

AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN WHO
PROVIDE DIRECT SERVICES TO AFRICAN AMERICAN NONRESIDENTIAL FATHERS

by

LATRICE SHEREE ROLLINS

(Under the Direction of June Gary Hopps)

ABSTRACT

African American nonresidential fathers are amongst the most underserved populations of individuals in need of services. Since the majority of social service staff are women and programs are typically directed towards mothers, there is limited guidance in the literature on how professional female social service providers engage fathers and create therapeutic helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers. There also needs to be more attention in the social work literature to issues of gender, race, socioeconomic status and other issues of power that impact helping relationships. Specifically, there is a gap in the literature regarding professional relationships between African American female professionals and African American male clients. This study addresses this gap in part by exploring how African American women who provide direct services to African American nonresidential fathers (fatherhood service providers) engage this population in services and overcome the various issues of power that impact helping relationships.

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. There were three research questions addressed in this study: (1) What are the common motivations of African American women who

are fatherhood service providers? (2) In what ways do gender, race, and socioeconomic status (power issues) affect their ability to create successful helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers? and (3) How do African American women who are fatherhood service providers negotiate issues of power and authority in their professional relationships with African American nonresidential fathers?

This critical qualitative research study was guided by womanist and postmodern theories. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirteen African American women who were fatherhood service providers in Atlanta, GA, Alexandria, LA, Baltimore, MD, Milwaukee, WI, New Orleans, LA, and Washington, D.C. Findings of this study indicated that African American women who were fatherhood service providers were motivated to provide direct services to African American nonresidential fathers in order to foster change and equity. The findings also indicated that gender, race, and socioeconomic status impacted helping relationships in various ways. Finally, the women indicated that issues of power and authority are negotiated by finding balance and meeting the fathers' social and spatial needs.

INDEX WORDS: African American female service providers, Fatherhood service providers, African American nonresidential fathers, Fatherhood programs, Social work, Womanist theory, Deconstruction

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to two of my loved ones who were inspirational throughout this doctoral journey but didn't live to see the dream fulfilled- my grandmother, Mrs. Joann Stampley and my father-in-law, Elder Charlie Lee Rollins. Both were heavily committed to their communities and touched the lives of many. To my grandmother who always said I received my "smarts" from her side of the family, I hope that I make you and our ancestors proud. To my father-in-law who requested that I speak to young girls and encourage them to further their education, I will humbly honor your request and work toward inspiring others through example.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Prologue

Within the concrete walls of a college classroom, twelve African American fathers sit behind long wooden desks waiting. Each row of desks seats fathers who have feelings of anxiety, anger, frustration, hope, optimism, and anticipation of the program orientation that they were all invited to take part in that morning. It is too early in the morning for them to exchange small talk, so the fathers sit in silence meditating on their lives, their families, and particularly their children. How did they get to be in this room? What will change when they step out? Their thoughts are interrupted as a professionally dressed African American woman enters the class. “Is everyone here for the Fatherhood Program?” she asks cheerfully. Some nod, some sigh, and some return to their thoughts. “Are you my caseworker?” one father boldly asks. Another father with a worried expression wonders aloud, “Are we about to go to jail?” All previous feelings turn to surprise as the woman announces that she is not going to send them to jail. She is the coordinator and group facilitator of the Fatherhood program.

The purpose of this study is to explore the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. In this chapter, the background of this issue is introduced through an overview of: the history of Fatherhood programs; the exclusion of practice based knowledge about African American nonresidential fathers from social work practice, education, and research; and the implications that this exclusion has for the social work

profession and African American nonresidential fathers. A statement of the problem under study and the significance of this research are also provided.

Background of the Problem

The provision of social services to nonresidential fathers is increasingly becoming an area of public interest and practice (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). This interest has developed in part because several studies have focused on the impact of fathers' active involvement in their children's lives. Father involvement and nurturance have been positively associated with children's intellectual development, social competence, internal locus of control, ability to empathize, and may protect children from the adverse effects of poverty, school problems, substance abuse, pregnancy, and crime (Huebner, Werner, Hartwig, White, & Shewa, 2008). The active involvement of nonresidential fathers, particularly in the lives of children of color, has been an issue of public concern due to high disproportionate numbers of children of color in foster care, living in poverty, and experiencing academic failure (Coakley, 2008; Sorenson & Zibman, 2001; Nord & West, 2001).

Based on the father involvement literature, the effort to improve children's well-being has led to increased policies and programs focused on nonresidential fathers. Specifically, due to high incarceration rates, high unemployed and jobless rates, low educational attainment, racism and sexism, efforts to increase positive involvement of African American nonresidential fathers requires special attention. Despite the needs of this population, the majority of helping professionals are women and some fathers believe that these social service workers prevent them from receiving assistance and consequently serve as barriers to their involvement with their children (Coakley, 2008; Daniel & Taylor, 1999; Hamer & Marchioro, 2002; Huebner et al., 2008; O'Donnell, 1999). However, if current trends around addressing the at-risk status of

African American nonresidential fathers persist and the predominance of women in helping professions continue, issues around service provision to this population by female practitioners will become more and more common. According to a 2006 National Association of Social Workers' survey, 81 percent of its licensed members were women (National Association of Social Workers, 2006). In addition, African American women are more likely to be employed as officials and managers within helping professions (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2001). As more federal funds are allocated for the development of fatherhood related activities, more female providers will be required to address the concerns of African American nonresidential fathers. This trend is already emerging in states such as Minnesota, where women make up over 70 percent of the professionals providing services to all types of fathers (Minnesota Fathers & Families Network, 2007).

Numerous female practitioners have frequent contact with men as clients and increased numbers of female practitioners have chosen to work with this population (Cree & Cavanagh, 1996; Pease & Camilleri, 2001). The women that choose to work with African American nonresidential fathers are unique as many social service agencies and professionals have excluded these fathers through various organizational policies and procedures and environments that center around motherhood. While a number of studies, books, and reports exist on providing services to African American nonresidential fathers, these studies fail to provide practice-based strategies that address the power dynamics that may hinder a predominantly female workforce in creating successful helping alliances with this population. Therefore, the focus of this study will be on the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. This population warrants study not only because their motivation to work with African American nonresidential fathers is an unexplored phenomenon. The strategies that they employ

to negotiate various issues of power such as race, socioeconomic status, and gender, which have impacted African American social relationships throughout history, will be instrumental in advancing social work practice, education, and research. The social work profession should be concerned with finding effective strategies to address the persistent needs of African American nonresidential fathers and the professional development needs of social work students and practitioners, particularly those who are women. The profession's attention toward these issues will benefit students, practitioners, researchers, policymakers, clients, and communities.

A Historical Background of Fatherhood Programs

The interest in helping African American nonresidential fathers is not a recent phenomenon. Throughout African American history, there has been a call for the uplift of African American men in general. Slavery in the United States deprived Black men in America of their ability to be “men” and “fathers.” Therefore, during Emancipation, the restoration of Black manhood and fatherhood was a priority for many African Americans and African American institutions (Genovese, 1974). Early Black fatherhood efforts were based on two assumptions about Black men: 1) they were responsible for saving Black communities; and 2) it was their natural right and duty to dominate the discourse and actions around the improvement of African American families and communities (Noguera, 1997). Lemons (2009) argued that the Black liberation movement during Emancipation could easily be tied to contemporary Black fatherhood efforts:

For many black men, “the black people” came to be synonymous with the struggle for black manhood against “the White Man” (the founding father)... It has been black male contestation of the paternal law of the White Father and his rule through white supremacy that has propelled the black liberation movement from origin of the abolitionist

movement to the black power movement to the black (male) nationalist' calls for black patriarchal atonement in the 1990s. (p. 119)

Nevertheless, there were many missed opportunities, from Emancipation to the present, to significantly change the status quo and improve the conditions of African American men, families, and communities.

Hill (2005) stated that African Americans were involved in "gender based organizations in their efforts to promote racial liberation" (p. 30). By the end of the Civil War, Black suffrage became the center of Black politics (Foner, 1987). The gain of political power for African American men symbolized a step forward for the Black community as a whole (Ibid, 1987). African Americans were deeply involved with the Republican Party at this time, which represented Black suffrage and emancipation (Ibid, 1987). Fredrick Douglass has been noted as a champion for universal human rights and a "model of black manhood" (Lemons, 2009, p. 41). After slavery ended, Douglass wrote and gave speeches about the importance of voting rights for Black men which he believed would improve conditions for Black families and communities. On May 9, 1865, he stated "Slavery is not abolished until the black man has the ballot" (as cited in Lemons, 2009, p. 35).

After Emancipation, the Black church played an integral role in encouraging high moral conduct among freed individuals, which included social sanctions for men's failure to take care of their families. The influence of the church contributed to the rush of freedmen to legalize their marriages and "send women into homes" (Genovese, 1974, p. 454). In fact, the rate of marriage among African American couples remained high after slavery until it began to decline in the 1960s (Pinderhughes, 2002). Men were eager to establish themselves as the heads of their families because while in slavery, the owners of enslaved persons held this position. It was

widely accepted during this period that everyone should be married, men should be protectors and providers, and women should handle domestic matters. These ideals were also evidenced by the advice given to men at the Black Convention in 1869 to take their wives from the “drudgery” of working outside the home and a publication distributed by the Freedmen’s Bureau entitled ‘Be a Man’ (Booker, 2000). The widely publicized debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois around the means toward the uplift of the African American race also included their differing views on African American men. While Washington counseled males to be subservient, DuBois spoke about the need for society to address the “manhood needs of African American men” (Booker, 2000, p. 121).

In addition to the Black church, there were several all male formal and informal associations that arose to address the issues of manhood such as The Knights of Pythias, Oddfellows, Elks, and Masonic lodges (White & Cones, 1999). By the end of World War I, national concerns regarding the conditions of African American men had risen. With Jim Crow practices still in effect, there was still a movement for Black men to emerge as leaders for the African American community. Some scholars called this period of affirmation of Black manhood during this time “the new Negro” or the “new manhood movement” (Franklin, 2000). In 1918, Marcus Garvey founded the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and stated that the men in his association represent “the new manhood of the Negro.” Garvey frequently stressed the importance of high moral character and cautioned men against having excessive numbers of children (Booker, 2000). He encouraged men to be responsible fathers and husbands:

Let us go back to the days of true manhood when women...truly revered us...let us again place our women upon a pedestal whence they have been forced into the vortex of the seething world of business. (as cited in Franklin, 2000, p. 96)

In the *Color of Welfare*, Quadagno (1994) argued that the problem with welfare in the United States is the fact that racial inequality has not been addressed by any of the programs, from the New Deal to present public assistance programs. In the 1940s and late 1950s, increasing out of wedlock African American births and numbers of African Americans receiving Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) concerned some communities and states. Agencies in these states developed extensive fraud and investigation units whose workers carried out invasive procedures, such as midnight raids, based on “man-in –the –house” or substitute father rules. If a man was found in the home, mothers were threatened to have their children removed due to their failure to provide a “suitable moral environment.” Public aid was also based on paternity establishment and recipient case information was passed on to child support enforcement agencies as “desertion cases” (Handler & Hasenfeld, 2007). Therefore, these policies had a major impact on fatherhood by limiting and restricting paternal participation (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999). In addition to the restrictive welfare policies, the decline of employment opportunities created serious problems for African American men and fathers in the 1960s. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. criticized these practices of forcing mothers to depend on welfare instead of helping fathers who were not able to fulfill traditional fatherhood roles:

When you deprive a man of a job, you deprive him of his manhood, deprive him of the authority of fatherhood, place him in a situation which controls his political life and denies his children adequate education and health services, forcing his wife to live on welfare in a dilapidated dwelling, you have a systematic pattern of humiliation which is as immoral as slavery and a lot more crippling than southern segregation. (as cited in Estes, 2005, p. 107)

There was also increased attention on African American fatherhood and the stability of families during this period with the release of the Moynihan report in 1965. The report blamed the breakdown of the African American family on female-headed families and launched a call to restore African American fathers to the head of households. Although Nixon's Family Assistance Plan sought to address the male employment concerns brought out in the report by offering more employment and economic equality to the "proudest poor" which were working, poor, Black men, this plan was deeply opposed and not supported (Quadagno, 1994). While the Moynihan report sparked outrage among African Americans in the 1960s, it has been revisited by several contemporary scholars to support the current marriage and fatherhood promotion efforts given the continued decline of marriage and increase in nonresidential fathers in the Black community.

In 1963, the national organization, 100 Black Men, was founded to address issues such as housing, education, economic development, employment and health, which affected African American men and their families (White & Cones, 1999). The Black Power movement, which occurred in the late 1960s, emphasized the place of the Black man as the authority figure in the family and offered programs for youth in African American communities. This movement, along with the development of Afrocentric ideologies, led to the African-centered movement in the 1980s, which produced a number of rites of passage programs and educational facilities for African American boys (Bush, 1999). These programs and academies emphasized Afrocentric values and manhood training because of the belief that "Black parents must instill an Afrocentric value system into their children," including a commitment to family and community (Oliver, 1989, p. 26).

In the 1980s, the federal government started to encourage and support fatherhood programs. Lamb (1981) developed a model that characterized father involvement by the following themes: responsibility, availability, and engagement. This more inclusive conceptualization of fathers' participation in their children's lives influenced programs and policies. Policymakers began to pass legislations that funded programs that focused on nonresidential father involvement beyond their financial contributions. The social sanction strategy of putting nonresidential fathers in jail for nonsupport was augmented to provide these fathers an option to receive social services that would help them to contribute to their children's financial, physical, and emotional well-being. The first government sponsored fatherhood demonstration project was the Teen Fathers Collaborative, which operated eight sites between 1983 and 1985. This program provided pregnancy prevention and employment services for young nonresidential fathers (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002).

The 1988 Family Support Act helped program developers create a series of access and visitation demonstration programs to educate these fathers about legitimation and reduce the barriers that they experienced in gaining visitation privileges. Older nonresidential fathers who had child support obligations also received assistance through the Parents Fair Share program in 1988. This program offered peer support groups, employment/training services, mediation services, and assistance in navigating the child support system. This program serves as a model for many of the current responsible fatherhood programs.

The early 1990s marked the period where there were the most sustained efforts to study fatherhood and change policies that impacted fathers and families (Gadsden, 2003). Researchers, many located at historically Black colleges and universities, focused on the problems of African American boys and men and it was assumed that in order to improve the condition of African

Americans, an understanding of the African American male was essential (Gordon, 2004). In 1990, the National Council of African American Men (NCAAM) was founded to “expedite policy changes at the national, state and local levels that will enable Black males to take advantage of a wide range of educational, occupational, and economic opportunities” (White & Cones, 1999, p. 248).

In 1992, the Young Unwed Fathers Project was developed to provide counseling, job placement, and access to job training programs, which enabled young nonresidential fathers to meet their child support obligations. By 1994, there were almost two hundred operational fatherhood programs in the United States (Horn, 2003). This national shift in research, policy and rapid growth of services and attention towards fathers has led some to again name these events, “The Fatherhood Movement” (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). In 1995, President Clinton requested that federal agencies review their programs and policies with the “purposes of strengthening the role of fathers in families and highlighting the contributions that fathers can make to their children’s well being” (Cabrera & Peters, 2000, p. 299). This Fatherhood Initiative included academics, researchers, policymakers, educators, and practitioners who worked together to develop strategies to address the issues of nonresidential fathers (Cabrera & Peters, 2000). Since the majority of research conducted during this period indicated several negative consequences of ‘fatherlessness’ for children and society (Cabrera & Peters, 2000; Miller, 2006; Solomon-Fears, 2005), federal initiatives and private foundations provided more financial resources that created a new area of practice-fatherhood (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002).

In addition to the increased federal attention on fathers, on October 16, 1995, The Million Man March took place in Washington D.C. Bush (1999) stated that it was “one of the most significant single occurrences in the history of African men in the Americas” (p.53). This march

was organized by the Nation of Islam and specifically addressed the roles of African American men and fathers. The men who attended this march pledged to uphold their family and community responsibilities (Million Man March, 1995). While not specifically focused on African American men, The Promise Keepers, an organization of Christian men committed to maintaining the integrity of family and faith was founded in 1990 and also had a rally in Washington, D.C. in October of 1997. Again, hundreds of thousands of men, of all racial backgrounds, promised to protect their wives and families and be responsible members of their community (Promise Keepers, 2004).

In 1996, as a part of their Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative, the Ford Foundation created the Partners for Fragile Families Initiative, which typically worked with fathers not yet under child support obligations. This program attempted to work with young couples and encouraged healthy relationships in order for them to rear their children together. The 1996 Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) shifted the focus of welfare from the “provision of cash assistance to women and their children to an emphasis on self-sufficiency through work and enhanced financial support and involvement by fathers” (Lipscomb, 2001). PRWORA also provided states with the authority to request that courts mandated nonresidential fathers who were unable to pay their child support obligation for a child receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits, to participate in fatherhood programs (Solomon-Fears, 2005). Federal sources of funding for fatherhood programs included state TANF, state Child Support Enforcement (CSE), and Social Services Block grant (Title XX) funds (Solomon-Fears, 2005). These fatherhood activities were not required but they were often administered through state offices of child support enforcement. Fatherhood initiatives were an extension of child support enforcement and paternity establishment in that their goal was to

reconnect fathers with their children (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). The largest fatherhood program sponsored by child support enforcement is in Georgia and provides technical education and employment services to over 2,500 nonresidential fathers annually and has served over 15,000 since 2001 (Office of Child Support Services, 2007).

In 2001, fatherhood was declared a national priority. According to some estimates, the current number of programs that provide services to fathers in the United States has grown to 2000 (Horn, 2003). Recently, these initiatives have been referred to as responsible fatherhood programs and accordingly they are apart of the “Responsible Fatherhood Movement.” In 2002, President Bush revealed a 320 million dollar plan to fund responsible fatherhood and marriage initiatives (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007). The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 was significant to the Responsible Fatherhood Movement because while it still provided funding to state programs, it also included financial resources for healthy relationship and fatherhood related activities within faith-based and community agencies. This has increasingly helped fatherhood programs to become part of a wider social system that includes relationships with social, educational, health, and legal systems (Curran, 2003; Strug & Wilmore-Schaeffer, 2005). Several initiatives offered through faith-based, nonprofit, educational, and other community organizations include domestic violence, anger management, employment, fatherhood, and healthy marriage promotion activities (Gavanas, 2004). In the end, it appears as if efforts directed towards the improvement of African American fathers’ conditions are returning to the churches and communities where they started.

African American nonresidential fathers comprise over 85 percent of participants of responsible fatherhood programs (Bloomer & Sipe, 2003; The Lewin Group, 1997). Due to significant individual, structural, and societal constraints, this population presents significant

challenges for social service agencies and workers. A disproportionate number of African American men experience higher rates of homicide and suicide, unwed teenage fatherhood, substance abuse, homelessness, delinquency and crime, unemployment and underemployment, and low educational attainment, which all impact their involvement with their children (Bronte-Tinkew, Bowie, & Moore, 2007; Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Hanson, 1998; Horn, 2003; Roy, 2008; Sonenstein, Malm, & Billing, 2002). In addition, these fathers face the obstacles of racism, discrimination, prejudice, and sexism, which have troubled “the state of affairs for African American males since their arrival on these shores” (Hopps, Pinderhughes, & Shankar, 1995, p. 114).

Responsible fatherhood programs have been identified as safe spaces for groups of men, who were historically ignored by social service professions, to engage in discourses on being men and fathers (Anderson & Letiecq, 2005). However, recruiting and engaging African American nonresidential fathers in services is challenging. Given the history of negative interactions between fathers and social services, many fathers are initially apprehensive about participating in responsible fatherhood programs. Many of these responsible fatherhood programs specifically report high drop out rates because of the fathers’ lack of trust in project staff (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999). Despite the progress in policy and practice to include fathers in social services, many research studies find that the staff is unprepared to meet the multiple needs of African American nonresidential fathers and effectively involve them in services (Hamer, 2001; Johnson & Bryant, 2004; Jones, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recent increase in numbers of female practitioners that provide services to men, the exclusion of African American nonresidential fathers and the lack of knowledge about practice with this group have been identified as barriers to fathers' participation in services (Featherstone, 2001; Huebner, Werner, Hartwig, White, & Shewa, 2008; Sonenstein et al., 2002). There is less empirical attention toward specific strategies female practitioners can employ to better engage this population, what issues underlie bias among some practitioners, and how these issues can be addressed. Many research studies suggest that more African American males should be hired as they share common backgrounds and experiences with these fathers (Anderson, Kohler, & Letiecq, 2002; Fletcher, Silberberg & Baxter, 2001; Hopps, Pinderhughes, & Shankar, 1995; Jones, 2006). While this is a desirable goal, female service providers are the best available current options. Therefore, we should improve our understanding and demystify this therapeutic alliance. In addition, research on the African American female practitioner-African American male client dyad, from the female practitioner's perspective, deserves particular attention when we consider issues related to race, gender, and socioeconomic status that have historically impacted African American relationships.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. Specifically, (1) What are the common motivations of African American women who are fatherhood service providers? (2) In what ways do gender, race, and socioeconomic status (power issues) affect their ability to create successful helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers? and (3) How do

African American women who are fatherhood service providers negotiate issues of power and authority in their professional relationships with African American nonresidential fathers?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study for the social work profession has been divided into the following concerns: current trends that suggest that many African American nonresidential fathers are a population at-risk, the neglect of scholarship on practice with African American nonresidential fathers (and African American fathers in general), and the lack of scholarship on issues of power within African American female practitioner-African American male client relationships. This is the only study with African American women who are fatherhood service providers and the only research with fatherhood service providers that focuses on their job motivation, the impact of issues of power, and the negotiation of power dynamics. This study seeks to contribute to the knowledge about the development of successful helping relationships between African American female practitioners and African American nonresidential fathers.

The Neglect of Scholarship on Practice with African American Nonresidential Fathers

The need for social services for African American nonresidential fathers should be a concern for the social work profession given the persistent social problems affecting this population. African American nonresidential fathers, particular those who are poor and unmarried, comprise a group about whom social work students, practitioners, policymakers or researchers are least aware (Gadsden, 2003). It is possible that a vicious cycle exists between education, practice, research and policy in relation to effectively addressing the needs of African American nonresidential fathers (Figure 1.1). There exists a cycle of exclusion that could be understood by systems theory which assumes that these components, social work education, practice, research and social policy, comprise a social system and are interrelated. Each

component interacts with the other and change or (lack of change) in one component impacts the action (or lack of action) in the others. If a new social worker is not educated about the needs of African American nonresidential fathers and how to address them, what would be their likelihood to engage these fathers in practice? If the social worker does not know how to engage African American nonresidential fathers in practice, what would be the likelihood that they could conduct practice-based research with this population? If there are few to no practice-based research studies with African American nonresidential fathers, what is the likelihood that proposed policies and programs will be reflective of the needs of this population and consequently their families? As systems theory assumes that one part of a system affects the whole, the exclusion of African American nonresidential fathers in one component negatively impacts all- the lives of fathers, children, and families.



Figure 1.1. The Cycle of Exclusion of African American Nonresidential Fathers

Many caseworkers lack the education and skills necessary to successfully connect fathers, especially African American nonresidential fathers, to services (Huebner et al., 2008; Munro, 1998; O'Hagan, 1997; Sonenstein et al., 2002). However, there is a wealth of knowledge about African American nonresidential fathers by African American scholars that can be used to educate students and current practitioners about practice with this population (Billingsley, 1992; Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Burgest, 1989; Hill, 2007a, Freeman & Logan, 2004, Hopps & Pinderhughes, 1999; McAdoo, 2007; See, 2007). Researchers have also presented theories, programs, and practice guidelines that may be employed in order to ameliorate the practice with men (Allen & Gordon, 1990; Johnson, 2005) and specifically, the conditions of African American nonresidential fathers (Behnke & Allen, 2007; Cochran, 1997; Davis, 1999; Dudley & Stone, 2001; Fagan & Hawkins, 2001; Mincy & Pouncy, 2002; Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999; Tuck, 1970). In the 1970s, African American social work scholars requested that the social work curriculum include more material on the Black community in order to respond to the changing societal conditions and knowledge base (Gary, 1973; Longres, 1973; Turner, 1973). However, this problem persists as the profession still fails to incorporate and further develop this material into social work education, practice, research, and policy.

Since few African American nonresidential fathers have been involved in case assessments, case planning, or the receipt of services in child or public welfare systems, the opportunity to include them is missed in day-to-day practice (Coakley, 2008; Featherstone, 2004; O'Donnell, 1999; Rasheed & Stewart, 2007; Risley-Curtiss & Heffeman, 2003; Taylor & Daniel, 2000; Wolins, 1983). The lack of basic demographic information or in-depth assessments with African American nonresidential fathers in case records also reflects the failure to include them in the provision of services or refer them to programs (Huebner et al., 2008; O'Donnell,

1999; O'Hagan, 1997). In order to improve the situation of African American nonresidential fathers and families, the rhetoric of involving these fathers in child and family welfare must meet the realities of practice.

Although there has been growth in the variety of services offered and in the diversity of individuals providing services to African American nonresidential fathers, more research and evaluation of these programs are needed. The failure to evaluate and learn from practice with African American nonresidential fathers not only risks the loss of scarce resources devoted to programs targeting this population, but the profession also neglects the opportunity to critically and effectively abolish the state of crisis these fathers and their families experience (Horn, 2003). The lack of research leads to the inability of policymakers to implement laws and policies that impact the circumstances surrounding these fathers. Ultimately, this perpetuates the cycle of exclusion, leading back to nonexistent or exclusive practices.

The Scholarly Neglect of the Role of Power Dynamics in Service Provision to Fathers

Since the majority of social workers are women, the significance and consequence of the predominance of women in the day-to-day negotiations between social workers, clients, and their families must be explored (Abrams & Curran, 2004). Many social workers hold perceptions of Black nonresidential fathers that are based on a "tangle of myth and nonempirical lore" (Hamer, 2001, p. 1). The stereotypes, media images, and resulting fear of Black nonresidential fathers are examples of issues that need to be included in the discourse on practice with this population. However, current practice recommendations are limited in their proposals to hire Black males to provide the services and support needed to African American nonresidential fathers (Jones, 2006; Noguera, 1997). Despite the fact that there are no studies that demonstrate increased program effectiveness based on matching the gender of practitioners and African American

nonresidential fathers (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999), there are too few males in the social service field to handle the current multiple needs of African American nonresidential fathers alone. This recommendation also assumes that Black men are inherently knowledgeable about practice with African American nonresidential fathers, more willing to engage these fathers in services, and will not experience their own challenges with this population.

In addition, there is a gap in the literature about strategies that can address “power struggles initiated by fathers” (Johnson & Bryant, 2004, p. 783) and perceived “resentment toward women in authority” (Ibid, 2004). While social workers have created a number of frameworks and guidelines of culturally sensitive practice or practice with people of color, these models still lack attention to the issues of power (Williams, 1990). Female social workers will need knowledge and skills in relation to power and interpersonal dynamics (Featherstone, 2001; Pinderhughes, 1989). The power relations in female practitioner-male client relationships have been found to be different from those of males working with nonresidential fathers due to the increased likelihood of power struggles in relation to traditional sex role behaviors (Wall & Levy, 1994). The power dynamics between African American female practitioners and African American male clients might also have significant differences. Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin (1990) stated that if a power dynamic that involves hierarchy, manipulation, and/or control takes shape within African American female-male relations, competition and/or exploitation of each other may result. There have been several studies on the romantic or intimate relationships between African American men and women, but there have been none that specifically address professional helping alliances within this dyad. Therefore, this study will focus on the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers and

address the gap in knowledge about the power dynamics between African American female practitioners and African American male clients.

Social workers should seize the opportunity now to lead the discourse on the complexities of practice with African American nonresidential fathers while social political attention is focused on this population. With an African American male now holding the highest office of the land, it is time to capitalize on the sense of hope that he represents for many African Americans, particularly African American men. The combination of over two decades of scholarly dialogue on father involvement and the recent opportunities presented by federal initiatives make it possible for social workers to develop the skills and resources and move toward engaging African American nonresidential fathers in services (Featherstone, 2001; Kruk, 1994). Thus, the question posed, can our helping professionals finally turn the rhetoric of our country's democratic ideals and the ethics of our profession into real life practice? At the risk of sounding cliché, the answer is and has always been: yes we can.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are also used throughout this study and their definitions are offered in order to understand their meaning in reference to this research.

- 1) The term African American is used interchangeably throughout this study with the term Black. The participants in this study self-identified as African Americans which refers to Americans of African descent (Ghee, 1990).
- 2) Nonresidential fathers are defined as fathers who do not live in the same household as their child. This is a diverse group of fathers that includes divorced, teen, and unmarried fathers (Dudley & Stone, 2001).

- 3) Fatherhood service providers are defined as individuals that work to “meet discrete needs and provide specific services for different kinds of fathers” (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002).
- 4) The Responsible Fatherhood Movement is distinct from the men’s movement and the father’s rights movement. The Responsible Fatherhood Movement is commonly referred to as having two strands. One side of the movement encourages father involvement through public media campaigns as well as a strong emphasis on marriage. This study will focus on the other strand which provides employment and other services to help low income fathers become involved with their children (Roberts, 2006). For both sides of the movement, the focus is on the well-being of children. As a result, a number of federal welfare reform and child welfare policies have been passed to support these activities.
- 5) Responsible fatherhood programs are defined as initiatives that promote men’s financial and emotional involvement (Anderson & Letiecq, 2005). These programs encourage “personal responsibility of nonresidential fathers to their children and increase the participation of fathers in the lives of their children” (Solomon-Fears, 2005).
- 6) Intergender relationships are defined as the dynamics involved in relationships between men and women (Lawrence-Webb, Littlefield, & Okundaye, 2004). This term is commonly used in reference to romantic relationships. However, this study employs this term to describe professional alliances.
- 7) Intra-racial relationships are defined as the dynamics involved between individuals of the same race (Lawrence-Webb, Littlefield, & Okundaye, 2004).
- 8) Intra-racial diversity refers to the understanding that African Americans as a group are multidimensional and hold a variety of values, attitudes, and experiences among them (Smith & Moore, 2000).

In Chapter Two, the historical, social and cultural context that impacts the lives of African American nonresidential fathers is discussed. An overview of issues of power that may influence African American female practitioner-African American male client dyads within the context of responsible fatherhood programs is also presented.

CHAPTER TWO

AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN WHO PROVIDE DIRECT SERVICES TO AFRICAN AMERICAN NONRESIDENTIAL FATHERS

The purpose of this study is to explore the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. This study will seek to understand: (1) the common motivations of African American women who are fatherhood service providers; (2) the ways in which gender, race, and socioeconomic status (issues of power) affect their ability to create successful helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers; and (3) how African American women who are fatherhood service providers negotiate issues of power and authority in their professional relationships with African American nonresidential fathers.

This chapter provides an overview of the social, historical, and cultural influences that impact the lives of African American nonresidential fathers. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the power dynamics and their possible impact on the African American female practitioner-male client dyad.

African American Nonresidential Fathers: Holistic Perspectives

Historically, formal social service institutions have tended to systematically exclude African American families (Hopps & Lowe, 2008; Jewell, 1988; Roy 2008). Since 1601, the *Elizabethan Poor Laws* set a precedent for government involvement in social service delivery. These laws mandated that communities assume responsibility for their poor and create institutions to care for the indigent (Jewell, 1988). African Americans have never been viewed as the deserving poor under these laws. All the major institutions of American society have failed

to respond appropriately and effectively to the multiple needs and problems of African American men (Allen-Meares & Burman, 2003; Bronte-Tinkew, Bowie, & Moore, 2007; Gibbs, 1988; Sonenstein, Malm, & Billing, 2002). Solomon (1988) suggests that public policy is the source of difficulties for African American males in social functioning. The role of the government has “historically stood as an obstacle to the freedom, independence, and opportunities available to African American families” (Billingsley, 1992). Studies on responsible fatherhood programs present “compelling evidence that the nation’s major social policies do not promote effective programming for young poor nonresidential fathers” (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999, p. 142). Regarding the lack of attention to the status of African American males, Allen-Meares and Burman (2003) stated “society’s level of concern says much about us as a nation.” Considerable apathy also exists about the plight of low-income African American men because of a belief system that purports that individuals who achieve great success do so because of their individual strengths such as motivation, dedication to the work ethic, and intelligence. Therefore, it is assumed that African American men do not deserve larger shares of the available services and resources (Solomon, 1988).

Throughout history, public policies have also been more supportive of motherhood than fatherhood, which has resulted in less access to services for nonresidential fathers (Smith, 2004). Although sexism is usually not discussed in regards to African American nonresidential fathers, it exists to prevent adequate service provision to them. Gendered obstacles are defined as “institutionally based racism and sexism that uniquely and profoundly impacts the availability of health and social services to African American men in America” (Rasheed & Stewart, 2007, p. 583). In 1952, Ralph Ellison addressed the psychological impact of racism on African American men when he wrote: “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me” (as

cited in Cunningham, 2006, p. 221). Chestang (1974) also stated “the reality of the black condition compels every black man to expend the majority of his energy in the struggle to survive. In every aspect of his life, the black man wrestles daily with the choking tentacles of racism” (p. 395). Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000) presented a conceptual model to explain the impact of racism on African American men’s behavior called the invisibility syndrome. The invisibility syndrome is defined as:

The ongoing effort to manage racial slights, as well as the confusion and disillusionment induced by persistent acts of racism, [which] can undermine the resilience of some African Americans, leading to deterioration in their ability to cope, whether on a transient or a more enduring basis. (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000, p. 38)

Rasheed and Stewart (2007) also argued that the notion of negative invisibility, the process of the psychological and emotional experiences of African American males being rendered invisible, exists in the development and provision of social and mental health services. As a result, for decades, there were no “entirely federally funded or joint federal and state grant programs for low-income nonresidential fathers” (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999, p. 128).

African American nonresidential fathers are in many ways like all other American fathers but “because of history and contemporary social conditions, there are important differences” (Comer, 1989, p. 366). As all fathers may go to great lengths to fulfill their paternal roles, African American nonresidential fathers are unique due to “the obstacles and weighty dilemmas of life for Black men[that] are produced and sustained primarily by the structure of American society itself” (Hamer, 2001, p. 2). Myrdal (1962) stated:

...there is no single side of the Negro problem-whether it be the Negro's political status, the education he gets, his place in the labor market, his cultural and personality traits or anything else-which is not predominantly determined by its total American setting. (p. lxxvii)

There is usually little regard for social context and sociocultural barriers that African American nonresidential fathers face in performing their parental roles (Anderson & Letiecq, 2005). The forces of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and "new forms of inequities evolving within the context of an increasingly globalized economy and polity" (Booker, 2000, p. vii) must all be considered in a discussion of the current at-risk status of many African American nonresidential fathers. African American scholars have developed multiple theoretical perspectives that could be used in the field to understand the issues that impact African American nonresidential fatherhood (Billingsley, 1992; Chestang, 1976; Norton, 1978; Schiele, 1996). Although these theories seek to address the totality of the African American experience, they have yet to be fully integrated into social work education, practice, and research (Gilbert, Harvey, & Belgrave, 2009). This is due in part to the fact that:

Social workers, in their practice, must come to accept the fact that the melting-pot simply did not melt. America did not, in fact, become God's Crucible, in which people from all nations and ethnicity melted into a new race of men. (Washington, 1979, p. 150)

The ability to recognize the various influences and be flexible in practice is necessary in order for engagement with African American nonresidential fathers to be successful. In this regard, Afrocentric, Black, Dual, and Holistic Perspectives have been offered in the literature as guidance for practitioners to address the needs of this population, their families, and communities.

The Afrocentric Framework and Black Perspective

Afrocentric, Africentric, Afrocentricity, and African centered frameworks are interchangeable terms used to describe a framework that puts African American lives, values, culture, and history at the center of analysis (Graham, 1999). As there are many names for the Afrocentric framework, there are also several different definitions and assumptions depending on the author. This view emphasizes that Afrocentric principles or values should be used to understand African American behavior and four themes noted are: interdependency, collectivity, spirituality, and affect (Schiele, 2000a). The Black perspective is a similar philosophical stance which, in addition to those themes listed above, also promotes family, self determination, life, dignity, brotherhood, self-sufficiency, and Black identity (Chunn, 1974, p. 18).

The majority of studies that have examined the Afrocentric framework for programs involve African American youth and reported positive outcomes in social skill development and anger management (Banks, Hogue, & Timberlake 1997; Moore, Madison-Colmore, & Moore, 2003). There are also a few studies on practice with African American nonresidential fathers that recommend the use of Afrocentric values, particularly the emphasis on family and community responsibilities (Levine & Pitt, 1995; Rasheed & Johnson, 1995). However, there are more conceptual publications than empirical on the use of this framework and no empirical support exists to identify the observed Afrocentric values (Bush, 1999; Mazama, 2001). The assumption that a core Afrocentric value system exists among Africans and African Americans is often criticized for asserting the superiority of the African race and at the same time minimizing the agency of African Americans (Cobb, 1997). The existence of “idealized” Afrocentric values has also been criticized in light of the atrocities committed by Africans against other Africans including those who participated in the kidnapping and selling of Africans into the Atlantic slave

trade. However, Nobles and Goddard (1993) counter this critique by stating that culture and behavior are separate. Therefore, while problem behaviors exist among Africans and African Americans, these authors state that destructive behavior is not an expression of the values of the culture:

It is important to remember that current behavior results from the interaction of the culture and the material condition of a people and that both, culture and condition, must be understood and manipulated if interventions and change is to be achieved. (p. 117)

Another critique of this perspective relevant to the current study is that it does not provide an analytic framework for the impact of oppression on women's identity or a means to examine the intersection of race and gender (Williams, 2005). Therefore, some African American female scholars have developed theories, such as Africana Womanism, to address the concerns of African American women (Dove, 1998; Hudson-Weems, 1993).

The rationale for the development of an Afrocentric framework is understood. Many Eurocentric theories have been used in various disciplines that emphasized the genetic inferiority of African Americans and blamed the issues that African Americans faced on individual deficits. Therefore, African American scholars recognized the need to emphasize the strengths of African Americans and address the oppression that the population faces. There is certainly a need to understand African American nonresidential fathers outside of a Western, traditional, or mainstream paradigm.

Dual Perspective

In practice, social workers could use the dual perspective to understand the experiences of African American nonresidential fathers. The dual perspective originated with DuBois' concept of 'double consciousness.' DuBois (1903) stated "one ever feels his twoness, an

American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” Chestang (1976) further developed the notion of twoness that African Americans experience in relation to their environment. While individuals are all apart of two systems, one which is the larger society and the other the “immediate physical and social environment” (Norton, 1978, p. 3), there is a difference in the way that these environments are experienced by African Americans. The two environments are called the sustaining and nurturing environments. Chestang (1976) stated:

The sustaining environment consists of the survival needs of man- goods and services, political power, economic resources; larger society makes an instrumental adaptation to it, hostility in the sustaining environment; the nurturing environment, the black community-individual emotional support, cultural values, family relationships and supportive institutions, relationship to this world is expressive (sense of wholeness and identification). (p. 70)

Thus, Norton (1978) defined the dual perspective as:

The conscious and systematic process of perceiving, understanding, and comparing simultaneously the values, attitudes, and behavior of the larger societal system with those of the client’s immediate family and community system. (p. 3)

The dual perspective is not only useful in understanding systems and the impact on African Americans but individuals of various ethnic/racial backgrounds (Brown, 1978; Murase, 1978; Valle, 1978). Therefore, the dual perspective is used by social workers to assess issues presented by the client specifically by analyzing the incongruency that individuals may experience as they try to maneuver their existence through these two systems (Norton, 1978). Practitioners should understand that the double consciousness is expressed as a tool of survival

because African Americans only have two choices: “succumb to the erosive denials of his humanity or perform adaptive maneuvers to preserve his integrity” (Chestang, 1976, p. 70). By also challenging social workers to become aware of their own value systems, the dual perspective is a means for practitioners to provide services free of the “stereotyping, misinterpretations, incorrect expectations, and inappropriate interventions” (Norton, 1978, p. 3) that African American nonresidential fathers might typically encounter when seeking services. Norton (1978) refers to this ability as having a reversible mind, having the ability and “conscious motivation” to examine the relationship between larger society and immediate environment, their own values, and the knowledge to guide interventions and actions (p. 12).

Holistic Perspective

A holistic understanding of the difficulties contemporary African American nonresidential fathers face requires attention to culture, history, and contemporary society (Billingsley, 1992; Hamer, 2001; Roberts, 1998). Figure 2.1 is an adoption of Billingsley’s (1992) holistic model for African American families. In addition to history and various social relationships, this figure demonstrates that African American nonresidential fathers specifically have to be understood through their interactions within communities and society. The community consists of churches, schools, business enterprises and voluntary organizations. Society includes a number of systems but has been categorized as government, private business, voluntary, nonsectarian and religious sectors (Billingsley, 1992). Boyd-Franklin (2003) adds that while there are multiple issues, the various systems involved must be a part of the solution. This understanding, if grasped by practitioners, educators, researchers and policymakers, would alter current ineffective approaches to the problems (Franklin, 1997; Hamer, 2001).

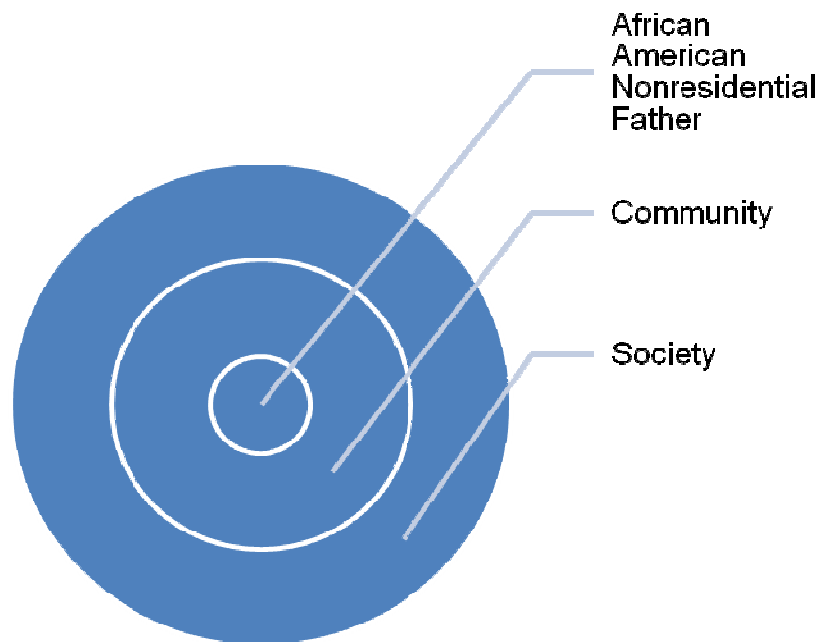


Figure 2.1. The Holistic Perspective Adopted from Billingsley (1992)

In summary, each of these perspectives has been offered by African American scholars as ways to understand and guide practice with African Americans. The dual and holistic perspectives are more grounded in systems theory and offer ways to examine the African American nonresidential fathers' total experience in community and society. Despite its critics, scholars who support the Afrocentric perspective state that research and practice with African American nonresidential fathers should not be guided by Western, Eurocentric theories that have been known to perpetuate negative images and stereotypes of nontraditional family forms. The following section presents a brief outline of events that have impacted lives of African American nonresidential fathers. This historical overview should be considered for future education, practice, research, and policy involving this population.

