His-stories: Young, non-residential, African American fathers participating in a responsible fatherhood program: A hermeneutic inquiry

by

Gregory Suni Childs

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Major: Family and Consumer Sciences Education

Program of Study Committee:
Robert H. Bosselman, Co-Major Professor
Steven B. Garasky, Co-Major Professor
Cheryl Farr
Carole Makela
Jennifer Margrett
Penny Ralston

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the "dream team", my dissertation committee.
Thank you so very much for guiding me down this incredible path to knowing.
My boys the "Z's".
The Five Fathers
My dear friend Ms. Mangus

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ABSTRACT

Childs, Suni Gregory. Ph.D., Iowa State University, May 2012. His-stories: Young, non-residential, African American fathers participating in a responsible fatherhood program: A hermeneutic inquiry. Major Professors: Robert H. Bosselman and Steve B. Garasky.

In America, 26 percent of all children live within a single parent household that is headed by a female. Of that number, two-thirds of African American children are now born into single-mother households. The purpose of this Phenomenological (Hermeneutic) study was to conduct in-depth hermeneutical interviews with a selected group of young African American fathers, who have or are currently participating in one of two Responsible Fatherhood Programs within the western New York area. They were: 1. *Great Starts (Only For Fathers Program) and, 2. *Positive, Outcomes, for Parents, who are Self-Sufficient, or P.O.P.S.. The P.O.P.S. program receives funding from the targeted area's Department of Social Services and Great Starts receives funding from New York State Office of Children and Family Services. The goal of this research was to conduct a chronology of their life-world experiences which included exploring, their "past", "present", and "future" life-changing circumstances as a result of participating within a Responsible Fatherhood Program. This was achieved by using individual interviews to uncover common lived-world experiences of these young African American fathers' lives, as it related to their future life-circumstances, post-program, and in their own voice. Results uncovered five common "lived-world "experiences or themes: (a) Fatherlessness: Mama Knows Best; (b) My Babymama: Inter-parental conflict; (c) Making It: Self-Efficacy; (d) Help Wanted: underemployment/ unemployment; and, (e) Wanting To Be a Good Father: The provider/role model.

For the practitioner and professional within the field of Family and Consumer Science working with fathers, this research might provide a new lens by which to deliver services to young fathers. For example, they could advocate for co-parenting classes as a graduation requirement and part of custody arrangement within the family court system. Moreover, the practitioner can promote father friendly services and educate the public on the impact fathers have on the well-being of children.

* Pseudonyms were used for each program

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"There is another measure of the damage of fatherlessness, one with which you may identify immediately. You see, it's actually impossible for a father to be truly absent; part of him is always there. But in the fatherless home, he has given up his right to represent himself, and he often gets translated into a ghost, or a haunting spirit, or some would say a demon. No statistic can adequately measure the amount of pain caused by an absent father".
-Ken R. Canfield, Ph. D., (1992, p. 225)

In America, 26 percent of all children live within a single parent household that is headed by a female (National Fatherhood Leadership Group [NFLG], 2009a). Of that number, two-thirds of African American children are now born into single-mother households (National Urban League [NUL], 2007). At least 18,450 of these children live in the target researched area, and close to two-thirds of these children live within two major zip code areas. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 "American Community Survey Report," these two zip code areas represent major "pockets", where children are born into poverty within western New York. These numbers are overwhelming and the consequences are inexcusable (Canfield, 1992, pp. 224-227; Davis, Jenkins & Hunt, 2007, p. 254).

The research is explicitly clear in that children who have access to both biological parents are less likely to live in a state of abject poverty (National Center for Fathers and Families [NCOFF], 2000; National Fatherhood Initiative [NFI], 2008; NFLG, 2009c; NUL, 2007). Moreover, these trends pose a significant threat to African American children, the African American community, and to our nation Morehouse Research Institute & Institute for American Values [MRI & IAV], 1999; NUL, 2007).

There is compelling evidence that children raised by single parents generally do not fare as well as children raised by two parents. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. DHHS) (2004), fatherless children are twice as likely to:

1. Fare poorly in academic achievement;

2. Display early signs of delinquent behavior; and

3. Not graduate from high school.

There is currently a national movement to assist non-residential fathers to better parent their children. The Obama administrations, as well as the previous three presidential administrations, have made marriage promotion a high priority on their social policy agendas (NFLG, 2009a). A host of public and privately run marriage promotion and enrichment organizations, serving primarily to educate suburban populations, are now being enlisted to deliver marriage support services to poor and minority communities. Out of these initiatives is the "Responsible Fatherhood Programs" (RFP). One of the goals of RFP is to reduce the level of cases of non-payment for child-support clogging the family court system (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). In addition, another goal of RFP is designed to change the negative consequences of fatherlessness in the lives of children. The hope is that young fathers who participate in these programs will become responsible parents and meaningful father figures (pp. 569-573).

Statement of the Problem

To date, very little is known about the impact of RFP with respect to the participants they serve, both on the local and national levels; this, in light of the fact that these programs have been in existence for nearly three decades (Anderson, Kohler, & Letiecq, 2002; Mincy & Pouncy, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002; The Lewin Group, 1997; U.S. Government

Accountability Office (GAO) 2008). Moreover, the "major" programs or large "intermediaries" have been, and continue to be, heavily funded on both state and federal levels (GAO, 2008). It is imperative that new measures, both qualitatively and quantitatively, be employed to capture the participants' perceptions and behaviors with respect to responsible fathering. In an attempt to gain an understanding on how fathers are making meaning of their experiences, particularly their future life circumstances (Roggman, Fitzgerald, Bradley, & Raikes, 2002), these measures must be in place, particularly, at the local level to justify future RFP initiatives under limited funding climates.

Purpose of Study

According to the NFLG Issue Brief #5 (2009c), "…policies and programs for fathers and their families must be race-informed and should be assessed for their equitable impact," (p. 3). Therefore, in an attempt to explicitly understand how young, non-residential, African American fathers are making meaning of their past, current, and future life circumstances as a result of participating in a RFP, the purpose of this study was to give voice to a population of individuals we rarely hear from (Anderson et al., 2002; Jordan-Zachery, 2009; Kiselica, 2008; Young, 2004). To this end, this was an opportunity to hear from a selected group of young, non-residential, African American fathers participating in such programs. Hence, it was not a program evaluation or an assessment.

Research Questions (RQ)

This research includes three "Grand Tour" questions (i.e., guiding questions) (McCaslin & Scott, 2003), that are few and general. The three questions the researcher was seeking to answer are as follows:

1. What life-changing circumstances led these fathers to seek the services of a RFP?

2. What are the perceived expectations/outcomes these fathers hope to gain as a result of participating in such programs?

3. How do these fathers envision their futures as a result of participating in such RFP?

Assumptions

1. This researcher would have access to the participants in one of the RFP.
2. The perceptions of success for the participants were different from those of the RFP funders.
3. Trustworthiness would be developed among this researcher and participants; participants will be open, honest, and available for interviews.
4. Restorying of participants narratives will be accurate.

Limitations

1. This researcher had only one year to complete this study.
2. Application of findings would be limited to the target research area.
3. Study was limited to young, non-residential African American fathers, ages 18-25.
4. Participants had a child living in one of the targeted zip code areas.

The Researcher's Subjectivity

This researcher entered this process with a certain set of preconceptions and biases. Laverty (2003) refers to this orientation as one's "history" (p. 24). The researcher's history in relation to the phenomenon under study includes his personal experiences growing up fatherless and his educational and professional experiences as they relate to the phenomenon under study. This researcher shares the viewpoint of Dudley (2007), "…biological fathers who do not live on a daily basis with their children have a unique role, potential or real, to play in raising their children by virtue of their inherent biological connection to their children." (p. 171). Moreover, this researcher embraces the "Seven Core Learning" (discussed within this chapter) advocated by the National Center for Fathers & Families (NCOFF, 2000). Consequently, this researcher is unable to "bracket" his history in relationship to the phenomenon under study, which is why he

has chosen to employ a hermeneutic phenomenology as the preferred methodological approach. In support of this stance, Lopez and Willis (2004) state, *"The technique of bracketing, as described by descriptive phenomenologist, is inconsistent and questionable within a hermeneutic approach."* (p. 730). Furthermore, according to Heidegger (trans1962) (the creator of this approach), nothing can be encountered without reference to a person's background understanding (p. 25). A detailed discussion of phenomenology is presented within Chapter Three. To this end, this researcher acknowledges the fact that he is an advocate for all young fathers regardless of their race, ethnicity, and social economic status.

<div align="center">His-Story The Researcher</div>

For the past four years this researcher has been on a quest to understand, help, and most importantly, study the plight of urban young fathers. Ironically, this interest evolved as a result of this researcher losing his job as a Family and Consumer Sciences educator within the western New York public school system in 2005. Preferring not to seek employment within the surrounding school districts, he accepted a position with a parenting education program that provided case management and home visiting opportunities to primarily young, low-come mothers. His goal was to gain experience in the area of case management which would enable him to seek employment within the county social services department, which he felt was still within the realms of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Six months into the position, on a cold February night, this researcher sat in front of the television exhausted from a full day of home visiting. In a near state of semi-consciousness, while "channel-surfing," he stumbled across the premier episode of a program called "My Life as A Child" on Turner Broadcasting Network's Total Learning Channel (TLC). The program took a phenomenological approach by allowing children between the ages of 7-14 to tell their

life stories in their own voice while filming. The title of this premier episode was called "Hoops & Hurdles". This episode began with an angelic African American seven-year-old child named, Joshua Bynum. In his neighborhood, Joshua was looking out of his bedroom window. Joshua began to articulate in such an adult-like fashion his shamefulness of being fatherless and what he would do if he had his father in his life. Although Joshua was only seven at the time, he was speaking a language so many adult fatherless individuals could relate to, but only dare to discuss within the confines of a therapist. Initially, this researcher felt that Joshua was being prepped. However, the more he listened to Joshua's story, the more he realized no child Joshua's age could possibly remember such lines. Moreover, Joshua, who spoke with such passion, made it clear he needed his biological father. Interestingly, and contrary to popular belief, Joshua was not "male-deprived". Quite the contrary, he had quite a few men in his life (e.g., his teacher and males at the community center, where he often went to play).

Needless to say, Joshua's story resonated within this researcher. Joshua was making public the shame this researcher had tried to conceal for years, the shame of growing-up fatherless during his teen years, a critical period in his life.

This researcher's father was killed during a botched robbery on Christmas Eve, 1975. This was the year in which he wanted to have the "talk" with his father regarding the "ways" of the world and what it meant to be a "man". Regretfully, this researcher spent the better part of his teen years in a state of anger and confusion, and certainly at risk to the streets. Fortunately, with the help of his high school's Family and Consumer Sciences teacher (Mrs. Lepaglea) and his junior and senior high Guidance Counselor (Mrs. Gold), he was able to envision a future that extended beyond "street life". Unfortunately, however, he spent most of his young adult years struggling with those internal demons that impact on one's well-being; clearly a direct

consequence of growing up fatherless; of which, Canfield (1992) eloquently and Dudley (2007) unapologetically articulate.

To conclude, shortly after the airing of "My Life as A Child", this researcher approached the parenting program administrator with a proposal to incorporate a "fathering" component to the existing program offering. The administrator was impressed and agreed to send this researcher to Washington, D C to train under Dr. Jeffery Johnson, president and CEO of the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL). Dr. Johnson co-authored the curriculum "Working with Young Fathers", which is used in most demonstration projects within the fatherhood field (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002).

Once trained, this researcher immediately began making contact with other human service organizations, as well as major fatherhood initiatives within western New York. Unfortunately, this researcher's immediate supervisor felt uncomfortable with this researcher "heading- up" such a major initiative under the current program offerings and created an environment that became unproductive for this researcher, causing him to resign. Shortly thereafter, this researcher was admitted to Iowa State University's Family and Consumer Science Educational Leadership Academy doctoral program, whereby he is currently pursuing his research interests, young fathers who are participating in a RFP within western New York.

Finally, upon completing his education, this researcher plans to operate a RFP within western New York, which will serve all young fathers.

<div align="center">Rationale for Study</div>

We are at a crossroad in fatherhood research (Day & Lamb, 2004; Roggman et al., 2002). Many gaps warrant inquiry, particularly, with regard to self-reports from the father's perspective (Day & Lamb, 2004, p. 3; Roggman et al., 2002; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002). There is a

strong need in the research to lend "voice" to the "voiceless" by providing a new paradigm of father-child interactions and solutions that are based upon practices that have the potential to decrease the state of fatherlessness (Marsiglio, 1995a). Moreover, in this researcher's opinion, and under the right conditions, fatherlessness must not be considered the default option (e.g., in particular, with respect to the family court system, who is responsible in most cases for custody decisions) (Kiselica, 2008, pp. 171-174).

Finally, and most importantly; from the researcher's perspective, there were several compelling reasons for conducting this study. To date, most of the research with regard to this population has evolved from the mid west and particularly, from one researcher (see Roy, 1999, 2004a, 2004b, 2010). Consequently, there was a need to examine young father's perceptions from an east coast perspective. The target area is rated the third poorest in the nation (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2008), and it was critical that "voice" be given to this population of fathers in order that they might provide insight with regard to future program development within this area. As in previous studies and from a regional perspective, inter-parental conflict was the major barrier to responsible fathers (Schuerger, 2002; Sylvester & Reich, 2002). However, to this researcher's knowledge, there has been no research evolving from this part of the country to either support or refute this topic.

<div align="center">Significance of Study</div>

Research findings on the importance of non-residential fathers to the well-being of their child (ren) are unmistakably significant (Blankenhorn, 1995; Davis et al, 2007, p. 2; Day & Lamb, 2004; Dudley & Stone, 2001; Kiselica, 2008; Lindsay, 1993; Marsiglio, 1995b; Marsiglio, Roy & Fox, 2005; Morris, 2002; Mincy & Sylvester, 1994; Pitts, 2006; See, 2007). It is clear that children who live without contact with their biological fathers fare poorly in academic

achievement, display early signs of delinquent behavior, and are less likely to graduate from high school (Clayton, Mincy, & Blankenhorn, 2003; Morehouse Research Institute & Institute for American Values [MRI & IAV], 1999).

Over the past two decades, there has been a voluminous body of research devoted to the plight of the non-residential father (Day & Lamb, 2004; Nelson, Clampet-Lundquist, & Edin, 2002, p. 526). The most comprehensive to date is, "The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study" (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). Yet, as Nelson et al., (2002) surmise "…relatively little is known about them [African American fathers]." (p. 526). Moreover, Mincy and Pouncy (2002) conclude that the primary clients (and direct benefactors) of this research are government agencies (e.g., Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) and foundations (e.g., Ford Foundation) (p. 566). For example, foundations such as the Ford were the primary funders of RFP during the early stages of development and government support of RFP is a relatively recent phenomenon. According to the NCOFF (2000) (Established to serve as a repository of best practices and research) the research has illuminated the following:

1. Fathers' care even if caring is not always shown in conventional ways.

2. Father's presence matters in terms of economic well-being, social support, and child development.

3. Joblessness is a major impediment to family formation and father involvement.

4. Many young fathers' view paternity establishment and child support enforcement activities as punitive.

5. Families often do not have the resources or desire to assist young fathers in becoming better parents.

6. Many children are growing up in "fragile families"; they need access to two parents.

7. Making the transition to being a committed parent is often incomplete and problematic for young fathers (The guiding assumption for this research).

Finally, there is a strong need to collect data directly from fathers including, but not limited to, in-home biological fathers and/ or non-residential fathers (Day& Lamb, 2004; Roggman et al., 2002). Therefore, this study will add to the dearth of research that currently exists within the field of FCS. Ironically, a significant portion of the research has evolved from Human Development and FCS Extension departments relating to young, non-residential, African American fathers approaching and fulfilling their parenting role. Consequently, this study will focus on how these young fathers envision their future "life-changing circumstances" as a result of having participated in a RFP post- program activity, in their voices. For the practitioner and professional within the field of Family and Consumer Science working with fathers, this research might provide a new lens by which to deliver services to young fathers. For example, they could advocate for co-parenting classes as a graduation requirement and part of custody arrangement within the family court system. Moreover, the practitioner can promote father friendly services and educate the public on the impact fathers have on the well-being of children.

<div align="center">Important Terms</div>

1. <u>Afrocentric Cultural Perspective</u>- Molefi Kete Asante first coined this term in 1976; it refers to a state of mind that empowers people of African descent to view themselves as "actors" in history rather than "objects", in a non-European fashion (Asante, 1991; Paschal, 2006; Schiele, 2000).

2. <u>Babymama's Drama</u>- Slang term used by "Hip-Hop Culture" to define the constructs of gatekeeping. Further, Roy and Dyson (2005) describe it as the process of negotiation between mother and father to secure, to restrict, and to define the father's roles in their

children's lives. This definition will guild this research study and used interchangeably with "gatekeeping".

3. <u>Co-parenting</u>- A feature of the couple's relationship that can occur when both parents are together and when they are apart. "It is characterized by being low in conflict and high in both cooperation and support" (Jekielek, 2004, p. 94).

4. <u>Gatekeeping</u>- A collection of beliefs and behaviors that inhibit a collaborative effort between men and women in family work (Allen & Alan, 1999; Brent, Kelly, Bost, Vaughn, & Korth, 2005; Roy & Dyson, 2005). Gatekeeping and "Babymama" will be used interchangeably within this study.

5. <u>Interparental Conflicts</u>- The degree of hostility, conflict, tension, and disagreement that is present when parents negotiate parenting roles (Jekielek, 2004).

6. <u>Life-Changing Circumstances</u>-"life changing" circumstances is being conceptualized to include but not limited to: social, economical, and educational occurring events that have the potential to elevate or hinder one's path to self- reliance as a responsible fathers (National Network for Family Resiliency, 1995).

7. <u>Live-away</u>- The non-resident parent; it will be used interchangeably within this study (Anderson et al., 2002).

8. <u>Low-income</u>- Individuals who meet federal/state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligibility requirements (Roy, 2004a). For the purpose of this study, the federal poverty guidelines will be used to determine income criteria. The guidelines are a simplified version of the federal poverty thresholds. These guidelines are updated yearly and are used for administrative purposes. A low income father is being conceptualized as

fathers who are currently earning less than \$14,439 per year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

9. <u>Non-resident</u>: Parent who does not live in the same household as their child (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004).

10. <u>Parenting Plan</u>- Voluntary agreement made between parents concerning the parenting arrangements for their child. It is recognized by the courts when signed and dated, written without threat, duress, or coercion (Dunn & Gittoes-Caesar, 2007).

11. <u>Responsible Fathering</u>- Based on consensus within the field of fatherhood, responsible fathering means; (a) he establishes paternity; (b) he is present in the life of his child; (c) he provides economic support; and (d) he collaborates and respects his child's mother (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1996; Mincy & Pouncy, 2002; NFLG, 2009a).

