole lot because I know I want to go back to school and I know my son wants to see his father do better than my father.

Another young father described his willingness to give up the street life to go back to school since he feels it is his responsibility to set a good example for his child:

I can say like, I ain’t never wanted to go back to school, I always wanted to hang out on the streets, but I can’t really teach my child if I don’t know too much so I need to go back to school.

Another theme that emerged related to education is the struggle between furthering education to get a better job and the need to immediately obtain employment in order to assume the provider role within the family. As one father explained:
I'm trying really hard to earn extra money, you know, I know it's hard out there getting a job when you go back out there with a GED, but I'm trying to do some good things to take care of my family.

Employment Characteristics

The findings suggest that there is some variance in how much employment is interfering with the amount of time the participants are able to spend with their children. One employment obstacle that is interfering with participants spending time with their children is an inflexible work schedule. As one participant stated, "Before, I was seeing her practically every day but then when I started working, I went to school and then after school I went to work so a couple of days a week I didn't get to see her." Other fathers indicated that they had time to spend with their children but chose to use their time in other ways. "I wasn't using my time like I probably should've," said one participant. Another participant responded in a similar way when asked if it was possible to plan his work schedule around spending time with his child. He said, "It was possible, I just had bad guy thinking." A major theme that emerged here is the importance of job flexibility to make more time in the work schedule to spend time with the child. However, the findings also suggest that some young fathers have the flexibility in their schedules to spend time with their children, but they choose to use their spare time in other ways.

Role Identification

Participants were asked how committed they are to being a father based upon a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all...5=very much so). All 18 participants responded to this question, resulting in a mean rating of 4.61 (Range=2-5, SD=0.78). Ninety-five percent of the young fathers indicated that they were very committed to being a father. Only one
father responded that he was not committed to being a father. He described this lack of commitment as well as his understanding for how he can increase his level of commitment with his daughter:

Ain’t too much I know about a baby for real for real. There’s certain things I know like changing the diaper, like burping her, like feeding her a bottle and all that kind of stuff. It’s a lot of other stuff that I need to learn and I think once I learn that I’ll get more into my daughter and be more active.

Participants were also asked how important it was for them to be or continue to be an involved father. This question was supplemented by a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all...5=very much so). All participants responded to this question and 100% of participants indicated that it was very important to them that they are an involved father.

A major theme within role identification is the desire to stay away from negative influences in order to be a more involved father. The participants indicated the need to change the people in their lives. One father remarked:

I gotta pretty much get quote unquote all new friends or associates. Uh, I just pretty much gotta stay as close to my daughter as possible because I don’t do nothing around my daughter. Nothing. I don’t smoke cigarettes, I don’t do anything around her. So I be like if I stay around her more it’ll turn into a habit.

The participants also indicated the importance of staying away from criminal behaviors in order to stay out of jail and become more involved with their children. One incarcerated father described how he can assume a more involved father role once he gets of jail and how this will, in turn, influence his child’s well-being:
Right now the only responsibility I think I got to my child is staying out of jail...I feel that if my daughter got a good dad that do stuff for her and everything and involved in her life, maybe she will grow up to be better than what I did when I was little.

Many participants commented on how their preoccupation with the "street mentality" has prevented them from fulfilling their fatherhood responsibilities. As one participant said, "I gotta, uhm, do what's right for real. I gotta get out of the street mentality because I gotta get my education and better myself as a person so I can be there for my son."

Another participant described how his addiction to drugs and alcohol interferes with his ability to achieve his goals:

Jail, drugs, and alcohol was a big thing in my life and it played a big part because it altered my mind, my mind process, my thought process was so mixed up and so wrong, you know, now I'm sober and got a clear mind. I really can think now and uh, you know I think that that was a big thing that happened to me. Drugs and alcohol kept me back from succeeding in a lot of things.

Another key theme that emerged from participants' responses is a strong sense of commitment to becoming a more involved father. Many of the fathers described their desire to be emotionally present in their children's lives and to "step it up" in order to better themselves and take care of their children. As one father described:

I'm trying to change my life and make my life more positive so I can be positive around them and they can, they can eat off of that and see that, "yeah, my dad is stepping up, he is doing a lot of things, he accomplished a lot so I want to look up to him ya know." That's what I'm trying to do.
One father described what being there for his daughter would involve once he gets out of prison:

Buying her clothes, shoes, taking her to the park, watching movies with her, hug and kiss her all the time, let her know I’m gonna be there for her all the time instead of be there one second and then leave.

Some of the fathers commented on their commitment to being a better father to their children than their fathers were with them. One participant described one of his goals as a father is, “Basically to uh treat her better than my father treated me, you know. That’s about it, just treat her better.”

The participants described both emotional and financial responsibilities they need to fulfill as part of assuming the father role. Many of the fathers reported the desire to be a role model to their children. The participants had different ideas about how to be a role model. One incarcerated father described his future desire to be a role model by showing his children love and by leading by example:

I want to give my daughter what my parents gave me, just the love, just to try to show me the right example, they lead by example. I just chose to go on the paths I went. I don’t want to show my daughter the wrong things, like the path I’ve been going down for the past couple of years.

Another incarcerated father described how he is trying to be a role model to his children:

Showing my kids I can be a role model to them. Showing them the right way instead of the wrong way to survive in life. Just showing them love, I never had love so I’m trying to be there for ‘em.
Most of the participants agreed that a large part of assuming their role as a father involved fulfilling their financial responsibilities. One father described his struggles to assume the provider role and his willingness to engage in criminal behaviors in order to provide financially for his family:

I gotta provide, you know what I mean. I feel like I tried to provide, I can’t say too much, but I was doing whatever I could. You know what I mean, whatever I could as far as me working 9 to 5 and me going around and selling this and selling that, you know what I mean. It’s kind of like it’s called a good dad thinking. And I kind of was like, ok, I’m doing the wrong thing but for the right reasons. Like I said, “I gotta do it all the right way this time around.”

This is a struggle that several of the participants expressed. These fathers have typically found that they can make more money in fewer hours by selling drugs than they can working an “honest job.” Other participants expressed their financial responsibility to “get a good job” to “take care of my child and give him the stuff I didn’t have.” One participant described his future goals for assuming this financial responsibility once he is able to get out of prison and find a job:

My first goal is that when I do be able to get my job my baby can have everything that she wants because right now I ain’t been able to get that stuff that I want because it’s been hard for me to get it or to be able to earn stuff to get it, so I’m hoping when I get my job, if my daughter needs anything, like if she asks me for a pair of shoes or something I’ll just be able to get it.

Several of the participants’ responses revealed difficulty adjusting to a loss of freedom. As one father described, “Now that I got somebody else to worry about, I just
can’t be worrying about myself.” Another father explained how, initially, he was not fulfilling his responsibilities as a father, but that he has come to realize what he needs to do in order to assume more of a father role. He said, “When I was out there I didn’t have no responsibilities to my child because I was busy running the streets but now I feel like since I’ve been locked up, I need to be there for her.”