African American Nonresidential Fatherhood: A Socio-Historical Overview

Africa: Forgotten Memories?

An understanding of African American fatherhood must begin with his “ancestral past” (Mitchell, 2004). Some scholars have linked the structure of contemporary African American families to African family customs. Initially, there was debate that enslaved families did not retain any of their African traditions, yet evidence has demonstrated that certain family practices can be traced back to Africa (Billingsley, 1992; DuBois, 1899; Herskovits, 1958; Sudarkasa, 1999). Many Africans spoke three to five different languages, which contradict assumptions that once they arrived in America, enslaved African people were not able to communicate with one another (Sudarkasa, 1999). Sudarkasa’s (1999) main contribution to the debate was the distinction between the families built on concepts of conjugality and consanguinity. The Eurocentric nuclear family represents conjugality where the kinship between spouses is central. On the other hand, African families emphasize consanguinity where blood relationships are more important than spousal relationships. As a means of survival, Genovese (1974) stated that folk beliefs which enslaved African people brought with them to America helped them to cope with the brutal conditions of slavery.

While most scholars simply noted the similarities between West African and African American family structures, Billingsley (1992) traced customs back to Egypt, four million years ago. In the Egyptian culture, the role of the husband and father was paramount. Every man was the breadwinner and head of the household. This Egyptian society was also very child centered where whole communities took on the responsibility of socializing its children. Although males were the masters of their home, the family was female centered.

Within the African tradition, the marital couple existed within a 'compound' which consisted of extended family members either related by blood or marriage. Therefore, the boundaries of African families were less rigid than those of European families. It was not suggested that African families had the same practices and structures. Yet, there were similarities between the families of Egypt and the West African families studied by Comer (1989). These groups also embraced an underlying principle of commitment to the collectivity, which fostered a sense of belonging, and a set of strong group sanctions (Comer, 1989). Members of the compound were also responsible for the children.

Male and female roles were well defined within African families (Comer, 1989). The oldest male of the compound was the decision maker and all men in his generation comprised the elders of the family. Female elders existed within the compound also. Husbands did have authority over their wives but wives worked and maintained control of their profits. While divorce rates were high, most individuals were in a marital union throughout their lives.

Who buys me must buy my son too

There were approximately 15 million Africans brought to the New World between the years 1528 and 1870 (Mitchell, 2004). By the start of the Civil War, there were 400,000 people held as enslaved individuals in the United States, which many slave owners held as a "badge of success" (Booker, 2000). Many scholars have debated about the relations within enslaved families and the impact that it had on the current structure of African American families. Researchers have also disagreed about the extent to which enslaved individuals have been able to withstand the forces of slavery and maintain families while others have said slavery has destroyed family structure and the evidence lies in the "broken" family ties that exist today (Comer, 1989). Dunaway (2003) states that there were differences between the disruption of

enslaved families based on the size and location of the plantation. Yet no matter the specific position all can agree that slavery was “the Black man’s burden” (Killens, 1965).

African American males practically always acted within the context of the family, extended family, and the enslaved community (Booker, 2000). These strong family ties among enslaved individuals were also used as a means of control as masters would threaten to sell and separate family members for the purposes of coercion (Genovese, 1974). Despite many African Americans’ efforts to “maintain a high standard of nutrition, social status, material prosperity, and family stability, almost all would end up involved in acts deemed criminal under slavery” (Booker, 2000, p. 23). Due to nature of work, there was flexibility in the gender roles of men and women that have been said to have developed during this era (Booker, 2000). Fathers supplemented the meager rations provided by slave owners by hunting and fishing and raising gardens and passing these skills to their sons (Booker, 2000; Griswold, 1993). Fathers exercised decisive authority in family life and women had more varied tasks (Booker, 2000, p. 32). Hamer (2001) suggest that the equality between married partners was necessary for survival as families prepared for mothers to be able to take care of themselves and their children in the case the father was sold away. Frazier (1966) also stated that women were self reliant and self sufficient but presents this as the ‘dominant’ nature of African American women, not as a means of survival.

Although narratives of the enslaved have been used to show that there was a predominance of two parent households during slavery, there are also those that demonstrate a number of single female headed households (Booker, 2000; Gutman, 1976). In some cases where fathers were not in the household, they were either sold, lived on neighboring plantations, or were used for ‘breeding’ purposes and were assumed to have no emotional attachment to the mother or child (Hamer, 2001). Further explanations for father absence in enslaved families,

particularly on small plantations in the Upper Southern U. S. region, were long-term hire outs, owner migrations, estate settlements, enslaved men given as presents to family members, and labor allocation to owners' distant work sites (Dunaway, 2003).

Slavery had a devastating effect on the psychology, masculinity, and fathering practices of Black males (Comer, 1989; Mitchell, 2004). According to the law during this time, enslaved families consisted of mothers and children. While enslaved, African American fathers did not have any natural rights to their children. If a father was owned by a different slaveholder than the mother, the father "retained no legal right to command visitation privileges nor to maintain linkages with their children" (Dunaway, 2003, p. 64). Fathers were only allowed contact with their children on another plantation at the owner's discretion (Dunaway, 2003). Some owners cited visitations as a loss of labor and would deny visitations. Many fathers that were sent to other plantations still managed to visit their wives and children under the cover of darkness (Booker, 2000).

Some enslaved fathers were not allowed to discipline their children (Dunaway, 2003; Mitchell, 2004). Therefore, enslaved fathers were not allowed to raise their children to become "competent, valued members of the larger society" (Comer, 1989, p. 369). Records of enslaved persons' births indicated that fathers had no legal attachment to children because the names of the child, the mother, and the slave owner were the only names listed.

Traditionally, African American fathers named their first born sons after themselves (Griswold, 1993). Gutman (1976) provides a detailed description of the naming practices of enslaved individuals and how some owners even interfered with those traditions by naming the enslaved children. Many men ran away from the plantations to escape these brutal conditions. In Richmond, between the years of 1804 and 1824, 85 percent of runaways were males and in

Louisiana this figure was 68 percent (Booker, 2000). The Fugitive Slave Clause thus was enacted to discourage this action. Once freed these men used their anger to “fuel abolitionist activism” (Booker, 2000, p. 34). There were many men that simply refused to marry while enslaved as it would be an invitation for trauma (Comer, 1989). One father commented that “the one phase of his life that he regretted was that of being a father and a husband of slaves” (Booker, 2000, p. 34). This exemplifies the depression, anger, and grief many men experienced due to the lack of control over their family’s life circumstances. Although many men “demonstrated powerful inner resources” (Genovese, 1974, p. 491), some could not stand the oppressive conditions and became indifferent fathers or irresponsible husbands (Genovese, 1974, p. 490). Comer (1989) suggest that since there were no group sanctions for not fulfilling the paternal role, there were little emotional ties to children and stated that the master’s children were often more valued than their own children. Some former enslaved individuals stated that they seen their fathers as “temporary intruders whom they hardly knew” (Dunaway, 2003, p. 79) and therefore were indifferent to his efforts to visit. Others called their fathers ‘dat man’ and rejected him as a stranger.

During slavery in America, the slave owner was the primary source of goods and services for enslaved individuals (Franklin, 1997; Jewell, 1988; Martin & Martin, 1985). There were no formal social service institutions available to aid enslaved individuals or free African Americans. Therefore, African Americans had to depend on mutual aid, churches and families (Carlton-Laney, 1999; Jewell, 1988; Lowe & Hopps, 2007; Martin & Martin, 1985). The social obligations of African American enslaved individuals was expressed in a number of ways by: helping new enslaved individuals to adjust to plantation life, raising crops in common to supplement the little rations issued irregularly by the slave masters, caring for the sick, providing burial services, lifting each others’ spirits and worshipping together, planning escapes, and

enforcing a code of conduct among themselves for protection (Martin & Martin, 1985).

Therefore, enslaved individuals had natural helping networks.

Meanwhile, free African Americans relied on churches, benevolent societies and fraternal orders for mental and moral improvement efforts and organized protests. In 1831, the National Negro Convention was “organized in response to growing social concerns such as the need for proactive approaches to employment, mutual aid, and the sweeping political challenge of disenfranchisement of freed Blacks” (Lowe & Hopps, 2007, p. 32). The African Methodist Episcopal church, National Negro Convention and the secretive Underground Railroad all emerged as vehicles of “leadership, resource mobilization, and mechanisms of liberation among African Americans” (Lowe & Hopps, 2007, p. 32).

Prior to the emancipation of all enslaved individuals, federal policy for relief of former enslaved individuals developed so slowly that private citizens, African Americans and Caucasians undertook to supplement it. Social thought of the nineteenth century did not insist on equal treatment for all who needed assistance. The Black poor, like other impoverished groups, suffered from substandard housing, poor sanitation, tuberculosis, and other social problems. Of the many voices raised for reform and social justice, only a few were directed toward the African American community. There was dire need for public relief for poor African Americans who were excluded from it (Cash, 2001). Since the early stages of social welfare, social services have been exclusive to white fathers and widows. During the Civil War, survivors of deceased white soldiers were given pensions to care for their families. The Union armies were made up of 14 percent of the Black male population (Hamer, 2001). These soldiers were either paid very little or not at all. Many of the soldiers’ families lived on Union contraband camps and were treated very poorly (Dunaway, 2003). When African American men began to fight and die in the war in

1863, their surviving wives filed claims for pensions. However, it wasn't until 1864 that African American women were allowed to receive this assistance (Franke, 1999). Therefore, even though the casualties among African American soldiers were great, it took some time before these men and their families were recognized as “deserving” of services.

Ah master! I'm free now!

In 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment declared that all enslaved individuals were constitutionally free (Jansson, 2001; Ross, 1978). Upon emancipation, the first task of many freed individuals was to reunite with lost family members. Announcements were published in Black newspapers for over ten years by freedmen searching for their loved ones (Hamer, 2001). Frazier (1966) identified three incentives that contributed to the recently freed fathers' interest in his family. They were: the subordination of women, the acquisition of property or a home, and purchasing the freedom of his loved ones. Gutman (1976) offers a more optimistic and positive image of the families of the freed individuals by providing evidence that most were two parent households where fathers cared for their children not simply as an expression of manhood or economic gain.

During the Reconstruction period, benevolent societies and fraternal orders were in their “highest historical stage of caring for ex-slaves and other destitute Blacks” (Martin & Martin, 1985, p. 54). As African American families struggled to gain self sufficiency, they encountered resistance among social workers who did not want to give public benefits to unmarried mothers (Franklin, 1997). African Americans had to cope in their own ways with their own peculiar and singular social problems (Carlton-Laney, 1999; Ross, 1978). Many of the freed families did not have legal documentation of their marriages and therefore their households were not deemed ‘suitable homes’ for the rearing of children (Franklin, 1997). Suitability guidelines with mothers’

pensions were also enforced by the Charity Organization Society (COS). These guidelines excluded many African Americans from receiving benefits as the only families who were eligible for relief in all states were those whose fathers had been permanently eliminated by death, long term imprisonment, or incurable insanity. Therefore, the church, as it had in the past, began increasing its function as a welfare agency to address the needs of African Americans (Franklin & Moss, 2000).

Active governmental intervention in social welfare was one of great social experimentation at this time (Jansson, 2001; Ross, 1978; Gibbs, 1988). In 1865, the first federal relief agency, The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, otherwise known as the Freedmen's Bureau, was created to assist the recently freed individuals cope with freedom and gain self sufficiency (Franklin & Moss, 2000). The Freedmen's Bureau was the "first massive governmental effort at caregiving" (Martin & Martin, 1985, p. 7). The agency lasted for seven years and was instrumental in establishing educational and health institutions in the African American community (Bennett, 2003; Lowe & Hopps, 2007). The Bureau provided food, clothing, shelter and vital information concerning consumerism, land acquisition, and labor contracts. In the South, this agency set developments in education and public health care of African Americans in motion. The agency's efforts also helped freedmen acquire land and the economic ability to provide for their families. The Southern Homestead Act of 1866 encouraged the dispersion of populations from congested urban centers by opening public lands in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Florida to all settlers. The heads of families were allowed up to eighty acres of land (Franklin & Moss, 2000).

However, the Bureau's potential to greatly improve the situation of African Americans was limited. It was underfunded and only focused on moral reform issues instead of strategies to

improve African Americans' political and economic position in America (Franke, 1999; Jansson, 2001). The agents of the Bureau have also been criticized for aiding white farmers and not helping freedmen to gain self sufficiency. In 1865, a Louisiana Freedmen Bureau refused to provide assistance to evicted families of Black soldiers if the soldiers failed to sign a contract to labor for plantation owners (Booker, 2000).

In addition, between 1865 and 1868, numerous laws known as the Black codes, were enacted by southern legislatures to prevent the realization of true economic, political, and social equality for Blacks. Many freedmen were unprepared to meet their basic needs on their own. The freed individuals would continue to labor for their previous owners and be charged against their wages for food and housing or charged interest on cash advances (Dunaway, 2003). These codes served to retain as much social control over the freedmen as possible. Vagrancy laws also made it difficult for African Americans to go out and search for work (Hamer, 20001). These local and state laws criminalized unemployment and forced those freedmen without stable work to labor without pay under the supervision of military guards until they accepted a farm labor contract (Dunaway, 2003). In addition some of these freedmen were arrested and then hired out to work (Dunaway, 2003).

This period has also been referred to as the Radical Reconstruction period due to positive shift in the social status of Africans Americans during this time (Marable, 2007). Education was highly valued as a tool to ameliorate the condition of the freedmen and many historically Black colleges and universities were founded or sponsored during this time. African American children either attended public schools or schools established by churches (Marable, 2007). African Americans also took advantage of their political power since the Fourteenth Amendment granting citizenship for all Blacks and exercise of due process and protection of the law was

ratified in 1868 and the Fifteenth Amendment granting freedmen the right to vote was ratified in 1870 (Hamer, 2001; Jansson, 2001; Ross, 1978). Between the years of 1867 and 1869, African American men served in Southern state legislatures, served on juries, and exercised their voting rights (Booker, 2000; Hamer, 2001; Marable, 2007). By the end of the nineteenth century, the progressive legislations African American politicians passed were repealed and the men were forced out of office primarily through violence (Hamer, 2001). Although written nearly two decades prior to the Reconstruction era, Alexis de Tocqueville (1841) wrote about the negative consequences the prejudice of Whites would have on African Americans, even after slavery. In fact, he stated that these prejudices would “increase in proportion as slavery is abolished” (p. 287). Based on his observations of the freed African Americans in the North, he stated that “although the law may abolish slavery, God alone can obliterate the traces of its existence” (p. 289).

War, still, has never ceased in this country

This period marked the passage of Jim Crow laws and is referred to as the “nadir of American race relations” (Franklin, 1997). During this time period, segregation was violently enforced and the rights previously granted to African Americans were made increasingly difficult to fulfill. Many African Americans that provided for their families through sharecropping were immediately disenfranchised. In 1870, 96 percent of the freedmen were landless, 75 percent were illiterate, and 70 percent had zero wealth, while the average household wealth among African Americans was \$65.41 (Dunaway, 2003). Less than a third were able to find nonagricultural jobs which had higher and more stable wages. However, most of this work, such as coal mining, was dangerous and posed severe health risks (Dunaway, 2003). The industrial development in the South shut out most African American from well paying jobs

(Booker, 2000). In addition, Southern Whites prevented Black men from owning farms through “inflated prices, exorbitant interest rates, fraud, and violence” (Griswold, 1993, p. 52).

Despite these extreme circumstances, African American labor organizations, such as the Knights of Labor, mobilized to protect their means of livelihood (Ross, 1978; Scott, 2000). By 1877, there were 400 local groups totaling 90,000 to 95,000 members. In 1880, a voluntary migration, or Exodus, of African Americans from the South began (Billingsley, 1992). The demise of any political gains African Americans could have made came with the ruling that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional in 1883.

So long as I go where a man is a man

The 1890s marked the beginning of a new period in the history of social welfare dubbed the Maternalistic Era. By the depression of 1893, the failure of private and public relief efforts was clearly exposed (Franklin, 1997). The effects on African Americans became further pronounced with the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision which established the “separate but equal” principle (Marable, 2007). Segregation laws applied to schools, entertainment venues, transportation, restaurants, restrooms, recreation facilities, and even cemeteries (White & Cones, 1999). State and local governments created social welfare institutions that included services for African Americans, but they also existed “on a separate but equal basis” (Martin & Martin, 1985, p. 78). Even the political power of African Americans was hampered by the institution of poll taxes, literacy tests and grandfather clauses (White & Cones, 1999).

Therefore, a generation of educated Black women emerged in the 1890s to become “diplomats to the White community after their husbands, brothers, and sons, were disfranchised” (Cash, 2001). African American women in the professions found ways to negotiate and mediate among different groups such as men, women, people of different races and nationalities to affect

change that affirmed the mutual purposes of those groups (Parker, 2005). Carlton-Laney (1999) discusses the value of mutual aid among African Americans that occurred during this time period. In order to cope with the unfavorable conditions of the time, the development of private African American institutions, primarily founded by women, emerged (Gordon, 1991).

By 1890, the majority of African American men were agricultural laborers (63 percent) (Marable, 2007). After the Civil War, there was tremendous industrial growth in the North which created new job opportunities (Myrdal, 1962). The name, The Great Migration, has been used to describe the period when over one million African Americans remained in the South and 400,000 moved to the North (Frazier, 1966). Many African Americans from the South moved to the North in search of greater employment opportunities and refuge from the oppressive Jim Crow laws. Consequently, the ability to start businesses and organizations, create newspapers and other publications, obtain an education, and work in various skilled trades increased the numbers of middle class African Americans (Marable, 2007).

The Great Migration also created some negative consequences for African American families. In some cities, during this early period of industrialization, African American males had less access to employment opportunities than Black women and often earned less than their wives (Griswold, 1993; Stewart, 1994). Some men had to make a difficult transition from an agricultural background to the specialized nature of work in the cities. From 1900-1945, many jobs required a moderate level of education or special training (Comer, 1989). In the North, some African American men were unprepared for the “unsympathetic and impersonal environment of northern cities” (Frazier, 1966) as employers replaced African American men with immigrants. Meanwhile, major sources of employment for African American women were in domestic services, such as housekeeping.

The Great Migration, which continued into the 1940s, also contributed to marital dissolution and the increase in absent fathers (Franklin, 1997). The migration of married African American men to Northern industrial areas disrupted families and family life. Some scholars believe that this migration contributed to the numerous social problems African American families face today (Connor, 1988). Frazier (1966) provides evidence that a large number of cases in which African American families needed help the mother had been deserted. He shows that these percentages of cases increased over time. The Cook County Service Bureau for Transients reported that 52 percent of migrants were married and 75 percent had deserted their wives (Frazier, 1966). Despite African American fathers' often "sincere intentions to rejoin their families and the initial loneliness which they experienced in the new world, the city with its varied interests proved fatal to family ties" (Frazier, 1966, p. 245).

In 1890, African Americans created The Afro American League to train workers and request better economic opportunities for African Americans (Hamilton, 1986; King & Tuck, 2007). By 1910, nearly 1.6 million African Americans had migrated from their state of birth to another in search of employment (Frazier, 1966). The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded in 1910 by W.E.B. DuBois and continues to be instrumental in promoting and protecting civil rights, particularly for African Americans. In 1911, the National League on Urban Conditions among Negroes, now known as the National Urban League (NUL), created programs to help African American migrants, direct them to jobs and lodgings, and offer them information on how to live in the city. The NUL was also responsible for the development of a training program in social work for young men and women to address the needs of the inequities in services to African Americans (Franklin & Moss, 2000). Its chief objectives were to promote "constructive and preventive social work," the training and utilization of Black social

workers, and the design of research in cities. These goals were ultimately intended to assist the NUL in “improving the social and economic conditions of Negroes in urban centers” (Reed, 2008, p. 15). The increase in manufacturing complexes in cities required more laborers than were available among White workers. Many of these White laborers left industry jobs to work in white collar professions. Therefore, African American men were employed to fill this shortage. By 1914, 80 percent of African Americans were gainfully employed (Booker, 2000).

In 1917, the United States entered World War I and there was much debate about the thousands of African Americans being “drafted, armed, and trained” to fight in the war (Ellis, 2001). The presence of racism and years of lynching that had occurred caused many White Americans to fear the possibility of Black disloyalty and the effect it might have during war (Ellis, 2001). While some African Americans were against the African American participation in the war, some scholars such as W.E.B. DuBois recognized the benefits of the war. There was hope that if the United States was successful in helping other nations become free, so too could the rightful liberties of African Americans in the United States be restored (Ellis, 2001). Many African American journals and newspapers supported DuBois’ stance and urged Black men to volunteer for military service “despite the strain put on that loyalty to an administration most unfriendly to them. After all, administrations come and go, but the nation endures forever” (Ellis, 2001, p. 5). In the end, over 370,000 African Americans served in the war, mostly providing support services, and over 1400 were commissioned as captains and lieutenants (Bennett, 2003).

“Buy Black”

After World War I, there was still a presence of racial violence in America. The riots, bombings, and discriminatory practices successfully excluded many African Americans from mainstream forms of employment and even reduced their contact with other races. Therefore, the

1920s sparked the establishment of many Black institutions where Black professionals were able to find work (Fusfeld & Bates, 1984). Despite the recession years in the early 1920s when several Black banks failed, there was remarkable economic growth during this decade among African American business owners. By 1920, although factories were the largest employers of Black men in the North, there were 74,424 African Americans in business or business-related occupations (Bennett, 1993; Fusfeld & Bates, 1984). By 1926, there were 30 Black banks with assets totaling 13 million dollars (Bennett, 1993). In addition, the Black entrepreneur or businessman was very successful, producing an array of goods from flour to hair products (Bennett, 1993). This period has also been called the Black Guilded Age, or the “age of hope, faith and hucksterism, and tens of thousands believed they would soon be rich” (Bennett, 1993, p. 323). The Negro’s Adventure in General Business reported:

The 1920s were the years when building and loan associations, banks, insurance companies, real estate agencies, import and export houses, chain stores, steamship lines, stock exchanges for dealing in securities of Negro corporations, and many other wildcat schemes devised to solve the economic problems of the Negro appeared on the scene.

(Oak as cited in Bennett, 1993, p. 323)

The philosophy of Marcus Garvey was also popular during this time and he asked that African Americans invest in his business venture, The Black Star Line, Inc., a means for African Americans to get into the trade business (Cronon, 1969). Businessmen also funded the plays, theaters, and other forms of entertainment that are often associated with the rise of Black culture in the 1920s (Bennett, 1993). The business boom lasted until 1929 with the “collapse of the Stock Market and ensuing Depression” (Bennett, 1993, p. 330). With many Black institutions closing, African Americans tried to work in white-owned businesses but were met with

discrimination. The Black Consumer Movement emerged during this time as many African Americans marched and boycotted these businesses that would not hire them. The protesters carried signs with the motto “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” (Bennett, 1993).

The New Deal

In 1929, the Great Depression had a significant impact on the ability of Americans, particularly African Americans, to provide for their families. During the Depression, African Americans were the first ones fired (Bennett, 1993; Myrdal, 1962). In 1934, it was reported that 17 percent of Whites and 38 percent of Blacks were incapable of self support in any occupation (Franklin & Moss, 2000). As racism and segregation were still major barriers for African Americans, relief during this period was hard to come by. African Americans were excluded from soup kitchens and early programs of public assistance showed as much as a 6 dollar differential in the monthly aid given to White and Black families (Franklin & Moss, 2000). In 1935, 65 percent of African Americans in Atlanta were in need of public assistance and still few places were offering relief on a nonracial basis (Franklin & Moss, 2000). Despite scarce access to resources, it was during the Great Depression that African Americans “began to look more and more toward the government for survival” (Martin & Martin, 1985, p. 80). In fact, the majority of jobs provided to African Americans during this period were through the public sector as opposed to the manufacturing industry.

The New Deal was a series of programs under the Roosevelt administration to address the declining economy. These programs were “in many ways hostile to the interests of the Black people” (Martin & Martin, 1985, p. 79). During this period, the housing policies created residential segregation, the economic policies sanctioned discrimination in employment, and the agricultural policies allowed farmers to collect money for not planting or plowing crops which

caused the unemployment of a number of African American work hands (Martin & Martin, 1985). The 1934 Housing Act created the Federal Housing Administration's Underwriting Manual which encouraged underwriters to assess the economic stability of neighborhoods. Since many businesses were leaving the inner cities, this led to the isolation of African Americans and other low-income individuals in these economically depressed areas (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). The National Industrial Recovery Act sought to stimulate the industry by establishing a minimum wage scale of 12 to 15 dollars per week for a forty hour week and the abolition of child labor under the age of 16. However, African Americans still received lower wages or worse and were dismissed from jobs (Franklin & Moss, 2000). In 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act and the wages and hours bill affected more than 1 million working African Americans; however many were unable to obtain jobs due to discrimination (Franklin & Moss, 2000).

African Americans that resided in the South were in need of relief and assistance during this period. Planter-tenant relationships were usually at the African American tenants' disadvantage as planters would withhold assistance and pay less for African American field hands than for Whites (Franklin, 1997). Since certain occupational groups, such as agricultural laborers, private domestic servants, and workers in nonprofit institutions, were excluded from old age insurance and unemployment insurance programs, it is estimated that two-thirds of African Americans were deemed ineligible (Franklin, 1997). The Social Security Act was passed and included legislation that created Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) in 1935. Similar to the Mothers' Aid pensions, ADC was designed to "help White widows and women deserted in the aftermath of the Depression provide for their children" (Harris & Parisi, 2005, p. 842). This program was meant to provide the income that a father would have brought to a family while mothers stayed home with their children.

In 1937, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) established communities of small farmers who rented land from the FSA and made loans to those who desired to purchase their own farms. There were educational programs to introduce new methods of production and marketing. This enabled thousands of African Americans to purchase land. However, the program ended in 1942 (Franklin & Moss, 2000). In addition, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration hurt African American sharecroppers by forcing land out of production and shrinking African American employment in the South. This administration replaced sharecroppers with day workers and misappropriated federal funds for African American sharecroppers (Franklin, 1997).

Government programs focused on helping fathers contribute financially to their families did not begin with the recent conservative efforts to 'end welfare as we know it.' This shift towards work programs for unemployed African American men began with the programs of the New Deal. As a response to the criticism that the Federal Emergency Relief funds discouraged recipients from seeking employment, many work programs were developed in the 1930s to provide relief for the unemployed. At any rate, some African Americans were excluded from obtaining these funds as administrators assumed that they had lower standards of living and thus failed to meet need/eligibility requirements (Rose, 1993).

Construction jobs became available to African American men through the Federal Public Housing Authority and Public Works Administration. These men helped to build hospitals and homes (Franklin & Moss, 2000). The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) operated from 1933 to 1942 and employed approximately 200,000 African American boys and young men. This program allowed young men to work in camps established by the agency. There was also an educational program for the men, which was under African American supervision (Franklin &

Moss, 2000). The Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided food, clothing, commodity surpluses, and employment for men. There was more fairness in material relief with this program.

However, the work programs administered through the Civil Works Administration (CWA), later to be replaced with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and the Public Works Administration (PWA) were discriminatory (Jansson, 2001; Rose, 1993). The Tennessee Valley Authority barred African Americans from working on their construction jobs (Martin & Martin, 1985). The National Youth Administration (NYA) was the only program to include a focus on African American participants, yet these work programs were primarily designed for unemployed White men (Jansson, 2001). Quotas were set for the number of African Americans that could obtain work through the programs and positions for unskilled labor were often given to African Americans. In addition, African Americans were paid much lower wages than Whites, but they earned more money in these programs than in agricultural jobs (Franklin & Moss, 2000). In 1939, deserving widows and children of deceased wage earners became entitled to dependent allowance. Therefore, those that were previously receiving assistance through Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) were moved to social security leaving African Americans on ADC (Franklin, 1997).

A Time for Change

The 1940s brought about major changes in the lives of African Americans, particularly in the areas of education, employment, and politics. World War II caused over three million Black men to register for the service, and about 500,000 were stationed overseas (Marable, 2007). The war also enabled Black men and women in the United States to work in various industries to support the war effort (Marable, 2007). African Americans were also involved in trade and labor

unions. This led to many strikes by whites who refused to work with Blacks or protested the rise in status of Black workers (Marable, 2007).

By this time, a large number of African Americans had shifted political allegiance to Democratic Party (Marable, 2007). By the mid 1940s, a growing number of white Americans in the North criticized the system of racial segregation and believed in efforts to overthrow it. After 1946, several northern states passed local laws against employment discrimination. Between the years 1949 and 1950, 72 bills were proposed in support of the rights of African Americans. The numbers of registered Black voters were growing and several states prohibited all white primaries. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded in 1942 which would later influence the Freedom Ride movement of the 1960s. However, The Cold War successfully halted Black progress during this time as many African American leaders feared the punishments and repercussions of being accused of being Communist.

The United Negro College Fund also helped to save Black colleges and universities by raising a million dollars per year between 1944 and 1946. (Marable, 2007). By 1950, 83,000 Black men and women between the age of 18 and 24 were enrolled in universities. The Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision in 1954 desegregated public schools and “redefined the role of Blacks in American life” (Bennett, 2003, p. 347).

Lift Every Voice

The Civil Rights movement played a large role in helping African Americans politically. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 increased participation in the electoral process. However, the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s occurred during a time of sinking income levels and employment rates in the African American community (Williams, 1990). By 1958, the unemployment rate among African Americans had peaked to 12.6 percent. While boycotts, sit-

ins, and other nonviolent protests were staged in an effort to fight the segregation and discrimination Black individuals faced, the response of the government was to spend more money on police forces to intimidate and quell these actions (Williams, 1990).

During this era, the number of African American women participating in Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) grew. ADC was transformed to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) which has a “history of contributing to father absence and family breakup” (Leashore, 1989, p. 87). It is suggested that this welfare system has “succeeded in unraveling the fabric of the Black family by penalizing the fathers’ presence” (Mitchell, 2004, p. 40). Many of the regulations under AFDC caused several individuals to feel that this program contributed to the decrease in two-parent African American families. For example, it was not until 1970 that the ‘man- in- the-house’ eligibility rule was prohibited. This mandate, enforced in several states, did not allow women receiving AFDC benefits to have an adult male living in the household. In cases when the male was the natural father, stepfather or cohabiter, “the presence of a male was deemed sufficient grounds for ineligibility” (Moffitt, Reville, & Winkler, 1998, p. 264). Coles (1977) stated:

...until recently, in many cities and counties families became eligible for welfare only when the father was dead or disabled or no longer at home. In thousands of instances, men have left their families for just that purpose. They sneak away when the welfare worker is expected, and return in-between her visits. Or go away and stay away. (p. 85)

In addition, under the AFDC program, “two parent families in which the father worked more than 100 hours per month were not eligible for assistance” (Garfinkel, McLanahan, Tienda, & Brooks-Gunn, 2001, p. 294). Therefore, even though these families were living in poverty, it seemed that the policies under AFDC favored one parent families. Social workers in public

welfare offices more vigilantly investigated African American families to find “men in the house” to deny them welfare support (Hill, 2007b). At this time, the social work profession relied heavily on literatures in psychology and sociology which cast African Americans in a deviant and pathological light (Martin & Martin, 1985). Therefore, it was assumed that Africans Americans “must be made healthy with the endowment of White middle class values” (Martin & Martin, 1985, p. 84).

The Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Unemployed Parent (AFDC-UP) program was enacted to expand welfare support to include poor couples-in which one of the parents (usually the father) had to be unemployed. Families utilizing this program accounted for 5 percent of families on welfare. Unemployed African American fathers were still less likely than unemployed White fathers to receive these welfare benefits (Hill, 2007a, p. 121). In 1967, the unemployed father program was amended. Families in need, as a result of the unemployment of the father of at least one of the children, became eligible for AFDC. However, this program changed back to the original unemployed parent program in 1979. Therefore, there was a great deal of trial and error in the development and administration of social programs from reconstruction to the present day (Jewell, 1988). Consequently, it was also during this period that interest in the increasing number of out of wedlock births and female headed household in the Black community arose. Up until this era, it was reported that well over 80 percent of African American families were two parent households. A number of factors have been suggested to have contributed to this sudden decline of African American nuclear families. Hamer (2001) pointed that up until 1960, surveys for the U. S. Census Bureau did not ask whether the children living in the household were the fathers’ ‘own children.’ Therefore, many two parent households

previously counted may have been blended or stepfamilies where a mother had remarried and were considered in the same group as 'natural fathers' living with their wives and children.

In addition, the decline in two parent families indicated that more males were not in positions to support themselves and their families (Comer, 1989). If poor youths and chronically unemployed adults were given the education and skills they needed to find employment, they would be well on their way to permanent self-sufficiency and productive lives. This logic, derived from the theory of human capital investment, and articulated in the 1964 Economic Report of the President inspired a variety of federal initiatives targeted on the poor (Taylor, 1994). Federal spending on human capital programs rose sharply during the 1960s from just under 1 billion dollars in 1964 to 10 billion dollars in 1968 (Taylor, 1994).

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 also required community action and provided the basis for government support for this type of activity (Clark & Hopkins, 1969). This act provided funding for a number of government work programs, which marked the beginnings of welfare to work programs. These work initiatives included the Community Work and Training programs (CWT), Work Experience and Training (WET), Work Incentive Program (WIN) and Community Work Experience program (CWE). WIN in particular targeted male AFDC recipients.

During this period, the armed forces were considered attractive jobs and careers. However, African American soldiers were disproportionately assigned to infantry and artillery which led to an excess of Black casualties (Billingsley, 1992). Those soldiers affected by the Vietnam War used heroin and many other drugs to numb their emotions. It is believed that this led to the drug epidemic in the Black community that extended into the 1980s (James & Johnson, 1996).

The War on Poverty

Aggressive militant Black organizations such as the Black Power party gained attention within the community and were able to initiate a number of programs for the Black poor. However, the “co-optation of militant leaders in federal programs, coupled with repression and the killing or jailing of indigenous leaders had by the mid-1970s produced another lull in the ongoing and cyclical history of black protest going back to slavery” (Williams, 1990, p. 174). Using data from the National Survey of Black Americans 1979-80, Neighbors and Taylor (1989) found that when the effects of education, gender, and age were taken into account, low-income Blacks were more than twice as likely as high-income Blacks to use social services. Therefore, social services for low-income groups acted as primary source of care and referral source (Neighbors & Taylor, 1989). The majority of individuals, 24 percent, sought help for economic problems (Neighbors & Taylor, 1989). Therefore, as the War on Poverty began, several programs were developed to target young low-income African American men. The Manpower Development Training Administration (MDTA), Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), Job Corps, and on-the-job training programs were some of the programs that provided technical skills and employment. These efforts to improve the conditions among African American males continued into the 1970s. Programs such as the Public Employment Program (PEP) and the Public Service Employment (PSE) program continued job related training and employment opportunities.

Clark and Hopkins (1969) criticized the War on Poverty and stated that the “brief and romantic interlude with the poor was a deep rooted distrust of the poor themselves, manifested when the poor and particularly the Negro poor choose to believe the rhetoric of participatory democracy and choose to act on this belief” (p. v). While community action was a part of the

effort to help the poor it was stopped because the government was preoccupied with the Vietnam War (Clark & Hopkins, 1969).

The enforcement of child support also has many implications for African American nonresidential fathers. In 1974, child support was legislated by Congress and added to the Social Security Act as Title IV-D. It required each state to “create Child Support Enforcement (CSE) programs to establish paternity and enforce child support obligations” (Becerra, Thomas, Ong, 2001, p. 5). CSE was viewed as a way to “make nonresidential parents responsible for the financial support of their children” (Solomon-Fears, 2005, p. 3). Rooted in coercive and punitive social policy, African American males are more likely to be the victims of child support enforcement programs because they experience a higher rate of unemployment, receive lower wages, and are therefore less likely able to pay than White males (Haskins, 2007; Hill, 2007a; Leashore, 1989). Child support orders typically require low income fathers, particularly African American fathers, to pay higher proportions of their income than middle and upper income fathers. In addition, low income fathers are more likely to have their wages garnished and be arrested for past due support than middle or upper income fathers (Hill, 2007a).

The War on the Poor and the Addicts

In the 1980s, the conservative Republican administration aggressively dismantled or diluted many of the most effective civil rights and social welfare programs established in the previous years (Gibbs, 1988; Roy, 2008). Federal programs designed for disadvantaged youths and the poor, which enrolled some of the highest proportions of African American males, were the targets for elimination or the severest cuts in federal funding during the 1980s (Taylor, 1994). The job training programs and general assistance funding for young men and fathers in the 1960s and 1970s were terminated (Roy, 2008). The allocation of funds to the Vietnam War was the

cause of many of these cuts (Bennett, 2003). More than 30 percent of the participants in the employment and job training programs that were cut were African American (Leashore, 1989). The federal retreat from programs and policies in the 1970s especially in areas of employment, education, health, and family stability, contributed to the deepening of social problems in the Black community in the 1980s (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999). Since this time, as many as 43.3 percent of African American males under the age of 18 have been impoverished compared with 12.2 percent of Whites (Booker, 2000, p. x).

In 1981, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act under the Regan administration shifted control of welfare programs to the states. The focus of this administration was controlling government spending and the shift from collective to private responsibility (Orloff & Monson, 2002). Public assistance was reframed from allowing mothers to raise their children full-time to getting mothers in the workforce. In 1988, the pressure of child support payments was increased as states were required to withhold wages of absent fathers and require fathers in two parent families to work a minimum of 16 hours per week in community service in exchange for welfare benefits (Jewell, 1988; Orloff & Monson, 2002). This period also marked the beginning of the “mass imprisonment movement” because several laws were passed to address the epidemic of crack cocaine that largely affected African American communities and high crime rates in predominantly urban areas (James & Johnson, 1996; Williams, 2006). The policies of the 1960s that offered rehabilitation for offenders were replaced with policies such as mandatory sentencing that gave longer sentences to those involved with drugs regardless of whether they were in possession for use or distribution (Swisher & Waller, 2008; Williams, 2006). Policies such as the Crack Cocaine Meaningful Act of 1986 and the Anti Drug Abuse Act of 1988 set the stage for the mass incarceration movement that continues today (Jordan-Zachery, 2007).

Between the years of 1980 to 1993, the number of African American prison inmates increased by 217 percent (Williams, 2006). The incarceration rates for all African American males were five to seven times more than those of White males (Williams, 2006).

Consequently, there are 1.5 million children who have at least one parent in prison (Swisher & Waller, 2008). This impacts African American nonresidential fathers significantly as child support policies don't consider incarceration as a justification to modify support orders (Swisher & Waller, 2008). Therefore, fathers are unable to pay the court ordered amount while in jail, and arrearages, plus interest in some states, build up. When they are released, it is unlikely that the amount owed will be paid as conviction records prevent fathers from obtaining gainful employment. Unless these fathers can receive some form of assistance, it is possible that they end up incarcerated again for the failure to pay child support.

The End of Welfare as We Know It

One of the most significant expressions of public activism around representations of African American men was the Million Man March. It was a demonstration against the demonization of African American men and a collective statement of manhood (Mullings, 1997). On October 16, 1995, organizers headed by the Nation of Islam, sought to assemble one million African American men in the nation's capital for the purpose of atonement and revitalization of the African American community. The call to march was directed only to Black men (Smooth & Tucker, 1999). However, many African American women including elected officials of civil rights organizations and members of sororities enthusiastically supported the male only march (Mullings, 1997). To many women, the call for men to take responsibility was a welcome one (Mullings, 1997). African American women were inspired by the promises that the march would

“bring peace to their communities, fathers to their single parent families, and a higher level sense of responsibility” (Smooth & Tucker, 1999).

Meanwhile, the government was still concerned about the growing numbers of families receiving public assistance and the increasing numbers of unmarried births. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) replaced AFDC and began the saga of reform legislation and the inclusion of fatherhood programs. TANF changed to a six-year block grant as a result of the 1996 Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). PRWORA had a disproportionate adverse impact on most low-income Black families by destabilizing them (Hill, 2007b). Specifically, eligibility time limits and penalties against recipients who had household members with drug related convictions significantly stalled the path to stability and self-sufficiency (Schiele, 2000b). The total amount of time a recipient could receive benefits was five years or less in some states where able-bodied recipients had to work after 2 years. The decrease in TANF funds for families with persons convicted of drug related offenses disproportionately affects African American families due to the high numbers of those incarcerated for such charges (Schiele, 2000b). In addition, these recent reforms, “focus mainly on lifting single mothers out of poverty and have provided little assistance to nonresidential fathers in increasing their income or in developing relationships with their children” because states were not required to provide services and activities for fathers (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999, p. 128). Yet, there were also benefits and opportunities for African Americans through the passage of PRWORA due to the federal support allocated to faith-based organizations to provide services in the community (Schiele, 2000b).

The Millennium

Hamer (2001) stated Black men have spent generations chasing the American dream, but the dream is more like a steady nightmare...times just keep getting worse and worse (p. 57). The issues fathers face span several service areas, including education, employment, and housing, therefore requiring intervention on multiple levels. The consistent failure to address these barriers and the complex psychosocial dynamics involved simply increases risk factors for fathers and further hinders their involvement with their children (Sonenstein et al., 2002).

Since slavery in America, the negative impact of the economic system continues to be unrelenting toward African American males, which is the main stressor of African American nonresidential fathers. In 2000, 11 percent of the total U.S. population lived in poverty as compared with 20 percent of all Black males (McElroy & Andrews, 2004). In 1999, 31.5 percent of African American men had no income at all. The median annual salary for an African American male working full-time was 26,416 dollars, while those working part-time averaged only 4,551 dollars for the year.

