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## A Father's Hands: African American Fathering Involvement and The Educational Outcomes of Their Children

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A FATHER'S HANDS: AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHERING INVOLVEMENT  
AND THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF THEIR CHILDREN

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirement for the

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**May 2012**

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Abstract

**A Father's Hands: African American Fathering Involvement and the Educational Outcomes of Their Children**

by

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Department of Teaching and Learning

Although there is a great deal of research on hegemonic masculinity, fathering involvement and a father's influence on his children's educational outcomes, little empirical research has linked these practices to African American fathers. Because they are typically depicted as ineffective, irresponsible and non-present, African American fathers who are involved in their children's lives must do so in ways that affirm their identity, ways that are contrary to the common social conceptions and media representations of Black men. Using the framework of hegemonic masculinity, this study examined how the increase of women in the workforce translates to both the *amount of time* an African American father spends with his children and *what* he does as an involved father in regards to his children's positive educational outcomes. Data were collected from African American fathers or African American stepfathers between the ages of 18 and 52 using 9 semi-structured interviews, 6 video clip reflections and 7 observational sessions. The results overwhelmingly contradict the image of African American fathers as irresponsible and uninvolved fathers as well as shed new insights into fathering involvement.

*Keywords:* African American fathers, African American fathering involvement, educational outcomes.

To the loving memory  
and indelible impression  
of Dr. Helen Harper.

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Lastly, I would like to thank my own father for giving me the greatest gift a father could give a son: a father to be proud of.

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## CHAPTER 1

### **Introduction**

On July 9, 2008, President Obama spoke about the need to have a “national conversation on responsible fatherhood and healthy families” (Obama, 2009). The Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009 bill announced June 19, 2009, would provide grants to promote economic opportunity for low-income parents, reverses federal funding cut from child support programs, repeals a \$25 child support fee charged to parents, requires all collected child support to be paid to families, addresses unpaid child support debt, expands the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and creates career pathways that require a good education. “We need [men] to realize that what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child—it’s the courage to raise one” (Obama, 2009).

Most would agree the impact a father has on his children cannot be overstated. Children without fathers in their lives are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, nine times more likely to drop out of school and 20 times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioral problems or run away from home (Obama, 2009).

Clearly, fatherless children are a problem for all Americans, especially educators. Studies show that for sons, IQ is related to a father’s nurturing, and for children in general, father involvement shows an increase in verbal skills and higher scores on assessments of cognitive abilities. Daughters are often more mentally competent with positive fathering involvement (Pruett, 2000). Sadly, more than 24 million children live without fathers today (Congressional Desk, 2009). Teachman and Tedrow (2008) assert that 30% of U.S. families who do have a father in the home do so with a stepparent and

most likely a stepfather. However, this growing trend is not just in the U.S. For example, 8% of French families, 9% of Swiss families and 10% of British families are stepfamilies (Teachman & Tedrow, 2008). Japan had to borrow the term stepfamily from English because there was no word for it in Japanese (Nozawa, 2008). Clearly, the meaning and the praxis of fatherhood are slowly being reinterpreted through changing family dynamics such as blended families at a pace difficult to measure. Studies on stepfathering are behind that of intact and biological fathers (Borstein, 2005). This provides strong evidence that the praxis of stepfathering and fatherhood needs a new definition.

### **Definition of Fathering**

One definition of being an active father is a term called fathering. Fathering, the repetitive enactment of action patterns in the context of family life, can be looked at in at least two cumulative behaviors: a) nurturance distance regulation (attachment and bonding), problem solving, stress management, and b) displays of affection and aggression (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2010). The emergence of different types of fathering is partially cultural and partly reflective of changing societal norms. Researchers are just now starting to recognize the cultural dimensions of fathering as more complex and dynamic than past conceptions of fathering. However, most research on fathering is largely based on White culturally influenced ways of fathering. While illuminating, White cultural-based norms of fathering may not tell the entire story of the experience of minorities, such as African Americans. Additionally, the definition of fathering and what it means to be a father has moved from the culture of a two- biological-parent home with single-parent income

provider into blended families of all types with dual-parent incomes. In addition, because of the growing number of women in the workforce, fathering has changed more in the last 100 years than it has in the past two centuries. The increase of women in the workforce is significant to African American masculinity and fatherhood as Black women are earning more than African American men by 70% (Hymowitz, 2005). This phenomenon has created a shift not only in the fundamental elements of fatherhood, but also in masculinity itself for both Black and White men. One contemporary term in which to view the actions of fatherhood is called fathering involvement.

**Fathering involvement.** Fathering involvement comprises three components. Part one is the interaction (or engagement)—interacting directly with the child in the context of caretaking, play, or leisure. Part two is accessibility (or availability)—being physically and/or psychologically available to the child. Part three entails responsibility—assuming responsibility for the child’s welfare and care, including organizing and planning children’s lives. This model has proven to be the most accepted definition of father involvement (Pleck, 1997; Radin, 1994). However, previous interpretations of masculinity lack nuance and have direct negative implications for African American fathers. Because of the overwhelmingly percentage of African American children who live in single parent homes, 53%(U.S. Census Bureau, 2003), the low percentage of African American never married 43%(U.S. Census Bureau, 2003) the low high school graduation rates for black males, 53% (Greene & Winters, 2009) results in the fact that African American Fathers are commonly perceived as poor fathers and husbands, irresponsible and uninvolved fathers (Smith, et al, 2005; Taylor, 1977). When in fact, African American fathers are positively engaged, active and involved with their

children but in different ways (Roopnarine, 2004; Coley, 2001; Rivera, et al, 1986; & Cazenave, 1979). This unvoiced praxis of fatherhood has a direct correlation to how fathers educate their children in the home and their expectations of what a child should learn in school and underscore the necessity of studying what successful African American Fathers actually do in regards to their children's educational outcomes.

**Educational outcomes.** The educational capital necessary for success in the American school system is based on human capital. Human capital is measured by professional knowledge and skills that are typically reflected in the level of education (Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2003). Slightly related but different from human capital, social capital consists of networks and connections or, "the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Portes, 1998, p. 6) that can be transmitted to children (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital includes cultural habits and dispositions inherited from family that are fundamental in school success (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). Social capital includes the actual or potential resources derived from investing in networks and relationship strategies, such as being involved in the community, making connections in the workplace or being involved in clubs or organizations (Bourdieu, 1986). Sometimes consciously or unconsciously, social capital requires investment in time to have both knowledge of and the ability to create occasions, places and practices (such as cultural ceremonies) and skill at using them to maximum benefit (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, I examine how the positive educational outcomes derived from educational capital, social capital, and cultural capital are facilitated by participating in faith-based institutions and events. Faith-based institutions served as the place of recruitment for participants as well as places of observations for this study.

**Faith-based Institutions.** More than just religious institutions and worship communities, faith-based organizations, as conceptualized by Castelli and McCarthy (1997), are divided into three categories: 1) congregations; 2) networks, which include local and national denominations, their social service arms (charities, social services), and networks of related organizations (the Boys and Girls Club); and 3) freestanding religious organizations, which may be local, regional or affiliated with national and international groups. This research design entails collecting rich data from two of these three categories: congregations and local religious organizations from which many people go to find affinity. Affinity is an often informal space where people find a place in which to interact and share knowledge usually around an activity (Gee, 2004). Faith-based institutions are suitable places in which to find how African American fathers learn to perceive themselves as fathers, how African American fathers learn how to deal with contrary perceptions of masculinity and fatherhood, as well as how African American fathers demonstrate through actions their fathering involvement. These three subject areas center around fatherhood, how fathers perceive themselves, how fathers feel about the perceptions of their fatherhood and masculinity as well as how they demonstrate their fathering involvement and set up the foundations for this study.

### **Summary**

This chapter explained the impetus for the need to study fatherhood as a matter of national policy because that research can inform how fathers can positively influence everything from educational outcomes to general societal well being. This perspective is especially important as changes in the workforce have created new circumstances that affect what it means to be a good parent in terms of gender and the resulting implications



of providing opportunities for positive educational outcomes based on one parent alone. This has created differing perceptions of what it means to be a father for all men but especially so for African American fathers. For example, single Black women head the overwhelming majority of African American households. This has caused a role reversal for Black men, who have to deal with not only being the “man” in the house, but also have to reinterpret their definition of what it means to be a man. Previous interpretations of masculinity are lacking in nuance. This unvoiced praxis of fatherhood has a direct correlation to how fathers educate their children in the home and their expectations of what a child should learn in school.

### Overview

In the following section, Chapter 2, the literature review will provide evidence to explain how the patriarchal world is slowly changing and as a result is redefining what it means to be a father. The change has come in areas from emerging roles and expectations of fathers to reexamining the term stepfather and even in regards to occupation and earning a living. Starting first with African views on fatherhood and ending with African American fathering involvement. Chapter 2 also details the result of hegemonic influences that sustain opposition between the masculinity of the ruling class and working class as well as working class African Americans.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology for this study to give a voice to the unsung African American fathers who are indeed caring and involved. Using hermeneutic phenomenology, this study used three interrelated data collecting methods: 1) interviews of fathers, 2) video clip reflection of fathers and 3) observation of fathers during activities with their children. I used faith-based institutions as a reasonable location to identify and

recruit African American fathers of different ages, levels of experience in parenting, SES, and education levels for participant selection.

Using interviews, video clip reflections and observation sessions, chapter 3 provided the framework in which to examine the essence of African American fathers and how they perceive themselves in regards to their children's educational outcomes, their perceptions of their masculine influences on their children, and how they demonstrate their influence on their children's educational outcomes and involvement voiced in their own words and based on their own actions.

Chapter 5 provides the analysis of the data based on profiles of the participants. Three overarching themes: feelings, providing guidance and showing emotion were the subjects of the interviews that were also supported in the video clip reflections and observation sessions. Chapter 5 concludes with a summary, recommendation for future research and final thoughts.

Heartfelt, humorous painful and revealing, each of the fathers I interviewed shared with me their thoughts and emotions from the heart. Not all but more than a few fathers had their hands full. A few of the fathers made fatherhood seem like a walk in the park or as easy as pushing a swing. However, all of the fathers showed grace and courage as they told me their stories both as fathers and as men.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Literature Review**

Prior to President Obama's presidential election, most media portrayals of African American men in movies and television tended to show them involved in criminal activity (Miller, & Maiter, 2008). Black fathers have been historically described as ineffective (Frazier & Frazier, 1993), and as contributors to a negative pathology of poor parenting (Moynihan, 1965). Additionally, Dates and Stroman (2001) assert minority families are typically not portrayed accurately by the media. Smith, Krohn, Chu, and Best (2005) report that there is little in the social science literature about the relationship between African American men and their children, and that literature seems to reflect the public's view of African American fathers as financially irresponsible, hypermasculine, and uninvolved.

The result is that our accepted male ideals make it appear that the dominant White culture of masculinity is the standard (Connell, 1995). These contemporary portrayals of American fatherhood are based on White norms and serve as both a model and cause for oppositional behavior of fatherhood (Dates & Stroman, 2001) between Blacks and Whites. Consequently, Black Americans have developed a sense of identity in opposition to White Americans because of social, economic, and political subordination they have encountered (Harpalani, 2002), "underpinned by a basic human need for positive self-esteem" (Hogg, 2001, p. 187). Oppositional frames of reference that Black Americans have developed reactively promote Black identity by sustaining boundaries between themselves and the dominant White culture (Harpalani, 2002). Nonminority fathers may not see a need nor have experience with passing on forms of cultural capital that foster

ethnic resilience to adversity. In this respect, it is clear that fathers are not a homogenous group and differing aspects of identity are likely to influence, and be influenced by the experience and practice of fathering (Williams, 2009, p. 59). I take this to mean that fatherhood may have different scripts based on cultural expectations that may not be reflected in either the media or in contemporary conceptions of hegemonic masculinity.

Fatherhood, as the name suggests, implies a relationship between provider and protector. Any element that denies a man full participation in his role as a father, such as economics, socioeconomic status (SES), or negative media portrayals, undermines his masculinity. Additionally, what is an acceptable cultural practice in his culture may be taboo in the norms of the dominant masculine idealized culture. These two issues create cultural push back against hegemonic forms of masculinity that in turn influences perceptions concerning fatherhood. But what exactly is a good father and what does good fathering look like? If we know that father-child attachment results in fewer behavior problems (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999), greater sociability (Lamb, Hwang, Frodi, & Frodi, 1982; Sagi, Lamb, & Gardner, 1986), and higher quality peer interactions (Parke, 2002), what is the degree of these indirect and direct fathering effects? Can ethnic men be good fathers? Does good fathering mean spending time with children, giving monetary contributions to the wife, showing involvement, giving affection, or living in the home, and do these factors influence education outcomes? These questions help us begin to understand what it means to be a good father in general terms and not necessarily by the nuances of ethnicity. However, a cultural lens for understanding fathering is helpful only when the definition of culture moves beyond “ethnicity to

include race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and economic standing” (Miller & Maiter, 2008 p. 298). In fact, some men become religious or even more religious when they become fathers (Nock, in press). The overarching problems in the aforementioned questions are to find ways of researching fathering that are inclusive of cultural issues of minority fathers such as African Americans and that are both sensitive and reflective of their individual differences.

I will review how these models apply to or diverge from the role African American fathers play in educating their children. Starting with a general overview of fathering involvement, I will then describe the little research done with non-Eurocentric models of parenting of African Americans and conclude with a discussion and recommendation for future research at the end of this chapter.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the historical significance of fatherhood and masculinity. I will consider the changing role of parenting and education with a particular focus on African American fathers. In order to achieve this goal, I will use the theoretical framework of masculinity as conceptualized by Connell.

### **Theoretical Framework**

R.W. Connell’s research on masculinity is one of the most cited, discussed, and influential theories of our time (Wedgwood, 2009). Connell originally started researching class structure and education inequities, two issues specifically pertinent to masculinity and African American males. Connell’s main perspective is that current social and power conditions are based on patriarchal norms that represent the desired ideals of a small and select group of men (Connell, 1995; 2002). Connell’s theory of

masculinity is sometimes referred to as hegemonic masculinity, as her ideas are concerned with both hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinity. Hegemony, as interpreted by Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* and influenced by Marxist thinking, centers around the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains domination of social groups (Hearn, 2004). Gramsci's framework of masculinity helped Connell conceive of hegemonic masculinity as two-way and simultaneous, the practice that forms and is formed by the structures that are appropriated and defined (Connell, 1995). Put another way, hegemonic masculinity is a practice that is constantly being recreated under changing conditions, including resistance to subordinate groups (Wedgwood, 2009), and not a fixed biological behavior (Bean, & Harper, 2007). Connell's masculinity specifically attempts to address non-hegemonic masculinities first and hegemonic masculinity second as part of the conversation of gender but not the entire subject (Wedgwood, 2009). She uses this method in an attempt to study the dominant group in order to change power structures. For Connell, "cultural, individual, and structural components are interdependent" (Lusher & Robins, 2009, p. 389). I take that as evidence that Connell's hegemonic masculinity is a suitable frame to study the changing role of fatherhood, masculinity, and especially ethnicity.

**Personal bias.** As I write this, I recognize that I sit in a privileged and uncommon chair as an African American male who has always had an involved father, who is close to two uncles, and who has vivid memories of both grandfathers and even fond memories of my grandfather's brother. I fully realize that my experiences may not only be uncommon for my ethnicity but for most American men. I was born in a predominately African American middle class neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. Shortly

afterwards my family moved from a predominately African American neighborhood to the mostly White country of England. This transition from a Black neighborhood to a White culture and country enabled me to experience being the "other" for the first time.

As a result, I have always sat as an outsider looking in, both as an African American who has had strong fathering influences throughout his life, and as an American who has lived and attended school in another country and culture. That has given me a hyperawareness of being a Black male. Other than when I was very young, most of my experience has been as the only person of my culture and gender in class, both as a student and later as a teacher.

### **Potential Significance**

Since hegemonic masculinity influences conceptions of gender roles by providing scripts for fatherhood, masculinity particularly affects ethnic and working fathers in areas of culture/ethnicity, religion, Social Economic Status (*SES*), discipline, perception surrounding the joy of being a father, and finding a balance between work and home. These areas in turn influence how fathers educate their children at home or support their children's education in the classroom. A study that embraces and helps to define new forms of cultural masculinity and how they relate to fatherhood has the potential to add to the conversation of what it means to be a good parent. After all, parents are the first teachers, and fathers are parents too. In fact according to Compton-Lilly (2004), fathers make great teachers!

### **Delimitations of the Research**

Word searches in this study included *hegemonic masculinity*, *masculinity*, *African American masculinity* and *Black masculinity*. The research was conducted utilizing

Academic Search Premier operated by EBSCO. Academic Search Premier contains indexing and abstracts for over 8,450 journals, with full text for 4,600 of those titles and nearly 7,400 of the journals peer-reviewed. EBSCO (the Elton B Stephens Company), is the largest subscription agency in the world. The searches were filtered first by date – those within the last 10 years. Articles that were not peer reviewed or did not have the full text available were excluded. Additional sources came from secondary sources such as books, research reports, and newspaper articles.

### **Fatherhood Over Time**

Toward the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fathers in the U.S. moved away from farms and small business to the emerging industrial economy seeking work in big cities. This left the responsibility of raising children to the mothers and narrowed the perception of the father as one of breadwinner and provider. Under this framework of family, the female constant in-home perspective emphasizing the importance of presence of the mother became the model of a good family, and the father's paternal presence inside the home became irrelevant (Cabrera, et al, 2010). As long as the father was earning a paycheck, he was considered a good father and provider of a good home, making the single parent earning income the accepted norm. Any man who did not provide for his family financially was considered a bad father.

