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Negative Stereotypes and Childhood Paternal Relationships as Predictors of Paternal Identity in African American Fathers

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NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES AND CHILDHOOD PATERNAL
RELATIONSHIPS AS PREDICTORS OF PATERNAL
IDENTITY IN AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHERS

by

Danielle K. Wright

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
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Many people are familiar with the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.” One might have the impression that after the child successfully reaches adulthood, the village has done its job. On the contrary, raising the child is just the beginning. I’ve learned over the course of my years, that the village expands, moves, grows, and changes with the child as the child integrates into the community. To that end, I would like to thank all of the people who were instrumental in my village experience.

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I dedicate this work and all my academic achievements to my parents, Darius and Pamela Wright. Words cannot express the gratitude that I have for them. I am so thankful that they value education and chose to invest in me. I want to thank my mother for all the encouraging phone calls, pep talks and visits. I believe in me because she believes in me. I want to thank my father for being an inspiration for this study. My life would be so different if he were not in it.

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Danielle K. Wright
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

African American males have been described as a high-risk population on the verge of extinction because of their low life expectancy and the many social issues that plague them (Cochran, 1997). This group of men face disproportionately high rates of incarceration, poverty, morbidity, unemployment and have shorter life expectancy than their White counterparts. In addition, they also have less access to health care, education and psychological services (Coles, 2002; Majors & Billson, 1992). Despite their disadvantages, there is a paucity of research and literature on African American males and their psychological well-being. In particular, there is little research about their positive well-being. The literature expresses the central concern of fatherlessness in the African American community, but has not addressed the parental experiences of African American fathers.

The impetus for the present study was derived from the need for more research to be conducted about African American fathers from the viewpoint of active and engaged African American fathers. African American fathers have been called the phantom of social sciences (Cazenave, 1979; Gary & Leashore, 1982; Hamer, 1997). Very little attention has been given to their experiences. Mothers have provided much of the sparse literature that exists concerning African American fathers (Bowman, 1993; Coley, 2001, McAdoo & McAdoo, 1993). Before the 1980’s, the majority of social science literature was extremely negative and taken from a deficit model. Historically, the literature focused on African American men from lower economic classes, men who were absent.
from the home, and teen fathers. It was not until the late 1970's and early 1980's that contemporary theorists began to take into consideration the contextual factors that influence African American men (Adams, 2002; Cochran, 1997, Wade, 1994). At last, African American men were discussed and researched from an ecological perspective, which includes their strengths and their weaknesses.

Multiple authors have reviewed demographic and population statistics for American families and have raised concerns about growing numbers of “fatherless children” (Blankenhorn, 1995). Rodney and Mupier (1999) assert that in 1995, 24 million children (28% of the population of American children) did not live with their biological fathers. More than 50% of all African American children live in homes in which the father is not present (Rasheed, 1999). Furthermore, Brown-Cheatham (1993) reported that 90% of African American children will spend some part of their childhood in a single-parented female-headed household. In essence, the African American community can be described as raising a generation of fatherless children. African American men may want to be better fathers to their children, however, there are many external forces that make it difficult to fulfill the provider role that helps define what being a good father is (McAdoo, 1993). High unemployment rates, low-income, and poor education are thought to contribute to African American men’s low self-efficacy concerning fatherhood (Rasheed, 1999).

Fatherless children present a concern because father involvement is believed to contribute to the well being of children’s lives (Pruett, 1993). All fathers can have a positive influence on their children by providing child-care, helping with household duties and responsibilities and supporting their children’s mother (Black et. al, 1999).
The literature also suggests that the father is an asset to the family unit and makes unique contributions to the well-being of his children. Blankenhorn (1995) maintains that paternal investment provides: 1) children with a father’s physical protection, 2) money and material resources, 3) paternal cultural transmission or a paternal contribution to the identity, character, and competence of his children, and 4) day-to-day nurturing.

Conversely, not having a father in the home can be problematic to the children. Zimmerman et al. (1995) illustrated that father absence has been linked with delinquency, substance abuse, tobacco use and poor self-esteem. It has also been reported that father absence has an effect on sex-role identification of sons; Moran and Barclay (1988) report that boys without the influence of their fathers identify with feminine qualities such as passivity, dependency, and less aggressiveness.

Background of the Problem

Negative stereotypes of African Americans, in particular African American males, appear to be widely accepted. The television and news media as well as the popular literature portray a negative public perception of African American men as perpetrators of crime and violence. The scholarly literature suggests that African American men are irresponsible, erratic in behavior, unintelligent and incapable of being responsible fathers (Gadsden & Smith, 1995; Gary & Leashore, 1982). The popular media further implies that black men are shiftless, lazy, no-good, trifling, dangerous, unemployed and perhaps even an “endangered species” (Blake & Darling, 1994; White & Cones, 1994). The latter term implies that African American men are on the verge of being extinct – no longer existing in the way we are familiar with them. “Endangered species” suggests that if something doesn’t happen soon, the African American man will
be a distant memory. These negative stereotypes of African American fathers seem to be perpetuated in the social science literature focusing on father absence, poor parental involvement and pathology (Bowman, 1993; Riley, 1999; Wade, 1994). The current study seeks to expand understanding of African American fathers by exploring how the internalization of negative stereotypes, relationships with their own fathers, and the ability to function in the provider role affect African American males perceptions of themselves as fathers.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, there is a dearth of knowledge concerning African American fathers (Blake & Darling, 1994); they have been repeatedly described as “invisible” (Bright & Williams, 1996; Cochran, 1997b, Hyde & Texidor, 1988). Unfortunately, when African American men have been studied, they have primarily been compared to their white counterparts. Many researchers have not taken into consideration the historical, social, and political plight of African American men, and consequently have not illuminated the African American male’s experiences. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of African American fathers who have been ignored and overlooked in the literature.

Overview of Remaining Chapters

In Chapter II, the literature concerning good fathering and conceptual and empirical literature about African American fathers is presented. Literature is also presented about African American men’s relationships with their fathers and the nature of the African American family. The final section of Chapter II reviews factors affecting African American fathers, such as societal inequities, dominant group expectations, and
within group responses. Chapter III describes the research methods used in the study, including sample, research measures, research procedures and hypotheses. In Chapter IV, the findings of the study are reported. Finally, in Chapter V, a discussion of the results are presented along with implications for practice and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

There is a growing body of literature that addresses the concept of fatherhood, however, there is very little research that addresses the experiences of African American fathers. The limited available research tends to be pejorative, studied from a Eurocentric perspective and focused on the negative aspects of African American fathers (e.g. Allen & Conner, 1997; Cochran, 1997). The first part of this literature review documents the concept of good fathering. The next section presents conceptual and empirical literature concerning African American fathers. The final section reviews experiences African American males encounter that may influence their fathering abilities, such as social inequities, dominant culture expectations of African American males, and the positive within group responses.

Good Fathering

Theorists and scholars have conceptualized fatherhood in a number of ways. However, similar themes emerge from different schools of thought that define the concept of good fathering. Recently, good fathering has also been described as “responsible” fathering. The term “responsible fathering” reflects a change in the social climate that acknowledges values associated with parenting (Coles, 2002; Doherty, Kouneski & Erickson, 1996). There are attitudes and behaviors of fathers that convey good and/or responsible fathering.

Responsible fatherhood has been described as establishing legal paternity, being present, providing economic support, and being involved in the child’s life (Coley, 2001;
Doherty, Koveneski, & Erickson, 1996). Establishing paternity is critical to responsible fathering as it benefits the child economically, socially and psychologically. The child may benefit from knowing his biological heritage and have a clearer sense of identity (Doherty et. al., 1996). Legal paternity also insures the father’s rights to some extent as social policies and institutions tend to be stricter on fathers as opposed to mothers. Several researchers have documented the importance of father presence as opposed to father absence (Blankenhorn, 1995; Marsiglio et. al, 2000; Pruett, 1993). According to Doherty et. al.(1996), two important barriers that prevent fathers from being present in their children’s lives are nonmarital childbirths and divorce; thirty two percent of all children born in the United States in 1997 were to unwed mothers (Coley, 2001).

Unequivocally, the distinguishing feature of responsible fathering is being a breadwinner and provider for the family (Black, 1997; Blankenhorn, 1995; Coley, 2001; Doherty, Koveneski, & Erickson, 1996; Lamb,1995). A unique contribution that father’s make to their children’s lives is financial stability. This is in part because generally speaking women make less money than men and are not as likely to be employed full time. Without economic support from fathers, children tend to have poorer health and nutrition, lower grades in school, higher dropout rates, and emotional and behavioral difficulties (Marsiglio et. al., 2000).

A hallmark of responsible fathering is paternal involvement. Black (1999) asserts that paternal involvement includes such factors as marital status and living arrangements as well as the quality of the relationship between fathers and their children. Lamb and Oppenheim (1989) describe three aspects of paternal involvement: engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. Engagement or interaction is defined as time spent in
actual one-on-one interaction with the child and direct caregiving, leisure or play.

*Parental accessibility* is defined as activities that are not as intense or immediate as one-on-one interaction. An example of parental accessibility is the father washing dishes in the kitchen while the child is in the next room studying or watching television.

*Responsibility* includes attending to the child’s overall well-being and making decisions on the child’s behalf. Another component of paternal involvement raised by Coley (2001) is paternal human capital. Paternal human capital is defined as “behaviors, skills, and knowledge that can be passed on to his children to foster their achievement and success in society” (p.747). It is recognized that father’s involvement adds to the achievement and success of their offspring. Paternal involvement is important to children as research indicates that involvement by fathers correlates with better cognitive and school functioning of children (Coley, 2001) and improves children’s social (Black, 1999) and sex-role development (Radin, 1986).

Responsible fathering further involves offering emotional and economic support to the mother. Today’s fathers are expected to be much more involved in the everyday lives of their children than the previous generations, including providing childcare and doing housework (Coley, 2001). Black (1999) reported that mothers who feel supported by fathers are more sensitive to their children. Fathers can provide support to the mothers by assuming more responsibility as it relates to housework, contributing money and material goods, and offering input concerning childrearing issues (Black, 1999).

In sum, Levine and Pitt (1995) define responsible fathering as follows: a man who “a) waits to make a baby until he is prepared emotionally and financially to support his child, b) establishes legal paternity if and when he makes a baby, c) actively shares with
the child’s mother in the continuing emotional and physical care of their child, from pregnancy onwards, and d) shares with the child’s mother in the continuing financial support of their child, from pregnancy onwards” (p. 4).

African American Fathers

There is a paucity of research focused specifically on African American fathers. Prior to the mid-1980’s, the research studies about African American fathers relied on White, middle-class, Western norms as a point of reference (Allen & Conner, 1997; Cochran, 1997; McAdoo & McAdoo, 1993). In this literature, African American fathers were portrayed as invisible, absent or uninvolved in their children’s lives. These negative images of African American fathers have been reinforced by social stereotypes presented by the media (White & Cones, 1999) and academic literature (Mirande, 1991). More recently, studies have been conducted that portray a more balanced image of the African American father. However, there are a few studies that acknowledge that many African American men play a significant role in their children’s lives much like men from other ethnic groups.

Brief Historical Context

It is imperative to review the various historical, social and economic factors that have negatively impacted African American fathers to gain an understanding of their current plight. Riley (1999) proposes that the fatherlessness experienced by the African American community began in slavery. Enslaved African and African American men were taken from their families causing instability, segmentation and destruction of the family unit that has been perpetuated into the twenty-first century. Hamer (1997) and Gordon (2000) noted that both historical and contemporary experiences have hindered
African American men’s ability to perform their economic function and altered their role in various aspects of fathering. Hamer reported that African American men in slavery could not vote, participate in politics or define their future for themselves or their families. Indeed, they experienced a considerable number of conflictual predicaments. They could not own property, but were expected to work and maintain the fields of their masters. They could not defend themselves or their families, yet were expected to be physically strong. They could not marry legally, yet were expected to produce offspring with enslaved African American women. They did not have any legal rights or responsibilities for their children, yet they were encouraged and required to mate with slave women. Since slavery, African American men have been expected to maintain the traditional image of a good father, however, they have consistently struggled with obtaining the means and the opportunity to do so.