While the focus of the research on Black men in the 1990s was on problems, the millennium must bring solutions to address the needs of this population. There may be hope in store as there continues to be an increase in knowledge about the experiences of men as demonstrated by the rise in men's studies over the past ten years (Gordon, 2004). The historical ups and downs this population has faced must be understood by practitioners seeking to engage this population. In addition, the joining of skill and cultural competence will advance practice with African American nonresidential fathers.

The Impact of Issues of Power on African American Female Practitioner - Male Client Relations

Power has been defined as “an often unspoken but central dynamic in cross cultural encounters and therefore needs to be addressed in the clinical social work relationship” (Greene, 1994, p. 227). Issues of power have influenced the lives of African American nonresidential fathers for generations. Since power relations that impact our society cannot “be checked at the door,” (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1997, p. 42) African American nonresidential fathers enter social agencies with “ready made definitions or form judgments while there” (Anderson & Letiecq, 2005). Fatherhood can increase a man’s sense of failure and vulnerability if he knows or fears that he cannot provide for his family. This sense of powerlessness and helplessness can have negative effects on the psychological and emotional states of African American fathers. The symptoms of social disorganization, frustration and social alienation experienced by African American fathers are often characterized by antisocial behaviors, drug addiction, exploitative and hostile relationships with women, confrontational relationships with police and other authorities, and very high risk activities (Gibbs, 1988; Roy, 2008).

Further, Hopps, Pinderhughes, and Shankar (1995) stated that the “power or lack of power emanating from cultural group status assignment and from the status assignment of other groups from which one derives identity and meaning (sex role, sexual orientation, class status, etc.) thus become factors in the dynamics of relationships” (p. 45). Conversely, power is embodied in the practitioner role. Practitioners are the experts and have the “license to diagnose, teach, and treat” (Hopps, Pinderhughes, & Shankar, 1995, p. 46). It has been suggested that African American nonresidential fathers have a cultural paranoia toward helping relationships that are focused on punitive issues, such as child support (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999). It is in

these types of professional alliances that the practitioner clearly “represents the social order and may be seen as an agent of control” (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999, p. 55).

Scholarly works about the lives of African Americans that are premised on the assumption of racial, gender, and class homogeneity prevent acknowledgement of intragroup social relations as relations of power (Matthews, 2001). In relation to African American women and men, the conflicts around issues of power are largely due to the “cumulative effects of racism, (White male) sexism, the (American) capitalist ethos, the scarcity of (available or marriageable) Black men, the “endangered” plight of African American men, and common socioeconomic class differences ” (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999, p. 80). Although individuals may share the same race, differences in gender and socioeconomic status between African American female practitioners and their male clients may negatively impact the willingness of African American fathers to “emotionally invest in the helping relationship and thus have a negative impact on the development of trust within the therapeutic relationship” (Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999, p. 55). In addition to the complex issues that impact African American nonresidential fathers’ lives, attention toward the issues of power that impact practitioners’ abilities to effectively engage this population in services must be explored.

Race Matters

There is a reluctance of practitioners and the social work literature to address racial factors (Abrams & Curran, 2004; Calnek, 1989; Comer, 1989). Typically social work education and literature around cultural competence suggests guidelines for practice when the practitioners are of different cultural backgrounds than their clients. However, practitioners need to consider the influence of race within intraracial helping relationships. Race within the context of intraracial relations refers to “a deeper meaning signifying cultural identity and heritage”

(Collins, 1998, p. 23). Race can mean nation or the perceived kinship ties between Blacks in Africa and throughout the Diaspora (Franklin & Collier-Thomas, 2001). Race is also complex as it “not only tends to subsume other sets of social relations, namely gender and class, but it blurs and disguises, suppresses and negates its own complex interplay with the very social relations it envelopes” (Franklin & Collier-Thomas, 2001). Therefore, this study will discuss the impact of differences or similarities within race on the practitioner-client relationship. While gender and socioeconomic issues are discussed separately, race is an integral part of both constructs (Hardy, 2008).

Daniels (1998) states “cultural and racial issues are prominent in America in the past and present and enter into therapeutic relationships, particularly with therapists of color” (p. 290). The issue of matching clients and practitioners by race has been a continually debated issue in the practice literature (Daniels, 1998; Flaskerud, 1990; Sattler, 1970). It should not be assumed that racial matching is effective because all practitioners who work with African American clients have to deal with both their own feelings and their clients’ feelings about their race (Calnek, 1989; Davis, 1999). A discussion of racial transference and countertransference deserves special attention when exploring the experiences of African American fatherhood service providers and their African American clients. Although the issues between African American practitioners and African American clients receive less attention, their understanding will lead to more effective practice.

Freud defined “countertransference as the unconscious counterreaction to the patient’s transference, indicative of the therapist’s own unresolved intrapsychic conflicts” (cited in Bernstein, 2001, p 115). Countertransference has also been defined as subjective responses of therapist to clients (Calnek, 1989; Gelso & Mohr, 2001). Transference was referred to by Freud

as the “unconscious reaction a patient has toward a therapist, which was believed to be rooted in antecedents from childhood” (cited in Bernstein, 2001, p. 115). There are multiple forms of transference, such as “positive, negative, erotic, and psychotic, with countertransference implications for each” (Bernstein, 2001, p. 115).

The communality of race or the similar experience of being African American in predominantly White America make for better understanding and closer relationships between practitioners and clients (Calnek, 1989; Daniels, 1998). Racial transference and countertransference issues might impede the effectiveness of interventions. Within intraracial relationships, transference can “occur in many variations, including overcompliance, excessive admiration, denial of the importance of ethnicity, suspicion of therapist motives, stereotype projections based on ethnicity, and hostility” (Bernstein, 2001, p. 116). Two of the identified means through which African American practitioners may ineffectively deal with intraracial worker-client relations are denial of identification and over identification. Denial of identification is when practitioners attempt to avoid acknowledging race with their African American clients. This might lead to an underestimation of clients’ difficulties related to race and attributing anywhere from most to all of their problems to individual and external issues (Bernstein, 2001; Calnek, 1989). Over identification or “over rapport” is when practitioners have a felt bond with African American clients and see them as an extension of themselves because of common racial experiences (Bernstein, 2001; Calnek, 1989; Sattler, 1970). The risk of overidentification is that too much time is spent on discussing the problem instead of working towards resolving it (Comer, 1989).

The Man Woman Thing

Child welfare professionals reported their frustration with the “power struggles” that occur between themselves and fathers due to the “man-woman thing” (Johnson & Bryant, 2004, p. 783). Gender is “not just about women, it is about the social relationship between men and women and the dialectical, reciprocal, and cultural construction of femininity and masculinity” (Mullings, 1997). In order to engage fathers in social services, the influence of gender on the helping relationship must be addressed with practitioners and strategies to resolve conflicts must be proposed (Johnson & Bryant, 2004). Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) found in their study involving a female practitioner facilitating a group for fathers that specific skills or directives were necessary in working with this population. In comparison with the group for women, the fathers’ group required the practitioner to: place greater emphasis on respect; assert limitations on verbal assaults or negative language, emphasize confidentiality more, prohibit violence or abusive actions, and be competent in getting fathers used to the group process of sharing and helping.

The issue of gender transference and countertransference has not been widely addressed in the social work literature but is found in psychoanalytic or psychology studies. It is suggested that there are several forms of gender transference and they are maternal, paternal, erotic and eroticized, and oedipal transferences (Kulich, 1989; Maguire, 2004). This research usually refers to transference or countertransference issues in reference to male practitioners and female clients. Since 1915, Freud has helped to perpetuate the image of female clinicians that fall in love with their male therapists as a natural occurrence. In the 1980s, the psychology literature provided evidence that erotic transferences between female practitioners and male clients were rare. Therefore, there is less knowledge about the impact of gender on female practitioner-male

client dyads. Yet, Maguire (2004) speculates that there may be more occurrences than is mentioned because it seems more likely that men would play the role of suitors than to embrace a passive client role (p. 134).

A study of treatment of fathers in a psychiatric hospital revealed that their all-female staff had to handle transference issues carefully as their patients were “powerless, helpless and defeated” (Lanksey & Simenstad, 1989). Since female practitioners are in a more authoritative position relative to their male clients, the risks of practitioners’: 1) exercising ‘power over’ powerless male clients, 2) over-identifying with mothers of client’s children, and/or 3) aligning against their male clients might become influential factors in the relationship (Wall & Levy, 1994). Maguire (2004) stated:

When confronted with emotional power of female analysts, some male patients may have particular difficulty in acknowledging aspects of themselves that are often projected onto women and other less powerful groups. This leads to aggressive power battles in transference. Some male patients will cling to the reality of female therapists' gender in order to reinforce their very masculine identity. (p. 134)

Female clinicians must find ways to deal with the anxiety, horror, or aversion they sometimes feel when erotic transferences occur. It is suggested that there is powerful hostility, contempt, and infantile need beneath these expressions. Ultimately, if issues of power in the helping relationship are not attended to, maladaptive ways of coping that were targeted for change may be strengthened as fathers’ negative experiences with their past partners or families of origin are reenacted within the therapeutic process (Lanksey & Simenstad, 1989; Wall & Levy, 1994). Although these studies called for straightforward strategies to address areas of conflict and resistance, none were offered.

African American Gender Relations

The forced adaptations to the unnatural state of slavery “over two and a half centuries ago resulted in patterns of interaction between men and women that while precariously functional within the plantation slave regimes were later to prove tragically disruptive for Afro Americans ” (Patterson, 1998, p. 28). One of the most complex and pressing issues in the African American community is centered in the relationship between African American men and women (Cazenave, 1983; Hare & Hare, 1984; Rodgers-Rose, 1980; Bethea, 1995; Hill, 2005; Patterson, 1998; Pinderhughes, 2002; Wallace, 1990). The manner in which African American people have envisioned relationships of gender in light of a history of slavery, segregation, and numerous injustices, has expressed itself in markedly different forms (Mullings, 1997). On one end of the spectrum this relationship has been characterized as a ‘crisis’ and on the other it is one of increasing hatred and tension. As shown in Figure 2.2 below, the tension between African American men and women has been explained through external forces, such as societal, structural, institutional, and cultural constraints (Aborampah, 1989; Franklin, 1984; Patterson, 1998). African Americans as individuals and their social interactions have also been noted as contributors to gender conflicts (Patterson, 1998; Wallace, 1990).

The assimilation of African Americans into mainstream culture also impacted the gender ideologies among African Americans (Hill, 2005; Wallace, 1990). The attempt to mimic paternalistic, Eurocentric relationship values and ideals created conjugal role ambiguity and role strain and are a probable cause for sources of African American male female conflict (Rasheed & Stewart, 2007, p. 572). Therefore, as African American men and women have increasingly accepted Eurocentric definitions of male-female relationships, the empathic relationships between genders declined.

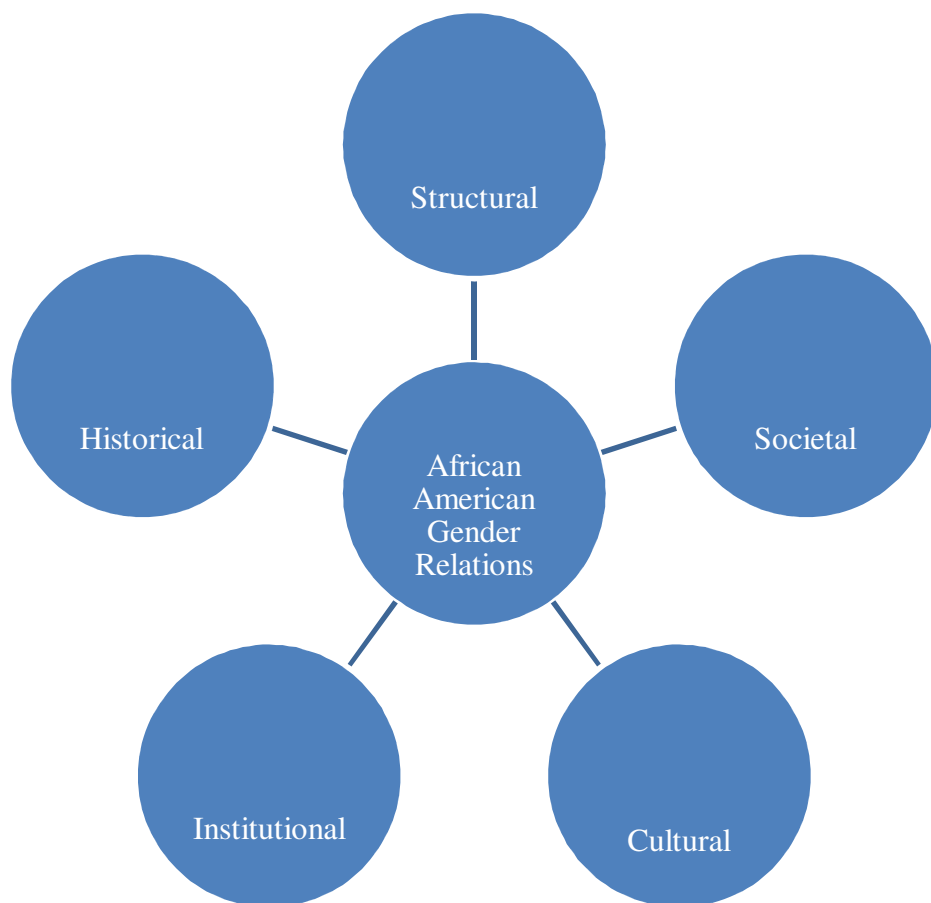


Figure 2.2. The Influences on African American Gender Relations

While feminism has been criticized for overly portraying women as victims at the expense of acknowledging the needs of males (Sommers, 2000), the women's movement that took form in the 1970s has also been cited as a source of strain on African American relationships. Hare and Hare (1984) argue that not only have Black scholars ignored the issue of conflict between African American men and women, but they have added fuel to the issue by producing studies that focused on how Black women were achieving gains over Black men. It is argued that these scholars should have been addressing the ideas of white middle class feminist women who claimed that "the blacks had the sixties; [the white women] will have the 70's" (Hare & Hare, 1984, p. 9). Meanwhile, "white feminists in search of their "identities" and

practicing “assertiveness”... take the jobs and income... that could have gone to black males” (Hare & Hare, 1984, p. 9). Overall, the past editor of *Essence* magazine, Susan Taylor, stated:

There is a war on Black people in America and that neither Black men nor Black women should buy into the myth that one or the other is enjoying some kind of privilege. (cited in Willie & Reddick, 2003, p. 132)

Therefore, there needs to be a change in discourse around African American male-female relations that addresses the power struggle within these relationships but brings us closer to progress and collaboration, not stagnation and competition.

Remember the Ladies

After the Civil War, gender divisions emerged and moved Black families "away from egalitarianism of social relationships during slavery” (Booker, 2000, p. 103). African American men hold very traditional conservative views on gender matters (McCreary & Wright, 2003). Even before slavery ended, African American men were “lobbying for patriarchal privileges, especially in their families, and saw the subjugation and control of Black women as essential to their mission” (Hill, 2005, pp. 5-6). There was a tendency toward male dominance as compensation for racial disadvantage among African American men (Kane, 2000). African American men’s treatment of women has long been criticized by African American women activists, such as Anna Julia Cooper and women writers of *The Independent* (Giddings, 1984; Jordan-Zachery, 2007). During the Reconstruction era, Black men were dominant in social, economic, and political life (Booker, 2000). Many organizations focused on offering African American men opportunities for political leadership and opportunities to partner with fellow businessmen, while women were generally “barred by custom and law from political involvement” (Booker, 2000, p. 101). If women participated in organizations, Ransby (2001)

stated that there was a tendency to assign women to a secondary, ornamental, or honoree roles instead of partnership roles. Although women were considered the backbones of Black churches, social institutions, and social movements, male leadership was paramount (Ransby, 2001). In reference to the inequality some women experienced within the Black Power Party, Wallace (1990) stated:

Women, traditionally, want more than anything to keep things together. Women are hard workers and they require little compensation. Women are sometimes willing to die much more quickly than men. Women vote. Women march. Women perform tedious tasks. And women cannot be paid off for the death and the suffering of their children. By negating the importance of their role, the efficiency of the Black movement was obliterated. It was just a lot of Black men sitting around with Afros. (p. 81)

Sambo and Sapphire: Stereotypes of African American Men and Women

One purpose of stereotypes is to “lessen the cognitive-load of modern man inasmuch as we must codify and categorize the infinite amount of information on which reality itself is based” (Turner, 1977, p. 122). Bethea (1995) states that the main causes of conflict- between African American men and women are stereotyped views and inauthentic communication (Bethea, 1995). Pinderhughes (1994) states stereotyping occurs:

- 1) As a generic norm of behavior; 2) as a result of competition for scarce resources;
- 3) as a result of the process of deindividuation that is when people are not known or not visible they are not seen as individuals; and 4) as a result of the violation of laws of interpersonal distance. (p. 277)

McCreary & Wright (2003) state there is a connection between structural oppression and the internalization of negative stereotypes as a contributor to disenfranchising behavior and feelings. African American men and women have internalized stereotypes and situations and they have become real in their consequences (Pinderhughes, 2002; Rodgers-Rose, 1980). It appears that African American men and women have accepted these stereotypic views as facts which caused a schism to develop between them (Bethea, 1995). Negative stereotypes that proliferate about African American men serve to justify the neglect of this population among mental health and social service professions (Rasheed & Stewart, 2007). African American female practitioners must be aware of their own assumptions about their clients and be prepared to handle the stereotypes clients may have about them.

From slavery to contemporary society, the Black male image as a menace to society has often been referred to as the “Nat” stereotype. It has “served to reinforce the status quo and legitimate the social order and lowly status of Black males within it” (Booker, 2000, p. viii). Hutchinson (1996) also stated that the assassination of the black male image has transformed the Black man into the universal boogeyman (p. 174). Society’s fear of the angry or violent Black male has been a useful tactic for political gain for years from Senator Stephen A Douglas, President Theodore Roosevelt to George Bush with the Willie Horton case. Senator John McCain presidential campaign’s unsuccessful attempt to depict President Barack Obama’s former pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, as only an angry unpatriotic Black man shows that this ideal exists today. The threatening, Black angry male image persists:

...because of the stigma attached to their skin color, age, gender, appearance, and general style of self presentation. Criminality, incivility, toughness and street smartness are often attributed to the unknown Black male. (Anderson, 1990 as cited in Hamer, 2001, p. 28)

In the 1990s, the rise of “gangster rap” and images of young Black males in many films, such as *Boyz N the Hood*, *Menace II Society*, and *Juice*, also perpetuated the stereotype of not only angry, but violent men (Roberts, 1998; White & Cones, 1999). Many social service providers feel unsafe and threatened by the presence of African American men. There is a need for practitioners to find strategies to overcome their fear of working with this population. It has been recommended that conflict resolution or mediation courses be added to the curriculum (Jones, 2006).

The characterization, “Sambo,” was used to represent an African American man that was “docile but irresponsible, loyal but lazy, humble but chronically given to lying and stealing” (Elkins, 1976, p. 82). By the turn of the twentieth century, newspapers, books, and plays frequently portrayed images of Black men as thieves, drunks, incompetent, and foolish (Booker, 2000; Cockrell, 1997; Lemons, 1977). The presence of this stereotype in contemporary society was evident during the 2008 Presidential campaign:

When asked by an interviewer what he thought of fellow senator and Democratic presidential opponent Barack Obama, an African American, Biden stated, “I mean, you got the first mainstream African American who is articulate and bright and clean and nice looking guy...I mean, that’s a storybook, man.” (Hardy & Laszloffy, 2008, p. 226)

The “Sambo” image represented a man that was actually a “perpetual child existing to serve Whites with a smiling face, perform hard labor, and act as a lightning rod for humor” (Booker, 2000, p. 13). The use of this stereotype in minstrel shows sought to mock the African American male and “remake the Black male” into someone harmless. Many current and past television shows have been criticized for perpetuating “Sambo” like representations of African American men and fathers. Television fathers such as Fred Sanford of *Sanford and Son*, George

Jefferson of the Jeffersons, and even the fathers on more current shows such as Bill Cosby of The Cosby Show, and Damon Wayans of My Wife and Kids played professional fathers, yet the goals were to make you laugh (Hamer, 2001; White & Cones, 1999). In addition, many of the popular Black fiction novels, women's magazines, and films depict African American men as "shiftless, cheating, or no good" (Hamer, 2001, p. 23).

For centuries, stereotypes of the sexual behaviors of African American men have been a source of conflict and have had dangerous consequences for some:

I am not absolutely certain at what age I became conscious of my color as a limitation on where I could go, sit, or with whom I could associate. I think it was during my seventh year, for that was when I received my first beating for associating with a white female. (Hernton, 1977, p. 244)

Many scholars, African American scholars included, described the African American male as immoral and promiscuous (DuBois, 1899; Frazier, 1966). Prejudiced Whites instilled fear about Black males as sexual predators and frequently accused them of raping or making advances toward White women. In 1910, a report indicated that:

...the use of cocaine by Negroes of the South is one of the most elusive and troublesome questions confronting enforcement of law in most of the Southern states [because] cocaine heightened African American males' innate tendencies toward uncontrollable savagery particularly toward White women. (Johnson, 1992, p. 24)

As a result, by 1914, the use of drugs was treated as a criminal offense. Restrictive sanctions were, and still are, deemed necessary to control African American males (Johnson, 1992).

The promiscuous stereotype of African American fathers was revealed in a study on married fathers conducted by David Schulz (1977). Three types of African American fathers were identified: 1) the 'indiscreet free-man' who has illegitimate relationships outside the marriage that are well known by the wife, 2) the 'discreet free-man' whose "cutting out" is not known to his family and finally 3) the monogamous father which is simply described as rare. The internalization of this overly sexual stereotype by African American men may create a "hidden ambivalence towards all women, black as well as white" (Hernton, 1997, p. 245).

African American nonresidential fathers have also been identified as the "culprits in the rise of welfare dependent families" (Gadsden, 2003, p. 97). They have become the "scapegoat for society" (Mitchell, 2004, p. 40) as the lack of their presence has been attributed to numerous societal ills among 'fatherless' children. Issues such as crime and delinquency, premature sexuality, out of wedlock births, poor educational achievement, substance abuse and addiction, alienation, and poverty have been characterized as the crisis of fatherlessness (Mitchell, 2004; Popenoe, 1996). Programs frequently focus on the rates of unmarried births among the African American population and blame the Black nonresidential father who "epitomizes the male component of family breakdown and its deplorable repercussions" (Roberts, 1998, p. 145). These ideas are problematic because it essentially lets society off the hook for the various structural forces that impede nonresidential fathers' ability to participate in their children's lives (Billingsley, 1992; Roberts, 1998). The correlation between race and poverty is more significant than that between 'fatherlessness' and poverty (Roberts, 1998). Poverty does not exist because fathers are not residing in the home with their children (Roberts, 1998). Social problems are part of American culture, not a 'culture of poverty' (Martin & Martin, 1978).

African American nonresidential fathers are stereotyped as unresponsive or uninterested in their children's welfare (Johnson & Bryant, 2004; Jones, 2006). It is believed that fathers' poor attitudes or bad habits are the sources of their problems (Roberts, 1998). Clark (1965) stated that "professionals have abandoned hope. There are people in helping services who have abandoned any meaningful attempt to help people who are in need" (p. 52). Many service providers label the fathers as "hard to reach" and fail to collect data or contact information on the father or attempt to involve them when they do have the information (Johnson & Bryant, 2004). A study of a community fatherhood program found that most men had no clear idea how to achieve their goals or get what they needed to be good parents (Cunningham, 2006). Majors and Billson (1992) coined the term "cool pose" to describe the aloof and cool behavior African American men project towards women and children in order to maintain some control over their manhood. In addition, Comer (1989) noted that "controlling, authoritarian, aggressive, even violent and exploiting behaviors of too many low income fathers is a reaction to their own sense of powerlessness, abuse, and rejection in society" (p. 371). Although these behaviors are not condoned, when economic, political, educational gains are blocked for most African American nonresidential fathers this may lead to "acting up and acting out, apathy, and withdrawal behaviors" (Comer, 1989, p. 371).

Collins (1998) stated that African American women have been depicted as being "stupid; having an "essential" animal like sexuality; a "natural" willingness to serve, and an "innate" ability to cook; demonstrating a seemingly endless "strength" in the face of racism and sexism, cheerfulness in situations of profound poverty, and a willingness to put anyone and everyone always before ourselves; and being generally "bitchy" and disagreeable (pp. 8-9). The women that endured slavery "passed on to their nominally free female descendants a legacy of hard

work, perseverance, and self reliance, a legacy of tenacity resistance, and insistence on sexual equality-in short a legacy spelling out standards for a new womanhood” (Davis, 1983, p. 29). However, the image of the ‘strong Black woman’ also “makes it difficult for Black women to reject exploitative work and simply walk away from responsibilities” (Collins, 2004, p. 205). The negative stereotype of Sapphire represents a dominating, emasculating, castrating Black woman (Bell-Scott, 1982; Booker, 2000; Hill, 2005). Sapphire is related to the stereotype of the “Black Lady Overachiever” which is “a new controlling image applied to middle class professional Black women” (Collins, 1998, p. 39). Many African American women encounter punishment or are viewed as a threat if they are seen as too individualistic. Patterson (1998) states that an African American woman "must never intimidate him [the Black man] with her knowledge or common sense, [but] let him feel stable and dominant” (p. 52). Thus the notion that weaker African American women are needed to create stronger African American men remains prevalent (Hill, 2005). This has been evidenced by recent media frenzy over the ‘fist bump’ shared between President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama during the Presidential campaign. Previous to this event, there have been several characterizations of Michelle Obama as being intimidating and controlling (Collins, 2008; Cottie, 2008; Wolffe, Kliff, Springen & Popescu, 2008). Therefore, this action defined as “a hand gesture normally associated with sporting events and Bud Lite commercials” (Stephey, 2008) was viewed as too masculine.

The myth of the Black Matriarch is “so deeply rooted in the social sciences and in social work that it has been accepted largely as an unquestionable fact” (Martin & Martin, 1985, p. 6). The belief that African American mothers keep African Americans poor has been “masqueraded as a scientific truth” (Collins, 1998, p. 9). The notion of Black matriarchy has its origins in the early works of DuBois (1899) and Frazier (1966) where African American women were

ostracized as doubly deviant, masculine, and unnaturally superior (Bell-Scott, 1982). In 1965, the Moynihan report received greater public attention for directly linking the contemporary social and economic problems of the African American community to a dysfunctional matriarchal family structure. However, the difference between Frazier and DuBois' research and that conducted by Moynihan is that DuBois and Frazier "interpreted matriarchal families as a *product* [italics are the author's] of racial oppression and poverty not as a central *cause* [italics are the author's] in the inequitable social and economic position of Black families relative to White families" (Jordan-Zachery, 2007, p. 183). The thesis of the Moynihan Report was that the source of oppression was deeper than the racial discrimination that produced unemployment, poor housing, inadequate education and substandard medical care. The root of the oppression was described as a "tangle of pathology" created by the absence of male authority within African American families (Battle & Bennett, 1997; Davis, 1983). There was a call to introduce male authority into the African American family and the community at large in order to cure social ills (Davis, 1983; Newton, 2005).

It is suggested that African American men bought into the message that African American women were to blame for the population's underclass status in America (Battle & Bennett, 1997; Franklin, 1984; Hill, 2005; Mullings, 1997). Wallace (1990) stated:

Everybody wanted to cut Daniel Moynihan's heart out and feed it to the dogs, but he did have a point after all. The Black woman had gotten out of hand. She was too strong, too hard, too evil, too castrating. She got all the jobs, all the everything. The Black man had never had a chance. No wonder he wanted a White woman. He needed a rest. The Black woman should be more submissive and, above all, keep her big, Black mouth shut. (p. 11)

Scholars, such as William Turner, suggested that this myth of the Black matriarch was simply an expression of wishful thinking on the part of White men. The perpetuation of the image of an impotent Black male was used as a tactic to distract the liberation struggle which had “one uncompromising goal: total freedom for all black people, men and women alike” (Turner, 1977, p. 143).

Researchers should begin to give an increasing amount of attention to the African American male-female dyad and move toward the creation of new and more meaningful relationships among African Americans (Aldridge, 1989). Bethea (1995) states the conflict between African American men and women is the:

...social equivalent of what Berne labels "Lets You and Him Fight" (1964), a game that, in this case, can end badly for everyone involved. Such a game maintains the victims in a continual posture of opposition and blaming without ever focusing on the real persecutor, the system that offers unequal access to education and employment as vehicles for success. (p. 88)

Further, it has been evidenced that progress does not result from this divide among African Americans:

In the new millennium it is clear that any movement that seeks to foist a postmodern patriarchalism on Black America is doomed to failure. Not only would that clash with the trends of contemporary history, but it would go against the grain of African American history and culture. Black males will march in equality with their female counterparts, or there will be no forward march. (Booker, 2000, p. 223)

The Influence of Socioeconomic Status

African Americans have always been diverse as there are variations among class, status, occupation, worldview, religion, color, sexual orientation and region across the group (Booker, 2000; Banks, 1972). Besides race and gender, this study will explore socioeconomic status as a location of difference between African American female practitioners and African American male clients. Typically, African American female fatherhood service providers have higher income and higher educational attainment than the fathers they serve. Gil (1994) states “formal and informal criteria for access and promotions within and between occupational classes, and the fact that at the bottom of the class structure are usually people who participate only marginally in the work system, and who experience, therefore severe material deprivations, tend to result in fierce competition among individuals and social groups” (p. 248). This form of competition becomes “a major arena for conflicts between individuals and social groups, victimized by subjectively discrete types of discrimination” (Gil, 1994, p. 248). Stereotypes and realities concerning the socioeconomic differences between African American men and women must be considered when entering professional relationships. The target population of most fatherhood programs could be described as disadvantaged or at-risk African American fathers. While some of the program participants have similar middle class values as practitioners, there are also those participants who:

...are alienated from middle class society and its values. They feel a deep seated anger and bitterness toward White America because they have not been treated fairly. Rage, combined with frustration fuels self destructive behavior in the form of drug and alcohol abuse and criminal behavior. Explosive violence can easily be triggered by day-to-day conflicts and frustrations. Living involves very little long-range planning, setting of

priorities, or carefully examining the consequences of high risk behavior to themselves or others. (White & Cones, 1997, p. 71)

Therefore, an assessment of practitioners' and clients' attitudes about each other's socioeconomic status and strategies to address conflicts are essential to developing a successful helping relationship.

Education

Fannie Lou Hamer stated:

...whether you have a PhD, D.D., or no D., we're in this bag together. And whether you're from Morehouse or Nohouse, we're still in this bag together. Not to fight to try to liberate ourselves from the men-this is another trick to get us fighting among ourselves-but to work together with the Black man, then we will have a better chance to act as human beings, and to be treated as human beings in our sick society. (as cited in Price and Markham, 1994, p. 43)

African American women are making greater progress educationally than African American men. In 2007, there were 150,000 more African American women than African American men enrolled in college (Staples, 2007). The explanation for this is that there are a larger number of female role models as more women are enrolled in college. Some scholars attribute this gender disparity to the historical practice of African American families sending their daughters to college and not their sons as males had a wider variety of occupations open to them that didn't require education (Staples, 2007). However, African American fathers also encouraged the education of their sons, particularly in the North, because fathers had no influence to secure jobs for them from their racist employers (Griswold, 1993).

In 2004, over 20 percent of African American males had less than a high school diploma (United States Census Bureau, 2007). Statistics also show that only 14 percent of African American fathers have graduated from college, compared to 25 percent of White men (United States Census Bureau, 2005). It was estimated that 44 percent of all African American males were functionally illiterate because many African American males are allowed to reach the 10th grade or graduate from high school without basic reading and writing skills (Roy, 2008). Further, these men are discouraged from acquiring an education as data indicate that the same amount of educational attainment yields considerably less return for African American men in the workforce than White men (Blake & Darling, 1994).

Employment

It is suggested that women obtained higher status in society following the Civil Rights movement and the Women's movement. African American women like all women have taken on a much more "public role in society and have assumed a more politicized voice" (Smooth & Tucker, 1999, p. 244). Patterson (1998) states the external gender environment has grown somewhat better for African American women while it has stagnated for African American men. Between 1960 and 1980, occupational upgrading occurred with greater frequency for African American women than for African American men. Some men are even resentful that African American women appear to have more opportunities than they do (Kaba, 2005). Patterson (1998) states that the burdens of African American men have "always been oppressive, dispiriting, demoralizing, isolating, and soul killing whereas those of women while physically and emotionally no doubt as great have always also been at least partly generative empowering and humanizing." White collar professions (sales/clerical positions) were available to African American women but not to men. Among executive, administrative, and managerial workers,

there are now 127 African American women for every 100 African American men and among professional 151 women for every 100 men (Patterson, 1998).

The problem for the inner-city African American father has always been his place in the economy and a “matrix of domination” that prevents them from making progress (Wilson, 2003). In the last decade, the median income of African American men has never surpassed two-thirds of the median income of Caucasian men. Worse still, the income gap has repeatedly shown signs of widening. African American men earn the lowest weekly salary among racial and ethnic groups and those working full-time only take home about 79 percent of the median salary for White men (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008b). In addition, the wages of African American men, particularly in blue collar occupations, have continually fallen since the 1970s (Haskins, 2007). The national unemployment rate is also the highest among all racial and ethnic groups. As recent as October 2008, the unemployment rate among this population ballooned to 11.1 percent and continues to increase monthly (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008a). Therefore, it is not surprising that 2.5 million nonresidential fathers who do not pay child support are poor themselves or living below the poverty line (Sorensen & Zibman, 2001). Most empirical studies indicate that never married fathers and fathers whose children obtain public assistance have, on average, low incomes and high unemployment rates compared with the general population (Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Hanson, 1998; Garfinkel, McLanahan, Tienda, Brooks-Gunn, 2001).

Class

The importance of class differences among African Americans is not to be underestimated (Calnek, 1989; Hill, 2005). This tension between classes of African Americans has been traced back to slavery. There was an occupational structure within slavery that differentiated between skilled enslaved individuals and field hands (Booker, 2000). Some

describe this structure as a hierarchy of house enslaved individuals, slave drivers, overseers, slave craftsmen and skilled individuals (Genovese, 1974; Gutman, 1976). This hierarchy contributed to the “extent of diversity among antebellum African Americans” (Booker, 2000, p. 8). It is argued that there was a sense of equality among individuals despite their place in this hierarchy (Booker, 2000). Yet, Frazier (1966) cited this structure as a source of division and conflict between classes of African Americans. Upper class Blacks maintained purity in family morals as well as external forms of respectability. He equated their success with their adoption of the manners and morals of Whites. Further, he stated that it was this small group that was isolated from the majority of the population but was responsible for the gains the Negro has made.

The racial consciousness of the middle class African American has always been in question. Sampson and Milam (1975) revisited the less mentioned issue of group solidarity or group consciousness among Blacks and the divisions among the race by class. Their analysis begins with the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement and the solidarity among Blacks often characterized as just a ‘feeling in the air.’ At the same time, there were middle class African Americans who weren’t involved in the Civil Rights or Black Power Movement that followed. The stereotype of an “Uncle Tom” or “Oreo” class has often been used to disparage this group of individuals (Sampson & Milam, 1975). The middle class African American has been criticized for:

...taking jobs with white companies...not wearing dashikis, giving the Black Power handshake, or getting an Afro haircut, not being Black enough for other Blacks.
(Hamilton, 1970 as cited in Sampson & Milam, 1975, p. 154)

Despite this, Sampson and Milam (1975) also found that middle class African Americans displayed a sense of racial solidarity and consciousness. Today, Hill (2005) suggests that middle class African Americans are increasingly “estranged from, critical of, and embarrassed by street savvy, disrespectful, low-income African Americans” (pp. 203-204). This issue is relevant because most social workers embrace middle class values (Banks, 1972; Hopps, Pinderhughes, & Shankar, 1995). This has caused some to be “far enough removed in time and circumstance to cause an inevitable sense of strangeness between themselves and the client” (Clark, 1965). There needs to be more attention and discussion about practitioners’ values and beliefs about low-income clients and how to address conflicts that may arise.

Chapter Summary

As evidenced by the literature reviewed in this chapter, our society has created and reinforced several barriers that effectively reduce fathers’ involvement with their children and families (Parke & Brott, 1999). A multidimensional understanding of these fathers in addition to an attention toward power dynamics is essential to advancing practice, education, and research. Although social work practice is behind in developing empirically-based strategies to engage African American nonresidential fathers, the literature reveals many areas that have been explored that offer opportunities for the profession to begin engaging with this population (Dudley & Stone, 2001; Hopps, Pinderhughes, & Shankar, 1995; Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999; See, 2007). Clark (1965) stated:

...social agencies must have courage to reexamine ruthlessly their present assumptions, methods, and programs and prune those postures and pretenses which reflect only traditional and bureaucratic lags or fundraising gimmicks. Must dare to run the risks of

being part of a real and comprehensive program of social action and social change.

(p. 50)

It is hoped that the exploration of the experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers will add to our minimal existing knowledge about practice with fathers and the challenges involved. The following chapter will describe the methods and rationale for the approaches that will be used in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology that was used to explore the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. A qualitative approach was utilized to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the common motivations of African American women who are fatherhood service providers? (2) In what ways do gender, race, and socioeconomic status (power issues) affect their ability to create successful helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers? (3) How do African American women who are fatherhood service providers negotiate issues of power and authority in their professional relationships with African American nonresidential fathers?

This chapter provides an overview of the fit between the goals of this research and the qualitative approach, and the rationales for the design, sample, data collection and data analysis that were employed. A discussion of the trustworthiness of the study and the subjectivity of the researcher is also included.

Design of the Study

Rossmann and Rallis (1998) stated “the purpose of qualitative research is to learn about some aspect of the social world and to generate new understandings that can be used by that social world” (p. 5). This study developed new knowledge about the professional experiences and motivations of African American female fatherhood service providers that have not been

discussed in the literature. By exploring the women's unique stories, education about work with fathers, gender relations in African American professional relationships, and issues of power within a female practitioner-male client dyad were obtained.

Creswell stated there are eight reasons why a qualitative approach should be taken for a particular study: (1) the nature of the research question, (2) the topic needs to be explored, (3) the need to present a detailed view of the topic, (4) approach to study individuals in their natural setting, (5) interest in writing in a literary style, (6) sufficient time and resources, (7) audiences are receptive to qualitative research and (8) emphasizes researcher's role as active learner rather than as expert (p. 17). In addition, the characteristics of qualitative research are: (1) orientation towards the natural world, (2) multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic, (3) focus on context, (4) researcher systematically reflects on their impact on flow of participants' everyday lives, (5) sensitivity to personal biography of the researcher, (6) emergent nature of research design (7) reasoning that is multifaceted and iterative, and (8) fundamentally interpretive (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 9).

As a result, the qualitative tradition of inquiry was ideal for this study. The three research questions addressed were all 'how' and 'what' questions indicating a need for detailed information on the topic. The experiences of African American female fatherhood service providers contribute to the gap in social work knowledge about practice with fathers and power dynamics. This study could also be considered interpretive as it seeks to understand how the practitioners interact with their social world and the meaning that it has for them (Merriam, 2002).

Creswell (1998) also emphasized that qualitative research presents a "complex holistic picture [that] takes the reader into the multiple dimensions of a problem or issue and displays it

in all of its complexity” (p. 15). This qualitative approach was also effective in the study of multi-layered issues, such as the roles of gender, race, and socioeconomic status in the female practitioner-male client dyad. The complexities of the topic were such that a quantitative approach using an instrument or survey could not accurately provide understanding of the practitioners’ experiences. Therefore, the means to research these female-male relations existed through meeting the women in their natural settings and interviewing them.

Qualitative research designs can be interpretive, critical, or postmodern (Merriam, 2002). This study employed a ‘critical’ qualitative research design. Critical qualitative research “uncovers, examines, and critiques the social, cultural, and psychological assumptions that structure and limit our ways of thinking and being in the world” (Merriam, 2002, p. 9). A critical qualitative approach “differs from a mainstream qualitative study in that the research questions and data collection set out to make the workings of societal power visible” (Sandlin, 2002, p. 372). Banks-Wallace (2000) noted that the critical line of research inquiry is a “tool that serves dual purposes: knowledge development and promotion of change” (p. 37). According to the principles of critical research, the aims of this study have been framed “in terms of power- who has it, how it’s negotiated, [and] what structures in society reinforce the current distribution of power” (Merriam, 2002, p. 327). The issues of power experienced by the research participants were explored considering the intersections of race, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Theoretical Framework

Some qualitative researchers utilize certain paradigms or worldviews, as a basic set of beliefs or assumptions to guide their inquiries (Creswell, 1998). The five philosophical assumptions that undergird qualitative research are that the researcher understands that: 1) reality is subjective and multiple; 2) the distance between the researcher and that being researched must

be lessened; 3) research is value laden; 4) written presentation should be in a literary informal style; 5) inductive logic; and 6) an emerging design should be used (Creswell, 1998). Research with African American women should be “grounded in culturally consistent epistemologic frameworks [that] may offer opportunities to integrate healing and scholarly inquiry consciously” (Banks-Wallace, 2000, p. 34). Typically, African American women’s lives are examined from a problems framework (Bell, 1990; Bell-Scott, 1982; King & Ferguson, 2001). Therefore, a womanist theoretical framework was embraced in order to understand the professional experiences of African American female fatherhood service providers. Taylor (1998) stated that the “womanist perspective focuses on how women make their way toward survival, wholeness, and enfranchisement for the African American community” (p. 62). The use of this theory allows the researcher to: 1) acknowledge the uniqueness of African American women’s experiences; 2) explore the commonalities and differences between the stories of the participants and other women; and 3) address the connections between African American men and women (Banks-Wallace, 2000). In accordance with the guidelines of womanist research, these women were not portrayed as victims of the patriarchal society, but their strengths and wisdom were emphasized (Banks-Wallace, 2000; Jones, 1996; King & Ferguson, 2001). Therefore, the use of this framework helped to “establish collaborative and nonexploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative” (Creswell, 1998, p. 83). Qualitative research may also employ an ideological perspective to “draw attention to the needs of people and social action” (Creswell, 1998, p. 78). Phillips (2006) defines womanism as:

...a social change perspective rooted in Black women’s and other women of color’s everyday experiences and everyday methods of problem solving in everyday spaces,

extended to the problem of ending all forms of oppression for all people, restoring the balance between people and the environment/nature, and reconciling human life with the spiritual dimension. (p. xx)

Womanist theory captured the complexity and diversity of experiences among African American women who are fatherhood service providers because this framework addresses power relations through gender, race, inequitable systems, oppression, and disempowerment. This perspective has been used in multiple forms to explore “the hidden agendas, power imbalances, power centers, and assumptions that inhibit, repress, and constrain African American individuals, families and communities as well as examines how women express agency within hostile social environments” (Taylor, 1998, p. 64). As these women help the fathers in their struggle to be treated equally as needful clients and parents, it is also worthwhile to know how various oppressive forces affect their role as fatherhood service providers. The knowledge gained from this research will be shared and provided to those who can create change and for women’s personal, professional, or political use (Banks-Wallace, 2000; Saulnier, 1996).