12. <u>Responsible Fatherhood Program</u>-*"A Responsible Fatherhood Education program is one that focuses on giving fathers the knowledge and skills to better understand their social, cultural, economic, legal, and developmental impact on their children. Moreover, the program teaches and encourages fathers to assume personal responsibility for their past, current and future attitudes and behaviors"* Dr. J, Johnson (personal communication, December, 2007).

13. <u>Strength-Based Perspective</u>- A focus on the capacities and resources of the individual, family, and community for motivation to overcome challenges and adversity. Its focus is on personal and community empowerment (See, 2007, p. 306) in contrast to a deficit model.

14. <u>Teen Father</u>- Males who father children before reaching age 20 or, sometime, before reaching 18 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004).

15. <u>Young Father</u>- For the purpose of this study, the sample will consist of fathers who are

18-25 years of age.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The goal of this review of the literature was to tease out the substantive information that will assist in the support of answering the research questions. The questions were: (1) What life-changing circumstances led these fathers to seek the services of a RFP?; (2) What are the perceived expectations/outcomes these fathers hope to gain as a result of participating in such programs?; and, (3) How do these fathers envision their future as a result of participating in such programs? These questions are designed to explicitly understand how these young, non-residential, African American fathers are making meaning of their past, current and future life circumstances as a result of participating in a RFP.

Hence, the objective of this review of the literature was to: (1) discuss the rationale for employing a bioecological approach; (2) center the African American father within a historical context; (3) provide a brief overview of the challenges this population faces with regard to fatherhood; (4) discuss the evolution of the fatherhood field; and, (5) review specific research that addresses the phenomenon under study.

Theoretical Framework: Billingsley African American Family Model

The Billingsley (1992) African American Family Model (BAAFM) was used as a guide in the data analysis of this study (see figure 1). The researcher relied on this framework as the guiding lens to help explain the "lived-experiences" of the participants. The BAAFM is merely an extension of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Framework (Julion, Gross, Barclay-McLaughlin, & Fogg, 2007, p. 597), which has its roots within the field that underpins the discipline of Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) (White & Klein, 2008, pp. 263-265).

Figure 1

Billingsley African American Family Model
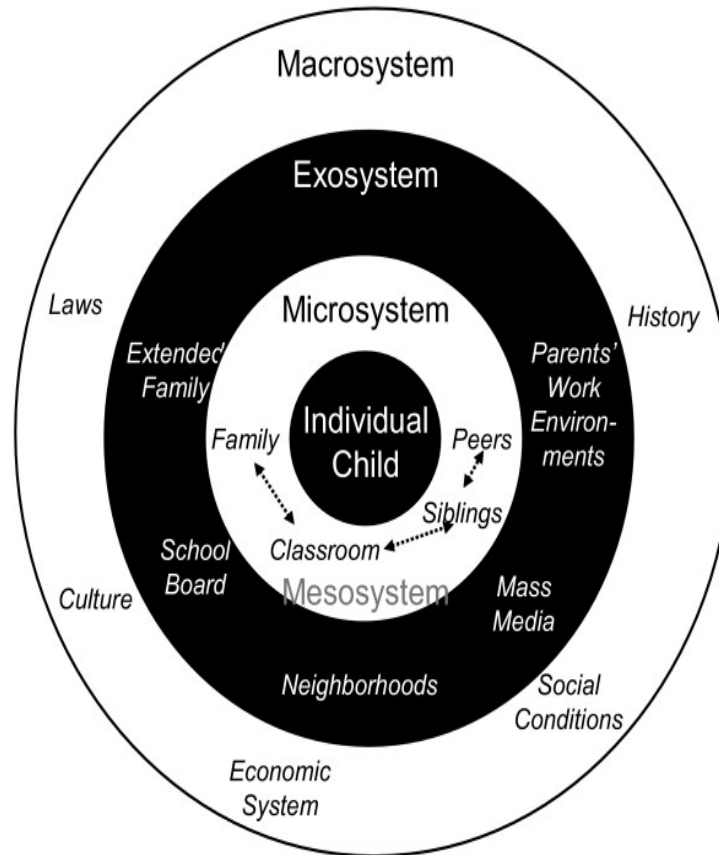
From: "Climbing Jocabs Ladder: The Enduring Legacy of African-American Families,"
by A. Billingsley, 1992, p. 77. Copyright 1992 by Simon and Schuster. Adapted with
permission of the publisher.

The difference between Billingsley and Bronfenbrenner's models is the notion of time,

specifically, in reference to the notion of historical time, which was conceived first by

Billingsley (1968) and later added by Bronfenbrenner in (1989) (White & Klein, 2008, p. 259).

Moreover, as mentioned, any discussion related to the African American family (in this case,

African American males) needs a framework that assesses the historical, as well as the many

societal factors, affecting this population (NFLG, 2009c; McAdoo, 1993). Finally, consistent

with Bronfenbrenner's framework, the child (in this case, the individual) is considered in the context of the larger social environment, including those of the family, the community, and the society (Littlejohn-Blacke & Darling, 1993, p. 461; McAdoo, 1993). Bronfenbrenner argues that behavior is a function of the interaction of the person's traits and abilities with the environment (B=f[PE]), B=Behavior, f=function, P=traits/abilities, and E=environment (White & Klein, 2008, p. 258).

<center>The African American Family Defined</center>

According to Billingsley (1992) the African American family is defined as "an intimate association of person of persons of African descent who are related to one another by a variety of means, including blood, marriage, formal adoption, informal adoption, or by appropriation; sustained by a history of common residence in America; and deeply embedded in a network of social structures both internal and external to itself" (p.28). Billingsley further defines the African American family in regard to its structures and considers there composition to be common within the African American community: nuclear, extended, and augmented families. The nuclear family consists of married couples, with or without children or unmarried parents living with their children (p. 40). Extended families include combined families of couples (p. 42). Augmented families include non-relatives living with nuclear or extended families (p. 44). The single parent particularly, the non-residential father is absent from these descriptions.

<center>Forces That Shape the African American Family</center>

Families are shaped by three major forces according to the BAAFM (p. 77). These forces are: (1) African history and culture and their impact on family development; (2) contemporary society, which is composed of government, private business, voluntary, and religious sectors that influence the family; and, (3) contemporary family patterns which are affected by social class,

family structure, demographic composition, and role functions. Each of these forces and their relationship to answering the research questions will be used as the guiding lens to the interpretive process; which will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

Historical Perspective: African American Fatherhood (Slavery-1970)

From a historical perspective, fatherhood in the African American community has always been marginalized in this country (McAdoo, 1998, p. 363). Hamer (2001) concludes that slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction all served to support the view of the unwed father (non-residential). Moreover, any discourse on African American fatherhood must be viewed from this perspective (Billingsly, 1994; Gutman, 1976; Hamer, 2001; Karenga, 1980; Mincy, 1994; Paschal, 2006; Roy, 2004b; Roy & Dyson, 2010; Williams, 1990). Family formation was never the intent of slavery. The purpose of slavery was simply to provide a controlled source of cheap labor. Although slaves did marry, family formation was not legal and neither parent(s) had rights as parents for their offspring. It was understood by slave owners that allowing slaves to marry and breed ensured a steady supply of cheap labor and increased property values (Hamer, 2001, p. 34); Gutman, 1976; Williams, 1990). These practices continued until the Reconstruction Era.

With their new found freedom, ex-slaves eagerly entered marital unions by exercising their constitutional rights (Clayton et al., 2003; Gutman, 1976). The African American male sought opportunities in every direction. They started businesses, enrolled in schools, and purchased property. For a brief moment in this country's history, the African American male prospered. African American fathers were able to sign contracts and were legally responsible for their wives and children. In 1890, 80 percent of African American households were comprised of two parents (Franklin, 2003). An unwed parent was unthinkable during this period. African Americans' views toward family formation were in line with their American Caucasian counterparts. Yet, there was an underclass of African Americans'; the poor unwed mother and

father. Hamer (2001) and Williams (1990) found that the practice of encouraging adult men and women to have sexual relationships out of wedlock meant that even with freedom, unwed fathers (non-residential) remain a prominent and steadfast form of African American life. Moreover, Williams (1990) coined the name "hit-and-run" fathering to describe this phenomenon and philosophy of certain members within this population that evolved from slavery and continue to resonate (p. 38). Moreover, Majors and Billson (1992) refer to this practice as "Black Masking" (pp. 54-67). Waller (2002) captures the essence of this practice. She wrote, "…*These men preferred to have sexual relationships with multiple women, to remain in their own mother's home, and to "play daddy"…". "In this way, they received the benefits of being a father without marrying the mother or assuming any real responsibility for their children."* (p. 44).

At the start of the twentieth century, African American males faced the ugly reality of "Jim Crow", which was perpetuated by the film "Birth of a Nation" (1910) (Adams, 2001). During this period, all African American boys and men were confronted with brutal forms of social, physical, emotional, and political castrations, which have been the most damaging and de-humanizing aspect of post-slavery activity in this country. As in slavery and Reconstruction, and throughout early decades of the twentieth century, poor African American unwed women continued to utilize social networks, such as extended family formations and charitable relief societies, to supplement the physical needs of their children (Hamer, 2001). The notion of a responsible and nurturing father from an African American perspective was relegated to a stereotyped monster characterized by terms such as "deadbeat dads," who were lazy, buffoonish, drunken, and most importantly, irresponsible toward family financial obligations (Hamer, 2001; Gadsden & Smith, 1994; Williams, 1990). This image remained in the minds of most Caucasian

Americans well into the late 1960s. To add to this, the provocative "Moynihan Report" (1965), which described the African American family as being a "tangles of pathology" (Clayton et al., 2003; Gutman, 1976), continued this negative portrayal of African American fathers. The hypothesis of this report stated that African American families were forced into a matriarchal formation during slavery. As a result, marriage was not a goal of this group of people. Furthermore, the report stated that the African American family structure was "…*out of line with the rest of American society*." (Clayton et al., 2003, p. 14; Gutman, 1976). This negative portrayal continued to marginalize African American fathers. To show another side to the negative images of black men as father, Marelene Perchinske (1998) presents photo essays and brief biological sketches of African American men as fathers, who were confident and nurturing. In addition, the purpose of Gutman's (1976) *"The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom: 1750-1925"*, was to refute Moynihan's thesis (pp. xvii-xxviii). For African American men, a mental and physical castration occurred; there was no use for them after this report became public. Unwed mothers on welfare often were denied benefits if social workers even suspected the presence of a male cohabitating within the households (Gordon, 1994, pp. 297-299); this practice changed under welfare reform. However, this was the beginning of the concept of "underground fathering," which is a practice many unwed fathers choose to utilize today (Morton, 2007). Unfortunately, it has devastating effects on poor children and continues the "cycle of poverty". Clayton argues in the book, *"The Truly Disadvantaged"* (William, 1987) that male joblessness since 1970 accounts for a large percentage of unwed households in the African American community. The passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Women's Rights Movement, the Men's Movement, and the increase in divorce rates among all ethnic groups in America initiated

a change in the "thinking" of fatherhood across all social, economical, and racial backgrounds (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002).

<div align="center">The Young Non-Residential African American Father</div>

The young nonresidential, African American father faces numerous challenges (Hamer, 2002; See, 2007; Mazza, 2002 & Paschal, 2006; NFLG, 2009c). The research findings are unmistakably consistent on the plight of the young African American father. According to the NFLG, an emerging think-tank of practitioners and scholars who are advocating for the "strengthening" of the "American family" through strong father involvement (2009a). This organization has identified three core challenges facing this population; (1) the lack of economic opportunities; these young fathers need training and education in areas, which will provide them with the skills they need to secure employment so they can provide for themselves and their children. They also need employment that can provide the necessities and ensure an adequate source of income (see Appendix C for a comparison of the disparities of employment by race) (NFLG, 2009c; NUL, 2007); (2) social support from the community; including family members, mentors, friends, community organizations, and home visiting programs; and, (3) services and supports; including quality health care, housing assistance, and affordable childcare (Danziger & Radin, 1990; Edin, Lundquist-Clampet, Nelson 2000; Waller, 2002).

Inter-parental Conflicts (Gatekeeping/"Babymama")

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges facing this population, a growing body of research has indicated these fathers face an additional challenge, which involves their ability to negotiate relationships at the micro-level within their immediate ecological system. This additional challenge is between the young father and young mother, and is referred to as "Inter-parental Conflict" (Roy & Dyson, 2005). An inter-parental conflict is the consequence of

"gatekeeping" or "Babymama" for this study. They are the communication intensity levels by which fathers and mothers navigate their co-parenting parental roles (Jekielek, 2004; Schuerger, 2002). Danziger and Radin (1990) conducted a study on the beliefs of welfare recipients teen mother's via a telephone survey. They delineated father's involvement to include: (1) the mother's assessment of the quality of the father-child relationship; (2) the diversity of chores fathers are engaged in (i.e., feeding, dressing and playing); (3) the extent to which the mother discussed the child with the father; and, (4) the mother's overall perception of his role as a responsible father. These four predictors are in line with current findings on the level of involvement relating to the non-residential father (see Brent et al., 2005; Greene & More 2000; and Marsiglio, 1995b).

<div align="center">Overview of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (Initiative)</div>

Where is Daddy?

The history of the evolution of the fatherhood field is well documented (see Mincy & Pouncy, 2002, for the most comprehensive overview to date). Consequently, the purpose of this section is merely to provide an overview that will assist in our basic understanding of the phenomenon in regard to answering the research questions.

In the United States, we can trace back the social phenomenon of fatherlessness (i.e., which is not specific to the plight of the African American father) beginning with the turbulent 1960s. During this period, both men and women began to question the role of the sexes. While women were stepping outside their traditional roles, men were tapping-into their inner selves, resulting in the debunking of the romanticized nuclear family (e.g., a mother and father along with 2.5 children) (Goldberg, 1987; Steinem, 1992; Berkeley, 1999). During this time another social phenomenon occurred, the increase in the divorce and illegitimacy rates (Mincy &

Pouncy, 2002). For African Americans, the family was in crisis mode. According to the "Moynihan Report", this population of families was viewed as a "tangles of pathology" (Clayton et al., 2003; McAdoo, 1998; Majors & Billson, 1992, pp. 16-17). During the "let's make it right" 1970s, the rate of both divorce and illegitimacy reached significant levels, resulting in public discourse and scholarly inquiry (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). We can contribute the escalating divorce rate during this period with that of two groups; middle and upper-middle class men advocating for changes in family law policy (this resulted in no-fault divorce, particularly as it related to child support and custody issues (Doyle, R.E., 1970-1971, G. F. Doppler to Doyle, September 14, 1970; Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). As for the increase in illegitimacy rates, the post-Johnson era "war on poverty," and the social programs that followed, contributed to households that were headed by women (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). The programs to evolve resulted in policies and practices that prohibited fathers in the household (Doherty et al., 1996); such as, the Means Test and or the Work Test (Gordon, 1994, pp. 297-299). At the policy level, under the Nixon Administration, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) was created as a result of Congress passing The 1974 Social Security Act. On the national level, no significant research or programmatic activities occurred during this period directly relating to the impact of fatherhood programs on the participants they serve (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002).

Father's Matter

During the 1980s & 1990s the flood gates were opened, resulting in a tsunami of research from the academic community along with statements from the political elite, advocating the importance of fathers in the lives of their children (see, Goldberg, Tan, and Thorsen (2009) for a detailed analysis of scholarship on fathering and fatherhood). The message was clear, the American family was in danger and the absence of fathers in the lives of their children led to dire

social consequences. Study after study confirmed the social implications of fatherlessness for children and for the nation.

The research on the devastating consequences of fatherlessness prior to the 1980s focus primarily on the absence of fathers and the relationship to teen antisocial behavior (e.g., such as, parental attachment and psychological adjustment). During the 1980s, the focused took a "conceptual leap forward" (Day & Lamb, 2004, p. 6), by centering the father and his role in relationship to family life and child development. For example, McLanahan (1999) conducted a longitudinal study spanning a ten year period, which included well over ten large data sets. Noteworthy were The Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID); The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY); The High School and Beyond Study (HSB); and The National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). She found that children who grow up apart from their biological fathers were less likely to finish high school and attend college; they were less likely to find and keep a steady job; and, more likely to become teen parents. Harper and McLanahan (2004) employed an age-based event-history analysis to follow the life course of adolescents using data from the NLSY79. Noteworthy among the findings were: youths from father-absent families had a significantly higher risk of incarceration than those from mother-father families; and youths from stepparent families faced the highest incarceration risk association, which might further support the notion of involving the biological father in the lives of their children whenever possible. Finally, Forste and Jarvis (2007) employed the father factors (e.g., such as generative fathering) proposed by Doherty et al., (1996) to measure the relationship between father residence during adolescence and early paternity and residency among a group of young men using data from the National Survey of Adolescent (Waves I, III). Results indicated living with a father during adolescence reduces the odds of fatherhood at an early age and, living with a

biological father as teen increases the odds that young adult fathers will reside with their children.

Under the umbrella of these findings and the work of individual advocates, programmatic activities began to emerge in pocket areas of the country. Most notable was the work of an individual named Charles Ballard and the programmatic activities of the Teen Fathers Collaboration (TFC) (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). Charles Ballard is considered the "father" of RFP. He was among the first to employ the use of home visits and mentoring opportunities within the homes of low-income families in his Cleveland neighborhood. The TFC was innovative in how the program provided an "employment" component to its programmatic activities; which today represents a major component in "model" RFP (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002).

A Field Evolves

The field itself can be divided into two distinct camps, one that advocates marriage promotion (e.g., The Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization; IRFFR) and one that advocates healthy co-parenting relationships (e.g., National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership; NPCL). These two camps can be further sub-divided into three programmatic activities, pregnancy prevention, child support enforcement, and fathers' involvement (e.g., father and child interaction (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002, p. 558)).

The 1990s witnessed the issue of "fatherlessness" moving up the ranks within the social policy network at the national level; which was fueled by the reports put out by the academic community; especially the social scientist and behaviorist (e.g., Family Therapist and Psychologist). During this period, family court systems across the United States were experiencing a backlog of child support cases; resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars remaining owed to the system (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). Under the Clinton administration, a

policy was enacted called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) (PL 104-193), which required women receiving public cash benefits to identify the father of any child for which she received benefits (Doherty et al., 1992; Johnson, Levine, & Doolittle, 1999). The PRWORA made it possible for child support agencies to locate and demand payment from such fathers. During this period, the first government-sponsored initiative was set in place. It was called the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) and administered by Wade F. Horn. In 2002 the "Act" was further strengthened by former president George W. Bush and his administrations. The initiative, called "Healthy Marriage", was reauthorized in 2004. These initiatives led to what is now known as Responsible Fatherhood Programs. They are designed to encourage fathers' involvement within the lives of their children on all levels, physical, mental, and financial.