*African American Fathers as Providers*

Perhaps the most significant role for African American fathers is the provider role, being able to support and sustain the well-being of the family economically. Several researchers suggest that African American fathers’ ability or inability to provide for their offspring affects their willingness to participate in their children’s lives (Bowman, 1993; Cochran, 1997; Johnson, 1998; McAdoo, 1993, & Wade 1994).

Two studies focused on the economic stability of middle income African American fathers. Cazenave (1979) collected interview data from 54 middle-income Black fathers who were mail carriers. The study focused on Black fathers’ role perceptions and found that the provider role was a prominent identity for these fathers. According to the participants, being a man meant being able to take care of one’s family.
as a responsible father and husband. These fathers’ perception of their roles included spending time with their children, being emotionally involved with their children, and being more involved in child care activities than their fathers had been. In addition, those fathers who experienced greater economic security, were more active in child-rearing activities. The relationships between forty middle-income African American fathers and their preschool children were explored by McAdoo (1986). He found that economically stable African American fathers were actively involved in the socialization of their children. He also found that as economic stability and sufficiency increased within African American families, participation of African American fathers in the socialization of their children increased.

Bryan and Ajo (1992) provided additional information about African American fathers by examining a broader economic sample. They administered a 20-item survey to 50 African American men recruited from two homeless shelters and two professional organizations. Age, education, employment and income were identified as the independent variables. The results of the study indicated that the role perceptions of African American fathers are heavily influenced by economic concerns. The economic status of African American fathers significantly impacts their perception and definition of themselves as a provider for the family. The authors acknowledge that African American fathers may experience frustration, anger and rage because of their father role expectations and the lack of economic support and societal opportunities available to them.

Multiple studies highlight the importance of the provider role for African American fathers. Yet, as noted by McAdoo (1993), most social science literature focuses
on African American men in the lower socioeconomic class and unjustly generalizes the
findings to African American fathers in other socioeconomic classes. McAdoo further
concluded from an observational study of Black fathers with their children that
economically secure fathers are able to provide the social and economic resources for
their wives and children and that African American men who are able to fulfill the
provider role, regardless of socioeconomic class, are not significantly different from
fathers in other ethnic groups.

African American Families

Unfortunately, research on the African American family has focused primarily on
the lower class family, as compared to white middle class norms, and has generated a
picture of African American families as “deviant” and “pathological” (Walters &
Chapman, 1991). An infamous report, the Moynihan Report, which was released in 1965,
declared that the Negro family in America was immersed “in a tangle of pathology”
characterized by an unstable matriarchal structure (White & Cones, 1999). The purpose
of the report was to convince the federal government that it was irrelevant to improve the
social conditions of Black and poor people in the United States. Instead, the federal
government should treat this as a pathological condition and encourage the Negro family
to seek “self-reliance” rather than expect improvement in social conditions (Walters &
Chapman, 1991). The Moynihan Report prompted other researchers to present a different
portrayal of the African American family — one that is not deficient and deviant, but
recognizes its differences from middle class White families.

Twelve percent of the American population, or about 29 million Americans are
African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). In 1996, there were 8.1 million African
American families, 46 percent of which were married-couple families (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). The structure of African American families can be linked to a number of societal changes. Wade (1994) reported that between the years of 1880 and 1925, two parent families were the norm in black communities. He further states that African American families were torn apart because of urbanization and industrialization. The men were unable to secure work, whereas the women were usually able to find domestic work. World War II had a similar effect on African American families. The men moved to industrial cities for employment, which led to an uneven distribution of the sexes and the disruption of family life. The two parent family structure among African Americans began to deteriorate in the late 1960's due to poverty, racism, and segregation.

Eshleman (1985) has noted three different recent or current structures of the African American family. The matriarchal or matricentric family is usually a single-parent family with low income. This family may include a father who cannot support the family or who cannot exercise paternal authority. The egalitarian family structure includes two-parents and is usually middle class. The patriarchal family is characterized by affluence and the male being the dominant partner.

More generally, the African American family is noted for their extended kinships, multiple parenting, fosterage, flexible role definitions, and networks with others in their community (Walters & Chapman, 1991). One of the most common characteristics of the African American family is extended kinships. It is not uncommon for several generations to live in the same household. The family may consist of adults, grandchildren, grandparents and other individuals (i.e. aunts, uncles, cousins) who may live with the family to meet various needs. One benefit to extended family households is
improving the economic welfare of the entire household. The income of the African American family is generally less than their Caucasian counterparts and therefore, additional income from extended family members may assist the family in meeting daily needs or achieving a desired standard of living (Taylor et. al, 1990). Other benefits of extended families in the African American community are providing mutual assistance with such responsibilities as childcare, caring for an impaired family member, domestic responsibilities, transportation, and emotional support (Taylor et. al., 1990; Walters & Chapman, 1991).

Walters and Chapman (1991) discuss fosterage as a unique characteristic of African American families. Fosterage is an informal or consensual type of adoption. It occurs when the natural parents are unable to care for their child and willingly allow another family member or friend to raise the child. The natural parents do not renounce the rights to their child, but expect that the child will be reared properly.

African American families are also characterized by flexible and interchangeable roles (Walters & Chapman, 1991). Flexibility allows the paternal role to be fluid. One or more males in the family may fulfill the duties of the biological father when he is unable to do so (Whitmore, 1999). Coley (2001) describes this as social fathering. Other males that may fulfill the father-figure role for children may be stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, god-fathers, boyfriends, cousins and ministers.

African American families may be different from the dominant culture, but they are not deviant. Historically, African Americans have placed a high value on community (Morris, 1987). Therefore, it is not surprising that there are flexible roles within the community that allow African Americans to meet the needs of their members by
whatever means is necessary. For African American families, the definition of family is broader than the biological family; they have redefined the meaning of family to include any individual who relates as a member of the family. One must consider the nature of the African American family when exploring one piece of the system, such as the father role.

Fathers’ Paternal Relationships

Men’s perceptions of fatherhood are shaped by interactions with significant people in their lives. An interaction that seems to be crucial in the development of their perceptions of paternal roles is their interaction with their father (Wade, 1994). Gordon (1990) and Feldman (1990) emphasized the importance of exploring the paternal relationship for fathers. Gordon suggested that men processing and understanding their relationship with their father and grandfather helps them come to terms with their own identity. Feldman suggested that men, regardless of whether they are fathers, benefit from exploring the relationship with their own father.

Penha-Lopes (1998) also asserts that the perception of one’s father’s influence can impact one’s own parenting. She interviewed eight African American men and explored their family involvement. She concluded that variations in family involvement of the African American men were influenced by three factors: 1) childhood experiences, including perceptions of their own father’s performance when they were growing up; 2) economic stability in adult life; and c) love relationships. She indicated that men who were disappointed in the relationship they had with their father were mindful of their own fathering and tried not to repeat it with their own children. She also indicated that
economic circumstances and love relationships tended to cause the respondents to reevaluate their own lives.

Similarly, Allen and Doherty (1996) assert that the process of developing perceptions of fatherhood begins with childhood experiences. The authors conducted in-depth interviews with ten adolescent African American fathers concerning their experience of fatherhood. Participants’ childhood experiences of relationships with their own fathers determined the nature of the relationship they had with their child, particularly if their relationship with their father had been negative or the father was absent. The impact of not having a present father motivated them to remain involved in their children’s life.

Factors Affecting African American Fathers

Societal Inequities

African American men encounter societal deterrents that may impede their ability to live their lives to their fullest potential and consequently, affect their ability to be good fathers. African American men suffer inequities in nearly every aspect of the American life: socially, economically, in familial relationships, and physically due to lack of access to adequate health care. African American men experience high arrest and incarceration rates, poor public education support, high crime and violence rates, significant unemployment and underemployment (Cochran, 1997; Kimmel & Messner, 1998), higher chemical dependency rates (Riley, 1999) and shorter life expectancy than their White counterparts (Blake & Darling, 1994). Not only do African American men endure many inequalities, their experiences are rarely validated and they are blamed for the consequences of their inequities. It is easy to see how these deterrents may affect their
ability to provide for their families as well as create difficulties in providing emotional
and physical care giving.

One of the most severe societal barriers for African American men is lack of
employment and economic stability. Unemployment, underemployment and poor
economic stability influence African American men’s ability to fulfill the provider role of
being a father. African American men have historically had higher rates of
unemployment than their White counterparts. In 1950, the rate for unemployment of
African American men was twice that of White men. In 1986 their unemployment rate
was three times that of White men (Blake & Darling, 1994). In fact, employment
opportunities for African American men have been declining since the seventies (Blake
& Darling, 1994).

Rasheed (1999) states that poor, urban African American men have a high rate of
unemployment for three reasons: 1) spatial mismatch, 2) skills mismatch, and 3) racial
discrimination. Poor, urban African American men are spatially mismatched with jobs
because they are inner-city residents and there are few jobs in the inner-city. Desirable
jobs are usually in the suburbs. Generally African American men have a lower level of
educational attainment compared to White men and therefore are not equipped for
employment, which leads to a skills mismatch. Racial discrimination also affects the
employment rate of African American men. African American men experience being
denied job opportunities because of being African American even when they overcome
the barriers of mismatched skills and poor proximity. They also experience the glass
ceiling effect, which is less upward career mobility and restricted opportunities for
advancement, and lower pay compared to White Americans (Rasheed, 1999). Many
African American men encounter chronic joblessness and have been affected by the deindustrialization of the workforce in the United States (Bowman, 1993; McAdoo, 1993).

Another impediment African American men face that may affect their ability to be a good father is poor health. African American men have poor health for numerous reasons. African American men were the target population of the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which injected them with the virus and withheld effective treatment. The men where told that they were being treated for “bad blood”. The truth was not revealed until 1972. This deception fostered a deep mistrust of the medical field and as a result, many African American men are reluctant to seek treatment for any type of ailment (Fagan & Stevenson, 1995; Booker, 1999). Generally, African Americans have poor access to health care and poor health care practices. In 1994, 19.7 percent of African Americans lacked health insurance and made few visits to the doctor. However, African Americans averaged greater outpatient and hospital emergency room visits than White Americans implying that they wait until it is absolutely necessary to seek medical attention (Booker, 1999). Some African Americans may struggle with being skeptical about receiving medical attention and may not be in a position where they can afford adequate medical care.

African American men have a shorter life expectancy than nonwhite women and White women and men (Gary & Leashore, 1982). According to Blake and Darling (1994), mortality rates for African American males between the ages of 15 and 30 are three times higher than those of White males in the same age group. Young African American males are 50% more likely to die by the age of 20 than are young White males.
The most frequent causes of death for young African American males are homicide, drug abuse, suicide and accidents; for young White males the primary causes of death are accidents and cardiovascular disease. Unfortunately, the suicide rate for young African American males is increasing. Blake and Darling (1994) assert that the cause of this increase is anger spurred on by racial discrimination and high unemployment. These authors also attribute the increase in suicide rates to low self-esteem, depression born of hopelessness and drug abuse.