The use of binary categories and labeling of clients has been a hindrance to fulfilling the mission of the social work profession (Sands & Nuccio, 1992). Postmodern thought also guided this research as it fosters “a powerful critique of existing knowledges and the hierarchical power relations they defend” (Collins, 1998, p. 124). By focusing on the complex yet rarely discussed position of African American female fatherhood service providers, postmodern thought will “promote a breakdown in traditional ways of seeing and thinking about reality, ways of constructing aesthetic theory and practice” (hooks, 1990). The main concepts discussed in postmodern thought are decentering, deconstruction, and difference (Flax, 1987; Collins, 1998). These concepts are helpful in exploring the experiences of African American female fatherhood

service providers as “the marginalized and devalued space of Black womanhood [is viewed] not as one of tragedy but as one of creativity and power” (Collins, 1998, p.128). By choosing to work with African American fathers, postmodern thought assisted in exploring the “sensibilities which are shared across the boundaries of class, gender, and race, and which could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy” (hooks, 1990). In other words, this study lends insight not only into the work experiences, but the motivations of these practitioners in order to establish more credibility around the needs of fathers and the potential to address them.

Postmodern thought also challenges the idea of a universal Black experience and highlights the diversity of African Americans (Hill, 2005; hooks, 1990). Since this study also addresses intraracial diversity based on gender and socioeconomic status, postmodern thought will be useful in deconstructing “the claims of discourses that lock subjects into fixed raced and gendered identities and focus attention on the fluidity, contradictions, paradoxes and tensions of ...life” (Parker, 2005). Overall, the use of womanism and postmodernism “point[s] to positive possibilities and articulate[s] a better more just vision of the world” (Sandlin, 2002, p. 373).

Sample Selection

Schwandt (2001) stated that participants are “chosen not for their representativeness but for their relevance to the research question, analytical framework, and explanation or account being developed in the research” (p. 232). Qualitative researchers plan to obtain a sample that includes “people selected with a different goal in mind: gaining deep understanding of some phenomenon experienced by a carefully selected group of people” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 56). Patton (2002) suggests several sampling methods that aim toward increased understanding of the problem versus generalizability of results. He described a variety of

purposive sampling strategies including: extreme or deviant case sampling, intensity sampling, maximum variation sampling, critical case sampling, criterion sampling, and snowball sampling.

The use of purposeful sampling for this study helped obtain women that could best expand knowledge about this phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). However, the snowball sampling technique was also used to have women recommend other practitioners for the study. This sample was obtained by sending a recruitment flyer (Appendix A) by email to fatherhood organizations and local and state health and human service organizations. Interested practitioners contacted the researcher by email or phone to ensure their appropriateness for the study. However, this strategy has been found to work primarily with White women working in male-dominated occupations who were raised in middle class families (Cannon, Higginbotham & Leung, 1991). Therefore, it is suggested that more labor-intensive strategies be employed to recruit African American women (Gibson & Abrams, 2003). For example, community and professional events were attended and contacts made during fatherhood and other social service conferences were called to recruit participants for the study. Upon participants' consent (Appendix B), an interview was scheduled at their workplace or another convenient meeting place. The compensation for their involvement in the study was their choice of a \$25 Visa or Applebee's restaurant gift certificate given on the date of the interview.

Participant Criteria

The first criterion for participation in the study was that the women self-identify as African American. None of the participants identified as having been born outside of the United States, although this population was not excluded from participation. There needs to be more research on their lives, particularly professional lives, of African American women. Since this research sought to explore and describe behaviors, it was more useful that the small sample

under study was relatively homogeneous. A sample that is too diverse will make identifying common practices and experiences almost impossible (Cannon, Higginbotham & Leung, 1991). This research fills the gap in the literature on the motivations and complex relations African American women experience in their social work exchanges with African American male clients (Abrams & Curran, 2004).

The position of African American women in male-dominated professions or specialties may engender a unique consciousness, “informed not only by the double consciousness and second sight of the veil but also by the triple consciousness of being at the forefront of race, class, and gender conflict” (Mullings, 1997). Collins (1998) also describes the knowledge of African American women as unique due to their outsider-within perspective. In a patriarchal society, “the outsider-within location describes a particular knowledge/power relationship, one of gaining knowledge about or of a dominant group without gaining the full power accorded to members of that group” (Collins, 1998, p. 6). African American women who are fatherhood service providers have insider knowledge about fathers yet biologically could never become full-fledged members of the Black male gender. As full insiders within African American women communities, they have knowledge largely hidden to African American men and other non-Black, non-females (Collins, 1998). Therefore, the knowledge that these practitioners shared adds to the knowledge base about the complexities of practice and effective means of addressing the issues that African American nonresidential fathers face.

The second criterion was that the women provide direct services to fathers currently or within the past year. This study presented the experiences of women that had daily interactions and working relationships with their male clients. While African American women are concentrated in occupations such as social work and various community services because they

are more open to them, (Cannon, Higginbotham, & Leung, 1991) it was not easy to locate women that provide direct services to only fathers. As previously discussed, most responsible fatherhood programs and men's services employ male service providers.

The third criterion was that the women are 25 years of age or older. This will ensure that women are of age to reflect on their past experiences and share the knowledge they gained from their experiences. Thus, it is hoped that various strategies across age groups will be shared to engage fathers in practice.

The fourth criterion was the possession of at least a bachelor's level degree in social work or other social science. The educational level of participants was important in deciding the implications for practice and education.

In qualitative research, data is collected and analyzed until no new information is found (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 63). This saturation point is also referred to as a "point of diminishing returns...where you learn a decreasing amount for the time you spend" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 69). The saturation point for this study was considered reached when no new: 1) motivations for the participants' work with fathers are shared; 2) influences or consequences related to issues of power are learned; 3) techniques for developing successful working relationships with fathers are gained.

Sites of Research

The sites of the research were Atlanta, Georgia, Alexandria, Louisiana, Baltimore, Maryland, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Washington, D.C. These sites were selected based on demographic similarities among these cities' African American populations and the popularity of and interest in fatherhood initiatives in these areas. The participants were interviewed either at restaurants or their workplaces.

Atlanta, Georgia

Atlanta is located in the southeastern United States and home to six historically Black colleges and universities. According to the 2000 Census Bureau statistics, 56.8 percent of Atlanta's population is African American compared to 12.8 percent of the total Black population in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2000). The 2000 Census reports a population of 135,854 Black women and 119,835 Black males in Atlanta (United States Census Bureau, 2000). The State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates report shows that there are a total of 42,990 individuals working in community and social service occupations in Georgia with 12,430 being social workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Since 1997, the Georgia Fatherhood Program has been one of the nation's models for service delivery to fathers. The fathers in this program face several challenges as over 80 percent of individuals living below poverty level in Atlanta are African American (United States Census Bureau, 2000). The high school graduation rate among these African American males is only 41.5 percent compared with the national average of 48.5 percent (Diplomas Count, 2008). The median household income among African Americans is 23, 128 dollars compared to the total population's income of 34,770 dollars (United States Census Bureau, 2000). In addition, the rising unemployment rate in Atlanta is estimated to be 7.5 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008a).

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Milwaukee, 'the great place on a great lake', is located in the midwestern United States and African Americans comprise about 38 percent of the total population. However, approximately 66 percent of families in Milwaukee that live below the poverty line are African American (United States Census Bureau, 2000). The median household income among African Americans is 24, 403 dollars compared to 32,216 dollars for the city's total population (United

States Census Bureau, 2000). Even more telling is the fact that approximately 35.8 percent of Black males graduate from Milwaukee high schools (Diplomas Count, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that 51.1 percent of working age Black males in Milwaukee are not in the labor force (Levine, 2008). Over 30,000 individuals are employed in community and social service occupations in the state with more than 10,000 being social workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Given the dire statistics, human service professionals in the city have actively sought to address the needs of fathers in the community. In 2005, the Milwaukee Fatherhood Collaborative has worked to increase attention to the needs of this population.

Alexandria, Louisiana

Alexandria, Louisiana is located in the southern region of the United States in central Louisiana and has been called “The Crossroads.” The African American population in Alexandria is 54.7 percent of the total population (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Only forty percent of the city’s high school graduates are African American (Ibid, 2000). The median household income is 17, 861 dollars compared to 26, 097 dollars for the total city’s population (Ibid, 2000). While one of the largest industrial sectors in the city is education, health, and social services, need still exists among the African American male population. According to the 2007 American Community Survey, out of the 13, 859 African Americans in Alexandria with incomes below the poverty level, 5,250 are African American men (United States Census Bureau, 2007).

New Orleans, Louisiana

New Orleans, Louisiana is located in the southern region of the United States. On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina, one of the greatest natural disasters in American history hit the city. In 2000, African American residents accounted for 67 percent of the total population (United States Census Bureau, 2000). A third of these individuals lived below the poverty line (Ibid,

2000). Almost 55 percent of African Americans in New Orleans are at least high school graduates (Ibid, 2000). The median household income among African Americans is 21,461 dollars compared to 27,133 dollars for the city's total population (Ibid, 2000). The dire consequences of the storm and the pre-existing poverty in the city have been numerous including physical and mental health, unemployment, and housing issues (Chia Chen Chen, Keith, Airriess, Li & Leong, 2007). The city is building a 'New New Orleans' and has established a fatherhood effort.

Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore is the largest city in Maryland and is located on the East Coast of the United States. African Americans comprise approximately 64 percent of the total population in Baltimore City. Practitioners have been actively involved in the Responsible Fatherhood Movement due to the high number of risk factors that fathers in the city. Only 31 percent of African American males graduate from high school (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2008). Consequently, 36.1 percent of African American men are jobless (Levine, 2009). Of the 143,514 individuals living below the poverty level, 110,022 are African American (United States Census Bureau, 2000). The median household income is 26,202 dollars compared with 30,078 dollars for the total population (Ibid, 2000).

Washington, D.C.

African Americans in the United States' capital make up 55.5 percent of the city's total population (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Interestingly, African American males in Washington, D.C. have a higher graduation rate of 50 percent compared with the national average (Diplomas Count, 2008). The D.C. metropolitan area is the home of several fatherhood initiatives, conferences, and federal bodies that fund and promote these efforts. The need for

services is still evident as the unemployment rate has increased to approximately 8.4 percent in this city according to recent estimates (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008a). In addition, 76.8 percent of individuals living below the poverty level in Washington, D.C. are African American (United States Census Bureau, 2000). The median household income among African Americans is 35,622 dollars compared to 46,283 dollars for the city's total population (Ibid, 2000).

Data Collection

The qualitative approach requires that humans act as the instrument in data collection and analysis purposes (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The following characteristics qualify the human as the instrument of choice for naturalistic inquiry: 1) responsiveness; 2) adaptability; 3) holistic emphasis; 4) knowledge base expansion; 5) processual immediacy; 6) opportunities for clarification and summarization; and 7) opportunity to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 193). Complex topics are best suited for qualitative inquiry due to this method of data collection. Maykut & Morehouse (1994) stated the "human as instrument, is the only instrument which is flexible enough to capture the complexity, subtlety, and constantly changing situation which is the human experience" (p. 26). This study used semi-structured interviews as a data collection method.

Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis (2003) stated that about 90 percent of all social science investigation relies on interview data. Interviews have been defined as "a conversation with a purpose" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 79) and "reality constructing, meaning making occasions, whether recognized or not" (Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003, p. 645). Interviews allow "the respondent to move back and forth in time-to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273). This study embraced the view of interviews as "the active joint construction of plausible

stories or accounts of social life” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 136). The researcher must actively participate in the interview as though it were a regular conversation. Creswell (1998) stated that the critical approach calls for interviews to be conducted in an “interactive dialogic manner that entails self disclosure on the part of the researcher and fosters a sense of collaboration.” The co-construction of knowledge was helpful in gaining rich information for other practitioners’ learning to work with fathers as the actual stories and experiences of the participants were presented.

The interview structure can also vary depending on the nature of the research topic. The structure of the interview primarily concerns “the extent to which the questions to be asked are developed prior to the interview” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 81). The structured interview is the “mode of choice when the interviewer knows what he or she does not know and can therefore frame appropriate questions to find out” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 269). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used since little is known about power relations in female practitioner-male client dyads and African American female fatherhood service providers’ experiences. An interview guide of twelve questions (Appendix C) was created to explore topics in these areas. The areas of questioning were challenges and successes of working with fathers, motivations for working with fathers and influences of gender, power, race, and socioeconomic status in professional relationships. The interviews lasted a maximum of 60 minutes, were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. It was also requested that follow up contacts be permitted, whether by phone, mail, or in person to ensure accuracy of findings or to ask further questions about the original interview. The interview data was collected over a three month period.

Some challenges of interviewing have been identified as “ unexpected participant behaviors, consequences of the researchers’ own actions and subjectivities, phrasing and

negotiating questions and dealing with sensitive issues” (Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003, p. 648). Since this study is being conducted by an African American woman researcher with African American woman participants, it was anticipated that challenges due to differences in educational background, class, and color might arise during the interview (Johnson-Bailey, 1999). In addition to social class, the age of African American female participants has been found to impact researcher-respondent alliances (Reynolds, 2002). Younger women were more open to being involved in research studies whereas older women were more skeptical. Being a female researcher of color did not count for much among middle class African American female participants. These participants typically controlled the interview in terms of time and the information they provided (Reynolds, 2002). The influence of color among African Americans was also not taken lightly as there is a history of darker skinned African Americans feeling slighted by African Americans that have lighter complexions (Hunter, 2002). While these issues did not arise in the data collection process, the researcher was prepared to explore the meaning that the participants ascribed to them and how they impacted their worldview. This would have to be taken into consideration in the interpretation of findings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research “involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 159). An inductive approach to data analysis is used in qualitative inquiry (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 126). Inductive analysis was primarily used because there is little known about practice with fathers, particularly women that provide services to fathers. Inductive data analysis may be defined as a process of turning specific raw units of information into general categories of information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore,

inductive analysis allowed the researcher to use specific instances or perceptions in the practitioners' work with fathers to make general assumptions about practice with this population. The inductive data analysis technique used was the constant comparative method. This method is most often associated with scholars, Bernard Glaser, Anselm Strauss, and Juliet Corbin, and typically refers to grounded theory. Glaser and Straus (1967) state that this form of data analysis "combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained" (as cited in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 134). Although Glaser and Straus (1967) state that the approach is useful for any kind of data, Bogdan & Biklen (2007) call their approach "complicated" (p. 73) and mostly used in multi-site, participant observation studies. Bogdan and Biklen primarily describe constant comparative as a method used only in grounded theory studies, where one uses theoretical sampling and saturation in order to develop a theory.

Merriam (2002) states that the constant comparative method involves the researcher "continually comparing one unit of data with another in order to derive conceptual elements of the theory, even though they may not be developing theory" (p. 8). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Charmaz (2006) have also added to existing knowledge about the process of using the constant comparative method. These scholars both provide an open interpretation of this method where the end result of the analysis is a deep understanding of the phenomenon, but not necessarily a theory. Charmaz (2006) also describes a more open use of the constant comparative method where one "compares data with data to find similarities and differences" (p. 54). Although Charmaz describes this method as a part of developing grounded theory, her description of the constant comparative method, particularly her discussion on the different types of coding (pp. 54-66), seems to make it more accessible to multiple types of qualitative inquiry. Coding is defined as the process of systematically transforming and aggregating raw data into units "which

permit precise description of relevant content characteristics” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203). The constant comparative process helps the researcher “develop a set of categories that provide a reasonable reconstruction of the data she or he has collected” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 134). Categories also “provide descriptive or inferential information about the context or setting from which units are derived” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203). In order to find common categories across interviews, focused coding was used (Charmaz, 2006). This process entailed going through the data to find recurring or significant codes and deciding which ones were useful in categorizing the data. This decision was based upon which categories made more sense according to the purpose of the study, which is to portray the women’s professional experiences, and the research questions. Once the categories were developed, the categories were assessed to make sure that they could stand on their own, meaning that the categories were distinct from one another. By examining the similarities among instances in certain categories, preliminary themes were developed that captured the essence of the participants’ experiences and were conceptually congruent.

Trustworthiness

There are several aspects of the qualitative research process that contribute to the trustworthiness of the study. These could be: 1) using multiple methods of data collection; 2) building an audit trail; 3) working with a research team; and 4) conducting member checks (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also listed additional aspects of trustworthiness relevant to the proposed study: 1) maintaining field journals; 2) mounting safeguards; 3) triangulating; 4) prolonged engagement; and 5) persistent observation. This study used various methods to address internal validity, reliability, and external validity.

Internal Validity

Lincoln & Guba (1985) prefer the term credibility instead of validity in reference to qualitative research. Credibility is enhanced when 1) the inquiry is carried out in such a way that the probability that the findings will be found to be credible is enhanced; and 2) the findings have been “approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied” (p. 296).

Triangulation is also a means to increase the credibility of research outcomes (Mathison, 1988). The goal of triangulation is to “study and understand when and why there are differences” (Mathison, 1988, p. 13). There are four types of triangulation: 1) data; 2) investigator; 3) theory; and 4) methodological (Mathison, 1988). This study employed theoretical triangulation which refers to using more than one theory in the interpretation of a social phenomenon (Mathison, 1988)

Critical research designs call for researchers to ‘negotiate meanings of results with participants in the study’ (Creswell, 1998, p. 84). Therefore, member checking was used. Participants’ were given the option to review their transcripts at their request. However, all participants were consulted about findings and consulted for clarification of meaning throughout data analysis. In addition, female experts in fatherhood work were consulted throughout the study. An organization named Women in Fatherhood, Inc (WIFI) agreed to assist the researcher with reviewing findings and providing feedback. This organization consists of 13 women that either manage programs for fathers or are social service administrators that also advocate for changes in services related to fatherhood. All except three women in the organization are African American.

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research is viewed as a fit between the recorded data and what actually occurs in the setting under study (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). Lincoln & Guba (1985) refer to reliability as dependability. Dependability is defined as methods used to seek “means for taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change” (p. 297). Dependability was accomplished through the use of an audit trail. A journal was kept to record personal reactions during interviews and decisions made throughout the course of the study regarding the research design. Therefore, the entire research design and process is transparent should any concerns arise.

External Validity

As opposed to the term external validity, Lincoln & Guba (1985) use the terms applicability and transferability. In qualitative research, the goal is not generalizability as is common in quantitative approaches. Future qualitative studies may utilize the working hypotheses from another qualitative research. However, the transferability of the hypotheses is “an empirical matter depending on the degree of similarity between sending and receiving contexts” (p. 297). Therefore, in order to ensure that similarities between various contexts can be assessed, thick description was used to present the context and findings of the study. Also, the use of various sites of research added to its external validity.

Ethical Concerns

In order to insure that participants are treated in an ethical manner, the study received IRB approval from the University, which included informed consent from participants. There were three ethical considerations to be mindful of when conducting this study. The first was confidentiality, as I protected the women’s identities and used pseudonyms in place of their real

names at their request. As the interviews and information shared were intimate and personal, they required a great degree of trust between participants and researchers.

The second ethical consideration has to do with the representation of the participants in the final research report. The issue of representation is central to critical research because women's perspectives must be portrayed accurately and understood. The data collection process has to remain "humane and preserve the personal dignity" (Etter-Lewis, 1996, p. 119) of the participant. This study was also somewhat challenging as critical research calls for the researcher to 'strive to address false consciousness and conceptual determinism' (Creswell, 1998, p. 84). Parker and Lynn (2002) noted that the expectations of the researcher for participants to engage in critical discourse might lead to disappointment. Some of the participants had a difficult time viewing their situation as being influenced by a patriarchal society and thus did not want to be represented as such. Researchers must avoid analyzing the voices of participants too narrowly and ensure that research findings are consistent with what participants expressed.

The third ethical consideration was that the research process was collaborative, not coercive (Etter-Lewis, 1996, p. 119). Merriam et al. (2001) stated that "during fieldwork the researchers' power is negotiated not given" (p. 409). If the women did not want to disclose particular details of their lives, the issue was not be pressed, as researchers are not allowed to enter all areas of their private experiences. The effort to continue communication with the women regarding the progress of the research was established so that the participants didn't feel abandoned as other interviews, analysis, or the final report were completed.

Risks and Benefits

Research studies concerning the African American community, particularly those that offer a critique, are usually viewed as ‘airing dirty laundry.’ In other words, interior practice secrets and relations that have been considered important to practitioners will be exposed. There is initial concern about the way African American female fatherhood service providers will be viewed within larger segments of the community, specifically by men in fatherhood practice and service delivery. One of the goals of the research was to avoid a ‘we-they’ tone, orientation, or analysis while presenting findings. This was achieved by consulting with the Women in Fatherhood organization to ensure that the information was constructive and not divisive.

The benefit of this research to the participants was the opportunity to share their experiences and inform the professional knowledge base about effective engagement with fathers within female practitioner-male client dyads. This research also established some credibility to the wisdom shared by the participants. It is hoped that this research was empowering to the women and stimulated thought and change about the way that women approach practice with men and the way African American male clients are viewed within human service professions. While the risks of participating in this research were minimal, some of the participants became emotional when discussing issues involving their own fathers, family members, or even past clients. In these cases, participants were allowed time to process the emotional event while the researcher provided empathy and support. While no serious emotional risks were presented during the interviews, the researcher was prepared to provide participants with a list of community and mental health resources if necessary.

Researcher Bias and Assumptions

As a social worker, I am genuinely concerned with exploring and rectifying inequities in the provision of social services. This conviction arose from my experience as an enforcement/legal agent in a state child support enforcement office for over three years. The majority of my clients were unemployed or low-income, African American nonresidential fathers. I learned that these fathers faced various obstacles- low wage jobs, low educational attainment, and difficulties meeting their basic needs. It was also disheartening to see the cycle of fatherlessness firsthand. For example, I could enter a parent's name into the child support computer network and see that the client's father had child support cases with their mother.

I was also employed as a female fatherhood service provider and therefore my own experiences of working with fathers and working within the "Responsible Fatherhood Movement" influenced my decision to conduct this research. Therefore, it was important for me to state my assumptions upfront and be mindful of my own subjectivity throughout this research. My assumptions were:

- 1) Services to fathers are important for them, their children, families and society.
- 2) There are unique features of relationships between female fatherhood service providers, particularly African American women, and their male clients.

These assumptions were handled by the use of validity techniques, member checking, and simply putting assumptions aside by listening. In analysis, these assumptions were countered by staying in the presence of my data. In other words, the inductive analysis process required that I analyzed what was actually present in the data and support any claims with the data itself.

The Pilot Study

In March 2008, University IRB approval was obtained and a recruitment flyer was sent to several fatherhood organizations, previous research participants for my pilot quantitative study and community organizations. Initially, nine women expressed interest in participating in the study. However, only four lived in Georgia and one was willing to travel from Ohio to participate. After several e-mails and scheduling conflicts two of the women were interviewed on April 5 and April 14, respectively. The women identified themselves as being 1) African American; 2) providers of direct services to fathers currently; and 3) at least 25 years old. They both created pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Moya is a 25 year old master's level social worker who is employed as the team leader of a fatherhood program. Alicia is a 33 year old high school graduate who is employed as a child support consultant. Both of their interviews lasted about forty five minutes, however I did not record our initial small talk and the time spent going over the consent and payment forms. Overall, an hour and a half was spent in each setting with the women. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed with the assistance of transcription software.

Preliminary Findings

The first research question deals with the participants' motivation or reason for choosing this line of work. Moya expressed commitment to families and children "for years" and her passion for helping fathers become more active with their children as motivation for her involvement. Alicia stated that she spent years working in child support. A father that she knew was experiencing extreme bias in the system, which only hurt the children involved, and she decided to "switch teams." The theme, "Finding balance," refers to the women's constant

thoughts about the fathers' interests as well as those of the mothers and children. The possible categories might be: 1) serving father's interests; 2) serving mother's interests and 3) serving children's interests. Both women did not limit their interviews about practice with fathers to their male clients. The mothers and children in their clients' lives were always considered. Moya stated that the program for fathers also includes "a family day where we have the family come out to the park and have just a cookout, have fun together."

Table 3.1

Preliminary Findings

		Themes		
Categories	Finding Balance	Breaking Walls	Crossing Over	
	• Serving Father's Interests	• Demonstrating Knowledge	• Transitioning Behaviors of Clients	
	• Serving Mother's Interests	Establishes Respect	• Transitioning	
	• Serving Children's Interests	• Persevering	• Transitioning	
		Establishes Rapport	Perceptions of Practitioners	

Collins (1990) coined the phrase "outsider within perspective" which explains the feeling these women shared as always conscious of their male audience. These women's stories of "being the only female in the room" confirmed that issues around gender exist and influence their work with fathers. The theme, "Breaking walls," refers to the barriers that must be addressed when building professional relationships with fathers as a female practitioner. The participants stated that many of the fathers automatically think that female practitioners are 'out

to get them.’ This theme seemed to address the ways in which women negotiated power and authority. Possible categories could be 1) demonstrating knowledge establishes respect, and 2) persevering establishes rapport. The women both made several references to assuring the fathers that they were competent. Moya noted occasions of initial “head butting” in workshops with the fathers where she simply had to show that she had the knowledge to lead and inform their parenting behaviors. Once the fathers acknowledge that the women are ‘smart’ or ‘know what they are talking about,’ then they have gained the fathers’ respect to some degree. Despite the challenging nature of work with this population, Moya makes sure that her intentions are not misunderstood and she continues to show up for the fathers. Her perseverance or willingness to continue to negotiate and work with the fathers seems to eventually establish rapport as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

...so they’ve grown to just accept that I’m bringing knowledge and skills to them and it’s up to them what they do with it whereas before “you’re just trying to get us to do...” you know its not like that...

The theme, “Crossing over,” refers to the transition that takes place in female practitioner-male client relationships. This theme was a very important point in both interviews. The women discussed what they had to do to get to this point but the women also described what actually happened in the work environment and interactions when this occurred. The categories could include: 1) transitioning behaviors of clients, which would describe the fathers’ new behaviors that the practitioner observes, and 2) transitioning perceptions of practitioners, which would include the practitioner’s perception of what the fathers think of her after the transition. Moya described her experience among the fathers in the following manner:

I've enjoyed it. They have been great since day one BUT we actually saw around week- I would say around week about seven, there was a transition... Where the first couple weeks the men were always you know "what's your opinion?" They wanted to know from the female standpoint... and every single class... I'd say class one through four, they had to say something about you being a female...

Then she stated:

...but now they are on the other side of that. They've gotten to the point where I'm just another guy in the room [laughs]. They say whatever is on their mind, they're open, there's no more head butting with me they don't want to know "well what do you think as a woman." There's none of that anymore...

In terms of the research question about various issues of power, neither Moya nor Alicia was as explicit about their views on the impact of race and socioeconomic status on the helping relationship. Moya did provide descriptions of the African American fathers' group as enjoyable now but there was initial testing and confrontation that she pointed out. However, with the group of Caucasian fathers with whom she worked, she stated that they "only want to learn" and seemingly don't acknowledge her gender as she states "they don't care about me ...they just want to know what can they do and how can they work through this." Since there were only two practitioners involved in the pilot study, it was necessary for more data to be collected before drawing conclusions on the impact of race and socioeconomic status on the intergender helping relationship.

These interviews affected the research design as an additional criterion was included specifying that individuals have at least a bachelor's level degree in social work or another

cognate discipline. In addition, new questions were added to the interview guide to address items such as race and socioeconomic status that were not openly discussed during the pilot interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. The research questions were: (1) What are the common motivations of African American women who are fatherhood service providers? (2) In what ways do gender, race, and socioeconomic status (power issues) affect their ability to create successful helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers? and (3) How do African American women who are fatherhood service providers negotiate issues of power and authority in their professional relationships with African American nonresidential fathers? In this chapter, a brief profile of each participant is provided and an overview of the research findings is presented.

Participants

Thirteen women were eligible for participation in this study (Table 4.1). The women worked and were interviewed in five states: Wisconsin, Louisiana, Maryland, District of Columbia, and Georgia. The participants' ages at the time of the interview ranged from 25 to 61. The years spent in their current position ranged from 1 to 10 years. Nine of the women worked in community-based, nonprofit organizations, while three worked for state or federal programs. Four of the women worked specifically with fatherhood programs and were employed as program coordinator, group facilitator, team leader, and operations manager. Four women

Table 4.1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

NAME	AGE	CITY	HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL DEGREE	AREA OF STUDY	JOB POSITION	EMPLOYING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION TYPE	PRACTICE AREA	YEARS IN JOB POSITION	MARITAL STATUS	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
Carmen	46	Milwaukee	Bachelor's	Childhood Education	Program Instructor/ National Trainer	Nonprofit	Domestic Violence/ Parent Education	2	Married	4
Hope	51	Milwaukee	Bachelor's	Human Services	Program Manager	Nonprofit	Healthy Marriage	1	Married	2
Angela	49	Milwaukee	Master's	Human Services	Parent Educator	Nonprofit	Parent Education	6	Married	2
Queen	46	Alexandria	Doctorate of Jurisprudence	Law	Assistant District Attorney/ Program Coordinator	Government	Child Support/ Fatherhood	5	Divorced	2
Drucilla	40	New Orleans	Master's	Nursing Social Work	Facilitator	Nonprofit	Fatherhood	2	Married	4
Dawn	30	Baltimore	Bachelor's	Psychology	Program Director	Nonprofit	Healthy Marriage	2	Divorced	1

Jocelyn	45	Baltimore	Master's	Psychology	Group Facilitator/ Deputy Director	Nonprofit	Healthy Marriage/ Substance Abuse	10	Married	3
Bonnie	51	Washington, DC	Master's	Social Work	Program Director	Government	Parent Education	5	Single	0
Pudin	61	Washington, DC	Master's	Social Work Community Development	Executive Director	Nonprofit	Healthy Marriage	2	Divorced	2
Moya	25	Atlanta	Master's	Social Work	Team Leader	Nonprofit	Fatherhood	1	Married	0
Georgia	29	Atlanta	Master's	Business Administration	Operations Manager	Government	Fatherhood	6	Married	0
Lola	55	Atlanta	Master's	Social Work	Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Nonprofit	Access/ Visitation	2	Single	0
Yvonne	30	Atlanta	Doctorate	Educational Psychology	Licensed Professional Counselor/ Educational Psychologist	Private Practice	Counseling/ Military	2	Divorced	2

were employed with healthy marriage programs as program manager, program director, group facilitator, and executive director. Two women worked with parenting programs as parent educator and program director. The other three women worked with fathers in a domestic violence agency, access and visitation program, and private practice.

Five of the participants had an educational background in social work. Three women had psychology backgrounds, two had degrees in human services, and one had a background in early childhood education. The highest degrees for the other two participants were a juris doctorate and master's in business administration. Seven of the women were married, two were single and four women were divorced. Nine of the participants had children and the number ranged from 1 to 4.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Milwaukee is home to nearly 80 percent of Wisconsin's African American population. Unfortunately, Milwaukee ranks as the fifth metropolitan area in the United States with the highest rate of African American male joblessness. This statistic is higher than any of the other research sites in this study. For example, the percentage is 27.7 in Washington, D.C., 32.3 percent in Atlanta, and 36.1 percent in Baltimore (Levine, 2009). Nearly half (47.1 percent) of the cities' Black men are jobless (Levine, 2009).

All of the Milwaukee participants stated that unemployment was a major issue for the fathers that they served. However, they all agreed that there were a wide range of other issues that Milwaukee fathers faced that practitioners had to be prepared to address. Many of these issues stem from the lack of employment. Angela, one of the fatherhood service providers in Milwaukee stated that the large number of fathers not in the home was also a unique barrier for

fathers and service providers in Milwaukee. She stated that many of these fathers did not reside in the home because:

They can't provide financially for them so it's better to just stay away than to be there hindering or making the situation worse. They end up owing back child support because they had no way to pay it when it started. As each day goes by, that child support mounts up and they also get a mountain of interest put on top of it.

Hence, Carmen, one of the Milwaukee fatherhood service providers, discussed the unique collaborative efforts in the city to meet fathers' various needs, from child support to health services, as means to connect fathers to their children:

I've just been so impressed by people from a whole lot of spectrums being able to come together around the idea of fatherhood. The shift that the Milwaukee Fatherhood Movement is taking is that it's not always about the issue of fatherlessness. It's about celebrating the role of fathers period. So I think they have a really unique opportunity here and I'm so pleased with the fact there's so many that worked on this effort all year. They came from all different backgrounds, so to have people from all different walks of life to come together and say we value, we need, we appreciate the role that fathers have in the lives of their families and their children. Just helping them to see that don't let the baby mama drama keep you away from taking care of your kid and having a community message to say that, instead of one person, to really work on getting this out as a whole community wide message.

Carmen

Carmen is 46 years old and married. She is the mother of four children, two adult sons and two young daughters. She was born and raised in Milwaukee. Carmen is a program instructor in a domestic violence agency. However, for the first 20 years of her career, she worked in early childhood education. Her interest in fathers began in that field:

I've always been really intrigued by the power of men and how they can influence their children. So, being in that early childhood setting, I could see children who would just light up when their fathers would take the time to come and do story time or any of that.

I just say that those opportunities were just as valuable when mothers did it, but that male influence in that early childhood setting always amazed me.

In 2005, when the Mayor of Milwaukee began to implement the National Fatherhood Initiative model in the city, Carmen became involved in the Responsible Fatherhood Movement, participating in collaborative efforts across the city:

I was totally immersed in this whole Fatherhood Movement and so this is kind of the validation of what I always knew- our community has a whole lot to gain from having active involved fathers in the lives of their children.

While Carmen is self-employed as a national trainer for parent education facilitators, for the past two years, she has worked with men in the domestic violence agency. Along with a male co-facilitator, Carmen works with the fathers for six months, two hours per week on various topics such as: "objectifying women, relationships, [and] dealing with child abuse and neglect from your own childhood experience." The fathers are usually court ordered to attend the program after "some kind of domestic violence, [or] disorderly conduct with intimate partners." However, many program participants were self-referred or are referred by word of mouth. The majority of

the fathers that Carmen serves are young, African American males. Next to the employment issue, a “considerable” number of fathers come into the program with substance abuse and mental health issues.

Regarding being a woman working with the men, Carmen stated:

My main thing is- I don't apologize for being a woman. And a lot of people, I think, sometimes deal with insecurities of going into an all-male environment. I respect the men first of all. I don't see them as being less than or any of those things ...you know I really value them as men. And I value the fact that we have differences and I respect those differences. But I think a lot of it has to do with me being so comfortable with who I am. I don't have to put on airs or false pretenses with the men and I allow them to be who they are.

Hope

Hope is 51 years old and married. She has two children, one grandchild, and 28 godchildren. She was born and raised in Milwaukee and works as the program manager for a healthy relationship and marriage enhancement program. Hope began her career working with homeless families and then transitioned to providing social services at a national school readiness program in Milwaukee. For the past fourteen years, she has worked with this program as a social worker, site supervisor, parent involvement coordinator, and now program manager. She began to work with fathers in Milwaukee in 1996 when many of the recent national father involvement policies and programs emerged. Hope received training to introduce fathering activities and engagement into her organization:

We have five different agencies that we gave money to that run programs and I was responsible for coordinating, providing the training, the technical assistance, the federal

monitoring, [and] doing workshops all across... I just kind of started working with the males and making the program more male-friendly, more sensitive and doing workshops here and there at different events.

From that point on, Hope became heavily involved with the Responsible Fatherhood Movement in Milwaukee and was “fired up” to help fathers. However, while Hope conducted workshops for men, she also began training the women in her organization because:

In the social service arena, it's primarily female dominated. Even if the men are in positions where they don't feel empowered- they may be the bus driver or the van driver...maybe the cook, some kind of maintenance or in accounting or something but other than that you know they may not be the CEO of the agency. But when it filters down, its majority women, especially within our program. So I started hearing some of the men say that when they go in the classroom [women] had a whole other standard for when a man came in the class versus if me and you came in the classroom. If they came in the center, some teachers would be fearful of them if they came to pick up their kids, or when the social worker sits down to interview a man and woman or enroll them into the program, they would address the woman and would not address the male or stuff like that. So I started having to deal with stuff like that from a monitoring and compliance standpoint. So it started off as teaching them [women].

Hope provides workshops on the relationship between fathers and daughters and for the past year has worked with couples on skills for healthy relationships and marriage. The program works with couples within the school readiness program and advertises their relationship classes and retreats within the organization and throughout the community. Hope stated that the majority of

the fathers that participate in the program are African American, have less than a high school diploma, have felonies, are unemployed, or have very low skilled jobs.

When asked what it was like to be a woman doing this work, Hope stated she loves her work with the fathers, especially the couples, but she expressed some difficulties that she experiences amongst her peers:

It's hard because on one side you got women who feel like 'Aw she's just pro-male.' Then, on the other side you got men who feel like women aren't supposed to be in this work. So you get caught and a lot of times you get tired. Before I got this job, I was tired. I had got to the point where I was tired of fighting the battle. But then when I got this position, the work became fresh again. It's hard because you really have to really believe in it. They don't believe that you can be faithful to both...it's almost like you gotta pick a side, and then whatever side you pick, you're still caught. They want you to choose and when you're really passionate about this work you can't choose you know. I don't choose. I know that if one ain't right, the other is not going to be right. One and one equals two, you know? It's just not going to be right and that's the battle. That's the battle- when you walk into the meeting of women and you may be the only one that's speaking up for the men.

Angela

Angela is 49 years old and married with two young adult children and one grandchild. Angela was born in Chicago and raised in Mississippi. She relocated to Milwaukee and started her career in human services over twenty years ago. For the past twenty years, she has worked with families in the community and has worked as a parent educator for the past six years. Angela feels that including fathers in services is very important because:

Fathers play a big role and a big part in raising children as well. If you're doing a group and you have fathers in your group, you cannot do the group without including the fathers- that's my attitude. I strongly believe that everybody should be treated equally or fairly when I'm doing the groups. If a father is in a group, I have to give him the same respect, the same concern as I do a mother. Regardless to what the gender is, I'm here to provide a service that will be beneficial to the parent.

Many of the fathers that attend her classes are self-referred by contacting the organization's parenting hotline. Some of the fathers are also court ordered to attend parenting classes in lieu of jail time or fines. Due to recent policy changes that encourage increased father involvement, fathers that are involved in divorce, foster care/adoption, or child custody cases take parenting classes to improve their chances of obtaining visitation or custody orders. The majority of the participants are African American and come from various socioeconomic backgrounds. While the focus of the classes is on parenting skills, the barriers that fathers face are also discussed in Angela's groups:

There are other barriers that come up all the time. I think that is probably one of the reasons why a lot of the parents come back because they know that no matter what they're going through, when they come to parenting- being parenting education and *support group*, they know that they can address that issue or concern during that group time before we get into our agenda for the day. No parent is going to come into the group and want to discuss parenting issues when they have an eviction notice put in their hands as they walk out the door. No father is going to want to come in and talk about parenting when he just got told, 'We have to let you go from your job.' So even if that's the case, I provide resources and information, connect them with a place that can help them find

another housing, or help them with their housing issues, as well as tell fathers ‘Well you can go here, go there, and apply for work, or job until you can find something more permanent or stable.’

As a woman, Angela stated that it is very “challenging” initially to work with the fathers because:

For the most part, most of them that come into the various classes that I facilitate come in with their own mind and frame of thought as to how a parent should be or how a father should be. Very few of them will admit that they don’t know certain things—they have this attitude that because they are a man and ‘this is the way it’s supposed to be,’ they’re not really trying to hear what a woman is saying to them. But once they see that I’m trying to work to help better their situation- in the best interest of their child or help them accomplishing their goals, then they’re open to accepting whatever information we provide for them.

Louisiana

The participants in Louisiana lived and worked in two different cities, New Orleans and Alexandria. Both of the women indicated that the educational deficits that the fathers have are major issues across the state and impact practice. The women also added that the poverty rate, criminal records, and job opportunities, or job placement, were barriers for the fathers that they served. When asked about the impact of Hurricane Katrina on fathers and services, one of the fatherhood service providers in New Orleans, Drucilla, responded:

They still have quite a few services that are not available, a lot that have not come back. They used to have a few drop-in centers where fathers could go, or not just fathers, but people could go to use the phone. Some of our fathers when their phone gets

disconnected, they have to come to our agency because we let them use the phone, computers, and everything. So now you put in applications- for someone to be able to call you back- it's a real problem. So a lot of those places that were available for those things, drop-in centers, are not available which is a problem for the fathers.

Queen, a fatherhood service provider in Alexandria stated that all areas of the state were affected by Katrina. However, she stated that the disaster has been a means to rebuild and provide more support for fathers in New Orleans than was available prior to the storm:

I think the whole state has been affected in different areas in different ways. But as it relates to fatherhood, I know particularly in New Orleans it may have turned into something positive. We got more people coming in now rebuilding those neighborhoods and realizing that the whole family needs to be served, so for New Orleans it's been good. It's been a positive.

Queen

Queen is a 46 year old, divorced mother of two young daughters. She was born and raised in Pineville, Louisiana. Queen went away to attend law school and returned to Louisiana to begin her law career. She was hired as an assistant district attorney with child support enforcement and has worked there for 16 years. However, for the past five years, Queen has also worked as a coordinator with a fathers' assistance program:

After ten years of working in child support and kind of seeing that the issues don't change- the noncustodial parent has all kinds of problems that are never addressed. I figured that would be a good place to start in trying to make a difference. So, our fathers' assistance program was created.

In order to participate in the program, the fathers must be under an order to pay child support and be less than 40 years old. The majority of the program participants are African American males and are court ordered to attend. Queen stated that the fathers typically have less than a high school diploma, earn minimum wage- if at all, have very limited family support, and very low self-esteem. Overall though, the fathers that she serves are “kind people...very kind guys with some barriers.”