Relationship with own father

Participants’ responses indicated variability among the amount of involvement their fathers had in their lives as well as the quality of their relationships with their fathers. Participants were asked how much involvement their fathers had in raising them. This question was supplemented with a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all…5=very much so). All 18 participants responded to this question with a resultant mean rating of 2.89 (Range=1-5, SD=1.81). Fifty percent indicated that their fathers had no involvement in raising them while 44 percent of the participants reported that their fathers were very involved in raising them. Some of the participants identified positive aspects of their relationship with their fathers. Several of the fathers reported that their father was present in their lives. One father remarked on his relationship with his father saying, “It’s nice. He’s been there for me most of the time. I can’t really say a time he hasn’t really been there for me. He’s pretty supportive.” Another father shared how his father expressed love:

I think the biggest thing he did to show he loved me was being there for me. Everything I went through he always had my side and he was always standing right next to me so I think that’s the biggest thing.
Some of the fathers commented on how they have learned to be a good father from their experiences with their own fathers. As one father stated:

I look up to him a lot so I think that the way he raised me is something I will reflect on the way I raise my daughter because I think he did a good job. I turned out to be a good person so I think it will influence me as being a father.

While some of the participants described positive aspects of their relationships with their own fathers, half of the participants remarked on their dissatisfaction with this relationship. Several of the participants felt that their fathers could have been more involved if they did not have a substance use problem. As one father said, “My father could’ve taught me to be a better man instead of on the streets dragging weed.” Others felt that they had to take care of themselves and be their own “father figures” since neither parent was around. As one participant described, “Both my parents struggled on drugs. I’m the second oldest of seven kids. I had to do what I had to do to provide for us at the age of seven.” A large number of the fathers describe how the absence of a father figure caused feelings of hurt and rejection. This feeling is described by one participant: “he left us when I was five years old and when he left I was kind of hurt and I’ve been hurting for a lot of years from that.” Another participant reflected on how he felt about having an absent father. He explained, “When I was younger I never thought he loved me ‘cause I felt like if he loved me he wouldn’t be doing the things he was doing, he wouldn’t have turned his back on me.” Many of the participants with absent fathers indicated that they do not want to make the same mistakes as their fathers made. One young father commented on this:
Well, like I said to my dad, "when I grew up I didn't have no father figures. So, I gotta be there for my son so he can know that I'm his dad and he gonna respect me." I don't want to make the same mistake that he made.

However, some of these fathers are already making the same mistakes as their fathers by being absent in their children's lives. One father recognized this problem and described his frustrations with not having a father figure in his life to provide him with some direction:

See, my pop wasn't there so I try to work on my relationship with my son and my daughter. I try to be there for them and I know it's kind of funny because I'm locked up right now and I ain't with them, but my pop never did nothing for me and I had to learn how to be a man from my cousins and they was all into street life.

Residential Status

Participants were asked to identify on a 5-point rating scale how much their living arrangements have affected their relationship and involvement with their children (1=not at all...5=very much so). Twelve participants responded to this question, resulting in a mean rating of 2.50 (Range=1-5, SD=1.45). Fifty-eight percent of the participants reported that their living arrangements have not affected their relationship or involvement with their children while 33 percent expressed that their living arrangements significantly affected this relationship. Participants who live with their children or who live within a close distance to their children reported no effect of living arrangements on the time they spend with their children. Other participants are satisfied with their visitation
arrangements and do not see their living arrangements as getting in the way of their being able to see their children.

Some of the participants revealed negative aspects to their living arrangements in relation to seeing their children. Responses revealed that the farther away their child lives, the less they get to see him or her. As one father said, “When I was staying with my dad I didn’t get to see my son very much so I was stopped from seeing him for three months.” Several of the participants identified that being incarcerated affects their relationship with their children. One father described this: “I’m not there. I really can’t say because she’s still young but I know she feels I ain’t there so it’s probably affecting her maybe emotionally.”

*Psychological Well-Being*

This factor was explored to develop a better understanding for how young fathers adjust to the news of becoming a father. Many of the participants reported both positive and negative reactions to becoming a father. One positive reaction indicated by several fathers was the feeling that they had support from family and friends to become a father. One father described this feeling of family support:

Yeah, my family was good people. They love children. When I knew I was having a baby I knew I wasn’t gonna have no problem with her running around the house because there’s always little children and toddlers running around.

Some of the fathers reported being excited with the news of becoming a father. A participant described this reaction:

I was just like “what?” I was kind of happy though because for the simple fact me and my baby mama really loved each other at the same time. I thought it was
gonna be easy though. I was just excited at the time, you know, I'm having a child.

Another father explained how he adjusted to the news of becoming a father with excitement:

Well at first I thought about it like I don't want no kid. Then once people started telling me and I started thinking more and the way my mama was talking about it I just started getting happy like yeah, I do want a kid, it would be nice to have a kid. I always said if I had a kid I wonder what he or she would look like and that made me think, yeah, I want a kid, I want to see what she look like.

Other participants expressed some difficulty adjusting to the idea of becoming a father, but they recognized the importance of viewing things from an optimistic perspective. As one father stated, “It saddened me, but there was nothing I could do about it but be there. So, I just had to take action, I had to care.” Another participant described his realization that becoming a father would give him a purpose:

At first I really didn't know what to do but I started looking on the brighter side and I don't know it just kind of came to me, I had a purpose, it was just something I had to address.

Some of the participants described negative reactions to becoming a father. One reaction was that of shock. As one young father commented, “It's kind of like unbelievable when you hear it. Me, I couldn't believe that I could do it.” Other participants were scared of becoming a father. One father described his fears:

I was scared, and actually I'm still kind of in that mode. I'm scared I'm not gonna be the father that my son loves or I'm not gonna be effective enough as a
father. And plus I felt kind of careless because when we found out she was already two months pregnant. It also made me feel like, “ok, your life ain’t yours no more.”

Most of the young fathers indicated a lack of readiness to becoming a father. Some fathers indicated that they did not feel financially stable to support a child. One father reported:

I was stressed out a lot because I wanted them to have the nicer things. I knew I needed to keep the bills up. I was feeling overwhelmed at times, frustrated, sometimes I got depressed because I always felt like I was thinking ahead. I ain’t got no GED, I ain’t got no career, I know I ain’t gonna be able to be hustling for the rest of my life. I’m not trying to do that because if I get locked up it can just give me ten years, fifteen years just out of the blue.

This participant as well as other participants expressed a willingness to engage in illegal behaviors in order to financially support their children. As another participant stated, “I didn’t think I was too young but like I didn’t have enough money. But being on the streets I guess I was just gonna step my game up.” Some of the participants felt they were too young to be a father. As one father explained: “The first thing I thought of was I’m a kid, how am I having a kid. A kid can’t take care of a kid, I can’t do it.” Other fathers were frustrated with the idea that they had a life that would be set aside in order to take care of their children.

A small number of fathers indicated that they felt ready to become a father and had few concerns related to this matter. The participants who expressed this feeling of
readiness had previous experiences of becoming a father. One participant described his previous experiences:

When I was fifteen I was about to have a child by another girl and then when I was seventeen I was about to have another baby by another girl but they were miscarriages so I was like, this time I was like man forget it, I ain’t even worried about it. At first when I was fifteen I was scared, I was like damn I don’t want to take care of no baby but when I was like seventeen I just had to suck it up.

Another participant explained that he had no difficulties adjusting to the idea of becoming a father. He said, “I don’t know, I don’t think I really had a problem adjusting to it for real. I always knew how to make money so I was just like when it come, let it come.”