This viewpoint of a good father based on providing has negatively affected research and perceptions of African American males, who have been increasingly rendered underemployed as well as unemployable due to economic issues related to social class, gender, and race (Pierce-Bonham & Skeen, 1979). African American women, who have historically been considered for home care professions, have not suffered in



employability as much African American men. Hearn (2004) informs us that hegemony often ignores working and Black men by focusing on employment as the sole marker of a responsible father. Theorists for most of the Industrial Revolution supported the importance of the mother in child development and homemaking, restricting ideas of good fathering to the masculine role of provider. However, the economy affects all fathers who earn income in some way as well as the families they try to support. The lower the employability of the provider, the lower the income of the family and the less likely the family will live in a neighborhood with a good school.

The emergence of the Women's Rights movement, which coincided with the influx of women in the workforce, was the catalyst that started the current change of the model family. The image of the ideal mother changed after the 1960s with the abundance of two parents working outside the home (Cabrera, et al, 2010). As a result, the two-parent home with the father as the sole breadwinner perspective declined. Although the mother has always worked inside the home, prior to the 1950s work outside the home was confined to family businesses. As Domenico and Jones (2006) attest, work outside the home was considered the unpaid duty of a mother prior to WWII.

In addition to the emergence and prevalence of women in the workforce, migration of jobs overseas has also affected the father's ability to perform the prescribed role as the provider of his home. Seventy-five percent of job losses affect male-dominated fields, including manufacturing, real estate, and construction (Briody, 2010). Men have experienced 3 out of every 4 jobs lost in the current recession (Boushey, 2009). Men in the workforce have declined from 70% in 1945 to less than 50% today, and in large cities; single, childless women earn 8% more than their male peers do (Roman &

Dokoupil, 2010). Sussman and Bonneil report that in 2003, 29% of women earned more than their male partner. This percentage is up from 11% in 1967. Today women match or outnumber men in college and graduate school (Roman & Dokoupil, 2010), further distancing the earned income potential of women in the workforce away from men. African American women have outpaced men in earning potential since African American women are earning 70% of the master's degrees awarded to African Americans, and black women made up 61.7% of the African American enrollment at the nation's 50 highest-ranked law schools (Milloy, 2011). As women are working outside the home and earning household income equal to men, the traditional role of "breadwinner" has been forced to be re-interpreted. As a result, research suggests that men have been encouraged to include fatherhood as a major life role of masculinity, at least since 1976 (Price-Bonham, 1979). This has caused both Black and White men to face contradictory challenges to traditional masculinity in the form of blurred boundaries (Williams, 2009) as they struggle to keep up with the times.

Fathers have expressed tension as they try to fulfill the breadwinner role while simultaneously striving to become a more involved parent (Hatter et al., 2002). So much tension, in fact, the lack of energy to fill these two roles, breadwinner and involved parent, is considered a barrier to fathering involvement (Freeman, Newland, & Coyl, 2008). Williams' (2009) research has stressed that men have identified child behavior problems; fatigue and exhaustion from work and parenting; unpaid work in regards to taking care of children; informal learning (being involved in play and sports); and formal learning such as religion as significant concerns for both Black and White middle-class men within these new bounds of fatherhood, leaving many men feeling vulnerable and

unsure of their nature and purpose in the world (Whitehead, 2002). However, conceptually, very little is known about how low-income, unmarried fathers think about fatherhood (Smeeding, Garfinkel, & Mincy, 2011). It would not be unreasonable to assume that low-income fathers may have differing ideas of masculinity and fatherhood and even the possibilities of a good education that are different than current conceptions of hegemonic masculinity.

There is evidence within the UK of fathers' increased involvement in the care of preschool children (Ferri & Smith, 1996; O'Brien & Shemlit, 2003), and of men's substantial contributions to children's development in the United States (Lamb & Lewis, 2004). And although fathering involvement is still influenced by changes in the labor market (O'Brien & Shemlit, 2003), both Black men and White working-class men identified love for and validation from the love of their children as important and said they enjoy their children's achievements, including educational success (Williams, 2009). This research is also supported by findings from the early 1990s that assert that having someone to love and who loves in return, having someone to take care of, and being respected as a father are a few of the best things about being a father (Pierce-Bonham & Skeen, 1979). Too much responsibility and problems of discipline were the top two worst things about fathering for both Black and White fathers (Pierce-Bonham & Skeen, 1979).

The increase in research explains the experiences of modern fathers and new norms that include issues of class and gender have created new opportunities for men to express emotions in ways that were previously considered as not masculine. Even recent television shows are more likely to show depictions of active and involved fathers who

have emotional bonds and display playfulness and support with their children (Kelly, 2006). Lupton and Barclay (1997) have termed the expression of feelings of love and affection by men with children as “championing.” Similarly, Kyle Pruett describes fatherhood as, “an intrinsic force that pulls men to children and children to men as evidence of the nurturing nature and fathering instinct in men” (Connor & White, 2006, p. 9). Barnett, Marshall and Pleck (1992) assert that fathering is a source of inspiration for many fathers. While anyone who has seen men watching sports on television would hardly say that men do not express emotion in some form, the articulation by men of their feelings about the joy of fatherhood is a refreshing change in research.

Through new research that advances new perspectives of masculinity, we now know that a great number of men willingly embrace fatherhood in all of its new forms. For example, an ever-increasing trend in fatherhood is the presence of a stepfather. Today, one in three children in the United States lives apart from their biological father (Congressional Desk, 2009). Stepfathers are no longer a trend but are becoming the norm in many types of homes: ruling upper class, working class, and ethnic minority families. It is no longer solely the biological fathers picking up and dropping off the kids at school, but stepfathers as well.

**Stepfathering.** As alluded to in the beginning of this chapter, stepfathering is becoming more prevalent all around the world. American children spend an average of 1.9 years living with a mother and a stepfather from birth to age 15 (Heuveline, Timberlake, & Furstenberg, 2003).

“Step” is an Old English term for deprive or bereave (Daly & Wilson, 1988, p. 85). Stepfather is a term that is used to indicate that a man willingly acknowledges the

existence of another child, regardless of whether he decides to take responsibility for it. The key concept here is the man is aware the mother has a child or children before he becomes involved with her. Why would a man voluntarily take responsibility, financially or otherwise, of a child or children he did not sire?

Investing in becoming a stepfather allows a male to create and maintain a relationship with the children of the mother. In societies where there are more men available than women, those men may have little choice but to marry a woman with children, or to not marry at all (Anderson, 2000). Men who marry women with children may also not be “prime” candidates for marriage. Stepfathers who marry women with children tend to have less education, earn lower incomes, and are more likely to have been previously married, all issues related to a lower standing in the marriage market (Anderson, 2000). A man willing to be a stepparent increases his likelihood of getting married.

Consequently, stepparents display little gender biases with stepchildren (Marsiglio, 1991). In fact, men are equally likely to help with homework, or to provide money for food and other miscellaneous items, whether they are the genetic father or the stepfather (Gray & Anderson, 2010). However, stepchildren are also more likely to be abused and murdered than biological children (Daly & Wilson, 2001). It may be that the very presence of stepchildren causes more arguments and fights (Daly & Wilson, 1998). Or, because stepparents are less likely to be around during birth, the result is less of an opportunity for bonding (Gray & Anderson, 2010). This may be one of the reasons for the common perception of a stepparent as negative. The truth is quite different. Married fathers spend more money on stepchildren and are more likely to give help to

stepchildren if they are married (Anderson, Kaplan & Lancaster, 1999a). Additionally, many couples with stepchildren will have a child together to solidify their marital bond (Stewart, 2005), solidifying the entire family unit, stepchildren included.

In short, the evolution of masculinity from colonial times to modern times has transformed from the role of distant father, to breadwinner, to the father as a co-parent (Pleck & Pleck, 1997) or stepfather. This phenomenon has been attributed to four social trends: women's increased labor force participation, a rise in nonresidential fathers, increased involvement of fathers in intact families, and increased cultural diversity in the U.S. (Cabrera, et al, 2010, p. 127). This has resulted in a trend of research to focus on the amount of time a father spends in the home and its effect on child outcomes more than the quality of the time spent (Halme, Åstedt-Kurki & Tarkka, 2009). A male figure in the home may do a child little good simply because he spends time with the child.

Additionally, the time a father spends with a child may differ for a variety of reasons, such as the amount of time he actually has to spend with a child based on the amount of time he spends on his job, or his cultural or religious background. In other words, the substantive quality of the interaction with the child and father that is important for positive development can be based on a combination of his social economic status, religion, culture, and concepts of gender responsibility and masculinity.

The changes in the workforce have created new circumstances that affect what it means to be a good parent in terms of gender and the resulting implications of providing opportunities for positive educational outcomes based on one parent alone. For example, single Black women head the overwhelming majority of African American households. This has caused a role reversal for Black men who have to deal with not only being the

”man” in the house, but who also have to reinterpret their definition of what it means to be a man. Previous interpretations of masculinity based on economic changes in the workforce are not inclusive of economic situation of African American men, but are lacking in the nuances of working class men or additional cultural groups such as ethnicities.

This means that definitions of masculinity are based on elitist hegemonic norms that have never accurately applied or correctly portrayed minority and working class fathers, since those two groups are the most likely to have wives who work outside the home or suffer from employment issues. In fact, one could argue that a more involved fathering role has always been enacted by minority and working class men as pure necessity for their survival. However, in popular cultural learning venues such as television, positive depictions of fatherhood are lacking for both Black and White fathers.

### **Fatherhood in Popular Culture**

Far and away, the most positive and popular mediated image of fatherhood is Jim Anderson of *Fathers Knows Best*, played by Robert Young. He along with his wife, Margaret Anderson, and their three children made the working father and stay-at-home mother iconic parenting figures in American life. *Father Knows Best* ran from 1954 to 1964. When Jim Anderson appears in the opening scenes of the show looking at his watch, it symbolizes that the man is in control, and it is the father who deals with the outside world. The mother, on the other hand, takes care of the home as a helpmate. In other words, the world is ruled by time, and the father is the controlling figure (Frazer & Frazer, 1993). The mother’s role is one of moral authority, nagging the boys into place in most of the episodes. This idealized image of the father, the so-called head of the

household, has left the impression that the mother performs nurturing and true parenting in the home. Dad is someone who provides advice, but the mother is the real parent who does most of the real work. The father is in control, but it is the mother who provides the real authority. Usually it was Margaret (the mom) who provides the real moral perspectives and the true nurturing in the home usually directed towards the men (especially the father) in the home (Frazer & Frazer, 1993). In fact, the main comedic well that *Father Knows Best* drew from most frequently stemmed from the comical depictions and actions of the father, Jim Anderson. Jim Anderson rarely helped the kids with homework.

Twenty years later, a new model father emerged, this time in the form of an African American father Heathcliff Huxtable, who had an African American working wife, Clair Huxtable. *The Cosby Show* became the representative of family of the 1980s running from 1984 to 1992. The socially constructed idea has been that *The Cosby Show* resisted stereotypical images of the African American family. While it may be argued that it did, it did not resist asserting commonly held expectations of gender roles of parenting. For example, although Clair Huxtable is a working mom, an attorney no less, she still is in charge of the domestic duties in the home. In one episode, Clair catches her husband and son-in-law trying to fool her while attempting to prove that men can cook. She catches them using a commercial jar of sauce and trying to pull it off as their own, thereby proving the superiority of women and keeping the womanhood of cooking as safe and powered by femininity. Although Bill Cosby, as Cliff Huxtable, appears first in the Cosby introduction and then later the wife and kids are shown, the implied message that he is the head of the family rarely persists (Frazer & Frazer, 1993). What *The Cosby*



*Show* represents then is not some major shift in political gravity, as illustrated by the persistence, despite much ideological change in the past few decades, of some very traditional forms still embedded in our everyday discourse (Frazer & Frazer, 1993).

It appears as if African American sitcoms, as well as White sitcoms, almost make comedies out of the age-old gender contest of who really knows best. In fact, in one inductive thematic analysis of popular television shows by Pehlke, Hennon, Radina, and Kuvalanka (2009), negative depictions of fatherhood were common. Changes in the ways in which fathers interacted with their children based on past conceptions of fathering and cultural concerns depicting television fathers including social economic status were the other two common themes (Pehlke, et al., 2009).

Two television shows did provide positive depictions of fathering, *7th Heaven* and *Run's House*. The first show, *7th Heaven*, centered on the character Father Eric Camdon played by Stephen Collins. Camdon often dispensed fatherly advice from a spiritual perspective. The second show, *Run's House*, was a cable reality show played by real life minister and rap pioneer Joseph Simmons. The show typically ended with Rev. Run offering spiritual and ethical motivations.

A popular survey of fathers' attitudes toward fathering would align with these depictions, with virtually all of the participants agreeing that their perceptions of fatherhood reflect images of fathers on film and that being a father is an important part of who they are (NFI, 2006). As such, *Run's House*, *Father Hood* and *The Cosby Show* contributed to a contemporary form of racism that is based on the idea that racism is no longer a problem in the United States and that lack of African American success is based on lack of effort and/or ability (Smith, 2008). As a result, this leads both Blacks and

Whites to believe, when test scores denote inequities, that either teachers are not doing their jobs or that minoritized students are simply not trying hard enough (Harry & Kilinger 2006).

These media influenced conceptions of Black home life sets up conflict between Black and White conceptions of masculinity. It is a type of oppositional culture. Oppositional culture is based on a single factor: not acting “White.” However, oppositional culture is not the only theory that is used to explain Black students and the cultural implications of academic outcomes. For example, Ogbu’s Cultural-Ecological Model is based on two interrelated problems of minority education and school performance: societal factors called *the system* and minority community factors called *community forces* (Ogbu, 2004).

Here educational policies such as segregation and school funding; treatment of minority children in such things as teacher expectation; and societal rewards that are awarded to and withheld from minorities are all interrelated. Since both Whiteness and maleness are modeled qualities in the American school system (Dill & Zambrana, 2009), oppositional culture affects both White and Black male interactions. White males are immediately targeted as the model culture that has to be emulated while students of color are depicted as anti-theoretical to accepted norms that enable them to learn. As a result, Black males left with the choices of being popular or smart (Kunjufu, 2010) create what some have come to believe as oppositional culture. In addition to the fact that reading is not masculine, just not cool (Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Brozo, 2005; Busk, 2010), for Black boys, pursuing high academic achievement is associated with acting White and is considered culturally undesirable (Ogbu, 2004). Black youths in U.S. schools are often

left with the choice of being accepted as an athlete or being an outcast on the honor roll. In fact, a strong sense of cultural identity of being Black may cause a student to reject formalized schooling because higher education does not appear to be a viable option for minorities in America. This definition of Black masculinity is often conceptualized as a *cool pose* (Majors & Billson, 1992). Cool pose is the appearance of being resilient, relaxed, confident, and emotionally detached for psychological, emotional and physical survival (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003). This is the conceptualized enactment of Black male identity as uninvolved and unconcerned, a large part of hegemonic masculinity. However, there is emerging research that asserts culturally sensitive literacy programs (Tatum, 2005) and fathering influence can dissuade negative influences of black boys (Letiecq, 2007). While research has provided insight into the inner workings and sociological implications that affect schooling and masculinity, there is also scientific data on fatherhood as well.

### **Academic Perspectives of Fatherhood**

There are recent studies about the levels of fathers' involvement in the lives of their children (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004) in general. However, Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985, 1987) have proposed a three-part model of paternal involvement of father involvement that was conceived in the 1990s that is still used today. Part one is the interaction (or engagement)—interacting directly with the child in the context of caretaking, play, or leisure. Part two is accessibility (or availability)—being physically and/or psychologically available to the child. Part three entails responsibility—assuming responsibility for the child's welfare and care, including organizing and planning children's lives. This model has proven to be the most accepted definition of father

involvement (Pleck & Pleck 1997; Radin, 1994). Engagement may be similar, but it is separate and distinct from attachment, because children form secure attachment regardless of whether their fathers were highly involved or not (Schoppe-Sullivan, et al., 2006). That is not the case with fathering involvement.

In fact, social scientists assert that adolescent happiness is linked to father involvement both significantly and independently of the mother (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003a). Although maternal involvement is important, the involved father is more likely to have children that feel positively towards school and are more likely to participate and graduate than children of uninvolved fathers (Flouri, 2005; Flouri, Buchanan & Bream, 2002). Additionally, children who felt close to their involved fathers were more likely to be satisfied with their romantic partners in midlife (Moller & Stattin, 2001), have more successful intimate relationships (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002b), and be less likely to divorce (Risch, Jodl & Eccles, 2004). Young adults whose fathers were more sensitive in their early play interactions had more secure and healthy romantic relationships (Grossmann, Grossmann, Winter, & Zimmerman, 2002). Boys with an engaged father had fewer behavioral problems during the early school years and were slightly more socially advantaged than children of less engaged fathers during the preschool years (Howard, Lefever, Borkowski, & Whitman, 2006; and Aldus, 2002). Sons also foster better social/relational functioning in childhood (Levy-Schiff, Hoffman, Mogilner, Levinger, & Mogilner, 1990) and adulthood (Buchanan, Flouri, et al 2002) in addition to having better educational outcomes (Buchanan, & Flouri, 2004). Peers (2009) asserts that positive outcomes are also associated with having a religiously involved father. A father's academic support is positively related to a son's academic motivation to try

harder in school and to place a higher value on education (Alfaro, Umana-Taylor & Bamaca, 2006). Additionally, “fathers tend to have a unique style of disciplining their children . . . (and) are more likely to use strict and demanding parenting behaviors when dealing with boys” (Malone-Colon & Roberts, 2006, p. 2). An involved father does not just influence sons but daughters as well, further research shows.

Daughters who have an involved father are more likely to achieve higher in school than daughters who do not have an involved father (Leman & Sorensen, 2000). In addition, an involved father is more likely to help counter eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression of their daughters because of over sexualization of women in the media (Courtney, 2008; Dow, 1996; Stokes, 2007). Furthermore, when tension begins to develop between mothers and daughters during the teenage years, involved fathers can help mediate the conflict by helping to interpret the mothers in a more favorable light and by serving as a sounding board for the mothers (Dobson, 2007). An authoritarian style of parenting reduces the risk of substance abuse (Bronte-Tinkew, Moore & Carrano, 2006) and multiple, first-time risky behaviors (Dorius, Bahr, Hoffmann & Harmon, 2004).