Currently, at the federal level, the most comprehensive piece of legislative amendment activity to date is being considered that will amend Title IV of the Social Security Act, whereby a dedicated source of funds at the federal level will be made available for each state to tap-into for RFP regardless to program orientation (e.g., marriage promotion or healthy co-parenting); at present, federal funding is available to marriage promotion program only. That amendment is called: "The Julia Casons Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009" (H.R. 2979). (NFLG, 2010d).

Related Research on the Young African American fathers and Responsible Fatherhood Programs

To date, just a handful of studies exist that are related to the population and phenomenon under study. The selection that follows will briefly discuss each in relationship to the research questions.

Hendricks, Howard, and Caesar (1981) explored the help seeking behavior of unwed Black adolescent fathers. Albeit, their study did not directly address help seeking behavior as it relates to fatherhood programs, the context in which their sample sought help is significant in relationship to this current study. Employing a cross-sectional approach, 95 Black, unwed, adolescent fathers living in three major urban cities, Tulsa, Oklahoma (20), Chicago, Illinois (27), and Columbus, Ohio (48) were recruited from various teen parenting agencies: the Margaret Hudson Program in Tulsa, the Arts of Living Institute in Chicago, and the Bethune Center for Unwed Parents in Columbus. Two open-ended questions were used to obtain information on why these fathers sought help: In your opinion, and from what you have seen yourself, what are some of the problems you have faced as a young father?; And, With whom would you go to first with a problem? Fifty-five percent indicated their problems to fall within the realms of relationships. These included problems with the father's family, not being able to see his child, restriction of freedom and problems with his child's mother's family. As to the second question, the results indicated overwhelmingly that these fathers regardless to location sought the advice from their mothers; no pattern could be ascertained in respects to friends or community members. Implications indicated that agencies and institutions serving family planning needs have a role to play in the alleviation of difficulties faced by this population.

Fagan and Stevenson (1995) conducted a study using content analysis of focus group activities of eight African American participants of a Head Start Program (Head Start is considered the pioneer of father involvement, p. 29; Fagan & Stevenson, 2002, p. 191). The purpose of their paper was to describe a self-help group, called "Men as Teacher", and to describe the issues and themes the participants discussed in the self-help groups. By employing an "empowerment perspective", the eight participants felt that relevant information could be

gleamed that would offer solution to underutilized services offered by the program. The authors met with the eight highly engaged participants in 1993 to discuss the finding of the Philadelphia Parent Child Centers first year evaluation. The men expressed the need to develop support groups that would be organized and led by men who had children attending the program. Over the course of 10 to 15 meetings, the men agreed to develop group leadership skills and to plan all facets of the self-help, e.g., this included objectives, potential curriculum and recruitment procedures. Four groups, each consisting of nine fathers (36), were conducted during March and April of 1993. All of the men who participated in the groups were African American, with incomes ranging from $10,000 to $14, 999 per year, with an average age of 29 years. Only fifteen (15) of the men at the time were employed.

Results indicated the following themes: (1), the men felt marginalized (e.g., racism and the media played a significant role in undermining their roles as fathers); (2) developing the capacity to have control over their own destinies; (3) defining meaning and value of being a father; (4) to work collectively to resist oppressive social faces; and, (5) developing the skills to move forward. Implications, support current practices within model RFP, group activities are central, these groups provide an environment whereby individual's can advocate and empower one another during times of crisis.

Kost (1997) conducted one of the first impact studies which examined the effects of educational, employment, and psychosocial support services on young fathers participating in a college-based program in Buffalo, NY. "The Fathers' Forever Program" provided the opportunity to study unwed fathers use of services. The sample consisted of 120 fathers who completed the program during September 1990 and June 1995. Participants were tracked using administrative data such as case records and services used to determine whether the participants

were successfully at maintaining employment and attending school at 30, 60, and 90 days after program completion. The goals of the program were to meet the service needs of adolescent fathers, with the primary goal being to promote the formation of a two-parent network around the children of the enrolled fathers. In addition, four other goals were identified: to improve academic preparedness for career development, to train young fathers in job search and job retentions skills, and to assist participant in becoming socialized to the work contract, and facilitate permanent part-time or full-time placement.

The result indicated few demographic differences between those who completed the program and those who did not. The average father who enrolled in the program was a never-married, unemployed, African American who was 19 years of age and had one child, one year old. Surprisingly, fathers who successfully completed the program were more likely to have been placed in an internship or to have received employment training than were those who were not successful. This program was funded under the New York State Division of Youth and later under the Office of Special Programs at Erie Community College (ECC), it lacked adequate funding and staff; the only paid staff member was the program director who served as the sole case-manager. The fact that only one person operated this program indicates that a lavish budget coupled with adequate personnel might not be a prerequisite for positive outcomes.

Roy (1999) employed multiple theoretical lenses (i.e., social policy, fatherhood identity) along with an ecological perspective to examine the impact of welfare reform on a group of African American, low-income, single fathers. Forty (40) fathers who were participating in a community-based parenting program in Chicago. The program provided employment training and placement, parenting classes, educational referrals, co-parenting counseling, court mediation, and clarification of new requirements under welfare reform (i.e., identification of fathers, and

paternity establishment). Over 400 fathers participated in the program, with 99 percent of the fathers African American, unemployed and looking for work, with an average of 2.3 children.

Using life history interviews and a phenomenological approach, this researcher found that contrary to popular belief, these fathers welcomed the opportunity to share their lived experiences when given the opportunity to carefully explain their meanings. Staff at the program referred fathers who seemed committed to being involved with their children for the study. The sample was divided into three cohorts, 35 years and older (15), 24-34 years old (12), and 17-24 years old (10). Half of the sample was living in some form of co-residency. The interview questions focused on the father, child, and co-parent interaction, family of origin, employment, and education. Two questions addressed welfare reform policies; (1) Have you established paternity for your children? And, (2) Do you pay child support for your children?"

The result revealed three themes of paternal involvement. First, were the father's rightful claims to fatherhood, as defined by biological proof, which were consistent with efforts to be involved, and establishment of legal paternity. Second, the father's role as a financial supporter; which range from monthly child support to in-kind resources such as food or clothing. Third, the father's experiences as caregiver and his access to his child. Finding indicated that researchers must be cognizant to the cultural and ethnicity of family formations, which ultimately might influence policies.

Mazza (2002) conducted one of the first experimental studies that compared two groups of low-income, African American adolescent first-time fathers participating in an intervention program designed to improve the father and child relationship. A snowball sampling technique was employed to recruit sixty (60), urban African American adolescent (16-18) first-time fathers living in low-income neighborhoods of New York City. The teens were randomly assigned to

one of two groups: experimental (30), and control (30). The mean age of the father's children at the time of the study was 9.0 months. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the impact of individualized social work intervention. Each father in the experimental group was asked to verbally list those areas in his life where he thought he would need help. The control group of fathers was given only weekly parenting skill training. At "Time 1", each participant was measured on their current perceptions of themselves, of their children, their children's mothers, their support systems, their ideas of fatherhood, and their goals for the future. At "Time 2", the participants were again asked the same questions. Over a six month period, the fathers in the experimental group far exceeded the fathers in the control group on a number of levels.

The results indicated that programs for young fathers that focus only on parenting skills were ineffective. Statistically significant changes between the two groups related to employment rate (97 percent for the experimental group and 31 percent for the control group, and the quality of their current relationship with their children at time 2 (77 percent for the experimental group reported "excellent" or "good" while 50 percent for the control group reported the same on this variable). Finally, on the variable 10-Year Plan, the fathers in the experimental group (90 percent) were able to develop long-range plans, while fathers in the control group (50 percent) were able to develop plans at "Time 2"). The most interesting variable assessed within this study was the father's ability to plan for their future. Most importantly, this is perhaps the only study to date which assessed father's perception of future aspirations as a result of participating in a RFP.

Fagan and Howard (2002) expanded upon their previous work (discussed within this section) by exploring the effects of an empowerment intervention program on Head Start fathers, using an experimental, pretest/posttest design. The sample consisted of all fathers or father figures participating within a northeastern Head Start program (42). The experimental group (19)

and the control group (19) completed the post-treatment interview, for a completion rate of 90 percent. Two fathers dropped out and two fathers attended irregularly. The fathers in the experimental group were required to attend six consecutive weeks of group activities which included the curriculum "Men as Teachers." The curriculum consisted of six major areas; (1) The meaning and value of being a father; (2) The need to challenge racism in society; (3) Obtaining control over one's destiny; (4) The effect of drugs and alcohol on parenting; (5) Ways in which to instill healthy value on their children; and, (6) Positive discipline strategies. The fathers in the control group were required to attend five consecutive weeks of watching a videotape series on parenting called "Parenting: An Attitude of the Heart." Several instruments were used to assess the father's self-esteem (The Jackson Personality Inventory), the father's self-perceptions of their roles (Self-Perceptions of the Parental Role), the parent-child relationship (The Parent as a Teacher Inventory), and the father's attitudes and values regarding socialization of children (The Scale of Racial Socialization).

The results on the variable self-esteem indicated a significant main effect for the treatment group and a significant interactive effect for the treatment group by residential status of the father. There was no main effect for treatment group on father's satisfaction with the parenting role; however, there was a significant interactive effect for treatment group based on residential status. Finally, the father's attitudes about teaching revealed a significant main effect for the treatment group. The treatment group made significantly greater gains than did the control group in their attitudes in regard to the teaching/learning process. The results support the notion of empowering-based practices, which have the potential to liberate this population of fathers.

Anderson et al., (2002) used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach along with focus groups to give voice to low-income fathers who were participating in a responsible fatherhood program using a cultural-ecological framework as the primary lens. The purpose of the study was to examine men's fathering experiences at the individual, familial, and contextual levels, as well as their perspectives on the program in regard to services. The research questions were: (1) What is the meaning of fatherhood; (2) How did the program benefit these men; and, (3) How would the men like to see the program change? The ultimate goal of the study was to provide a preliminary evaluation of the program services, including the benefits and limitations of such a program as perceived by the participants; and to make recommendations to the program that were sensitive to the unique cultural experiences and needs of low-income fathers. Twenty African American fathers (20) participated in four focus groups held during May and October 1999. The participants were at various stages of program activity within this urban east coast program; eight (8) were at the entry level, five (5) were currently enrolled in the fathers' groups, and seven (7) were graduates of the program. The purpose of the program was to help fathers become more capable of financially supporting their children, more compliant with respects to Child Support Enforcement, and more involved in their children's lives as positive role models and nurturer. The program provided the following services; life skill training, vocational and career counseling, job readiness and placement assistance, and mental health counseling. The fathers ranged in age from 17 to 48, with the mean age being 31.2 years, and72 percent being in their 20s. Most fathers were African American (95 percent), and all fathers had their names on their children's birth certificates. Sixty percent of the fathers at the time were employed and educationally, 65 percent had graduated from high school or obtained a GED.

The results identified four general themes which described the meaning of fatherhood for this group of participants and what they perceived to be the benefits and limitations of the program. The themes for fatherhood were: (1). the participants' memories of becoming fathers; (2). their perceived individual relationships; and, contextual benefits of the program, (4). their perceived barriers to remaining involved, and their suggestions for program improvement. Findings suggested a need for a comprehensive approach to address the unique needs of low-income fathers that would include linking fatherhood programs to physical mental health initiative, parenting educational, and job training programs.

Buzi, Saleh, Weinman, and Smith (2004) employed thematic analysis via a needs assessment along with questionnaires to elicit participants' expectations of a program designed to provide an array of health, social, and community services to strengthen the father's capacity to function as responsible fathers. Fifty-four (54) urban African American, young (17 to 31) fathers participated in the program. At in-take, 81 percent were unmarried, 80.4 percent were unemployed, 66 percent had not completed high school, and the mean age was 19 when the fathers became parents.

The program provided case management, as the case managers worked directly with the fathers to determine their need for resources and develop plans to meet those needs (e.g., parenting responsibilities, relationship development, legal, educational and employment). A community coalition composed of several other human services organizations supported this southwestern program. Two researchers independently analyzed the data for emerging themes.

The results of the thematic analysis regarding the participant's expectations and perceived gains resulted in two categories: (1) Self-improvement and (2) family improvement. Self-Improvement according to the researchers reflected the father's desire to improve their

personal life circumstances (e.g., finding employment and education goals). Family Improvement was defined as the father's needs and request for services (e.g., which involved the need for help with employment). Moreover, at intake, the majority of the father's (62.9 percent) requested help with family-improvement (employment) and 37.0 percent requested self-improvement services. At follow-up, 57.3 percent reported gains in self-improvement, while, 46.3 percent indicated the program helped them with family-improvement. The results indicated that young fathers want to provide for their children's economic well-being, yet many face additional challenges and need the services of organizations that can provide a healthy balance between personal development and family responsibilities.

Roy (2004a) conducted a study to examine the contextual factors (see Doherty et al., 1996, p. 24) on how a group of fathers experience and perceive local environments (e.g., risky physical and social spaces) in regard to how these fathers develop strategies to enhance paternal involvement. Using observation and life history interviews, this ethnographic study captures the voices of low-income fathers participating in a responsible fatherhood program in Chicago. Forty (40) low-income African American fathers agreed to participate in this study, ranging in age 17-35. Fifteen (15) were between 35 years or older, fifteen (15) were between 24 and 34, and ten (10) were between 17 and 23 years of age. Twenty (20) were ex-offenders, and twenty (20) had completed high school. Twenty (20) had been affiliated with local gangs, at the time of the study only fifteen of the fathers were employed (38 percent), and twenty-four (60 percent) were unemployed, and ten (25 percent) were underemployed. Twenty-nine (72 percent) were never married, five (13 percent) were married, and six (15 percent) were separated or divorced.

The results indicated certain ecological processes in local neighborhoods which limited the father's daily routines and shaped their roles as provides and caregivers. This included

poverty, gang activity, policing, and lack of opportunities for jobs and education. Moreover, the father's perceptions of their ecological circumstances resulted in them developing "mental maps" (e.g., mental pictures of areas not to venture into) of dangerous areas (e.g., violent neighborhoods). This impacted on how they related to their children. Finally, fathers and mothers used kin-work (e.g., their social interaction with family members) strategies to fulfill parenting obligations under limited "three-block" zones of safe space for family interaction. The findings indicated that fathering in low-income neighborhood posed significant risk, and future research must center these men/fathers within their unique contextual contexts.

Jordan-Zachery (2009) employed an interpretive phenomenological analysis to examine a group of African American fathers who had participated in a fatherhood program along with fathers who had not. Five (5) African American fathers were recruited from two northeastern fatherhood programs, "Rays of Hope" or "Uplifing Men" program. Five (5) were recruited from the community at large and had not participated in any programs; the total sample for this study was ten (10). The age ranges of the fathers were 25-58 with the average age being 41.5. One father was 20, four were 30-36, two were between the age of 44 and 47, and three were in the age range of 52-58. Most of the fathers were teen parents at the time of birth (17-19years). Their children ages ranged from eighteen months to forty-one years of age (18-41). Five of the fathers were married at least once and often to the mother of their child. Three fathers were college graduates, two completed some college, four completed high school or a GED program. One did not complete high school. Nine of the fathers were employed at the time of the study. Three of the fathers reported being middle-income and the others claimed to be low-income. Several reported a "legal history".

The results indicated three dominant themes along with several sub-themes. The themes were: (1). feelings of pride; (2). despair and gender differentials relating to parenting; the impact of both external and internal factors that influence paternal functioning; and, (3). the quest for empowerment. Fatherhood initiatives must be designed to ensure that men function and behave in such a way as to enhance the well-being of their children and consequently cure many of the ills plaguing fatherless communities. Moreover, the fatherhood movement is progressing on with limited information regarding the very participants these programs serve.

Roy and Dyson (2010) employed constant comparative analysis to explore how low-income African American fathers conceptualize their understandings of successful manhood as a result of participating in a responsible fatherhood program. Using previously collected data from two research projects regarding responsible fatherhood programs in two large urban communities in Illinois and Indiana, seventy-five (75) African American fathers' interviews were used for this analysis. The fathers varied in age, 47 percent (35) were 23 or younger, 33 percent (25) were 24-34, and 20 percent (15) were 35 or older. A little over half of the fathers were ex-offenders (56 percent, 42), with a similar proportion having completed high school (59 percent, 44). Almost a quarter of the fathers (23 percent, 17) were employed. 6o percent of the fathers were nonresidential (45) and were living with either their own mothers or grandmother, and 8 (11 percent) were living on their own. Only 11 percent of the father were married (8), 19 percent were living sporadically with their child' mother (14), and the average age of their children was 2.1 and 40 percent had children in multiple household (30).

The results indicated the following themes: (1). that young African American fathers strive for autonomy and mastery of their environment; (2). street masculinities emerge when men aspired to autonomy and mastery without resources to achieve these goals; (3). within

unpredictable environments, everyday concerns over safety and fear of exposure to threatening male peers led most fathers to construct a cocoon of social isolation; and, (4). the promise of alternative masculinity through fatherhood is problematic for most young fathers. RFP must help young fathers focus on connectedness and recognition of their multiple realities (e.g., roles) that encourage alternative versions of masculinity that are not based on priority of fathers' financial provision.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Consistently, the research has indicated the unique challenges faced by low-income African American fathers. Most notably, these fathers are seeking what most fathers need and want, that is economic opportunities (e.g., employment), which can lead to a sense of empowerment. Roy & Dyson (2010) assert, "*Programs that focus on connectedness and recognition of multiple realities may encourage alternative versions of masculinity that are not based on priority of fathers' financial provision* (p. 152). Moreover, in order to more effectively address the needs of low-income African American fathers, researchers and policymakers must view fatherhood as a dynamic process with a lens toward those contextual factors (see Doherty et al., 1996, p. 24.) that are uniquely embedded within an individual's life circumstances. This includes the fathers (attitudes/behaviors) past, present, and futures (Dr. J. Johnson, personal communication, December, 2007). Ultimately, their attitudes and behaviors will influence how these fathers move in and out of the lives of their children (Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002, p. 242).

Thus, in light of the above-mentioned, it is unambiguously clear that in order for young, non-residential, low-income African American fathers to be successful and remain involved within the lives of their children, they will benefit from the services of a RFP that is individually

tailored, rooted in a strength-based perspective, and fused with a culturally sensitive-Afrocentric lens (See, 2007; Jarrett et al., 2002, p. 222).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the procedures that were used to guide this study with respect to answering the research questions. First, the researcher will focus on the theoretical framework chosen by providing a brief overview regarding how the researcher perceived the theory of phenomenology as best suited for this study. The chapter then transitions into the sample, procedure, structure, issues of validity, analysis of data, and contributions to knowledge.

The research questions were: (1). What life-changing circumstances led these fathers to seek the services of a RFP?; (2). What are the perceived expectations/outcomes these fathers hope to gain as a result of participating in RFP?; and, (3). How do these fathers envision their future as a result of participating in RFP?