Participants were asked whether they had ever been to see a counselor or therapist and whether this experience was helpful for them. This question was supplemented by a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all...5=very much so). Only five fathers were able to respond to this question resulting in a mean rating of 2.80 (Range=1-5, SD=2.05). Three of them (60%) indicated that this experience was not helpful and two fathers (40%) described this experience as very helpful. One father talked about his positive experience with a counselor he was seeing while incarcerated.

She keeps it real. She down to earth. She was on drugs, she turned her life around. She wants the best for us. She ain’t gonna let us leave this program unless we change our life and get a job. We can talk to her about anything and she keep it real. She like a mother figure to me.
Child factors and aspects of the father-child relationship

The second research objective was also to gain an understanding of how child factors and the quality of the father-child relationship influence African American adolescent father involvement. Participants were asked how involved they felt they were with their children. This question was supplemented with a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all...5=very much so). Seventeen of the participants responded to this question with a resultant mean rating of 3.53 (Range=1-5, SD=1.07). Fifty-three percent of the fathers reported feeling that they were very involved with their children. Twelve percent reported that they were not at all involved and 35 percent reported that they were somewhat involved, but not as involved as they could be.

Many of the participants reported a positive quality to the father-child relationship. Some of the fathers indicated that they saw their children on a regular basis and they did “a lot together,” as one father stated. Another father stated that he saw his child “everyday. If I didn’t see him on a daily basis I don’t think I’d be able to function.” Some of the participants who were at a correctional facility at the time of the interview reported that their children were brought regularly for visiting hours. One father remarked about his attempts to be involved with his son while he was locked up: “I see him every week. They come for visits. My girlfriend sends me his little progress reports from day care, uhm, I send money home for him to get him new toys, haircuts, stuff like that.” Many of the participants reported that they were most involved immediately following their children’s births. As one father described:
When she was first born, we'd always go see her. She was a pretty baby and I loved to go see her. Whenever I'd go see her, her eyes would just get wide like, I just liked to hold her and be close to her and everything.

Many of the fathers revealed positive feelings when spending time with their children. One father described how he feels when he thinks about his daughter:

I be real happy, like I'd forget about all the things that went on like that day or the week before that, it'd just be blocked up when I'm with her and I just get that warm type of feeling in my heart, like I put someone on this earth so if anything happen to me there'll be someone out there like me.

Another father explained that he felt “happy, like the man I’m supposed to be.” One father discussed how thinking about or being with his son makes him feel confident.

I feel better than I feel when I'm by myself, seriously. I feel more confident. Every time I think about him and I pull out his picture makes me feel more confident. Just to know that he is ok makes me feel confident, just to know that I did my part to help him. When I’m with him, if I got him in his clothes, I feel, I can’t even explain it sometimes.

Many of the participants described their child in terms of physical attributes and many of them commented on how much their child looked like them. As one father explained, “She’s beautiful, I can’t describe it. A lot of people say she looks just like me. She’s got a lot of hair.”

Obstacles to father involvement were identified by some of the participants. Getting incarcerated was identified as a major obstacle to continuing father involvement. One father reported, “I was not there when he was born. I was locked up here. I didn’t
get to sign it [child’s birth certificate].” Another obstacle to father involvement was identified as participation in criminal activity. Some of the fathers indicated the need to avoid continued association with criminal activity in order to remain involved with their children. As one father stated, “I can’t fall back in the same old things.” Another reason identified by one participant for lack of involvement is lack of transportation to see his child. He stated, “I just gotta wait for my mom to be off on the weekends, that’s the only time I can get her right now is on the weekends so right now it’s [relationship with child] not that good.”

**Impact of the mother-father relationship on father involvement**

The third research objective was to explore the quality of the mother-father relationship and how it impacts father involvement. Participants were asked to complete the Quality of Relationships Inventory to further explore their perceptions of their relationships with their children’s mothers. All participants completed this inventory, resulting in a mean rating of 71.61 (SD=9.87). Scores ranged from 44 (describing a negative relationship) to 82 (describing a positive relationship). There was some variability among the scores, but many fathers identified positive aspects of their relationship with their children’s mothers. Participants who described a positive relationship with their children’s mothers indicated that they felt comfortable turning to her for advice and felt that they could count on her for help, feedback, and support in dealing with life stressors. Also, these fathers reported this relationship plays a significant role in their lives. A low level of conflict in the mother-father relationship was present for fathers with higher QRI scores. A small number of participants described a negative relationship. These fathers reported that they had to “give in” a lot in the
mother-father relationship and they felt that their children's mother was very critical of them and wanted them to change a lot. Also, these participants indicated that they gave a lot more to the mother-father relationship than they got out of it. Most of the fathers with low QRI scores reported more frequent arguments within the relationships. The participants QRI scores were highly correlated with their responses to the interview questions. Fathers who indicated a positive mother-father relationship on the QRI also identified positive aspects of this relationship in their responses to the interview questions.

Participants were asked how supportive they felt their relationship was with their children's mothers. This question was supplemented with a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all...5=very much so). Seventeen fathers responded to this question with a resultant mean rating of 3.53 (Range=1-5, SD=1.23). Fifty-nine percent indicated a supportive relationship with the mother of their child while 24 percent reported a relationship that was not supportive. Participants who had higher scores on the QRI indicated having supportive relationships with their children's mothers while the participants with lower QRI scores reported a less supportive mother-father relationship. One father talked about his supportive relationship with his child's mother and how this relationship helps him to deal more effectively with the strain of having a child at a young age:

We get along great. We're pretty much the same person I'd say, we joke around a lot with each other and we keep each other smiling and stuff because life's stressful especially when you have a kid so we try to keep each other happy.

Other participants described the supportive relationship in terms of working together to provide. As one father explained, "We support each other a whole lot. We go half and
half on everything, bills, my son’s clothes, all that.” Some participants reported that the mother-father relationship improved following the child’s birth. One father commented:

To me, I think our relationship got better. I feel like after our baby was born we started talking more, like before she was born it started getting better too. We started talking more, talking about what we was gonna name her and all kind of stuff.

Several of the fathers talked about having a positive mother-father relationship without being romantically involved. One father described this: “We communicate, we talk, we get along good, we just won’t take it to a relationship level.” Other participants commented on making sure that they always had a relationship with their child’s mother “no matter what.” As one father remarked:

No matter who she gonna be with, who she talks to, who she stay with, I’m always going to see my son. We got a relationship where if I’m not there she gotta be there and if she ain’t there I gotta be there.

Participants were also asked how involved their children’s mothers expect them to be as fathers. This question was supplemented by a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all... 5=very much so). Thirteen participants responded to this question with a mean of 5.00. One hundred percent of these participants reported that they are expected to be very involved fathers. Some fathers talked about how their children’s mothers expected emotional involvement. One father described this expectation: “She wants me to just physically be there. Like I feel like if I’m there as much as possible, that’s pretty much the foundation and everything else just kind of falls in place.” Another father described similar expectations:
Yeah, she expects me to spend time with her because there’s been times when I came in and dropped off some shoes and left back out. She’s like “oh you ain’t even staying?” and goes down my throat. So, she expects me to spend quality time with her, and I mean she like me to feed the baby and she expects me to do those things, which I like doing anyway, but she expects me to do them.