A study by Rowe, Cocker, and Pan indicates that father involvement has been shown to encourage toddlers to talk more, use a more diverse vocabulary, and produce longer utterances when interacting with their fathers (2004). Additionally, father involvement has a protective effect against criminality for both sexes (Coley, 2007), and school-aged children of involved fathers are more likely to achieve higher academically than those of non-involved fathers. (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997; Nord & West, 2001). For adolescents in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, father involvement is associated with less drug use, less delinquency, and less violent behavior. These positive associations of father

involvement increase in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade if the father provided child support (Zimmerman, et al, 2000). Father involvement is also associated with a lower frequency of not only disruptive behavior such as anti-social behavior, but depression, lying, and sadness as well (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002a; King & Sobolewski, 2006).

While this research is illuminating and provides a conceptual background of fathering in general, it sheds little light on the intricacies of fathering involvement for African American fathers and how they inform their children culturally in regards to SES, how they instill a strong sense of resilience to oppression through ethnic identity, and how they pass down religious belief. Research on fatherhood and fathering may not address these issues specifically, but may reveal overarching cultural trends of African American fathering as a whole, since African Americans share differing ethnic origins than the dominant culture.

**Fathering in Africa.** In just one example of culturally defined meaning of the word father in Africa fathering is an interrelated term of mother, family, community, etc. Research reveals that in Africa, people form kinship bonds and networks where no blood relationship exists (Scott & Black, 1989). Fathering in Africa is done by men to promote a better society. African-centered fathering is a political and social act preparing the next generation of warriors for the fight of liberation (Madhubuti, 1990). Also, African fathering includes, but is not limited to, “providing guidance for children from childhood to adulthood – as well as love, quality time, listening, building a child’s self-love and self-esteem, being slow to criticize, practicing nonviolence, and taking an equal share of housework” (Newton, 2005, p. 170). However, since Africa is made up of many diverse cultural types, fathering in Africa also includes male members of tribes that do not

involve fathering until children reach adulthood (Ahadi, 2007). Clearly, male-defined parenting roles are socially constructed and differ from culture to culture.

As Hare and Hare (1984) describe, because of Westernization, both African and African American men have to negotiate their traditional roles as hunters and providers in a place that often deprives them of both. Taylor's *The Black Male in America: Perspectives on His Status in Contemporary Society* (1977) agrees, stating that African American men face many challenges raising their children while maintaining their integrity as men. Men who have never been married often find difficulty defining and enacting their fathering roles due to lack of non-marital cultural scripts (Hamer & Marchioro, 2002; Roy, 2006). This is reflective of new American conceptions of masculinity and the changing meaning and identity of fatherhood. Lack of positive or present fathering models are of particular interests in African American fathering outcomes. For this reason, many African American men do not see the value in getting married.

**African American views on marriage and family.** Low expectations of getting married are not based on non-marital childbearing. Out-of-wedlock childbearing is the cause not the consequence of reduced expectations and likelihood of first marriages, as the vast majority of African American mothers want to get married (Patterson, 1998). Young African American women especially value marriage in an effort to avoid repeating the hardships of their mothers and have yet to outpace African American males economically. This may be the reason for the fact over 70% of African American households are run with Black women as the head of the household (Hymowitz, 2005; Morgan, 2000). As in Africa, young African American men with few male role models

see no benefit to marriage (Patterson, 1998). Additionally, African American women have better labor-market prospects are more attractive to potential husbands, but because they are financially and otherwise secure and independent, those in trying relationships may be less inclined to get married or to stay in the relationship. Educated older and financially secure African American men are not more likely to get married than their younger and less financially secure counterparts (Patterson, 1998). Lack of willingness to get married within the African American community may be incorrectly blamed on residual effects of slavery. In reality, Blacks during slavery were voluntarily married more often and sustained longer marriages than they do today (Patterson, 1998). A more likely cause for the decline of marriage in the African American community is that African American women have not conformed to traditional paternalistic traditions of marriage (Patterson, 1998). With the lack of interest to get married for both older African American men and women, combined with lack of availability of African American men, African Americans are moving toward annihilation, not just disruption of the family (Patterson, 1998). Increasing African American fathering involvement is important literally and figuratively to the survival of the race.

### **African American Fathering Involvement**

As previously discussed, researchers have used a European centered model of fathering in their studies, thereby leaving out cultural influences that skew their findings negatively in regards to African American males. The result of this viewpoint has created stereotypical opinions that African Americans are poor husbands and fathers (Taylor, 1977). Now that modern research is more inclusive about the cultural aspects of African American fatherhood, we know that indeed African American men do father their



children. In fact, African American men are quite involved in rearing their children, but in different ways.

African American men, because of social and economic conditions, may not be able to support a family financially initially, but are likely to contribute to the family in other ways such as child care. The high lack of employment, the high accusable and conviction rate of Black men in the United States combined with an imprisonment rate that is seven times higher than White males between the ages of 20 and 39 (Dyson, 2007) has produced more absentee African American fathers than other ethnic groups. Because of this, African American men are more likely to be unemployed temporarily. Therefore, African American men are more likely to be involved teaching their children how to deal with economic conditions by stressing the importance of having culture as a resource to combat discrimination. This perspective diverges from commonly accepted ideas of African American fathers.

Roopnarine (2004) suggests that African American fathering is likely to highlight ethnic and racial identity of minority oppression. This makes fathering involvement a matter of cultural pride among African Americans and influences early childrearing participation. In addition to identity, African American men contribute domestically as well. In married, working [African American families] 40% of fathers changed diapers, 77% played with the baby, 68% disciplined children, 49% helped children with homework, and 49% often took children to the doctor and dentist (Cazenave, 1979).

Among unwed noncustodial fathers, 73% fed the child, 39% changed diapers, 82% stayed alone with the child, 64% took the child out, 19% bathed the child, and 97% played with the child at 18 months (Rivera, et al, 1986). Even the scant research on

fathering that is inclusive of African American fathers sheds a new light on previous misconceptions. Studies suggest that European American fathers provide skills, knowledge, and opportunities to children including financial resources to purchase goods and services while African American fathers are more likely to provide cultural capital like ethnic identity (Coley, 2001). This suggests that even further research needs to be conducted among African American fathering.

Additionally, involved African American fathers are controlling, supportive, and strict. They expected autonomy sooner and encouraged egalitarian family roles (Bartz & Levine, 1978; Grief, Habowski, & Malton, 1998). This study calls for us to consider alternative views of hegemonic masculinity, especially in the involvement of children and education outcomes. Coley intimates that authoritative fathering in the African American home led to better school behavior among third and fourth grade children (1998) and that close relationships were related to high self-esteem in adolescents (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Zimmerman, et al, 1995). Rodney and Mupier (1999) assert that African American male children who have a biological father in the home are less likely to repeat a grade. For African American girls, lack of fathering resulted in greater symptoms of depression (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 2002). Despite this fact, various impacts of not having a biological father in the home have not been studied enough (DeLeire & Kalil, 2002), especially for African American fathers.

For African American males, satisfaction with the parenting role was associated with cognitive and receptive language scores for African Americas children (Black, et al., 1999; Dubowitz et al., 2001), and informal child support was related to cognitive

stimulation in the home (Greene & Moore, 2000). However, parenting in the home is changing, especially for African Americans.

### **African American Fathering Accessibility**

In the US, African Americans make up roughly 12.9% of the population. In 2001, 53% of African American children lived in single parent homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Single females head 43% of all African American families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). That means African American males head only 10% of single parent African American homes. The highest proportion of any racial category, that 43% of African Americans have never married compared to 25% of whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). The socially modeled parenting solution has been for African Americans to rely more heavily on grandparents and to adopt alternative parenting strategies such as kinship bonds.

This results in a high percentage of African American grandparents living in the same household as their grandchildren and the proliferation of kinship networks. More than half of the African American grandparents—8% compared to whites' 2%—reported that they were responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren and live in the same household (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). This underscores grandparents' importance in the African American community and calls into question what it means to be a "single" parent. Draper and Harpending (1988) noted that men's presence in households and involvement with children vary cross-culturally, and because of grandparent involvement, African Americans have not only different parenting strategies but also different reproductive strategies as well. For example, because of lack of economically available men, African American women have turned to faster maturation, earlier

reproduction, and less stable adult pair bonds relative to children who grow up in father-present households (Gray, & Anderson 2010). Simply put, if you grow up in a context where developmental cues suggest that high-quality male investment is not necessary for successful reproduction, then it makes sense (from an evolutionary point of view) to hasten puberty and start reproducing earlier (Gray & Anderson 2010). African American male accessibility is low, but African Americans have adapted by forming different concepts of family that stand counterpoint to conceptually formed perceptions of hegemonic masculinity.

Social statistics like the above are important, as African Americans tend to indicate behavioral patterns that lead other minorities and European Americans by 10 to 15 years (Patterson, 1998). That being said, studies that include multiple racial groups rarely present results separately by race (Quinlan, 2003). Most of the research studies that are ethnically centered are new and shed new light on perceived African American male masculinity and the relationship these men have with their children's mother.

### **African American Fathering Responsibility**

In 2000, 72% of African American children lived with a never married mother (Sigle-Rushton, & McLanahan, 2002a). The same year, 47% of African American males between their late 20s and early 30s reported fathering children outside marriage (Lerman & Sorenson, 2000). Here again this may not be as bad as it seems. The research found 20.6% of African American males were married and living with their child's mother within 6 to 10 years after the first nonmarital birth (Lerman & Sorenson, 2000). Thus, lack of economic opportunity or joblessness combined with fathering a child at an early age are some of the many reasons many Black men may choose not to marry right away.

Therefore, African American fathering in regards to education must be understood within the context of economic conditions and role strain, education attainment, self-knowledge family experiences, religiosity, age, and area of residence (Bowman & Forman, 1997; McLoyd et al. 2000; Sullivan, 1993). This echoes other studies that assert that joblessness is a difficult role for African American men and may alienate them from their families and children (Bowman & Forman, 1997; Bowman & Sanders, 1998; Elis, 2009; Wilson, 1987). Understandably, an invisible triangle of maternal partners and other men is an accepted role in African American families that also includes stepfathers (Coley, 2001; Hamer, 1997; Rasheed, 1998).

These findings give evidence to the idea the African American fathering experience changes over time as young men become young, responsible men within intra and intercultural expectations of manhood and fatherhood, just as it does for European Americans (Ray & Hans, 2001). However, because of kinship networks within the African American home that include grandparents, variations of socioeconomic status, habitat location, and varying levels of education, the European traditional family structure may not equate to African American family functioning. In fact, many African American middle-class men place more importance on being a husband than on being a provider (Cazenave, 1984). This is also counterintuitive to hegemonic framed masculinity. Family relationships, pride, spirituality, and humanism are rated higher than traditional traits of power, sexuality, and ownership within the African American community (Hunter & Davis 1992). In turn, Marsiglio, Amato, Day and Lamb (2000) assert that parenting quality skills that are based on the cultural influences above,

combined with relationship with the mother and informal economic provisions, are the keys to positive outcomes for children of African American families.

### **Summary**

As we have seen, the patriarchal world is slowly changing and as a result is redefining what it means to be a father. The change has come in areas from emerging roles and expectations of fathers to reexamining the term stepfather and even in regards to occupation and earning a living. These issues of economics particularly affect working-class and African American men. They are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed and must find new ways of not only earning an income but also supporting the wife and kids. This forces one to create new ways of transmitting wealth such as social capital, for example, preparing children for harsh realities of life such as racism. However, most men enjoy being a father, despite the changing times and reinterpretations of what it meant to be masculine. Discipline and finding ways to balance being a breadwinner and spending time with children is also a concern for both working-class and African American fathers.

Additionally, throughout this chapter, I have discussed contemporary depictions of fathering in the media showing fathers as bumbling and ineffective. This may be a result of hegemonic influences that sustain opposition between the masculinity of the ruling class and working class as well as working class African Americans. Contrary to being emotionally detached and unavailable, men often do show emotion and enjoy fatherhood. Lastly, since a strong sense of ethnic identity can cause males to reject hegemonic-formed versions of masculinity, instilling resilience in ethnic children may be a cultural trait transmitted by African American fathering.

## **Conclusion**

The impact a father has on his children cannot be overstated. Positive fathering has been associated with outcomes in children from higher self-esteem and reduced likelihood of committing a crime to better educational outcomes. These outcomes are independent and separate from maternal involvement. Additionally, there are specific significant positive outcomes for sons and daughters. For African American fathers specifically, they are more likely to help with nonpaid labor such as housework and child care. These trends are in direct opposition to positive depictions of fathers in general and for African American fathers in particular, since both groups are depicted negatively in the media and in research. In fact, many African American fathers not only enjoy fatherhood, they feel that being an involved father is part of their masculine identity.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Methodology**

Based on the previous chapter, we can clearly see the evolution of masculinity has transformed from the role of distant father to breadwinner to the father, or stepfather, as a co-parent (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). This phenomenon has been attributed to women's increased labor force participation, increased involvement of fathers in intact families, and changing family dynamics (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, et al, 2010). This has resulted in research focusing on the amount of time a father spends in the home and child outcomes more than the quality of the time spent (Halme, Åstedt-Kurki & Tarkka, 2009). However, a father in the home may do a child little good simply because he spends time with the child. Additionally, the time a father spends with a child may differ for a variety of reasons, such as the amount of time available to spend with a child based on the amount of time he spends on his job, his cultural or religious background, and the way he finds time to influence his children's educational outcomes. In other words, the substantive quality of the interaction between child and father that is important for positive development may be based on a combination of his social economic status, religious culture, and concepts of gender responsibility of masculinity. This gap in the literature begs for voices from silenced and marginalized groups to tell us how they negotiate their masculine identities in relationship to their identities of being a father and providing educational opportunities for their children.

### **Research Questions**

From a researcher's perspective, I adopt a nuanced and complex position that acknowledges masculine identity as multifaceted and socially constructed around



multiple contexts. Numerous obstacles may restrict African American fathers from being effective fathers under traditional hegemonic performances of masculinity. Nevertheless, contemporary social conditions have forged new ways to create education outcomes for their children. In addition, it is possible that African American fathers must construct identities separate from the media to inform their fathering. These socialization factors suggest research is needed that explores the three following questions:

**RQ 1** How do African American fathers perceive their fathering involvement in regards to their children's educational outcomes?

**RQ 2** What are the perceptions of the influence of African American fathers' masculinity on their children?

**RQ 3** How do African American fathers demonstrate their influence and involvement?

## **Research Paradigm**

### **Interpretive Paradigm**

**Through the lenses of black fathers.** The goal of this study is to understand the phenomenon of Black fathering involvement in regards to educational outcomes in the words of African American fathers. This goal is most suited within the "philosophy, strategies, and intentions of the interpretive research paradigm" (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007, p. 613). This perspective is based on the epistemology of idealism, that knowledge is understood as a social construction to interpret the social world (Higgs, 2001). With this goal and perspective in mind, the theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity was used to support the investigative approach of hermeneutic phenomenology that seeks to

understand the essence of a phenomenon and a participant's experience as opposed to merely predicting the person's behavior.

The goal is to amplify the voices of African American fathers who suffer from restrictive constraints of hegemonic masculinity, changes in the workforce, and few supportive positive representations in the media but who are still working hard in the world and who are successfully raising children with little or no models of support.

## **Methodology**

### **Statement of the Problem**

The interrelated influences of masculinity that are changing the meaning of fatherhood are issues related to the economy, such as the increase of women in the workforce, decline in the number and proportion of male skilled labor and the reduced purchasing power of the male wage. The introduction of women in the workforce has caused mothers to be gone from home more, allowing less time for parenting and subsequently shifting more home duties to men. The new division of labor has forced a change in the perceptions of masculinity. The ability to earn a wage has dramatically affected ethnic and middle class male workers and the heteronomy of being able to be a breadwinner. In the African American Community, Black women are not only earning more than African American men, more than 70% of African American households are run by single African American women (Hymowitz, 2005; Morgan, 2000). Consequently, working class and ethnic minority men, two groups historically affected by economic fluctuations, find that definitions of being a good father based on being a provider are inadequate and not inclusive of their realities. It is my hope that research

that is inclusive of new frameworks of masculinity will be a step towards new directions of inclusiveness.

### **Research Design**

**Hermeneutics** is a “research methodology aimed at producing rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of selected phenomena in the life world of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively” (Smith, 1997, p. 80). The first word “hermeneutic” is a Greek term for a continuously reflective process with origins in religious interpretations. The hermeneutic process is more interested in understanding an experience and involves four steps: pre-understanding, understanding, sensitivity, and the fore-conception of completeness and language (Nåden, 2010).

**Phenomenological** research designs typically consist of interviews with up to 10 participants in an attempt to understand the essence of a phenomenon from the participants' perceptions (Hein & Austin, 2001). Van Manen describes phenomenological research as hermeneutic research to develop a rich or dense description of a phenomenon in a specific context (van Manen, 1997). This approach typically involves an interview analysis or observation. Combined, the two interrelated terms of hermeneutics and phenomenology coalesce into a method that does more than just explain an event but understands its process. This study suggests using a hermeneutic phenomenological research design to study the essence of African American fatherhood based on the interrelated factors of fathering involvement and educational outcomes in faith-based institutions.

This study employed three interrelated data collecting methods: 1) interviews, 2) video clip reflection, and, 3) field observation session. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data on fathers' perceived views on changing roles of masculinity and their perceived influence on their children's educational outcomes. Video clip reflections were used to analyze how fathers inform their masculinity counter to media influences. Field observations were used to collect data on the praxis of fathering involvement. I used interview profiles, coded interviews, observation notes, and field notes for triangulation. Participants' number of years as a fathering influence, the process by which they became a father, children they influence, relationship with the mother, career levels, SES, life experiences, motivations for being a fathering figure, and goals for their children were data to be obtained. In addition, types of fathering activities and the artifacts that African American fathers experience as well as produce with their children were potential additional data that were sought. Although the definition of fathering includes any male fathering influence, the research design was restricted to African American biological fathers and African American stepfathers for a more detailed analysis. Research investigations of fathering involvement of grandfather, uncles, cousins, and other male influences will be suggested in the recommendations for future research.