As a woman providing direct services to fathers, Queen stated:

I think if I didn't have the title...of an assistant district attorney, I don't think they would listen to me. But because I do carry a badge and I have a little bit of power to incarcerate them-I get their attention. So I think that's been the way to capture their attention and keep them interested.

Drucilla

Drucilla is a 40 year old, married mother of four. She was born and raised in New Orleans. She is a licensed nurse but currently works full-time as a court coordinator and part-time as a group facilitator in a fatherhood program. For over 18 years, she worked in nursing and social work, but became interested in working with fathers two years ago when a male colleague asked her to help him start an agency to serve fathers:

We were working together at a program for pregnant teenage mothers with high risk pregnancies. A lot of fathers would come in and they were excluded a lot of times from certain services and he [her colleague] was unhappy with that. By him being a father and really being a strong partner in his kids' life, he was really disheartened by that. He said 'You know I'm sick of this.' He said 'Why don't we get together and try to get some services for fathers.' So we had some discrimination against fathers. I'm a mother.

Sometimes I feel that fathers don't play their part like they should. So it really was good for us doing it together because he had his views as a father and then I could put my input in as a mother.

Drucilla co-facilitates group sessions on life and relationship skills with her male colleague.

Drucilla also shared that the agency places a lot of emphasis on education and enrolls fathers in GED programs or vocational schools. The majority of the fathers, 95 percent, are African American with poor educational backgrounds. The fathers also have a hard time finding jobs because "80 percent have criminal backgrounds." The program and staff work on being accessible to fathers and meeting their multiple needs:

We're here from 9 am in the morning to 8 pm at night. We have nontraditional hours because a lot of times the fathers are working. If we say 5 o'clock, they're not able to come. So we're there until 8 pm at night and we also provide services on the weekend. And a lot of activities with the fathers and their children. They can bring their significant others and their children on Saturday, take them to the children's museum, ride on the streetcars, and stuff like that. Do activities with their children on the weekends and everything is free.

However, providing services has been a challenge due to cutbacks in funding:

We haven't been able to provide the intense services that we once were providing. We still have a waiting list now which isn't good because these fathers are in desperate need of services. But we aren't able to provide those services at this time because we don't have the funding. Some fathers might need assistance with daycare and a lot of times we would give stipends. We would assist with pampers and different things they might need for their babies. We're not able to assist on that level like we were doing before because

we don't have the funding to purchase these items. We're still writing letters to different companies to send donations and all but it's across the board. People are cutting back.

Drucilla discussed several times that she enjoys working with the fathers, particularly being able to provide the woman's point of view:

My passion is people and helping others. A lot of times when I'm not there, they're looking for me 'We want to hear what Dru is saying. Oh we need to hear her comment. Let's give her this situation, see what she would say.' So when it's my partner, when he's there and they're hearing his view- which he's learned not to take sides now since I'm with him-they look forward to me being there. Then they'll always give scenarios like 'Oh my little girl did this and so and so. Dru what would you have done and how do you think I should handle that.' So they want the women and the ladies' part. They say to my partner 'You a man, no we want the woman's point of view on how she would deal with the situation.'

Baltimore, Maryland

While Baltimore is affectionately known for its crab cakes and its proximity to the metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C. and Northern Virginia, the fathers in this city face many challenges. The women that work in Baltimore listed substance abuse as a unique problem for the fathers that they serve. Dawn stated:

They're still addicted to heroin and that's just a sad drug. It's passé in a lot of cities but it's still like 1983 here. Like it's brand new, it just came out.

Jocelyn added that among the other barriers that fathers face:

Drug use is probably the number one barrier. We have a heavy substance abusing population living in poverty. There are people who use drugs that are affluent but you

don't get to see them as much because they're able to buy cocaine, go to work, [and] maintain their jobs. It [drug use] doesn't usually get out of hand like it does for our couples.

Dawn also shared that the public school system in Baltimore "struggles." In Baltimore, nearly 75 percent of African American males do not complete high school. In addition, she discussed the impact of the isolation that fathers experience in Baltimore:

What makes it unique like no other city, is you can go down one street, it's the best street ever! It's clean, it's beautiful, the sun is shining. The next street it's dark and gloomy, its three folks out on the street walking like zombies, drug activity all around. Literally next to each other. People are still kind of stuck in Baltimore. They never left. Born and raised here, only know how to get around the Westside. They don't know anything about the Eastside.

Jocelyn stated that affordable housing is also an issue for the fathers because:

Baltimore is a place where everything is expensive. If it's a one bedroom apartment, you're looking at 800 dollars- if you don't want to live in the pure, pure ghetto, if you want to try to take your family with you to a relatively decent area. Rent is supposed to be one-third of your income. So that means you need to make 3000 dollars a month which just is not happening for our couples.

Dawn also described the lack of progress particularly in Baltimore's lower income areas:

I know this is one city, one state but it's one of the most disadvantaged cities I've ever lived in and I've lived in a lot of cities. Its like paralyzed. I've lived in Atlanta from '94 to 2003- it changed. That whole city changed in that timeframe. This is always...this has been here since I went to high school in 1993. This hasn't changed. I mean it looks the

same and probably a little worse. It is depressed like no other city outside of Detroit that you'll see. When you literally go down the street there's nothing but boarded up buildings, trash on the streets. It's depressing.

Dawn

Dawn is a 30 year old, divorced mother of a young daughter. She was born and raised in Germany but attended high school in Maryland. After attending college in Atlanta, she began her career working with refugees. She was encouraged by a mentor to move back to Maryland and she began working with parents providing them with communication and conflict resolution skills and helping them to develop parenting plans. She continues to work with couples today as the program director for a healthy relationship and marriage program. Initially though, she interviewed for a job with a domestic violence agency:

I applied for a part-time job for a domestic violence organization and I applied to work with their men who were batterers. The gentleman who interviewed me told me that the guys would see me differently than the women they were abusing- that they would put me on a pedestal and tell me how perfect I am and he didn't think I could handle the kind of things they would say. I told him I would beg to differ; you'd be really surprised what I've gone through. I've actually had very good experiences working with all the men that I've worked with. I mean even the men who might not have liked me so much.

The majority of her program participants are African American. Dawn estimated that “78 percent do not have a high school diploma, that same percentage are unemployed, 60% have more than one child, and about 60% of them owe child support.” Dawn and the program staff recruit couples primarily through “street outreach,” but they also receive couples through referrals from community partners. Services are provided only to couples during the “magic

moment, which is right at the time that they had the baby or right at the time that they're expecting the baby." The couples attend group sessions on healthy relationship skills for six months and can also participate in the organization's fatherhood and workforce development programs. In an effort to retain the participants, the program offers transportation, childcare, meals, weekly raffle prizes, and also a stipend upon completion of the program.

As a woman "in power," Dawn stated that when working with the fathers, they are sometimes taken aback by her position but she tries very hard to keep their "egos" intact:

Men have egos that you don't want to break. They're not as strong as women so stuff that you might be able to say to women, you can't say to a man as a woman. You always need to be cognizant of that very fragile, fragile male ego because you don't ever want to upset it or break it. That's important and that's like a part of manhood. It's hard for me to even articulate, and on some level I don't even understand it. I don't know what it is. I call it an ego- fragile. I always liken it to a glass dove, you say one wrong thing it breaks and it's hard to put it back together. So I just try to keep my dove with all my men intact, so that I never have to try to put it back together.

Jocelyn

Jocelyn is a 45 year old married mother of three. She was born and raised in Baltimore city. She works full-time as a deputy director of a substance abuse recovery program. She has also worked part-time as a group facilitator for ten years at the same healthy relationship and marriage program as Dawn. Jocelyn became interested in fathers and families when:

I was a director of a drug treatment facility for many, many years and that really showed me the opposite side of drugs and how drug use really destroys the family. So now in this part of my career, I am learning about how to build families, AND HOW to make

families strong and work and last forever. I think that they [fathers] have really gotten the rough end of the stick. One of the things I try to do in my full-time job is to be an advocate for dads and make sure that they have equal access to services. Far too often you find in the social service system that there is not space for dad or dad can't get access to benefits.

Jocelyn described the challenges that the fathers face as having “numerous” children, felonies, and pride:

I think another challenge in working with that population is just getting them to a point where they feel like they can be successful. That's kind of hard because they just keep running into closed doors. They have a lot of criminal history and a lot of felonies that stop them from getting housing. They put penalties on you for this and for that. They can't get jobs, they can't get bills in their name, they can't do all kinds of things that they need to do to be able to support their families. There are a lot of burdens that you try to help them with it, but they are serious burdens.

Jocelyn stated that she feels comfortable facilitating groups with fathers because:

I think it's probably easier because many of the men that we deal with are raised by single moms. So having a female facilitator or female program director- it just kind of works well for guys because they are used to women and they feel very comfortable with us. It's almost like a very natural kind of flow. It doesn't feel abnormal at all.

Washington, D.C.

The fathers in Washington, D.C., like those in the other research sites, struggle with unemployment. Since many of the clients that Bonnie, one of the research participants, serves came from the judicial system, she stated:

Within the judicial system, I think that securing a job has been a problem for a lot of men in trying to provide support for their families and it creates a vicious cycle. The fathers try to provide for their family and they can not find a job, therefore, they go back to the street life, get arrested, and the cycle begins. We have to look at education, training, and job placement collectively; This is not happening within a timely manner.

Another challenge working with fathers and particularly the age group that one of the research participants, Pudín, serves is the high rate of HIV/AIDS that has affected the African American community in Washington, D.C. She stated “the significant increase in the District of Columbia of AIDS and HIV between the ages of 13 and 20 is very, very critical.” The rate of new HIV/AIDS cases in Washington, D.C. among African Americans is 81 percent. Despite these statistics, Pudín states that a lot of the fathers that she serves are not being sexually responsible:

I think that’s a challenge with a lot of guys they want to rely on [the women]. Well take it [a condom] for protection from an STD if you’re not taking it to avoid pregnancy.

In addition, Pudín also discussed how these behaviors stem from the isolation that the young fathers face in the inner-city and the lack of role models:

I think there’s an isolation that our young people have, that disconnects them from mainstream society. This city is divided in such a way that various communities are lumped together in wards with limited or no diversity in the community, such as race, class or socioeconomics. I remember one of my classes was on abstinence education. I gave the class some statistics on the number of young people who had chosen to be abstinent, they could not believe the numbers. For them this was unheard of in their limited world. They had not heard of or knew anyone who had made such a choice. In

their environment no one talked about abstinence. At our Black Marriage Day event, we had our twenty young people perform who have vowed to remain abstinent until marriage. I shared this information with the class, they found this hard to believe. I learned we needed to do more, young people needed to have more models that exhibit the kinds of behavior we were teaching in the community. Again, its the isolation from others with different views that made it difficult for them to accept or believe that you can make other choices, more positive choices, or different choices from the ones they currently are making.

Bonnie

Bonnie is a 51 years old single “military brat”. She was born in Tennessee and has lived throughout the United States and abroad. She began her social work career helping children and adolescents in the private sector and also working in a psychiatric hospital. For the majority of her career, she has worked as a victim services program director and additionally, for the past three years, has facilitated parenting class. Her work with parents, the majority of them being fathers, was only supposed to last for six weeks; however the work ended up fulfilling a passion that she held for quite some time and gave her an opportunity to use her clinical skills in a judicial setting:

I had been working with victims of crime but backed into working with the parenting group. I was asked to facilitate the piloted six week group and three years later, I continue to facilitate the parenting group. ‘Can you do this for six weeks and we’ll find someone else to do it,’ because I had a clinical background I accepted the challenge and was able to see my need to provide direct services. It helped me to see a difference being made.

Bonnie stated that two-thirds of the participants are men and the majority are African American. She stated that the participants typically have tenth or eleventh grade education, were raised by single mothers, have been in and out of prison, have multiple children by various women, and some have a history of domestic violence. The majority of the class participants are court ordered to attend parenting classes, but some enroll on their own or as a part of treatment goals they need to fulfill. The classes last for seven weeks and cover topics such as: “appropriate discipline, child safety laws, [and] anger management.” Parenting education for this group is redefined as:

The participants learn how their behaviors, positive or not impact the child and the participants’ legal and moral responsibility for the child’s development. The participants will learn their ethical responsibility for the child as they interact in and with the community. It’s not about the actual parenting skills they need. They need to learn about healthy self esteem and how their actions, the curse words that they say will impact the child. And why that child is using profanity towards them, or not listening, or having a difficult time in school, or having inappropriate adult relationships with men, so all of this encompasses their parenting as well. How they dress is about parenting and selling crack is about parenting, or soliciting, or domestic violence. That’s all about parenting. Even in things they do and say in front of their children.

When Bonnie was asked what it was like working with fathers as a woman she responded:

The fathers may flirt from time to time and I use humor from time to time back with them; I don’t indulge it. I suppose my body language does not lend itself to having anything other than a professional relationship with my clients. I think we can dress stylish without being overexposed and we need to always carry ourselves in a respectful

way. Therefore, we encourage respect. Now whether they do or not I guess they have to make a choice. It's easier for them to if we have respect for ourselves.

Pudin

Pudin is a 61 year old, divorced mother of two. She was born and raised in Texas and has worked in the human services field for 35 years. She began working with the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative in 2005 and became the executive director of a community-based, healthy relationship and marriage program two years ago. Her involvement with this program also introduced her to the Fatherhood Movement. Her interest in working with fathers stems primarily from personal experience:

I was a single parent for a long time. My baby was 8 and the oldest 13. I too felt like I had to do that dual role thing of being mother and father like the women I worked with in the program. The experience taught me that there is value in knowing the role mothers and fathers need to play in the lives of children. Neither parent need to feel the pressure of to be both. My personal experience contributed to my desire to reach out to other mothers, helping them learn how to gain more interaction from the fathers and to be more open and receptive to whatever role the fathers can play in the lives of their children as long as it's a positive role. To remove the barriers that mothers put up that prevent fathers from getting involved in the parenting process of their children. Which led to the children not having any interaction with the fathers. And, we know now that is not healthy for the children and impacts their lives in a negative way.

However, Pudin was also motivated to work with fathers based on her experiences with mothers in her own agency:

My primary clients are welfare-to-work mothers, or welfare-to-work persons, because I had fathers in my classes as well. I worked with a curriculum-based life skills training program. I observed in my classes the relationship between the mothers and the fathers of their children was generally filled with rage, anger, hostility. Therefore, trying to counsel the women on how to establish a positive relationship or different kind of relationship with the fathers of their children was a real challenge. I often said “fathers would, if mothers got out of the way.” The more involved in this work I get I am beginning to believe this to be the truth.

Fathers participate in the healthy relationship and marriage program for twelve months. The participants are usually recruited through the program’s outreach worker, but community partners also make referrals for fathers to enroll. The participants are between 14 and 20 years of age therefore, they have very young children. All of the participants are African American and most are unemployed but seeking employment. Pudin works with the couples, providing healthy relationship skills that she hopes encourages them to marry.

When asked to describe her interactions with the fathers that she serves, Pudin responded: I believe I showed up to be a social worker. I can remember at a young age wanting to be a caretaker for my siblings, my parents and always wanting to befriend the underdog at school. I always had this sense of mothering everyone. In my work, I have to be mindful of this, because I have a tendency to mother my students. However, I manage to give them the skills, tools and education they will need to lead effective lives. Some see me as a parental figure as well as a teacher. I get a lot of hugs. Along with a lot of helpers, those

who ask often, ‘Can I help you? Can I take care of that for you?’ You know, the kinds of things you say to the elders. I had to recognize that I am one of the elders. But, that’s okay.

Atlanta, Georgia

The majority of the participants agreed that employment was a major issue for fathers in Atlanta. The state is ranked as having the fifth worst rate of job loss in the nation (Kannell, 2009). Georgia stated:

Our main goal is to get the guys working because if they’re not working, they can’t pay their child support. With everything that I do, I would love to just devote 100% of my time to doing that because that’s the key- getting them working is the key. We can serve as something like a temp agency for them. We know their skills, we’ve prepared their resume, now let’s get them working. Just getting them a job, getting them in the door- that’s just everything right there.

Unlike any research participants in the other cities, racism was brought up as an issue that affects fathers in Atlanta. Yvonne stated that a major issue is “driving while Black. I mean... D.W.B. is real.” She also stated that poor education and access to resources are also issues that African American nonresidential fathers face:

Just limited resources to anybody, especially once the kids are no longer in your care or custody. You lose all access to all resources and services.

Moya

Moya was the first research participant interviewed as a part of the pilot study. She was 25 years old and married. She was born and raised in Georgia. She began her social work career providing therapy to families and working in a domestic violence shelter. From her experiences

at the domestic violence agency, she realized that she wanted to do more to advocate for clients and help families:

I was only working part-time with the domestic violence shelter and they didn't have anything full-time. You know when you've been somewhere for awhile and you start seeing everyone behind closed doors? You see what it's really like and how they are really treating people, where fathers are really going, and things like that. You just don't want to be involved in that. And that's kind of where I got where I'm at right now. It's just the unfair treatment of- even with the domestic violence, unfair treatment of clients that was really starting to bother me. I had clients that would sit in the office and talk to me about things that I could decipher what was real and what wasn't, whereas when they were with certain people, they were siding instead of just going on what's there. And I couldn't deal with that anymore. I'm definitely an advocator and I want to be able to speak up and do what I can for my clients. And I wasn't in the position to do that and then there wasn't an open position for that. So I had to move on.

Moya moved on to the position of team leader for a fatherhood program. She stated:

I feel very strongly and very passionately about fathers interacting with their children, having good healthy relationships with their children, because a lot of times you see that turn, especially with girls. The teenage years and only being close to mom and dad just kind of steps back and lets mom handle those teenage years. But a lot of times they don't realize the child is really wanting you to be involved and doesn't know how to get that involvement there. I just think it's so rewarding to be able to teach ways of doing that and hopefully just building great relationships with their children. There are a lot of programs

out there for moms, a lot for single moms. There's not that much for fathers and especially young fathers and they really need to be involved.

Moya was responsible for keeping program statistics and facilitating group and family sessions. The fatherhood program had a faith-based component that held group sessions in an African American church, and a community-based group, where the participants were primarily Caucasian American. The participants in the faith-based group were primarily middle class (annual income levels \$50,000 or more), had educational backgrounds ranging high school to graduate degrees, and all but one were employed. The program lasted for twelve weeks, and the participants met for two hours once a week. Moya created the curriculum and covered topics such as: "building healthy relationships, positive communication, positive discipline, drugs and alcohol- how does that affect the child, [and] stages of development." Recruiting the fathers was difficult, so in an effort to retain them, the program offered a stipend upon completion.

When asked about the challenges of working with fathers as a woman, Moya responded: In the faith-based class, I have twelve men and I'm the only female in the room because my client educator is also male. He has enjoyed the class all the way through. I've enjoyed it. They have been great since day one BUT we actually saw around week about seven there was a transition. The first couple weeks, the men were always 'What's your opinion?' They wanted to know from the female standpoint and every single class, I'd say class one through four, they had to say something about you being a female. Always. But now they are on the other side of that. They've gotten to the point where I'm just another guy in the room.

Georgia

Georgia is 29 years old and married. She was born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona and moved to Atlanta to attend college. She began her career working in administration at a printing and computer company. Six years ago, she was looking for a change and during her job search, she saw a vague job description for work in a fatherhood program:

It sounded interesting so I applied for it. She contacted me back and we met and she was very interested in me. We got started right away.

Georgia is now the operations manager for the fatherhood program. She handles:

All operational purposes from facilitating the orientations, the workshops, preparing all of the paperwork, materials, assisting the participants in finding work, and getting resources to them, all communication with the participants, maintaining contact, updating records, maintaining the records, creating all of the different monthly and weekly reports that go to my boss as well as to the head state offices on our program, preparing and creating the yearly and semi-yearly programmatic reports that gives the breakdown of all of our numbers on our participants.

Though the work is demanding, Georgia is motivated to help the fathers because:

I can say personally and professionally I have family members that I kind of see my participants as. They remind me of some of my family members. So it does get personal at times because you really see where the guys are coming from. You see what their situation is. This is a position where if you're not in it to help people, you're not going to be good at this position. You have to really have a heart to want to help the people that you're working with. I just have that. I've always wanted to make a change to help people.

All of the fathers in the program are African American and between the ages of 18 and 65. They can be referred to the program by their child support agent, court ordered by a judge, or self-referred. However, they must have active child support cases in the State of Georgia. The fathers are typically in the program for three to six months, but this depends on the child support agent and how quickly they obtain employment. They receive life management and job readiness skills, education, and counseling services. The fathers face several barriers such as: “criminal backgrounds, they have substance abuse issues, they have anger management issues, no G.E.D. or high school diploma, and many of them have never worked a job.”

As far as being a woman working with fathers, Georgia responded:

I think it actually gives me an advantage because I think that this position would not work if you did not care about the people and what you’re doing. I think that since I am a woman I have a bigger caring aspect about me. It could just be my personality but I definitely think that I am more effective than many of the men that I’ve seen in fatherhood. It could be just my personality, my background. I think it also has something to do with me being a woman and I’m able to relate with the participants better.

Lola

Lola is 55 years old and single. She was born in Jackson, Tennessee and raised in Martinsville, Virginia. She began her social work career working in a community social service agency as an evaluator. Lola also worked as a case manager in a child welfare program, as a social worker for a clinical research study on the impact of lead poisoning on children, and as a social worker with families affected by HIV/AIDS. She currently works as a therapist in a community mental health clinic and for the past two years, Lola has worked part-time as a case manager with fathers in an access and visitation program:

I work with families who are dealing with the child support system. And try to assist them in facilitating visitation for children who are with the custodial parent and the noncustodial parent is having difficulties staying involved with the child.

Fathers are typically self-referred or referred to services through the state's fatherhood program. The majority of the fathers that Lola serves are African American, young, have high school education, and are unemployed. The participants attend one two-hour seminar and follow-up either by phone or appointment. The seminar covers various parenting and relationship topics such as: communication with the other parent, child developmental milestones, the legal system, legitimation, parenting issues, and child outcome statistics when both parents are involved. The program typically lasts 90 days. Georgia is the only state that requires fathers who have children out of wedlock to file a legitimation petition to legitimate the child prior to being able to gain visitation rights. Therefore, the program also offers referrals for legal consultations with attorneys and provides participants with paperwork to complete for legitimation and visitation. Lola also helps to facilitate the fathers' visits with their children by serving as a neutral drop-off and pick up point. Occasionally, fathers can also receive tickets to "activities like basketball games, or the circus, or the zoo."

The challenge that Lola experiences working with fathers is that "they need so much. A lot of times, I want to be able to do more because there are lot of unmet needs." When asked to describe her interactions with fathers, Lola stated:

It's been a range of interactions. I found that most of the clients are receptive to any help that they can get in their situation. It doesn't seem like there's any barriers with me being the person providing that information. However, there's been a couple of instances where

there were some difficulties. And I didn't feel like it was me personally, but maybe just some issues period with women.

Yvonne

Yvonne is a 30 year old, divorced mother of two. Yvonne was born and raised in California. She began working as a licensed professional counselor and educational psychologist in a community mental health center. She became interested in practice with fathers through her work at the center:

When I went to work at this place, there were a lot of moms. But I had this fascination with 'well what about those single dads?' because one of my coworkers was a single dad. And so I started asking my boss if I can have this one [dad]. I realize, especially with African American males, there's a lot of emphasis on all the negativity- they're deadbeat dads, they're all about themselves and blah, blah, blah. And that hasn't rang true with the fathers that I have worked with. So with every father that I see that's absolutely not like that, I'm just like 'okay what about this one, and this one?'

For the past two years, Yvonne has worked in her private practice with military fathers:

I do a lot of work with military families, military dads especially, when they're going through divorce and things of that nature. Helping them with the adjustment from being a full-time dad to a part-time dad. Knowing how to create those relationships with those kids and not feel as if they have to overdo it because overdoing it leads to issues. And I do a lot of work just helping them emotionally with everything else going on- with their jobs [and] having to get a normal sense of life once they are no longer married.

The fathers are referred through their insurance and typically work with Yvonne one-on-one, sometimes weekly, for "anywhere from three months to nine months." The majority of the

fathers are African American and since they are in the military, they have high school diplomas and “a lot of training and experience.” The fathers, if they are just joining the military, are also paid under minimum wage. The challenges that Yvonne experiences with the fathers are cancelled appointments and establishing a therapeutic rapport:

Work is generally the number one priority. So if something comes up, they cancel a lot. And the number one [challenge] is just because they have been burned, especially in dealing with their ex-wives, baby mama, etcetera, etcetera- just getting that therapeutic rapport established.

When asked about her experiences working with the fathers as a woman, Yvonne responded:

I guess I don't really know about that gender difference just because I think there's that whole therapist-client situation. I don't necessarily know that I look at gender. What I try to do is establish... 'Don't think of me as a woman. Just think of me as a therapist.' One thing that I've been told frequently is although I am female, I know how to quote on quote speak man. So when I'm talking to them I'm not a woman actually speaking to try to get their language. I speak it fluent. I speak fluent man. As if it's a real language! So I just speak to them in terms that they would know. So I use a lot of sports analogies, because I'm a sports fanatic, I'm a die hard football fan. I understand. Don't talk to me because I'm watching football.

Overview of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. The research questions were: (1) What are the common motivations of African American women who are fatherhood service providers? (2) In what ways do gender, race, and socioeconomic status (power issues) affect their ability to

create successful helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers? and (3) How do African American women who are fatherhood service providers negotiate issues of power and authority in their professional relationships with African American nonresidential fathers? The findings are presented in sections according to these research questions. Table 4.2 provides a summary of the findings.

First, findings are presented that describe the participants' motivation to work with African American nonresidential fathers. The two themes outlined in this section were "fostering equity" and "fostering change." Second, the findings that relate to the impact of race, gender, and socioeconomic status in establishing successful helping relationships are discussed. There were two themes identified for the participants' experiences with these issues of power: "being women," and "being familiar." Lastly, the third section of findings describes the strategies that the female fatherhood service providers employ to negotiate power and authority in helping relationships with male clients. The identified themes were: finding balance and meeting them.

Job Motivation

The women were asked what motivated their interest in fathers and what were the rewards of their work. Two themes were identified from their responses: "fostering equity" and "fostering change." These themes describe the women's common motivation to help fathers receive equitable treatment as parents of their children and equal access to social services. The women also discussed their commitment to helping the fathers improve their lives as individuals which influenced the outcomes for the fathers' children, families, and communities.

Table 4.2

Research Findings

Research Questions	Themes	Categories	Properties
Job Motivation	Fostering Equity	Equity in Parenting Equity in Services	
	Fostering Change	Individual Children/Family Community/Society	
The Impact of Issues of Power	Being Women	Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminine Perspective • Mother Nature • Initial Resistance • Raw Truth
	Being Familiar	Challenges Engaging Modeling	
Negotiating Power & Authority	Finding Balance	Compassion & Confrontation Personal & Professional	
	Meeting Them	Social Spatial	

Fostering Equity

The participants described their motivation to work with fathers as a means to foster equity and foster change. Fostering equity was identified as a common motivation among the participants in terms of their commitment to helping fathers receive the same recognition and treatment as mothers. The participants described their motivation in terms of fostering equity in parenting and fostering equity in services. By fostering equity in parenting, participants

discussed their work to help children have both parents in their lives and to treat fathers as if they are just as important to children's outcomes as mothers. However, many of the participants noted that mothers act as barriers to fathers' participation in their children's lives. By fostering equity in services, most of the participants discussed the needs of fathers and how they are often excluded from services. Therefore, the participants shared their motivation to advocate for these fathers and help them access services as fairly and frequently as mothers.

Equity in Parenting

Many of the participants discussed the ways in which the term, parent, generally refers to the mother and the importance of fathers is often not recognized. Angela stated that "the thing that strikes me about working with the fathers is when you say parents, society generally looks at the mothers as being the primary caregiver of children." The participants also shared that this assumption in society also impacts practice. Most of the participants shared that unlike many practitioners, they were committed to work with fathers because they believed that children needed both parents and fathers have received "a bad rap." Hope was motivated to help repair the image of fathers as parents:

I would be considered a fatherhood advocate- probably one of a few women. I really believe that, especially men of color, have been given a bad rap in a lot of cases. When I was introduced to the curriculum [fatherhood program] and listening to a lot of the key points and as I began to train men myself- my heart kind of just went out to them. So I begin to think 'wow I need to help.' And I would listen to the negativity around when it first came out- fatherhood versus male involvement. Especially when they would say 'Male involvement? Well, what about mothers?'

In American society, the role of the father is typically to be a provider, which is primarily financial (Lamb, 1981). If nonresidential fathers are unable to fulfill this role adequately, the fathers are often referred to as deadbeat and not viewed to be as important as mothers. Georgia challenged this stereotype of fathers as deadbeat and not participating in their children's lives. She specifically attributes their lack of financial support to the poor economic times:

I would say the majority of our participants are definitely not deadbeat dads. There's an extremely small percentage, maybe one percent, you know that I would even give that definition of a deadbeat dad- just not trying to do anything, that doesn't care. All of our participants want to be in their child's lives- they are in their children's lives. Money is just the issue. Not having the job is just the issue.

Yvonne agrees that many negative stereotypes about fathers are not true and do not reflect their desire to parent or be providers:

Not all fathers are deadbeats and just because they don't do something doesn't mean that they're able and they're choosing not to. Many times, it's that they are not able to. The way that the system has been set up, a lot of fathers for lack of better words get a short end of the deal and when they have to give up everything and start over, they don't have it to give. Many times they're judged because of that and that's not fair to them.

Jocelyn suggested that other female practitioners should know that fathers "are equally important to a child as mom." The women also shared that they are motivated to foster equity in parenting by helping mothers realize that fathers are important in their children's lives. Pudín stated that while she provides direct services to fathers she also works with mothers to help them understand the importance of fathers:

I'm passionate about changing the mindset of young women with this 'I don't need a man in my life,' 'I don't need a man'-and you may not, but your children do. So changing that focus- that is my primary objective and passion- to work with women who have children to understand the importance and the value of having fathers in the lives of their children.

The participants often discussed the ways in which mothers prevented fathers from spending time with the children. This is a major issue among nonresidential fathers that the women were motivated to address. Angela stated:

Some of the barriers that the fathers would discuss is the fact that they were doing everything they were supposed to do- they said they step up to the plate they're being responsible, they're taking responsibility for actions, they pay child support- they have all these concerns and want to make sure that their child is being taken care of but then the thing that bothers them the most is when the mother wants to keep them away and not let them have visitation with their kid. When they come to group or class, they're frustrated about the fact that the mother is doing that to them. The take I have on that is- I tell them that they both have to set their feelings about each other aside and work for what's in the best interest of that child. That means that they have to find common ground where they draw the line- it's not about me, it's not about you, it's about our child. They have to come to common ground and build each other up. They can't tear each other down and then say 'well my child don't have a father' or 'my child's father is this,' or 'my child's mother is this' when you're not helping make the situation better. That saying about if you're not part of the solution then you're part of the problem- that's true whether people believe it or not.

Georgia also agreed that the mothers' "control" of the children is a barrier to father's involvement with their children. She specifically points out as Angela did that regardless of child support, or any support that fathers provide for their children, fathers are not allowed the same opportunities to spend time with their children. Still, Georgia is motivated to foster opportunities for these fathers to be involved:

The mothers are the custodial parents in the majority of the cases and they more or less control if the father does or doesn't see their children. A lot of the fathers are just really hurt and they're really upset about the fact that they cannot see their children- 'I'm paying my child support, I'm paying everything I can, but she still won't let me see my children,' 'I don't have a job, I'm not working so I can't pay my child support,' or 'I can't pay much and she's not letting me see my own children.' That's not right because the two are completely separate issues. Payment of child support and visitation- never the two should meet. A father should always be able to see his child regardless of paying ability or not because that's his right. We can't control anything she does. We have different events. We have the father-daughter banquet, we have father-son cookout and you know these are excellent ways for the father to have a lot of one on one time- a date per se- with his kids. And a lot of the time she's [the mother] just not having it- 'I'm not letting her come, 'No I'm not letting you take him or her.'

Many of the participants discussed that they were motivated to work with the fathers and help them to either communicate with the mother or visit because of their belief that the children benefit from having both parents involved. Lola shared an instance where she worked for months to get a mother to allow a father to visit his child:

Well, it was a little bit of a challenge with him- trying to mediate between the father and the mother. The mother was extremely angry and extremely bitter- which I allow them [mothers] to vent their frustrations for several contacts- and she was particularly angry and bitter and just 'he'll never da da da da.' But I still continued to contact her. I wait a few days or a week or so and...after maybe about two months she decided that she would allow the visits. By this time, she had grown comfortable with the fact that he wasn't going to give up and that I was going to continue to periodically talk to her and try to encourage her and she relented and allowed the visits to start. So I felt good about that.

Many of the participants also discussed that they were hopeful for the future of these fathers and their ability to be involved with the children due to a slow shift in the practice environment to accept them as equal parents. Drucilla stated that this change in some service environments is due to recent attention on statistics that provide evidence of negative child outcomes when fathers are not involved:

People are beginning to become more open to fathers because they're seeing all that's going on with the crime from studies and research- that the absent father is where it's stemming from, these children not having a father in their lives. Because the majority of the crime are from our youth, our young men. So when they start asking questions and going back, they say 'Okay, well he didn't have that strong positive influence in his life period.' A lot of times, these fathers weren't like the greatest dad but they were there and just being there makes a difference.

Equity in Services

All of the participants discussed the ways in which fathers are excluded from services. The needs of fathers and their lack of access to resources motivated many of the participants to

continue to work and advocate for the fathers that they serve. Carmen stated that the issue was not whether services were available but whether these fathers were allowed access: "I don't think it's a lack of resources, but do people feel they have access and are they made to feel valued when they try to access the resources?" Many of the participants agreed that the major issue is around access. Hope stated:

Some females have their own set of issues but I also believe that men deal with a lot of stuff that females don't have to deal with as it relates to child support, if they have any felonies, or if they got in trouble when they were young. And women can a lot of times recover from all of that and it's easier for me to tell you- a woman- where to go. 'Well go to the welfare building,' 'well go to the clinic,' or 'go here,' but in a lot of cases the men couldn't go there. They couldn't go even if they have one of the big issues. So stuff that would have been readily accessible to a woman may not be readily accessible to him.

When you start working with the fathers, the majority- 90 percent of them- want to do the right things. If they're given the tools and the opportunity, they would do the right things.

They just haven't really been given the opportunity or introduced to the right things.

Similarly, Jocelyn stated that she is motivated to be an advocate for the fathers due to the lack of access to resources. She shared a story about an incident that occurred at her full-time job as a director of a substance abuse recovery program:

One of the things I try to do in my full-time job is really be an advocate for dads and making sure that they have equal access to services. Far often you find in the social service system that they don't have space for dad or dad can't get access to benefits and in my full-time job what I do is break those barriers down. We offer housing as a part of my job and when I first started the housing provider- it's a thirty-two unit apartment

complex- he said dads couldn't come. I couldn't understand why- we have a lot of single dads just as we have single moms. He said, 'I just don't have men in the building.' So I told him you really need to kind of look at that and see what the dynamics are. Right now, it's about fifty percent men and children and fifty percent women and children. So it just is encouraging to know that for a group of people that have been shunned that people are now starting to open up and understand that men have needs.

Bonnie also stated that she works to decrease the disparity in access to resources that the fathers experience:

There are fewer services for men than there are for women. I try to establish services for our clients as we continue to build our resource base. A couple months ago, I took on another project with our program and that was to look for services in the whole D.C. area for male offenders. We actually looked and reviewed all the services that they provided and provided like a cheat sheet for them to use.

Carmen also offered that the socialization of men might prevent them from attempting to access these resources:

What I know about women is that we find a way to get our emotional needs met- we will call a mother, sister, and say 'Girl, you won't believe what happened to me.' Our men are socialized in a way where they don't have a whole lot of outlets like that.

In summary, the women's motivation to work with fathers was their desire to foster equity. The women sought to foster equity in parenting, by viewing or encouraging others to view fathers as parents just like mothers. The participants also wanted to foster equity in services, by allowing or advocating for fathers to access services, like mothers.

Fostering Change

The participants also responded that they were motivated to work with fathers because of their ability to foster change. The motivation to foster change was divided into three categories: individual, children & families, and community & society. Many of the participants stated that seeing the improvements the fathers made in their lives motivated them to continue their work with this cohort. Some provided specific examples of fathers that had turned their lives around, and gained education or employment. Some of the participants also discussed that they were motivated to work with fathers because of the influence they have on children and their families. The other women were motivated to work with fathers because of the poor conditions they saw in their communities and felt that the work that they did with these men helped them, their children and family, community and ultimately society.

Individual

The majority of participants feel motivated by seeing change in their individual clients. Many of the participants shared that after working with the fathers individually, they immediately began to see changes in their situation and even in their attitudes or outlook on life. Georgia stated:

I think fatherhood is a good link- I'm able to help people you know get some things changed and really at the core level- change peoples' lives.

Lola agreed that she is motivated by helping the fathers improve their lives:

It's certainly rewarding when you are able to provide some information to someone and see that they are able to benefit by using that information to take steps to improve their situation.

Hope stated that she was motivated to work with fathers even if she was only able to help one father. She believed that her work with one individual might pass to another:

If I can change one life or help one male then I'll do that. If I reach him, maybe he can reach another. Seeing them get their life together, having them come back and...seeing them get their child support reduced where they're able to go to work and not have to worry about turning their whole check over to child support or seeing them and they actually get along with- if they got two, three baby mamas- they've learned to get along with them plus whoever they're in relationship with now. To be able to do all of that. So I think for me- that's it.

Drucilla agreed that she was motivated by seeing change in the clients. She also stated that she enjoys how the fathers in the group share their issues, which allows them to receive the help they need to change:

The unique reward is seeing change. You know seeing that they want to do better. They're talking to other guys-their fellas- where they can relate and hear they're having the same concerns. It's like 'Man I thought I was the only one going through this.' So when they hear other people having some similar situations they're like 'Okay, well I'm not all alone' and they're more willing to talk about it which helps them because they're like 'Oh I could have handled that differently.' They love it, they love it.

Moya agreed that the interaction between the dads is essential to fostering individual change and she felt motivated to continue to provide this opportunity for the fathers:

The dads have overwhelming said that they really didn't think they would get anything from the class or they came to the class thinking they were great dads and now that they've been there they've realized they can learn a lot from others. Not always

necessarily through the instruction because a lot of the instruction is 'Okay here's some facts, let's talk about your experiences' and they just learn so much from one another and they say that. I've heard that repeatedly throughout the course.

Yvonne stated that when she works with fathers her reward is when they come to a point of understanding about their situation and what to do about it:

My reward is when they get it, when they understand everything. When they get it, you know, when they understand that just because they're divorced it doesn't mean that they're a bad dad because they don't live there anymore. Doesn't mean that they're a bad dad or when they're able to finally just say 'I think I got it.'

Queen stated that she is motivated to show the fathers that there are programs and staff that care about them and want to help them make changes in their lives:

It's been very rewarding for me that they see that everybody in the system is not out to get them. I had a young gentleman who had served a lot of time in our state penitentiary for drug trafficking, selling, and everything else and when he was chosen for the program, we didn't know you know if he was going to succeed, but one of his questions to me was 'Why do you care? Why do you care? What is it to you? Why are you looking at me?' He was just going on. So I told him you know somebody's got to care about the system and if people are going to be successful. And it just happens to be me.

When asked about the rewards of their work and what motivates them, most participants provided examples of participants that were once difficult but completed the program and made several improvements. However, several women also talked about graduation day, when participants have completed the program and the women were able to see how the participants have changed. The graduation ceremonies motivated the women to work with fathers because

they witnessed how much their work helped the fathers and the fathers' sense of accomplishment. Bonnie stated:

When we can hear people talk from their heart about their experiences when they first came into the group. You see people actually bring their whole families for graduation- we have a little graduation but this gives people a sense of completion. They worked for it. Their families are just as proud of them for graduating from this group as they would be if they were graduating from high school or business college or something. They come in here with big balloons 'Happy Graduation,' 'We're Proud of You' you know. That makes me proud and I just keep coming back because of those types of things.

Dawn also shared a similar story about the graduation experience and the sense of completion that many of the fathers had not felt before:

Every graduation, we have a huge ceremony and a lot of people bring their parents, their friends, anybody. When they get their certificate, I let them say what they want to say. So some people say this is the only thing they ever graduated from, some people say that we have changed their whole lives, that their relationship was stronger for it. Men have stood up and said that these women [their children's mother] are their rib, their kids are what they care about, they're more dedicated and focused on their kids. I've seen hardened criminals stand up here and cry and say how we have just affected their lives and changed their lives for the better. So that's rewarding to me to hear that. So when I go to a graduation- this is why I do it- just to hear that kind of feedback, to see that kind of progress in peoples' lives is why I do it.

Children and Families

Many of the participants described their motivation to work with fathers as an effort to improve the lives of children and their families. Some of the participants like Hope were motivated to support more intact families, particularly among African Americans:

I don't know, I just live and breathe this stuff. I think my main motivation is that when I look at our family structure and the family structure is so torn up. That's my motivation. My motivation is that if I can help to help him and help her to become a whole maybe we won't find all the problems that we're having with our children. Our kids being medicated and our kids having to deal with this garbage.

Jocelyn stated that she is also motivated to help keep families together:

I am constantly surrounded by families and part of the reason I do this is because I believe so very highly in what this program is trying to do as well as what my program is trying to do. Just really trying to focus on families... I just absolutely love it. It is just one of the most rewarding things that I think you can ever do. What motivates me is just seeing the results. This is one job where you can do work with people and actually can track the progress. When you work with families you never kind of get rid of them, so you see them and you continue to interact with them.

Moya also described her work with the fathers and her motivation to help them have better interactions with their children and families:

We have a family day where we have the family come out to the park and have a cookout, have fun together. We facilitated some games and we had the dads play Twister with their children. So it was one family against another family on the Twister board and they didn't play by the rules or anything but they had fun and that's what's important.

They just had a great time. They had fun being there just kind of on the ground with the kids and interacting in that manner. Then, each of the families left with a game that day to further facilitate family interactions. So it's definitely rewarding.

Some of the participants stated that they were motivated to work with fathers by the numbers of couples that they see get married. These participants believed that their work with fathers and helping them to improve their relationships with the children's mother would lead to positive outcomes for the fathers, children, and their families. Pudín specifically stated that she is motivated by the statistics regarding African American marriage:

We have a couple of parents of the same child who are in the program and you know the organization- we're promoting marriage within the African American community. So we make no hidden agenda about that. We say upfront- we want to give you the skills and tools that you can use in the healthy relationship that we hope ultimately will end into a marriage. When you look at the statistics- that's a factor and a motivator for me- having the lowest rate of marriage now and at one time having the highest.