Other fathers reported that they were expected to provide financially. One father commented on this being the only expectation his child’s mother has of him. He stated, “She really could care less if I see her, she just wants money. She told me that.” Other fathers discussed this expectation to provide financially in terms of going to work and providing for the child’s needs. Another expectation some of the participants described is staying away from “the streets” and making an honest living. As one father remarked, “She wants me to be there instead of the streets. She want me to get a job, make an honest living so I ain’t gotta be away from my family like this in jail.”

Many of the participants talked about how their children’s mothers’ expectations are similar to their own expectations of themselves as fathers. Some of them talked about their desire to provide financially. One father described how he meets this expectation:

Every time I get my check I take it to her and show her how much it is. That’s for me, she doesn’t ask me to do this. I give her my check, I sign it on the back. I say, “whatever you need go get it.” If she needs stuff and she want me to go cash my check I go cash my check. I be like “what do you need?”

Other fathers commented on having expectations of themselves to stay out of trouble and be there for their children. As one father remarked:
It’s getting more intense and it’s getting more, me as a man, I’m really putting the pressure on me to take care of my responsibilities. I’m just telling her [child’s mother], “don’t worry about it, I’m going to make sure we’ll be alright.”

Although many positive aspects of the mother-father relationship were reported, some participants reported having conflictual relationships with their children’s mothers. “It’s bad, for real, we gonna have to shape it up,” said one participant of his relationship with his child’s mother. A small number commented on how their children’s mothers restrict their involvement with their children when the mother-father relationship is “not on good terms.” One father described his frustrations when this occurs:

If we break up, she get mad and won’t let me see my child. That’s one thing, that’s what I hate because like if I say “it’s over, I don’t want to be with you,” she’ll like take it out on the baby like it’s his fault. I’ll be like, “he ain’t got nothing to do with this.” That’s the reason why I’m going to court now because if we break up again she won’t let me see him. And if we have a court order she has to let me see him.

Some fathers reported that the mother-father relationship worsened following the child’s birth. As one father described, “Yeah, we was still together when she was born but we just started arguing, it was really getting out of hand. It just didn’t work any more.” Other fathers talked about how their behaviors were likely contributing to problems within the mother-father relationship. Some participants expressed their need for freedom and how pursuing a relationship with their children’s mothers would interfere with this. As one father described this problem: “She been wanting me to move in forever, but it’s like I guess I’m being selfish. I want to do what I want to do.”
Facilitators of father involvement

The final research objective was to gain an understanding of the goals African American adolescent fathers have with regards to father involvement and the changes that need to occur in their lives in order to achieve these goals. Further, this research objective was to determine which factors will facilitate goal achievement. Throughout the interview, participants discussed changes they would like to make in their lives in order to become more involved fathers. At the end of the interview participants were asked how hopeful they were that these changes are possible. This question was supplemented by a 5-point rating scale (1=not at all...5=very much so). Seventeen participants responded to this question, resulting in a mean rating of 4.71 (Range=4-5, SD=0.47). One hundred percent of the participants who responded to this question indicated that they were very hopeful about the possibility of making these changes.

The participants identified several desired changes to facilitate increased involvement with their children. First, many of them indicated the need to stop selling drugs. Others talked about the need to stop using drugs. Another desired change that emerged among participants was to stay out of jail. One father described how staying out of jail would increase his involvement with his child. He stated, “by staying out of jail, that’s one thing I can say for right now since she’s so young is that if I stay out of jail I will be able to see her and she’ll know who her daddy is.”

Participants identified support networks that could help them in making their desired changes. Many participants indicated the need for support from family members. One participant said, “The help I need...I got my baby mama and her family for real, that’s all I need right there. It’s my family.” Other participants discussed needing
support from professionals in finding a job. One father described how finding a job
would be the primary factor in helping him to become an involved father:

The only kind of support, I really need people to help me find a job. That’s the
only thing I can see right now. Because like right now that’s the only thing that I
really feel will help me stop doing stuff that I’m doing.

Another father talked about how seeing a therapist might be beneficial. He said, “I think
I just need somebody that I can talk to and listen to my small issues that I make big and
my big issues that I make little and help me to prioritize.” Several fathers expressed that
they needed help from a fatherhood program to make changes. One father described the
type of help he felt this type of program would offer:

A fatherhood program that shows you how to maintain a job, that teach you how
to be a man and the steps it takes to be a man and to being a good father because
there are a lot of fathers out there that ain’t have no father and it would be helpful
to learn how to take those steps, how to do it.

Other participants talked about how they felt they could make the necessary changes on
their own by using what they have learned from previous experiences. One father
remarked:

I feel like if I survive by the principles they teach you here [correctional facility] –
accept responsibility, showing compassion, discipline your strength, learn and
achieve, those principles, if I can survive by them there won’t be no problems
with me if I accept responsibility and take care of my business.
Many participants commented on the importance of education and employment in facilitating involvement with their children. Some of the fathers indicated the need to graduate from high school to have a better life for themselves and their children.

If I stay in school, which I know I am, like when I get out I want him to see me as a graduate, not as a dropout. Because when I was growing up my mom didn't finish school and stuff like that. I'm trying to show her [the child] that I'm a better person.

Another father commented on the value of a high school diploma in getting a better job. He remarked:

Because as I see it I don't think I can find a better job unless I get my diploma. I really don't want to see myself working at McDonald's for like 12, 30 years flipping burgers. I see myself owning it or something like that or owning my own business.

Other participants discussed the importance of getting a job to make an honest living. One father talked about the need to "get a well paying job and be there for my son so I don't have to be worried about the next time I dodge the police. Just change my whole way of living to an honest living now." Another father discussed how being financially stable would facilitate increased involvement with his child: "financially, being more financially stable, that could change a lot. I could be able to support her more and buy her more things. I could be in her life a little more than what I am."

Some of the fathers had already participated in a fatherhood program prior to the interview. Other participants were involved in this type of program at the time of the interview. They discussed benefits of the young fathers program in which they
participants. Participants described how this program helped them to better themselves and their families. One father talked about how he gained a better understanding for how to be in his children’s life in a positive way.

Yeah, they showed me how to be a father, not how to raise my son but how to be in my son’s life more in a positive way and do more positive things with him instead of the negative things and start doing the things my father ain’t did for me. Another participant discussed how the fatherhood program educated him about how to be an effective nonresidential parent:

Just teaching me how to, like with me and her mother’s situation, like you can still be a parent even if y’all don’t stay in the same household, like that’s what it was teaching you... I learned a lot. It taught me a lot of stuff I thought I knew but I didn’t, like boundaries, and punishment and discipline.

A small number of fathers reported a negative response to help offered to them in the past. One father said, “I know how to get it [help], it’s just to choose to do it and commit to it and stay consistent, I just can’t stay consistent with nothing too much.”

Discussion

The current study was designed to allow African American, adolescent fathers the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own words and to provide them with the opportunity to speak out about what they believe is preventing them from being an involved father and fulfilling their expectations of themselves as fathers. This study provides a different perspective on adolescent fathers who, contrary to societal stereotypes as uncaring and uninvolved, are attempting to assume responsible parent roles. However, along with previous research findings (Cochran, 1997; Johnson, 2000;
Sullivan, 1993), this study’s findings suggest that there are significant obstacles these young fathers continue to encounter within their immediate environment that prevent them from assuming their ideal role as a father.