African American men have been targeted by law enforcement and the criminal justice system, which has been a stressor for many African American men. It is well recognized that African American men have a strained relationship with law enforcement and the criminal justice system with the most notable example being the Rodney King incident. Unfortunately, African American men are disproportionately represented in the prison population and face harsher sentencing policies for criminal offenders than do other segments of the population (Booker, 1999). For example, there is a discrepancy in sentencing when crack cocaine or powder cocaine is involved. Crack cocaine carries a harsher penalty than powder cocaine. African American men are more likely to possess crack cocaine, the less expensive form of the drug, while White males are more like to possess powder cocaine. Recently, there has been an acknowledgment of racial profiling and police brutality directed at African American males (Booker, 1999). The terms “Driving While Black” or “DWB” and “Shopping While Black” or “SWB” have become flippant coined phrases that mimic other real crimes such as “Driving Under the Influence” or “DUI”.
Poor or low income African American men encounter another significant societal barrier: social policy. Social policies have disproportionately focused on supporting single mothers (Fagan & Stevenson, 1995). Rasheed (1999) reports that because of the structure of the welfare system, it may be more financially beneficial for women to remain single rather than marry a man whose income will not raise the household income over the poverty level. Thus poor or low-income African American men may not be seen as desirable mates and may not have the opportunity to fulfill their parenting role from within the household. Unfortunately, the social system expects these men to increase their net worth, however, there are few programs or sources of assistance for men to help them achieve that goal.

For some African American fathers, a poor relationship with the mother may prevent them from being more involved in their children’s lives. The introduction of new partners in either of the parents’ lives may lead to the father being less involved with his children. Many biological fathers’ involvement decreases and is replaced by the mothers’ current partners (Black, 1999; Coley, 2001). Fathers who form new relationships and have more children are less involved with their children from previous relationships (Coley, 2001).

Any one of the societal barriers mentioned—unemployment, underemployment, poor education opportunities, poor health, and poor social policy can impact one’s well-being. However, many African American males are constantly and consistently confronted with multiple barriers. These contextual factors are often ignored or minimized when studying African American men, yet they clearly affect their parenting experiences.
Aside from enduring many societal inequalities, African American males struggle with pervasive negative stereotypes in the social science literature, the mass media, and other aspects of the general culture. Gary and Leashore (1982) reported that social scientists have depicted African American men as pimps, criminals, hustlers, and ineffective family leaders. The authors further state that poor research continues to perpetuate negative stereotypes. Some of the deficiencies of existing research include 1) a tendency to focus on pathology rather than strengths, 2) a reliance on inadequate models and theoretical assumptions, 3) a tendency to assume a common black experience, 4) a propensity to focus on low-income groups in the black community, and 5) a tendency to concentrate on captive subjects, especially prisoners and mental patients. During the process of conducting the literature review for this study, the researcher found many articles that focused on the deficiencies of African American fathers. Research that focused on father absence, adolescent fathers, low-income, non custodial and unmarried African American fathers was reviewed but not wholly integrated into the design of the present study because the primary purpose of this study is to investigate African American males’ experiences as fathers from their perspectives instead of focusing on assumed or stereotypical dysfunction.

The mass media has historically contributed to the negative stereotypes of African American males as buffoons (Gary & Leashore, 1982), perpetrators of crimes (Gadsen & Smith, 1994), intellectually inferior to the dominant culture (Booker, 1999), and unable to handle the responsibilities of employment or fatherhood (Gadsen & Smith, 1994). White and Cones (1999) reported that *Amos and Andy* began as a radio series in 1928. It became
a television program in 1951 and remained on television until 1966. The program
featured three African American male characters who seemed slow, passive, and silly.
They also spoke unintelligible English using phrases like “be fo I goes” and “dat’s right”.
African American men where primarily cast in comedic roles during the 1970’s
and finally cast in more dramatic roles in the 1980’s. Currently, the majority of African
American males in the media are entertainers, athletes, suspected criminals, or actors
portraying criminals (Booker, 1999). The emphasis is often on their physical abilities and
rarely on their intellectual capabilities. Although there are a plethora of African American
males who could present positive aspects of the African American male, the media seems
to constantly present an unbalanced, negative portrayal of African American men.
Booker (1999) asserts that considering the situation comedies, crime shows, and news
shows, one can only conclude that the image of the African American male is
intentionally portrayed as dangerous, volatile, and criminally-minded by those controlling
the media.
African American men are bombarded with the message that they are lazy,
immoral, violent, sexual studs, criminals, intellectually inferior, and good athletes. Due to
many interactions with the dominant culture, African American males may begin to
internalize these perceptions and see themselves in the same way that racist Whites do
(Blake & Darling, 1994). This phenomena, which has been termed internalized racism, is
linked to the history of slavery in the United States and has far reaching implications for
Grier and Cobbs (1968) assessed the legacy of slavery in the United States and
surmised that the mindset of slaves has never changed. They assert “the culture of slavery
was never undone for either master or slave’; although slavery ended decades ago, the inner feelings remain (p.20). Taylor (1990) suggests that the legacy of slavery has been preserved by the process of internalized racism. He contends that one danger of internalization is that it’s source is omnipresent racism, and another danger of internalization is that African American’s feel estranged from their culture of origin.

Oler (1989) maintains that the level of an African American’s racial identity and perceptions regarding the origins and amelioration of the oppressed conditions of African Americans in America plays a significant role in how he or she will view himself or herself in the world. The more positive an individual’s racial self-concept is, one can reason that the more adaptive and positive his or her general self-perceptions will be. One can surmise that someone who has internalized negative stereotypes about himself and his race will have less positive perceptions about himself overall.

According to Kelly and Floyd (2001) these negative stereotypes and resultant negative self perceptions contribute to feelings of inferiority among African American men. Kelly and Floyd further suggest that these feelings of inferiority have produced a rage that is unsafe to vent toward White society, and is being displaced toward one another (i.e. Black on Black crime). Duneier (1992) reported that many African American males are keenly aware of the stereotypes that the dominant culture has of them. Roberts (1994) asserts that many African American males disassociate themselves (psychologically and physically) in order to escape the negative stereotyping of this group.

Majors and Billson (1992) contend that African American men protect themselves from these negative stereotypes by portraying a “cool pose” or a composed, controlled
self-image. For many African American males maintaining one's cool pose is a sense of
power - power over one's emotions and vulnerabilities. In a society that denies them
access to acceptable routes of economic and social correlates of manhood, yet exerts
extreme pressure to prove that they are men (Roberts, 1994), power over one's self may
be the only thing over which the African American male feels he has control. Thus, the
façade of the cool pose is the signature of true masculinity for many African American
males, while Eurocentric standards of masculinity are stereotypically defined by
individualism, accumulation of wealth, and power (Allen & Conner, 1997).

Within Group Responses

Gordon (2000) provides a useful framework for conceptualizing the strengths of
African American men. He suggests that the state of the African American male be called
African American male problematique. He states that Black males as a group are
categorized by their subordinated cultural position. As members of a subordinate
cultural group, young African American males are forced to acculturate to the dominant
culture. Gordon (2000) asserts that while holding fast to one's indigenous culture, one is
likely to internalize aspects of the dominant culture and develop attitudes and behaviors
that are resistant to it. The author refers to this as subaltern status.

One manifestation of the subaltern status for African American males is
development and maintenance of cultural influences from their indigenous culture. They
may retain components of the African culture or they may find an alternative way of
doing things that are different from the dominant culture. Another manifestation of the
subaltern status is the resistant alternative or adaptation - behaviors that are open acts of
rebellion or open acts of resistance. These acts come to be viewed as abnormal,
disruptive, and disturbing to the dominant society (Gordon, 2000). Gordon proposed that the group seen as problematic (African American males) actually possess elements of a subaltern culture that could be used to fuel a new political force and change the status of African American males through political action.

Gordon (2000) further suggested that in the Black male subaltern group, there are three phenomena operating that support healthy functioning. The first is the value of patriarchy. Patriarchy is a cultural norm that is present in a number of cultures that places the male in a superior position. In this position, it is the responsibility of the male to protect the children and females of the group. African American males have borrowed the value of patriarchy from the dominant culture and endorsed it.

The second phenomena is what Gordon (2000) referred to as respectability. Respectability involves the accord, acclaim, and accommodation shown by the people around you. Black men achieved respectability toward the end of the 19th century when Blacks had their own institutions, intact communities, successful businesses, effective schools and the cornerstone of the community – The Black church. African American men were able to gain respectability on the basis of solid achievement. African Americans developed extensive kinships and social networks, were turned to as moral authorities, were economically stable and viable, had technical expertise and political savvy. African American men continue to exhibit characteristics of respectability.

The third phenomena Gordon (2000) reported is reputation, which is characterized by a complex set of cultural practices. Reputation is established through one-on-one competition and dominance over other male peers. In public form, reputation
is identified with African American entertainers, athletes, and politicians. African American men seek to shine and separate themselves from the pack.

Gordon (2000) concludes that the majority of African American males function adequately as fathers and many of these men excel despite the many deterrents they face. African American males in general are overcomers and have learned to adapt to their various situations. Indeed, African American men have demonstrated an enormous amount of psychological endurance. They have faced tremendous odds and yet in the infamous words of esteemed poet Maya Angelou “still [they] rise” (Angelou, 1980). Amidst all the (primarily negative) information reported about African American men and the targeted, systematic attacks on them, it is imperative to highlight their other strengths.

African Americans tend to accept a higher force and deity as a common cultural value. In this vein, African American men are able to withstand societal inequities and stressors such as unemployment, underemployment, poor health care, lack of education, violence, and racism by depending on their spirituality or their belief in God (Mattis, Fontenot, & Hatcher-Kay, 2003). Several researchers reported that spirituality is a coping mechanism for African Americans (Akinyela, 2003; Haight, 1998; Herndon, 2003). Haight (1998) in a study about spirituality in the lives of African American children described spirituality as a protective factor. She stated that the adult participants in her ethnographic research perceived spirituality as protective as it is a healthy way of coping with trials and tribulations. The adult participants expressed the importance of teaching and instilling their spiritual values to the younger generation.
Spirituality seems to be associated with resilience. Herndon (2003) conducted a qualitative study about the spirituality of 13 African American college males enrolled at a predominately White institution. He found that spirituality bolstered resilience. The participants' spirituality practices included praying, attending church, and reading scriptures. The participants' indicated that these acts relieved the stress in their lives and allowed them to excel in the face of adversities. Akinyela (2003) stated that Black religion is the primary source for resistance and resilience in the Black community. Haight (1998) also observed that resilient children have some religious beliefs that add meaning to their lives. Spirituality is a strong cultural value for African Americans and has always been recognized in the community as an avenue to deal with stressful life events or circumstances (Morris & Robinson, 1996). African American men have the benefit of this intergenerational value, which assists them with their unique struggles and stressors.

Resilience can be defined as an individual’s immunity to risks when it would be expected to create real vulnerability or harm. What makes a person resilient or resistant to his/her circumstantial and environmental stressors? One might argue (specifically about African American fathers) that it is an intestinal fortitude that allows them to press on despite their many obstacles and unvalidated experiences. For example, African American fathers that do not have custodial rights to their children may encounter difficulties with their children’s mothers and/or the social justice system. Yet, many of them persist past all the obstacles in an effort to continue to have a meaningful relationship with their children.
Self-determination is another veiled strength of African American fathers. In a society where they are constantly bombarded with negative images of themselves and portrayed as absent or uninvolved in their children’s lives, it would be easy to succumb to the negativity. However, active and involved African American fathers may be aware of their invisibility in the public’s eye (Franklin, 1999), yet continue to defy the notion of being absent or uninvolved. They opt to continue to determine who they are and what it means to be a father. Their self-image is not reliant on how the media portrays them. Instead, their positive self-image is derived from an internal source and other positive interpersonal relationships (Franklin & Davis, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

African American men have been widely ignored in the social science literature. When African American men have been studied, it has primarily been from a deficit model. Not surprisingly, African American men’s roles as fathers have been overlooked as well. Instead, images of African American men who are incompetent, lazy, and trifling have been perpetuated in the popular media and in the academic literature to a large degree. Researchers are slow to acknowledge the many barriers that African American men face: institutional and internalized racism, poverty, and violence just to name a few. African American men are not privy to equity, as we would like to believe. Therefore we must take note of their circumstances that may affect their parenting experience.