Dawn also stated that she is motivated to help the fathers marry the mothers of their children. She shared a story about one touching wedding experience that continues to influence her work with the fathers:

We've married three or four couples. I'm getting ready to marry my fifth couple. The second one, we did it out in the park. The girl and the guy brought their family and the girl's father cried and cried and cried. He was so proud of her for getting married. I mean this woman and this man had 7 children together. He was so proud of them for getting married. It was the most touching experience that I have ever seen. It was very emotional for me to even see that happen. So I think that my most pleasurable experiences are

watching the couples who I've seen struggle, who I've seen go through this six month process, because it's a six month program, marry each other and try to sustain their family life. That is extremely pleasurable for me.

Community and Society

The participants described their motivation to work with fathers as a means to improve communities and society. Some of the participants believed that while they work with individuals, the individual change would eventually benefit the community and society. Carmen stated: "In my mind, if we could get more young people to feel that unconditional love of their father, it will really heal a lot of the issues in our community." Carmen also shared that she is motivated when men complete the program and pass what they learned on to their peers:

I create as many teachable moments as possible during the class. When I hear them say it to other men towards the end of their graduation, I'm ready to get up and do the happy dance because it's so rewarding. It's one thing for professionals to give you all this stuff, but its something when you have internalized it enough and you can articulate it in your own community and your own peer groups.

Lola agreed that overall, when she helps fathers, she is motivated by the thought that the community, particularly the African American community, and the entire world will benefit:

In the back of my mind, there's always the thought and the feeling that you know I want my community to grow stronger, you know, to build it up. I have a sincere desire to be a help to families, to fathers. When you help fathers, you are helping families, which helps the community...helps the region, helps the world.

Dawn shared that she hoped her work would be instrumental in changing the community and society, particularly African American families and communities:

I am dedicated to changing what we see when we come outside of this building on to the street. Hit two corners, either corner you're going to have depressed, dilapidated, trash, rats-I'm just dedicated to changing that. I believe that with the services that are offered, we could actually change the plight of this city, of this community, of the families who live in this area. I would do this all day long, everyday, if it means that something would change in our community in the aspect of how people look at us in society as a whole. So that's why I do it... It's still necessary for a person like myself, like the staff that I have or organization to do what we do to invoke change that will hopefully go up to the top.

Queen also stated that she is motivated to help fathers and change the poor image of African American fathers in society:

I guess my motivation comes from reading the paper, watching the news, and seeing all of the tragic stories about African American men, and being incarcerated at the rate that they're being incarcerated. The drop out rate is always highest among you know African Americans and so that's my motivation. It's just you know everyday current events.

However, the thing that worries Bonnie the most is wondering if the work she does with the fathers will actually last given their position in society:

The challenge is wondering if things are ever going to get better as far as the economics, the drugs, and the cycle that the people are in. And just wondering- is this a temporary change or permanent because we can only do a little bit. I guess the challenge for me is more mental- wondering if it is going to really get better for them when they're outside these walls.

In summary, the women stated that they were motivated to work with fathers to foster change. The participants all stated that they enjoyed seeing individual change and the change that their work fostered in the lives of children and families. Some of the participants even shared their motivation to work with fathers and see the change it fosters in the community and society.

The Impact of Issues of Power

The respondents identified several ways in which gender, race, and socioeconomic status impacted their ability to create successful helping relationships with their clients. The themes identified were: “being women” and “being familiar.” The role of gender in the helping relationship is addressed in the being women theme as the women identified common challenges and advantages to being women working with fathers. The role of race and socioeconomic status is captured in the theme, “being familiar,” since the participants discussed that being of the same race as the majority of their clients and being able to identify with the clients’ socioeconomic positions allowed them to engage the fathers in services and also serve as role models.

Being Women

As female fatherhood service providers, some of the participants described their gender as an advantage in their work with fathers while others identified gender as a challenge. The participants’ descriptions of the advantages of being women working with fathers fit into two categories: feminine perspective and mother nature. Some of the women also described some challenges of being women working with fathers that also fell into two categories: initial resistance and raw truth.

Advantages

The participants' perceptions of the advantages of being women working with fathers included: providing their male clients with a feminine perspective; and mother nature, which represented the participants' perceptions that fathers felt comfortable working with the women due to the likelihood that they were raised by their mothers and could discuss serious issues with female service providers.

Feminine Perspective

Some of the women perceived that their gender was an advantage because their male clients typically wanted to know the "woman's point of view" or the "feminine perspective" particularly with issues around their intimate partners or their children. In fact, Lola stated that women should be involved with services for fathers directly for the purpose of providing a feminine perspective: "I think women should be involved as a source of support and a source of information and knowledge from a feminine perspective." Queen also shared that women's involvement in services to fathers was important to tell them that women value them:

We have to [be involved] because I don't think men realize, especially low-income men, their role. They don't realize the importance of it. They're not motivated to fulfill their roles and until women say 'Look your children need you and this is why...' I don't think they really listen. They're not really listening. I don't think they feel like they're valued. We provide a framework for them and then we have to in some way motivate them to fill the roles that they are supposed to fulfill.

Drucilla was passionate about providing the woman's point of view for the fathers because she wanted them to have more positive thoughts about women. She also stated that she facilitates groups with a male co-facilitator to keep him from colluding with the fathers when they "bash the women":

They always try to bash the women and [male facilitator] always agrees that it's important for me to be there to shed light on the woman's side and for him to stay focused because he will fall into that too- 'Yeah they do.' I say 'No, there's two sides to every story.' My key motivation is to give them a positive view of women. You know it's not as bad as they make it seem. Giving them some examples and then just showing them the way I am with them speaking to me, coming in and seeing how I am. I am willing to listen to their perceptions of what they think of women and then give them some positive feedback and not giving in. Even when they are right, I'll say, 'Okay, well yea, you're right but when you're wrong, you're wrong.' They just need a strong... woman...to guide them. They might not be willing to say that, but they just need that strong person in their life to give them the guidance that they need.

Yvonne agreed that her male colleagues respect her work with male clients because:

I think they see it as a good idea sometimes depending on the situation because I can present both the male and female perspectives. So, 'Yes I understand what you're going through as a man, but then when you're complaining about her for doing this well, have you thought that maybe this is what she was thinking?' When you say stuff like that they're like 'oh well I would have never seen it that way' and I explain 'Women are emotional they see things that way.'

Angela shared that sometimes fathers might not want to be surrounded by men and only hear male perspectives. She stated that she had some men to leave the organization's all-male fatherhood program and join her coed parenting group:

I have had clients that for whatever reason may transfer from one group to another and its because of timing and scheduling. But for the most part, there have been dads who have actually started out in the dad's group and said 'Well, this is not what I really want to do.' So they'll come over and start doing the group where I'm at and that's where they finish. I kind of wonder why they didn't want to be in the all dads group. Well, one did say something about that-even though it wasn't like he was mandated but it was a requirement for him to take a parenting class and he actually started out in the dad's group, but then he switched over. His comments were that he wanted to be in a diverse group where he could hear from both sides- mothers and fathers. He didn't want to just be in a room with all dads.

Hope also stated that female providers think of topics that are more relevant to what fathers need to know to be successful in their relationships with their children and intimate partners:

I have a class called, "The Right Touch," because sometimes you don't even know how to touch me you see? Brothers never thought about that. I try to be real. I tell men too- a lot of men want to know how to treat their woman. A man can't teach you how to treat a woman. A man can teach you about you. But he can't teach you how to treat your partner, and that's what they want to know- about their kids and about how to treat their lady.

Mother Nature

Some of the participants stated that being women, particularly being Black women, was advantageous in creating a successful helping relationship. These participants shared that since many of the male clients are raised by women, the providers perceived that they reminded their clients of their mothers or other immediate female family members. Georgia stated:

I think it helps [being a woman] because I think they see me more as a sister or a mothering role- somebody who genuinely wants to and is trying to help them. So I think it makes them feel more comfortable, they don't have their guards up, and they're willing to accept the help. A lot of the time, it's just breaking through that first barrier of them being able to basically trust you- trust that you are going to help them, trust that you're not going to do something else that's going to hurt them.

Hope stated that a lot of times male practitioners cannot create a rapport with the fathers:

A lot of times, they are so mad, they are so angry because their daddy didn't do anything for them. So they are sitting across from you and you're a brother and he won't talk to you. He can put on his face. But then you [a woman] come into the room and talk to him and he'll tell you his whole life story. You have a lot of men that's very angry at men...very angry because they are mad at their daddy. 'So who are you? You ain't my daddy! My daddy wasn't there, my mama was the one who...' So you got to help them through that. That's what sisters can do-help them brothers through all that. So that's the advantage that we have as sisters- He look at me, he look at his mama.

Further, Hope explains how she relates to the clients in a "mothering" way:

I think I'm harder on them because most of my clients are African American and Hispanic and I think I kind of mother them. I think I'm kind of that hard mother- I got a

son a majority of their ages- so...I think I'm a little harder on them you know in a good way. If you say 'Ms. Hope, I need to work on my child support.' So I give you some steps then I'm going to hold you accountable to those steps. So don't come back to me five days later and you haven't done A,B,C because I'm going to get you. So they'll come in with their stuff- but remember most of them been raised by their mama.

Overall, some of the participants perceive their gender as being an advantage to establishing successful relationships with their male clients. The women shared that they thought the male clients benefit from and want to hear the "feminine perspective." They also shared that since most of the clients were raised by their mothers, it is easier for them as women to establish trust or a rapport with the fathers.

Challenges

The challenges of working with fathers identified by the participants included: the initial resistance men exhibited toward the female providers; and the raw truth, which represented the rough language that male clients used, the harsh discussions of abuse or domestic violence toward women that occurred among the male clients and the reality that the women might have to deal with the death of their male clients.

Initial Resistance

One of the identified challenges of providing services to male clients as a woman was the initial resistance of the fathers. Lola shared that women must have strength to work with fathers.

As an example, one father was particularly challenging:

You have to have strength to present your information and answer questions because it was challenging, conversing with him in particular, because he just knew everything but yet needed my help.

Sometimes the resistance is due to the reluctance to receive services or attend groups. Bonnie provided an example of the behaviors of resistant group members:

He was weighing our group down and he was only here to satisfy the judge. So, he looked at his watch, looked out the window, and wouldn't participate. So it went on for a couple of weeks and I said 'I can't do this anymore because it's not fair to the group members.' So when I came into group, the young man came in late then he went through his whole routine and I was like 'I can't. I'm not going to do this with you today.' We couldn't continue to allow him to come in, get the same benefits as the group members and he had not bought into the group. He wasn't exposing himself like the other group members and we couldn't continue to allow that to happen. So, I just don't believe in getting into arguments and going back and forth with people because its nonproductive. So I said 'Just go and come back at another time when you're feeling more motivated because this group is not for you.'

Some of the participants perceived that the resistance they experienced from the fathers was specifically due to the fact that they were women. Moya shared two instances when fathers were resistant to her:

We were not talking about positive discipline. We were talking about communication or something completely different from discipline. Somehow it turned into discipline and one of the fathers just said 'Yea you definitely don't spare the rod' and I'm like 'Okay well I didn't say I believe in sparing the rod...where did that come from?' Just a blunt attack because he felt that whatever I was teaching was against 'spare the rod, spoil the child.' Then, another instance, I tried to lighten the environment and be on their level, relate to them as much as possible and their experiences. I think I was doing so but there

was a point where one of the fathers said, that was typically an oppositional father- he was really always in my face about what I thought and why did I think this way. I constantly enforced that it's not the way I think or feel but this is from the research that has been written in our curriculum. This is from studies, books and materials that are about positive parenting. So he said to me 'You know I agree with what you're saying BUT...' and I said, 'You just said you agree with me?' and he goes "See you're a woman, a man wouldn't say that.' He was having this realization and he was going on to explain why he agreed and I said 'Oh okay you agree with me that's interesting' and he said 'Oh a woman would only say that.'

Yvonne stated that when she encounters resistant male clients she confronts them about their bias:

A lot of times it really just takes reframing everything that they say back to them so that they can understand what it is that they're actually dealing with and it's not me. 'The issue is not me. It can't be me! You just met me! You just walked through the door, you don't know me from Adam.'

Moya stated that regardless of gender, practitioners have to be confident in themselves and their ability to deliver services:

I think it is always important to put the knowledge and skills in front of gender and ethnicity, because if you have the knowledge and skills and you're confident about what you're saying and what you're teaching, then you can get through. Rather than if you are going in like 'Oh no, I'm a female so they're not going to listen to me.'

Dawn stated that if she has resistant potential male participants, she will ask a male practitioner to work with her and the participants:

The thing I like about my job is that we have male and female employees. So I have two family coordinators who are male, who kind of give us that gender balance, and its myself and my assistant who are the females. So if I feel like I'm going to have a problem with a guy, I hold off and I bring my guy in with me. So that kind of gives him the feeling 'Okay I can talk to another man.'

As opposed to some of the participants that felt that a maternal transference or countertransference between the provider and clients helped to create a successful helping relationship, Queen explained that the transference might be the reason that men are resistant to female providers:

I think gender plays a big role in it because a lot of things they [fathers] would share with a man, they won't share with a woman. So I think gender plays a big role in it.

Sometimes they even resented women who try to advise them because a lot of times they were reared by women. If they didn't listen to the people who reared them, they aren't going to listen to you or it makes it very difficult for them to want to listen.

Although the participants provided examples of their clients' resistant behaviors, they all explained that the resistance is usually temporary. Bonnie stated:

We get people that they come in and they are resistant. They don't want to be here. They don't know why the judge ordered them or their probation officer ordered them here. So, they're angry or nonverbal but after a week or two, or maybe after the second group, we see them become verbal and animated. They can verbalize why they were ordered here, why the judge ordered them here, how the behavior has impacted their ability to parent their children, and how their own parents have an impact on their present parenting skills. So, when they leave, I'm able to just see a new person evolve.

Carmen described one of her most resistant participants that eventually winded up being one of her most successful participants:

I almost feel bad picking this one out but I have to use him because he was my worst, most challenging intake. I always have the guys to come in really respectful but I had this one young man that came in and he was so angry and borderline disrespectful during intake. I was really new; it was my first couple of months here. During the intake, every time I would ask him a question, he would say ‘Well what do you think? How do you feel about this?’ and I had to keep redirecting him ‘Well it’s not that I don’t respect you asking me, but because we’re here to focus on you, we need to keep the questions with you.’ So it was his way of trying to intimidate me with the line of questioning that’s required for the intake. So he was just a challenge then when we got to the end when he needed to sign his contract he didn’t want to sign the contract. So this young man came to my class, every Thursday morning, 10 to 12, and he was so bright. He was able to embrace these concepts, process and internalize them in a way that I have yet to see anybody do. He ended up being a volunteer with the fatherhood summit...and he ended up getting an opportunity to go with the Mayor and he ended up going to the correction institution to speak and motivate other men. He came back and was able to share that with the group and you could just see how empowered he was.

Carmen also stated that once trust is gained with the fathers: “they come in, they’re relaxed, they take off their coat, and they are just like ‘Okay let’s just talk.’” Moya also shared that the fathers eventually stop being resistant and provided a description of their new behaviors:

They say whatever is on their mind, they’re open, there’s no more head-butting with me, they don’t want to know ‘Well, what do you think as a woman.’ There’s none of that

anymore. So they've grown to just accept that I'm bringing knowledge and skills to them and it's up to them what they do with it. Whereas before it was 'You're just trying to get us to do....,' you know it's not like that.

Raw Truth

Many of the participants stated that some of the discussions fathers bring up are very "raw" or "rough" in terms of their language, or descriptions of domestic violence or anger towards the mother of their children. Carmen stated:

One of the biggest challenges that the men have is the language that they use. I establish the expectations on the front end. During the orientation, we talk about it's not okay to refer to your partner as 'girl.' 'My girl this, my girl that,' and that's just regular language and I'm sure that they don't really mean any offense. However, we try to help them see that it's a difference between a woman and a girl. So I redirect a lot like 'Oh who are we referring to?' While we check-in, they'll say 'Well me and my girl went to the movies this weekend.' I say 'Oh are you dating someone under 18 now?' That's just my way of dealing with it and they laugh and they say 'Okay, Okay, my bad. My partner, my woman.' I say 'Right because you know when you say girl, I assume that you're talking about somebody under 18.'

Pudin also shared that she doesn't like it when fathers call the mothers of their children out of their name, or refers to them negatively:

I think the most negative experience that I've had was a father who just could not stop calling the mother a bad word. I mean even if he was saying something good-well it was never good but... it was 'that b, that b.' It was never my baby mother or her name; it was

just such...anger. So I think that's a real challenge- working with the men so that they will not be angry with the women who are the mothers of their children.

Drucilla shared that sometimes the fathers fear that the language or topic that they are discussing is unfit for her to hear:

They try to put me out when they're having their little discussions on intimacy, relationships, sexually transmitted diseases, and all the things that they don't want me to hear. 'Oh no because then you're going to go home and fuss with your husband!' and I say, 'I want to know what kind of games you all are playing!'

Other times, fathers participate and discuss behavior towards women and children that *is* actually uncomfortable for the providers. Drucilla shared two experiences that were very uncomfortable for her. In one example, Drucilla stated that there are a lot of fathers in the program that have been charged with domestic violence:

Oh we have a lot. 'I pushed them.' That's our favorite word in the program-pushed- because we have a lot of domestic violence. We have about five that's been involved in domestic violence who were referred through the courts and still say 'I pushed her.' I ask, 'So what is your definition of pushed?' Everybody will say pushed. 'Oh I just pushed her away from me.' So we started finding out that they had different definitions of pushed.

Drucilla also shared that there was a father in the program accused of raping his two biological daughters, and she was very conflicted about working with him and allowing him to participate in the program:

We had a father who was involved in the juvenile system because he was charged with raping two of his children, whose case was also in a section of court that I work in full-time. It was very uncomfortable for me because most of the evidence pointed to him

actually doing this. He was saying that he didn't. From the evidence, the hospital records, and all of this stuff, it was saying that he did it. So that was really, really uncomfortable for me seeing that I had to actually work in both areas with him knowing that he could have done this to his children. That was so uncomfortable for me because I'm saying to myself- knowing that I shouldn't be thinking this but we still have our feelings- that this man is crazy and he needs some serious psychiatric treatment. I'm upset with this because he is still actually thinking that he doesn't have a problem. Now, I have children and I can just imagine, I would probably be serving twenty to life if this would have happened to my children. So I try to be open minded and still maintain a professional demeanor while working with him and not just going ballistic.

On the other side, some of the providers have had to deal with the raw truth of serving this at-risk population. Some of the participants have been through things and shared issues that the practitioners would have never imagined. Jocelyn stated:

They [fathers] may not give you all of themselves as publicly as women will, but when they give you all of themselves watch out because it's going to be deeper and more heartfelt than what many of the women will give you. In the treatment center I used to run for many years, if I had fifty males, I would say forty-five of them had been sexually abused. So you think that sexual abuse is something that only happens to women. In reality, it's much more prevalent among men- they just don't talk about it. Women tell everything- when it happened, how it happened- but to get a man to open up... This group that we have here- they have told us some stuff that just about rocked our socks. One guy talked about his father, even at the age of ten, his father would pull his pants down and beat him very methodically with some sort of bat and he would be stroking

himself at the same time. The father had some kind of sadomasochistic sickness going on with this guy's punishment but it's affected him as a man today. He's brought that out in the group and was just very open and very honest and other guys when he opened up it was like pass the box [tissue] and there was not much for us to say as facilitators because this was the opportunity to release some of that and let some of that go. They haven't even told a parent what had happened and this happened when they were eight, nine, and ten. They were crying in group and they had never cried. They show anger and they show rage and as a facilitator you have to be able to handle that and not be frightened or put off by the fact that they're screaming or they're up. I just say that's a part of how they get it out. I never let any of their anger or fire that they bring bother me. I just embrace them.

Drucilla agreed that some of the issues that fathers discuss are shocking. She stated that the father who was accused of raping his daughters was abused by his grandfather, which came out in group. She also shared that often the fathers talk about what they witnessed in their home that influences their actions today:

One guy told us that his father used to beat his mama almost everyday and after that she would you know cry and then be laughing the next day. He said 'they were laughing and talking and they would go in the room.' So he thought that's how you relate... it's really something- the different experiences these guys have actually been through. Things that you would never dream of or think was possible. That sometimes this is all they know. So you can't really fault them. Why wouldn't they think this is the right thing to do? They were never taught differently, so you have to really sometimes have a real appreciation that they have made it this far.

Sometimes the participants don't 'make it far' and one of the participants shared how the death of one of the fathers in her program changed the way they operate today. Dawn stated that despite the reputation of violence in Baltimore city, she simply was not prepared to deal with the death of this father:

The worst thing that ever happened in my opinion for the program was that one of our clients was killed almost two or three years ago now. Actually that would not be so odd, but running the program, we just never thought that somebody was going to get killed. I don't know what we were thinking. I really don't know because this is Baltimore...but it was devastating because he and his significant other came to group faithfully. He had 99% attendance once they graduated. His significant other was the most difficult individual to get along with and he was dedicated to making it work. So he would come in some days like 'I don't know what I'm going to do.' But he was dedicated to his children- he had two kids. He worked a full-time job- had worked for the city for about 4 years by the time he had come to the program. Yes in his past he had done some unsavory stuff but he had pretty much cleared that out. He had gotten his life together and was really doing stuff. He had a twin brother who was locked up- now they were identical but half of his face was burned so you could definitely, clearly tell them apart. His brother was incarcerated at the time he was killed and apparently he was killed behind a retaliation against the brother. They literally shot him on the street...shot him dead. It was just...the worst thing to ever happen. I had gotten really close with this couple because this couple was featured by our funder. We had done a video and this couple was featured in the video. So we had to spend a lot time with them, go with the funder, do all that stuff. So I had really gotten to know them really, really well and it was

devastating. It was so devastating that we changed how we operated. We took it badly. No one took it well. Since then, we've had other clients die or be killed but nothing ever devastated us like this. It's like we put on a preparation for it. So now you're like 'Aw that's sad! I remember him.' But it's not how it was that first time.

In summary, the challenges to working with fathers as women were perceived by the participants to be the initial resistance they received when trying to engage with the fathers. However, most of the participants stated that this resistance can usually be addressed and subsided over time. The participants also stated that one of the challenges was the raw truth that some of the fathers presented in group, or the reality that the practitioners have to be prepared for when working with this population.

Being Familiar

The participants responded that being the same race as most of their clients created a familiarity between the provider and their clients despite socioeconomic differences. Therefore, their responses regarding the impact of race and socioeconomic status were divided into two categories: engaging and modeling.

Engaging

Most of the participants stated that being the same race as their clients made it easier for the fathers to engage with them. Lola stated that being the same race helps engage fathers: "I think that coming from a place of common experiences and culture, it's easier to relate on a lot of different levels." Queen also agreed that "race makes it easier to relate. It kind of makes them more comfortable to see someone who looks like them." Dawn stated that Black people generally have a familiarity with one another which it makes easier for her African American clients to accept services from her:

I think they can take it easier from me because ultimately- I coined this phrase-the familiarity complex- Black folks have a tendency to think that we know each other. So I don't care what you do, they're so comfortable with you. We have a familiarity with each other that makes it easier.

Pudin agrees:

Because I am of the same race, I look like their mother, their sister, their brother or I resemble somebody that they can connect to. Oftentimes in the African American community, I don't care who you are, where you are, there is somebody that that person reminds you of and you hope that that's a positive person- not somebody that you don't like. I think that's significant and I think that's one thing that resonates with them and that's what they connect to. They may not say that but 'Oh she sound like my grandmother,' 'She kind of look like my cousin,' that kind of thing. I think that's good and that we need to see more of us giving back into our communities that we can touch not just read about. I think that I'm able to relate and connect with my people regardless. I just think we connect. Our spirits connect, our souls connect on whatever level.

Yvonne also agreed that race helps the fathers to engage with her but this is an issue that she feels is due to the racism in the State of Georgia: "I think that especially in Georgia most of my population is either Latin or Black. Many of the Caucasians will not [stay in services]."

The difference in socioeconomic status between the providers and the clients could negatively impact their ability to create a successful helping relationship. The participants stated that they didn't allow the differences to affect the way that they treated the clients. Most of the participants revealed that the clients sense if providers are demeaning them or think that they are better than the clients. Jocelyn stated: "I think the men really get a sense if you're putting them

down or you're looking down on them." Carmen stated: "Men pick up on- does this person have ulterior motives? Do they really value who I am or what I need to do with my life?" Queen also stated:

I think at some point in time they have to see that you're a real person because they can see through any person. Most of them can see if you're sincere or not. I think you have to be sincere and caring. They pick up on that. If you're not they know.

Dawn agreed that providers should not let their status influence their work with clients because the clients will notice:

If you can't work well with disadvantaged, low-income populations in general then you shouldn't do it. If it's something where you're going to turn your nose up, you shouldn't do it. If you think that you can do it, even though in your mind you can turn your nose up and you think that you're better, the client will see through you immediately. I just think that it should come very naturally and if it doesn't then you shouldn't do it. If you feel taken aback then you shouldn't do it. If you feel fear, then you shouldn't do it because all those things are things that people can read in you initially.

Drucilla noted that she also relates to participants regardless of socioeconomic status because of her personal experiences:

My husband is a truck driver. He graduated from high school but he has no college degree or anything. So I'm understanding, I'm open and that's why I think it really works out well for me because I know both sides. Because of my title and my educational background, he [husband] would feel insecure a lot of times. He's okay now, but it really was hard in the beginning. So I'm able to relate with what they're saying a lot of times because believe it or not as women, the majority of the women are more professional or

achieving higher goals now. I just think that if we all were to work together, people would stop having these opinions and things would get better. Even though it's a slow pace right now and sometimes it looks like its getting worse- if people would stop having their feelings as if they're better than everyone, we would be further along.

Therefore, most of the participants stated that the differences in socioeconomic status did not influence the way that they interacted with the fathers. Lola stated that she doesn't think socioeconomic status impacts the helping relationship despite the noted differences:

With some of the younger guys-I don't even know if it's necessarily a different set of values, but certainly different educational experiences. But once they know that my main interest is helping you and helping your child to be a closer unit and a better family interaction then there's no problems.

Dawn also agreed that she doesn't share the same experiences or even the same communication styles as the fathers: "It's not necessarily what I'm accustomed to. I mean it's almost like they're speaking a whole other language." Queen stated that the providers control whether their status impacts the helping relationship:

It [socioeconomic differences] could become something that's distracting. But if you can communicate to them in a way that they understand, it really doesn't matter. It's on that professional person to be able to communicate to that father at a certain level.

Yvonne also stated that despite any socioeconomic differences, it is her responsibility to make the client feel comfortable:

I've worked with all kinds of clients and because of where I've come from it kind of helps me be able to associate and relate to them so they don't feel uncomfortable. If I

know that [lower socioeconomic status] about them, I would never go in there with a power suit. I would go in so that they would be comfortable.

Additionally, the providers acknowledged that there were socioeconomic differences between themselves and their clients, but due to the similar racial background, the providers stated that these differences did not impact their ability to relate to the fathers and engage them in services. Bonnie acknowledged the difference between her background and her clients' background. However, she stated that she could probably relate more to the fathers than someone of a different race:

It's not difficult for me to engage with this population but I've never had a lot of the same life experiences as they have had. They'll look at me and say 'Aw Ms. Bonnie, you look like you come from a family with a silver spoon,' or something of that nature. And that's not necessarily so but that's how they perceive me. Having said that, it would be even more difficult, if I were not of the same race, to engage them. I think it could happen but how successful you would be- I just don't know. Even though I haven't had a lot of the same experiences as some of the group participants, I can kind of get there in my head. I can get there a lot quicker than maybe someone else of another race or culture could.

Drucilla also questioned whether someone of a different race could engage the African American fathers:

One time we had someone to come in who was of a different race and they [the fathers] really were not open to voice their personal dilemmas because they didn't feel that that person could relate to them. So I think being of the same race is a very strong influence. Anybody that comes in with domestic violence have to talk to our therapist and we only had one who didn't want to discuss it at the time we started because he was not used to

sharing information. Then, when he saw that it was an African American male, he couldn't believe that it was an African American male that was a psychologist doing that kind of work and he opened up and they have the best relationship. The psychologist that we have- he's down to earth, he's like 'I'm from the hood.' He tells them so they feel comfortable. He's like 'I'm from the hood. I could tell you some stories.' But he said 'I went further and I didn't let anything stop me. I know what abuse is. I saw it in my household.' So he's able to relate and let them know. He said 'I don't speak like I should either but I got that degree.' He tells them and so they love him to death.

However, there were some participants that stated that race or socioeconomic status did not influence their motivation to work with fathers, nor did it affect their ability to create a successful helping relationship with their clients. All of the participants stated that all the fathers that participate in their programs were different and that while the majority might be African American, low-income, unemployed, and have low educational attainment, they would also have participants that were from different races, or were employed in well-paying jobs and were well educated. Angela stated that she serves clients from diverse backgrounds and doesn't think that the differences influence her relationships with them, particularly when they are focused on parenting, a topic or concern that she perceives to be somewhat universal:

The race of the clients is diverse. Although the majority of the clients that I work with are African American, I have had Hispanics in the group as well as whites and other races. So, it's not one specific race that I work with. I have had all races in the groups. I don't think its all about looking at it through a cultural perspective even though most of the parents male or female are African American. For the most part no matter what educational level or income level people are when they come into the group, they're there

for one reason and that's to discuss parenting issues or concerns. When we have parents of other races come into the group, I will address the same topic with them that I do with the rest of the group, but from their perspective and their culture. 'You tell me how this is done in your race or in your culture.' We look at parenting no matter what the difference is with our culture and our race. The bottom line is: parenting is parenting. We're both here trying to accomplish that job of helping keep our child healthy, helping maintain a healthy relationship with our family and at the same time making sure that our children are raised to become positive productive citizens in the city.

Jocelyn also stated that she doesn't see a difference in her motivation or ability to engage with clients based on race because:

I guess I don't really think about it because I spent so many years in drug addiction that I just see this as a human condition. Drugs couldn't care if you are Black or White or Green or you're Pink. So I never really see color when I'm helping people. I try to just deal with who they are. I just see people who have needs. So I don't really think that it impacts me and what I do. I don't look out for the brothers or the sisters. I just make sure the clients get their needs met. I think if you did something like that then people could tell that you are showing favoritism to all the females or all the Black men that are in your program. So I just stay away from that.

Overall, most of the participants perceived that being the same race as their participants helped them to engage and create successful helping relationships with their clients. Some of the participants also stated that because they were the same race, the differences in socioeconomic status between the provider and the clients didn't impact their ability to engage the fathers. In fact, the participants stated that they made sure that they did not demean or demoralize the

fathers based on their socioeconomic status. There were also some participants that did not feel that race or socioeconomic status influenced their helping relationships or motivation to work with fathers.

Modeling

Many of the participants stated that because they were the same race of the majority of their clients, they perceived that their higher socioeconomic status allowed them to serve as role models for their clients. Pudín stated that being the same race “is important in the sense that I believe we need more modeled behavior in our community.” Jocelyn noted that the participants are aware of the socioeconomic differences between themselves and the providers and encourages them to want to do more for themselves:

It’s something that they often times want to strive for. I notice that in the evening they watch us. They watch what we drive and they’re very cognizant of the types of cars that we have. Then, we try to let them know that we have cars because we worked very hard and sacrificed and when you use that as your value system- hard work and sacrifice- you too can have anything that we have. Anything whatsoever. So we just try to encourage them, but I think it influences them in a good way.

Dawn also shared about being a role model to clients in terms of employment:

It’s funny because a lot of my guys will say ‘I just want to do what you do, Ms. Dawn. I just want to do what you do.’ I say, ‘Okay here’s what it takes. It’s not that hard, you can too do it.’ They say ‘Oh well that means I got to go to school.’ I say ‘Oh ...yea it’s not easy but that’s definitely what you have to do and if you want to do it, I’m willing to help you do it.’

Some of the participants stated that they do not judge the values of their clients or compare them to their own. However, the participants stated that the influence of their values on the clients was sometimes unavoidable and they didn't perceive this to be a negative situation.

Bonnie stated:

I try not to put my values on the group members but I think we all do that in some way or another. I think that's kind of what it's about. Not to say that my values are any better or they're right but they haven't landed me in the judicial system so... so I must be doing something right you know? If that's true, then I would like to think I am more of a role model and not necessarily someone that's trying to impose my values.

Jocelyn agreed that the influence of the providers' values could be helpful:

I think most of them are looking for so much guidance that they take on some of your values and I don't think that you can hide your values when you're working with them. You kind of have to be honest with who you are. As long as your values aren't demeaning or demoralizing, I think they respect that.

Hope stated that sharing her values with the clients makes them aware of the appropriate behaviors:

Well, I think it affects them in the sense that when they come through our class they know that they are supposed to be the provider [for their family]. You know that makes them more conscious that I may have to accept anything. Sometimes after they come through dealing with us, they'll go and find a job. A job that before they wouldn't take but now they'll take it.

In summary, the difference in socioeconomic status but the similarity in race made some of the participants feel as if they were role models for the clients. The participants also discussed how they tried not to force their values on to their clients, but if their values did influence the clients, it was typically regarded as a good occurrence. The influence of the service providers encouraged the fathers to obtain employment and understand the values of “hard work and sacrifice.”

Negotiating Power and Authority

The participants identified the ways in which they negotiated power and authority in their relationships with African American nonresidential fathers. Two themes were identified: finding balance and meeting them. These themes represent the common identified ways that the participants used either in practice or in the environment to negotiate any power imbalances.

Finding Balance

The theme, “finding balance,” represents the participants’ common perceptions that as women working with fathers they must balance: compassion and confrontation; and their personal and professional experiences. The participants stated that an imbalance of either of these properties has negative consequences for either the service provider and/or the client.

Compassion & Confrontation

The balance of compassion and confrontation could certainly be described as a slippery slope if one of these elements is more present in the female practitioner-male client dyad than the other. Most of the participants discussed that both elements were necessary but warned that too much of either could lead to negative consequences. Queen stated:

I think you have to be somewhat firm in dealing with men. But I think we also have to have some compassion for them and kind of balance it because you can’t be too friendly-

Know what happens then. But you can't be too stern or too strict either. You have to find a combination of compassion and nurturing with firmness and making sure that they're following the rules.

As female service providers, the majority of the participants recognize that they have a position of power over the fathers. Therefore, the participants stated that in order for the fathers to feel comfortable with the providers, they must show the fathers compassion and empathy.

Angela stated:

For a woman to be able to work with the fathers and not have them just get totally turned off and not want to participate in the group, you have to be a people person. In the field of human services, you have to have compassion, empathy and show some concern.

Jocelyn stated that female practitioners should have "compassion for the human condition" and Pudín added that it is important to have compassion for clients and "for all people on a human level, regardless of the sex."

Most of the participants stated that service providers must be active listeners. Drucilla stated "a lot of time you don't have to say anything just be that listening ear for them." In addition to patience, Georgia agreed that listening is the key to expressing compassion:

When they see someone that's genuinely trying to listen to them and assist them then that allows them to open up, share with that person, and really see that that person is trying to help them versus someone not listening to what they have to say and just barking directives to them. I'm a very active listener. You know a lot of the time it's not about what you say it's about what you don't say. They just need to be heard and in so many areas of their lives they're not heard. They feel like child support is not hearing them, they feel like their child's mother is not hearing them, they feel like the system as a whole

is not hearing them, they have something that they want to say and they feel like they're getting the short end of the stick. They feel like employers are not hearing them. So just by being a caring, listening ear- it just makes a world of difference.

Queen also stated that listening is essential:

I try to just be respectful of them and I try to listen. What they really want is for somebody to listen. A big part of it is listening, so you have to know when to stop talking and when not to push too hard.

Lola also agreed that the fathers want to be heard:

Everybody's different and everybody has their own story. So you definitely spend a lot of time initially getting information- getting that story and being able to empathize with what's going on with them.

However, if the providers showed too much compassion, several of the participants shared that unwanted advances from the fathers occurred. Carmen shared:

There's a guy in the class tonight -he'll say things like 'Oh, I just want to tell you that you're a really beautiful woman,' if I'm making copies and I say 'Thank you. You are a really intelligent man.' I just throw back a compliment for a compliment. One of the guys today said 'Well Carmen let's say for example if you were in the club...' I say 'Well let's just say in general because most likely if I was in the club, it wouldn't be the same club as you because of the age difference.' So, I just redirect it and I take it off of me. I do think a lot of it has to do with the fact that I am so much older and they respect who I am. Now if a younger woman were working here, she would have to really be on her game.

Drucilla also shared her experience with fathers who idealized her as a potential mate because of her compassion:

There was a real big problem a long time ago. By me being this understanding person and being able to give some views on different ways to handle situations, they would take that as 'Oh I'm the perfect person!' Since I can understand and I wouldn't be doing all the things that they're saying the mothers are doing to them. Then too, since I'm a professional woman, a lot times they see dollar signs and they would try to make comments. In the very beginning, when I first meet them, I always stress that I am happily married. I say 'This is a business, this is a job, and I don't mix the two.' I let them know that. But on the side, some of them will still try and come and talk and say something. I let them know 'No. This is professional. In order for you to get to another level, you have to separate and you can't have anything going on because then you won't be able to reach your potential.' A lot of times, they go to my partner [male co-facilitator] and ask about me, 'Oh do you think...' and he's like 'No way! That's inappropriate.'

Georgia shared an experience she had with a program participant:

The fact that these are men and we are women adds a dynamic of, for lack of better words, sexual frustration. Many times when I walk into the orientation, the first time they see me their attention is distracted because the rest of the people in the room are men and in walks a woman. So they're distracted. They can't see past 'Oh this is a nice looking woman.' So it's a matter of getting them over that. First, letting them know 'That's not why I'm here. I'm married, taken. I'm here to help you so let's start from that foundation.' When I first started out, there was one participant- because of the way that I assist people and I genuinely care about helping the participants- he, in his mind, took

that to mean that I had a special relationship with him and it kind of turned into a stalker situation to where we had to put him out the program. I mean, he was calling my phone twenty, thirty times a day. It got really ridiculous. I think he had some clinical issues as well because as many times as I tried to tell him that this is my job, I help all of my participants in the same way, I'm interested in helping, and getting everybody on the right track, 'No, this is something that you're doing special. I think there's more to it.' So, it got rather interesting and then at some point I just had to be very abrupt with him- professional still- but very to the point and let him know 'NO.' Just so blunt that it might hurt your feelings. From that experience, we implemented a set of rules for the participants so that they can see that this is the way you are to act in the program.

Like Georgia, Yvonne had to terminate a father from services due to inappropriate behaviors:

He just kept trying to sit next to me when we were having sessions or making comments. I told him 'This is not appropriate. Can we not have these conversations please? No.' And he wouldn't stop so I had to tell him he couldn't come back. What sucks about that is if he would have taken his focus off of that, I think he would have gotten it [improved outcomes] quick.

Bonnie also shared her experience with one of her clients and how she handled it:

One guy would drop into my office whenever he was in the building. I guess I could have approached it in a way that would bring it to his attention and ask him not to but I just dealt with it. I just closed myself to his advances and didn't speak to him. I just kept it moving. Even now, I recognize him and keep going.

Dawn also shared that a professional approach is also best when dealing with fathers that “like” service providers:

Clients are going to say a lot of stuff to you, especially men, they will say everything to you. You’ll have men who like you and you’ll know that they like you. They might even approach you in that manner but you’ll know it. Just maintain a professional demeanor. You have to be the type of person who knows how to handle situations calmly and effectively and maintain a level of decorum and composure about yourself to be very successful.

Carmen offered an explanation for some of the fathers that misunderstand the compassion that the female service providers show them:

The majority of the men here refuse to believe that all of the people that work here together aren’t sleeping with each other. They are really stuck in a place where they don’t understand a male and female [professional relationship]. They even talk about it in a couple of the classes about having a professional friendship with people of the opposite gender. They say ‘Why would you want to be friends with a woman if you aren’t sleeping with her? If your motivation is not to have sex with her?’ A lot of them really feel like that’s the only purpose that women have.

Many of the participants said that women working with men need to know that “they’re men.” In other words, they need to hold clients accountable and confront them with reality when appropriate. Pudis stated that confrontations still have an element of compassion since they seek “understanding, but not rationalizing or making excuses for behavior but understanding why people make different choices.” Georgia stated:

I confront them [fathers] head on. These are men first and foremost. I'm not going to help them by babying them. I'm not going to help them by being a crutch for them. Many people, not a majority, but there are many fathers in the program that have this conspiracy theory that everybody is after them. The Man is after them, the Man is the reason why this, the Man is the reason why that. So I say 'Step back. You made these choices. You chose the mother of your children. It goes back to think before you leap. You made these choices. So first and foremost be accountable for yourself and the choices that you made in life in general. Yes, yes you were doing fine on your payments until you went to jail. Then why did you go to jail? You made that choice and yes you were in jail and obviously you can't pay your child support while you're in jail but again who put you there? Who made those choices? So...it all comes back to you and your accountability as a man as a father. When you can realize that and when you can really accept that, then you can really move on to the next level and let all that stuff go because excuses- there are many. But you know you have to get over your excuses and just start from right now and realize that the past was the past. I am responsible for my past and I need to move forward and I need to not make those same mistake again.'

Dawn shared an experience with one father who had his girlfriend call her office for him about employment. She stated that she lets the fathers know that they have to be responsible and seek out the things that they need:

She {father's girlfriend} called me two days ago, 'Can he apply for the internship position?' I said 'He can do whatever he wants but it can't be through you. He would need to contact this office and submit a resume.' She called me today and she was still on the phone telling him everything I'm saying and then she had to also tell him that I don't

play. 'Ms. Dawn don't play. When you talking about business, she expects a resume.' She knows because the same thing happened with her. So she's feeding him all this but I told her very clearly. She said 'Do you want to talk to him?' I said 'No, because he didn't call me.' I mean we need to hold people accountable. If he wants the job, then he needs to call me. So that's kind of how I deal with the clients and I haven't gotten any blow back from it yet so I guess it works. But I think that you need to take ownership in whatever it is you want to do- I don't care if you want to be a football player. What are you doing to be a football player? High school might be one of those things you might want to do because then you have to go to college and play college ball. So whatever goal they have, I will help them meet it, but they have to come in here somewhere.