This study used a different strategy compared to previous studies in exploring the factors that contribute to father involvement. A combination of a conceptual model of the influences on fatherhood (Doherty et al., 1998) and the sociocultural emphasis of the contemporary theories on African American fathers were used as the foundation for determining factors that influence African American, unwed adolescent father involvement. The findings of this study are discussed in terms of the themes that emerged within each of these factors as well as how these factors interact with one another to create or hinder father involvement.

Societal and contextual factors

The majority of the participants reported that they were encouraged by their families and friends to be a part of their children’s lives. Families of the participants, in particular, pressured many of them to become more responsible and to eliminate criminal activity from their lives. Family members also provided emotional and financial support in helping the fathers to involved with their children. This finding supports previous literature (Sullivan, 1993) that African American families and communities play an involved role in providing some financial and child-care support. Peer support was also present for many of the participants related to their becoming fathers. Most of the participants remarked that becoming a father is a common experience among their peers although they felt that they were more involved with their children than their peers were
as fathers. Additional research should further explore the factors contributing to fatherhood becoming a common experience among African American, adolescents.

This study along with previous research (Cochran, 1998; Johnson, 2000; Sullivan, 1993) found that many of these fathers have goals to take long-term responsibility for their children, but are hampered by a lack of employment opportunities. Participants commented on several obstacles to becoming employed. First, some participants had difficulty finding a job despite putting forth effort in doing so. These fathers became frustrated that they were filling out many applications without responses. Also, many of these young fathers had limited work experience since many places have a hiring age of at least 16. Other fathers were selling drugs for financial support instead of searching for legal employment opportunities. Some fathers reported that they had tried looking for employment, but gave up when their searches were unsuccessful and began selling drugs for financial stability. A small number of participants reported that their jobs significantly affected their relationships with their children. This finding can be interpreted in several ways. First, many fathers reported being satisfied with the visitation arrangement they have with their children even if it is not on a daily basis. Second, many of the participants did not have steady employment and therefore, they do not see the effects employment can have on the amount of time they spend with their children. Additionally, some participants expressed having enough flexibility in their jobs, which created satisfaction with the amount of time they spent with their children. A small number of the fathers did have the experience of steady employment and recognized the value of using their employment wages to support and take care of their children.
Findings of this study suggest that criminal activity is one of the major societal factors that interfere with father involvement. Ten of the participants were incarcerated at the time of the interview. Many of these fathers had been locked up numerous times. They recognized how incarceration affects their ability to “be there” for their children, however, at the same time most of them are willing to sell drugs in order to financially support their family. This finding adds a different perspective from previous research findings that adolescent fathers involvement in criminal activity is, at times, due to their desire to fulfill their father role as a provider.

*Paternal factors*

Educational plans expressed by many of the participants were associated with a desire to better themselves for their children. The participants also shared additional ways they plan to fulfill their fatherhood responsibilities. They identified the need to avoid negative peer influences and to refrain from engaging in criminal activity. Many fathers commented on how their preoccupation with criminal activity prevented them from furthering their education as well as from being actively involved with their children. This finding, based upon the experiences of the incarcerated fathers in this study, elaborates upon previous research findings (Lerman, 1993; Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997) that discuss the likelihood that fathers with these problems will be limited in their ability to contribute financially to their children’s support. Fatherhood responsibilities were described on both an emotional and financial level. Ninety-five percent of the fathers indicated that they were very committed to being a father. Previous research has found that fathers with a stronger commitment to parenting and who see their role as integral to their image are more involved fathers regardless of their marital or residential
status (Black et al., 1999). Therefore, the strong level of commitment among these fathers will likely lead to positive outcomes related to their involvement with their children. One hundred percent of the participants reported that it was very important to them to be an involved father. These results portray caring fathers who are striving to overcome obstacles in order to be a part of their children’s lives.

This study found that adolescent father’s relationships with their own fathers likely contribute to their behaviors as fathers. Some of the participants reported having absent fathers while other participants indicated that they had very involved fathers. Those participants that did not have a father figure in their lives commented on concerns that they were falling into the same negative patterns as their fathers including criminal activity and substance use problems. Those fathers that had involved fathers remarked on how they look to their fathers as role models for how they should assume the father role. Additional research should examine, in more detail, the dynamics related to adolescent father’s experiences with their fathers when they were growing up and how much of an association this relationship has in adolescent fathering behaviors.

Participants expressed having both positive and negative reactions to becoming a father. Some of the fathers were excited and optimistic about becoming a father. A small number of the participants felt ready to become a father due to having previous experiences of becoming a father that resulted in miscarriages or due to having more than one child, which was true for one father in this study. Negative reactions to becoming a father, as reported by the participants, included shock, fear, lack of readiness, and feeling as though they were too young. The fathers who had negative emotional reactions to becoming a father remarked on how they worked to overcome these emotions in order to
work toward becoming an involved father. This finding suggests that adolescent fathers are likely to have negative reactions to becoming a father, especially at their developmental stage. However, many of the fathers have the resources to cope with and overcome these negative emotions to work toward fulfilling their responsibilities as fathers.

Child factors and the father-child relationship

There was some variation among the participants related to how they described the father-child relationship and how involved they felt in their children’s lives. While 53 percent of the participants felt they were very involved with their children, 12 percent reported being somewhat involved, and the other 35 percent did not feel they were very involved. Each participant in this study had his own views as to what constitutes an involved father. For example, some participants who reported being very involved saw their children daily and assumed responsibility for taking care of their children. Other fathers who reported that they were very involved were incarcerated at the time, but felt they were still involved even though they were not physically present. It would be beneficial for future research to explore how varied perceptions of involvement relate to adolescent fathers assuming their fatherhood responsibilities. Additionally, future research focused on father involvement should more clearly describe to participants what constitutes not involved versus very involved.

This study also found that many of the participants were most involved immediately following their children’s births. Research has found that African American fathers either significantly increase or decrease their involvement between the child’s birth and their preschool years (Coley, 2001). However, this pattern has been found to be
a function of the timing and quality of the fathers' romantic relationships with the 
mothers of their children, rather than the age of the children (Marsiglio & Cohan, 1997). 
The findings from this study in combination with previous research demonstrates how the 
interaction between the mother-father relationship and the father-child relationship 
contributes to the level of father involvement observed at different stages in a child's life. 

Many of the participants, even those that were not very involved, reported a 
positive quality to the father-child relationship. Some fathers saw their children on a 
daily basis. Other participants, who were incarcerated at the time of the interview, saw 
their children regularly once a week for visiting hours. All participants reported positive 
emotions when interacting with their children including feelings of confidence and 
happiness. Many of the participants became tearful when talking about their children, 
specifically those that were incarcerated at the time of the interview, expressing feelings 
of sadness around missing their children and the lack of contact they have with their 
children while in jail. Several of the participants described how thinking about their child 
helped them to overcome their daily stressors. This finding demonstrates that, although 
some fathers lack a physical presence in their children's lives, it is likely that they 
continue to think about their child and recognize that being a father is an important aspect 
of their life.