In light of grim statistics and constant negative portrayal of African American men, it is not surprising that society has embraced African American men as the “fallen man”. However, there is much more to African American men than their stream of deterrents. African American men are much more than criminals, high school drop outs,
athletes, entertainers and absentee fathers. To that end, it is important to study the strengths of ordinary African American men.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of the ignored African American father, whether he is working-poor, middle-class, or upper-class, biological or non-biological, residential or non-residential. This study explores how African American fathers view themselves as fathers and gives voice to their own experiences of being a parent. This study also explores the correlation between the acceptance of negative stereotypes or internalized racism and African American males’ perceptions of themselves as fathers. Another factor that is explored is how the relationship between the African American father and his own father influences how he sees himself in the father role. Yet another factor that is explored is the father’s ability to function in the provider role and how that influences how he sees himself as a father. To date, no studies have examined how African American fathers perceive themselves in light of their relationship to their fathers and in light of how society negatively portrays African American men.

The present study tests the following hypotheses:

1. Fathers who accept negative stereotypes will have a negative self-perception of themselves as fathers. It is expected that the converse will be true as well.

2. Fathers who have a positive relationship with their fathers will have a positive self-perception of themselves as fathers. It is expected that the converse will be true as well.

3. It is expected that contextual factors (including the ability to function in the provider role) of African American men will also influence how
negative stereotypes and their relationship with their father affects their paternal identity.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

In a review of the literature on African American fathers, Cochran (1997) found that early research compared African American to White, middle-class, Western, and mainstream families. She indicated that fatherhood for African American men cannot be discussed without considering their culture, sociohistorical background, institutional racism, and the marginal status these men face. The present study is designed to follow Cochran’s suggestions; it utilizes cultural ecological theory to guide the data collection design and the understanding of results.

Cultural ecological theory posits that populations experience socially transmitted patterns of behavior that are interconnected to their environments (Ogbu, 1981). Ogbu states that it is a disservice to compare ethnic and racial minority cultures to Caucasian American norms. He argued that different populations vary in response to a given phenomena because different populations do not have the same environment, nor do they have the same resources. In addition, different populations have varying histories of how they obtain resources and use them to sustain their culture. Cultural ecological theory examines the relationship between personal attributes, behaviors and the social environment of specific cultural groups (Ogbu, 1981).

A cultural ecological perspective does not seek to compare one ethnic or class group with another. Instead, it allows for exploration of African American fathers in light of the culture and contextual factors that influence African American men’s family involvement (Cochran, 1997). McAdoo (1993) asserts that cultural ecological theory considers the context in which African American fathers fulfill their roles as provider,
protector, shared decision maker, child socializer, and one who supports his spouse. He states that cultural ecological theory encourages researchers to explore historical, political, and social influences on African American fathers. By considering all of these influences, the negative and positive aspects of African American fathers can be explored.

This study has been influenced by the cultural ecological theory as it explored factors that influence African American men’s perception of themselves as fathers such as an African American father’s relationship with his father, internalized racism and the ability to be a provider to his child(ren). This study did not compare African American fathers’ experiences to other ethnic groups. Instead, this study allowed African American fathers to have a voice independent of other groups or people (i.e. Caucasian men or African American mothers).

Understanding the impact of African American fathers’ relationship with their fathers and the acceptance of negative stereotypes or internalized racism on African American fathers is the purpose of this study. The remainder of this chapter presents the sample, research design, measurements and data collection techniques for this study.

Sample

The sample in this study consisted of 101 men who identify as African American, were at least eighteen years old, and who have at least one child. The participants were recruited in one of two ways. The first method involved surveying men who participated in cultural events primarily for African Americans throughout a small Midwestern city. The second method involved surveying men who were members of social organization
throughout the Midwest in small to moderately sized cities. Specifically, the participants hailed from Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

Of the 101 participants whose data were used in the study, 101 (100%) identified as Black or African American. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 76 with the average age being 44. The majority of the participants (60%) were married, while 21% were divorced or separated, 12% were single or never married, 5% were living with someone and 2% percent were widowed. Of the participants who reported being married or living with someone, 46% indicated that they were extremely satisfied with their relationship, 35% indicated that they were very satisfied, 15% indicated that they were somewhat satisfied, and 4% indicated that they were not too satisfied with their relationship.

Educational level ranged from having less than some high school education to graduate professional training. The majority of participants (91%) had a minimum of a high school education. Further, 18% had an associate degree, 22% had an undergraduate college degree, and 12% had a graduate degree or some professional training. Ninety-five percent (n = 96) of the participants reported their income. Without the monetary contribution of their significant other, 37% reported a yearly income between $30,000 to $40,000, 21% reported a yearly income between $50,000 to $75,000, 18% reported a yearly income between $10,000 to $20,000, and 9% reported a yearly income of $75,000 to $100,000. The participants’ occupational circumstances ranged from being out of work to being a professor at a Midwestern university.
Research Measures

**Demographic Questionnaire**

A brief demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed specifically for the present study. The demographic questionnaire, which has a total of 10 items, focused on collecting data pertaining to the subjects’ ethnicity, age, current marital status, number of children, socioeconomic status (SES), educational level and occupation. An exploratory variable, father’s ability to fulfill the provider role, was also included on the demographic questionnaire. The demographic data was used to explore the diversity of African Americans fathers, describe the obtained sample and assess the provider role.

**Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale (CPRS)**

The Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale was developed to assess respondents’ perceptions of the level of involvement and the quality of their relationship with their own fathers while growing up (Shields & Harrell, 1997). The CPRS has a total of 37 items and is divided into four sections. The first section, Part A, contains nine items that assess the amount of time spent with the respondents’ biological father and notes any absenteeism. An example of an item in Part A is as follows: Was there ever a period of time in your life when your biological father was not in your life at all? The second section of the CPRS, Part B, assesses whether or not the respondent was raised by a male parenting figure other than his biological father and consists of 10 items. Examples of a male parenting figure other than a biological father include but are not limited to a stepfather, grandfather, or uncle. An example of an item in Part B is as follows: Was there any male, other than your biological father, who raised you or was like a father to you?
The third section of the CPRS, the Quality of Paternal Relationship Subscale (Part C), assesses the quality of respondents’ relationship with their biological and/or non-biological fathers. There are 15 items in Part C of the CPRS. An example of an item in Part C is as follows: My father showed a great deal of interest in me. Part C uses a likert scale in which the respondent can assess his biological father and/or his non-biological father (Not at all = 0 to A lot = 3), with the higher score reflecting greater quality of paternal relationship. A Cronbach’s alpha of .90 was reported for Part C (Shields, 1997). The alpha reliability analysis for Part C on the present sample was .84.

The fourth section of the CPRS, the Similarities of Paternal Relationship Subscale (Part D), assesses the similarities between the respondents as fathers and their biological/non-biological fathers. There are 3 items in Part D of the CPRS. An example of an item in Part D is as follows: I am raising my child (children) very much like my father raised me. Part D uses a likert scale in which the respondent can assess his biological father and/or his non-biological father (Strongly true =1 to Strongly false = 5), with the higher score reflecting greater perceived similarity between the respondent and his father. Two of the three items are reversed coded. The alpha reliability analysis for Part D on the present sample was .86.

Although the CPRS measure was given to the respondents in its entirety, this study focused on the quality of the paternal relationship (Part C) and the perceived similarities between respondents’ fathers’ parenting styles and their own (Part D). Some respondents had two scores for Part C and D indicating that they had a relationship with a biological and non-biological father. One item was added to the measure allowing the respondents to select which father they considered to be their primary male parenting
figure. Once their primary male parenting figure was identified, only the data that corresponded to that parenting figure for each participant was used in the data analysis. The responses to survey items in Part A and Part B were used to describe the sample. There was no initial validity data reported for the CPRS.

*Paternal Attachment Scale*

A modified version of the Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment (IPPA, Appendix C) was administered in order to provide validity data concerning the Quality of Paternal Relationship Subscale (Part C), of the CPRS. The IPPA has two subscales: parental attachment and peer attachment. For the purpose of this study, only the parental attachment subscale was modified and used. The original IPPA parental subscale assesses the respondents’ attachment to their parents. The modified parental attachment subscale assesses the attachment to the respondents’ father specifically. The word “parent” was replaced with “father” in each item on this scale. The name of the scale was changed to the Paternal Attachment Scale to reflect the relationship being assessed. The Paternal Attachment Scale consists of 28 items. An example of an item is as follows: My father respects my feelings. The items are rated on a five point likert scale (Almost never or never = 1 to Almost always or always = 5), with the higher score reflecting greater quality of father attachment. Negatively stated items are reversed scored.

The Paternal Attachment Scale can also be broken down into three subscales: trust, communication and alienation. The alpha coefficients for trust, communication and alienation for the original IPPA parental attachment subscale are .97, .91 and .86 respectively (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Convergent validity is available for IPPA scores and scores from two other instruments: 1) Family Environment Scale (FES) and 2)
Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS). Parental attachment is positively correlated with family cohesion (.56), family expressiveness (.52) and family self-concept (Ishak, 1999). The alpha reliability analysis for the Paternal Attachment Scale on the present sample was .91. Scores on the Paternal Attachment Scale were expected to correlate positively with the Quality of Paternal Relationship Subscale, Part C.

Dimensions of Fathering Survey

Fox and Bruce (1996) developed the Dimensions of Fathering Survey (Appendix D) as a tool for conceptualizing fatherhood. The authors approached the development of the instrument by first observing two sets of group counseling sessions for men who had been verbally or physically abusive with their partner. The authors observed just over fifty hours of these men (not all of whom were fathers) in their group sessions. Secondly, the authors conducted intensive, semi-structured individual interviews with eight fathers from the groups. The authors then used the data collected from their observations and interviews, and reviewed 250 empirical articles that developed or used existing measures of fathering constructs to select and write initial items for a fathering survey. Lastly, Fox and Bruce (1996) conducted a small pilot study to assess the measure they constructed.

The Dimensions of Fathering Survey explores responsivity, harshness, behavioral engagement, and affective involvement from identity and parental investment theories. For the purpose of this study, only those aspects pertaining to paternal identity were examined. Therefore, responses to only one subscale, paternal identity, were explored. This subscale incorporates three content areas – father role salience, father role satisfaction and reflected appraisals.
Fox and Bruce (2001) define salience as shaping choices among competing behaviors or roles (Fox & Bruce, 2001). Father role salience is a nine-item subscale developed from revisions of similar questions used by many other researchers. An example of an item on the subscale is as follows: I like being known as a father. Father role salience uses a 3-point likert scale (Not true =1 to Very true =3) with higher scores reflecting more role salience. Five items are reverse coded. An example of a reversed coded item is as follows: I miss the running around I did before I had kids. Father role salience is comprised of items loading on two factors that are consistent with the definition of salience. The first factor pertains to the father’s reflections regarding the priority of the father role over other possible roles. The second factor pertains to whether the father seeks out or avoids the opportunity to enact the father role. The reliability for father role salience combining both factors is a Cronbach’s alpha of .63. The alpha reliability analysis for father role salience on the present sample was .32. As it relates to validity, Fox and Bruce (1996) conducted a regression and reported a positive relationship for father role salience with behavioral engagement and affective involvement.