Besides confronting the fathers about personal responsibility, Drucilla also confronts fathers about their behavior in relationships with their children's mother:

We do our group sessions with the fathers and let them voice some of the dislikes about the mothers or the parents of their children. We have a few who are married but many are not even in the relationship anymore but they still see their children. And we discuss some things about why they weren't with the mother and they always make it seem like it's our fault. I would say 'Well you are pushing all the blame on the mother, but what were you doing?' So the men are like 'Oh, y'all have attitudes all the time and y'all all this and y'all just angry all the time and we do one wrong thing and you ready to put us out and all this stuff.' I tell them 'It's called communication- you have to have open communication and coming to this class you'll understand and you'll work on having healthy relationships versus just walking out the house when you don't like what you hear. You have to be open to the criticism as well. Every time the woman says 'Oh no'

to something, you can't get mad at her and leave. And then you go find somebody else, have a baby with this one, have a baby with that one.' We have a lot of that here.

Pudin also stated that she had an experience with one father who wanted to blame his child's mother instead of accepting responsibility for his part:

I had one young man who always said that he never wanted to be a father outside of marriage but he was having unprotected sex with a girl that he would never ever consider marrying. So she gets pregnant and he spends a lot of time with the baby. Every other weekend from Thursday to Sunday the baby is with him. Just beautiful but he just cannot get past the anger with the mother. It's the mother's fault no matter what you say 'She knew what she was doing.' I say 'Why can't you take responsibility for this?' He says 'Well I thought she was.' I say 'Man up! Just man up! It's done. That is your seed, it will always be your seed, it will forever be your seed whether you see it today, don't ever see it, you got a seed out there. So man up in whatever way you can.'

The participants had many examples of how they confront the fathers, particularly when they need to address acting out behaviors in the group. Carmen stated that she confronts fathers one-on-one when they are not behaving appropriately in class:

During the little fifteen minute break, I assess how it's going and I try to pull the person one-on-one and say 'Is everything okay because I noticed you weren't really in the group. You weren't really engaged. You seemed to be having some other things to talk about. Did you have anything that you needed to share with the group?' I let them know that I see you, I hear you but I'm not going to give you the stage you want to perform on. I will do it one-on-one which has helped a lot.

Hope stated that she sets ground rules in the beginning to avoid most confrontations in the group:

I just kind of set the ground rules in the beginning. We'll say 'You have your rules. What do you think is missing [from the rules]?' If you set the rules in the beginning, then you don't have to deal with a lot of stuff.

Some of the participants stated that they share ownership or power with their participants.

Bonnie, Carmen, and Hope stated that the men in the group confront one another, particularly new people that come in and don't observe the rules. Hope agrees that peers will "check" one another:

They follow what you say. They try to respect you and I think some of it has to do with the fact that you are a woman. So one of the rules might be no cursing, no profanity.

They come up with the rules. They say 'We got to respect that because there's a lady in the house man.' Then what they do is check each other. So if one may be trying to say something [use profanity] then somebody in the group is going to immediately check them.

Bonnie also shared that they "look at a few of the stronger people in the group and rely on them or make them ambassadors of the group." Pudín also empowers participants to design their own program. Thus, if they fail to meet their own rules, she will call attention to the importance of accountability:

One of the things that we did when we had our first class was say "I know you guys have done a lot of programs like this. But this is the first time you guys get to design the program. Let me tell you what my scope of work says I have to do. They [program funders] don't tell me how I have to do it. So I want you to design this program, the way you want it to work, what are the hours that are best for you, what days. So I'm going to

do my six hours because that's what I said I would do, now you can decide how we do the six hours.' I think that's important. That let's them be stakeholders. And I remind them when they don't come or they don't show up- 'Look this is your schedule, I'm showing up to meet your schedule. So you have to take some responsibility for meeting your own schedule. If you're not going to meet your own schedule, you can't expect me to meet it.'

Overall, there has to be a delicate balance between confronting the clients and having compassion for them. Due to the professional position that the women have over the fathers, it is important that they show compassion. However, as women, they have to be careful not to show too much compassion as it might be mistaken for romantic interest. Therefore, the service providers must also be able to confront the fathers about irresponsible or inappropriate behavior. However, being in positions of power, they have to balance the confrontation with the compassion so that fathers don't "shut down" or withdraw from services. The participants also shared that they share their power with fathers and allow them to confront one another. Georgia stated:

That's why I say it starts out with the listening because they want to be heard. But once you listen to them and they know that you generally have their best interest at heart, it makes it so much easier to tell them about themselves.

Personal & Professional

When the participants were asked: what characteristic do women need to possess in order to work with African American nonresidential fathers, the number one response was: "Be professional." Professional in the sense that if a practitioner has had bad experiences with men,

they need to have these issues resolved before they begin working with this population or simply don't allow their personal lives to impact their professional work. Hope stated:

You have to deal with your stuff- do not get in this business and you go to a therapist. I don't care what you need to do but you read a book, do something, but deal with your stuff. Deal with your daddy issues, your man issues- deal with it or don't get in this work because sometimes they [male clients] can say something that will trigger something in you. They can wear a certain cologne that will trigger something in you. I actually take them [women she interviews] through a process of looking at their relationship with their daddy- 'Did you have one? How do you interact with him? If you're married, how do you interact with your husband? If you went through a bad divorce, how do you deal with that?' You have to really be real about where you are, put a mirror to yourself. That's the first thing you have to do if you are going to do this work. You can't do this work with all that baggage. You can't help them and you are looking at them through the eyes of your daddy that wasn't there or your man that knocked you upside your head.

Yvonne echoed this point: "you have to be sure that you're not bringing your own stuff in and your own opinions." Many of the practitioners stated that they have positive relationships with the men in their lives which help them to remain professional with the fathers. Dawn stated:

I love men. My father was very active in my life and I know the importance of that. I think it is very difficult to work with men when you don't like a man in general. From their personal experience or whatever, some women have an adverse reaction to men. I'm divorced and everything but it's nothing personal. You just can't take stuff personal. Let me forgive and forget and move forward. Some people can't evolve into that and that's unfortunate.

Carmen agreed that her positive relationships with men have helped her keep her relationships with the fathers positive and professional:

This work is not for everybody. If they [female practitioners] have issues that they haven't been able to heal from as a woman, it could be a challenge. But because I've had so many incredible relationships with men-my fathers, uncles- I know what it is to have men who can love you unconditionally. Some women have had minimum or no experience like that- not to say that they can't do this work, absolutely they can- but you at least have to be able to acknowledge that [past issues with men].

Drucilla stated that women have to separate their personal experiences from their professional lives because it impacts the services that men receive:

I really believe you have to be open minded because I have seen some women working with men who would not give any service at all. I guess they're so burned and have been burned by men until they will not help. If you're not ready and if you're not really stable in relationships then you can't go into this work because it's really going to make matters worse. You have to learn to separate. All of us do not have strong relationships- I get upset with my husband a lot of times but I still know how to not bring that with me to the job. I'll come to work and something they [male clients] tell me might trigger what we [her and her husband] just went through, but you still have to learn to separate the two. You don't bring your personal problems to the job.

Georgia also agreed that female practitioners that cannot separate their personal from their professional lives limit their ability to help fathers:

A lot of times they have their own preconceived notions of the fatherhood scenario. Maybe the father of their children doesn't pay child support and if he's not in the children's life, they tend to bring that over into their work. I see that a lot.

In other words, many of the women stated that female service providers cannot "take sides" or "judge" the clients. Pudín stated:

I think you have to be okay with your relationship with men and if there have been some experiences of divorce or unhealthy relationships, you have to understand that in any relationship, there are two sides and both parties are unhealthy. So, once you come more full circle and understand that, I think that makes you more effective.

Dawn also agreed that female service providers have to be objective and not let their own feelings influence their work with African American nonresidential fathers:

You really just can't take sides and I believe there's two sides to every story. So I can be very neutral in my feelings, even though I might have a personal feeling about it, but you really have to learn to separate what you personally feel from what you actually do professionally. That's probably more difficult to do than to say but it's crucial and it's critical to working with a disadvantaged population in general.

When meeting a client for the first time, Carmen stated that in order to reduce any bias she might experience, she waits until she meets the client before she reviews their referral or court records:

I go through that whole process of 'tell me a little bit about yourself' and then go into 'tell me about the situation that brings you here' - without any judging. I have the court records but I make it a practice that I don't read the records until after the men leave. I like to be able to approach this in a way that is not biased and judgmental. And then I allow them to say their side of the story. I don't try to critique and correct it and say 'Oh

no, according to your record it said you did this and that.’ Instead I say ‘Tell me about what brings you here- what were the dynamics?’ because all of us are more than an isolated behavior.

There still has to be a balance of personal and professional because many of the participants stated that it was necessary for them to reveal some of their personal experiences in order to help the fathers see them as real people, not just professionals. Drucilla stated:

I let them know that everybody wasn’t on the straight and narrow. I express to them that I was a teen mother but that didn’t stop me. It made me work even harder. So I always share personal experiences with them to let them know that- ‘No I wasn’t just spoon-fed all gold. I struggled and we have to learn to make some positive and better choices, and then lead by example.’

Pudin also shared that she discusses her personal experiences with her clients:

I’m able to talk about being a single mother and what that did to my son when his father wasn’t there. How he looked to him when his father promised to come and didn’t come or promised to call and didn’t call. So I can relate some real life experiences that I believe they can connect with.

Yvonne stated that she shares her common experiences with the military fathers who she works with:

I am divorced from a marine. So, I have personal experience to let them know my side but I also have personal experience with my fiancé who is in the Air Force and was previously married to his baby’s mother. Just self disclosing a little bit about myself, so that they understand I do actually understand military lifestyle, I do actually understand

what it is to go through all that other stuff. It works very, very well. Especially when I explain to them what I did in that situation.

On the other hand, Drucilla is also open to learning from the fathers and their perspectives:

It's interesting because like I said I'm married and I get to hear some views from these other fathers that really strengthens and really helps in my own personal relationship.

There are some things that I probably might have said and then I'm hearing how they react to the comments that we as women say, especially when we're strong-willed and educated, sometimes we do get the big head and we throw it in their faces. We shouldn't do that because they really start to feel insecure and they shut down. So, I enjoy working with them because I get a lot of feedback.

Overall, all of the participants stated that female service providers must separate their negative personal experiences with men from their professional work with this population. However, the providers must also be able to self-disclose and reveal some of their personal experiences that will help the fathers relate to the service providers as real people.

Meeting Them

The theme, "meeting them," refers to the participants' common saying that they have to "meet the clients where they are." In order to obtain the participants' meaning behind this statement, their responses were analyzed and it was found that 'meeting them' referred to meeting the fathers in their social situations and also spatially, in a welcoming, comfortable location.

Social

Many of the participants described “meeting them,” in terms of understanding the fathers’ social circumstances and being able to assess and meet their needs. Queen stated:

You have to meet those men where they are, at their level. That can be very hard in some cases because you really don’t know their level unless you spend time with them and they trust you enough to reveal.

Angela stated:

You have to relate to the people. If you can’t relate to them and understand where they’re at and meet them where they’re at, then your chance of helping them move forward is null to none.

Bonnie also agreed that you “meet them where they are,” but Jocelyn stated that you should not only meet them, but show respect for their situation:

I guess one of the things I would say is you need to have respect for where they are. Just being aware of where they are. I highly encourage all the people that I supervise to accept people for who they are, where they are. If they’re drug dealers, you can’t say ‘You’re a bad, bad boy.’ You really have to understand that he is man who is trying to provide for his family. My husband provides for his family but it’s through a job. Who knows if he had no job and we were in really bad straits what he would do to provide for his family. I would hope that wouldn’t be a choice but unfortunately drugs are a viable market. So you can’t really be mad at them, you have to just kind of understand what they’re working with, their challenges, and then teach them how to take those skills that they have, that they are using for drug selling and for doing other things, and try to turn those skills into something that’s viable and legal where they don’t lose their freedom. I think sometimes

we see people and we may say ‘Oh he’s got felonies,’ you have these preconceived notions that they are this bad person and when you really stand and talk to them, they’re just angry, frustrated, hurt individuals who just need love and guidance. When you take away all the rest of that stuff, you can meet them where they are then give them what they need to succeed.

Drucilla also suggested that in meeting the fathers, service providers should not make the fathers feel like they are bad parents:

We try to teach them life skills to show them how to become a better father- not saying that they’re not a good father but just some additional skills for them to look at first versus some of the decisions that they’re making.

Most of the participants stated that their male clients simply want their needs to be heard and met. Hope explained:

The first year that we did the fatherhood summit here, we were expecting maybe three hundred to four hundred men. We had over twelve hundred. I know exactly because I was the registration [volunteer]. Twelve hundred and eighty three men showed up. We had not one incident. All they wanted was to get their needs met.

Hope also stated that when service providers work with fathers: “you have to carry yourself as somebody that knows something.” So, most of the participants described how they go about assessing fathers’ needs and providing them with resources. Angela stated that when working with fathers there has to be flexibility and resourcefulness in meeting the fathers where they are and engaging them:

The things that engage fathers and get them to continue to come whether they’re there on their own, or through the Bureau [State child and family services], or probation and

parole, is letting them know that you are providing a service to them that they need in order to keep their children within their reigns. Whether it's continuing to have custody of their child, or getting custody of their child, or keeping their family together, keeping them from maybe owing big money to the state as a fine, or other probation and parole issues-The technique is discussing the issues or the problems with them that they have during the group settings and relating or providing information to them that's going to benefit them. Even though I have my agenda set to talk about child development in toddlers or whatever, I have to also address that [father's] issue with the teen who is being defiant and sometimes it means I have to be prepared with several lessons for the day, even though I don't have but one on the agenda. I may have to have something with me that covers those issues of dealing with defiant teens and usually it works out. Very rarely do I go in and not have a handout [to address a particular need]. Every time that they come back, they say, 'I tried this technique,' or 'I told my baby mama this,' 'I used the information you gave me and it did this,' or 'It's not working what else can I do.' It's either their needs are being met or not and they come back for you to give them other solutions.

Bonnie also agreed that meeting the fathers' needs by being able to access resources is critical when working with African American nonresidential fathers:

I'm a big believer in resources. In school, we learn how to share our little toolkit with resources in it. During the first couple weeks of the group, I come in armed with resources-pamphlets, telephone numbers, articles. I ask them to put all of their resources together- keep that and collect them. I model that for them in the beginning. So, whatever their need is, we don't let their need go ignored.

Lola agreed that providing resources a big part of working with this population and stated “That’s always a good connection when you know you can do something-whether it’s providing tickets to an activity or a referral for a free legal consultation.”

However, in meeting the fathers’ needs, it is important to make sure that fathers are ready to receive the help. Dawn shared an experience where she was disappointed because she overwhelmed one of her clients by not meeting the father and gauging his needs:

Well you get disappointed because you offer everything. You offer the client the world. I remember our first client that we offered everything to. He was from our pilot group and he needed a job, he couldn’t afford a drug test, paid for a drug test. He needed transportation, got him a bus pass. He needed housing, got him housing. We did so much for him that he crashed and burned. It was too much. It was help overload if there’s such a thing. He got the job, he was able to pay for the drug test, but he couldn’t go, he didn’t go. He had the bus pass but it was too much. He thought he wanted something and we provided it for him but he cracked under the pressure of it. So that was a learning lesson. One thing I learned is to take baby steps- let’s not give it all to him. Now some folks are ready for it. Some people want it snap, snap, snap. We need to gauge that and it’s the type of individual who wants a snap, snap, snap that has already gotten their high school diploma. That’s 30 percent of my clients who understand that your work demeanor needs to be different from your street demeanor. So some of those gentlemen really want it and they can handle that [receiving help]. But the ones that don’t have that high school diploma who are just getting off the streets from selling dope, just getting out of jail- it’s too much too fast. You have to gauge that so I had to learn to let go and ask myself ‘Okay why am I riding Joe harder than Joe is riding himself?’

Queen also shared that she had to learn that she couldn't help everybody:

You have to be prepared for disappointment. You say 'Everybody can make it,' 'Oh yea don't turn him away.' I mean my mistake was that I just wanted to help everybody and not realizing that everybody's not going to be saved no matter how bad you want them to be saved. Some of them are just knuckleheads and you won't be able to relate to them and you have to let them go.

Spatial

The location of these programs and resources were essential to negotiating power issues and getting fathers to feel comfortable accessing services and relating to the providers. The interviews for this study took place at the workplace for seven of the thirteen participants. Each of the seven programs that were visited were located in the inner cities; the neighborhoods where the participants lived. Carmen stated:

The majority of the fathers here are African American men. I would have to say that about ninety percent of the men are African American because where we're located is African American.

Some programs are not able to engage and retain fathers in services because they were located in unfamiliar areas of the city where fathers might feel disempowered.

In addition to the physical location of the programs, the actual meeting space was a place where the fathers felt comfortable to share their issues with others and receive assistance. Bonnie stated that they try to create an atmosphere where the fathers feel free to open up:

Their lives are so serious. We allow them to talk and be real about what they're going through- whether it's drugs, sex, their own skeletons that they have. When they were children, their fathers were in and out of prison or mothers were prostituting whatever it

is...we don't judge them or make it appear as if it's a bad thing. We let them feel free to be expressive.

Pudin also stated that she tries to create a welcoming environment:

We try to make this environment warm and nurturing- soft music, food. We always have plenty of food. I tell them 'Go in the refrigerator, treat it like home, go into the refrigerator, get whatever you want.' So, we try to make this their place to come and it's relaxing. 'If you want to sit on the floor, you want to sit on the chair, you know however is best for you.'

The unique situation around providing resources to African American nonresidential fathers successfully was the location and accessibility of the resources that most programs provided. When asked where clients with substance abuse or mental health issues are referred, Carmen simply stated "Downstairs." A mental health and substance abuse counseling center was located on the ground floor of her agency. Many of the participants stated that they also have therapists and psychologists come in to provide individual counseling to the fathers while they are going through fatherhood or healthy marriage programs. In other words, most of the programs try to offer resources that are centrally located within or very near to their agency. Carmen stated:

The unique thing about our program leadership is that they allow us to deal with the depth of the person. So we go deep, inside and out. When that man walks through this door, here's our opportunity to wrap all the community services around him. Not for him to go door-to-door but for us to know this community well enough and empower him and embrace him in a way that he is willing to receive [help].

Dawn also shared that many of the resources that a father would need is located within her organization:

I'm lucky because our organization offers a workforce development program, G.E.D., a career path program and responsible fatherhood. For those programs, I can refer them within the office and I know we [practitioners within the agency] all feel the same way about our clients. Most of my partners [partnering agencies] are familiar with the population we serve so nothing is surprising and I think that everybody is pretty supportive. Our responsible fatherhood program works in tandem with the child support enforcement agency. They have some kind of incentive program where you can work toward getting a percentage of your child support arrears reduced if you work and pay it for a certain length of time. And our responsible fatherhood organization works directly with men to help them with that.

In summary, the participants stated that it is essential to “meet the fathers where they are.” By analyzing the participants responses, it was determined that “meeting them” referred to the father’s situation and also spatial aspects. Most of the participants shared that service providers must understand father’s situations and able to assess and meet their needs. The participants also shared that the location of services and resources, including the environmental aspects, were important in breaking down existing barriers that fathers might otherwise experience when attempting to receive help in traditional social service agencies.

Chapter Summary

The participants described their motivation for working with African American nonresidential fathers as a means to “foster equity” and “foster change.” The participants described their job motivation to foster equity in parenting as well as equity in services. Many of

the respondents discussed their desire to change the way fathers were viewed in American society from deadbeat dads to parents that were equally important to their children as mothers. The participants also noted that African American nonresidential fathers were often excluded from services. So they worked to meet this population's multiple needs which were comparable to those of mothers.

The participants also shared that they wanted to foster change in the lives of the individuals they served, their children, families, communities and society. Most of the participants stated that they were motivated to continue to work with African American nonresidential fathers because of the improvements that they can document in the lives of individual clients. Some of the participants also shared that they were motivated by their work with couples and helping those who were unwed to get married. They stated that this benefitted the children and helped build strong families. Some of the women stated that their work with individual fathers and/or their families was beneficial for the community and society as a whole.

The impact of race, gender, and socioeconomic status on the participants' ability to create successful helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers were divided into two themes "being women" and "being familiar." The participants identified challenges and advantages to being women working with fathers. The challenges that some of the participants described were the initial resistance that they experienced from the fathers and also the raw truth that some of the fathers shared with the women that at times made them uncomfortable. The advantages that the women discussed were the fact that they were able provide the fathers with the "feminine perspective" and also they thought that they were better able to engage with the fathers due to their "mother nature." Some of the participants stated that they reminded their male clients of their mothers and were therefore able to establish a rapport with them. Regarding

race and socioeconomic status, many of the participants shared that being the same race as the majority of their clients helped them to engage the fathers in a successful helping relationship. Since they are of the same race, the participants felt that the difference in socioeconomic status between themselves and the fathers did not negatively impact their ability to engage with the clients. In fact, their socioeconomic status allowed them to serve as role models to their clients.

As female fatherhood service providers, in order to negotiate power and authority with African American nonresidential fathers, the participants described two strategies: “finding balance” and “meeting them.” The participants stated that there must be a balance between the amount of compassion and confrontation in the helping relationship and there also must be a balance between the impact of their personal and professional experiences on the helping relationship. If an imbalance exists, the participants provided several negative consequences that could occur.

The respondents also used the common phrase in social services “meeting them where they are” as a strategy for working with this population. However, “meeting them” referred to the participants’ descriptions of meeting the clients’ situation and needs and also meeting the client through spatial aspects.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. The research questions were: (1) What are the common motivations of African American women who are fatherhood service providers? (2) In what ways do gender, race, and socioeconomic status (power issues) affect their ability to create successful helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers? and (3) How do African American women who are fatherhood service providers negotiate issues of power and authority in their professional relationships with African American nonresidential fathers?

In order to address these research questions, thirteen women who are fatherhood service providers were recruited with flyers which were emailed to various individual practitioners, state human service administrators, and fatherhood program directors. Participants were also recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods. The women worked and lived in five states: Wisconsin, Louisiana, Maryland, District of Columbia, and Georgia. The researcher traveled to these states between the months of April and May 2008. The women participated in semi-structured interviews that ranged from approximately 40 to 74 minutes. Seven of the women were interviewed in their place of work and the other six chose to be interviewed in a local restaurant, coffee shop, or bookstore.

The findings revealed that female fatherhood service providers are motivated to work with fathers because they are committed to “fostering equity” and “fostering change.” The theme, “fostering equity” involved the provider’s motivation to create equitable social services for fathers and therefore promote “equity” in perceptions of fathers as equal parents. The theme, “fostering change” included the service providers’ motivation to foster change on multiple levels including individual, children/family, and societal levels. There were also two themes identified that described the impact of race, gender, and socioeconomic status on the women’s ability to create successful helping relationships with fathers. These themes were “being women” and “being familiar.” The theme, “being women” included advantages and challenges of being a different gender than their clients. The identified advantages of being African American female fatherhood service providers were: being able to provide the “feminine perspective” and having a “mother nature.” The identified challenges were the fathers’ “initial resistance” behaviors and some of the “raw truth” that the fathers shared. The participants also shared their strategies for negotiating power and authority in the helping relationship with African American nonresidential fathers. These themes were “finding balance” and “meeting them.” The theme, “finding balance,” included the women’s descriptions of balancing compassion for the fathers and confrontation of inappropriate behavior or faulty thinking. The women also discussed creating a balance between personal and professional experiences. The theme, “meeting them” had two aspects as well, social and spatial. The social aspect of meeting the fathers’ needs included understanding the sociohistorical, economic, and political impacts on fathers’ lives. The spatial aspect of meeting the fathers’ needs included providing services in the fathers’ community, in locations that were not only convenient and familiar, but welcoming.

This chapter presents conclusions based on the study's findings. A discussion is also included that puts the knowledge that the women shared in conversation with relevant research literature. Finally, the implications of this research for theory, practice, education, and policy are discussed and recommendations for future research are suggested.

Conclusion and Discussion

There were three conclusions drawn from this study: (1) Women who are fatherhood service providers are motivated in their work with fathers to foster equity and change; (2) Women who are fatherhood service providers perceive that race, gender, and socioeconomic status impact the helping relationship; (3) Women who are fatherhood service providers negotiate power and authority in the helping relationship by finding balance and meeting clients' social and spatial needs.

Conclusion One: Motivation to Foster Equity and Change

The participants were motivated to foster equity in fathers' access to social services and the way that fathers are viewed in relation to mothers. The participants were also motivated to foster change with their clients on multiple levels. This study disputes the literature that states that female practitioners are not inclined or motivated to work with fathers (Anderson, Kohler, & Letiecq, 2002; Fletcher, Silberberg, & Baxter, 2001). While these participants agreed that more needs to be done to change some female practitioners' attitudes toward fathers, this study adds balance to the literature by focusing on women that are committed and provide direct services to African American nonresidential fathers.

Fostering Equity

The participants often described feeling motivated to change the perspective of African American nonresidential fathers in American society as deadbeat dads or uninvolved parents. The women believed that these fathers were equally as important as mothers. The participants noted the need to deconstruct the concept of “family services,” which has been socially constructed to denote services for women and children and the term “parent,” which has been socially defined to mean mothers. Several studies have demonstrated that most staff in child welfare agencies target casework toward mothers and do not find it problematic that fathers are not involved in services (Franck, 2001; O’Donnell, 1999). O’Donnell et al. (2005) did five focus groups with child welfare workers to explore the lack of fathers’ participation in casework. Some of their participants stated fathers should be treated identically to mothers and receive the same services. They addressed the gender bias that impacts child welfare practice by stating:

I think that there is a gender stereotype here when it comes to fathers because society looks at mothers being the sole parent and that the kids need mothers more than fathers...If [fathers] step forward society says "No...you have to prove to us that you are able to be a parent." This is more discouraging to fathers than anything.

Child welfare and society as a whole believes that children should be with their mother. That holds up services [to fathers]—why do we need to look at them [fathers]? They [the children] have a mother. (O’Donnell, 2005, p. 396)

Julion et al. (2007) conducted focus groups with fathers and asked “what they wanted the world to know about being an African-American father, [and] one father replied: “I want the world to know that I love my kid and I’m important too. It’s not just about mommas. . .” (p. 606). The practitioners consistently stated that fathers are important and should be involved in

their children's lives. They discussed mothers' roles in preventing fathers from visitation with their children. Many of the participants were able to work with both mothers and fathers and discussed their motivation to convince mothers that parents should work together in the best interests of children. Vann (2007) also recommended that programs should serve mothers and fathers for the purpose of improving child well-being:

I think this is one of the big lessons of efforts to create programs for fathers modeled on services for mothers, you can't just work with dads—or moms. If your goal is improved child outcomes, you need services that address moms and dads. It doesn't matter if mom and dad live together. Or if they are married or divorced. What matters is that, irrespective of their living and marital situation, they develop the skills necessary to raise their children in a loving, respectful manner. (p. 267)

The participants were motivated to foster equity in services because of the high needs among the fathers they served and the lack of access to services. The child welfare workers in O'Donnell's (2005) study also addressed the lack of equity in services for fathers despite great need:

Dad gets denied a rent cut for public housing. Dad gets public aid [severely] cut for working...he's going to end up losing his kids. But the mom who doesn't even have kids at home can get housing assistance. (O'Donnell, 2005, p. 399)

The Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study (2003) demonstrated that unwed fathers are an underserved, disadvantaged group. Based on their study's findings, 38 percent of unwed fathers did not graduate from high school, over 50 percent have been incarcerated, and 6 percent reported drug or alcohol use that interfered with work or family responsibilities. The practitioners in the current study also discussed the great needs among the fathers they served

and were motivated to provide the services necessary to improve fathers' situations. Georgia provided data on fathers in her Atlanta program that revealed: 31 percent did not graduate from high school or have a GED; 91 percent had criminal records; 71 percent reported substance abuse issues, and 23 percent reported mental health issues. Drucilla in New Orleans stated that 80 percent of her participants had criminal backgrounds and Dawn in Baltimore stated that 78 percent of the fathers in her program did not have a high school diploma. This situation among the fathers that the participants served is similar to situations that healthcare professionals in hospitals and clinics experience. In the healthcare field, there is heavy emphasis on preventive care and research on prevention because patients wind up receiving care only in crisis and often it is too late. It appears that fathers are invited to participate in these programs as a last resort when early intervention would have been more beneficial to all involved. In reference to teenage parents, Handler and Hasenfeld (1997) made a similar observation:

...we target for treatment the worse cases-teenage mothers who have dropped out of school and are probably living in independent households-and we ignore most of the young women who live in high-risk conditions. We do so because of the symbolic value of such programs. They demonstrate our commitment to uphold dominant family values while showing that we are doing something about the worst offenders. In fact, we design policies and programs with built-in self-fulfilling prophecies. Such programs that target the difficult cases as we have seen produce little success and reinforce the image of teenage mothers as incorrigible deviants. (p. 199)

This study identified some aspects of practice with nonresidential fathers that supported Maslow's concept of the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1948). The practitioners reported that they had to address the clients' issues in a hierarchical fashion. The "higher" needs such as housing,

food assistance, clothing, employment, childcare, transportation, meals and stipends had to be addressed first. Then, the fathers were open to some of the programs goals (“lower” needs) which focus on improving parenting and relationship skills. Overall, these mostly small community-based organizations receive limited funding to provide intensive, costly services that which cause many to reduce services drastically or end services altogether.

The participants understood that African American nonresidential fathers, and men in general, lack the knowledge or patience to navigate bureaucratic systems. They were motivated to address what Rasheed (1999) called “gendered obstacles which exist in social service delivery systems that affect the paternal role functions of inner city, low-income, noncustodial African American fathers” (p. 10). In their study on practice with overwhelmed clients, Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) also found that service providers must know how to assist clients get through the “red tape” often found in bureaucratic social service agencies. They stated that practitioners:

...demonstrated skill in negotiating these complex service delivery systems which required them to have knowledge of definition or terms of eligibility, to build contacts and relationships with staff in large bureaucracies, and to be capable and willing to serve as advocates for clients, helping them learn skills in navigating such systems. (p.140)

Hope described her motivation to help fathers, providing an example of her advocacy for a father who had custody of his children, but was unsuccessful in stopping the child support agency from deducting money from his pay:

Just being able to teach them how to get through the red tape, being an advocate and being able to call and talk to the other female on the line and say ‘Look, I got this young man in my office, he has his three kids...’

Fostering Change

The participants felt rewarded in their jobs by their ability to foster individual change, which contributed to change in children and family situations, communities and society. The women felt rewarded in their work with African American nonresidential fathers based on the positive change they witnessed in individual fathers and their children and families.

Consequently, some of the participants believed that their work with fathers and families contributed to the positive impact these two cohorts had on the community and society.

These women described having an intrinsic motivation to work with the fathers since many stated that they were not motivated to work with them solely for the money or professional recognition. Carmen stated:

I first of all love the work...it's the kind of thing that I would show up to if there was no money- and I know in social work money can never be the motivating force, but if I cashed in on a lottery ticket and never had to work, I would still come here because this work is still rewarding.

Many participants discussed their intrinsic job motivation evidenced by statements that they loved their jobs and were motivated by seeing change in the fathers' lives. Angela stated:

I enjoy doing this type of work because I get paid for the job I do but the reward is not always in the money. The reward is mostly in me seeing that I've done something to make a positive change or difference in other peoples' life. I really like helping people. I want to see people have a better life and not have all these challenges to face and meet. When I see that I played a part in helping them overcome some of their barriers or issues, that's my reward. It makes me feel good to know that I made a difference or helped somebody where they needed help.

Bonnie agreed that the work she does with her parenting groups is her reward:

When I think of my happiest or my proudest moments for my groups, it has not been ...the awards because I've gotten a lot of those in my career- national...community, local. It's the things that happen in here that people out there in the community don't see. It's all about what goes on in here with us.

In his work on the motivation of helping professionals, Kottler (2000) stated:

People come to us in excruciating pain or with a hunger to learn. They look to us for salvation, to guide them out of the abyss of hopelessness, to provide enlightenment. Yet, during this journey we take together, the client is certainly not the only one who profits from the experience. There are times when we learn about ourselves as much as our clients grow from the interactions. There is also that mysterious, magical feeling of exhilaration when we know that as a result of our efforts somebody's life is somehow enriched. Even with all the stresses and strains of helping work, the burdens of responsibility, the uncertainty and doubts, there are few joys greater than knowing that we have been helpful to someone. (p. 6)

Research studies have demonstrated the positive outcomes for children when fathers are involved in their lives (Huebner, Werner, Hartwig, White, & Shewa, 2008). The practitioners were motivated to foster change in the lives of children and families by helping fathers. They discussed their motivation to maintain the family's structure. Hope specifically pointed out her motivation to keep building the African American family. Many of the participants referred to their motivation to improve couple relationships and encourage marriage for the benefit of children. When asked about the rewards of their work many of the women discussed

participating in clients' marriage ceremonies. Pudin stated explicitly that she is motivated to get *African American* couples to marry.

Many of the participants were motivated to work with fathers because they stated that by helping them, they were in fact helping the community and "the world." Several studies have noted the impact that father involvement has on the community, in terms of preparing the next generation of men (Caldwell & White, 2005). The concept of generative fathering, which originated from Erik Erikson's concept of generativity, has been used by scholars to understand how father involvement contributes to the well-being of future generations (Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998; Caldwell & White, 2005). Dollahite & Hawkins (1998) provided a conceptual framework of generative fathering:

The generative approach assumes that: (a) fathers are under the obligations of an ethical call from their child(ren) and communities to meet their child(ren)'s needs; (b) the needs of the next generation are preeminent over the needs of adults; (c) fathers have "contextual agency," that is, fathers make choices, within a context of constraints, in relation to the next generation; and (d) fathers can and should connect with and care for their children in meaningful ways. (p. 111)

Pudin embraced the concept of generative fathering in her motivation to work with fathers as evidenced by her statement: "We know at the end of the day we're making a difference in somebody's life who's gonna make a difference in somebody else's life." Vann (2007) stated "Some of the most successful programs are able to nurture a group of men who go on to engage and assist other men in their community, so truly stressing the generative aspects of fatherhood" (p. 267). Jordan Zachery (2009) interviewed ten men in fatherhood programs to ask about their

perspectives on fatherhood and the impact of the program on their children and parenting skills. She stated that providing services to fathers impacts the community because:

These men also feel empowered as they now see themselves as belonging and contributing to a community—the feelings of isolation many of these men experienced appears to be countered by their involvement with the fatherhood programs. (p. 212)

The concept of generativity could also be used to understand the participants' motivation to work with fathers as many discussed getting to a certain point in their life where they wanted to make a difference in the lives of others. They shared the belief that they could make the greatest contributions in the area of fatherhood.

Conclusion Two: Race, Gender, and Socioeconomic Status Impacts Helping Relationships

Proctor (1982) stated that the worker-client relationship “is the chief tool and basic means of social work intervention” (p. 430). Therefore, this study explored the African American female practitioner-African American male client relationship because in order to establish a successful relationship, the background of the clients and practitioners must be considered. Across several disciplines, there is discussion about discovering techniques or strategies to engage African American men. However, there is very little attention given to the issues of power that might impact engaging this population in helping relationships. Shorter-Gooden (2009) stated that:

...a central consideration in working with African American male clients is the importance of attention to the development of rapport, given the potential cultural mistrust of therapy and the struggles that many Black men have with needing to feel in control. (p. 453)

The theme, “being women,” was identified to describe the women’s discussion of the advantages and challenges of gender differences between practitioners and clients. The advantages were referred to as being able to provide “feminine perspective,” and having a “mother nature.” The challenges were categorized as “initial resistance” and “raw truth.”

Being Women

In the Black Mental Health Alliance for Education and Consultation’s (2003) report on African American men’s mental health one man stated: “We have a problem asking for help especially from folks who we think are the reasons for our mental illness.” Although stated in jest, comedian Dave Chappelle stated that “a woman’s problem in life is material. A man’s problem in life is women.” Given these two statements, the question could be posed, would men willingly accept help from a female professional, specifically a Black female professional?

Kosberg (2002) stated:

Professionals working with persons from culturally diverse groups have known that a professional’s age and racial, religious, or ethnic background can influence the utilization, continuation, and effectiveness of interventions. So, too, can the gender of the professional. To be sure, the professional’s competence is more important than gender; yet, gender is a consideration. (p. 63)

Similar to Brown and Brown’s (1997) study of African American social workers working with Caucasian clients, women working with men have to decide at which point to deal with the gender issues, particularly when clients make disparaging comments:

At what point does the therapist deal with it as a clinical issue? In order to more fully answer these questions, one must more closely examine the purpose of the therapeutic relationship. If the African American social worker’s goal is to assist the client in

working through particular issues then interventions must be targeted at that which assists the client, not the worker, feel comfortable. On the other hand, social workers operate from a person-in-environment framework such that racism and its variants are unacceptable and deemed dysfunctional in whatever form or context. Based upon this latter consideration it would seem plausible to explore the client's remark/attitude to determine its fuller meaning and significance within the client's "worldview."

Based on the goal of programs to improve relationships with children, it is obvious that most programs advocate for improved relationships with the children's mother. Therefore, the practitioners explored fathers' views of not only mothers, but women in general, since they influence their behavior and worldview.

Feminine Perspective

While there are some men who are uncomfortable with female professionals regardless of experience and skills, some of the participants stated that fathers appreciated working with female practitioners. They stated that fathers often wanted the "feminine perspective" or woman's point of view on several of their issues. Brice-Baker (1996) suggests that "since the domain of females is considered to be the emotional well-being of the family, a female therapist could be accepted and have validity" (p. 94). Since the practitioners were teaching parenting and relationship skills, an area that is stereotypically feminine, it could be assumed that some of the fathers did not consider having a female professional in the program unusual. Some of the participants stated that male practitioners were sometimes not as effective as women in establishing successful helping relationships with fathers. This might be due to the fear of losing face when expressing vulnerabilities or problems to another man (Kosberg, 2002). Majors et al. (1994) coined the term "cool pose" to describe the ways in which African American men convey

a sense of power in light of the frustration, pain, and inequities they experience. Hope stated that when fathers work with male practitioners that often will take on a “cool pose,” and women are suited to help them deal with the pain behind the “mask”:

Brothers [male practitioners] say ‘Hey brotha’ [to the fathers] still trying to be cool... So they [fathers] put on that mask...that’s the advantage that we have as sisters.

Some of the participants were satisfied with providing the feminine perspective while others resented being seen as only able to provide the woman’s point of view. Moya expressed satisfaction and joy when she discussed the moment the fathers recognized her as “just another guy in the room.”

Mother Nature

Many of the participants discussed a maternal aspect of their work with African American nonresidential fathers. Similarly, Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) used womanist theory to understand the characteristics of African American teachers and found that there was “an embrace of the maternal” (p. 71) among this population. She described a teacher’s view that mothering students was:

...an emotional strength rather than as a weakness. If anything, her parenting experiences as a mother seem to have informed her teaching so that she has brought the same standards of care and accountability to her students as she would to her own children.

Exemplary African-American women teachers use the familiar and familial mother-child relationship as a guide for their interactions with students. (p. 73)

Only four of the thirteen participants in the current study did not have biological children. Hope frequently mentioned mothering her clients, but in an authoritative fashion:

I think I'm harder on them because most of my clients are African American and Hispanic and I think I kind of mother them. I think I'm kind of that hard mother. I have a son their age so...I think I'm a little harder on them in a good way. If I give them something to do ...then I'm going to hold them accountable. 'So don't come back to me five days later and you haven't done A, B, C because I'm going to get you [laughs].'

Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) discussed this view of mothering as not only nurturing but authoritative and a means to contribute to the well-being of people of color:

...it is not separate from the exercise of authority. An exceedingly powerful version of nurture emerges from this particular social context. These women viewed the maternal as a profound commitment to the well-being and survival of Black children and Black people. The maternal lens they brought to their practice powerfully connected their personal relationships with students to an active engagement with social reality. (p. 76)

While some of the participants viewed their maternal transferences as mostly positive, other participants expressed mixed feelings about being looked upon as motherly by the fathers. Pudín shared this mixed sentiment about being viewed as a mother or grandmother:

Well you know and that's good and bad. You want them to come back because the program is giving them something that they need...