The mother-father relationship

Research findings demonstrate that a major social influence on father 
involvement is the quality of the mother-father relationship (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 
1999; Furstenberg, 1995; Johnson, 2001). Coley and Chase-Lansdale stressed the 
importance of the closeness and quality of the emotional bond of the mother-father
relationship instead of focusing on their romantic involvement and residential status.

This study's results support this research finding. Many of the participants commented on positive aspects of the mother-father relationship as reflected in their QRI scores and interview responses. Some of the participants described this relationship as supportive and indicated that a supportive mother-father relationship is associated with their level of involvement with their children. Other participants reported a supportive relationship although they had no romantic involvement with their children's mother. These fathers indicated the importance of communicating and getting along well with the child's mother whether or not a romantic relationship occurs between them.

Results of this study indicated that conflict in the mother-father relationship has a significant effect on father involvement. A small number of the participants reported situations in which their involvement was restricted when they were not getting along with their children's mothers. Other participants commented on how the mother-father relationship worsened following the birth of their children. Some participants chose to not pursue a relationship with their children's mother due to the way it would interfere with their desire for freedom.

All of the participants reported that they were expected by their children's mothers to be very involved with their children. According to the participants, most of their children's mothers expected both emotional and financial support. The fathers are expected to spend time with their children, find a way to make an honest living to support the child, and stay away from criminal behaviors. Most of the participants had expectations for themselves that were similar to those of their children's mothers.
Study Limitations

There are several limitations of this study that future research should seek to address. Some challenges were experienced during the recruitment phase of this study. Several community agencies and school districts were not cooperative with recruitment efforts. Approximately 20 local community agencies and school systems were contacted throughout the recruitment process. The primary investigator went to many of these agencies to discuss the research. During these initial meetings, many of the agency sites identified prospective participants. However, once these participants were identified, it became difficult for the primary investigator to maintain contact with the majority of these agencies in order to schedule and complete the interviews due to a lack of cooperation from the agencies in returning phone calls and e-mails. There was also some resistance from prospective participants in partaking in this study. There were approximately 15 African American adolescent fathers who initially agreed to participate in the study, but did not complete the interview. A few of these fathers went so far as to schedule an interview, but they did not follow through although they were given several rescheduled interview times. Other non-participants indicated that they were hesitant about sharing their personal experiences and therefore, they chose not to complete the interview. Also, parental consent needed to be obtained for those participants who were minors and participant's unwillingness to or difficulty remembering to obtain parental consent presented as a barrier to recruitment.

Another limitation of this study involves the extent to which the findings can be generalized. All of the fathers voluntarily participated in the study. Therefore, it is
possible that the sample that was recruited represents fathers who are more motivated and willing to openly talk about their experiences as adolescent fathers. Also, although efforts were made to evenly recruit participants from community agencies as well as correctional facilities, more than half of the sample were incarcerated at the time of the interview. Therefore, this further limits the generalizability of the results.

The age range of this study was purposefully narrowed to focus more on the lower age range of young fathers. However, fourteen of the participants fell in the upper end of the 14 to 20 age range. Future research should examine fathers ranging in age from 14 to 16 to develop a better understanding for the differences among their fatherhood experiences compared to older adolescent fathers.

**Implications for Service Providers**

Research has shown that paternal education and employment are strongly associated with increased father involvement over time (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). The participants of this study have recognized this and many of them discussed the need to further their education and the need for assistance in finding employment. It is important for professionals working with these young men to recognize their need for support in finding and maintaining employment. This study found that many of the fathers who have no success in finding employment will seek out financial support from any where they can find it, even if it requires criminal behavior.

The participants identified several support networks that would help them to make their desired changes to become more involved fathers. Many participants indicated the need for support from family members and the child’s mother. It is important for family members to understand the primary role that family plays in these father’s lives and ways
the family can influence the father to fulfill his responsibilities. Since research has shown that adolescent father enrollment in service programs is typically problematic (Kiselica, 1995; Lane & Clay, 2000), it might be helpful to involve family members as part of the programs. A small number of the fathers indicated that talking to a therapist might be beneficial in helping them to work through their personal problems. Therefore, individual therapy might not need to be a primary component of a social service program, but it would be helpful if it were offered to these young men. Many of the fathers felt they needed help from a fatherhood program that would help them with multiple issues including obtaining and maintaining a job, educating them about what they need to do to be a good father and how to get there.

All of the fathers in this study identified both short and long-term goals for assuming their responsibilities as fathers and for being an involved father. However, as this study demonstrated, many of these fathers do not have the resources to fully achieve these goals. Social service organizations can develop programs that, among other things, educate fathers on ways their goals can be achieved through the use of community, family, and personal resources.

Several of the participants had previously participated in a young fathers program. They commented on the benefits of this program. First, the program helped them to better themselves and their families. Also, they gained a better understanding for how to be in their children’s lives in a positive way. They also expressed learning how to start doing the things that their fathers did not do for them. It is especially important that professionals working with adolescent fathers understand the father figures or lack of
father figures that were present in the lives of these young men while they were growing up.

As previous research has indicated (Sullivan, 1993), it is a challenge to study adolescent fathers because of the difficulty in locating them and then ensuring that they will follow through with their appointments. This challenge was experienced during the recruitment of participants for this study. However, once the participants began the interview they were very willing to share their fatherhood experiences. It was also clear that many of them have a strong emotional connection to being a father and wanting to be present in their children’s lives. Therefore, it is likely that, although these fathers feel they need help in multiple areas, they will not actively seek out support services on their own. It is important for service providers to be very assertive and consistent in enrolling adolescent fathers in the programs offered to ensure that they have the opportunity to increase their involvement with their children and to strengthen the father-child relationship.

Conclusion

This study has provided additional insight into the barriers that interfere with African American, unwed adolescent father involvement as well as the factors that will likely lead to create and maintain the father-child bond. Additionally, this study provided a different perspective on determining the factors that influence father involvement through the use of a conceptual model of the influences on fatherhood and the sociocultural emphasis of the contemporary theories on African American fathers. Since research has found that some fathers’ absences may have detrimental impacts on their children’s development and well-being, specifically low-income, African American
fathers, it is imperative that research continues to focus on the obstacles these men face in
becoming an involved father and ways to facilitate their increased presence in their
children’s lives.
References


Table 1

Demographic Data

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*Numerical Rating Scale Scores*

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Table 2 (continued)

* - Questions corresponding to Rating Scale Numbers:

1. Have your decisions about your education been affected by your desire to be involved with your child? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
2. How committed are you to being a father? (1 – not committed...5 – very committed)
3. How important is it for you to be or continue to be an involved father? (1 – not important...5 – very important)
4. How much involvement did your father have in raising you? (1 – none...5 – a lot)
5. How do you think these living arrangements have affected your relationship and involvement with your child? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
6. How helpful was this experience for you? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
7. How much have you been encouraged by your family and friends to be a part of your child’s life? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
8. Do you think your jobs have affected your relationship with your child? How so? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
9. How involved do you feel that you are with your child(ren)? (1-not involved at all...5 – very involved)
10. How supportive do you feel your relationship is? (1 – not supportive...5 – very supportive)
11. How involved do you think she expects you to be? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
12. How hopeful are you that these changes are possible? (1- not hopeful...5 – very hopeful)