### **Participants**

African American fathers were either biological African American fathers or African American stepfathers who were between the ages of 18 and 52. I interviewed 11 African American fathers living in an urban community in the Southwest U.S. Information from two of the interviewed fathers was discarded because they exceeded the age limit. Three

of the remaining fathers were from a Methodist church; two were Sunni Muslims; two were Nation of Islam Muslims; one was Catholic; and one was Baptist. Two of the fathers were single fathers, and one father was a grandfather. Six of the aforementioned fathers viewed the video reflection clips. I also conducted seven fathering observation sessions. Four observations were conducted at a Boys and Girls Club, one at a Baptist church, one at a football game, one in a mentorship program, and one in-home observation.

### **Participant Selection**

My intention was to post fliers at several faith-based institutions in a Southern U.S. urban city to seek participants. Since African Americans typically attend Black churches (Wilcox & Gomex, 1990), it was logical to assume four separate religious faith-based institutions would be the most likely place to find intersecting groups of African Americans with different incomes, education, occupations, and incomes. Second Baptist, First A.M.E. (Methodist), St. James (Catholic) and Muhammad Mosque 75 (Nation of Islam) were the intended sites. These sites were selected from neighborhoods in Southern, Nevada, the area with the highest concentration of African Americans (ERSys, 2011). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), in 2000 African Americans were 9.7% of the total population in Nevada, and 7.5% of the total population in Las Vegas, mostly North Las Vegas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Many African Americans attend faith-based institutions, which includes religious community centers.

The interest and the response by officials at each institution were so enthusiastic that participants were recommended to me without having to post a single flier. The

participants were selected from snowball recommendations. A detailed copy of the intended participant recruitment notice is in Appendix B.

**Site of research.** The interviews and video clip reflections were conducted in the participant fathers' homes, coffee shops, library, and a community mentorship office. Four observations were conducted at a Boys and Girls Club, one at a Baptist church, one at a football game, one in a mentorship community center program office, and one in home observation.

Community centers are known to be socially influential in urban areas (Vidal, 2001). Just as importantly, research suggests that African Americans in the U.S. are more likely to attend religious services than any other ethnic group (Pew Forum, 2009). Additionally, African Americans typically attend churches in which most members are Black (Wilcox & Gomex, 1990). This meant that using local organizations and religious organizations both for participant recruitment facilitated the widest intercultural range of SES, class, and education levels of African American fathers.

Although a significant component, religion is not the focus of this study. African American religious institutions are vehicles of empowerment and serve as a counter narrative to prejudicial social conditions and as a source of resistance to cultural assimilation (Ammerman, 2005). Therefore, it is likely that any sample of African Americans from most any local network location will likely include African American fathers who attend a religious institution.

Participants were informed that all interview materials will be kept in a locked drawer in my office (CEB 367) for no more than three years. Each participant was given a consent form to sign and told that participation was voluntary and could be terminated at

any time without penalty. Each participant was also given a code number and later a pseudonym with all data reported in aggregate form to avoid any possible identification in future publications. All data and recorded interviews will be stored in a locked drawer in an office in the Department of Teaching and Learning and destroyed three years after completion of the study.

### **Instruments**

There is only one known quantitative fathering involvement scale (Finley & Schwartz, 2004). However, a qualitative adaptation of the scale was used to help formulate discussion questions. The original quantitative study was from both an adolescent and adult child-centered approach in conjunction with a questionnaire. The new qualitative adapted method was used to conceptualize discussion questions specifically from a father's perspective.

Interviews lasted approximately one and a half to two hours. As Friesen (2010) suggests, I started with the least sensitive questions first to help establish rapport. I then asked the men more detailed questions about their children, their relationship with their children, their beliefs about fatherhood, and their fathering behavior. I next asked specific questions about challenges they face as African American fathers. When needed during the interview process, I revised my questions in order to make the questions more relevant to fathering involvement. In addition, I paid close attention to my department, the verbal and nonverbal presentations that may unintentionally influence responses (Friesen 2010). Interviews were recorded on a portable digital recorder and transcribed. Interviewees did not receive compensation for completing the interview. After all of the interviews were conducted and transcribed, they were left for three days to clear my mind

(Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This is directly in line with hermeneutic phenomenology analysis.

### **Stage I: Interview Process**

I conducted nine semi-structured interviews of African American fathers. Before the beginning of each interview, I familiarized myself with the interview questions and the research goals of the interview process. At the beginning of each interview session, I clearly explained to each participant the purpose of the study and my goals. I told them I was looking for information on what African American fathers do to help their children get ahead in school. I clearly outlined the IRB procedures, which included a follow-up meeting where they have the opportunity to look over the transcripts of our conversation to check for accuracy or to make corrections or to engage in a member check at the end of the study (Merriam, 1998). Member checking is a “way of finding out whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants’ experiences” (Curtin & Fossey, 2007, p. 92) and is best conducted when the interpreted pieces are presented as themes and patterns that emerge from the data and not just from transcripts alone (Creswell, 2009). I also asked the participants for permission to record the interview. Once the participants signed the interview and audio interview forms, I proceeded with the interview. Three main interview questions with possible follow-up interview questions were used as an instrument based on Rubin and Rubin’s *Qualitative Responsive Interviewing Methods* (2005, p. 143). A full description can be found in Appendix C. I continued the interview as long as I was gaining useful information (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

Throughout the interview, I allowed the informants enough time to answer the questions in whatever way they wanted. I attempted to show empathy and trust since



interviewees are less likely to answer questions honestly if some degree of rapport is not established first (Friesen, 2010). I interrupted or probed only when I needed clarification or more information. Although each interview was slightly different, I made a conscious effort to be hospitable, understanding, and empathetic whenever I could. At the conclusion of each interview, I did a short debriefing as much as time allowed. Interviewing is a social relationship that must be nurtured, sustained, and ended gracefully (Dexter, 1970). While transcribing the interviews, I left out vocalized pauses such as “uhh”, “umm,” and “ooh.” In addition, I left out parts of the conversation that did not relate directly to the interview, such as portions where I attempted to build rapport and trust.

### **Stage II: Video Clip Reflections**

At the beginning of each video reaction session, I reviewed the video reaction questions and the research goals. I played approximately two minutes of three video clips for each of the participant African American fathers: one of Jim Anderson and the television show *Father Knows Best*, one of Bill Cosby’s *The Cosby Show* and one of *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven*. *Father Knows Best* and *The Cosby Show* are far and away the two most recognized and popular television shows in American history (Frazer, & Frazer, 1993). *Father Knows Best* first aired in the ’50s. *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* was a more recent show.

Television, family and fatherhood are important frameworks to analyze, because there has been at least one television sitcom in the Nielsen’s top 20 per season for the past 50 years (Lackmann, 2003). The *Father Knows Best* episode selected depicts Jim Anderson and his family dealing with a misunderstanding over dinner. The *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* episode depicts James Camdon dealing with marijuana use. *The Cosby Show* episode shows Bill

Cosby dealing with a bad report card. Video clip responses were based on a Paulo Freire's (2007) dialectic method of understanding social injustice through the language of the oppressed.

Responses to the video clips were coded. A full description of the video clip reflections can be found in Appendix D. At the end of the reflection process, I provided a short debriefing that included looking over my initial notes. I also provided an opportunity for a member check (Merriam, 1998) after themes and patterns were established from the data.

### **Stage III: Field Observations**

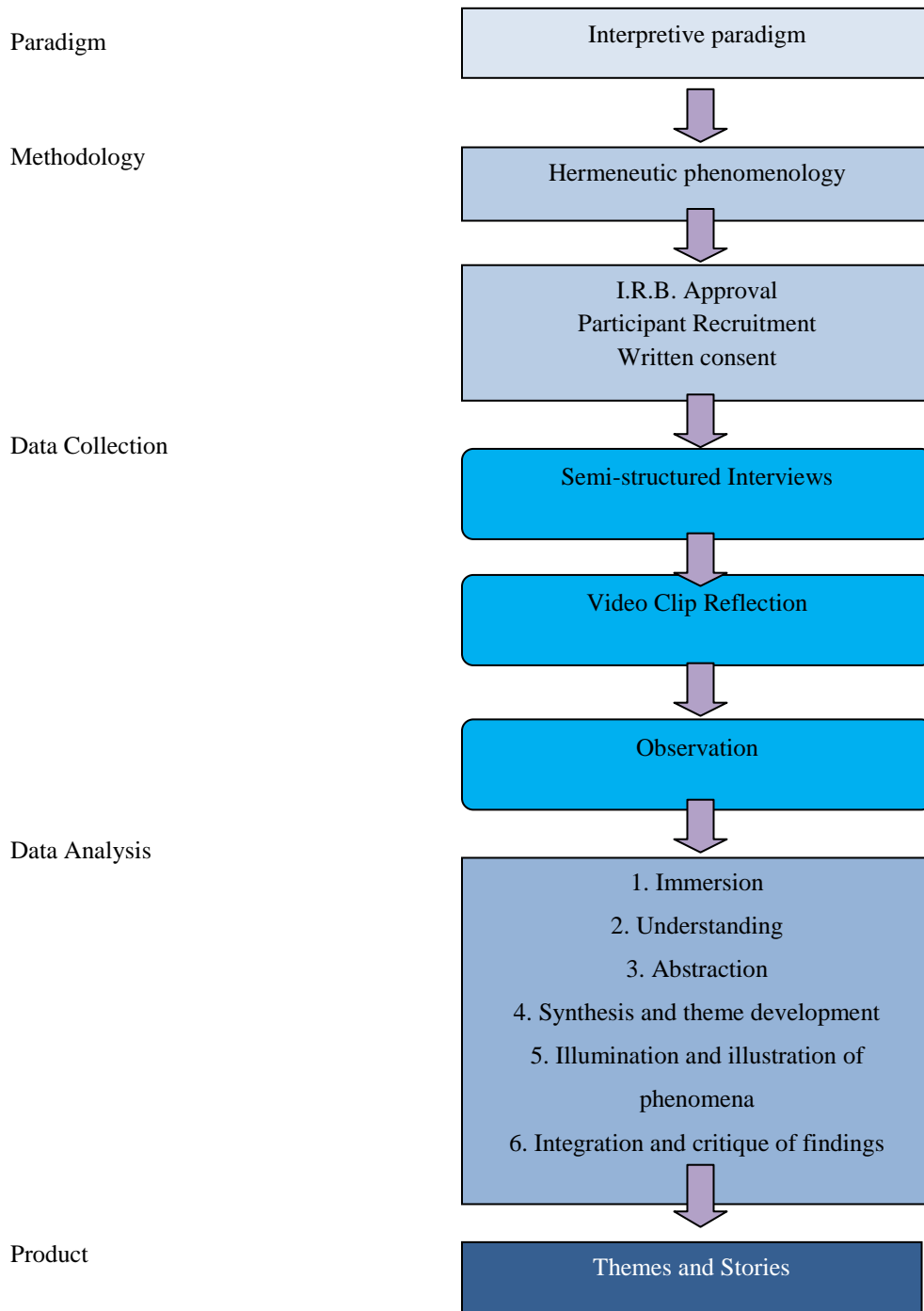
For “data not available” during the interview process and video clip reflection process, I conducted both a participant and a non-participant field observation. At the beginning of each field observation, I familiarized myself with the research goals of the study as well as the environment in which I was to conduct the observation. Specific attention was paid to African American fathers and their fathering interaction with their children. The observations were recorded and field notes of the activities were coded. The participants, children, location, and activity were all documented. I also provided an opportunity for a member check (Merriam, 1998) after themes and patterns were established from the data to the interview participant fathers.

Table 1. Data Sources Used to Explore Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Source Semi structured Interviews	Data Source Video Clip Reactions	Data Source Observations notes and artifacts
<b>RQ 1</b> How do African American fathers perceive their fathering involvement in regards to their children's educational outcomes?	Based on engagement, availability and responsibility as well as hegemonic masculinity, coded, categorized, and placed into themes		
<b>RQ 2</b> What are the perceptions of African American fathers' influence of their masculinity on their children?		Based on age-appropriate video clips of <i>Father Knows Best</i> , <i>7<sup>th</sup> Heaven</i> and <i>The Cosby Show</i> as well as hegemonic masculinity coded, categorized and placed into themes	
<b>RQ 3</b> How do African American fathers demonstrate their influence on their children's educational outcomes and involvement?			Based on educational capital, social capital, and cultural capital. May include father child activities, father-son trophies, father daughter dances etc. Coded, categorized and placed into themes.

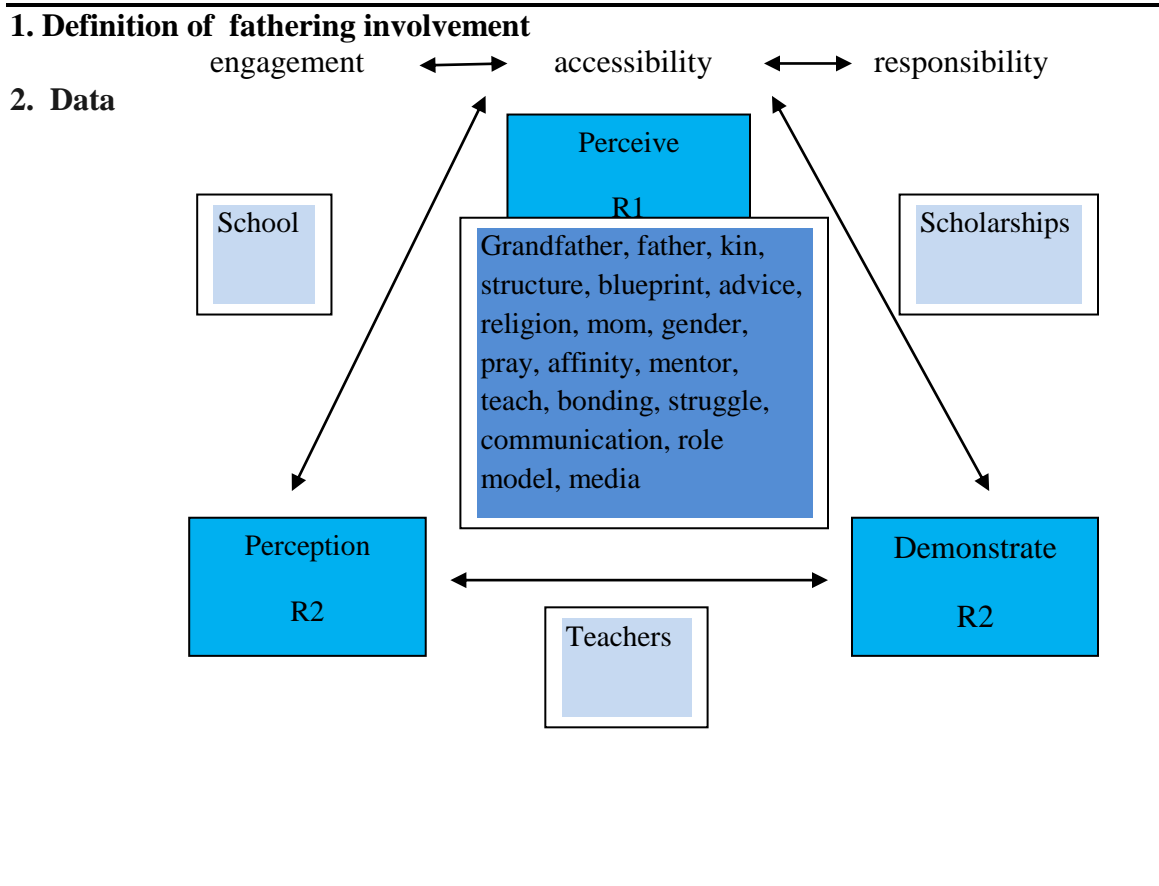
### Data Analysis

Ajjawi, and Higgs (2007) describe hermeneutic phenomenology analysis as a process that requires at least six steps. Step 1 includes immersion; step 2, understanding; step 3, abstraction; step 4, synthesis and themes development; step 5, illumination and illustration of phenomena; and step 6, integration and critique of findings within the research and out. These steps appear under Data Analysis in Figure 1.

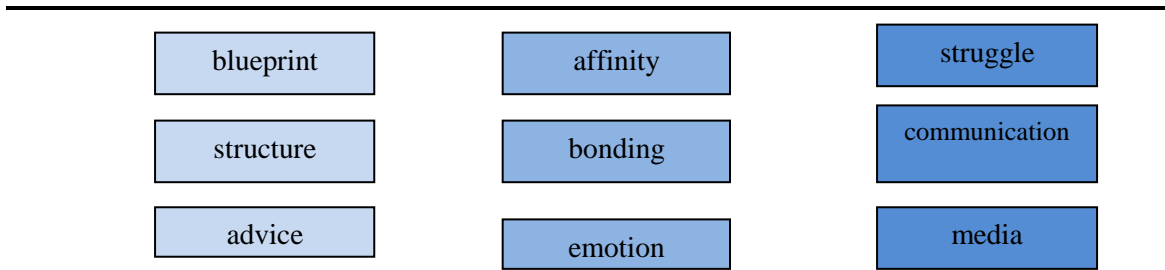


*Figure 1.* Interviews, video reactions and observation field notes were all triangulated in the discussion section.

*Immersion* entails organizing the data into texts, reading of the texts and interpretations of the text in a way that leads to effective coding. *Understanding* identifies participants' constructs and initial themes. *Abstraction* identifies sub-themes. Van Manen (1990) suggests three processes for isolating thematic statements: "the holistic or sententious approach; the selective or highlighting approach; and the detailed or line-by-line approach" (p. 93). *Synthesis and theme* development requires grouping into sub themes, interpretation, and elaboration of themes. *Illumination* reconstructs interpretations into a whole and relate as well as link the themes based on literature. *Integration and critique* solicit participants' responses to transcription and initial conclusions before final interpretation of research findings.