Father role satisfaction is defined as the degree of satisfaction a man derives from being a father. The father role satisfaction subscale consists of seven items. An example of an item is as follows: Being a father has given me a lot of pleasure. The father role satisfaction subscale uses a 5-point likert scale (Strongly agree = 1 to Strongly Disagree = 5) with the lower score reflecting father role satisfaction. Three of the items are reversed coded. An example of a reverse coded item is as follows: I am not very happy with the way things are between me and my children. Similar to father role satisfaction, this scale
also consists of two factors. The first factor pertains to satisfaction with the fathering experience and the second pertains to the dissatisfactions of the fathering experience. The Cronbach alpha for father role satisfaction combining both factors was .66. The alpha reliability analysis for father role satisfaction on the present sample was .69. Fox and Bruce (2001) found that father role satisfaction was a significant predictor of harshness, a fathering concept that assesses the father’s use of a harsh, punitive, and inconsistent approach to parenting. Father role satisfaction also approached statistical significance as a predictor of responsitivity, a fathering concept that assesses the father’s use of a warm, nurturant, and supportive parenting style; and behavioral engagement, a fathering concept that indicates the degree to which a father engages the child in particular activities. Fathers who reported high role satisfaction were less likely to report harshness and more likely to report responsitivity and behavioral engagement.

The reflected appraisals subscale assesses the respondent’s perceptions of how significant others evaluate his performance as a father (Fox & Bruce, 2001). There are seven items in this subscale. An example of an item is as follows: On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important, how important to you are your son’s opinions of you as a father. Next taking everything into consideration, if A is excellent, B is good, C is average, and D is poor, what grade would you get from your son on being a father? Respondents’ report of their significant other’s assessments of their fathering ability is weighted by the degree of importance the participants attach to their significant others’ opinions of themselves in the father role. The weighted score is averaged within seven categories of significant others (i.e. son, daughter, children’s mother, mother, father, siblings, and best friends), and then summed across all categories.
These items all load on a single factor producing a Cronbach’s alpha of .77. Fox and Bruce (2001) reported that reflected appraisals significantly correlated with behavioral engagement and affective involvement. The alpha reliability analysis for reflected appraisals on the present sample was .81.

*Stereotype Scale*

The Stereotype Scale (Appendix E) is a 52-item survey that assesses participants’ internalized negative stereotypes about African Americans (Kelly & Floyd, 2001). The scale was adapted from Allen and Hatchett’s 10-item measure of Black Group Perception, which noted stereotypical characteristics of Black people (Kelly & Floyd, 2001). The Stereotype Scale was designed to provide a more subtle assessment of negative stereotypes than the Black Group Perception Scale by including both negative and positive statements about African Americans. The Stereotype Scale consists of three subscales: one contains statements pertaining to Black people in general and the other two pertaining to perceptions of Black males and Black females. Three examples of statements on the Stereotype Scale are as follows: 1) Most Black people are ashamed of themselves, 2) Most Black men neglect their families (don’t take care of them) and, 3) Most Black women are dominating towards men. Statements on each subscale are rated on a 5-point likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree), with the lower score reflecting greater acceptance of negative stereotypes. In the study for which the scale was designed, the Cronbach’s alphas for the male respondents were .83 for ratings of Blacks in general, .87 for ratings of Black men, and .79 for ratings of Black women. The Cronbach’s alphas for the female respondents were .84 for ratings of Blacks in general, .87 for ratings of Black men, and .84 for ratings of Black women. The present
study utilized only the Black Male subscale. On the Black Male subscale for the present sample, alpha reliability was .76.

Research Procedures

After obtaining approval from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University, African American fathers were recruited to participate in this study during several cultural festivals that primarily attract African Americans in a midsize Midwestern city. The researcher was stationed at the African American Health Initiative (AAHI) booth and inquired if men were interested in being a participant in the current study about their experiences as an African American father. When men affirmed that they were interested, the researcher gave them a research packet to review and fill out if they chose. Participants were rewarded with a T-shirt from the African American Health Initiative and the opportunity to enter into a drawing for a $150 prize. The research packet contained a cover letter, an informed consent form, a demographic questionnaire, the Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale (CPRS), the Paternal Attachment Scale, the Dimensions of Fathering Scale, and the Stereotype Scale. The cover letter explained the purpose of the study and informed the recipient that participation was voluntary. The informed consent form included specific information about the confidentiality of the data collected, anticipated minimal risks of participation and researcher contact information should the participants have any questions. Participants who indicated that they would like to take the research packet with them were given a self-addressed pre-paid stamped envelope and a form to fill out for the drawing.
Participants who completed the survey on site were given a T-shirt from the African American Health Initiative and the opportunity to enter into the drawing for the $150 prize. These participants were also asked to complete the survey again in approximately one week to establish test-retest reliability for the survey instruments. Participants could elect to take another research packet with them and/or sign a contact information form to have the researcher send them another research packet in the mail. The retest research packet contained the same information as the initial packet along with a form to fill out for the drawing and a self-addressed pre-paid stamped envelope to return the packet to the researcher. Upon completing the surveys a second time, the participants could enter the drawing for the $150 cash prize again, increasing their chances at winning.

After obtaining approval from the Human Subject Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University to collect data using an additional method, African American fathers who were active in a variety of social organizations in 6 additional Midwest cities were recruited to participate in this study by organizational leaders. The organizational leaders were sent a number of the research packets to distribute to their members. The organizational leaders were asked to read a script inviting the members of the organization to participate in the study. After reading the consent form, members of the organization that agreed to participate in the study signed the consent form, completed the survey instruments and the drawing form, and mailed the packages in the self-addressed stamped envelope that was included in the packet.
Response Rate

For the first method of collecting data, a total of 163 African American men received research packets. Of those 163, sixty-two returned the surveys resulting in a response rate of 38%. For the second method of collecting data, a total of 63 African American men received research packets. Of those 63, thirty-nine returned the surveys resulting in a response rate of 62%. Thus, a total of 101 African American men returned completed survey packets for a total response rate of 45%.

All of the participants were asked to consider taking a retest of the survey instruments for test-retest reliability purposes. Of the 101 respondents, 27 respondents (27%) indicated on the drawing form that they did not want to receive another research packet for test-retest purposes. The remaining 74 respondents received retest packages one to two weeks after the researcher received their initial research packet. Of the seventy-four respondents who agreed to receive and retake the survey instruments, twenty-two (30%) retest packets were returned.

Hypotheses

In this study, the participants' experiences as fathers were examined. Different subscales of the CPRS measured two of the independent variables. One of these variables was measured by the Quality of Paternal Relationship Subscale (Part C), which assesses respondents' perceptions of the level of involvement and the quality of their relationship with their own fathers while growing up. The other variable was measured by the Similarities of Paternal Relationship Subscale (Part D), which assesses the similarities between the respondents as fathers and their biological/non-biological fathers. The other independent variable was measured with the Stereotype Scale. The Stereotype Scale
assesses the extent to which participants are under the influence of negative images of African American men in the general media. An exploratory variable was also included which examined the African American father’s ability to fulfill the provider role. Three dependent variables were used to explore the African American fathers’ perception of themselves as fathers; these variables include father role salience, satisfaction and reflected appraisals. Father role satisfaction reflects the degree of satisfaction a man derives from being a father. Father role salience reflects the prominence of the paternal role. Reflected appraisals reflect the father’s thoughts about significant other’s opinion about his performance and ability to father. Selected demographic variables were also examined for the influence and relationship to fathers’ perception of themselves as fathers.

Thus far, there has been limited research addressing African American men in their role as fathers. In fact, the majority of the literature focuses on African American fathers being absent from the home (Mirande, 1991). The research literature has only begun to explore ethnic minority fathers more thoroughly in the last two decades (Marsigilio et. al, 2000) In this study the following hypotheses were examined:

1. Fathers who accept negative stereotypes will have a negative self-perception of themselves as fathers. It is expected that the converse will be true as well.

2. Fathers who had a positive relationship with their fathers will have a positive self-perception of themselves as fathers. It is expected that the converse will be true as well.
3. It is expected that contextual factors (including the ability to function in the provider role) of African American men will also influence the observed relationship between negative stereotypes, quality of paternal relationship, and paternal identity.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to learn how African American men view themselves in their paternal role. This study explored how African American fathers view themselves as fathers and gave voice to their own experiences of being a parent. This study also explored participants' acceptance of negative stereotypes, their relationship with their fathers, and their ability to function in the provider role. To date, no studies have examined how African American fathers perceive themselves in light of their relationship to their fathers and in light of how society negatively portrays African American men.

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis. First, the psychometric analyses are presented. Second, a description of the fathers is presented. The third section presents the results of the planned regression analyses. The final section presents the results of additional exploratory posthoc analyses.

Psychometric Analyses

Several measures used in the present study were relatively new and untested. Specifically, continued assessment of the Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale (CPRS) was needed as there was little reliability and validity reported for this measure. Therefore, test – retest reliability data was collected for the CPRS on a portion of the present sample. Additional CPRS validity data was also gathered via correlations with the Paternal Attachment Scale (PAS).

Test – retest reliability was examined for two subscales on the CPRS. The test-retest correlation for the Quality of Paternal Relationship Subscale yielded a statistically
significant positive correlation of .91. The test-retest correlation for the Similarities of Paternal Relationship Subscale yielded a statistically significant positive correlation of .60. As expected, the correlations between the Quality of Paternal Relationship Subscale and the modified version of the Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment (IPPA), the Paternal Attachment Scale, yielded a statistically significant positive correlation of .49.

Although the primary focus of the psychometric analysis was on the CPRS, test-retest reliability was also estimated for each of the other measures used in the study. The result of the test-retest reliability analysis for the Paternal Attachment Scale in the present study was a statistically significant positive correlation of .81. The result of the test-retest reliability analysis on the Black Male Stereotype Scale in the present study was a statistically positive correlation of .64. The result of the test-retest reliability analysis for the Father Role Salience Scale in the present study was a statistically significant positive correlation of .56. The result of the test-retest reliability analysis for the Father Role Satisfaction Scale in the present study was a statistically significant positive correlation of .54. The result of the test-retest reliability analysis for the Reflected Appraisals Scale in the present study was a statistically significant positive correlation of .63.

Description of Fathers

The 101 fathers who completed the survey were assessed on several different variables. Correlations, means and standard deviations for all variables are reported in Table 1 and the same information is presented in Table 2 for fathers of children fourteen years old or younger. The Quality of Paternal Relationship Subscale of the Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale (CPRS) assessed the participants on the quality of their
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Correlations Between All Variables of Whole Sample

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Note. PAS = Paternal Attachment Scale; SSM = Stereotype Scale for Black men; DFSA = Dimensions in Fathering Survey, Salience; DFSB = Dimensions in Fathering Survey, Satisfaction; DFSC = Dimensions in Fathering Survey, Reflected Appraisal; CPRSC = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Quality of Paternal Relationship; CPRSD = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Similarities in Parenting; Mother = relationship with mother
*p < .05, **p < .01. (two tailed)
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Note. PAS = Paternal Attachment Scale; SSM = Stereotype Scale for Black Men; DFSA = Dimensions in Fathering Survey, Salience; DFSB = Dimensions in Fathering Survey, Satisfaction; DFSC = Dimensions in Fathering Survey, Reflected Appraisal; CPRSC = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Quality of Paternal Relationship; CPRSD = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Similarities in Parenting; Mother = relationship with mother
*p < .05, **p < .01. (two tailed)
paternal relationship with their biological and/or non-biological fathers, whomever was
designated as their primary male parenting figure on the survey. The Similarities of
Paternal Relationship subscale of the CPRS assessed the similarities between the
respondents as fathers and their biological/non-biological fathers. The Paternal
Attachment Scale assessed the attachment of the participant to his biological and/or non-
biological father, whomever was designated as his primary male parenting figure on the
survey. The Black Male Stereotype subscale of the Stereotype Scale assessed the
participants’ internalized negative stereotypes about African American men. The Father
Role Salience subscale of the Dimensions of Fathering Survey assessed participants
reflections regarding the priority of the father role over other possible roles and whether
or not the participant engages in the father role. The Father Role Satisfaction subscale of
the Dimensions of Fathering Survey assessed the degree of satisfaction the participants
derived from being a father. Finally, the Reflected Appraisals subscale of the Dimensions
of Fathering Survey assessed the participants’ perception of how significant others
evaluate his performance as a father.