** - Not applicable or no response given.
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* - Higher scores on the QRI indicate more positive appraisals of the relationship.
**Influences on Fatherhood**

**A Conceptual Model**

**Father Factors**
- Role Identification
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Commitment
- Psychological Well Being
- Relations with Own Father
- Employment Characteristics
- Residential Status

**Contextual Factors**
- Institutional Practices
- Employment Opportunities
- Economic Factors
- Race/Ethnicity Resources and Challenges
- Cultural Expectations
- Social Support

**Child Factors**
- Attitude toward Father
- Behavioral Difficulties
- Temperament
- Gender
- Age
- Developmental Status

**Coparental Relationship**
- Marital/Nonmarital Status
- Dual vs. Single Earning
- Custodial Arrangement
- Relationship Commitment
- Cooperation
- Mutual Support
- Conflict

**Mother Factors**
- Attitude toward Father
- Expectations of Father
- Support of Father
- Employment Characteristics

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Doherty, William J., Edward F. Kouneski, and Martha Farrell Erickson.

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Appendix A

Father Interview

Paternal Factors in Father Involvement

Education (refer to demographic form)

- Are you currently enrolled in school?
  - What grade are you in?
  - Have you had sex education in school?
- What plans do you have for continuing your education?
  - Graduate from high school?
  - Go to college?
  - Get GED?
- Have your decisions about your education been affected by your desire to be involved with your child? (1 - not at all...5 - very much so)
  - How?

Employment Characteristics

- What kind of flexibility does your current job provide?
  - Is it possible to plan your schedule around spending time with your child?
- How do you think your job interferes with the amount of time you can spend with your child?

Role Identification

- What goals do you have for yourself as a father? (short-term and long-term)
- What responsibilities do you think you have to your child(ren)?
- What kinds of steps do you think you need to take to be part of your child’s life?
- What do you think makes it difficult to take these steps? What do you think makes it easier for you to take these steps?
- How committed are you to being a father? (1 - not committed...5 - very committed)
- How important is it for you to be or continue to be an involved father? (1 - not important...5 - very important)

Relationship with Own Father

- Please describe to me your relationship with your father?
  - What was your relationship like when you were growing up?
  - Was your father around a lot?
  - Was he married to your mother?
  - Who do you feel raised you?
  - How much involvement did your father have in raising you? (1 - none...5 - a lot)
  - How did he discipline you?
  - How do you think your father show that he loved you?
  - What kinds of things do you remember doing with your father?
• How do you think your behaviors as a father have been influenced by your relationship with your own father?

Residential Status
• Where are you currently living? (refer to demographic form)
• Do you have a room of your own?
• How long have you lived there?
• How do you think these living arrangements have affected your relationship and involvement with your child? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
  - Please explain

Psychological Well-Being
• Have you ever been to a counselor or therapist?
  - How helpful was this experience for you? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)
• Did you have any trouble adjusting to the news of becoming a father?
  - What was your reaction when you were told that you were going to be a father?
• What do you think makes it difficult to adjust to the news of being a father?
  - Not being ready/prepared to be a father?
  - Feeling like you are too young to be a father?
  - Not having enough money?
• What has helped you in getting used to the idea of your being a father?
  - Support from family and friends?
  - Talking to a counselor/therapist?

Societal and Contextual Factors in Father Involvement

Community/Societal/Family Expectations
• How did your friends and family react to your being a father?
  - What kind of pressure did you feel from them to be a part of your child’s life?
  - Are you getting any help from anybody to be part of your child’s life?
    ▪ What kind of emotional help are you getting from family and friends?
    ▪ What kind of financial help are you getting from family and friends?
  - What kind of support did your family offer to you? (emotional, financial, etc.)
  - Has anybody in your family discussed sex and birth control with you?
• How much have you been encouraged by your family and friends to be a part of your child’s life? (1 – not at all...5 – very much so)

Employment Opportunities/Challenges
• Are you working right now? (refer to demographic form)
  - If so, tell me about your job.
  - What jobs have you had before?
  - How long did you stay at each job?
  - What were your responsibilities?
  - How much were you paid?
  - How many hours did you work?
• Was there ever a time when you had trouble finding a job?
- Tell me about it
- What made it hard to get a job?

• Do you think your jobs have affected your relationship with your child? How so? (1 not at all...5 - very much so)
  - Do you think your jobs have affected your relationship with your child’s mother? How so?
  - Does any of the money you make from your job go toward supporting your child? How much? What is it used for?

**Child Support**

• Have you been ordered by the court to pay child support?
• Are you able to pay what you have been ordered to pay?
• If you are not able to pay, what makes this difficult? Was there ever a time when it was easier to pay?
• What do you think would make it easier to pay child support?
• Is anybody paying child support for you such as your parents?
• How do you feel about being ordered by the court to pay support?

**Peer Relationships/Perspectives**

• What do your friends have to say about your being a father?
  - Do they know?
  - Are any of them fathers?
  - Is this a common experience (being a father) among your friends?
  - Is your relationship with your child(ren) like the relationship they have with their children or different? How so?

**Criminal Activity**

• Have you ever used drugs or alcohol?
• Were you under the influence when your child was conceived?
• Have you ever been arrested? Have you ever served time in a facility? For what? How many times?
• How have these experiences affected your relationship with your child?

**The Child**

• Tell me about your child(ren) – (refer to demographic form)
  - Age
  - Sex
  - Where does he or she live?
  - With whom does he or she live?
• Is your name on your child’s birth certificate?
• Was your child named after you (first name or last name)?
• What is your current relationship with your child(ren)?
  - Are you permitted to see your child?
  - How often do you see your child(ren)?
- Do you have a scheduled time to see your child?
  - How many hours do you spend together during a visit?
  - Do you spend time alone with your child?
  - What kinds of things do you do together?
  - How do you feel when you are spending time with your child(ren)?
    - How involved do you feel that you are with your child(ren)? (1-not involved at all...5 - very involved)

- At what point were you most involved with your child? (at birth vs. more recently)
  - What was your relationship like with your child(ren)’s mother at this time?

The Mother-Father Relationship

- Describe for me the relationship you have with your child(ren)’s mother(s).
  - How long did the two of you know each other before your baby was born?
  - How do the two of you get along now?
  - Has your relationship changed since your child was born? How so?
  - How supportive do you feel your relationship is? (1 - not supportive.....5 - very supportive)
    - If the relationship is supportive, how do you think this influences your involvement with your child?
    - If the relationship is not supportive, how do you think this influences your involvement with your child?
    - (If have more than one child with different mothers) What are your relationships like with each of your child’s mothers?
      - What makes them different?

- Where does the mother of your child live?
  - What difference do you think this makes in your relationship with your child?
  - Do you think things would be different if the living arrangements were different? How so?

- What expectations does your child’s mother have for you as a father?
  - How involved do you think she expects you to be? (1 - not at all...5 - very much so)
    - What kind of financial support does she expect you to provide?
    - Does she expect other support as well such as spending quality time with your child?

- Has your involvement with your child ever been restricted either by the child’s mother or by her parents?
  - If so, what limits have been placed on your involvement?
  - How does it feel to be restricted from seeing your child?