This hermeneutic (interpretive), phenomenological study was informed by Martin Heidegger (1962) and tempered by Max Van Manen (1990, 1998), with the goal of using in-depth interviews to describe "what it is like" for five young African American fathers who are participating in a RFP. Phenomenology was employed because its goal is to allow the researcher to gain access to the "life-world" of individuals in order to appreciate and understand the meaning of their experiences as it is lived or has been lived (Wilson & Washington, 2004; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Van Manen, 1990, 1998).

Finally, a phenomenological approach, coupled, with an ecological lens was in concert with the current Body of Knowledge (BOK) advocated by Nickols et al., (2009). The current BOK stresses a holistic perspective for professional practice. To this end, it meets the needs of individuals and families across the life span within FCS. Moreover, this hermeneutic approach

was chosen over other qualitative traditions because of its "liberating" potential (Wilson & Washington, 2007, p. 63; Lopez & Willis, 2004, pp. 730-731), which is conceptually congruent with a "Critical Science Approach" advocated by Brown and Paolucci (1979, p. 34) insofar as, previous research has illuminated the need for this population of fathers "to strive for autonomy and become master's of their environments" (Roy & Dyson, 2010, p. 23). Therefore, it is hopeful these young fathers will begin to think about envisioning their future life circumstances proactively rather than hopelessly coping with and accepting their current life circumstances. In so doing, the ultimate goal of being a lifetime loving and involved father to their children might be achieved.

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework: Phenomenology (Hermeneutic)</div>

According to Creswell (2007), there are five methodological approaches within the domain of qualitative research. They are: (1) Narrative Research; (2) Phenomenology Research; (3) Grounded Theory Research; (4) Ethnography; and, (5) Case Study Research. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has chosen Phenomenology (specifically, Hermeneutic) research as the mode of inquiry. Moreover, phenomenology is considered a philosophy, theoretical framework, and methodological approach (Wilson & Washington, 2004, p. 63).

What is Phenomenology?

All five approaches of qualitative research involve some aspect of phenomenolog*y*. Each seeks to understand and/or describe how either individuals and or groups make meaning of the *lived experience* with "symbolic interaction" embedded as the "given" theoretical framework (Van Manen, 1990, 1998). Moreover, phenomenology is an inductive and descriptive process (Wilson & Washington, 2007, p. 63; Pattern, 2008, p. 159). In addition, according to Van Manen (1990, 1998), at its core "…*Phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld-the world as we*

immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it". (1990, p. 9). Consequently, the researcher begins a study without the presence of variables and hypotheses; these concepts simply evolve as the research evolves (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p.730; Van Manen, 1990, 1998; Creswell, 2007; Pattern, 2008). Furthermore, there are two distinct approaches to phenomenology: Descriptive (Husserlian) and Interpretive/ Hermeneutic (Heideggerian) along with an emerging approach called "Gadamerian" (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Laverty, 2003; Fleming, Gaidys & Robb, 2003). Finally, according to Whitehead (2003) it is the researcher's responsibility to clearly articulate the philosophical principles which undergird the approach employed (p. 512).

Hermeneutical, which means to interpret, is rooted in education (e.g., reflective pedagogy and nursing) with emphasis on *interpreting* findings from a linguistic (text included) perspective, and the researcher's *subjectivity* plays a pivotal role in the interpretation process (Laverty, 2003; Whitehead, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wilson & Washington, 2004; Van Manen, 1990, 1998). In addition, phenomenological research involves getting to the *"essence"* of a phenomenon, as it is lived (Van Manen, 1990, 1998). This requires the researcher to identify individuals or groups of people who have experience with a phenomenon (referred to as the "co-researchers"); and in this case, the non-residential, African American, young fathers, and directly asking them to give their "take" on the phenomenon being studied. For the purpose of this study, the researcher is seeking to understand how these fathers are conceptualizing (e.g., make meaning of and/or understanding) their parenting aspirations, as a result of participating in a RFP. Moreover, phenomenology is descriptive in scope and utilizes the researcher (who is in a constant state of reflectivity*)* as the primary instrument to elicit credible and dependable data, which has the potential to be transferable to similar populations and settings (Van Manen, 1990, 1998;

Creswell, 2007).   Finally, it is the researcher's responsibility to interpret the participant's response(s) in such a fashion that the *"essence"* is revealed. Van Manen (1990) states, "…*the research question always led back to the phenomenon"* (p. 29). Therefore, interpretation is always an evolving process and a definitive interpretation is likely never possible (Laverty, 2003, p. 25). The following section will discuss Heideggerian (Interpretive) phenomenology.

Heideggerian (Interpretive) Phenomenology

Although not a formal student (rather a protégé') of the German mathematician Edmund Husserl, considered the "father" of phenomenology (Laverty, 2003), Martin Heidegger abandoned one of the core assumptions laid out by his mentor (p. 24). The core assumption abandoned by Heidegger was in order to understand how individual's "make meaning" of their "lived" circumstances, one would need to suspend prior knowledge by employing a technique called "Bracketing" (p. 23). Bracketing involves the researcher to approach a phenomenon as if it was being experienced for the first time, with a "child-like wonder". For Husserl, the "mind' and 'body" were separate, and it was possible for human-beings to "step-outside of themselves". Heidegger felt this technique was impossible and set out to conceive an alternative to the "ways of knowing" via this notion, that human beings could not separate the mind from the body. In other words, as human-beings, we are consciously within the world. Consequently, as human-beings, we bring to the world our "pre-understanding"/"fore-structures," or "our history" to the understanding and interpretation process (p. 24). According to Heidegger, "pre-understanding" is not something a person can step outside of or put aside, as it is understood as already being with us in the world." (p. 24). In support of this stance, Laverty (2003) wrote "…*The researcher is called, on an ongoing basis, to give considerable thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being*

researched" (p. 28). Furthermore, Heidegger believed that through casual conversations the researcher could explicate "hidden meaning" embedded within the context of everyday living (Allan & Dixon, 2009, p. 865). He coined this "the taken for granted" or the "life-world" experiences. In addition, through the process of reflectivity, participant's are able to describe the "lived-world" experiences, which are those shared social/normative cues, individuals and groups receive and utilize to rationalize the "human condition". Moreover, Heidegger claimed that to be human was to interpret, and that every human encounter involves interpretation (Laverty, 2003). Heidegger further believed, within the realms of the "lived-world" experience therein lies the "essence" of the phenomena (Whitehead, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Laverty, 2003; Van Manen, 1990, 1998). Interestingly, the "lived-world" experiences may or may not be grounded in reality for an individual or a group. Consequently, uncovering "certainties" and "falsities" are not the objective. Rather, capturing a deep understanding of the participant's perspectives (using his voice) and interpreting the finding in such a manner, to gain practical application being the ultimate goal within this form of inquiry. Baker, Norton, Young, and Ward (1998) wrote "…*It is only when we can apply something to our situation, and make it relevant to ourselves, that we can understand it*." (p. 549).

<div align="center">The Co-Researchers (The Participants)</div>

The purpose of a hermeneutical inquiry is to describe in rich detail the participants' perspective of a phenomenon, while at the same time capturing their voices. To do so, the researcher must seek individuals who have knowledge of the phenomenon as those holding the knowledge of the phenomenon are considered the "experts". Collectively, the researcher and the participants co-create the experience by engaging in a dynamic dialectic process of moving between the "part" and the "whole" (e.g., referring to a holistic approach via the participant's

narratives). Heidegger referred to this collaborative effort as the "Hermeneutic Circle" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 730; Whitehead, 2003, p. 513; Fleming & Robb, 2003; Koch, 1995, p. 176), Van Manen likened this conversational process to that of a birdie moving back and forth in a game of badminton (1990, 1998). Thus, a purposeful criterion sample was recruited for this study. They were: young (18 to 25), African American, and non-residential fathers with a child living in the 14215 or 14211 zip code areas who are participating in RFP.

As mentioned, phenomenology seeks to understand the "essence" of a phenomenon via direct contact with those who have experienced the phenomenon. Thus, the sample size is "kept deliberately small" (Parra-Cardona, Wampler, & Sharp, 2006) and, according to Creswell (2007), saturation can be achieved by interviewing sample sizes ranging from 1 to 10 (pp. 127-129). Once approval was gained from one of the sites, recruitment continued until five fathers agreed to participate in this current study. In addition, young fathers were recruited via the community at large (e.g., barbershop, mall, and/or neighboring high school) similar to Jorden-Zachery's (2009) "snowball" sampling approach.

<center>Procedure</center>

Approval from Iowa State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained.

Once a father agreed to participate, a consent form was signed (see Appendix A Consent Form). In addition, each participate was asked to fill out a demographic data sheet (see Appendix B Demographic Data). Each participant (co-researcher) (5 fathers) was interviewed for approximately 50 minutes on two separate occasions to address the research questions (RQs) (see Appendices C-1 , C-2 and C-3 for the interview protocols) and received financial compensation in the amount of $30 per interview. Interviews two and three were combined,

which were based on the participants' availability which meant the financial compensation had to be adjusted to \$30 per interview instead of \$20 per interview.

After each individual interview, the researcher summarizes each using an interview summary sheet (see Appendix D). The "grand tour" questions were supplemented with probing questions (e.g., what is the ideal job for you? In addition, what is a responsible father?). All interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service. After each individual interview was transcribed and returned, the researcher reviewed and coded each interview, and then cross coded all ten interviews for emerging themes, following Van Manen's (1990, 1998) six step process and Auerback and Silverstein's (2003) six steps analysis procedures, which are described below.

Methodical Structure

Although there is no set structure or procedure for conducting phenomenological research, Van Manen (1998) identified six steps that are unique to phenomenological inquiry. However, he cautions the researcher not to assume that the steps are sequential. They are:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;

2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;

3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;

4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;

5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; and

6. Balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole.

(Adopted from Van Manen, 1998, p. 30-34).

(1) Turning to a phenomenon that seriously interests the researcher is the first step, which is critical and according to Van Manen, *"…every project of phenomenological inquiry is driven*

by a commitment of turning to an abiding concern" (p. 31). In this case, this researcher is seeking to understand the experiences of a selected group of fathers, who might inform this researcher on "what" works and "what" does not work, within this local program; furthermore, this researcher intends on developing a "fathering program", once he completes his education. (2) Investigating experience as we live it refers to the researcher ability and or willingness to renew one's genuine interest in the phenomenon being studied. It means to have the capacity to "stand in the fullness" of the lived experiences of the phenomenon as it is being studied not as we conceive it (p. 33), and the latter, involving the process of reflecting on the phenomenon under study, using one's particular world-view, along with a theoretical lens to explain the actions/behaviors and beliefs of the actor's who have or living the phenomenon understudy (p. 32). (3) Reflecting on essential themes is the process of synthesizing the data into unifying construct, which can then be explained using one's theoretical perspective. (4) Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing involves the process of skillfully capturing the "voice" of the participants within the study whereby the process of "writing the other" occurs; while at the same time maintaining a scholarly pedagogy toward the phenomenon, using language appropriate for the intended audience, in this case, a dissertation review committee. (5) Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon requires that the researcher remain connected to the phenomenon understudy. According to Van Manen (1998), "…*unless the researcher remains strong in his or her orientation to the fundamental question or notion of the phenomenon, there will be "temptations" to get side-tracked or to wander"* (p. 34)*,* which is why he cautions the researcher from getting caught-up in the process of employing a process within this approach., and (6) The researcher is seeking to understand the essence of the phenomenon, as it is lived, not settling for superficialities and falsities (p. 33). The last step

involves balancing the research context by considering its parts and whole. As the researcher is the **primary instrument** in qualitative research and throughout the process, the researcher must pause and reflect on how the process (e.g., from a scholarly standpoint) contributes to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon understudy, as it is lived, not as we "conceive" it. Furthermore, does this research echo the voice (s) of the participants who have the knowledge? Moreover, Van Manen asks the researcher to question …"*Is the study properly grounded in a laying open of the question? Are the current forms of knowledge examined, for what they may contribute to the question? Has it been shown how some of these knowledge forms (theories, concepts) are glosses that overlay our understanding of the phenomenon*?" (p. 34).

To conclude, in support of the chosen methodological approach Van Manen writes, *"…there are no definitive set of research procedures offered here that one can follow blindly"* (p. 34).

Analysis of Data

Coding (Interpretive Process)

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) recommend the following six steps in analyzing and interpreting in-depth interview data. However, the initial "process" of coding begins during the face to face interviews insofar as the researcher is mentally making connections between what is being said in relationship to the research question(s) (Saldana, 2009, p. 7). The six steps fall under the following three categories; (1) making the text manageable; (2) hearing what was said; and, (3) developing the interpretive analysis. In addition, see Figure 1, the Billingsley's African American Family Model (BAAFM) which was used to help explain the social, economical, relationship, and educational circumstances that might impact how the young, non-residential

African American fathers is makes meaning of his past, current, and future life circumstances as a result of participating in a RFP (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009, p. 14; Roy, 2004 a, pp. 529-530).

This next section will briefly address Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) recommended steps for analyzing and interpreting in-depth interview data.

MAKING THE TEXT MANAGEABLE

1. Select relevant text for explicitly state research concerns and theoretical framework.

2. further analysis

HEARING WHAT WAS SAID

3. Record repeating ideas by grouping together related passages of relevant text

4. Organize themes by grouping repeating ideas into coherent categories

DEVELOPING THE INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS

5. Develop interpretive constructs by grouping themes into concepts consistent with theoretical framework.

6. Create an interpretive narrative by retelling the participant's story in terms of interpretive constructs

(Adopted from Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003. p. 43)

According to Auerbach and Silverstein, the first "phase" in the data analysis process (1-2), that is to make the text manageable; the researcher is dealing with the "text" at its most basic level, with the goal being to "filter" the data into categories that will be used in the analysis process (p. 42.). The second phase in the analysis process (2-4), the researcher is dealing with the text from the subjective perspective of the participants (co-researcher) (p. 42.). For example, and borrowing from Parra-Cardona, Wampler, and Sharp (2006) the transcribed data was

grouped into three sections, irrelevant data, life-world data, and lived experience data (p. 221), which addresses the process 1-4.

For example, "irrelevant data" or "orphans," which are non-repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 58) consist of transcribe data that is to be discarded (i.e., data does not address the RQs). Life-world data consists of transcribed data that may or may not address the RQs, but warrants future analysis, and finally, lived experience data consists of transcribed data that specifically addresses the RQs, which was further analyzed and interpreted using those micro-macro constructs that can be explained using Billingsley's African American Family Model. The final phase (5-6) involves retelling of the participants stories through the lens of the constructs (if any) as interpretive by the researcher and in this case, via the Billingsley's African American Family Model, using narrative vignettes. Parra-Cardona et al., (2006) refer to this final process as "writing the other" (p. 222).

<div align="center">Validity/Quality Control</div>

In *qualitative* research, the notion of *trustworthiness* is employed to address the issues of *validity* and *reliability*, which is used in traditional *quantitative* inquiry as an indicator of quality (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Guba and Lincoln (1994) identify four criteria (terms) the *qualitative* researcher uses to address *validity* and *reliability*. They are: (1) credibility; (2) dependability; (3) conformability; and, (4) transferability. Briefly, the researcher will discuss each as to their relationship to *quality control*. In addition, for each criterion, there are certain activities listed within, which have the potential to elicit *valid* and *reliable* findings within the tradition of *quantitative* research. For a full discussion on the issues of *quality* in regard to qualitative research, see Van Manen (1990) and Creswell (2007).

1. Credibility (Internal Validity) Derives from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants, and the reader; credibility refers to the accuracy of the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 86).

2. Dependability (Reliability) refers to the notion of transparency; the critical question, is there *consistency* within the data collection process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 86).

3. Conformability (Objectivity) refers to the notion that the findings are the result of the research.

4. Transferability (Generaliziability) only the reader can determine whether the findings of a study can be generaliziable. It is a researchers responsibility to provide enough information so that the reader can draw their own decisions and conclusions as to whether this study can be replicated with a similar population and setting (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 87).

<div align="center">Ethical Considerations</div>

Ethical considerations must be embedded throughout the qualitative research process. Furthermore, ethics play a central role in respect to rigor regardless of method used, qualitative or quantitative. Ethical considerations go beyond the usual scope of prerequisites for scholarly inquiry (e.g., consent forms and IRB approval). The researcher has an obligation to be true to themselves, the participants of the study, the academic community, and the public at large, and more specifically, the community in which the research is being conducted (Jordon-Zachery personal communication, January 2010).

As a neophyte researcher, this researcher believes that ethics involves the concepts of truth and intentionality; each of these concepts will be briefly discussed.

1) It is the researcher's responsibility to give voice to the voiceless. With that being said, it is the researcher role to describe and interpret the participants' perspective (using their voice) in relationship to the phenomenon studied.

2) The researcher is obligated to do no harm and to leave the site undisturbed. This is paramount to any future endeavors in relationship to the researcher's credibility.

3) The researcher must write with a certain level of passion (intentionality) in such a way that the reader will be motivated to respond with a sense of urgency, in relationship to any change (if necessary) in respect to the phenomenon under study.

To this end, this researcher utilized a set of systematic procedures and or strategies of verification with respect to the research. These procedures or strategies of verification will be heavily influenced by his readings (comprehension) on hermeneutical (interpretive) phenomenology, along with a general respect for the privacy of the participants who choose to allow this researcher into their lived-world.

Contribution to Knowledge

From a policy perspective, funding decisions must be based on empirical evidence that will support the impact these programs have on the participants from their perspective as well as the many stakeholders involved program design and implementation. From a practitioner perspective, it is imperative that we hear from this population of fathers, in order that appropriate program decisions (e.g., what frameworks must we work within) can be made in our attempts to decrease the number of fatherless homes in this country. Finally, from a local perspective, the host agency involved in this study will receive timely in depth information that might enhance program activities.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this hermeneutic (interpretive), phenomenological study was to give "voice" to a selected group of young, non-residential African American fathers who are (were) participating in one of two RFP located in a major city within the confines of western New York. Moreover, this was not a program evaluation, but rather an opportunity to hear from a population of fathers we rarely hear from in the literature. This research used the recommended methodical procedures advocated by Van Manen (1990, 1998) and Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), which included: (a) selecting relevant texts that explicitly related to the stated research concerns and theoretical framework; (b) recording repeated ideas by grouping together related passages of relevant texts; (c) organizing themes by grouping repeated ideas into coherent categories; (d) developing the interpretive constructs by grouping themes into concepts that were consistent with theoretical framework; and (e) creating a interpretive narrative of participants stories in terms of the interpretive constructs.

The chapter begins with a summary of descriptive data of the participants involved in this study (see Table 1) to be followed by a more detailed narrative which includes a description of the locations where the interviews took place and the researcher's field notes. Then, it will transition into the common "lived-world" experiences shared by the fathers, which were grouped according to life-changing circumstances that were based on their "past", current, and future aspirations as a "responsible father" post-program. These common "lived-world "experiences were further grouped into five essential themes (a) Fatherlessness: Mama Knows Best; (b) My Babymama: Inter-parental conflict; (c) Making It: Self-Efficacy; (d) Help Wanted: Underemployment/ Unemployment; and, (e) Wanting To Be a Good Father: The provider/role

model. Segments of texts (data) used in this analysis are presented in the participant's own voices. Consequently, at times, capturing their perceptions within complete sentences was not possible.