Generally speaking, the present sample of 101 African American fathers reported
that their role as a father was salient (M = 24.36) and satisfying (M = 13.52) (See Table 1)
The present sample further indicated that others’ appraisals of them as fathers was
relatively important to them and that they are “good” to “excellent” fathers (M = 6.72).
These descriptions held true for fathers of the whole sample as well as fathers of children
fourteen years old or younger (See Table 2). Fathers of younger children were examined
separately with the reasoning that the father role may be more salient for them because
they are still actively parenting their child(ren). T-tests were conducted to compare
fathers of older children to fathers of younger children on each of the dependent variables that speak to the concept of paternal identity. All results were non significant (father role salience $t = -0.92, p = 0.35$; father role satisfaction $t = 1.88, p = 0.06$; father role reflected appraisals $t = 1.58, p = 0.12$).

With respect to relationships with their own fathers, participants indicated that they perceived themselves as having “somewhat” of a quality relationship with their biological and/or non-biological father ($M = 25.96$). They also described themselves as being “somewhat” ($M = 8.68$) similar in their parenting to their primary male parenting figure. Participants reported having very satisfying relationships with their child(ren)’s mother ($M = 3.03$) and they described how things are financially for them and their children as “fairly comfortable” ($M = 2.83$). Participants further reported that collectively, they do not accept negative stereotypes about African American males ($M = 56.92$).

Regression Analyses

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the research hypotheses for this study. This statistical technique is the statistical tool of choice when the researcher wishes to learn more about the relationship between multiple predictor variables and a single criterion variable (Wampold & Freund, 1987). Multiple regression is a data analysis strategy where the unique and collective contributions of the predictor variables are used to predict or explain a portion of the variance in a criterion variable. In this study, the criterion of interest, paternal identity, was assessed with three distinct variables: father role salience, father role satisfaction and reflected appraisals. The predictor variables were the internalization of negative stereotypes, the quality of the paternal relationship,
the perceived similarities of parenting, and contextual factors such as the relationship with the mother, the participants age, level of education and how they feel they are able to contribute to their children’s lives financially.

Testing Assumptions

Multiple regression analysis requires testing four assumptions: 1) univariate normality, 2) linearity of relationships, 3) normality of residuals, and 4) homoscedasticity. The tenability of each assumption was tested for each regression conducted. Tests of normality for each individual variable indicated that age and the similarities of paternal relationship variables are within the scope of normality while the other variables deviate from normality. In respect to what and how the constructs are being measured, the deviance is acceptable. The most deviant variable, the Black male stereotype, could not be transformed to a normal distribution curve. Therefore, these are the best results available for this study. Multiple regression analyses are robust to violations of normality (Mertler & Vannatla, 2002).

Linearity of relationships was examined for each predictor variable with each dependent variable. The bivariate scatter plots were inspected and were observed to be distributed in an elliptical shape. A histogram of standardized residuals was obtained in order to test for the normality of residuals. The data reflected in the histograms indicated a reasonable approximation to a normal distribution. Therefore, it is likely that the results from the statistical analyses are a correct estimate of the true relationship between variables.

Homoscedasticity was examined via scatter plots of the standardized residuals against the predicted values for each dependant variables. In these plots, points should
scatter at random around a horizontal line (Mertler & Vannatla, 2002). The results of the scatter plots indicate a relatively random scattering of points, confirming an absence of differences in variance across levels of each criterion variable.

*Testing Hypotheses*

Three separate multiple regressions were conducted to assess the relationships between the predictor variables and the three criterion variables. The first multiple regression involved the criterion variable father role salience (See Table 3). The square of the multiple correlation coefficient, $R^2$, allows for the determination of the proportion of variance of father role salience as explained by the seven predictor variables. The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .06. This $R^2$ is not statistically significant, $F(7, 60) = .51, p = .82$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables did not predict the father role salience of this sample. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 94%.

The second multiple regression involved the criterion variable father role satisfaction (See Table 3). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .36. This $R^2$ is statistically significant, $F(7, 60) = 4.8, p = .00$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables predicted the father role satisfaction of this sample. The regression model indicated that the internalization of negative stereotypes, the quality of the paternal relationship, the perceived similarities of parenting, the participants' age, level of education, perceived ability to financially provide for his children and the relationship with his children's mother explained 36% of the variance in father role satisfaction. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 64%. The
Table 3
Regression Results of Whole Sample with All Variables

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Note. CPRSC = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Quality of Paternal Relationship; CPRSD = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Similarities in Parenting; SSM = Stereotype Scale of Black men; Mother = relationship with mother
* p < .05
standardized regression coefficients, or betas, are used to indicate the unique contribution of each predictor variable in the regression model. As can be seen in Table 3, the beta weights suggest that perceived similarities of parenting and the relationship with mother variables are small, negative unique predictors of father role satisfaction in this regression model. Low satisfaction scores reflect a high level of satisfaction; this means a positive relationship with mother and higher perceived similarities in parenting with fathers are associated with high satisfaction.

The third multiple regression involved the criterion variable reflected appraisals (See Table 3). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .07. This $R^2$ is not statistically significant, $F(7, 60) = .66$, $p = .71$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables did not predict the reflected appraisals of this sample. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 93%.

Posthoc Analyses

Whole Sample Regression Analyses without Mother Variable

The planned multiple regressions for the study yielded a small sample size due to the predictor variable that measured the participants’ relationship with the mother of his child(ren). This variable affected the sample size because not all participants reported having relationships with their child(ren)’s mother. While this variable is important to understand a contextual factor that potentially influences paternal identity, it seemed important to also examine the data without this variable. Removal of the relationship with mother variable increased sample size and thus increased power to detect the relationship between predictor and criterion variables. All three multiple regression analyses were run
again without the predictor variable that assessed the participants’ relationship with the mother of his child(ren).

The first multiple regression without the relationship with mother variable involved the criterion variable father role salience (See Table 4). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .04. Consistent with the previous multiple regression on the whole sample, this $R^2$ is not statistically significant, $F(6, 84) = .61, p = .72$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables did not predict the father role salience of this sample. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from this regression model is 96%.

The second multiple regression without the relationship with mother variable involved the criterion variable father role satisfaction (See Table 4). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .19. Consistent with the previous multiple regression on the whole sample, this $R^2$ is statistically significant, $F(6, 84) = 3.3, p = .01$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables predicted the father role satisfaction of this sample. The regression model indicated that the internalization of negative stereotypes, the quality of the paternal relationship, the perceived similarities of parenting, the participants’ age, level of education, and the perceived ability to financially provide for his children explained 19% of the variance in father role satisfaction. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 81%. As can be seen in Table 4, the beta weights suggest that perceived similarities of parenting and the perceived ability to financially provide for children variables are small, negative unique predictors of father role satisfaction in this regression model. Low satisfaction scores reflect a high level of satisfaction; thus higher perceived similarities in parenting with
Table 4
Regression Results of Whole Sample without Mother Variable

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Note. CPRSC = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Quality of Paternal Relationship; CPRSD = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Similarities in Parenting; SSM = Stereotype Scale of Black Men

*p < .05
fathers and better perceived ability to provide for their children are associated with
greater father role satisfaction.

The third multiple regression without the relationship with mother variable
involved the criterion variable reflected appraisals (See Table 4). The $R^2$ for this multiple
regression was .06. Consistent with the previous multiple regression on the whole
sample, this $R^2$ is not statistically significant, $F(6, 80) = .91, p = .49$, which suggests that
the combination of the predictor variables did not predict the reflected appraisals of this
sample. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model
is 94%.

Subsample Regression Analyses

The continued absence of significant results for father role salience and reflected
appraisals prompted an additional set of post hoc analysis. In this analysis, participants
with young children (14 years old or less) were extracted from the larger sample. The
reasoning is that the fathering role may be more salient for fathers of young children
because they are assumed to be still actively parenting their children. This is in contrast to
older children who may require less from their father. In the study, 63 participants
indicated that they have children fourteen years old or younger. Similar to the multiple
regression analysis on the whole sample, six multiple regression analyses were conducted
— three with all the study variables and three without the relationship with mother
variable.

All Study Variables

The first multiple regression of the subsample of participants with children
fourteen years old or younger involved the criterion variable father role salience (See
Table 5). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .08. Consistent with the previous multiple regression on the whole sample, this $R^2$ is not statistically significant, $F(7, 34) = .41, p = .89$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables did not predict the father role salience of this sample. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 92%.

The second multiple regression of the subsample of participants with children fourteen years old or younger involved the criterion variable father role satisfaction (See Table 5). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .42. Consistent with the previous multiple regression on the whole sample, this $R^2$ is statistically significant, $F(7, 34) = 3.4, p = .01$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables predicted the father role satisfaction of this sample. The regression model indicated that the internalization of negative stereotypes, the quality of the paternal relationship, the perceived similarities of parenting, the participants' age, level of education, the perceived ability to provide for his children and the relationship with his children's mother explained 42% of the variance is father role satisfaction. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 58%. As can be seen in Table 5, the beta weights suggest that perceived similarities of parenting and the relationship with mother variables are small, negative unique predictors of father role satisfaction in this regression model. Low satisfaction scores reflect a high level of satisfaction; thus the higher perceived similarities in parenting with fathers and a positive relationship with their offspring's mother are associated with greater father role satisfaction.

The third multiple regression of the subsample of participants with children fourteen years old or younger involved the criterion variable reflected appraisals (See
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Note. CPRSC = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Quality of Paternal Relationship; CPRSD = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Similarities in Parenting; SSM = Stereotype Scale of Black men; Mother = relationship with mother

*p < .05
Table 5). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .19. Consistent with the previous multiple regression on the whole sample, this $R^2$ is not statistically significant, $F(7, 34) = 1.1, p = .38$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables did not predict the reflected appraisals of this sample. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 81%.

Regression Analyses without Relationship with Mother Variable

The fourth multiple regression of the subsample of participants with children fourteen years old or younger excluded the relationship with mother variable. This analysis examined the criterion variable father role salience (See Table 6). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .08. Consistent with the previous multiple regression on the whole sample, this $R^2$ is not statistically significant, $F(6, 52) = .74, p = .62$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables did not predict the father role salience of this sample. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 92%.

The fifth multiple regression of the subsample of participants with children fourteen years old or younger without the relationship with mother variable involved the criterion variable father role satisfaction (See Table 6). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .33. Consistent with the previous multiple regression on the whole sample, this $R^2$ is statistically significant, $F(6, 52) = 4.3, p = .00$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables predicted the father role satisfaction of this sample. The regression model indicated that the internalization of negative stereotypes, the quality of the paternal relationship, the perceived similarities of parenting, the participants’ age, level of education, and the perceived ability to financially provide for
Table 6
Regression Results of Subsample without Mother Variable

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Note. CPRS = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Quality of Paternal Relationship; CPRSD = Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale, Similarities in Parenting; SSM = Stereotype Scale of Black Men

*p < .05
his children explained 33% of the variance is father role satisfaction. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 67%. As can be seen in Table 6, the beta weights suggest the quality of the paternal relationship, the perceived similarities of parenting, the level of the participants education and the perceived ability to financially provide for children variables are small, negative unique predictors of father role satisfaction in this regression model. The quality of the paternal relationship variable was also a small, positive unique predictor of father role satisfaction in this regression model. Low satisfaction scores reflect a high level of satisfaction; thus the better quality of the paternal relationship, the higher perceived similarities in parenting with father, the higher levels of education, and the perceived ability to better provide for their offspring are associated with greater father role satisfaction.