Facilitators of Father Involvement

- Overall, what changes do you think you could be made in your life to become more involved with you child(ren)?
- What kind of help do you feel you might need in making these changes?
• How hopeful are you that these changes are possible? (1 - not hopeful...5 - very hopeful)
• Have you ever or are you currently participating in any service programs that help you to increase your involvement with your child? (refer to demographic form)
  - What about these programs have you found to be most helpful?
  - What other services do you feel you need in making these changes?
  - Do you feel that you have access to these services in order to make the necessary changes?
Appendix B

Quality of Relationships Inventory

Please use the scale below to answer the following questions regarding your relationship with your child(ren)'s mother(s).

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>Quite a bit</td>
<td>Very Much</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems? 1 2 3 4
2. How often do you need to work hard to avoid conflict with this person? 1 2 3 4
3. To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem? 1 2 3 4
4. How upset does this person sometimes make you feel? 1 2 3 4
5. To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it? 1 2 3 4
6. How much does this person make you feel guilty? 1 2 3 4
7. How much do you have to “give in” in this relationship? 1 2 3 4
8. To what extent can you count on this person to help you if a family member very close to you died? 1 2 3 4
9. How much does this person want you to change? 1 2 3 4
10. How positive a role does this person play in your life? 1 2 3 4
26. How significant is this relationship in your life? 1 2 3 4
27. How close will your relationship be with this person in 10 years? 1 2 3 4
28. How much would you miss this person if the two of you could not see or talk with each other for a month? 1 2 3 4
29. How critical of you is this person? 1 2 3 4
30. If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, 1 2 3 4
how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something with you?

31. How responsible do you feel for this person’s well-being? 1 2 3 4

32. How much do you depend on this person? 1 2 3 4

33. To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else? 1 2 3 4

34. How much would you like this person to change? 1 2 3 4

35. How angry does this person make you feel? 1 2 3 4

36. How much do you argue with this person? 1 2 3 4

37. To what extent can you really count on this person to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress? 1 2 3 4

38. How often does this person make you feel angry? 1 2 3 4

39. How often does this person try to control or influence your life? 1 2 3 4

40. How much more do you give than you get from this relationship? 1 2 3 4
Appendix C

Demographic Information Form

Age: ___

Who do you live with? ________________________________

How many children do you have? ______

Age(s) of child(ren): _____________________________

Who does your child live with?
  □ Their Mother
  □ Their Mother's Parents
  □ Your Parents
  □ Foster Home
  □ Other ______________

What is the highest level of education you have completed? ___________________________

What is the highest level of education your mother has completed?
  □ Elementary School
  □ Some Middle School
  □ Completed Middle School
  □ Some High School
  □ Completed High School
  □ Some College
  □ Completed College

Do you currently have a job or have you worked in the past? ______

If you are employed or have been employed, please list the kinds of jobs you have or had:
  _____________________________________________
  _____________________________________________
_____________________________________________

Are you and your family eligible for Medicaid? ______

Referral Source ____________________________________________________________
(filled out by primary investigator)
Appendix D

Consent and Assent Forms

Participant Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted through Xavier University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. This is a research project designed to look at the things that influence adolescent fathers in being the father they want to be. Your participation in this project will involve responding to questions in an interview about your relationship with your child(ren) and what factors have influenced this relationship. The interview will be audio recorded and the information transcribed.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in this study. However, some people get upset when discussing personal issues. The possible benefits to you include the opportunity to think about your experiences as a father and to help professionals better understand the issues related to adolescent fatherhood.

If you have any additional questions about the purpose of this project, please contact Jessica Samson at 521-1154 or Dr. Janet Schultz at the Xavier University Psychology Department at 745-3248.

I will be keeping the information gathered from our interview, but this information is strictly confidential. Your name and other identifying information will not be connected with your responses. Tapes and transcriptions will be kept separately from consent and demographic forms. Tapes may be used for professional or educational purposes but will at no time be matched with any identifying information. This information cannot be released to any agency involving issues such as child support without your explicit written permission. You are under no obligation to participate in this study, and you are free to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty for withdrawing from the study. If you complete this project you will be given Showcase Cinemas coupon good for two movie tickets, two drinks, and for your participation.

If you decide to participate in this project, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

______________________________  ______________________________
Participant Signature (age 18 and older)  Date

______________________________  ______________________________
Investigator Signature  Date
Parental/ Legal Guardian Consent Form

Your son is being asked to participate in a research project through Xavier University. This is a research project designed to look at the things that influence adolescent fathers in being the father they want to be. Your son's participation in this project will involve responding to questions in an interview about his relationship with his child(ren) and what factors have influenced this relationship. The interview will be audio recorded and the information transcribed.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with your son's participation in this study. However, some people get upset when discussing personal issues. The possible benefits to him include the opportunity to think about his experiences as a father and to help professionals better understand the issues related to adolescent fatherhood.

If you have any additional questions about the purpose of this project, please contact Jessica Samson at 521-1154 or Dr. Janet Schultz at the Xavier University Psychology Department at 745-3248.

I will be keeping the information gathered from the interview, but this information is strictly confidential. Your son’s name and other identifying information will not be associated with his responses. Tapes and transcriptions will be kept separately from consent and demographic forms. Tapes may be used for professional or educational purposes but will at no time be matched with any identifying information. This information cannot be released to any agency involving issues such as child support without your explicit written permission. Your son is under no obligation to participate in this study, and he is free to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty for withdrawing from the study. At the completion of your son’s participation in this project, he will be given a Showcase Cinemas coupon good for two movie tickets, two drinks, and popcorn.

Please sign below if you give your son permission to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

__________________________________  ___________________________
Legal Guardian Signature            Date

__________________________________  ___________________________
Investigator Signature              Date

Appendix F
Minor Assent Form

I, ______________________________ understand that my parents/guardian have said it's okay for me to take part in a research project about the things that influence young fathers in being the father they want to be.

I am taking part in the project because I want to. I have been told that I can stop at any time I want to and that nothing will happen to me if I want to stop. I also understand that this information cannot be released to any agency involving issues such as child support without my written permission.

If I complete this project, I will be given a Showcase Cinemas coupon good for two movie tickets, two drinks, and popcorn for my participation.

In signing below I am willing to participate in this research project.

__________________________  ______________________
Participant Signature       Date

__________________________  ______________________
Investigator Signature      Date
Appendix E

IRB Approval Form

September 15, 2004

Jessica Samson
Cincinnati, OH 45211

Dear Ms. Samson:

The Xavier University Institutional Review Board received the revised survey for your Protocol #0302-4, *Through the Eyes of the Father*, today. Your research is approved in the Full Review category. This approval expires 9/15/05. A progress report must be filed with XU’s IRB by the expiration date either stating that your research has been completed or that you request an extension of IRB approval. A form is enclosed for your convenience. The form is also available at http://www.xu.edu/IRB/IRBforms.htm.

If there are any adverse events or modifications to the research, please notify the IRB immediately.

We wish you every success in your research.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Baumiller, S.J.
IRB Chair and Administrator

RCB:nn

cc: Dr. Janet Schultz, ML 6511

Enclosures: Approved Informed Consent Forms
Progress Report form