### 3. Codes



### 4. Themes

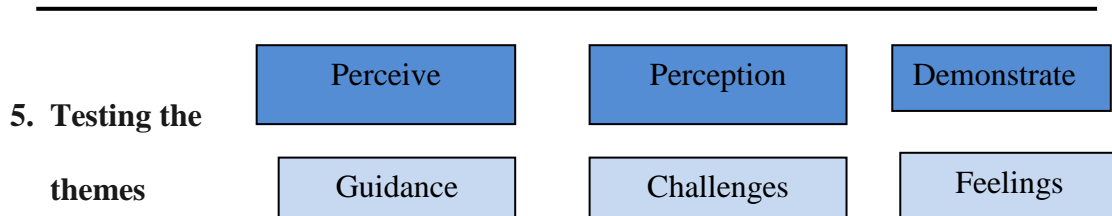


Figure 2. Data analysis map. The numbers on the left represent a five step process.

After the final interview and video clip reflection was conducted, both were transcribed and left for three days to clear my mind (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). While no visual representation can fully represent the cognitive process and intuitive leaps that are necessary for any analysis (Harry, Sturges & Klinger, 2005), it is my hope that the model in Figure 2 shows the methodology used to organize the data used in this study.

**Level 1. Open coded definitions.** The definition of fathering involvement, engagement, accessibility and responsibility had been previously defined by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985, 1987), and the interviews were coded based on individual answers to those definitions in the profiles.

**Level 2. Data.** Next, items, words, and phrases that seemed interesting and pertinent were underlined. Interesting and pertinent terms included grandfather, father, kin,

structure, blueprint, advice, religion, mom, gender, pray, affinity, mentor, teach, bonding, struggle, communication, model, media.

Repeated words: School, scholarship, teachers.

**Level 3. Codes.** The resulting interesting and pertinent terms were coded into nine categories: blueprint, structure, advice, affinity, bonding, emotion, struggle, communication, and media.

**Level 3. Themes.** The 9 codes of blueprint, structure, advice, affinity, bonding, emotion, struggle, communication, and media were analyzed to see if any patterns emerged. The remaining codes were placed into themes of guidance, feelings, and challenges.

**Level 4. Testing the Themes.** After testing the themes of guidance, feelings, and challenges, each theme was interrelated with the original definitions of engagement accessibility and responsibility. These themes are each related to fathering involvement in some way, so the test proved to be valid.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the methodology for this study to give a voice to the unsung African American fathers who are indeed caring fathers. Using hermeneutic phenomenology, this study used three interrelated data collecting methods: 1) interviews, 2) video clip reflection, and 3) shadowing fathers during activities. It used faith-based institutions as a reasonable location to identify and recruit African American fathers of different ages, levels of experience in parenting, SES, and education levels for participant selection.

## **Conclusion**

Now that background information on changing roles of masculinity and fatherhood has been provided, a body of previous work in regards to fathering and African American fathers has been established, and both the theoretical and methodological frameworks have been outlined, the data of the study can be reported. The following chapter will provide the story for the essence of African American fathers and how they perceive themselves in regards to their children's educational outcomes, their perceptions of their masculine influences on their children, and how they demonstrate their influence on their children's educational outcomes and involvement voiced in their own words and based on their own actions.



## CHAPTER 4

### Findings

#### Profiles

Direct questions were used in compiling the interview profiles. Open-ended questions from the interviews and video clip reflections were coded and follow this profile section. Observations were used to verify any of the findings of the profiles and video clip reflections.

It is important to note, that at the time of the interviews, which was during the second week of the school year 2011, the school district had switched to a 9-month school system instead of a 12-month track system. This meant that for the first time fathers had their children at home with them for three consecutive months.

What follows next are the interview profiles of each of the participants. I attempted to give a brief overview of each of the interviews so that the reader would have some idea of the participants' background and to enhance the understanding of their personal narratives. Most of the fathers earned between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. Most of the fathers rated themselves a 7 out of 10 as a father. Most of the fathers had at least two children living in the home. All of the fathers were happy to talk about their fathering and shared their hopes, dreams, and fears with me in a most humbling, honest, and thoughtful manner. The following section will include pseudonyms of the interviewed participant fathers, the coded themes of the interview. Those themes are energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father as well as accessibility, responsibility, and engagement. It concludes with a take away statement.

The summaries of the interviews, video-clip reflection and then the findings from the observations sessions follow the profile section.

**Howard: Mentor and Role Model**

**Summary.** Howard is a manager of a telecommunications agency. He identifies as African American. He is 51 and earns between \$50,000 and \$100,000 a year. Howard has one daughter and one granddaughter living in the home. His daughter is 20 and his granddaughter is 4. Howard has an MBA and was thoughtful, reflective and talkative throughout the interview. Howard rates himself a 7 out of 10 as a father. He feels that his wife “has his back” as a father and helps him to have confidence in himself as a father. Most memorable comment: “There’s never enough time and there’s never enough money!”

**Energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father.** He tries to space out his bursts of energy for his family, but feels there is never enough time, never enough money. He does not see any challenges to his masculinity as a father. He feels that having more patience would help make him a better father.

**Accessibility, responsibility, and engagement.** He has been living in the home with both his daughter and granddaughter since they were born. He talks to his daughter, who attends college, about her studies about twice a month. His granddaughter has just started pre-school, so there is not much homework as yet. He did most of the driving when his daughter was in school; currently his granddaughter takes the pre-school bus and her grandmother picks her up.

**Take away.** His mentoring does not stop when his daughter is in college.

**Morehouse: Role Model**

**Summary.** Morehouse works with at-risk teens and coaches both football and basketball (but prefers coaching football). He identifies as African American. He is 42 and earns between \$50,000 and \$100,000 a year. Morehouse has two sons—one stepson and one biological one—living in the home. His stepson is 19 and his biological son is 8. Morehouse has a bachelor's degree and was exuberant and excited to talk about his children and fathering. He even showed me several pictures of his sons sharing that he suggested his oldest son attend summer school in college to help raise his grades. Morehouse rated himself a 10 out of 10 as a. He feels that he became even closer to his wife after they had two miscarriages and that she plays a key role in his ability to be a father. Most memorable comment, "They [kids] know who I am. I have their respect."

**Energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father.** He feels that he has enough energy for his family's needs because he plans ahead for it and works out frequently. He feels no particular challenges to his masculinity and that having more "me" time and a date night with his wife would help him to be a better father.

**Accessibility, responsibility, and engagement.** He has been in the home with his biological son since he was born and he has been in the home with his stepson since he was 7. He had his youngest son do unrequired schoolwork over the summer break. He frequently reads together with his son. His wife is a teacher and handles a lot of the homework, but he helps about twice a week.

**Take away.** Unrequired schoolwork during the summer, counseling a college student to retake a course in the summer to help with grades shows that a stepfather can be an inspiration.

**Fisk: Instills Self Reliance**

Fisk is a union representative, shop steward and single father. He identifies as African American. He is a biological father. He is also a single father. Fisk is 40 and earns between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. He is a biological father of four: a 20-year-old daughter, a 14-year-old son, and a stepfather to a 15-year-old daughter and a 7-year-old daughter. He has lived in the house with all of his children except his son, whose mother disappeared with him for four years of his life but now lives with him. Fisk has no college education. Fisk was thoughtful, emotional, and pained throughout the interview, even crying at times. He rated himself a 7 ½ as a father. He is not currently married and feels the relationship with his children's mother was and still is challenging due to custody battles. However he feels that his current girlfriend is helpful, especially in regards to his children's education. Most memorable comment: "I'm your parent not your friend. But I can be friendly."

**Energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father.**

He feels that he doesn't always have enough energy for his family but gets through it. Fisk feels his masculinity is challenged when his daughters ask him to take them clothes shopping. He feels that having more time to spend with his family would make him a better father. He enjoys the Mother's Day cards he gets on Mother's Day.

**Accessibility, responsibility, and engagement.** He has lived in the home with all of his children since their birth except for his son, who was absent for four years. He helps his children with homework when he can, but checks to see if their homework is completed before school in the morning. His girlfriend also brings over books for the children and helps them with school when she comes over. Fisk has the children turn off

the television until homework is completed. During the summer, he took the children to the library regularly, had them read to him, and took them to tutoring at the church. He checks in with them frequently on their cell phones. He rewards them with video games and clothing they want when they do well in school.

**Take away.** Taking children to the museum and library during the summer when there is no school and making use of the cell phone when he has to work can be effective tools for parenting.

**Clark:** Fathering from the Heart

**Summary.** Clark is 46. He identifies as African American. Clark earns between \$50,000 and \$100,000. He is both a stepfather and a biological father of five children total. A 24-year-old biological daughter is not in the home, and a 23-year-old biological daughter, a 19-year-old biological son, and two stepsons 19 and 16 years old, respectively, live with him. Clark has an undergraduate degree. His oldest daughter graduated from the University of New Mexico. Clark rated himself as average as a father. He was patient and straightforward throughout the interview. He feels that his former wife and current wife are supportive of his role as a father. Most memorable quote: “You can plant the seeds. Whether they take or not...?”

**Energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father.** Clark learned how to be a father by doing the opposite of what his father did. He feels physically stretched sometimes. To help manage his time and energy, he has a family cleaning day once a month and for Sunday dinner everyone has to make a dish. Clark says that he has no challenges to his masculinity, stating that he “has no problems going to the store to buy tampons or whatever.” He states that staying in the word (a religious

saying that means having faith in God and the Bible) and keeping in the church helps him to be a better father. As a father of five, he would like to know more about college scholarships, how to best match colleges with students and how to better plan community service for college acceptance.

**Accessibility, responsibility, and engagement.** Clark helps his children with homework every night, spends various times with each one and buys college, Spanish and high school proficiency books for them. Every child had a different day to spend with dad.

**Take away.** Being raised by a bad father does not necessarily make you a bad father.

**Xavier:** Seeks a More Communal Fatherhood

**Summary.** Xavier is 39, he does not identify as African American because America does not offer African Americans the same opportunities as other Americans. He earns between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. He has four biological sons ages 14, 11, 5 and 2, one stepson age 11, a 22-year-old stepdaughter and a 2-year-old biological daughter. The 2-year-olds are twins. He is not sure if his oldest daughter is still attending college but knows that she was enrolled. Xavier appeared very dejected, frustrated with society and very pained throughout the interview. However, he was also thoughtful and reflective, even laughing occasionally. He does have some postsecondary education. He rates himself a “zero” as a father because he has nothing to compare to. He says the standard is so high you cannot even gauge it. He feels that his wife has a distinct role to his being a father and that too often women in the Black community have to also be the father. Most memorable quote, “The challenge to a man’s masculinity is dealing with a woman while maintaining a position of dominance.”

## **Additional**

### **Energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father.**

Xavier feels strongly that he does not have enough energy for his family. He says that no man can have enough energy for his family and that it takes an entire village, community, and even a nation to meet a family's needs. Xavier feels that society has done a lot to take away the power of the male in the home, and that poses a challenge to all American men's masculinity. He feels that collective organization with other fathers who share a sense of urgency for change in the condition of the African American family would help him to be a better father.

**Accessibility, responsibility, and engagement.** Xavier has lived in the home with all of his children with the exception of his 11-year-old stepson. He talks to his oldest sons, who live out of state, on the phone. His wife is the children's primary homework helper. His oldest live-in 5 year old son does not seem to need help with homework and often finishes in the car before they get home from school. He normally picks up and brings the children to school and uses drive time to turn off the radio and talk to his children about school or anything else. He takes his children to the theater, the arts center, and different activities outside of school during the summer months. He also brings his children to the Mosque for military class, where they learn leadership and community responsibility. In addition, he has his son read for 30 minutes a day, carefully choosing books for him to read.

**Take away.** Being a good father requires support from the entire community.

**Hampton:** Spends Quality Time

**Summary.** Hampton is the custodian and head of security at a church. He is 47 years old and makes between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. He is a stepfather who witnessed his 10-year-old step-son's birth. Hampton has graduated from high school and he rates himself a 9 out of 10 father, saying you can always know more. Hampton was open and enthusiastic to talk about himself as a father. He feels that in order for a wife to be helpful to her husband as his wife is, they need to "be on the same accord." Most memorable quote: "I can sense when something is wrong [with my son]. I sense when he is feeling hurt. I can tell when he wants to talk. And that's a special father and son bond."

**Energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father.** Hampton feels that he has enough energy in his life, because he works out and has God in his life. He feels that the challenges to his masculinity are the same as any parent: corruption. He feels that the media is the biggest challenge to his masculinity, reporting that, "There are so many things out there, if you don't stay on your p's and q's, it is unbelievable [what can happen to children]." He does not have any specific ideas of what would make him a better father, but feels that more education about raising children would be helpful.

**Accessibility, responsibility, and engagement.** Hampton feels that living in the home with both a mother and father makes his son feel more secure. He does not have any specific time limits with his son, just quality time. He sits with his son while he does his homework in case he has any questions, until his son asks to go out and play or to watch TV. He also talks to his son as soon as he gets in the car on the ride home from school. He asks, "How was your day? Did you have any problems at school and how did



the teacher treat you today?’ He says he does that so he can nip any problems in the bud, by talking to the teacher right away.

**Take away.** “I have a role that I have to live up to so I try to be the best that I can be so that my son can see that he can be the best that he can be.”

**Grambling:** Not a Hypocrite

**Summary.** Grambling is a direct Internet marketer who identifies as African American. He is 42 and makes between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. Grambling is a biological father of five, one of whom is not by his current wife. He has a 16-year-old daughter, a 5-year-old girl who is home schooled, a 14-year-old girl, a 12-year-old, and 2-year-old son. He has an undergraduate degree and was poignant and humorous throughout the interview. He feels especially close to his wife, saying they have been together since they were both 18 and that a good relationship with his wife makes him look good in front of his children. He rates himself a 7 out of 10 as a father. Most memorable quote: “I don’t drink, don’t smoke, don’t chase women, don’t chase men so I ain’t got no problems”

**Energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father.** Grambling feels that he has enough energy for his family, because he works out. While he did not watch the video clips, Grambling did identify with *Father Knows Best*. He feels that the challenges to his masculinity are the media, particularly hip-hop icons such as Nicki Minaj, Drake, and Lil Wayne. He would like to know how to be more approachable to his daughters and sons in general and feels this would help him to be a better father.

**Accessibility, responsibility, and engagement.** Grambling has lived with all of his children in the home since birth with the exception of an eight-year separation from his wife, which whom he has since reconciled. He had one child during that separation. While separated from his wife and other children, he kept in contact with them over the phone. He feels that living in the home with his children helps them to know the male influence of a father. Grambling does not use his cell phone to talk to his children as much as the other fathers but does use walks to school as quality time to talk to his children. His wife home-schools one of his children and helps his 12-year-old son with homework. Grambling indicated that he helps him out more and is closer to him than the others. He has his 12-year-old son read at least a half-an-hour a day and allows him to choose his own books. He also helped his daughter build a homecoming float. He meets his children's teachers on the first day of school. He says that being proactive and allowing children to learn in their own way instead of forcing them are keys to his parenting. For instance, he gives his children money for book fairs and lets them pick out which books they want. No one is allowed to eat until he gets home. Dinnertime is used to talk and catch up on the day. He says he is constantly in their ear, asking them questions about what they learned in school. Grambling used to smoke marijuana until his daughter told him a few years ago that she hated him because he was "nothin' but a weed head!" He stopped smoking the next day.

**Take away.** – Kids hate hypocrites, and they can only learn what they see.

**Wilberforce:** Measures Success by his Children's Accomplishments

**Summary.** Wilberforce is a 47-year-old single father, business administrator, behavioral counselor, and business consultant and earns between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a

year. He identifies as African American and is a biological father of two sons, ages 6 and 18. His youngest son is in first grade reading at the second grade level; his oldest son is a freshman in college and graduated high school with a 4.3. Wilberforce has an undergraduate degree and was thoughtful with short and quick answers, as if he had spent a lot of time thinking about being a father. He rates himself as an 8 as a father. He agrees that his son's mothers play a role in his fatherhood, but also said that he did not allow them or anything else to "prevent him from being a father." Most memorable quote: "Education is an equalizer for African Americans."

**Energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father.**

Wilberforce feels that he has enough energy for his family, because he tries to save energy for them. One of his strategies is to make sure that his youngest son has a play friend so Wilberforce does not have to expend all of his energy. He does not see any challenges to his masculinity; he does not allow others to define him. He feels since his oldest child made it into college on an academic scholarship, he pretty much has things under control. However, he would like to make more money so that he could spend more time with his children on foreign and domestic trips to help them learn social capital.

**Accessibility, responsibility, and engagement.** Wilberforce has lived in the home with all of his children since birth. However, he had each son with a different mother. While he does not feel especially emotionally close to the mothers of his children, he says that he never did anything to jeopardize his relationship as a father to them. He feels that living in the home with his children has helped them in terms of providing stability, reassurance, peace of mind, and focus. He helps his children with their homework as necessary. He has a rule that his sons must do their homework before anything else. His

6-year-old is reading at a second-grade level and his oldest son graduated high school with a 4.3 GPA. He helps his children with their ABCs, math, reading, and with science fair projects. Wilberforce goes to his son's schools to meet their teachers. He drives his youngest son to school every day and drove his oldest son to college, forcing him to listen to National Public Radio (NPR) on the way. He says that listening to NPR helps children learn how to have conversations with adults. He also makes sure that he provides social capital, such as conversation skills, to his sons.