The sixth multiple regression of the subsample of participants with children fourteen years old or younger without the relationship with mother variable involved the criterion variable reflected appraisals (See Table 6). The $R^2$ for this multiple regression was .18. Consistent with the previous multiple regression on the whole sample, this $R^2$ is not statistically significant $F(6, 49) = 1.8, p = .12$, which suggests that the combination of the predictor variables did not predict the reflected appraisals of this sample. The proportion of variance that is unexplained from the current regression model is 82%.

Summary of Regression Analyses

A total of twelve multiple regressions were conducted for the present study. The results yielded statistically significant findings for all of the regressions examining father role satisfaction. The significant predictor variable that consistently influenced father role satisfaction was the participants' perceived similarities of parenting to his father. It's
important to reiterate that low father role satisfaction scores actually indicate high father role satisfaction. In the whole sample and the subsample of fathers with younger children, father role satisfaction was also influenced by the participants' relationship with his child(ren)'s mother when the relationship with mother variable was not excluded. Additional unique predictors emerged for both the whole sample and the subsample when the relationship with mother variable was excluded and sample size was thus increased. In the whole sample without the relationship with mother variable, the participants' perceived ability to provide for his child(ren) was an additional significant predictor variable. In the subsample of participants with young children where the relationship with mother variable was excluded, several additional variables emerged as significant predictors. The variables include the quality of the paternal relationship, participants' level of education, and participants' perceived ability to provide for offspring.

In the whole sample and the subsample of participants who had children fourteen years old and younger, high similarities in parenting with their father and having a positive relationship with their child(ren)'s mother reflects greater father role satisfaction. In the whole sample without the relationship with mother variable, high similarities in parenting with their father and their perceived ability to provide for their child(ren) reflects greater father role satisfaction. In the subsample of participants who had children fourteen years old and younger, high quality of paternal relationship, high similarities in parenting with their father, the level of education and the perceived ability to provide for their children reflects greater father role satisfaction.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the paternal identity and experiences of African American fathers. This study investigated the influence of the acceptance of negative stereotypes, childhood paternal relationships, and various contextual factors on paternal identity. Previous literature has examined African American fathers, but has failed to depict them in a balanced light. More often than not, researchers have approached African American fathers from a deficit model and/or have not assessed African American fathers directly. For the purpose of this study, the construct of paternal identity was defined as father role salience, father role satisfaction and reflected appraisals. Subscales of the Dimensions of Fathering Survey were selected because the authors fashioned the instrument specifically to operationalize fatherhood (Fox & Bruce, 1996). In this study, a subscale of the Stereotype Scale measured the acceptance of negative stereotypes. This subscale assesses stereotypical characteristics of Black men (Kelly & Floyd, 2001). Subscales of the Childhood Paternal Relationship Scale (CPRS) were chosen to measure participants’ relationships with their fathers because they assess the quality of these relationships while participants were growing up and the similarities between their parenting and their fathers’ parenting (Shields & Harrell, 1997). Contextual factors that were examined in this study were the participants’ age, level of education, perceived relationship with child(ren)’s mother, and perceived ability to provide for child(ren).

The main focus of this research project was to explore the relationship between the predictor variables and paternal identity. One hundred and one African American
fathers completed a packet of self-report measures, which included a demographic questionnaire, two subscales of the CPRS, three subscales of the Dimensions of Fathering Survey, and the Stereotype Scale. It was hypothesized that lack of acceptance of negative stereotypes, positive relationships with fathers, age, level of education, and positive relationship with their child(ren)'s mother would be significant positive predictors of paternal identity. Additionally, it was predicted that participants' perceived ability to provide for offspring would account for a unique amount of variance in paternal identity.

This study is important because of the contribution it makes to the current literature regarding African American men and particularly African American fathers. African American males have been described as a high-risk population on the verge of extinction. Despite their legitimate disadvantages of higher rates of incarceration, poverty, morbidity, unemployment, and less access to health care and education than their White counterparts (Majors & Billson, 1992), African American men have survived, adapted to the dominant culture, and many are contributing parental figures for their offspring. This study examines the paternal experiences of the “average Joe” African American father.

Characteristics of the Participants

One hundred and one African American fathers completed a survey of self-report measures for this study. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 76 with the average age being 44 years old. The majority of the participants have two to three children and are married. Most of the participants have a high school degree at the minimum. The average yearly income of participants was $30,000 to $40,000 without the assistance from a
significant other; and participants indicated that financially they were “fairly comfortable”.

Generally speaking, the participants reported that their role as father was salient. The overwhelming majority responded positively to statements such as “I like being known as a father”, “Being a father has changed me a lot” and “I want people to know that I have children”. Participants also reported that their role as father is satisfying. Again the majority responded positively to statements such as “Being a father has given me a lot of pleasure”, “All in all, I am very satisfied with my relationship with my children” and “I am very proud of being my children’s father”. Participants’ indicated that others’ appraisals of them as fathers ranged primarily between “good” to “excellent” and that these significant others’ opinions of them are relatively important. The results from the survey indicate that these African American men are invested in their paternal role.

It is interesting to note that many of these fathers reported having a good relationship with their own male parenting figure (biological or non-biological father). The majority responded positively to statements like “My father showed a great deal of interest in me”, “I really admired and looked up to my father” and “My father and I had fun together”. Generally, the participants indicated that they had relatively positive relationships with their primary male parenting figure.

Of the participants who indicated that their fathers or non-biological fathers were not always present in their lives and expressed a reason, the majority of them indicated that it was a divorce or separation. The next highest reported explanation for their fathers
not being present during their childhood was death. Only three participants indicated that their primary male parenting figure was not in their lives because they were in prison.

Findings

Three hypotheses were formulated and tested for this study. Twelve multiple regressions were conducted. The results are separated into four different categories. The planned multiple regressions of the predictor variables and the criterion variables were first conducted on the whole sample. Additional multiple regressions were conducted in an effort to better understand and interpret the data. The second set of multiple regressions was conducted on the whole sample excluding the predictor variable of the participants' relationship with child(ren)'s mother. The third and fourth set of multiple regressions were conducted on a subsample of the population. In this subsample, fathers who have children fourteen years old or younger were extracted from the whole population because it was believed that their parenting experiences were different as they are still actively parenting their offspring. The third set of analyses consisted of multiple regressions conducted on the subsample and the fourth category consisted of multiple regressions conducted on the subsample excluding the predictor variable of the participants' relationship with child(ren)'s mother.

The only regression analysis that was statistically significant in each set of analyses was the analysis for father role satisfaction. The variable that significantly predicted father role satisfaction in each set of analyses was the perceived similarities of parenting variable. In the first set of multiple regressions with the whole sample and the third set of multiple regressions with the subsample, the combination of perceived similarities in parenting and the relationship with the mother variable predict higher
levels of father role satisfaction. In the second set of multiple regressions of the whole sample excluding the relationship with mother predictor variable, the combination of perceived similarities in parenting and the participants’ perceived ability to financially provide for offspring predict higher levels of father role satisfaction.

The final set of multiple regressions of this study expands on the family involvement of African American fathers that Penha-Lopes (1998) reported, which concluded that African American men were influenced by perceptions of their own father’s performance when they were growing up, economic stability in adult life, and love relationships. The fourth set of multiple regressions with the subsample excluding the relationship with mother variable, the combination of perceived similarities in parenting, participants’ perceived ability to financially provide for offspring, the quality of paternal relationship, and the level of the participants’ education predict higher levels of father role satisfaction.

Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to explore three hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that fathers who accept negative stereotypes about African American men will have a poor perception of themselves as fathers. If fathers do not accept negative stereotypes about African American men, then they will have a positive perception about themselves as fathers. The second hypothesis is that fathers who have a positive relationship with their father will have a positive perception of themselves as fathers. Fathers who have a negative relationship with their father will have a negative perception of themselves as fathers. The third hypothesis is that contextual factors such as age, education level, perceived ability to provide for offspring, and the relationship with offspring’s mother
influence the fathers’ perception of their paternal identity. In the present study, contextual factors influenced father role satisfaction.

Acceptance of negative stereotypes was not a significant predictor of paternal identity in this study. Although much of the previous literature indicates that the level of ones’ racial identity and perceptions influences one’s self perception (Oler, 1989), the results of this study do not reflect that. Possible explanations for the nonsignificant result of acceptance of negative stereotypes are social desirability and cultural mistrust. Participants may not have wanted to share any negative feelings about African Americans in fear that it may be presented in a poor light and be viewed as being disloyal to their race. The majority of the participants did not endorse many negative stereotypes about African American men. The Stereotype Scale used to assess the acceptance of negative stereotypes presented broad generalities and is not subtle. Several participants commented negatively about the scale during the process of completing the survey. In particular, one gentleman exclaimed that he did not want to complete this section of the survey because the statements were “too general” and the assessment was “not fair”. Yet another man stated, “A white person must have made this [Stereotype Scale] up.” Perhaps a more sophisticated measure for the acceptance of negative stereotypes would result in different conclusions.

The findings reveal that there is a relationship between the participants’ perceived similarities in their parenting with their primary male parenting figure and an aspect of paternal identity, father role satisfaction. The more the participants perceive their parenting to be similar to their primary parenting figure, the more they have father role satisfaction. It is imperative to understand the relationship between the participants’
perceived similarities in their parenting with their primary male parenting figure and father role satisfaction in context of their quality of relationship with their primary male parenting figure. Although the quality of paternal relationship variable was unexpectedly only significant for one multiple regression in this study, the majority of the participants indicated that they have a somewhat positive relationship with their father. Additionally, previous literature strongly supports the notion that men are directly influenced by the relationship (or lack of relationship) with their fathers (Allen & Doherty, 1996; Feldman, 1990; Gordon, 1990; Penha-Lopes, 1998; Wade, 1994).

Contextual factors that seem to affect one aspect of paternal identity (father role satisfaction) in one or more sets of analyses are the participants’ relationship with mother, their perceived ability to provide for their offspring, and their level of education. Fathers who had a more positive relationship with their offspring’s mother had more father role satisfaction. Fathers with more economic means had more father role satisfaction. Fathers who had more education had more father role satisfaction. Contextual factors such as the perceived ability to provide for their offspring and their level of education demonstrated a stronger relationship with father role satisfaction on the subsample without the relationship with mother variable.

Salience and Reflected Appraisals

Two components of paternal identity, father role salience and reflected appraisals seemed to be unaffected by the predictor variables. Participants’ age, level of education, relationship with child(ren)’s mother, and the perceived ability to provide did not predict father role salience or reflected appraisals in any of the sets of analyses. Father role salience may be nonsignificant because none of the participants indicated they had low
 Neither father role salience nor reflected appraisals were positively correlated with any other variables in this study.

**Limitations of the Study**

Although there were one hundred and one participants for this study, more participation could have possibly provided more significant findings. Having more participation would impact the power of the multiple regression analyses. The return rate for the test-retest instrument was rather low and more participation could have impacted what was learned about the reliability and validity of some of the instruments.