Narrative Description

Each father who agreed to participate in this study, prior to the tape recorder being turned on, was given a copy of the informed consent (see Appendix A) and the researcher read aloud the entire document. The research then asked if there were any questions or concerns. The researcher assigned each participant with the pseudonym "N" for "Narrative", followed by a numeric number denoting the order of the interview (e.g., 1, 2, 3). Once the participant signed the informed consent the tape recorder was turned on. At the conclusion of each interview, the participant was told that he would be contacted to review the transcript and would be allowed to make any changes if needed (all participants declined). Participants were also encouraged to sign a transcript consent form after each of the two interviews scheduled, lasting approximately 50 minutes in length (all participants declined). Participants were given $30.00 cash for each interview completed.

TABLE 1

PARTICIPANTS' PERSONAL AND FAMILIAL DATA

VARIABLE	N-1	N-2	N-3	N-4	N-5
Age	25	24	21	23	24
Age of Child(ren)	7	9	2	18 months	1
Gender of Child(ren)	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male
Education	MBA	Some College	11th	11th	GED and Trade
Family Background	Raised by mother	Raised by mother	Raised by adoptive mother	Raised by mother	Raised by mother
Legal Status	None	None	Yes	None	None
Current Household	Lives alone	Lives with a male roommate	Cohabitates with girlfriend	Lives with his mother	Lives with his mother
Access to Child(ren)	Weekends	Weekends	Inconsistent	Weekends	Daily
Paternity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Employment	Employed	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed
Relationship with child mother	Non-intimate	Non-intimate	Non-intimate	Non-intimate	Intimate

N-1

N-1 identified himself as a 25 year old African American never-married father of a seven year old boy. He contacted the researcher by phone after seeing the flyer posted in a barbershop located within one of the targeted zip code areas. During the phone conversation, he requested that the researcher contact his former case manager for the Positive, Outcomes, for Parents, who are Self-Sufficient (P.O.P.S.) program to arrange the location for his interviews. The researcher knew his case manager on a professional level and contacted her as requested. The interviews took place within a window-less conference room housed at an educational "skills readiness center", located in the downtown area of the target location. He arrived at the interview late, stating that he could not spend "not a whole lot of time on this interview today". In addition, he wanted to know if he would be provided money for parking; said money was given by the researcher. The case manager escorted the researcher and the participant to the conference room and left. He wore blue jeans that were fitted (not loose or sagging) to his body, a gray thermo long sleeve undershirt, and brown work boots. His overall appearance and demeanor was that of someone who took care of himself. Moreover, he was confident; he made good eye contact throughout both interviews. He was raised by a single mother, however, he spoke very little of his past life circumstances. Regarding education, employment and income, he stated that he had recently completed his MBA and he wrote on the interview data sheet that he worked in marketing. However, he provided no information on his current income. As for the relationship with his child, he tries to see him every weekend and four weeks in the summer; which is based on a court order. He stated that his child's mother frequently violates this order. At the close of the first interview, he stated that the relationship with his child's mother is verbally volatile. Paternity has been established and child support payments are current. He was one of the more

expressive interviewee, and his voice (perspective) was among the strongest. Total interview time was 57 minutes for two interviews, which produced 17 pages of transcribed data.

N-2

N-2 identified himself as a 25 year old African American never-married father of a nine year old boy. He contacted the researcher by phone after learning of the study from N-1. He also requested that the researcher contact his former case manager for the P.O.P.S. program to arrange the location for his interviews. The researcher knew his case manager on a professional level and contacted her as requested. The interviews took place within a window-less conference room housed at a educational "skills readiness center", located in the downtown area of the target location. Prior to meeting with the researcher, he met with his former case manager (who gave him bus tokens). The case manager escorted the researcher and the participant to the conference room and left. He was dressed in jeans that were fitted (not loose or sagging) to his body, a blue plaid dress shirt, a black nylon windbreaker, and white and blue sneakers. His overall appearance was casual and friendly. He maintained poor eye contact throughout the interviews. His demeanor was neither nervousness nor was it comfortable as his responses were short, controlled, and lacked details in spite of the fact that numerous probing strategies were employed. He stated that he was raised by his mother, yet knew his father, but as he stated "I mostly just catered to my mother". Educationally, he stated that he has completed high school and some community college. For employment, he stated that he was currently working two jobs; which he did not identify and declined to give any income information on demographic data sheet. As for the relationship with his child, he tries to see him every weekend, which is court ordered. He stated that the relationship with his child's mother is good by stating "It is never us fighting…she is more grown up now too." However, he stated that some tension exists

between his child's maternal grandmother and himself. Paternity has been established and child

support payments are current. Total interview time was 56 minutes for two interviews, which

produced 21 pages of transcribed data.

N-3

 N-3 identified himself as a 22 year old African American never-married father of a two

year old girl. He contacted the researcher by phone after learning of the study from the office

assistant who works at a local religious relief organization, where the recruitment poster was

posted. It is located adjacent to the Great Starts Program where his daughter attends morning

daycare sessions and he is involved with the "Father's Only" support group. His interviews took

place at the researcher home at his kitchen table. He arrived at the interview at the agreed time

along with his current girlfriend, who sat between the kitchen door and the dining room, where

the researcher's ten month old twin great nephews played in a playpen that was in view.

Both played with the researcher's nephews prior to the beginning of the interview. Once

the interview started, the girlfriend was quiet; however the researcher's nephews were not. The

tape was consequently stopped and the researcher changed places with the girlfriend who sat at

the kitchen table and the researcher sat on the floor near the playpen to keep the ten month old

twins relatively quiet. Nevertheless, the researcher's nephews can be heard throughout the tapes.

N-3 was dressed in tan loose khaki pants, a grayish-blue thick hoodie, red baseball cap, and red

and white sneakers. His overall appearance was casual and friendly, yet he maintained poor eye

contact throughout the interviews. His demeanor was extremely calm and relaxed. He stated that

he has a learning disability, which explains why numerous probing and redirecting strategies

were employed during his interviews. He also stated that he was adopted at the age of four by a

single African American female. He did not remember his biological mother, but did remember

his biological father: "All I remember is my dad, he was in the Army…He was just like me, that's the only thing I remember…never knew my real parents." He has completed grade 11th of high school. His last job was with a national fast food chain. As for the relationship with his child, he had a court order, which allowed him visitation twice a week, but he has violated it by not showing up. He stated: "I only had to see her two days out of the week but I stopped. doing that because I had so many girls [girlfriends] out there at that time." He indicated that the relationship with his child's mother is not good by stating; "She doesn't like me and I guess she don't want me to see my kid." Paternity has been established and child support payments are in arrears. Total interview time was 56 minutes for two interviews, which produced 21 pages of transcribed data.

<div style="text-align:center">

N-4

</div>

N-4 identified himself as a 22 year old African American never-married father of an eighteen month old boy. He contacted the researcher by phone after learning of the study from reading the research flyer that was posted throughout the atrium of a community college building where the P.O.P.S program is located. The interviews took place at the participant's mother's apartment, in a tastefully decorated dining room. Prior to the interview, the participant apologized for missing the first scheduled interview, which was scheduled for the previous day. He was dressed in blue jeans that were fitted (not loose or sagging) to his body, a white thermo long sleeve undershirt which was neatly tucked-into his pants, blue and white sneakers. Unrecognizable tattoos were visible on his neck, chest and hands. His overall appearance and demeanor was that of someone who took care of himself. Although appearing confident, he made poor eye contact throughout both interviews. He stated that he was raised by his mother. He further stated that he knew of his father but did not know on a personal level. He spoke very little

of his past life circumstances stating that; "he did not want to "go down that road." He stated that

the last grade completed was 11th and that his last job was with a national family restaurant

chain. As for the relationship with his child, there are no court orders in place and that he sees his

child weekly (he gave specific days and time). The relationship with his child's mother is

stressed "We just stay away from each other…we both having arguments…we kind of like resent

each other, so we just have different spaces…different worlds." Paternity has been established

and child support payments are current. Total interview time was 52 minutes for two interviews

which produced 17 pages of transcribed data.

N-5

N-5 identified himself as a 24 year old African American never-married father of a one

year old boy. He contacted the researcher by phone after learning of the study from reading the

research flyer as N-4 had. The interviews took place at the participant's mother's apartment,

within the confines of a very small bedroom, located just off the kitchen. Several family

members were present, including the participant's mother and two sisters along with their

children. The participant introduced the researcher to all and then escorted him to the back

bedroom. The participant originally requested that the interview take place in his car, which was

parked adjacent to a corner deli known for gang and drug activities. However, for his own safety,

the researcher declined. N-5 was dressed in a gray thermo snowsuit, which he unzipped allowing

the top of the snowsuit to rest around his waist. He also wore a white long sleeve thermo tee shirt

along with brownish work boots. His neck, chest, and arms were tattooed. His overall

appearance was casual and friendly. He was animated, articulate, and maintained excellent eye

contact throughout the interviews. Prior to the tape recorder being started, he lit a cigarette,

placed an ashtray on the sheet less mattress and opened the curtain less window. Educationally,

he stated that he completed his GED in a federal training program and received a certificate in

auto mechanics. He is currently unemployed and receiving unemployment benefits. As for the

relationship with his child, there are no court orders in place; he stated that he sees his child daily

and usually the child is with his mother most of the week. The relationship with his child's

mother is stressed as they just recently broke-up and no longer cohabitate. Paternity has not been

established and there are no child support orders. Total interview time was 88 minutes for two

interviews which produced 22 pages of transcribed data.

Family, Community, and Society: Common Lived-World Experiences

Five fathers participated in this study and after all the transcripts were individually

analyzed and coded, the process of comparative analysis occurred (e.g., the process of searching

for similarities across the individual cases (Saldana, 2009). Table 2 presents a visual summary of

the master list of the ten most repeated ideas generated from the cross case analysis following

step four, of Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) recommendations for analyzing the data (p. 61).

Based on the master list, the top five repeating ideas were grouped into categories that expressed

a common theme or live-world experiences, which were based on the frequency in which they

were mentioned during the analysis of the transcripts. The five major themes evolving from the

analysis were (1) Fatherlessness: Mama Knows Best; (2) My Babies Mama: Inter-parental

Conflict); (3) Making It: Self-Efficacy; (4) Help Wanted: Unemployment/Underemployment;

and, (5) Wanting to Be a Good Father: The Provider/ Role Model. In the following section, each

will be discussed using BAAFM to interpret the father's perceptions in relationship to answering

the research questions.

TABLE 2

MASTER LIST OF THEMES

*THEMES	Frequency Mentioned %
Fatherlessness: Mama Knows Best	100
My Babies Mama: Inter-parental Conflict	80
Making It: Self-Efficacy	100
Help Wanted: Underemployment/Unemployment	100
Wanting to Be a Good Father: The Provider/Role Model	100
Educated but still living on the margins of society fathers	40
Spirituality/Faith	20
Gang Association	20
Homelessness	20

*Note: N = 5, themes were derived based on Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) recommendations for identifying repeating ideas, a repeating idea is an idea expressed in relevant text by two or more research participants (p. 55).

Fatherlessness: Mama Knows Best

According to Billingsley (1992), the ultimate test on how well a family functions is based on how they care for their children. Moreover, he believes that this notion extends beyond the family unit to include the community and the larger society surrounding the family unit (p. 65). All of these fathers were born in the 1980s, and for the targeted area it was rated among one of the highest in teen pregnancies in the nation. Moreover, gang violence, drug use and police "cover-ups" plagued a large percentage of the targeted African American community during this

time. In addition, these targeted communities were compromised by a mass influx of immigrants brought in by various religious relief organizations, while at the same time a mass exodus of family-owned shops and middle-class families migrated to more promising nearby zip code areas, these changes resulted in a serious erosion of a sense of "community", the basic tenet which underpins Billingsley's model. Consequently, and in light of this reality, all of the participants found visiting their "past life circumstances" to be problematic, particularly in regard to family history and they chose not to discuss it even after the researcher employed numerous probing techniques. This researcher learned quickly to "read" their body and facial expression and knew when to "back-off". Nevertheless, all shared the common life-world experience of being raised by a single parent who was female; and all except N-3, by their biological mothers.

N-4 spoke the loudest, albeit short, by stating: "I was raised by a strong Black woman…by herself."

N-5 spoke of being raised by a single mother in terms of how he saw the women in his life being treated. Moreover, his perception alludes to the "hit and run fathering" mentality coined by Williams (1990). He stated:

> I grew up in a house with my mom. I got three other sisters I lived with growing up. My older sister she is older than me by seven years and the next one is twelve years. There is seven years, nine years or ten years or something like that between all my sisters and me. Growing up in a house full of women was very dramatic. As you can probably hearin in the background. Just women, their emotions made me, as I was growing up it made me just watch everything. Why do people get women and do whatever they do so hard to get the women and then whatever outcome made them out to be. I never understood that. Why would you go so hard to prove something and then when you get it you just run from it. It didn't make no sense to me. I always didn't like that. It made me feel like those types of people was fake people. Just so fake. I felt I was too real.

N-2 spoke of his mother in terms of her insisting that he "do" the right things in life…which supported N-4's notions of being raised by a strong Black woman. He said:

I had just graduated so I was done with high school. My mother she was like you are not laying around here so go and get a job. Go get something. So I went and got a job and I also got an apartment.

For most African Americans his mother's statement was merely a statement of "independence" or more specifically "freeing" her son from the nest; which is a traditional practice shared within the African American community. However, in regard to identifying this "essential theme" of being raised by a single parent, Van Manen (1998) cautions the phenomenologist on differentiating between essential themes and themes that are more incidentally related to the phenomenon under study. He surmises that some essential themes might be historically and culturally determined or shaped (p.106). This notion of history and culture supports Billingsley's African American Family Model, particularly in regard to this notion of history, which is the major distinction between Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Framework. Hence, the question that helped determine this common lived-world experience was: Would these young men become fathers if they were raised in two parent households? In all probability, and based on our current understanding on the plight of young fathers, the answer is no.

Only N-3 spoke negatively of being raised in a female headed household. Moreover, he was the only participant who discussed being neglected or abused. At the beginning of his second interview, he was asked if he wanted to talk about anything that was covered in his first interview, He stated:

> Basically about my mom. Like I said I'm adopted but my mom was raising me good at the time when I was four…But when I get to like 10 or 11, that's when I started doing my little [expletive] and everything, smoking cigarettes. But actually she was not a parent after that. She always keeps the money from downtown when they give her money and I really didn't never get no clothes or nothing. So that's what I was like saying to myself that she's taking all the money from us cause she had a lot of adoption kids. She adopted a lot of kids. She never had kids on her own, she adopted us. But like I said, I think she's

all about the money. It was about her stuff and don't worry about kids. So that's another thing I was supposed to mention.

After further probing he stated that he understood that the money was supposed to go for "rent and stuff like that", but felt she was getting plenty of money and that there was no reason for him to go without shoes. He stated that his foster mother took in many children, yet he was the only one who stayed with her consistently. His story started to get very disturbing and this researcher considered stopping the tape-recorder. However, in the "spirit of capturing" "his-story", the researcher continued and later sought out assistance in confirming his story with a social worker in foster care, who is currently assigned to the researcher's personal situation (no identifying information was provided, his situation was discussed within a hypothetical context). This social worker did not confirm his story to be factual, but rather, plausible. In sum, it is possible for an adoptive parent to surrender a child to the foster care system in the same manner that biological parents would surrender a child

To continue, when asked about the money his foster mother was receiving for him, he stated:

She didn't do none of that stuff for me cause she said if I don't listen to you and you wanna be grown, you can handle yourself on your own. I mean I can't talk.

He continued with:

You think you're grown… you might as well go do what you gotta do. Find your way, where you gotta go…Your destination. That's what she did so I got my own house.

The researcher continued to probe with the remark…At 15? He stated:

They [Social Service] was paying my rent and giving me food stamps still and giving me a little cash on the side…

Still more probing…He stated:

No she took me off the case. That's another thing. She took me off the case when I was 15 so I would not get no more money back from her. But when I was the age of cause I'm 22 right now…when I was the age of 20 I went down to her worker and asked if I have any money left. She said no.

He was asked to describe how a 15 year old lives? He stated:

Well, it was pretty much free for me because like I said, I got help from downtown. So it's pretty much free. All I gotta do is do what they told me to go to their program, to get the rent money. So that's what I did. Then I messed up cause I don't keep up my house and I got evicted. I've had five houses so far. So basically, like I was saying, when I was 15 I was just on my own by myself, she did not help me. That's when I called her, called her for some money; she would not help me out. I called her, can I get something to eat. I can't even take a shower there or nothing. So that's why I said okay, I'm gonna be on my own. Today, I'm doing stuff on my own. I don't call her for nothing.

"His-story" is touching and leads one to believe that not only did his family fail him, but the community and society in general. However, after careful examination of his transcripts and replaying the actual interviews several times, an interesting perspective surfaced in regard to this notion of being raised by a "Strong Black women". African American single mothers, for the most part, will not tolerate being disrespected in their home by their children, whether biological or adoptive, and age does not matter. The notion of "I brought you into this world…I'll take you out" is clearly evident within "his-story". This is a common saying within the African American community and should not be taken literally. In no way is the researcher attempting to marginalize the participant's story nor support child neglect or abuse. However, the participant "self-disclosed" the reason why he was returned to the foster care system. When asked why his mother kicked him out, he stated:

Mouthing, staying out late. I had a key, I got my key taken away cause I don't never come home or I come late, come late and hide, smoking, drinking and that's why she kicked me out. Me and my mom had an argument, I would like go downstairs, stuff like that. So that's another reason. She says you wanna be on you own, she gonna let me leave. She says you wanna be grown, I'm gonna teach you. That's another thing. When I was living with her at the age 13 to 15 when she kicked me out, I had to buy my own food. I can't touch none of her food in the house.

Not knowing the full details as to why he was possibly emancipated at 15 within the foster care

system, if indeed this occurred, it would demonstrate a major error on the "system's" part.

However, what is clear is somehow he was allowed to slip through the cracks which ultimately

led him to engage in deviant behaviors and is possibly a major precursor to early fatherhood

(Buzi, Saleh, Smith & Weinman, 2005; Weinman, Buzi, & Smith, 2005).

In regard to the father's perceptions of their own father's, only two participants offer any

significant details, and these were opposing perspectives. N-4 spoke of his father as someone he

hoped to meet and develop a relationship with. He stated:

> He [his father] is alive. But that made me like a better father. Not having him around
> made me have a stronger bond with me and my son now. That is why I am so close to my
> son now. Not having no father growing up like that you just think back and zeroing back
> like when you don't have no father and it always put me in a predicament. Like if I put
> myself in his shoes. I used to wonder when I was that age I just want to see my dad. Like
> where you at? I just wanted him to acknowledge me. That kind of made it kind of
> difficult.