**Take away.** He tries to put his children in educational environments so they can learn how to implement life plans.

**Jackson:** Instills Good Life Choices

Jackson is 37 years old, is in maintenance, and makes between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. He is a biological father of three girls and one boy. He has a 17-year-old daughter who is a senior in high school, an 11-year-old daughter who is a freshman in middle school, a 6-year-old daughter in first grade, and a 16-year-old son in high school. He is interested in getting a math tutor for his oldest daughter. His youngest daughter is being considered for early promotion to second grade. Jackson has secondary education from various technical schools. He rates himself as a 7 out of 10 as a father. His happiest memories about being a father are birthdays. He feels especially close to his wife, saying that they have been together since they were in high school. Most memorable quote: "I don't want pats on the back for what I'm supposed to be doing."

**Energy, challenges to masculinity, and what would help him be a better father.** Jackson feels that he has enough energy for his family, because he is still young. He feels that being a man can indeed be challenging at times, but at the end of the day he is

still “the man of the house.” Jackson feels that being more sensitive and learning how to communicate more and/or better with his children would help him be a better father.

**Accessibility, responsibility, and engagement.** Jackson has lived in the same home with all of his children since birth. He feels that living in the same home gives him the opportunity to share his male perspectives and life experiences. The children have to do homework first. He says that his wife is the primary homework helper in the house. She also gets helps from her 16-year-old daughter, and the children mostly have their homework completed before he gets home. Jackson says that all of his daughters are on track in school. His son is doing all right in school but has no plans, college or otherwise. He indicated that he helps with the chores, washes clothes, cooks on the grill, etc. His time with his children varies. However, he says they pray together and have a family meeting or dinner together almost every night. He tries to have the things that the children need at home, and hardly lets them go outside, because, he says, times are so different now. Jackson takes his children to the park, amusement parks, and frequent trips to Los Angeles to visit their grandmother. He feels emotionally close to his children, because he’s held them since birth.

**Take away.** Life is about choices, and we all have the choice to do right or wrong. Being a father is the right thing to do.

### **Interview Themes**

The following interviews are organized into the overarching themes of guidance, feelings and challenges blueprint and the sub themes of blueprint, structure, advice, affinity bonding, emotion, struggle, communication and media. It concludes with an additional data section. Each of these themes are then later discussed in relation to how

the fathers perceived their fathering involvement in regards to their children's educational outcomes.

### **Theme I - Guidance**

**Blueprint.** "I take my son with me everywhere. If there is a place I shouldn't take him, then I probably shouldn't be there either!" (Grambling). I started with this quote because it underscores the theme of wanting to set a good example. The interviewed fathers wanted to mentor and role model and to "give a visual picture to not waste time" (Morehouse). In other words, the participants wanted to model good examples of what a father should be. That included not arguing in front of their mothers, setting standards of how girls see their fathers and showing boys how to behave. One father, Grambling has a rule that no one can eat dinner until he gets home. Other fathers also used family dinnertime as a strategic method to model appropriate fathering behavior and to instill the importance of family. The fathers wanted their children to see that they had a strong father in their lives. Although the fathers tried to model what it meant to have religion in their lives, most of the fathers did not force or push religion on their children. They tried to model self-sufficiency and confidence in life and in school. The fathers with college degrees (all except two) not only helped their children with their homework and with advice in school, they also continued to mentor to their children when they were in college, often involving them or showing them what college was like while they were going to graduate school. They buy clothing with their college alma mater's logo so that their children know that "Daddy ain't playin'" (Grambling) when it comes to education. One father, Morehouse, says that, "What I like best is that they [his children] know who I am!" He practices what he preaches—a father who went to college and got a good job

who takes his children with him to work. The African American fathers in some fashion expressed that they did not want to be hypocrites.

**Structure.** “I pin their ears back!” (Jackson). It is reasonable to question why I would start with an antiquated term for an aggressive or stern talking-to in a section about structure. I do so because Jackson does it consistently as part of his role as a father. Consistency, in the words of Wilberforce, means “consistency brings out values, reassurance, peace of mind, and focus.” Most of the fathers had strict television policies and all of the fathers had a policy that required children to do homework before anything else, with the exception of a snack. The participant fathers frequently said that they were strict, often more strict than their children’s teachers. One father even has his children take pictures of their homework on their cells phones so he could verify it was done when he was at work and unable to check their work in person. Participant fathers also helped to establish and enforce rules for the household and held their children accountable for doing their chores. Doing homework routinely is a part of the rules for the participant fathers. Making sure that their children have strong educational foundations that include educational environments such as zoos and museums is also part of their family routines. Structure for many of the fathers was their way of providing stability and support to their children in a way their own fathers failed. Many of the fathers saw structure as being supportive and resisted being labeled as a disciplinarian. Hampton saw his structured routine of asking how his son how did in school and how the teacher treated him that day as opportunities to give gentle advice instead of discipline.

**Advice.** Morehouse uses opportunities like drive time as teachable moments on subjects such as dealing with kids who distract his children by talking in school. Howard

sees himself as a “dispenser of knowledge and wisdom about life choices” to his oldest daughter. Fisk makes sure that his children know how to multiply percentages so they will know they are getting paid correctly when they get jobs. All of the participant fathers gave advice to their children who were going to college or trade school or thinking about it. In fact, Wilberforce consistently forced his son to listen to National Public Radio (NPR) on the way to high school so that he had the cultural capital necessary to talk to adults and to carry a conversation. It paid off. One of his son’s college interview questions was, Do you listen to NPR?

Creating opportunities to give advice requires both reflection and forethought. However, this does not mean that participant fathers used only their minds and not their hearts. Not only did all of the participant fathers express some form of emotion, they also expressed affirming emotional bonds and desires for closeness or affinity.

## **Theme II - Feelings**

**Affinity.** The fathers interviewed all showed a willingness to demonstrate their love for their children. Protecting against unsavory suitors for their daughters, cooking on the grill, or just being present when their children needed to talk were all activities these African American fathers participated in. Interviewed fathers also went to schools to talk to teachers to show that they care about their children and their education. They went and talked to their children’s coaches or coached the team themselves. Fathers also visited classrooms and even volunteered for playground duty. They wanted to be contributors not only to their education but to their personal growth as well. “I want to make my child understand the world, but yet she doesn’t have to experience [the bad things in] the world” Howard said. Grambling even stopped smoking marijuana as a



strategy to get closer to his daughter when she objected to his lifestyle. These expressions of involvement as affinity-seeking behaviors have a way of connecting children to their fathers. Affinity seeking is also a method of bonding.

**Bonding.** “Whispering in the child’s ear when they are born helps to sooth them and gets them to stop crying,” Wilberforce said. A father who witnesses the birth of a child and then holds it establishes a “bonding presence, interaction and engagement and caring for one another creates closeness” Xavier said. Presence in the delivery room signaled the first emotional bond for most of the fathers. This bond can be so strong that children can fear disappointing their father in school or may even walk away from bad situations because they know their father was coming to pick them up. Clark, said, “My son and I are best friends.” Hampton said, “I can sense when something is wrong. I can sense when his feelings is hurt. I can tell when he wants to talk. And that’s a special father and son bond.” Fathers are close to their daughters, too. They reported buying tampons and Pamprin for their daughters and even helping to build floats for them during homecoming week in high school. The father-son bond is so strong with these fathers that it is impossible to say if they are more bonded to their sons than their daughters.

**Emotion.** “I was very emotional when she got pregnant [in high school]. That was a really tough one because there was joy or frustration disappointment all wrapped up into one,” Howard said. Howard also expressed regret that he was not more patient with his daughter and wanted her to know that, “there was nothing that she could do that would cause a love to stop.” Fisk was so emotional recreating the circumstances surrounding his daughter’s brain tumor, he was crying during the interview. Some of the emotions were from joyous occasions. Clark laughed when he told the story of when his son shot a

three pointer and was so shocked that he made it he just stood there a few seconds while the game kept going around him. The fathers reported that graduations, birthdays, and accomplishments such as singing the national anthem, awards for performance on the job, and winning talent shows were sources of great joy for them. “The children come to me for comfort or a hug and tell me that they love me or a hug and a kiss when I walk through the door; Daddy! Daddy” (Xavier). Fisk especially enjoys the Mothers Day cards he gets on Mother’s Day.

Sometimes happy, sometimes sad, these fathers who were so open and candid showed a range of emotion that is not normally attributed to men. In sum, these reflections of fathering are all examples of affinity seeking, bonding, and emotion. However, they are also markers of challenges fathers go through when they express feelings of both joy and pain.

### **Theme III – Challenges**

**Struggle.** “I do try to balance it all. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it can be a challenge. I have a superhero complex, trying to be the mighty Thor and save everybody,” Fisk said. This comment was expressed while Fisk was talking about his daughter’s brain tumor experience. It reflects the frustration of helplessness he felt during the ordeal. However, after he described the steps he had to go through to get his daughter re-admitted into school after her absences from her illness, he punctuated the story with his satisfactory exclamation, “I did my job!” Fisk’s daughter is now in college. Clark, Morehouse and Grambling asserted that their sons had trouble dealing with peer pressure and applying themselves. Other fathers reported they also feel helpless when their children are sick. The participant fathers also report of the struggles

they had to go through for custody, visitation rights with their children, and separations from their wives (Fisk, Grambling, Xavier, and Wilberforce). Wilberforce also detailed his thoughts about wanting to “give his son choices because there are so many things that can limit African American males.” Xavier agrees with that assessment, saying that “being an African in America is a struggle.” However, none of the fathers expressed resentment toward the struggles of fatherhood. “It can be challenging, but I am still the man in this house when it all boils down to it” (Jackson). In fact, most continue to be involved with their children, using the phone to communicate during times of long-term separation.

**Communication.** While some fathers use the phone to communicate during long-distance separation, Fisk uses his phone for short-distance communication, like checking in on his children and tucking them into bed by phone when he is working late at night. Most of the fathers used traveling to and from school as times to communicate, either when walking or, as Wilberforce and Xavier put it, “drive time.” All of the fathers report some type of restriction on the television, which is a method of communicating that education is more important than the media.

**Media.** “The media tells lies through vision” (Fisk). Fisk also feels the media “separates the parent’s power, wants the child to be as much as a consumer as the parent.” Xavier also agrees with that point of view asserting that, because of the media, “it’s hard to raise a child without a mother or father [protection].” Interview participant fathers agree that hip-hop videos and the girls in them set bad examples and do not impart family values. However, Jackson says, “The media shouldn’t take the place of a father or family.” For that reason, Xavier downloads all of the movies his children can watch

anytime they want, but no television without his approval. “I’ve noticed that the less television watched, the production of the household goes up” Xavier said.

**Additional data.** Most of the fathers reported the mothers of their children were crucial to their role as a father in terms of both access and support. “The mother and father need to be on the same accord” (Clark). Additionally, grandfathers provided examples of masculinity and fatherhood. Fisk reported this grandmother was an example of a good ‘father.’

### **Video Clip Reflections**

The following video clip reflections are organized into the themes based on identified, model and example. Each of these themes are then discussed in relation to the interviewed fathers perceptions of their masculine influence on their children.

Howard *identified* with all of the video clips in some fashion or another but especially connected with the last two, *Bill Cosby* and *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven*. Howard did not *model* his masculinity and fatherhood from the media, instead relying on his own father. What he learned and how he and handled his daughter’s teenage pregnancy is the best *example* he can think of that represents him as a father.

Morehouse *identified* with *Father Knows Best* and *The Cosby Show*. He *modeled* his masculinity and fatherhood by “what *not* to do from my father.” Morehouse feels that his everyday interactions serve as *examples* of being a good father.

Fisk *identified* with all of the clips to some degree. Fisk did not *model* himself after any of the video clips, relying instead with his grandfather’s influence. Fisk uses his detailed record keeping of what he spends on his children for the court system as an *example* of what a good father he is.

Xavier is not happy with society and did not *identify* with any of the video clips because they do not represent his own experiences. Xavier did not *model* either his masculinity or his fatherhood from his father, stating that his family upbringing as a Jehovah's Witness was the reason he turned to the Nation of Islam. Xavier could not think of an *example* or idea that represented him as a good father.

Wilberforce *identified* with all of the video clips. However, Wilberforce *modeled* his masculinity and fathering more from his own father than the media. Wilberforce said he is the *example* of what it means to be a good father.

### **Observation Sessions**

The following observation sessions are organized into categories of date, time and location. Each of these observation notes are then discussed in relation to the self-reported level of fathering involvement of the fathers, accessibility, responsibility and engagement place and location.

**Observation # 1.** August 20, 10-11:30 a.m., at Second Church Children and Family Day.

**Dillard** = Many men were present, though it was hard to identify fathers in particular. The two fathers who were identified were facilitators of the event. I was able to identify one other father. He arrived early, and his three children later. His daughter, who was old enough to drive, took the boys to the event. He charged her to look after the youngest and checked in on him personally not once but twice, making sure he was in the right classroom and not placed in a class too far advanced for his age.

**Observation #2.** August 23 4-5:30 p.m. at the Boys and Girls Club.

**Morris** = Morris is half Samoan and African American. He dropped his two daughters off at the Boys and Girls Club, walking in and making sure the club had the programs that were advertised and that the girls went into the right areas.

**Observation #3.** August 29 4-5:30 p.m. at the Boys and Girls Club.

Five moms dropped children off. One dad dropped off children. One older brother dropped off children.

**Observation #4.** August 31 4-5:30 p.m. at the Boys and Girls Club.

Four moms picked children up. Two males picked up children.

**Observation #5.** September 29 at the Boys and Girls Club, from 5-7:25

The event was Family Fun Night, which included giveaways of general prizes and a used big screen television and a Play Station 2. Children were allowed to attend only if they had a parent present.

Four fathers (men) dropped off children at the event. Three fathers stayed

**Stanford** = The first father had two children, one boy one girl, ages 10 and 9 respectively. A single father stayed approximately from 6:15 to 7:25. He spent the first hour on his cell phone rearranging his schedule so he could stay for the duration. His son played organized games inside the gym. He played family bingo with his daughter for approximately 30 minutes.

**Texas A&M** = had three children ages 8, 5, and 3, two boys one girl and came with his wife. The family stayed approximately from 5:45 to 7:25. He played pool for approximately 30 minutes while his two younger children played games. The oldest son was inside the gym, playing organized games. Father and mother played a family bingo

game with both of their younger children and one other for approximately 30 minutes while the oldest played basketball inside of the gym.

**Southern** = had three children. He stayed from approximately 6-7 p.m. and watched his children play basketball in the gym. Most of the time he quietly watched, but also played catch football with his youngest son for around 10 minutes.

**Observation # 6.** October 10, 2:30-4 p.m. The **Jackson**<sup>1</sup> Home.

Throughout the interview, Jackson checked on his daughters when they came home from school, and made sure that their homework was being done until his wife got home. Jackson's wife was very interested in what he had to say and was very vocal about his responses. Jackson may not have felt as unrestricted to express himself as he did before his wife came home.

**Observation #7.** October 11, 7-7:30 p.m. **Morehouse**<sup>2</sup> Practice

Morehouse was the coach of the team and his son was the quarterback of the football team. Morehouse had a range of emotion from excitement to yelling to high fives and quiet chats with his players. In short, he was coaching. He showed no favoritism toward his son, expressing the same range of emotion to him. Morehouse not only had his wife present at the practice but his mother-in-law as well. I witnessed a few very well executed play action fakes.

**Observation #8.** Grambling<sup>2</sup> at the Community Mentorship program.

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<sup>1</sup> Fathers who were interviewed

<sup>2</sup> Fathers who were interviewed

Grambling spent half-an-hour with his son modeling masculinity and fostering educational opportunities. He provided educational environments on computers and with oral questions.

### **Summary**

Fathering, as we have seen in Chapter 1, has undergone more changes in the last 50 years in American than it has in the last 300. Because of the increase of women in the work force, the definition of a father as just a provider is no longer the norm. The definition of a father has expanded to include stepfather as well as a desire to balance work and family. However, since the definition of father and being a man still includes being a provider, African American men have had particular constraints in their role as father due to being unemployed and underemployed. This thread was continued in Chapter 2, where this study highlighted depictions and cultural conceptions of fatherhood with special attention paid to the media depictions of African American men and fathers. The theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity played a key role, setting up a dominant framework that was challenged by each of these fathers. It allowed for an interpretation of what it means to be a man and a father, especially in regards to providing social, cultural, and academic capital for their children. Chapter 3 detailed the method of this study. The participant selection, assurance of confidentiality as well as the methods used to code the data based on father, engagement accessibility and responsibility were described. These three categories were analyzed using three methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews, video-clip reflections, and observations. Chapter 4 provided the findings of this study. The results were categorized into profiles



to give the reader a familiarity of the interview participants, the interviews, video clip reflections, and observations.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion/Analysis

#### **Profiles**

The findings overwhelmingly do not support the research that says that African American fathers are historically ineffective, are poor husbands and bad fathers (Frazier & Frazer 1993; Moynihan, 1965; Taylor, 1977), and do not father their children (Patterson, 1999). The profiles indicated that these African American fathers spend an average of seven days a week with their children, with the exception of the children who were going to college out of state. The ones going to college in the state lived at home. The seven-day-a-week average also includes children who had moved out of state, indicating the most of the children lived with them at home since birth. Four of the nine fathers interviewed were not the primary homework helpers, but those who were helped with homework an average of 30 minutes a day. Fathers who had children living at home and going to college still helped their children in school with both homework and advice an average of twice a month. Most of the fathers had at least two children still currently living in the home. Most of the fathers rated themselves a 7 out of 10 as a father. All of the fathers except Fisk, Xavier, and Clark (who reported that he sometimes feels stretched) felt that they had enough energy for their families. The fathers made use of drive time to and from school and cell phones as fathering tools to bond with their children. All of the fathers had strict regulations on television use or no television use at all.

**RQ 1.** How do African American fathers perceive their fathering involvement in regards to their children's educational outcomes?