The study was also affected by the selection of assessment tools. Every effort was made to select assessment tools that measured the desired constructs and that would not cause psychological discomfort. However, tools for exploring the experiences of fathers are not as fully developed as tools for exploring other phenomena such as the experiences of mothers. Instruments to explore fatherhood are not as prevalent nor as strenuously tested for validity and reliability. Continuing to improve assessment tools that explore the experiences of fathers will add to the existing research and literature. The use of the selected scale to assess the participants’ attitudes and thoughts about stereotypes of African American men may also have been a limitation. Some participants exclaimed that the scale was too general and did not want to complete it.

Despite the limitations mentioned, it can be stated that father role satisfaction is influenced by the perceived similarities of parenting. It can also be stated that many African American fathers have positive relationships with their primary male parenting figure and have positive identities as fathers. The study demonstrates that African American fathers have varying economic levels, varying marital relationships and
varying relationships with their offsprings’ mother, which is in contrast to much of the existing literature. Therefore, the results of this study add to the knowledge of the experiences of African American fathers.

Implications and Future Recommendations

Chapter II describes the existing literature on African American men and African American fathers. As mentioned previously, researchers have recently begun to shift their focus from deficit models to more wholistic perspectives such as the cultural ecological theory. The cultural ecological theory encourages researchers to consider historical, political and social/contextual influences of a group. Theories such as the cultural ecological theory warrant further empirical research because they focus on the positive aspects of the person or group as well as their challenges. As counseling psychologists, our paradigm consists on assisting individuals beginning with their positive attributes.

Therapists and mental health professionals should be challenged not to operate under the primarily negative assumptions that are presented in the media and perpetuated in society about African American men. Instead of assuming that their African American client is similar to the lazy, unintelligent, poor African American male that is so prevalently presented to society via media, mental health professionals should take into the consideration the many different aspects of his being. While this may seem to be a simplistic implication, it is necessary to continuously challenge our conscious and unconscious perceptions of others. It is also imperative to be purposeful about offering therapists and mental health professionals training opportunities to work with African American males and other underrepresented clients in therapy. Training programs may
need to be creative in reaching African American males and travel outside of the academic setting to places where African American men gather.

As mentioned previously, an important finding from this study indicates that African American fathers have positive relationships with their fathers and that they have positive paternal identities. This finding should influence future theorizing as there is a clear deficit in studying the positive aspects of the experiences of African American fathers in the current literature.

African American men are one of the least studied subgroup of people. Therefore, the opportunities for further study and exploration are limitless. The following recommendations are just a few areas that could be explored.

The researcher of this study strongly believes that African American men have a lot to contribute to the psychology literature on their behalf. A very practical implication is to continue to assess the beliefs, knowledge and skills of African American fathers from the perspective of the fathers. Notoriously, African American fathers' perspectives have been represented by the voice of their offspring or their offsprings' mother. Given the opportunity and the interest in them, African American fathers seem more than willing to share their experiences. It is this researcher's suggestion that the method in which the data is collected be culturally sensitive. African American men are less likely to share their experiences with a complete stranger and more likely to respond to an ethnically similar researcher with whom they have a positive, trusting relationship (Hatchett et al, 2000). Some of the participants of the current study offered to talk with the researcher after completing the survey and stated that they had much more to say about their identities as fathers.
The literature will continue to benefit from contributions from African American fathers who are middle to upper class. This will decrease the focus on low income African American fathers and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. Assessing participants in higher income levels will expose researchers, practitioners, policy makers and the like to more aspects of the African American community.

The literature consistently reports that fathers are directly affected by their means or lack of means to support their children (Bowman, 1993; Cochran, 1997; McAdoo, 1993, & Wade 1994). Future research should examine more closely the relationship between providing for offspring and the quality of the relationship with offspring. Fathers who are economically stable may not automatically have a better quality of relationship with their children.

Researchers may find statistically significant results regarding participants’ acceptance of negative stereotypes if they also assess participants’ racial identity. It may be beneficial to determine the participants’ level of racial identity and then compare it to the acceptance of negative stereotypes. Participants who have internalized racism may not be that developed in their racial identity. Exposing one’s racial identity and beliefs about stereotypes of African Americans may be extremely difficult as race issues are sometimes very emotional. Researchers may also consider using a scale to detect social desirability.

While further empirical research is desperately needed for African American men, it may be even more beneficial to collect qualitative data. There is such little empirical information about the experiences of fathers, particularly African American fathers, that
researchers could glean foundational information to create additional strength focused theories about being an African American father.
APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire
Demographic Questionnaire

1. Are you African American or Black? YES____ NO____

2. What is your age? _______

3. Where do you live? City______________ State____

3a. How long have you lived there? _______ years

4. Please list the age(s) and gender of your child(ren).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child #1</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child #2</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child #3</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child #4</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child #5</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. What is your current marital status? Check one.

- Married
- Living together (common law)
- Divorced/Separated
- Widowed
- Single (never married)

5a. If married or living together, how satisfied are you with this relationship? Would you say you are:

- Not too satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

5b. Is the person you are married or living with also the mother of your child(ren)?

YES____(if yes, please skip to #6) NO____ (if no, please answer 4c)

5c. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your child(ren)’s mother?

- Not too satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

6. Please check all the people who live in your household:

- Wife
- Girlfriend
- Mother
- Father
- Daughter(s)
- Son(s)
- Step-daughter(s)
- Step-son(s)
- Other(s)—please specify________________________
6a. Please check all the people who live in the household with your child(ren):
   if same as above, skip to #7
   ___ mother  ___ mother’s significant other
   ___ grandmother  ___ grandfather
   ___ sister(s)  ___ brother(s)
   ___ step-sister(s)  ___ step-brother(s)
   ___ Other(s) – please specify

7. Please check the highest level of education completed:
   ___ Partial high school
   ___ High school graduation
   ___ Associate degree
   ___ Undergraduate degree
   ___ Graduate professional training

8. What is your job occupation and title? ________________________________

9. Which best describes just your yearly income? (please do not include wife or significant other’s income)
   ___ Less than $10,000  ___ $10-20,000
   ___ $30-40,000  ___ $40-50,000
   ___ $50-75,000  ___ $75-100,000
   ___ More than $100,000

10. Which of these phrases best describes how things are financially for you and your children:
    ___ very poor
    ___ just enough to get by
    ___ fairly comfortable
    ___ well off
    ___ wealthy
APPENDIX B

Letter of Invitation
Dear Participant:

My name is Danielle K. Wright and I am a counseling psychology doctoral student at Western Michigan University. I am conducting a research project for my dissertation about the experiences of African American fathers. The purpose of the study is to explore how African American fathers view themselves as fathers while considering their unique contextual factors. This study will survey African American fathers about being African American fathers giving them an opportunity to express themselves.

I am interested in learning more about your experiences as an African American father and how some factors influence your ideas about your identity as a father. This study has been carefully reviewed and approved by a research committee at Western Michigan University.

This research packet includes an informed consent form, a series of questionnaires with instructions on how to fill them out, a self addressed stamped envelope for you to use in returning the completed questionnaires and a form to fill out for a $150 drawing.

I encourage you to participate in this valuable study about African American fathers. However, if you prefer not to participate, please send the blank forms in the self addressed envelope back to the researcher or (if in person) please return the research packet to the person who handed it to you.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

Danielle K. Wright, M.A.
APPENDIX C

Consent Form
Western Michigan University  
Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

Quantitative Study: Negative Stereotypes and Childhood Paternal Relationship  
As Predictors of Paternal Identity in African American Fathers  
Principal Investigator: Mary Z. Anderson, Ph.D.  
Student Investigator: Danielle K. Wright, M.A.

I have been invited to participate in a research project about how I see myself as an African American father. This research is Ms. Danielle Wright's dissertation project conducted under the supervision of Dr. Mary Z. Anderson.

My consent to participate in this project indicates that I will be asked to complete a demographic survey and four other surveys. The other surveys are about my childhood relationship with my father, how I view myself as a father and negative stereotypes about African Americans. Completing the surveys will take approximately 30 minutes. All participants will be asked to take the surveys twice to check the reliability of the survey instruments.

By agreeing to participate in the study, I may be making a contribution to others who may better understand the experiences of African American fathers. Results from this study may also enable researchers to conduct research projects on exploring the experiences of African American fathers' from their point of view. I will also have the opportunity to enter into a drawing of $150.

All information collected from this study is confidential. This means that my name will not appear on any papers on which information is recorded. The forms will be coded and Ms. Wright will keep a master list with the names of participants and the corresponding numbers separate from the data. Once data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All other forms will be kept for a minimum of three years in a locked file in Investigator Anderson’s office. No names will be used if the results are published or reported at a professional meeting.

One potential risk in this project is that I may become aware of sensitive topics that I may want to discuss. Should I decide that I need to discuss any of these issues further, I may contact a local crisis hotline agency within the community at (269) 381-4157. I may also refer to the referral list included in this research packet which contains information about access to counseling services and other appropriate referrals. I may also call Ms. Wright at (269) 342-1084 or (269) 873-0441 so that she may refer me to an appropriate agency.

I may refuse to participate or quit at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. If I have questions or concerns about the study, I may contact Ms. Wright at (269) 342-1084 or (269) 873-0441, or Dr. Mary Z. Anderson at (269) 337-5113. I may also contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-4293 or the Vice President of Research at (269) 987-3234 at Western Michigan University. If questions or problems arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use of one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate if the stamped date is more than one year old.

My signature below indicates that I understand the purpose and requirements of the study and that I agree to participate.

Print your name here

Sign your name here

Date
APPENDIX D

Oral Script for Researcher
Oral Script for Researcher

Hello. My name is Danielle Wright. I am a counseling psychology doctoral student at Western Michigan University. I am working on my dissertation project seeking to learn more about the experiences of African American Fathers.

Results from the proposed study will be presented in my completed dissertation and will provide researchers and practitioners with useful information about the experiences of African American Fathers from their own point of view.

I am asking that you participate in this valuable study about African American Fathers. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may discontinue at any time. Should you complete the survey instruments, however, you will receive a free T-shirt from the African American Health Initiative and enter into a drawing for $150.

(If the person indicates that they are interested, I will hand him a research packet and say:) Please read the cover letter and consent form carefully. The consent form also requires your signature and the date. I am available for your questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
APPENDIX E

Oral Script for Community Contacts
Danielle Wright is a doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. She is working on her dissertation research project under the supervision of Dr. Mary Anderson. She is requesting my assistance in recruiting participants for her research project. She is doing a study about the experiences of African American Fathers. Results from the proposed study will provide researchers and practitioners with useful information about the experiences of African American Fathers from their own point of view.

Your participation with this study is entirely voluntary and you may discontinue at any time. If you choose to complete the study, you may enter into a drawing for $150. Danielle is asking that you consider completing the survey another time for test-retest reliability purposes of the testing instruments. You may indicate your willingness to do so on the Drawing Form in the research packet and subsequently enter into the drawing for $150 again increasing your chances of winning.

To ensure confidentiality your name will not be associated in any way with the results of the research project. Any African American Father eighteen years old and older who expresses interest may receive a research packet. Please read the cover letter and consent form carefully. The consent form also requires your signature and the date. You may return it to Danielle in the self-addressed pre-paid envelope provided in the research packet.

If you have any questions, please contact Danielle Wright at (269) 342.1084 or (269) 873.0441. You may also contact Dr. Mary Anderson, who is supervising the research project, at (269) 387.5113.
APPENDIX F

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letter of Approval
Date: August 1, 2003

To: Mary Anderson, Principal Investigator
   Danielle Wright, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 03-07-17

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “Negative Stereotypes and Childhood Paternal Relationship as Predictors of Paternal Identity in African American Fathers” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: August 1, 2004
REFERENCES


A.J. (Eds.), Clinical and educational interventions with fathers (pp. 45-66).

Binghamton, NY: Haworth Clinical Practice Press.


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