He was further probed about meeting his father. He stated:

> Yeah, that's big. That is special. Even though he wasn't around I still want to meet him.
> Life is short. I will always regret him for not being there. He probably had a situation
> where he couldn't be there or something must have happended. I don't know. Times are
> different now though.

When asked whether he holds any resentment. He said:

> No, no. Not at all…I just want to meet him. I am grown now. You can't get those years
> back. I am an adult now. That would be childish to even act like that.

Off tape, he was asked whether his mother holds any resentment toward his father. He

stated that she has never really spoke of him; this might explain why this young father is moving

beyond the predictable, and on the road to a bright future as a responsible fathering.

In contrast, N-5 spoke of his father in terms of what he failed to provide. He stated:

> Yes, I knew my father. He stayed in a separate house. He visited me from time to time.
> He never really taught me much worthwhile. At least I don't remember. I really don't

remember him teaching me anything worthwhile. We just sat there and played cards, smoking cigars and beer and liquor every day. I did visit him from time to time. We had a relationship but it wasn't much too really talk about. It really was not worthwhile, but I did stay in the house with my mom.

These opposing views illuminate the feelings of ambivalence fatherless children experience over the life-course and possibly give us insight into the dysfunctionality experienced while growing up, which might explain why they chose to avoid revisiting their past. Finally, if left unaddressed, these feelings have the potential to manifest in how they themselves parent.

My Babymama: Interparental Conflict

The notion of interparental conflict, or in the fathers' common language "Babymama", was voiced the strongest among four of the five fathers. The levels and intensities were manifested in various ways: from daily arguing, complete break-downs in communication that were coupled with the maternal grandmother mediating the access to their children, parenting responsibilities via role strain, and child enforcement/family court issues. However, and on a sad note, only one of the fathers's articulated notions or acts of physical abuse. Finally, in determining whether the idea of interparental conflict was an essential theme or a theme that was more incidentally related to the research concern, the researcher posed the following question: If notions of conflict were absent between these parents, would these young fathers have sought out the services of a responsible fatherhood program? In all probability and based on our current understanding on the plight of young fathers, the answer is conclusively, no.

N-2 stated that the relationship between his child's mother was fine, by stating:

It was good because we were together. It was better. We were together. We lived together. We worked. She worked in the morning or I worked in the morning and she worked at night. We had a good system. It wasn't until we broke up and she lived in her own house and I had to get my own apartment and now we got all these extra bills. I think that is where stuff went wrong. No. she keeps a job. She doesn't get help from downtown. It is never us fighting.

N-2's statements represent an evolution perhaps, considering the fact that he has gone

through two fatherhood programs and has received intensive case management.

In addition, his age might explain the absence of conflict between his babymama.

Moreover, his babymama is working and it appeared that he was comfortable

with their situation and is moving beyond the "provider role" to "co-parenthood",

as a result of participating in a RFP. He stated:

> I mean she has a boyfriend. I won't get upset. My son, he loves me.
> He is not going to stop liking me because she has a boyfriend. That doesn't have
> affect on us…she keeps a job she doesn't get help from down town.
> It is never us fighting…As long as I stay on top of what I am supposed to do we
> won't have problems. If she sees me falling off then yes she is going to yell at me
> and we are going to fight in get into an argument. But as long as I stay on top of
> my game and keep a job and help her that's it.

> However, he stated that there is conflict with his son's maternal grandmother.

This behavior is not unusual for young fathers to experience, particularly when maternal

grandparents feel the fathers ought to "step-up" and provide for their

 grandchildren in spite of the fact that these young fathers are involved, or if there is

 any type of stress between the two parents the maternal grandmother will usually step-in

acting as the "gatekeeper". He describes this tension by stating:

> It was good at first. I was there helping out with doing what I was supposed to be
> doing. But I knew it wasn't real [maternal grandmothers' behavior]. Like she
> didn't like me. We were just there together because of a new baby and I was
> stepping up to the plate getting a job, but the whole time she didn't like me then.
> we don't even talk that much…just only when David is over there and I go and
> pick him up. That is the only time we talk…It is probably because of what
> [his child's mother] has told her. I can't go and stand up for myself because
> because she[maternal grandmother] is going to believe whatever she says.

> N-5 discussed levels of conflict within the context of a generational shift

(e.g., pop culture) in regard to his babymama having been raised in a two-parent

household compared to him being raised in a single parent household. He states:

Okay, like my baby's mother, for example, she was raised in a home with
mommy and daddy actually planned out before they had children and this and
that. Okay, it was good for back then. Now we are in a different time. We made
a mistake, well did not make a mistake. We talked about having a child together
and we went through with it but we really didn't worry about the things that were
going to come after as far as her insecurities and me just working and being out
and stuff like that. We never really established that part of our relationship good.

It was planned at first [their son living in the same household] up until we had our
differences when we couldn't just get along with each other. I would come home
after work two hours later, two and a half or maybe three hours later but never
extremely like to go to work and not come back home. I might come back a
couple hours later but she was just having a problem with it. Like I said, she had
a problem with me with just not coming home right after work so with that and
over time how that just got worse. It just kind of destroyed our relationship from
there. So I am like if I can't go to work and want to hang out and then come home
and have a home to come to and not a crazy fighting evil babymama who just
don't understand I wanted to hang out for a few hours. I don't think you would
get much further than that, you know. So after a while it just basically drew us
apart more over time along with a whole bunch of issues which I am not really
so keen of right now. It was just a whole lot in that situation.

This young father has yet (and perhaps refuses) to accept his parental role and

responsibilities. On the one hand he wants to be a father, and on the other hand he wants

the freedom afforded to non-fathers his age.

N-4 spoke of inter-parental conflict in terms of a complete shut-down in

communication between himself and his babymama. He stated:

Right now we don't speak at all. Right now we both have two different worlds
and two different spaces right now. We have to come to a mutual agreement
and talk to each other eventually because we both know we got a big agenda and
a big thing we gotta do [referring to raising their son] My son is getting old
and starting to talk now. He is in school. We have to talk one day. Right now
my main focus is just getting what I got to get for him so we both can be
financially stable.

Just like we was kind of like, I want to say like nagging at each other, going
at each other's throats. It wasn't no loner healthy. Now I don't want to have my
son see that. A child they zero in on stuff. They see stuff. When people think
they not watching, they are watching. They are always watching.

We was always arguing…I want to say like for me, I can only speak for me.

Me not being able to do what I want to do at the time. Not being able to give it enough time. You know like the time that she need. She is pregnant. I was young at the time. I didn't know how important that was. Not saying I wasn't there during the pregnancy. I was always there. But like when she got to like seven months I want to say like when the belly started really popping. It was new for me. I was kind of like scared. I am a new father and I don't know it is going to be.

He was probed further and asked how he avoids interaction with his babymama.

He stated:

Kind of like arguing, like, saying I was going to come over there and not showing up. Just stuff like that. Stuff to make an argument when I know it was wrong. In the back of my mind I know it is wrong but I still do it.

When asked about his fears on becoming a father, he stated:

I want to say not being able to provide for my child. That kind of made it like I want to say jealous in a way but not too jealous but I want to say jealous. My son's mother she is like she is doing everything for him She is in school. She is going to school to be a nurse and stuff like that. Everything she has was like all positive. I am going to kind of say like good girl/bad guy link up.

When asked about his babymama's parent's perception of him, he stated:

It was cool. Her mom is always telling me like you just have to go to school and stuff like that. Make sure you be there and stuff like that. Which I already knew.

When asked whether he consider this "nagging", he stated:

No, it was just someone giving me information and asked to keep that. When you hear something or somebody tells you something and you store it in your brain and it goes short term memory, long term memory. It was something I had to put in my long term memory. This is her grandchild and she wanted me to bring him up the right way, so I wouldn't say a nag. I would say, like I said in long term memory. Something to think about when times get hard, you know.

N-4 spoke in terms of issues with regard to role strain within the contexts of a generational shift in attitudes and behavior-the "hit & run" father is clearly evident.

He said:

Basically I met this girl at [a fast-food restaurant] and the next day I moved in with her
We had the first child but I had lost my job and she lost her job so we were both
on unemployment so we couldn't take care of the baby so we had the abortion
and then we made another baby. And I had gotten me a job at the time but I was
was I was not going to school or nothing, I was just working. So me and her got
into a little argument, stuff like that, and I left from her but I was still handling
my responsibilities with as a dad cause I had to.

I like a woman who like to work. She is lazy-all she would do is lay around the
house and smoke weed every day 24/7. You got a child at a house, you want to
go out clubbing and stuff. I know babies and everything cause I was working so
she demanded that people watch your kid. But if you want to have a
baby, all that stuff you was doing in the past, you got a [expletive] all that cause
you got to take care of your kid. Cause that's why I had left her alone because
I'm the type of person that I like to work and everything like that and my
responsibilities. So that's why we ended up breaking up and I just separated from
her.

Notions of the "hit & run" fathering mentality are expressed here and if left unaddressed the

cycle will continue for this young father (Dr. J, Johnson, personal communication, December,

2007).

When I was living with her, I was taking care of her. When I moved out I was still
taking care of her but sorry to say it now, I had another girlfriend, I had to take
care of her and my own child I wasn't because I really couldn't see her all like
that. So I was taking care of somebody else's child at the time. But I was doing
helping out around the house and help out with her cause the dad wasn't around
for that baby and like that type of stuff.

She doesn't like me and I guess she don't want me to see my kid. But I want to
see her cause like I said every time I see her she don't ever have her with her. It's
like she is avoiding the kid from the real me cause of the stuff I did. But I did
some tragedy stuff, I got mad at her, took a chain one day and I disappeared with
It. She got mad about that and that's why…cause…her house and she called her
aunts and uncles in, come fight me and everything, so I was getting on my
clothes and go down the street. I called the cops on her but the cops took
forever. So I get on a bus and I see a cop coming and she told every lie and
stuff and she's trying to –she put charges on me. So I went to jail and that day
I had court and I had to go to court three times. After the third time the wit-
ness didn't show up they let me go. But I was let go the next day because I
turned myself in.

N-1 spoke in terms of custody, visitation and distrust with regard to his child's

mother*. He said:

> Her intentions, her emotions, her aggressions are all toward me. She got
> pregnant at nineteen. Me, me , me. If you can't look past yourself you can't
> grow with anybody else. You are doomed to fail. All you can look past is the
> front of your nose. You can't look any further than your nose. You revert
> everything back to yourself. Until she changes that going for herself, me,
> Me. Nothing is going to change.

Notions of hostility are evident here and the canon for conflict.

> Mom is a shark. She knows the legal system inside and out. Part of the reason
> she hasn't come back to [research area] is the fact if she comes back here they are
> going to fine her for money she owes. Long story short is mom does what
> best for her and her interest regardless of whoever is in her way. She is very
> intelligent. She is very smart and I don't know why she is not going back
> to school. She is very narrow sighted. She has short vision. We are talking
> about long term vision here.

> But his mother [his son] does because she wants to be with me, like she wants
> us to be together type situation. She doesn't have the idea of the child in mind.
> She has the idea of herself and relationship and family and all that nonsense
> You know. I have to preface this. Me and his [his son] mother were never
> dating. We never were together/together. We hooked up and had intercourse
> but we were never together. So what that means for her to get back at me is
> she keeps him from me. Like right now I went to court again. Five different
> court orders for visitation rights meaning she won't let me see him. She won't
> meet me at the respectable spot. She won't be on time and she will sit there in
> court and have all the court records saying I am five minutes late. One of the
> judges finally stepped up on my side, thank God, and said listen he is going from
> an hour away so if he is more than twenty minutes late I am going to give him that
> leeway. He is traveling from [research area] to Rochester, snow, storm. God knows what
> what have you, five minutes late, an half hour leeway is not acceptable. So, I got a
> leeway now from here on out when I go pick up my son. I am driving the full
> gamut. We started out with me having Sundays. I had four hours on Sundays.
> So I would drive four hours to get four hours of my son. Two hours, an hour
> there, an hour back, four hours, an hour there, an hour back. You know what I
> am saying. It [visitation] moved up from there when I moved out of my mom's
> to my own little place-which is still a dump, but it has two bedrooms. So I moved
> up from the whole weekend and I had him for four weeks during the summer-
> time and that is where we kind of are.

> She pulled two stunts out of the last two and a half years so basically there
> was one time when I didn't see him for a complete month. I went to go pick him
> up at the pickup spot. Mind you, she has a car, everything like that but she is
> still making me come and pick her up because she doesn't have to come, drop

him off because the court didn't say so. She moved. I didn't know where she moved to. She gets me on the phone on how I am a deadbeat father. I am never there. I am not this. I am not that. I m not that. I am like what are you talking about. I am trying to be here and you left me. You lied to me about this nonsense. That is something she tries to, I guess, I think she is more afraid that I am sticking around because when he gets older he will know the truth. dad fought for me through the whole nonsense. Mom is the one who kept taking me away from him which is what she is still doing right now. I haven't seen him in over a month. I am on two months right now.

*N-5 was the only father who referred to his child's mother as "mother".

Making the transition to successful fatherhood (co-parenthood) as perceived by this group of young fathers reveals several constructs that are the direct consequences of contemporary societal trends, which according to Billingsley (1992) are the major contributors to the break-down of the African American family. These trends include the decline in marriage, out of wedlock births, the rise of co-habitation, mental health, substance abuse, pop cultural abandonment of traditional African American values, and gender inequities (p. 78). In addition, personal responsibility and accountability were often obscured via, and admittedly by their own insecurities, poor communication abilities, family history, the absence of two parents, educational and economic opportunities, developmental needs and, simply put, their own narcissism. Finally, these young fathers are at a major crossroad in regard to whether they will remain in the lives of their children. According to previous research, their age, the gender of their child (four of five had sons) and the absence of a romantic relationship with their babymamas are all significant indicators of future involvement over time (Dudley, 2007).

Making It: Self Efficacy

The mere fact that these fathers are (have) participated in a RFP did not necessarily establish this as an essential theme in light of the fact that this study was not meant to directly provide evaluative information to either of the programs. For that reason, the researcher avoided posing questions that were program specific. This essential theme reflected the fathers'

perceptions of their individual support systems within the context of their past life circumstances, present life circumstances and future life circumstances. Furthermore, only two of the fathers interviewed for this current study actually have "lived-world" experiences within the context of a fatherhood program and the other three are just entering either one of the two targeted programs. Consequently, their perspectives/ responses were conceived in an anticipatory fashion.

According to Billingsleys' (1992) African American Family Model, there are four distinct support systems within the reach of the individual and the family that either support or inhibit successful individual/family functioning. Ultimately, these systems have a profound impact on the overall well-being of the African American community. Moreover, Billingsley surmises that total dependency on any one of these support systems, either by the individual/family or the community, will result in a cycle of perpetual weakness (p. 75). The support systems are the public sector, the private for profit sector, the voluntary nonsectarian sector, and the religious sector. These four major sectors are further divided into subsystems which are: economic, political, health, housing, educational, welfare, criminal justice, military, transportation, recreation, communications, and the religious (p.75).

N-1 spoke in terms of the challenges he faced in regard to his help-seeking attempts. He said:

> I didn't understand how the whole thing worked. I mean what people don't understand is the system [family court] is set up for the mother. It is not set up for the man at all. My mom went through it with my sister, this paternity nonsense. I didn't want to be a part of that so that is why I knew that going in. But I didn't know lopsided it was. When I came in for paying child support that means I just pay child support for the child. I had no legal rights to Dustin, my son. I had no legal visitation, anything for him I had to go through, wait a minute, how can you just take my money but I don't have any right to the money you are taking. What is it going for, you know.

He's articulating the "punitive effect" most young working fathers feel.

I didn't know any of that and then, I stumbled upon the program which, thank God, helped me out a little bit. Pointed me in the right direction to find out how I could go about getting paternity. I got paternity established and how do I go about getting visitation and things of that nature. I have been fighting that battle ever since. When I found out he was actually my child I wanted to get his name changed. I wanted to start seeing him. I started calling him every day. His mom got a little worried because she lives an hour away. We are not in the same city. She is an hour outside of where I live at. For the last like almost year and a half, two years I have been driving back and forth, an hour both ways, for visitation to see him.

I called everyone in the book. This is the first lady is the first that actually helped you. Ms. Myles was the actual first person. She got on the phone. She counseled me, not like 100% legally but gave me pointers and direction of where to go. Other programs they want money from you. People don't understand. My child support they took it out of my paycheck. I almost lost everything. I was homeless. I couldn't pay my rent anymore. My car that I just bought I couldn't because that would ruin my credit. I am trying to get my credit back up. So I ended up living at my mom's house. I lived at my mom's basement for six months until I could get back up on my feet. But the program with Ms. Myles was the only free program out here that was willing to help you freely without saying well send us some money. Now that I know I have son who I am responsible for he is going to see me as a role model no matter what. I went back to school. I just recently graduated with my MBA in Marketing which is something I wanted to do. I want to be that shining light and beacon toward him. Without Ms. Myles and her program I don't know.

This participant's voice represents the "ideal' outcome for fathers who participate in a RFP.

N-2 voiced similar praise towards the front-line case manager Ms. Myles. He said:

Somebody told me to go downtown because they had a CNA [Certified Nursing Assistant] Program and I guess it was free. You didn't have to pay and after eight weeks you would be certified as a CNA. So I did that. I didn't get certified but I still got a certificate for completion of the class. After I did that they were like this is a program that will help you because you are a father with low income and they will help you like with resume writing to get a job. So, I said cool. That is how I found out about the program.

The resources that I rely on are the tokens for one. She [Ms. Myles] gave me token today and she gave me tokens before when I needed them. Also a resource I was relying on was the bus passes. They give us bus passes as long as we have a job to get to. But that stopped for some reason. I don't know why. If I needed help like with housing they would give me directions on where to go to look for a house or whatever. The program was all right.

Transportation is a major barrier for young father's seeking better employment opportunities and visitation with their children. When probed as to whether the program has helped him become a better father? He said:

> Because I had something to help me. Like if I didn't have a bus pass or those tokens to help me get around to get my son. I didn't use the bus pass just to go to work. I used it to go to see him and going to him. That helped me at one point.

This participant alludes to the notion of the "one-stop approach" many human service organizations are beginning to embrace. In support of this notion/trend he said:

> My experience with Social Services is it is not a good feeling. You are on a waiting list. As long as you talk to somebody and you are doing what you are supposed to be doing they will help you. But us, as fathers, we don't want to wait and when you go down there it is a bunch of people just sitting around, people you don't know. So that mainly could be one reason we won't go down to Social Services is because of the wait and the people we don't want to deal with. But if you are doing what you are supposed to be doing they will help you…they can make it more comfortable for the people that come down there if they could like hire more people. There are so many people that come down here. If they hired more people they probably wouldn't wait so long. It would probably go smoother and people aren't all stressed out because they have to wait…It would be nice if you had a program where the fathers could come downtown to Social Services for a father program to apply for food stamps and it is only for fathers. That would be good. They would focus on us and we would probably be in and out rather than waiting with all the other people who are applying for food stamps or Medicaid.