### **Interviews**

**Importance of Being a Father.** Additionally, the interviews indicated that African American fathers perceive themselves to be role models, teachers, and mentors to their children, and they help them to establish life plans based on high expectations and positive school experiences (Green & Mont, 2010, Tornace, 1984 Green, 2004, Berndt & Miller, 1990; Hubbard, 1999). The fathers reported their children shared their academic expectations and were doing well in school (Honora, 2003; Wood, Kaplan, McLoyd, 2007), shattering the myth reported in the media that African American men were criminals (Miller & Maiter, 2008) and the image in academic research of them as irresponsible and uninvolved fathers (Smith, et al, 2005).

**Involvement.** Research also suggests that African American fathers are equally or more likely to help with homework (Gray & Anderson, 2010), share in the housework, provide guidance, love, spend quality time (Newton, 2005), be supportive (Bartz & Levine, 1978; Grief, Habowski, & Maton, 1998), discipline their children (Cazenave, 1979), and to advise their children on issues of minority oppression and to provide a sense of ethnic identity (Roopnarine, 2002; Coley, 2001). The majority of the fathers drove their children to school. The participant fathers helped their children in other ways beyond just homework such as providing tutoring and college prep courses when their children needed them, taking their children to libraries, parks, museums, and zoos, assisting their children with school projects, assigning reading, and assigning unrequired schoolwork during the summer.

**Structure.** The majority of the fathers were living with their child's mother before 6 to 10 years after the first nonmarital birth as suggested by Lermen and Sorenson (2000). Not only did the interviewed participants in this study value the importance of the father, as suggested by the scant positive research on African American fathers (Smith et al 2005), they used prayer, family dinners, and reading from religious texts as fathering tools to instill structure and establish a positive family life (Palkovitz and Palm, 1998).

**Emotion.** Honestly and openly, the African American fathers seek affinity with their children and attempt to make them feel secure (Gee, 2004; Fagan and Iglesias, 1999; Ninio and Rinott, 1988). The fathers also shared that their children were sources of inspiration as outlined by Gray and Anderson (2010) and supported by Barnett, et al., (1992) and Lerman and Sorenson's (2002) research that suggest that a father's emotional investment in their children helps to relieve work-related stress and allows them to work even harder (Gray & Anderson, 2010). These findings attest to the validity of the research that nurturing is a natural instinct in men (Connor & White 2006), even African American men. Surprisingly enough, this level of emotion and nurturing was not restricted to biological children. None of the fathers referred to their children as stepchildren or themselves as stepfathers except when asked at the beginning of the interview.

**Stepfathers.** In fact, four out of the nine fathers were stepfathers, some of them living with the mothers of their stepchildren and likely to have had a child or children with them to solidify their family as suggested by Stewart (2005). This is a higher percentage of children living with their stepfather in the home than the U.S. average (Teachman & Tedrow, 2008). These same children have a higher than average length of

time living in the home of more than 1.9 years during the ages of 0 to 15 (Heuveline, Timberlake, & Furstenberg, 2003). All of the fathers reported not treating their biological children and stepchildren differently. This may be the reason why the participants did not report any gender bias with their stepchildren in the interviews as suggested by Marsiglio (1991). That does not mean that the fathers reported that their sons and daughters did not have different behaviors.

**Girls.** Fisk and Grambling reported their daughters are influenced by the media, especially Hip-Hop videos, and are aware of brand names, supporting research that suggests marketing creates contradictory and divergent cultural expectations that conflict with parental expectations (Courtney, 2008; Stokes, 2007; Dow, 1996).

**Boys.** The interviewed fathers seemed not to agree with the research supporting the idea that boys have two types of masculinity: academic achievers or athletes (Connell, 1996). Morehouse's youngest son not only won an award for being on the honor roll, he is also a starting quarterback for his youth football team. However, Morehouse's oldest son and Jackson's son both were reported to have trouble dealing with peer pressure and focusing in school. This is likely an indicator of Kunjufu's (1988), Brozo's (2005), Archer and Yamashita's (2003), and Busk's (2010) research that asserts that academics is uncool, unmasculine, and outside the norms for Black boys. Fisk, Xavier, and to some extent Morehouse counter negative peer pressure of academic performance among their sons by emphasizing the idea that education is an equalizer for African Americans. This affirms the research by Alfaro, Umana-Taylor, and Bamaca (2006) that assert that a son's academic motivation in school is related to his father's academic support and value of education. Furthermore, Tatum's research (2005) that suggests when a Black boy's

literacy education is targeted towards his interests, the boy breaks the negative stereotypes associated with “acting white” (Obama, 2005) is right in-line with Xavier choosing books for his son to read 30 minutes a day. Since all of the fathers interviewed reported that their sons were doing well in school except for Jackson, who indicated that his son lacked direction and focus, the interviews seem to confirm Nord and West’s work (2001) that suggests school-aged children of involved fathers are more likely to achieve higher academically than non-involved fathers.

**RQ 2** What are the perceptions of African American fathers’ influence of their masculinity on their children.

### **Video Clip Reflections**

Howard *identifies* with all of the video clips in some fashion or another but especially connected with the last two, *Bill Cosby* and *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* more than the first one, because they represent his personality. I take that to mean that Bill Cosby and James Camdon reflect his personal fathering style. That being the case, Howard did not *model* his masculinity and fatherhood from the media, instead relying on his own father’s examples stating, “He was there. He was available. He was always willing to lend advice and to impart wisdom. He was patient, took the time to explain things, but he was firm. There was an aura of not wanting to disappoint and not want to do anything to bring disappointment upon your father, so to speak. In my opinion, he was the only father that I had, so he was an ideal father.” This highlights the why Howard idolized his father more so than media depictions of fatherhood. “Cosby didn’t deal with teenage pregnancies. ... In my opinion that's when I grew the most as a father, and when I grew from going through that situation [of my daughter getting pregnant in high school]. Going through

that healing process helped strengthen me as a father and helped strengthen her knowing that regardless of what she did she [knew that she] was still loved.” This was the best *example* Howard could think that represented him as a father.

Morehouse, however, *identified* with *Father Knows Best* and *The Cosby Show* as a father, because he also “sit[s] them down and explain[s] to them [his children] what had happened to a point on their level when they could actually understand it. I do that consistently with my youngest son” as Cosby did in the video clip. He identified with *Fathers Knows Best* because of the way the father Jim Anderson talks to his children and also the way his family says grace and eats dinner together. Morehouse stated his parents divorced when he was 10 and that his stepfather passed away in a motorcycle accident. He did have somewhat of a relationship with his biological father but says that his biological father had flaws. So in essence he *modeled* his masculinity and fatherhood by “what *not* to do from my father.” This can be read as a testimony that having a bad father does not determine that a man will be a bad father. This view is supported by Jackson, who did not watch the video clips but who still asserted that he did not learn how to be a man and father from his own father but from his mother. Morehouse feels that his everyday interactions serve as *examples* of being a good father. This view is based on the fact that he works with troubled youths as part of his job and the fact he is both a football coach and a basketball coach, so his children see him around kids a lot. They get to see him “practice what he preaches” as a man. This has the implication that his children also see Morehouse serving as a father figure to other children as well.

Fisk *identifies* with all of the clips to some degree, but feels that did not have to deal with drugs as James Camdon did in the 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven* video clips. Like Morehouse, Fisk

also especially identified with *Father Knows Best* family prayer time segment of the video clip. "...And you know the involvement of the interaction [of the family] being able to sit at a table and pray together every one of those shows [episodes] were good shows." Fisk did not *model* himself after any of the video clips, relying instead on his grandfather's influence. "The greatest father I ever knew was my grandfather. Well he had it all, a gentle way of talking to you." He also had a little positive reinforcement of being a "man" from his uncles, who were always advising him not to be too "girly." He shows his children the medical bills when they get sick or go to the doctor so they know he makes sacrifices for them constantly. This may have more to do with a personal motivation to prove to his children that he does care and is a good father in opposition to the negative accusation he was a victim of when Child Protective Services removed them from his home. If so, then showing medical bills, although unconventional, may be an *example* of what a good father does to foster affinity. It would also explain that having to keep detailed financial records understandably makes him unhappy with the court system. It would also explain why he asserts that, "Society has changed to keep the courts open [in order] to keep the judge employed [and] the lawyers with money [as] part of the big wheel [of oppression]."

Xavier is also unhappy with society and did not *identify* with any of the video clips, because they do not represent his own experiences. "I would say that you know my experience of being a father in America is pretty painful, actually, and only I mean that in terms of I love having the opportunity to be a father but in relation to the way that I see fatherhood and the relationship that the parent should have with the children and conditions under which we should be living as a people creates a painful experience for



me as a father.” Although this response seems to ignore that Bill Cosby is an African American, it does underscore the fact many African Americans saw *The Cosby Show* as an idealized type of media show and not actually representational of most African Americans (Frazer & Frazer, 1993). *The Cosby Show* is “a bit difficult for me to relate [to] because I don't know if they're really based on real-life [African Americans] or not.” Xavier did not *model* either his masculinity or his fatherhood from his father, stating that his family upbringing as a Jehovah's Witness was the reason he turned to the Nation of Islam. He felt the Nation had a religious structure but no [black culture]. Xavier is the only father who mentioned culture as an aspect of either his masculinity or fatherhood. This supports Ogbu's research that suggests that cultural identity does not translate into educational outcomes but that societal and community factors play a role. Xavier could not think of an *example* or idea that represented him as a good father.

Wilberforce *identified* with all of the video clips, because they showed how “the father makes [the] stabilization and the balance in that particular home.” However, Wilberforce *modeled* his masculinity and fathering more from his own father than the media, indicating that he “took most of his [father's] wisdom when I got older as opposed to when I was younger. What I mean by that is a fact that the aspect of being responsible, the aspect of coming home each night, the aspect of going to work each day when he was sick and when he was healthy, he [also] went to work every day for all my life and whether [he] was fighting for his country or ensuring that his family was taken cared of, he was a worker bee.” Clearly this sentiment expresses not only his love for his father and how much he admired him but also the motivation behind his own drive to be

a good father to his children. Wilberforce *is* the *example* of what it means to be a good father.

**RQ 3** How do African American fathers demonstrate their influence and involvement?

### **Observations**

Although Dillard did not drive his children to his church's children and family event—he let his oldest daughter do that—he made sure that his youngest son was in the right classroom for his age not once but twice. These are all clear and apparent examples of both responsibility and engagement as well as planning in regards to providing unrequired educational opportunities for his children.

Morris is half Samoan and African American and also feels it is important to provide unrequired educational opportunities for his children. He also demonstrated responsibility and engagement by not only dropping off his children to the Boys and Girls Club but by also making sure that the programs that were advertised were actually taking place and his children went to the correct areas of the facilities for those programs.

Stanford spent the first hour on his cell phone re-arranging his schedule, because he did not know that he was required to be at the Agassi Family and Friends night for the entire event. That was illustrative of accessibility, however he also demonstrated engagement when he spent half an hour playing family bingo with his daughter. His son played organized games inside the gym.

Texas A&M also demonstrated engagement, as well as being an example of masculinity when he played the family bingo game with both his children and another child who was not his for half an hour.

Southern displayed accessibility, engagement, and responsibility, cheering and watching his children play basketball and playing catch football with his youngest son for an hour and a half.

Jackson spent the entire time during the interview checking on his daughter's progress with her homework. This double tasking, being interviewed and fathering his daughters exemplifies responsibility and engagement. He also asked his other daughters about their day when they got home from school and asked his oldest daughter during the interview for real-time updates about her plans for college.

Since Morehouse is the coach for his son's football team, he served as one of the best models of fathering I observed. He was responsible, engaged, and accessible as well as emotional, patient, strict, firm, and inspiring. He also modeled masculinity for his son's teammates by being a positive role model and father. Additionally, he showed service to his community by being a volunteer coach and communal fathering by working with, supporting, and allowing his other coaches to speak during the post practice meeting and by allowing the other teammates' fathers be involved in practice. Morehouse was indeed 10 out of 10 as a father.

Grambling also interacted with his son in an educational way, providing unrequired educational opportunities for his children. Although taking his son with him everywhere he goes is an example of modeling, it is also a form of engagement when he uses those trips as opportunities for learning.

### **Summary**

Fathers agree that depictions of African American men and fathers are negative while they simultaneously viewed themselves as slightly above average as a father but not

perfect. Almost all of the fathers offered negative comments about the media even before they viewed the video clips. Overwhelmingly, African American fathers who were interviewed wanted to set a good example for their children. Either in regards to getting a good education, being a good person, or getting through life, African American fathers provided structure and gave advice using themselves as blueprints.

### **Conclusion**

Specifically in regards to the research questions: How do African American fathers perceive their fathering involvement? What are the perceptions of African American father's influence of their children's educational outcomes? And how do African American fathers demonstrate their influence on their children's educational outcomes and involvement? The answers are they act as men of guidance, full of emotion, and able to overcome challenges; able to do whatever is necessary to educate their children despite media influences and social constraints; and are accessible, engaged and responsible fathers. Despite how they are identified in the media and in society, the interviewed African American fathers tried to provide positive models of masculinity as examples of what it meant to be a good father. In fact, even the fathers who did not view the video clips commented they did not allow the media to define them as men or fathers. All of the fathers that I observed showed accessibility, engagement, and responsibility in one form or another. In addition, while related to responsibility but not necessarily highlighted, the observed fathers all demonstrated the use of planning and forethought in regards to their fathering abilities as well.

### **Significance**

Combined, the results suggest three major findings: 1) continuation of the fathering role and helping a child once the child goes to college, 2) conspicuous use of communication, and 3) turning off the television are the most reported things that African American fathers do to help their children's educational outcomes. Fathers still give educational as well as life advice to their children even when they are in college. Conspicuous use of communication was done in at least two ways. The first, making use of drive time with children to and from school was an excellent way to check up on homework, discuss problems in school and to administer advice. The second is using cell phones to check in with children, saying goodnight when working late as fathers often have to do, displays of affection and other forms of nurturance. And finally, while turning off the television may not seem to be a novel idea, for African American fathers who are more likely to suffer from disparaging depictions of them as both men and fathers, television regulation may provide opportunities to provide alternative and positive examples of African American masculinity to family.

### **Limitations**

Based on the sample of fathers, the findings are not surprising. Fathers who are engaged in organized religion are more likely to be encouraged to involved fathers (Petts, 2009). However, fathers may also seek supportive organizations such as faith based institutions because they already affirm their attitudes about fatherhood. Regardless of any perspective about the role religion plays for the fathers in this study and their participation in faith-based institutions, a study similar to this using a sample of non religious fathers may yield additional heuristic results.

## **Recommendations**

Interviewing grandfathers and great-grandfathers would provide a more robust and thorough introspective into the historical influences, challenges, and changes of fatherhood, not just from a grandfather's perspective but also from a more experienced paternal perspective. One could argue that an involved grandfather is a fathering figure. For example, in one of the interviews that was discarded due to age, one grandfather commented that one of the problems with media is they provide children reasons to be disobedient by supporting opinions that spanking is abusive. Duplicating this study with other racial groups that include intra-group perspectives may provide heuristic value in learning from cross-cultural experiences. As we become a more global society and an increasingly multiethnic America, learning from others who have different perspectives would only serve to optimize the human experience.

Also in this study, the subject of home schooling came up. As the demands of the father are increasing, the use of home schooling and fathers who implement it while they work from home is a useful research topic to explore. Additionally, interviews with the mothers of the fathers children may help elucidate the how women support male fatherhood and masculinity.

## **Final thoughts**

In an effort to end this study where it began, I will turn once again to President Obama. At this reading, President Obama has just announced a student loan forgiveness plan (Wolfgang, 2011). While not specifically targeted toward African Americans, this student loan debt relief will no doubt benefit students and fathers in some fashion. Why is this important to this study? Wanting to know more about grants and student loans was

a frequent response to the interview question, What would help to make you a better father? It would be useful to know how important the participants feel in regards to President Obama's student loan forgiveness plan given their responses. However, President Obama did target a plan toward mostly African Americans. On September 1, 2009, President Obama announced that August 30 through September 5, 2009, would be known as National Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Week (Haynes, 2008). Since HBCUs graduate more African Americans than any other type of school (Haynes, 2008), it seemed fitting to use HBCU names as pseudonyms for the participants in this study.

In regards to President Obama's proposed Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009, the bill has yet to be passed. It has been rumored that is still something President Obama will try to work on during his second term if he is reelected. However, on June 15, 2011, the White House kicked off a Strong Fathers, Strong Families initiative encouraging companies and organizations to offer discounts for fathers who take their children to places like the zoo, the park, bowling, sports games etc...(Strautmanis, 2011). This is evidence that President Obama is showing his support for fathers with direct action and not just posing for media opportunities when he walks hand in hand with his daughters.

Whether a father is holding his child for the first time, pushing his daughter on a swing, holding his son's hand when he crosses the street, using both hands to hug a whole armful of children, or putting his hands on his hips to give a stern look of disapproval for a bad grade on a report card, a father's hands are powerful parenting tools, so powerful, in fact, that during the handshake and conclusion of every interview, it was difficult to let

the fathers go, both figuratively and literally. More than honest and open, each of the fathers let me into their lives for a brief moment. Combined, the fathers' experience left me with this thought: While the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, fathers whose hands are engaged, accessible, and responsible hold the family together.



## Appendix A

### Participant Recruitment Flier/Announcement

#### *African American Fathering Involvement and Education Outcomes*

You are invited to participate in a study designed to investigate African American fathering involvement and education outcomes. The study will be in interview form. Information you provide will clarify how children perform in school as a result of influences from a male father figure. The male can be an actual father or stepfather, uncle cousin, grandfather or any male figure that plays an active role in a child(s) life and is a descendant of African heritage. Data collected will allow researchers to analyze current practices of fathering with the end goal of identifying or improving positive results for students. This research project is part of a doctoral requirement. Your help is very much appreciated!

Your consent to participate in this study will be indicated by your signature of a completed informed consent form. All participation is voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty. Each participant will be given a code number and later a pseudonym with all data reported in aggregate form. Only the primary interviewer will have access to identifying information. There are no anticipated risks involved in participating in this research other than mild discomfort in addressing issues of explaining solutions to difficult parenting strategies.