Moreover, this participant articulated the ambivalence and vulnerability most young fathers experience while seeking help (Greif et al., 2011). Interestingly, both fathers were serviced by a female front-line social worker, which contradicts current trends and practices that advocate for more male front-line workers within RFP.

The other three participants are at various "In-take" stages in regard to program activities. Thus, their perspectives are somewhat limited. However, their primary source of support is confirmatory to that of previous studies, with regard to the population of most young fathers who rely on their mothers as the sole source of support.

N-4 spoke in terms of his mother being "there" during difficult time such as when became a father. He said:

> She was more like; she played a big part in that I would say. She played a big part in me being a father. If it wasn't for her I probably wouldn't be the person I am today. So by her being there because when I had the money and stuff like that …but by being jobless she was able to provide it for me or her grandchild. We both put our heads together giving him things like this…Right now, by me not working because I just lost my job in September so whatever I had to pay [child support] that stopped until I get another job. Then it will be back on. My mom she gives money. We just put it together and get my son things that we need to get him.

His statement "We just put it [money] together and get my son things", alludes to possible "underground work" being done by the father, which is not uncommon among this population of fathers (Roy, 1999).

N-4 situation was similar but he also relies on his sister. He said;

> My mom, sisters, they also help me out too. Besides that I have my car. I do little jitney runs [cab service] to make sure I keep my son with the things he needs at home like diapers, medicine, clothes, little stuff. That is just for the time being right now.

He's actually engaging in "underground work".

N-2 also included his mother as a source of support. However, this was in terms of him "doing the right things", insofar as being raised by a "Strong Black woman". He said:

> Besides Ms. Myles who I go to for advice on anything and if I have an issue that one person I am really close to is my mother. I will call her to let her know what is going on. She will know the issue and if I am having problems I will call her. Usually I will end up talking to her and she will give me a better perspective about what is going on. If that doesn't help and I am still confused I will go downtown and get help from like Social Services and places like that.

This participants story might resonate with "a" many of African American adults…no matter how old they might be…there's nothing like making the call to "Mama"…She knows best!

N-5 spoke in terms of information he hopes to acquire as a result of participating in a RFP. He said:

> Just any information they have available, period. Like me, I am a person who can kind of be, not taught anything but if somebody has something to tell me or something to offer to me I'm not just not going to denounce it and ignore it. I will take it in and see where I can use it and see where it fits in my life if I can use it, you know. Whatever they have available for me…if I can use it I will use it to my ability, you know, to my benefit.

This participant throughout the interview process appears to be on this "spiritual-awaking" path; which represents a major gap in the literature in regard to this population of fathers.

Help Wanted: Underemployment/Unemployment

It is not the researcher's purpose here to analyze the nation's economy; for no one model could explain the complexities of the current state of affairs with regard to the "down economy". According to Governor Andrew Cuomo during his "State of the State Address", the targeted research area is rated 3rd among the nation's poorest cities (January 4, 2012). In addition, and according to the U.S. Census (2008), the targeted research area's poverty rate is at 28.7%, while the nation is at 14.7%. Moreover, and according to the New York State Department of Labor (2011), the targeted area's unemployment rate is at 7.9%, while the nation is at 8.3%, this is according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012).

These numbers are significant, particularly with regard to individuals and families who are living on the margins of society; as is the case for all of the fathers interviewed. Education appeared not to be the great "buffer" for two of the fathers interviewed. Finally, and in light of the above mentioned, Billingsley (1997) surmises that African Americans rely heavily on the private sector for employment opportunities (p. 76); yet it is this very sector that has experienced the greatest number of job losses since World War II (p. 134). This is due primarily to

technological changes such as the practices of "outsourcing" within the last two decades.   In regard to the targeted research area, a decline in the total population and a shift away from blue-collar to white collar-service oriented professions can be explained for the lack of economic resources available to this population of young fathers. Nevertheless, these young fathers throughout the interview process appeared to remain optimistic. Despite the many challenges they face to provide for their children these fathers are meeting their basic needs. In their common voice they are "Handling their business" or "Doing what they gotta do".

N-3 discussed the ease by which he could gain employment opportunities. He said:

My last job was at [fast-food restaurant]…basically on my resume is a number of restaurants. [He lists several fast-food restaurants]. That's about it. I go back and forth to [fast-food restaurant].

He was probed as to why he gravitated toward this type of work? He said:

It's pretty easy. All you got to do is manage that building…this is a fast food restaurant. People expect their food up and ready. Once they [the casher] put in the cash register, the people get it back on the screen and want their food real quick. So you gotta keep the pace, just keep it moving.

While interviewing these fathers the researcher sensed a genuine fear of success among those fathers who had less education; yet all of these fathers were very intelligent and "street" savvy.

N-4 expressed his current unemployment status in relationship to his future education attainment. He said:

Like I said I was at [national restaurant] for a period over the summertime. I had another job at Bar Mary's. I lost that job and then I started working at Seinberg Campus. I was working there for probably like two months. I always had a job though before I had a child and prior to after having my child. I am jobless right now. I want to go to school. My main focus is school so I can get a career job that I need to back me up in the future, period.

He points out an interesting fact among this group of fathers; all were working prior to the birth

of their child, which is inconsistent with previous studies.

>N-2's perspective was similar but from a "program" context. He said:

>Managing my current life circumstances by keeping two jobs and making sure my bills are paid. But now I am behind in some of my bills because I was not making that much money. I would like to get into a program where they help fathers get into better job training so we can get a better job so we are making more than the minimum wage and so we can be able to pay our bills on time and take care of our kids without any problems. Also, if we could get into a program where we could go to school and we don't have to come out-of-pocket money to pay tuition. That would help. I wouldn't mind going to school to better myself to get a better job. It is just I am not making the money to pay for school. That would help also for right now.

Contrary to popular beliefs, these fathers want to provide for their children and certainly they are

not "dead-beats", it's hard to make ends meet during economic downturns (Greif et al., 2011).

>N-1 spoke in terms of seeking employment by relocating: He said:

>Yes, I am an up and coming professional. My education is great, don't get me wrong but it is not pulling in the money that I need to be pulling in. The field that I am in there are no real jobs in [the targeted area]. If I leave [the targeted area] I will lose residency with my son. If I stay in [the targeted area] I make just too much money so the "programs" won't help me. It goes back to the finances, the morality and the legal rights…leaving the area and getting a better job and doing what is best for me. Not for just me alone but me meaning this is my money. This is my son's money. He will never want because of the fact that I can't breech the legal system that is bound and holding me responsible for whatever the situation is.

Age and possible distance are major indicators that over time, this father will lose interest in the

relationship with his child.

>N-5 discussed his current unemployment status in relationship to his irresponsible

behavior. He said:

>This year I lost my job, earlier this year in May. I came late two days back to back. I have to get up very early and some mornings I just can't get up on time. It caused me to be seven, eight, nine, ten minutes late for work. Not that it affected my bus route schedule. It was just the fact of my come through the door schedule. Yes, I have been there two years, almost three years and they were still harassing me about that. Whatever. I let them write me up and all that other stuff and then they hit me with a random pee test [drug test].

> Mind you I love marijuana. I have not ever stopped smoking marijuana except for periodically a couple of months here to do what I got to do. After that whole time of having a job…Yes I smoke marijuana every day…three times a freaking day…faithfully. Kids on the bus… Yes I am high…I am the bus driver.

His perspective to "life" has become a commonly shared belief by an emerging youth subculture who have completely abandoned most traditional African American values and most American social values; which were traditionally, ingrained first in the home then, reinforced within the African American community (Billingsley, 1992).

Wanting to Be a Good Father: The provider/role model

This notion of "father" has never been truly embraced from a societal perspective in regard to the African American male. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the African American male's role from a historical perspective was that of a breeder and nothing more. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries he has been depicted as a lazy, buffoonish, irresponsible and, most importantly, completely incapable of providing for his family. Yet, as with previous studies as well as this current study, these young fathers want to be involved and provide for their children.

N-4 spoke in terms of his lack of education and lack of economic resources as a major constraint. He said:

> Opposites attract, stuff like that. It was kind of like she graduated from school.
> I didn't. Like a little jealousy there. I know she will be financially good but
> I wanted myself to be neck in neck, you know.

His perspective, his voice illuminates current societal trends in regard to the fact that, regardless to the family composition, women are increasing becoming the primary breadwinners in their homes (Warren, 2006). Moreover, they have excelled at seeking higher education over men in general (Roberts, 2010). From a societal perspective, to mediate the possibilities of role strain, men are being encouraged to accept their new roles as caretakers of domestic affairs; yet, this is problematic for most young African American father to accept (Greif, 2011, p. 257).

N-5 spoke in terms of the provider role. He said:

I would say just make sure your child have at least something. Have the things they need like clothes, food, diapers, wipes, you know what I mean. Somewhere safe to stay. As long as the dad can provide something like that you done your part..but I also feel that when that child becomes a certain age that father needs to be able to put something into that child worthwhile as far as like me when I turned 13 my dad, I used to hang out with my dad. We would sit there for hours and won't talk about noting. So I kind of feel that was just time wasted just sitting there with my dad and he don't teach me anything worthwhile. We just sitting there watching T.V. and he is playing cards. It was just time wasted.

N-3 echoed similar sentiment in regard to "putting" something into a child. He said:

Basically that's one of the reason I'm trying to get the [his daughter] to let her Know who her real dad is and don't follow the course that I did, try do something different. Try and get your education and graduate, don't drop out of school for nothing. Do what you gotta do…and basically I might want to tell her don't have sex until you meet that right person…I don't want my child to grow up to be just like me. Be different than me and that's what I'm trying to get my custody of my kid back and everything like that cause maybe that cause maybe they can help me.

N-2 spoke of the love and time. He said:

He is adorable. I love him. When we are together we find so much to do. Both of us are unstoppable. Like to see us together we are like brothers. To have him around is very special and I want to keep that relationship that I have with him. Like when he gets older I don't want him to be like, I don't know what he is doing but as long as I am close to him now he will be close to me in the future. I want to keep that. So as long as I got money in my pocket and able to take care of him I feel like he will be all right. As long as I take care of myself and keep doing what I am doing he will hook up to me and that is what I want.

N-4 shared similarly sentiments. He said:

It is a lot…to see a child, a person who looks like you. My son looks just like me. Everybody is like that is a little you. That is a little younger you. It puts a big smile on my face…See him talking and walking and things like that, dancing. It is the greatest feeling in the world…honestly speaking it is the greatest feeling in the world.

N-1 echoed similar sentiment; however, in the contexts of the co-parenting dynamics.

He said:

> I love my son. I take him everywhere. I do things with him. I taught him how to
> tie his shoes. Brush his teeth. You name it, we have worked through all of it, you
> know. I show him the rewards for it. You work hard for something you get
> rewards. He has an allowance. You know what I am saying…She thinks it is
> her son…she says don't ever get it wrong…this is my son…or actually, no, it is
> not…it is our son. Once you can actually see and agree with that then you will
> wake up [referring to his child mother]…why should I be fighting to be a part of
> son's life.

These participants' perspectives are rarely captured in the research. Thus, the stereotypes and

assumptions continue

Unfortunately, N-3 is on a trajectory of the "hit and run" father. His mental health status,

if left unaddressed, will continue this cycle in his quest to "get it right"; moreover, this behavior

is not uncommon for young fathers in similar circumstances. He said:

> This is my girl right here [pointing his girlfriend]. I am trying to keep like that.
> Not…trying, I am keeping it like that…so I want to have kids by her and I want to be in
> that child's life so I can do what I gotta do…so let them know like I said who your daddy
> is and I just want to raise my kid…and basically I want a new life, that's what I said
> when I was in jail.

This young father during the interview admitted to being once in a gang and he spoke of

his ultimate future, which he surmises to be his death by rival gang members or former gang

associates. The researcher was taken aback by this young father's honesty in regard to his

disclosure of the social realities of gang culture. Consequently, he found it impossible to make an

interpretation. According to Van Manen (1998) when writing (interpreting) the "unspeakable" it

is best to seek out an expert opinion (p. 113). However, in this case, being that this is a

dissertation, which the researcher is required to conduct this inquiry independently, seeking

outside opinions were not an option. Moreover, the researcher can surmise that this participant's

social reality is directly linked to that of the subculture, as mentioned within this chapter.

Summary

Using BAAFM as the guiding lens, five, young, non-residential African American fathers who were participating in a RFP told their stories and were presented in this chapter. Individually, "his-story" provided a rich description of the common lived-world experiences. Collectively, "his-stories" unveiled the "essence" as to why they were participating in a RFP. Results uncovered five common "lived-world "experiences or themes: (a) Fatherlessness: Mama Knows Best; (b) My Babymama: Inter-parental conflict; (c) Making It: Self-Efficacy; (d) Help Wanted: underemployment/ unemployment; and, (e) Wanting To Be a Good Father: The provider/role model.

For the practitioner and professional within the field of Family and Consumer Science working with fathers, this research might provide a new lens by which to deliver services to young fathers. For example, they could advocate for co-parenting classes as a graduation requirement and part of custody arrangement within the family court system. Moreover, the practitioner can promote father friendly services and educate the public on the impact fathers have on the well-being of children.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this hermeneutic (interpretive), phenomenological study was to give "voice" to a select group of young, non-residential African American fathers who are (were) participating in one of two RFP located in a major city within the confines of Western New York. Moreover, this was not a program evaluation, but rather an opportunity to hear from a population of fathers we rarely hear from in the literature. The chapter will highlight the common lived-world experiences shared by the participants. Limitations, implications, and directions for future research will also be discussed.

Common Lived-World Experience

The participants in this study shared common lived-world experiences in regard to:
(1) being raised by a single mother; (2) the levels of inter-parental conflict amongst their babymamas; (3) making it: self-efficacy; (4) employment status; and, (5) their perception of being a "good" father. Table 3 provides a summary of the themes which answered/ and or addressed the research questions posited: The research questions were: (1). What life-changing circumstances led these fathers to seek the services of a RFP?; (2). What are the perceived expectations/outcomes these fathers hope to gain as a result of participating in RFP?; and, (3). How do these fathers envision their future as a result of participating in such RFP?

TABLE 3

Themes That Answered and or Addressed Research Questions

THEMES	Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3
Fatherlessness: Mama Knows Best	Yes	Yes	Yes
My Babies Moma: Inter-parental Conflict	*Yes	Yes	Yes
Making It: Self-Efficacy	No	Yes	Yes
Help Wanted: Underemployment/Unemployment	No	Yes	Yes
Wanting to Be a Good Father: The Provider/Role Model	No	Yes	Yes

Note: *All but one father expressed and or perceived conflict with his child's mother (N-2).

Fatherless:Mama know's Best

Although most of the young fathers in this current study praised their mothers for

raising them single-handedly, none of them discussed in any great detail what that raising

involved. It was noted in the researcher field notes that whenever the subject of family

history was brought up these young fathers often tensed up. Moreover, most stated,

"they did not want to go there"…or "go down that road". The researcher surmises that

there is tremendous emotional pain. Furthermore, if given the right opportunity, they

would disclose this emotional pain. Therefore, these fatherless fathers must deal with the

"ghost" Dr. Canfield refers to in Chapter One. Consequently, it is this researcher's opinion,

this can only be achieved through clinical intervention. Within this setting, we can tap

into the core of their being and bring to light, issues that are troubling them, so that they

can become the responsible fathers they were meant to be. Interestingly, N-5 credited his

older sister for motivating him to move his life forward.

He said:

> My older sister always stuck around with her. She ended up getting her own house and I have been living back and forth between her and my mom. Everybody in my family, my older sister she made the most of me. I believe without her I would probably be a whole different person. I would probably be in jail. I had somebody who was, I guess by her being the oldest sister she got the chance to, I don't know, there is something about her that just made her excel with everything she touches, everything she did. Where did she learn this from. My momma didn't teach it to me. You know what I mean. I don't remember her dad being much around so where does she get it from so may-be some people was just born with it. Just born to excel. I am just glad to have her. She really did a whole lot for me. Every time I needed some help or some better information that would separate me from that lower self my sister was there to help me. I don't' know.

This participant was the only one who had a mother and father, yet he had nothing positive to say about either. The essential question here is: Are we limiting the participant's perspectives by centering our questions on a standard that negates their reality?

My Babymama: Interparental Conflict

This second lived-world experience was voiced the loudest among this group of fathers. Based on current trends and practices within the fatherhood field, providing co-parenting skills is essential to any successful fatherhood program (Greif et al., 2011, p. 253). It was apparent to this researcher that the two fathers who had completed a fatherhood program were more confident in their ability to navigate and negotiate their co-parenting relationships. However, based on previous research, all of these fathers are at a crossroad with regard to whether they will remain in the lives of their children (King & Heard, 1999). ? In this researcher's opinion, a parenting plan should be piloted within all fatherhood program.

The essential question here is: What needs to be done from a program perspective to correct this fact? Interestingly, last year the NFLG submitted recommendations to the Obama Administration on program evaluation, which indicated that all RPF that receive TANF funding should require participants to complete an Individual Parenting Plan (IPP), which would indicate how each participant plans to pursue measurable goals to becoming a responsible father (http://www.nflgonline.org). The IPP might include regular child contact schedules, special events schedules (e.g., birthdays and holidays), information sharing in regard to the child, telephone access, transportation for visitation, methods for resolving future disputes. Finally, these plans can be developed not only through RFP but also through mediation, attorney assistance, and family court assistants.

Making It: Self-Efficacy

This third lived-world experience was among the most challenging for this group of young fathers, which is not surprising, based on our current understanding in regard to the help seeking behavior of all men in general. Issues of vulnerability and masculinity are often the major barriers to help seeking behaviors among men (Greif et al., 2011, p. 248). For the young father, there are additional psychosocial issues he must overcome before he is able to seek help. For example, developmentally in most cases, this population of young fathers has yet to develop the communication skills necessary to ask for help; and yet, they are aware of this fact. To compensate and in their avoidance, they rely on their mothers' to do the leg-work within and across systems (Miller, 1997). The essential question here is: What developmental curricula need to be incorporated within fatherhood programs that would help the young African American father self advocate?

Help Wanted: Underemployment/Unemployment

This fourth lived-world experience confirmed a rather disturbing fact, it is well documented that, no other population in regard to race and gender experiences the phenomenon of being persistently out of work, than the African American male (Billingsley, 1992). Yet, throughout history to the present, African American males' have adopted to this disturbing fact. Albeit, some of their behaviors in making ends meet are not necessarily socially acceptable as discussed. Regardless of the various social constraints that they are confronted with, the fathers in this study want to work, have a right to work, and will continue to provide financial support for their children, by any means necessary (Greif et al., 2011, p. 252). The essential question here is: What resources at the local, state, and federal levels can fatherhood programs tap into to provide employment opportunities within this current down economy?