Because the majority of research focuses on Black and African American fathers who are not in the home, investigating fathers who are in the home, I believe, will contribute to our community as a whole.

If you decide to participate in this study, please contact Theodore S. Ransaw at 702-578-6851 or [ransawt@unlv.nevada.edu](mailto:ransawt@unlv.nevada.edu).

Again, this study is being completed as part of a doctoral dissertation for a graduate student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and your help is greatly appreciated!

Questions about the rights of the participant should be addressed to:

Human Research Compliance

702-895-2794

[irb@unlv.edu](mailto:irb@unlv.edu)

## Appendix B

### Semi structured interview questions

#### **General info**

Do you identify yourself as African America?

If not, why not?

What year were you born?

Do you earn more or less than:

25 K a year

50 K a year

100 K a year

How old are your CHILD(ren) What are their grades? In general, how much time do you spend with your CHILD(ren) per week, per day?

#### **Opening Questions**

What does being a good father mean to you?

Are you a biological father or a stepfather?

#### **Main Questions**

*Availability/Accessibility:* Since your CHILD(ren) was born, how many months have you lived in the same household as him/her? How do you feel your answer affects your CHILD(ren) in getting a good education?

*Responsibility:* How often in the past month did you take or pick up CHILD(ren) to school? What other ways do you help with your CHILD(ren) in school?

*Engagement:* In a typical day when you are with CHILD(ren) how much time do you spend helping with homework? Do you have any other practices you do on a regular bases that helps your CHILD(ren) in school?

**Follow up**

Can you recount an event or situation that expresses how much you enjoy being a father?

Can you describe how you show support for your CHILD(ren)

Do feel that you have enough *energy* to meet all of your family's needs, please explain why or why not?

Do you think that your CHILD(ren) *confide in* (talk about important personal things with) you, and can you give an example?

Do you feel emotionally *close* to your CHILD(ren) and can you provide an example?

How close are you to your CHILD(ren)'s mother and can you give an example?

Overall, how would you *rate* yourself as a fathering figure and why?

**Conversational guides based on nonverbal cues**

How many times did the person laugh, smile or frown and pause related to pitch and tone?

## Appendix C

### Video Clip Reflection Questions

#### **Initial questions**

Do you identify with any of the video clips? Why or why not?

From what other sources did you get your models of masculinity and fatherhood?

Can you reconstruct a time, place, or event that serves as a model you would like your child to think of as an example of a good father?

#### **Possible probe questions**

What are the challenges to your masculinity or to you as a father?

What do you enjoy, or like least about being a father and why?

What would help you the most to be a better father?

Do you feel that the media supports you as a father?

What impact does the relationship with your child or children's mother have on your ability to be a father?

What aspect about fatherhood would you like to know more about?

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Zimmerman, M. A., Salem, D. A., & Notaro, P. C. (Ed.). (2000). *Make room for daddy*  
*II: The positive effects of fathers' role in adolescent development*. Mahwah, NJ:  
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

## Curriculum Vita

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### ***Education***

PhD., Doctoral Candidate University of Nevada Las Vegas, Dept. Teaching and Learning, College of Education current.

Dissertation:

*A Fathers Hands: African American Fathering Involvement and Educational Outcomes*

This study seeks to understand the essence of fathering involvement in regards to how African American fathers perceive their fathering, how they deal with perceptions of their masculinity and their behavior in regards to helping their children achieve in school.

Committee:

Thomas Bean (chair), Porter Troutman, Sean Zhang, and Peter Gray.

M.A., University of Nevada Las Vegas, Communication Studies, Hank Greenspun College of Urban Affairs 2006.

Thesis

*Points of Contact: Nineteenth Century Visual Rhetoric of the Underground Railroad*

This study examined the visual rhetoric of nineteenth century textiles used by the Underground Railroad. From the evidence examined, I argue the visual texts of quilting during the nineteenth century were complete multimedia devices used not only by African Americans but also by other disenfranchised groups such as Abolitionists, Native Americans, Woman Suffrage Activists and Freemasons.

Committee

David Henry (chair), Thomas Burkholder, Donovan Conley and Gregory Borchard.

B.A., University of Nevada Las Vegas, Communication Studies, Hank Greenspun College of Urban Affairs 1999.

### ***University Teaching Experience***

EDU 280: Valuing Cultural Diversity. Dept. of Education Curriculum and Instruction, University of Nevada Las Vegas Teaching Assistant 2008-current

This course introduces prospective classroom teachers and people from other disciplines in understanding the value of multicultural education and how to use this knowledge to implement effective teaching strategies in diverse classrooms and other disciplines. The general course objectives are aligned with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

AAS 105: Hip-hop Music and Culture. *Afro-American Studies, University of Nevada Las Vegas Part Time Instructor 2008-current*

I developed this course to teach college entry-level students theoretical frameworks such as media cultivation, diffusion, nonverbal communication and rhetoric to explain how traditional academic approaches can be applied to popular culture.

AAS 10X Afro-American Masculinity. *Afro-American Studies, University of Nevada Las Vegas Part Time Instructor 2009-current*

I created this class to examine the historical, psychological, mythical, sexual, health, legislative and sociopolitical influences that shape the gender identity of Black males along the path to manhood.

COM 101: Public Speaking. *Community College of Southern Nevada Adjunct Instructor 2005-2007*

An introductory communication class involving public speaking and visual aids. Instruction at a community college involves preparing traditional and nontraditional students planning to transfer to a four-year college. My duties included bridging the gaps between local high school, junior college and national college expectations.

COM 101: Oral Communication. *Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies, University of Nevada Las Vegas G.T.A./Basic Course Instructor 2003-2005.*

University instruction involves creating a creative and conducive environment that stimulates learning for both traditional and nontraditional students. I prepared students for both critical research methods, and presenting quantitative and qualitative ideas for public speaking 101.

### **On-line Teaching Experience**

PD 503 Diversity In the Classroom. *McWendon Education 2008-current*

I designed this course specifically to assist classroom teachers and other cross-disciplines with increasing personal awareness as well as understanding the value of multicultural education and how to use this knowledge to implement effective teaching strategies in diverse classrooms and other disciplines as part of career development.

PD 505 From Boys to Men. *McWendon Education 2008-current*

I created this course as a shorter on-line version of Afro-American Masculinity to examine the historical, psychological, mythical, sexual, health, legislative and sociopolitical influences that shape the gender identity of Black males along the path to

manhood. This class draws from social science, communication studies, gender studies, political science, anthropology and ethnic studies disciplines in general, and connects theoretical themes such as rites of passage, masculinity, Afrocentricity, diffusion, social accommodation, media cultivation, and postcolonial theory in particular.

EDU 280: Valuing Cultural Diversity. *Distance Education, University of Nevada Las Vegas Teaching Assistant 2010.*

This class is the on-line version of the face-to-face class. The primary difference between the online teaching classroom and the classroom of the campus-based course is how students and faculty communicate and the range of tools that they use to communicate such as implementing the use of discussion boards, instruction modules and using both synchronous and asynchronous activities.

### **Teaching Experience Outside the University**

*YOU Turn Leadership Program Facilitator 2005.*

Private grant funded after school leadership academy for middle school students. My duties included creation and implementation of college preparatory curriculum for advanced junior high school students.

*Clark County School District, Guest Teacher 2001-2004*

My duties included making innovative decisions in a constantly changing environment, dealing with multiple personalities, and supervising and inspiring culturally diverse individuals to achieve specific time oriented goals. I specialized in teaching children with special needs, autism and behavioral problems for four long-term assignments.

### **Publications**

Ransaw, T. (2012). "Race, Space and Place: The liminal function of ritual in global Hip-hop." *Words. Beats. Life: The Global Journal of Hip-Hop Culture.*

### **Works in Press**

Green, R.L., White, G., & Ransaw, T. (2012). "Early warning signs of potential dropouts: What can be done?" *Clark County School District, CCSD.*

Bean, T & Ransaw. (2012). "The masculinity and portrayals of African-American boys in young adult literature: A critical deconstruction of this genre." *(Re) constructing gender through global literacy practices and policies.* New York: Routledge.

### **Publications Under Review**

"God created man *then* woman: The religious influences of black male privilege." *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality (JMMS).*

"From backboards to blackboards: Toward gender and cultural content to improve literacy of African American adolescent males."  
*Reading Research Quarterly (RRQ)*.

### **Research Interests**

My research streams include cultural literacy, masculinity, gendered education and mentorship.

### **Accepted Grant Proposals**

The UNLV/Matt Kelly Elementary School Mentorship Program (2011). The purpose of this mentorship program is to help increase literacy as well as mathematic performance while decreasing discipline problems for African American boys at Matt Kelly Elementary School with measurable outcomes.

The UNLV/Kermit Booker Elementary School Mentorship Program. (2012). The purpose of this mentorship program is to increase Science, Technology, Engineering and Math S.T.E.M. engagement while decreasing discipline problems for African American and Latino boys at Kermit Booker Elementary School with measurable outcomes.

### **Papers, Presentations, Forums and Conference Panels**

"Meet & Greet Networking Retreat: Academic Faculty Session"  
Facilitator: UNLV Office of Diversity Initiatives, Las Vegas, Nevada 2012.

"Black History Month Forum: The Impact of the Recession on African Americans in Southern Nevada" Panelist: UNLV Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Las Vegas, Nevada. 2012.

"Black History Month Forum: Fathers and Sons Panel" Moderator: Black Graduate Student Association, Black Student Organization. Hillel, & National Pan-Hellenic Council. UNLV Las Vegas, Nevada. 2012.

"Mr. Black History Pageant" Judge: The Black Student Organization and the National Pan-Hellenic Council. UNLV Las Vegas, Nevada. 2012.

"Can Mentorship Be An Effective Tool in Dismantling the School-To-Prison-Pipeline?"  
Presenter: Mentorship Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico. 2011.

"Black Relationship Forum." Panelist: Workshop Facilitator. The Black Think Tank Las Vegas, Nevada, 2011.

"The Single Black Parent Epidemic." Panelist: NSC's Black Student Organization. Henderson, Nevada, 2011.

“Black Fatherhood.” UNLV’s Black Graduate Association Moderator: Las Vegas, Nevada, 2011.

“Higher education: Using Hip-hop to understand the Black male student and improve student achievement.” National Conference on Educating Black Children. Las Vegas, Nevada, 2010. Co presenter with Dr. Troutman.

“Hermeneutics of African American Freedom.” Presenter: WSSA Conference: Reno, Nevada 2010.

“Black Male Privilege.” Presenter: WSSA Conference: Reno, Nevada 2010.

“AME Church Women and the Media.” International Conference on Religion and Media, Tehran: Iran, 2008. *Accepted*

“Forum on Black Masculinity” Guest Speaker: Phi Beta Sigma. Las Vegas, Nevada, 2010.

“Copyright Criminals.” Panelist: Movies That Matter Documentary Premier. Las Vegas, Nevada, 2009.

“Smart Start: Helping Graduate Students to Succeed.”  
Panelist: Black Graduate Student Association. BGSAs Las Vegas, Nevada, 2009.

“Masculinity in International Hip-hop.” Presenter: Graduate and Professional Student Association UNLV Poster Session: Awarded Honorable Mention Las Vegas, 2009.

“Reginald Hudlin’s 2006 *Black Panther* and Eric Jerome Dicke’s 2006 *Storm*: Afrocentric Literacy in Graphic Novels.” Presenter: Far West Popular Culture and American Culture Association Conference, Las Vegas, 2009.

“Genesis and the Janus Effect: Obama and a Look forward to New Theories of Black Masculinity.” Presenter: Far West Popular Culture and American Culture Association Conference Las Vegas, Nevada, 2009.

“Race, space and Place: The Luminal Function of Ritual in Global Hip-hop.” Presenter: WSSA Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2009.

How do Girlfriends Talk about Sex in the City?: A Qualitative comparative Analysis of Womanist and Feminist Themes.  
Presenter: WSSA Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico 2009.

“Increasing Minority Graduate Student Enrollment” Presenter: WSSA Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico 2009.

“Race of the Race.” Panelist and Forum Moderator: Black Graduate Association Las Vegas, Nevada, 2009.

“A Modern Form of Codices: The Mesoamerican Cultural Archetypes of Latin American Lowriders.” Presenter: WSSA Convention, Denver Colorado, 2008.

“Minorities in Higher Education.” Presenter: University of Denver, Denver, Colorado, 2008.

“From Emma Peel to Ultraviolet: Girl Power Self-Identity and the Media.” Presenter: WSSA Conference Paper Presentation, Calgary, Canada 2007.

“Hip-hop and Cultural Influences.” In class presentation for UNLV’s Sociology Dept.: Las Vegas, Nevada, 2007.

“Navigating the Academy: Africans and African Americans in Higher Education.” Panelist; WSSA; Calgary, Canada, 2007.

“Crossing Invisible and Visible Cultural Boundaries.” Panelist; WSSA; Calgary, Canada, 2007.

“How to Prepare a Conference Paper/ Journal Submission.” In class presentation: for School of Journalism and Media Historiography class; Las Vegas, Nevada, 2007.

“Increasing Minority Graduate Student Enrollment.” Panelist; WSSA; Phoenix, Arizona, 2006.

“Health Disparities.” Panelist; Arizona State University, Phoenix, Arizona, 2006.

“Common Roots of Resistance: Hip-hop, Feminism and the Underground Railroad.” Presenter: WSSA Conference Paper Presentation April, 2006 Phoenix, Arizona.

“Hip-hop and the Media.” In class presentation: School of Journalism and Media Visual Communication class; Las Vegas, Nevada, 2006.

“Sisters of the Spirit: Women Journalists of the A.M.E. Church.” Presenter: American Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference. August; Austin, Texas 2005.

“Freemasonry and the Underground Railroad.” Graduate & Professional Student Research Forum, Paper Presentation; April, Las Vegas, Nevada, 2005.

“Condoms and Culture.” Presenter: Hank Greenspun College of Urban Affairs Research and Ideas Conference Health Communication, Research Presentation; Las Vegas, Nevada, 2004.

“Commercial and Academic Publication Submissions.” Workshop Leader: National Black Graduate Student Association; UNLV, Las Vegas, Nevada, 2003.

### **Academic Service**

Western Social Science Association *African and African American Executive Board, 2010 current*

The African and African American Section of the WSSA is committed to multidisciplinary academic excellence. My current role as executive board member is to increase membership, coordinate a new conference poster session and to facilitate implementing conference wide assessments.

UNLV Graduate Student Grievance Committee *2010-current*

The committee handles graduate student appeals and petitions, and also reviews and makes recommendations regarding policies governing appointment to and termination of Graduate Faculty status. My duty includes coordinating the poster session.

Western Social Science Association African and African American *Section Leader, 2007-2010.*

As section leader, my objective is to provide opportunities for scholars to highlight modern theories and research as well as to facilitate scholarly discussions and presentations on academic, social, economic, and historical issues that affect the African and African American experience.

UNLV Graduate and Professional Student Association *Coordinator 2004-2005.*

As a GPSA Coordinator, I was responsible for procurement and distribution of news and information pertinent to graduate students within the Hank Greenspun School of Communication.

### **Graduate Awards**

Thomas Wilson Community Service Award. 2009, 2010. *UNLV Alliance of Professionals of African Heritage.*

Honorable Mention Poster Presentation, 2009 for the Department of Curriculum & Instruction: The Rite of Passage in Global Hip-hop.

### **Professional Workshops Attended**

Academic Assessment Workshop 20010, The Office of Academic Assessment, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.



Academic Assessment Workshop 2009, The Office of Academic Assessment,  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Cultural Leadership Retreat 2009, Student Diversity Programs and Services (SDPS)  
Warner Springs, California.

Active learning Practices 2009, University Teaching & Learning Center (TLC)  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Multicultural Etiquette 2009, University Teaching & Learning Center (TLC) University  
of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Publish and Flourish 2009, University Teaching & Learning Center (TLC) University of  
Nevada, Las Vegas.

Pedagogically Sound Power Point 2008, University Teaching & Learning Center (TLC)  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Web Campus Overview 2008, University Teaching & Learning Center (TLC) University  
of Nevada, Las Vegas.

SPSS I 2008, University Teaching & Learning Center (TLC) University of Nevada, Las  
Vegas.

Creating A Teaching Web Site 2004, University Teaching & Learning Center (TLC)  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

### **Media Appearances**

Urban Nation African Americans and Education in Nevada  
88.1 KCEP Las Vegas, Nevada, 2011.

African Americans in Nevada and the Recession  
88.9 KNPR Las Vegas, Nevada, 2012.

Black Fatherhood  
88.1 KCEP Las Vegas, Nevada, 2011.

EthniCITY Urban News Show Las Vegas  
UNLV TV, 2009.

2008 Nevada Presidential Caucus  
88.1 KCEP Las Vegas, Nevada, 2008.

Using the N-word  
National Public Radio, 2007.

The Importance of Black History Month Programs  
National Public Radio, 2007.

### ***Media Publications***

Service Publications  
“WSSA Mentorship,” WSSA Newsletter, Fall, 2011.

Local Magazines  
“Hip-hop and Yoga,” *Our Own Voices*, October, 2009.

“Tribute to Michael Jackson,” *Our Own Voices*, October, 2009.

National Magazines  
“Hard to Let Go,” *Today’s Black Woman*, June-July 2004.

“Comparisons,” *Today’s Black Woman*, April 2003.

Newspapers  
“Public Schools and Property Values,” *The Las Vegas Sentinel*, October 28, 2004.

“To Be Popular or Smart,” *The Las Vegas Sentinel*. August 22, 2002.

### ***Organizations***

AEJMC – Association for Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication. 2005.

NBGSA - National Black Graduate Student Association.

2003-Present.

UNLV, GPSA – University of Las Vegas Graduate and Professional Student Association.  
2003-Present.

WSSA – Western Association Social Science Association.

2006-Present.

## **Certifications**

Substitute Teachers License

Clark County School District, 2001-2004.