Wanting to Be a Good Father: The provider/role model

This fifth and final common lived-world experience shared by the fathers is closely linked to the above mentioned. One of the basic tenets of the responsible fatherhood field and the justification for fatherhood programs is that a responsible father is an individual who establishes paternity at birth or shortly thereafter (see Important Terms within Chapter One on how responsible fathering was conceptualized). Four out of the five participants within this current study have established paternity. N-5 has yet to established paternity. He indicated that for religious reasons he had yet to, but plans to. He said:

> No it wasn't [paternity]. I have a problem with. I didn't sign my son's birth certificate when he was first born because I got in touch with the Moorish Science Temple of America and the Moorish Science Temple of America they don't sign their rights over to the American government. They are a different corporate body so therefore I just didn't want to sign my son's birth certificate.

His religious ideology is somewhat unorthodox as such; the researcher chose to leave it where it is. The essential question here is: How does religion impact the young African American father's identity and his parental role?

<div align="center">Implications for Practitioners</div>

There are two major implications that can be derived from the finding of this study which, if left unaddressed, will result in broad over-reaching social consequences, with respect to the young non-residential African American father. They are (a) the transitional development between late adolescence and early adulthood; with the additional adjustment of fatherhood, and (b) the emerging proliferation of young men who are fathering children within a sub-culture that have completely disregarded most cultural and social values and norms of behaviors.

According to Billingsley (1992), a major impact on the African American family is the changing developmental age structure on both the needs and resources that are critical in maintaining healthy family functioning (p.58). Billingsley surmises that without the additional support of those four major sectors as discussed in Chapter Five; the late adolescent and young adult are at risk of experiencing a delay in growth and development (p.61). For the researcher, this was apparent throughout the interview process. Three of the fathers expressed their difficulties in accepting their roles as fathers and chose to continue behaving in a fashion that was more fitting for that of a non-father within their age group. Interestingly, none of these fathers appeared to hold guilt in regard to their behavior with respect to the co-parenting relationship. N-5's perceptions support this implication. He said:

> I felt like a mom should nurture the child at least until the child is one and a half or two years old. Let the child get big and walk good and you know before you just want to throw your child with the dad all the time. Let the child get on his two feet good and build up an immune system before you decide you want to throw you child with your baby's father.

The fatherhood programs must not only address the developmental stages of a child, but also they must also incorporate developmental curricula for self-development, particularly those that focus on life-course development (Greif et al., 2011), which further support the guiding assumption that underpinned this study: Making the transition to being a committed parent is often incomplete and problematic for young fathers (NCOFF, 2000).

The second implication that can be derived from the findings of this study, in regard to the young non-residential African American father, suggest that young men who are fathering children within a sub-culture that have completely disregarded most cultural and social values and norms of behaviors. Although none of the fathers explicitly stated their involvement with gang activities, throughout the interview process the researcher was able to surmise that three of the fathers either were activity engaged or were associated with gang activities.

This subculture has a sense of entitlement and attitudes of a grandiose nature similar to that of the latest pop idol. "I'll do what I want to do…when I want to do it" is their personal mantra, while disregarding any type of personal, community, and societal norms. This subculture is unlike the youth of the rebellious 60s & 70s who wanted to break free from traditional values that constrained them. This subculture however, does not care…it's all about me…the individual. They are fragile and if you cross them, there are consequences. For example, a simple glance might lead to a confrontation on the streets which might explain why; most of the participants chose not to look the researcher in the eyes during the interview process. For in their eyes (their social realities), this is a sign of disrespect. As a confirmatory measure, one needs to simply look to the economic environment and the social climate of the 80s, which was all about greed and the self.

Finally, to support the above mentioned, in 1991 the late C. Delores Tucker, founder of the Bethune-DuBois Institute for cultural and educational development of African American youths, was the first to "sound the alarm" with regard to the behavior of certain pop artists. The lyrics and videos of these pop artists were misogynistic and derogatory not only to women but other minorities-which Tucker felt had a negative impact on African American youths and launched a boycott against "gangsta rap" music. Her efforts resulted in the "advisory" labeling of music within certain genres (National Visionary Leadership Project, 2012).

This implication is significant for future program activities. It will be essential for intervention specialist's to be hired and trained to work with this population of fathers. The ultimate goal of this work will be debriefing these former gang members or quasi-associates back to social behaviors that are normative in scope, so that these young fathers can parent their children appropriately (Greif et al., 2011, p.255). For example, recently, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) aired a documentary called "The Interrupter," which looked at gang violence and how a group of former gang members are helping to mediate such violence in one Chicago community (James & Kotlowitz, 2012). Finally, there are two major initiatives that are offering promising strategies to address not only the above mentioned but a host of other community and societal constraints that impact the African American Community. The Harlem Children Zone and The National Cares Mentoring Movement.

Both of these initiatives are based on the premise that "it takes a village," which is conceptually consistent with BAAFM. The Harlem Children Zone (HCZ) is perhaps one of the most revolutionary social experiments to date in regard to addressing the many issues that plague at risk communities. Under the direction of Geoffery Canada, an advocate for education, the HCZ provides a multitude of social, educational, and human services to individual and families

across the life span living within a 100 block radius of Harlem, New York

(http://www.Hcz.org.). The targeted research area could benefit greatly from a similar model,

considering the fact that is rated the third poorest city in the nation (U.S. Bureau of Census,

2008). The National Cares Mentoring Movement was founded by Susan L. Taylor, former

Editor-In-Chief of Essence Magazine, in response to the poor educational system in New Orleans

in wake of Hurricane Katria, by offering mentoring in literacy, academic enrichment and

personal development to children and youths across the nation residing in at risk communities

(http://www.caresmentoring.org.).

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

The first limitation to this current study was the notion of time and space. Throughout the

recruitment, as well as the interview process, the researcher found it difficult to get the

participants to commit to appropriate and easily accessible locations for the interviews to take

place. These young fathers seemed to always be in a rush, and when they were ready to talk the

researcher had to "drop" everything and "go". Many times the scheduled interviews were

cancelled due to "no-shows". Two of the interviews took place at the workplace of the

participant's former case manager, which was uncomfortable for the researcher because the

space provided was reserved for certain time blocks, and if the participant did not show-up, this

time block had to be re-scheduled; in one case, it was not available when the researcher was

available. There were two interviews that took place in the participant's homes. On face, this

would appear to be ideal yet, in one case; the researcher felt completely unsafe and should have

cancelled. However, in pursuit of "getting the data", the researcher followed through.

Nevertheless, in all cases, this sense of urgency might have compromised the quality of data

gathered.

The second limitation to this current study was the limiting criteria set for participating in this study. Excluding ethnicity, participants had to be young (18-25), non-residential, have a child living within two targeted zip code areas, and were or had participated in one of two fatherhood programs. Opening this study to all young fathers within this age category might have proven to provide more rich-thick details regarding the phenomenon under study.

The third limitation to this current study was the fact the researcher had very little contact with one of the administrator's of the targeted program and none from the other program. This lack of involvement compromised the interpreted process from a program perspective, the researcher lacked basic knowledge in regard to services provided, demographic information, and budget allocations.

The fourth limitation to this current study was the lack of multiple coders during the coding process, which might have enhanced the validity of the findings and proven beneficial in excavating emerging essential themes.

The fifth and final limitation to this current study was the fact that the sample size was small, criterion based and reflecting one urban geographic area. Young fathers participating in a RFP could be experienced differently from a regional perspective.

<center>Directions for Future Research</center>

The results for this current study suggest future studies attend to several emerging issues in regard to young African American fathers directly and that of all fathers in general. More research is needed to shed light on the plight of the homeless father. Two of the participants stated that they experienced periods of homelessness during the interview process (they were not homeless at the time of the interviews). It is critical during economic downturns to survey how these young fathers are navigating and negotiating their parental rights under such conditions.

For example, where does visitation occur and in what environment are the children being exposed too? What type of transitional housing is available to the homeless father? How might existing shelters be adopted to accommodate the homeless father? What impact does a father's homeless status have on his child?

Research is needed to explore the emerging phenomenon of the "educated, but still living on the margins of society fathers". Education traditionally was the great buffer for African Americans. However, as illustrated in this current study, two fathers post secondary education and they still found themselves underemployed. Therefore, are the social constraints that contribute to this phenomenon due to a lack of motivation, racism/discrimination or the economy?

Research is needed to clarify the complexities involved in defining inter-parental conflict or "Babymama Drama". What does this behavior involve? How can a parent plan mediate this behavior?

Mental health issues and African American males is another area that needs further research, specifically in regard to their family of origin and the family's history. What are the issues that pain this population, and how can clinical intervention help alleviate some of the pain?

Finally, research informed by notions of spirituality/faith among the young non-residential African American fathers is needed to capture the whole, rather than the parts, of this population. For example what role does spirituality/faith play in regard to the father's parenting expectations and behaviors?

Conclusion

If anything, the researcher is hopeful that the voices of this selected group of fathers

have been heard. The findings indicate a need for rigorous longitudinal studies that will capture rich data with regard to this population of fathers and their children, who are certainly living on the margins of society. However, in spite of this fact, and in their own voices, they are "doing what they gotta do" to remain in the lives of their children regardless of relationship quality with their babymama or their residency.

From a policy perspective, funding decisions must be based on empirical evidence that will support the impact these programs have on the participants from their perspective as well as the many stakeholders involved program design and implementation. From a practitioner perspective, it was imperative that we heard from this population of fathers, in order that appropriate program decisions (e.g., what frameworks must we work within) can be made in our attempts to decrease the number of fatherless homes in this country. From a local perspective, the host agency involved in this study will receive timely in depth information that might enhance program activities.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Consent Form

Title of Study: *His-stories: Young, non- residential, African American fathers participating in a responsible fatherhood program: A hermeneutic inquiry*

Investigators: Gregory Suni Childs, MS

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.
Key points of this study:

1. The purpose of this study is to understand how you are making meaning (e.g., managing) your current life circumstances (e.g., your co-parenting experiences, the relationship with your child's mother and what resources (if any) you are relaying on) as a young, African-American father, who does not live with your child, as a result of participating within a Responsible Fatherhood Program. Moreover, this study seeks to understand how you envision your future life circumstances (e.g., what resources will you rely on and your level of involvement with your child, one year post program activities). You are being invited to participate in this study because you are currently involved in a Responsible Fatherhood Program and have experience with and know how the program has affected your relationship with your child, your child's mother. Through your participation in this study you may clarify your goals on becoming a responsible father via self-reflections.

2. If you agree to participate in this study, your participation will last for approximately two months. You will be interviewed three times over a period of eight weeks. The interviews will last for approximately one hour and will be tape recorded. You will be asked to talk about your experiences prior to your involvement with the program (e.g., what was your past life circumstances six month prior to the birth of your child and tell your story (e.g., current and future as it relate to your desire to be a responsible father as a result of participating in the program). How you tell your stories and what information you choose to share will be up to you. You can skip any question you do not want to answer and still participate in the study. These documents and tapes will be destroyed five years from the beginning of this study.

3. If you decide to participate in this study you may find that this experience might changed how you see yourself as a young father. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing insight in how Responsible Fatherhood Programs affects the young, non-residential African American father. Your participating in this

study has the potential to benefit you by providing an opportunity for self-reflection and to clarify your goals in becoming a responsible father.

4. A risk involved with this research may be some emotional discomfort if you choose to talk about any past life circumstances that were painful to you (e.g., your relationship with your parents and teen year's experiences). However, what you choose to share in the interviews will be up to you and at anytime you can request that tape recorder be stop and end the interview.

5. Your participation in this study will not cost you anything, and you will be paid a monetary gift of $20.00 per scheduled interview regardless as to whether you complete the full one hour interview. However, you will be ask to sign three forms (one for each scheduled interviews) attesting to the fact that you received compensation for your participations in this study.

6. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you many refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. You can withdraw your consent at any time without penalty and have the results of your participation, returned to you, removed from the records, or destroyed.

7. Participating or not participating in this study will not affect your involvement with the fatherhood program.

8. Your identity will be kept confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without your prior consent, unless required by law as described below. Information that you share with the researcher will remain confidential (that is, it will not be linked to you by name or shared with anyone in a way that would identify you) except for any information about child or elder abuse, or a treat of violence to yourself or others. Information in these areas will be reported to the authorities.

9. The tape recordings of your interviews, as well as the researcher's notes will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home at: [Home], and these will be available only to the researcher and his major professors. However, know that federal government regulatory agencies [NIH] and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. The tapes themselves will be erased by 5/1/2016. In addition, it is possible that the research being done here will result in professional presentations and publications, but you will in no way be personally identified in the way in which the results will be shared. For purposes of reporting the results of this study, a pseudonym will be used to protect your identity.

10. You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. If you like, you can receive a report of the findings of this study.

11. For further information about the study contact Gregory Suni Childs, Doctoral Candidate, (715) 876-1502, gchilds@iastate.edu or Robert H. Bosse1man, Major Professor, (515) 294-8550, drbob@iastate.edu and Steven B. Garasky, Major Professor, (515) 294-9826, sgarasky@iastate.edu. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, Office for Responsible Research, (515) 294-3115, 1138 Pearson Hall, Ames, IA 50011.

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's name (printed) _____

_____   _____
(Participant's Signature)   (Date)

APPENDIX B-1
Interview Protocol Past-Life Circumstances

For the next 60 minutes or so, I want you to reconstruct your life for me, go back as far as you can, bring us to the point where you became a father and joined this fatherhood program. Feel free to begin wherever you are most comfortable with, but I would like you to talk about your childhood, your family, and school, and friends, relationships, job, legal issues, if any, your first sexual encounter, and anything else you can recall (RQ 1: Life-Changing Circumstances)

(Probing Questions)
Posed these probing questions within the past-tense, ask question to account for any time gaps.

Family
Do you have any brother or sister?
Did you grow-up in a home with both parents?
How was your relationship with your mother- father- stepparent- guardian?
Was there any one adult that you felt was most important to you as you were growing up? Who? Why?

Education
What kind of student where you in elementary school? Junior High? High School?
Did you graduate from high school?
Why did you choose to leave school? In what grade did you leave school?

Peers & Support System
What were your support system outside of your family and close relatives?
With whom can you "count-on" during challenging circumstances (go further if need be)?
Who was your best friend? With whom did you first tell of the news about becoming a father?
Why? Where would you go for advice on dealing with stress, money, and health issues?

Employment
What was your last job? Doing what? For how long? Why did you leave? Are you working now?
Doing what? For how long?

Fatherhood
Did you plan to be a father?
Describe your relationship with the mother of your child
How much time do you spend with your child per day? Per Week?
Is there a parenting plan in place? Why? Why not?

Fatherhood Program
How did you learn about this program? Is it mandatory for you to attend? Why?
How did you come to get involved with the program? Was your child born then?
Has the program help you with any legal issues? What? Why?

APPENDIX B-2
Interview Protocol Current-Life Circumstances

For the next 60 minutes or so I want you to pick up where you left off in our last interview, I want you to focus on the concrete details of your life circumstances today. If I were to wake, up today in your shoes what would my entire day be like? Do I work? If so, what is my job? What is my educational level? What kind of relationship do I have with my child's mother? What is my relationship with family? Where is my father? What are my support systems? How often do I see my child? Do I have any legal issues? Drug issues? Where am I in the program? Has the program be beneficial to me? Who are my mentors here? Whom can I count on within this program? (RQ 2: Current-Life Circumstances)

(Probing Questions)
All questions in this section will be posed in the present tense. Questions will be asked to account for any time gaps.

Legal System
What going on in your life with the legal system? Is this program helping? Do you need help?

Employment
Are you currently working? Doing what? Has the program helped you find this job?
Are you working "underground"?
How much are you making per week, per month?
Do you need help?

Family
How are you making your child support payment?
Whom do you live with now?
Are you engaged, single?
How is your relationship with your family today, Mother, father, and Siblings?
Do you need help?

Education
Are you currently taking any classes? Are you in a degree program? Do you need help with educational issues?

Fatherhood Program
Is this program meeting your expectations? Please talk about the program in general, the staff, and services. What is working for you so far in this program? What is not? Please explain?

APPENDIX B-3
Interview Protocol Future-Life Circumstances

I have assumable you all here to discuss your future. For the next 60 minutes or so, I want you to "envision" yourselves one year-five years' post program. Based on what you have reconstructed in these past interviews, with regard to family, employment, fatherhood, the program, and education, where do you see yourself in the future? What impact, if any, will your past and current life circumstances and this program have on your future (RQ 3: Future-life Circumstances)

All questions in this section are posed in the future tense. Only one person at a time may speak and we will respect that person's opinion. Can we all agree on these basic rules?

Relationship
Describe your relationship with your child's mother in the future.
Will you have more children?
Will you get married?

Employment
What is your ideal employment?
Do you see yourself working "underground"?
Are there any skill/education you will need?

Legal Issues
What role, if any, will the legal system play in your future?
Are there any legal issues outstanding?

Children
What does the relationship "look" like with your child in the future?
What role will you play in his/her daily life?

The program
Will this program be around?
Do you see yourself involved in this program in the future?
In the future, would you or how would you change the program to make it better?

APPENDIX C
Interview Data Sheet

Site: Type of Interview:
Interviewers: With whom:

Today's Date:
Interview Date:
Code for Interview:

1. Briefly describe the father (s) involved in this interview, including influence of cultural and socio-economic attitudes/strategies towards being a responsible father.

2. What were the main ideas or issues around this interview?

3. Summarize the information you gathered during this interview?

Circumstances	Past Life (RQ 1)	Current Life (RQ2)	Future Life (RQ3)
Education			
Employment			
Program			
Housing			
Legal			
Relationship			
Family			

4. Anything else that you identified as salient, interesting, or important in this interview relevant to fatherhood?

5. What new questions or issues will you want to ask in future interviews and/or discuss with the participants?

APPENDIX D

Demographic Data

ID#_____

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! Please complete the survey below and return it in the attached self-addressed, stamped envelope.
   Please note that the information collected in this questionnaire is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study.

Demographic Data Sheet

1. My age is: ___13-15   ___16-20   ___21-25

2. My zip-code is: ___14211   ___14215

3. My race/ethnicity is: ____African American   ____ Hispanic ____Other

4. Age of infant: ___0-6months   ___6-one year

5. Age of child: ____1-3 ____4-6 ____7-10

6. Residential Status: ____I do not live with my child & mother _____I do live with my child & mother

7. Occupation:_____

8. Educational Level: ___8 grade   ___12 grade   ___2year college   ___4year college

9. Your total yearly income: ___under $5,500   ___under $10,500 ___under $15,500

10. Length in program: ____weeks ____months ___years

11. Legal issues pending: ____yes   ___no

12. Current with child support payments: ___yes   ___no

Thank you for completing this questionnaire! Your time and participation are very much appreciated, and will contribute to a growing knowledge base on experiences surrounding young father's involvement in a responsible fatherhood program.