Pudín was not sure if being viewed as a mother facilitated the clients' independence or if she would ever be able to truly have clients exit services. Collins (1990) criticizes the idea of mothering stating:

...the glorification of African American mothers is just as damaging as the image of a matriarch. The romanticized or idealized role of mothering in African American communities reflects the idea that mothers should live lives of sacrifice. (p. 117)

Initial Resistance

Many of the women were somewhat uncomfortable talking about the challenges of working with African American nonresidential fathers. Julion (2007) stated “practitioners working in community-based programs are particularly sensitive to the negative images and stereotypes of African-American men and African-American fathers...” (p. 598). Despite their desire to protect their clients, the participants shared some of the challenges they face as female fatherhood service providers. One of these challenges included the initial resistance fathers exhibited towards them. Shulman (2006) stated:

...all new relationships, particularly those with people in authority, begin tentatively. Clients perceive workers as symbols of authority with power to influence their lives. Clients often bring with them a fund of past experiences with professionals or stereotypes of them passed on by friends and family. (p. 78)

While helping relationships are approached tentatively by all clients, it is particularly true for African Americans, who are perceived to have a healthy mistrust of professionals which “has grown out of an enduring legacy of abuse, exploitation, and maltreatment of African Americans in the United States by federal, state, and local agencies, as well as commercial businesses” (Grimmett & Locke, 2009, p. 138). African American men have a history of resistance against professionals and agencies:

The script of Black male as subordinate and powerful institutions and people as controlling is one many men are socialized to rebel against. This rebellion is both self-promoting to the man's cultural identity and frequently self destructive to his physical health. Practitioners often misinterpret this mistrust as a coping strategy. The professional's miscalculation may result in the use of deficit-oriented and controlling

problem-solving strategies that increase the man's resistance and decrease the identification of the African American man's unique strengths. (p. 31)

In addition to resisting professionals and agencies in general, it is stated that many men have a distrust of women in positions of authority. In their study, Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) observed that in comparison to the female group facilitator's relationship with clients in the mothers' parenting group, the dynamics in the fathers' group "differed not just because of the overwhelmed status of the men...but because of their attitudes toward the female practitioner and the subsequent power struggle with her" (p. 69). O'Donnell (2005) found that in three of the five groups, some of the participants said that gender issues increased fathers' "sense of alienation from the social service system." Some of these female caseworkers stated that fathers tended to:

...resent or disparage them because they were young women...in a position of authority and reacted by acting very "macho" in an attempt to control them. The younger women also revealed a sense of awkwardness in establishing a professional relationship with these men. None of the older women in the focus groups, whether white or African American, identified gender issues as a serious impediment to their work with fathers. (p. 406)

This study supports O'Donnell's (2005) findings about the impact of the age of the women and the role of gender in general. The participants would say that they "aged out" of some of the issues that might occur while working with African American nonresidential fathers and stated that if they were younger, there might have been more problems. The participants did not directly address the role of being African American women which was assumed to impact the helping relationship in a unique way as well. As a result of slavery, the relationship between

African American men and women has been characterized as “destructive”- being filled with a lack of trust and respect, insecurity, rage, and self hatred (Willis, 1990). Willis (1990) states that when an African American man sees an African American woman “he sees someone who he has been told is dominant in the family, "a black castrating woman..." it destroys his feelings of being in control..." (p. 144). Alternatively, this study offers some data that reveals positive African American male-female professional relationships. Although some of the participants reported the men’s initial resistance to services as a challenge, they stated that there was a transition in fathers’ behaviors that let them know that resistance was receding and fathers were willing to receive help. One participant stated that this occurred after about seven sessions (out of twelve) and she was considered “one of the guys in the room.” Grimmett and Locke (2009) state:

The initial tasks of counselors working with African American clients is to establish that they are trustworthy. In other counseling situations, this may be a passive, expected development that will happen over time; however with African American clients, trust is not necessarily granted because of the services provided, the passage of time or an established relationship. Rather, a counselor’s trustworthiness is merited through an awareness of their client’s sociocultural experiences and worldview, and thoughtful, intentional, ongoing efforts by the counselor to overcome the underlying mistrust likely to exist. (p. 138)

It is suggested that practitioners understand human beings, psychological defenses, personality traits and learn to “challenge [clients] in the spirit of empathy as they try to help their clients face up to their defenses and what these defenses might be costing them” (Egan, 2002, p. 173). The fathers’ initial resistance to the practitioners could be understood as an immature

defense mechanism that gives the father a sense of control and power. Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) stated that overwhelmed clients:

...use responses which they think will provide them with some sense of power...responses that people develop to cope with powerless roles also need understanding. These include being guarded (seen by the powerful as having lack of trust, or even paranoid); persistently taking the initiative (seen as being oppositional, passive-aggressive) or being autonomous (seen by the powerful as being stubborn); and being manipulative, using avoiding and escape through alcohol and drugs. (p. 10)

Egan (2002) stated that immature defense mechanisms that cause clients trouble and contribute to resistance to help should be addressed, but with caution. If the practitioner “attacks” every immature defense, it might cause increased anxiety of the client and risk the establishment of a successful helping relationship (Egan, 2002, p. 172).

Raw Truth

Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) identified a lesson or strategy in work with overwhelmed clients as “truth saying:”

...practitioners helped members understand that they could grow and change by confronting difficulties in their lives and in their environment through teaching truth saying as a coping mechanism. This required members to be honest in sharing facts and information about their circumstances, to develop the ability to look at their actual reality, not dreams and fantasy, and move away from exaggeration and lying. (p. 175)

Telling the truth and honestly disclosing themselves is a challenge for clients who typically avoid the truth and pain associated with their real circumstances. The participants stated that fathers often shared stories that were sometimes uncomfortable or disturbing, or the practitioners had to

handle unexpected realities. When asked what the challenges in working with fathers were, Drucilla stated “they are so raw.” The language the fathers used and the stories that the fathers told were considered “raw,” but real. These raw truths included fathers’ descriptions of anger toward their children’s mother, incidents of domestic violence, and traumatic experiences including sexual abuse and homicide.

Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) found that fathers were very possessive of their children. In comparison to their observations of a group for mothers, they found that in the parenting group for recovering addict fathers, there was greater need for emphasis on respect- respect for other group members and the women to whom they were referring (staff, who were mostly women, mothers, wives, and girlfriends). Research studies found that mothers’ gatekeeping behaviors and gendered obstacles in social services prevent fathers’ visitation with their children (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Rasheed & Rasheed, 1999). As a result of feeling powerless, it is not uncommon that these men use disparaging, degrading language and express “rage” in their descriptions of their children’s mothers or even female staff who hold positions of power and authority. Franklin (1992) stated:

A frequent and understandable by-product of being denigrated and feeling invisible is anger/rage...Acting out angrily can be a way of dealing with one’s invisibility-a way of discharging the feelings related to being diminished or shamed, and a way of being seen.
(p. 352)

However, many of the participants understood the father’s anger since many studies show that the Black man’s anger often conceals hurt, disappointment, and feelings of depression (Wade, 2006). Jocelyn stated that providers can’t be afraid of fathers when they express what appears to be anger but is really pain:

They show anger and they show rage and as a facilitator you have to be able to handle that and not be frightened or put off by the fact that they're screaming or they're up. I just say that's a part of how they get it out. I never let any of their anger or fire that they bring bother me. I just embrace them [and say] 'it's going to be alright, it's going to be alright...'

While some forms of rage are allowed, rage involving discussions or threats of domestic violence are not acceptable to the practitioners. Drucilla stated that many of the fathers she serves talk about "pushing" their female partners and minimizing acts of violence. Carmen works with fathers who have been arrested for some form of intimate violence and described struggling with their views of dominating and objectifying women. The intersection of fatherhood and domestic violence is an increasing area of interest as the Office of Violence against Women is funding research and community partnerships between domestic violence and fatherhood advocates (Bogges, May, & Roulet, 2007). It is common that advocates on either side do not know about the resources of the other. When domestic violence victims/survivors have concerns about services for their abusive partners or when fatherhood advocates express concern over fathers' descriptions of abusive or controlling behaviors, they often do not know how to guide their clients or their own practice.

The practitioners also described having to address the fathers' traumatic experiences. Jocelyn stated that she has had several fathers in her group disclose childhood experiences of sexual abuse that have impacted their ability to parent effectively. While the programs are not designed to deal with the trauma and emotional issues that fathers have experienced, many of the participants reported having to help fathers cope by creating safe spaces for them to talk. The research literature varies on the rates of sexual abuse among men due to underreporting, but it

has been stated that at least 3 percent and as many as 20 percent of all boys have been victims of sexual exploitation. These men are more likely to have issues with violence, substance abuse, mental illness, depression and even commit suicide (Englar-Carlson, 2009). Jocelyn stated that the fathers often revealed incidents of childhood sexual abuse that occurred when they were very young and had never told anyone. Even though the program curriculum did not address these issues, the practitioners felt obligated to provide the psychosocial and emotional support the fathers needed as it was unlikely that the fathers would seek help elsewhere. Hopps, Pinderhughes, and Shankar (1995) stated:

...the complexity of issues to be addressed, the depth of need to be met, given clients usual economic, emotional, and psychological deprivation, the growing societal constraints and blocks that bar access to the resources that overwhelmed clients need, can push practitioners into feeling as overwhelmed as those they seek to help. (p. 46)

The participants shared stories about the lives of their clients that were painful. Some of the participants expressed feelings of being just as overwhelmed as their clients. Dawn stated:

This is a lot. It becomes a lot because you're taking on a lot of people's problems. It becomes a lot because we're a small staff and we work extremely hard. Sometimes it gets to the point where you ask- why am I doing this and it [pays] pennies on the dollar?

Dawn stated that although homicide is common on the impoverished streets of West Baltimore, she and her staff were not prepared to deal with the death of clients in the program. Nationwide, the greatest cause of death for men under the age of 25 is homicide. Specifically, African American males "between 20 and 24 years of age have the highest rate of death by gunfire-104 homicides by a firearm for every 100,000 persons" (Kost, 1997). In 2005, over half of all male victims of homicide were African American (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007). Therefore, the

death of loved ones or close friends, and fear for their own lives is a reality for many of these fathers. The sense of powerlessness that Dawn experienced after hearing of the death of one of her participants was still present as she recalled the incident and cried.

Being Familiar

Shorter-Gooden (2009) stated:

...one danger in focusing on gender differences is in implying that there are few similarities between African American men and women. Meta analyses of research on the general U.S. population reveal that there are tremendous similarities between men and women... Thus the task here is to illuminate gender differences, in order to develop a more differentiated understanding of Black men and women, without conveying that Black men and Black women hail from different planets. (p. 445)

Therefore, the theme, “being familiar,” focuses on the women’s common sentiments that being the same race facilitated engagement with African American nonresidential fathers. Additionally, differences in socioeconomic status were not perceived to negatively impact the ability to create successful helping relationships. Instead women considered themselves as positive role models for the fathers.

Engaging

The practitioners believed that being the same race as the majority of their clients helped them to engage them in services. Some participants gave examples of Caucasian women who temporarily facilitated or visited groups and the fathers did not “open up.” Trust has been noted as an essential component of the helping relationship and similarities between clients and practitioners seem to facilitate trust (Jourard, 1964). Further, it has been found that clients will disclose only once trust is established and:

...people disclose themselves when they are fairly sure that the target person (i.e., the person to whom they are disclosing) will evaluate their disclosures and react to them as they themselves do. (Vontress, 1971, p. 10)

For African American nonresidential fathers who have been made to feel powerless against “The System” it has been noted that African Americans are less likely to feel that Caucasian practitioners understand them or react to situations in the same way as they would. Solomon (1976) stated:

...rapport is extremely difficult to achieve across racial lines since it presupposes a willingness to let another person know what you think, feel, or want and such disclosures have often resulted in negative consequences for blacks. Self-disclosure is likely to occur only in a context of trust and blacks have had little reason to trust whites as a consequence of the racism which has effectively poisoned their relationship. (p. 316)

A recent study by Thompson and Alexander (2006) found that African American clients assigned to African American practitioners reported higher therapeutic understanding and acceptance than those assigned to Caucasians. Brown and Brown (1997) also stated that:

...a practitioner with the client’s culture and background will be perceived as being more similar to the client and hence will be better able to establish an effective, productive working relationship. (p. 101)

In the current study, some of the participants discussed that racism explained why the majority of the fathers that they worked with were African American. Brown and Brown (1997) also discussed the prevailing cultural racism that Black practitioners do not have credibility or expertise:

If, for example, a majority client enters the practitioner's office for the initial session only to discover that the worker is Black, then the client may or may not elect to return, based in some cases on the fact that he/she does not feel comfortable with an African American therapist. (p. 101)

Yvonne stated that while she doesn't mind working with Caucasian clients they do not stay or return for therapy. Therefore, the majority of the fathers she works with are African American or Hispanic.

While there is evidence that being the same race as clients tends to improve rapport or engagement, Banks (1972) states that there is a "heterogeneous Black culture." Therefore, we cannot assume that every Black person will work well with a Black practitioner and does not trust White practitioners. African American clients working with African American practitioners might assume cultural similarity between themselves and the practitioners. However, if strong differences or attitudes appear in the course of helping that do not confirm their initial assumptions, clients might refuse help (Fletcher, 1997). Brown and Brown (1997) also state:

...if the Black client sees the White worker as representing the enemy, he may see the Black worker as a traitor to his race, a collaborator with the establishment. Therefore, barriers to self-disclosure and openness may be as great between Black worker and Black client as between White worker and Black client. Black clients may find the Black clinician almost equally intimidating by virtue of class or educational differences should such differences exist. (p. 107)

Banks (1972) noted that although Black practitioners are typically members of the middle or upper class, this is not necessarily true of their clients. The participants not only stated that their clients were mostly low-income, differences existed in regional background, language and values. Solomon (1976) stated:

...middle class blacks often have to indicate their ability to understand and appreciate their concerns of their lower class brothers since they are frequently viewed as 'oreo cookies,' i.e. black on the outside and white on the inside. This often demands fluency in the normative communication patterns of both middle- and lower-class persons. (p. 317)

Dawn commented on the differences between herself and her clients in West Baltimore specifically with the slang expressions they use, calling it "a different language." Lola and Pudín commented on the younger fathers that they work with, stating that they have different values which include their lack of attention to time, lack of commitment to being punctual, lack of commitment to fulfilling responsibilities, or lack of planning for and working towards their future.

Many of the participants felt that they could relate and engage fathers despite socioeconomic differences. Solomon (1976) stated that this might occur because:

Given the racial isolation that exists in our society, it is much more likely for middle class blacks who themselves have had ghetto origins to be able to communicate in the idiom of the black lower-class than it is for lower or middle class whites. (p. 319)

Some of the participants grew up and lived in the same areas as their clients which helped them to engage and communicate effectively. Some of the participants also emphasized that they received little pay for their demanding work. Hopps and Pinderhughes (1995) also stated "many

line staff, professionally trained and untrained, do not earn enough to afford...respite. Like the clients, they are trapped in the stressful environment with which they struggle to cope” (p. 123).

Modeling

In his study on a social work intervention with young fathers, Mazza (2002) found that the social work relationship was important in working with fathers. He found that the social workers were positive role models for the fathers. Banks (1972) also stated:

...many Black therapists, as a result of their positive intraceptive attitudes, personal psychotherapy, and identity building experiences with a wide range of Blacks, have “got themselves together” and “know who they are.” Consequently, these therapists serve as effective therapeutic agents and role-models in their work with Black patients. (p. 6)

The participants viewed themselves as role models and encouraged the fathers that they could achieve their hopes and dreams. Hopps, Pinderhughes, and Shankar (1995) stated that one therapist in their study “had turned the negatives of her own life, poverty, stressful family relationships, into a positive force, serving as an excellent role model for clients” (p. 123). Many of the participants shared their personal experiences with the fathers in hopes of encouraging them. The participants did not feel that their achievements in education or their profession distanced them from the fathers- they used what they learned to help. Jocelyn stated that many of her participants ask for her advice on real estate or credit issues, and Carmen discussed school choices with a father for his child. Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) stated:

...everything the practitioner does offers the opportunity for clients to learn new ways of being and behaving...the practitioner often constitutes the only contact clients have with middle-class persons who expect so much from the overwhelmed and who may hold many of the keys to their future. (p. 177)

Conclusion Three: Finding Balance and Meeting Them

The participants shared their strategies for negotiating the issues of power and authority in order to create successful helping relationships with African American nonresidential fathers. The themes of these strategies were identified as: “finding balance” and “meeting them.”

Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) define power as “the capacity to influence for one’s own benefit the forces that affect one’s life space, [and] the capacity to produce desired effects in others” (p. 8). Power exists on internal-individual, interactional, group and family, institutional and societal levels (Hopps & Pinderhughes, 1999). In this study, race, gender, socioeconomic status were explored as issues of power that exist on the societal level based on group status. However, practitioners also have power on the institutional level in terms of authority. Practitioners rely on power from three primary sources: (1) the power of their professional expertise; (2) the power of persuasion; and (3) their legitimate power based on dominant cultural values and norms (Hasenfeld, 1987).

The participants also had power based on their capacity “to assess and intervene; to teach and treat; to give and withhold resources” (Hopps & Pinderhughes, 1999). This study also showed differences in helping relationships when clients are mandated or when they are voluntary. All participation in the programs was voluntary but some fathers were self-referred while others were ordered by the court to attend or otherwise face negative consequences. Power in mandated services is referred to as having “power over” clients. Queen, an assistant district attorney for child support, stated that she has the “power to incarcerate” the participants based on their participation in the program and child support compliance. Georgia, also tied to the state child support system can refer clients back to their agents for enforcement actions. Angela, Bonnie, and Carmen also have some clients who need to show proof of participation in their

parenting groups for the reconciliation of court cases, which can help some gain or regain custody of their children. Therefore, these participants have a lot of power from these fathers' standpoint. Recognizing fathers' initial resistance to this level of power and authority, Queen stated that they [her staff] try to reframe the negative image of services:

In our program- because it is court mandated- it's viewed as a punishment. And one of the things we had to work on was to try to overcome that feeling or that outlook that the father had, that this was a punishment. 'This is not to help me but this is a punishment.'

Carmen also stated:

We want them to see that we're not an extension of the court system- we're an educational facility. So our programs are geared to move you from a place of some type of denial to contemplation. Like 'Okay maybe there is something that I need to change.'

The issue of power is complex in African American female practitioner-African American male client relationships because "in many African American families the female role has been endowed with more power [than males]. African American women have contributed proportionately more as providers than their White counterparts and thus have been accorded higher status within the family" (Hopps, Pinderhughes & Shankar, 1995, p. 45). Some would argue that African American women hold higher status in the larger social system as well. However, African American women face "multiple jeopardies" of racism, sexism, classism, and other oppressive forces. While it might seem more likely that practitioners who are members of dominant groups would exploit their powerless clients, the practitioners who are also members of less powerful groups need to be aware of their need to "use the power that is embodied in their helping role to compensate for the powerlessness they experience in relation to their social roles" (Hopps & Pinderhughes, 1999, pp. 9-10). Dawn provided an example of a father in her pilot

program for whom she provided “everything” (job, housing, and transportation) and he disappeared. Her need to show that she was competent and able to meet all of his needs left him feeling even more incapable of helping himself. He did not fulfill any of the assigned tasks or return to the program. Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) warned that exploitation can occur “whenever practitioners engage in behavior that perpetuates clients’ aggrandized perception of the practitioner as powerful and expert while facilitating clients’ perception of themselves as less valued, incompetent, and powerless” (p. 23).

Finding Balance

The participants discussed strategies for negotiating issues of power and authority. One of the identified themes was “finding balance” which included balance between personal and professional experiences, and compassion and confrontation. In his work on present responsible Black fathers, Franklin (2010) provided similar themes for counselors trying to engage this population which were: “knowing one’s own attitudes, reaching out and being genuine, and adjusting the suitability of interventions” (pp. 136-137).

Personal and Professional

The participants stated that one strategy in addressing power imbalances is making sure that they deal with their own biases or stereotypes regarding men. Several of the women described this as “dealing with their own stuff” or “keeping their personal stuff at home” and remaining professional. Since they were in a position of “power over” the fathers, this strategy was considered an important component of practice. Shulman (2006) stated that practitioners often consider professionalism as “Take your professional self to work and leave your personal self at home” referring to an inappropriate use of personal self in the workplace or countertransference issues (p. 26). Julion (2007) found that there was a great need for awareness

among health care professionals of their potential biases against fathers. The practitioners not only stated that women working with fathers should be aware of their general biases but really understand how their personal histories impact their perspectives of men. Professional women who lived without a father or had poor relationships with men were considered reasons why fathers are often ignored or mistreated in practice. This finding is supported by Tiedje and Darling-Fisher's (2003) research that found:

...understanding one's own personal biases and preconceptions can facilitate implementation of family-sensitive care that is appropriate for the entire family in light of the considerable diversity that is evident within the family structure of African-American fathers and families. (as cited in Julion, 2007, p. 607)

If these biases are not addressed, then they will be brought into the relationship along with "feelings of superiority, and competitive tactics which minimize the therapeutic value of the professional interpersonal relationship" (Banks, 1972, p. 6). Brown (1991) also stated that "the projection of qualities of past relationships onto the therapeutic relationship is deemed by many to be a critical aspect of effective clinical work" (p. 55). In her article, Wolf (2009) shared her experience with a client that reminded her of her father and the impact that it had on the helping relationship. In order to separate her personal relationship with her father from the professional relationship she had with her client, she did the following role play with a colleague:

"Andrew," I said, looking into my colleague's eyes, pretending they were the eyes of my client, "I'm sorry I've been pushing you towards what I thought you needed to do. I apologize for trying to get you to feel your feelings and make a decision so I could feel good about myself as a therapist, so I could feel adequate and successful." Taking a deep breath, I went on. "I'm sorry I got you mixed up with my father and have been trying to

save you rather than just be with you where you are.” Now I was cooking. The words came so easily. It was all so clear. Shaking my red, stuffed heart a little, I said, “I really do want to reach you, for your heart to make contact with mine so you will feel cared about and safe enough to open up, to go beyond your stories to tell me how you feel. So I promise to just be with you in the future, to honor the pace you choose to take on your journey, and to respect you enough to know I don’t need to save you because you can save yourself.” With a deep sigh, he said, “Thank you. That’s all I need right now, a safe place to be while I learn to feel my feelings as I figure out what to do.” Then we embraced. (p. 45)

While the participants were very adamant about not letting their personal issues affect their professional selves, they also discussed the ways in which sharing some personal experiences were beneficial to engaging African American nonresidential fathers in the helping relationship. Shulman (2006) states that:

...we [practitioners] are faced with a false dichotomy when we believe we must choose between our personal self and our professional self. In fact, ...we are at our best in our work when we are able to synthesize the two by integrating our personal self into our professional role... each of us brings our own personal style, artistry, background, feelings, values, and beliefs to our professional practice. Rather than denying or suppressing these we need to learn more about ourselves in the context of our practice, and find ways to use our self in pursuit of our professional functions. (pp. 26-27)

Therefore, practitioners must find a healthy balance between what is kept personal and what is disclosed to the fathers. Behnke and Allen (2005) described the strategies to engage fathers of color, specifically African American and Latino fathers. They agree that there must be a personal component involved to engage fathers in the helping relationship:

Building trust and personal friendship is vital to helping fathers of color. Many of these fathers bring with them a custom of telling about themselves and developing a relationship before they are willing to commit to a professional relationship. These fathers are more likely to follow the instructions of a friend than an expert who is a stranger, no matter the expert's credentials. This means professionals must first be a friend. Fathers expect professionals to open up to them as well, and share information about their families to create this mutual trust. (p. 41)

Research also shows that African Americans value personal experience. Banks-Wallace (2000) noted that individuals' lived experiences were more credible than those about which individuals only think or read. The participants felt that it was important to show fathers that they were credible and "knew something" in order to engage them in services. Therefore, they shared their knowledge and relevant personal stories. They also stated that sharing personal experiences also showed the fathers that they were "real." The practitioners also consistently stated that if they weren't genuine the "fathers would know." Sharing their personal selves not only showed that the women were real people but that they had genuine concern for the fathers. It has been found that clients who are members of historically oppressed groups need to know that the practitioner is sincerely invested in their health and well-being (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Franklin & Moss, 2002; Grimmatt & Locke, 2009).

Compassion and Confrontation

The participants consistently stated that they show the fathers compassion and actively listen to their stories. While showing compassion is a key theme of practice, accountability is also discussed in the literature as a necessary component in the helping relationship. These practitioners understood that the men needed empathy and compassion but were “still men” and needed to be held accountable for their actions. Therefore, there was a fine balance in the helping relationship between compassion and confrontation.

Kottler (2000) stated that “by appearing too caring, loving, and helpful, you risk being perceived as a “lightweight,” an idealistic do-gooder who doesn’t see reality” (p. 4). In addition to perhaps not being taken seriously, these women found that being too caring or compassionate toward the fathers sometimes led to erotic transferences. While some of the participants typically laughed off the harassment they experienced from some of the fathers, others found the instances of stalking, inappropriate advances, and repeated calls from clients to be disturbing. Brown and Brown (1997) stated “the objectification of Black females would seriously contaminate the therapeutic relationship by being” sexist. This behavior could be considered as a defense mechanism to sexually devalue the practitioner. The stereotype of Black women as being hypersexual might also exacerbate the behavior that the fathers showed the African American female practitioner (Collins, 1998). Carmen stated that she works hard to get the fathers to understand platonic and professional relationships with women. Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) explained that some clients “cannot be reciprocal in their relationships because they tend to view interaction in terms of dominance/subordination” (p. 11). This idea supports Carmen’s statements that some of the fathers could not believe that the men and women working at the program were not “sleeping together,” i.e. romantically involved and they could not understand

why a man would want to be “friends” with a woman. In other words, some of the fathers could not understand reciprocity in the relationship; women were to be dominated and objectified. Given these types of ideas about women, the participants felt that it was beneficial for fathers to have female service providers. In addition, some of the participants worked with male co-facilitators in order to demonstrate “collaborative, non-dominating relationships” (Hopps & Pinderhughes, 1999). In any case, most of the participants adopted a direct approach to dealing with fathers’ inappropriate sexual comments by confronting the father and then terminating services if the inappropriate behavior continued.

Hopps, Pinderhughes, and Shankar (1995) discuss the societal projection process in relation to work with overwhelmed clients suggesting that practitioners who are over sympathetic to clients in victim groups serve to maintain the status quo, keep these clients in an inferior position, and therefore exploit clients to meet their personal needs to show that they are competent. Egan (2002) also agrees that practitioners should not see clients as “overly fragile:”

Neither pampering nor brutalizing clients serves their best interests. However many clients are less fragile than helpers make them out to be. Helpers who constantly see clients as fragile may well be acting in a self-protective way. (p. 58)

Dawn refers to the male ego as fragile and stated that she tries not to “upset or break” their ego as a “woman in a position of power.” While practitioners shouldn’t degrade or dehumanize fathers, there still cannot be the fear of “breaking them” by confronting them appropriately. Egan advocates for the term “challenge” as opposed to the “more hard hitting term” confrontation, since most people view confrontation as unpleasant. While he does not state that confrontation is ruled out, he suggests that confrontation be used sparingly and skillfully. Egan (2002) defines confrontation as:

...challenging clients to develop new perspectives and to change both internal and external behavior even when they show reluctance and resistance to do so. When helpers confront, they “make the case” for more effective living. Confrontation does not involve “do this or else” ultimatums. More often it is a way of making sure that clients understand what it means to change—that is, making sure they understand the consequences of persisting in dysfunctional patterns of behavior or of refusing to adopt new behaviors. (p. 215)

Shulman (2006) states that confrontation must be done at the appropriate time because confrontation that occurs too soon in the therapeutic encounter “may stiffen their resistance...the interaction becomes a battle” (pp. 333). Georgia agreed that confrontation is used once you have established a trusting relationship with the fathers. When the values of respect, empathy, and genuineness have already been conveyed, fathers will understand that confrontation occurs because of practitioners’ vested interest in their well-being. Egan (2002) outlines the factors that give practitioners the “right to challenge” clients which include: an established healthy helping relationship, understanding of the client, open to challenge from the client, and working on constructive change in the practitioner’s life (p. 220). Whether it is classified as challenging or confronting, the participants stated that certain unhealthy behaviors had to be addressed in order to help fathers build successful interpersonal relationships and develop a “healthy sense of self-responsibility” (Egan, 2002, p. 192). Georgia stated that she tells fathers “excuses there are many, any time you point the finger there are four pointing back at you.”

Meeting Them

The participants also stated the common mantra “meet the clients where they are” is a practice strategy. This act of “meeting them” was defined as understanding the father’s social location and the spatial aspects of services. Clients’ needs were met by understanding their circumstances, assessing needs and providing access to resources such as social services, counseling, food, childcare, and legal assistance. Power was shared with clients by meeting in their community and creating welcoming spaces.

Social

The participants showed an understanding of the economic, political and sociohistorical contexts that impact the lives of the fathers they serve. Behnke and Allen (2005) stated that in order “to take culturally appropriate actions professionals must truly understand these fathers’ contexts” (p. 41). Practitioners describe ‘meeting the fathers where they are’ not only in terms of understanding the social forces that impact their lives but understanding how their perception of reality influences behavior. Grimmatt and Locke (2009) support this definition by stating “a client and their presenting issues cannot be truly understood from the perspective of the counselor” (p. 139). Many of the participants discussed fathers who have anger toward children’s mother or have engaged in domestic violence stated that they don’t condemn the fathers rather they try to understand their perspective. Drucilla stated:

This is from them growing up, what they were used to seeing, and nobody ever doing anything about it. We even had fathers that thought that fighting was a normal thing and that’s how you express your love. And if they didn’t do anything, they didn’t love them and these are young guys who think like this. That’s not good. You don’t show love with violence.

Research studies have found that fathers will participate in services, if given the opportunity, and if the service meets the perceived needs of fathers (Julion, 2007; Roy, 2005). The participants consistently described adjusting curriculum or workshop topics to meet the needs of the fathers on any given day. Franklin (2010) agreed that when working with African American fathers, “no one approach was as sacred as was adaptability to the circumstances of the needs of the clients in the counseling process” (p. 137). Hopps, Pinderhughes, & Shankar (1995) found that flexibility was the key to effective practice. Many of the participants stated that they are supportive of the clients and flexible with topics, not sticking too closely to the curriculum in order to allow the topics that fathers want to discuss to be addressed in the group. Angela stressed this point throughout the interview that the group was not only parent education, but parent education and *support*. The participants attempted to meet the fathers’ needs through education and providing resources. Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) stated:

...using education strategies invokes a lower power differential in the helper-client relationship than does the use of counseling and therapeutic strategies. Teaching clients how to exercise power effectively can be accomplished by role playing, modeling, and coaching them on how to behave appropriately in a role that requires authority and being in charge. (p. 19)

An example of these educational strategies includes the role plays that the fathers did in groups with Drucilla. Bonnie also stated that she assigns a father to be the ambassador in the group, typically a father who has demonstrated “natural” leadership. The parents in the group were therefore considered to be empowered in the therapeutic process.

Spatial

Marsiglio, Roy and Fox (2005) discuss a spatially sensitive perspective on fathering and how physical and spatial characteristics impact fathering. Anderson and Letiecq (2005) use the Marsiglio model to examine fatherhood programs as “safe and nonjudgmental” spaces for fathers to grow and change (p. 195). These researchers found that “the actual place- the “safe haven” offered by the [program] location and fostered by program staff- facilitated change” (p. 204). Therefore, physical or spatial dimensions are important to understanding and working with fathers.

The participants shared that recruitment, practice, and retaining fathers involved consideration of spatial aspects. Many of the participants worked in community-based programs and identified street outreach as a means of recruiting. Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) also identified aggressive outreach in various settings as a strategy to engage overwhelmed clients. Dawn, Drucilla, and Pudín stated that they met fathers walking down the street, in hospitals or their home. Boyd-Franklin and Bry (2000) found that going out to families in their homes is a useful model for reaching out to Black men in the community. This research also found that the actual practice or intervention should take place in a father-friendly, nonclinical, relaxed place. Solomon (1976) stated:

...black communities have been the setting for a variety of social and psychological programming to meet inordinate needs created by inordinate stresses generated in the ethnosystem. (p. 100)

Other studies have found that fathers will be more likely to participate in programs and stay involved in them if they feel comfortable in the program setting. In this study, all of the programs that were visited were located in poor, urban communities. Hopps, Pinderhughes, and

Shankar (1995) found that location and accessibility to the overwhelmed client population facilitated utilization of services and all of the programs in their study were also “situated in desperate neighborhoods” (p. 127). The programs offered comprehensive services for fathers in trusted locations. O’Donnell’s (2005) study of child welfare caseworkers also identified location as important to engaging fathers. One caseworker noted:

The location of agencies downtown [is a barrier]. Dads are afraid of cops on the street, nervous about going downtown [and] having to take public transportation with men in suits. (O’Donnell, 2005, p. 397)

The participants described many aspects of the program settings that engaged fathers in services and retained them in services- non-traditional hours, welcoming environments, food, transportation, and childcare. Considerable attention to temporal dynamics has also been found to engage fathers in services. Pudín stated that she encourages fathers to have ownership in their programs and they set the time and day that they meet.

While community-based agencies are likely to help engage Black fathers and provide needed assistance in the community, Solomon (1976) cautions:

...it is not enough to elaborate highly localized neighborhood-oriented groups, since this results in the effective insulation of residents from the “institutional networks and nexuses which serve to perpetuate what is clearly the economic and political inequality between the ghetto and the rest of the urban community. (p. 358)

Therefore, while community-based agencies are needed, there must also be action directed toward changing the larger institutions outside the community that impact the lives of fathers and their families.

Implications of the Study

This study explored the experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. Specifically, their motivation to work with fathers, the impact of race, gender, and socioeconomic status on the helping relationship, and the negotiation of power and authority in the helping relationship were explored. This research is the only study on female fatherhood service providers and contributes the participants' knowledge about practice with African American nonresidential fathers, the needs of this population, and African American female practitioner-male client relationships to the research literature on fatherhood programs and cross-cultural practice.

Implications for Theory

There are several studies in social work, counseling, women's studies, addiction, and nursing that have utilized womanist theory as a framework for practice with African American women (Banks-Wallace, 2000; Lewis, 2004; Littlefield, 2003; Phillips, 2006; Taylor, 1998; Williams, 2005). This study provides evidence that womanist theory can also be applied to the professional experiences of African American women providing direct services to African American fathers. Phillips (2006) defines a womanist as:

...triple concerned with herself, other Black women, and the entire Black race, female and male-but also all humanity, showing an ever-expanding and ultimately universal arc of political concern, empathy, and activism. (p. xxiii)

The participants stated that they were motivated to foster: individual change in the fathers, change in the outcomes for children and families, and community or society change. This theoretical framework was particularly useful in understanding African American female fatherhood service providers' motivation because "womanism fosters stronger relationships

between Black women and Black men; another very important issue for African American women regardless of political perspective” (Collins, 2006, p. 60). Thus, utilizing womanist theory for practice and policy can enable social workers and other helping professionals to include fathers in services, avoid stereotyping, and provide “culturally competent, strengths oriented services” (Littlefield, 2003, p. 14).

Womanist theory is also a framework for understanding and scrutinizing the “multiple cultural identities” (Williams, 2005, p. 278) of African American women and the impact they have on helping relationships with male clients. In other words, the equation, Race x Gender x Class, is commonly used in Black feminist and womanist theory as a means of understanding how these issues of power impact the African American women’s lives simultaneously. The participants’ statements about practice with fathers support this notion of multiple, interactive identities because they did not answer the interview questions from the standpoint of gender, race, or class alone. They offered suggestions about the impact of these factors on the helping relationship as Black mothers or Black educated, professional women and often stated that they were not sure that women of other cultures would be able to engage these fathers.

The strategies the participants used to negotiate issues of power and authority are also consistent with womanist theory. Phillips (2006) identified womanist methods of social transformation as “activities around harmonizing and coordinating, balancing, and healing. The activities include: dialogue, arbitration and mediation, spiritual activities, hospitality, mutual aid and self-help, and mothering” (p. xxvi). Within womanist theory, the activity of dialogue means to express and establish both connection and individuality. All of the programs used groups “where language is accessible and...people share the truths of their lives on equal footing and learn through face to face conversation” (Banks-Wallace, 2000). Arbitration and mediation were

common motivations among the service providers. In womanist theory, these concepts do not have a goal of unity but rather commonweal. The participants often had to deal with fathers' anger toward their children's mother or anger towards "The System." The service providers served as mediators and arbitrators to "appeal to common humanity" or the common goal of improving child outcomes; the goal is not to determine who is right or wrong, but to find common ground. Hospitality is also a component of the womanist methods of social transformation that the women embraced in their practice with African American nonresidential fathers. Hospitality essentially means to take "good care of guests, as exhibited by being welcoming, and treating others in ways that respect their existential worth and integrity" (Phillips, 2006, p. xxviii). Many of the participants stated that their main technique in working with fathers was to be respectful. Respect is the cornerstone of creating "power with" clients and is "sacred in the Black male experience" (Franklin, 2004, p. 19). Further, showing hospitality in the helping relationship "preempts the tensions that might arise as a result of difference by providing a means of connection at the beginning of relation" (Phillips, 2006, p. xxviii). The participants also stated that having a "mother nature" impacted their relationship with fathers. In womanist theory, mothering is defined as "a set of behaviors based on caretaking, management, nurturance, education, spiritual mediation and dispute resolution" (Phillips, 2006, p. xvix). In addition, Beauboeuf-Lafontant's (2002) study findings support the women's conceptualization of mothering as not only nurturing but authoritative.

The findings could also be used to advance the postmodern concept of deconstruction. Postmodernist thinking is "concerned with making individualized meaning out of the social discourses of society" (Rabin, 2005, p. 22). Postmodern thought also embraces "non-binary, non-oppositional thoughts" (Tong, 1998, p. 210). Scholars use deconstruction "to make visible how

language operates to produce very real, material, and damaging structures in the world.” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 481) Deconstruction “consists of exposing a concept as ideological or culturally construed rather than as a natural or a simple reflection of reality” (Saulnier, 1996, p. 132). Deconstruction is not a tool to tear down concepts but is used to rebuild them (St. Pierre, 2000). The women discussed the need for the deconstruction of the terms father, parent, family services, responsible fatherhood programs, and parent education. The breakdown of these terms might help promote the “recognition of common commitments and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition” (hooks, 1990).

Meeting the fathers’ needs called for the use of deconstruction in the ideas of parent education and family services, which in practice, demonstrate “the true social construction of the concepts” (Taylor, 1998). The participants emphasized that they could not carry out a conventional parent education curriculum with the fathers. In order to meet their needs, they had to provide support and resources to address multiple needs such as housing, child support, substance abuse, and employment, which are not typically included in parent education. The term, family services is a social construct rather than a natural construct (Saulnier, 1996). Family in this sense does not refer to a nuclear family of father, mother, and children. It is generally understood or taken for granted to mean services for women and children. The lack of knowledge about social work with African American nonresidential fathers, particularly in family services, exists due to the fact that services have been socially constructed to exclude men/fathers. In order to improve the provision of social services and prepare future female practitioners for work with this population, the deconstruction of the term, family services, must occur.

This study also showed that the term, responsible fatherhood programs, is used less frequently as fathers are increasingly being included in a range of coed services, such as healthy relationships and parent education programs. The traditional fatherhood programs where only education and employment assistance are provided are rare. Programs for nonresidential fathers now offer anger management, intensive therapy, substance abuse counseling, relationship skills, and parent education. These programs are beginning to move away from what Hopps, Pinderhughes, & Shankar (1995) describe as the “deviant pathological or equivalence opportunity paradigm” (p. 70). While these programs still include components that require fathers to improve their individual characters, the women demonstrated an understanding of the impact of institutional and structural forces on the fathers’ lives. Therefore, several of the programs were set up as “one-stop shops” where fathers addressed parenting, child support, employment, mental health and substance abuse within one program. While many of the women stated that they simply did not have the time, the next step in working with fathers would be to empower them to take action against many of the institutions, such as the criminal justice and child support systems, that negatively impact them, their children and families, and community.

The findings also support the deconstruction of the term, father. The women were motivated to change the image of African American nonresidential fathers as deadbeat or not as important as mothers. Most social work literature on fathers depicts all fathers or men “as a coherent gender class with the same vested interests in controlling women” (Pease, 2001, p. 18). The creation of empathic helping relationships between female service providers and African American nonresidential fathers requires “an aspect of liberation from restrictive labels, internalized oppression, and the effects of discriminating social processes that marginalize people because of some social category” (Rabin, 2005, p. 17). Sample selection was difficult

because finding a program just for *nonresidential* fathers was rare. Most fathers in these programs were simultaneously nonresidential and residential, nonresidential and stepfathers, and many other combinations. Since fathers cannot be accurately described or understood in a universal sense, a deconstruction of this term leads to more effective ways of working with all fathers and creating knowledge about best practices with this population.

Womanist theory has been challenged for essentializing Black women's experiences. In regards to working with fathers who have so many unmet needs, the lack of guidance that the theory provides for action directed toward structural and institutional change is troubling. However, since the participants primarily work on building and improving relationships, womanist theory seems to fit these women's experiences. Postmodern theory has also been criticized because the removal of categories may deny oppressed groups "the springboard from which to advocate social change" (Saulnier, 1996, p. 141). In other words, with the loss of categorization there is the potential to lose basis to demand equal rights and resources for disenfranchised African American nonresidential fathers (Saulnier, 1996).

The findings could also be used to advance small-group theory in interventions with African American nonresidential fathers. Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) found that a combination of empowerment, social learning, cognitive-behavioral, family systems, and psychodynamic theories were used to guide group work with overwhelmed clients. While this study did not specifically examine the practitioners' use of theories or group work, it is evident that the women used a number of these theories to evoke change. Cognitive-behavioral approaches were used to help the fathers understand how some of their negative thoughts impacted their behavior and further impacted their children's or partners' well-being. Social learning theory was used as Carmen modeled positive relationships between herself and her male

colleagues and Drucilla provided fathers with a model of a positive, supportive woman. The use of empowerment theory is also found in the participants' stories since they identified individual change as a goal but also recognized the power of interpersonal change that occurred when fathers interacted in group. In addition, the practitioners also revealed understanding of systems theory since they demonstrated awareness and took some action to address various components such as family history and structural systems, which impacted the fathers' lives. Since there is limited guidance in the social work literature about small-group theory and African American nonresidential fathers, this study makes a unique contribution to the profession's knowledge base.

Practice

Many studies that support more engagement and services for fathers recognize that they are a source of strength and are an "untapped resource" in service delivery (Tuck, 1970). This study demonstrated that African American women who are fatherhood service providers can engage and are motivated to work with African American nonresidential fathers. Despite some challenges, the women did not express much difficulty establishing relationships with this population. Mazza (2002) found that "when these young men feel respected, liked, and wanted, they are very willing to enter into social work relationships" (p. 691). Vann (2007) also stated the key is offering something that the fathers perceive as beneficial and staff who can form a true connection with fathers in their community.

The area of fatherhood work is still young but not new (Vann, 2007). This practice domain is unique in regards to the moral implications, societal expectations, and the history of African American nonresidential fathers in social services. Therefore, there is still room for knowledge development regarding practice with African American fathers. Most evaluation

studies document that group work is a major component of responsible fatherhood programs (The Lewin Group, 1997; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). This study supports the practice framework created by Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) for group work with overwhelmed clients. The fatherhood service providers' descriptions of group member recruitment, selection, contracting; the purpose and goals of groups; and the stages of the group process were very similar to those identified by the above authors. It is evident that practitioners should employ more group interventions in order to meet the personal and interpersonal needs of African American nonresidential fathers. Therefore, new practitioners seeking to engage African American nonresidential fathers should be prepared for practice with groups.

Regarding race, gender and socioeconomic issues, the issue of power has to be explored within female-male relationships because men and women are generally viewed as opposites. The possibility of transference and countertransference occurring between African American nonresidential fathers and African American female practitioners makes power issues even more essential. Therefore, this study contributes to many disciplines and areas of practice because it not only explores the role of difference in practice but the role of similarities and how they are experienced in practice. The participants provided strategies for negotiating power and authority in the helping relationship. The women often used strategies that enabled participants to share power with the practitioners. Hopps and Pinderhughes (1999) stated:

...power sharing modes may also be necessary for work with clients whose experiences with personal and social powerlessness have been such that they cannot be engaged, and cannot begin to change their collusion with victimization without the use of strategies that give them some sense of power. (pp. 25-26)

Most of the participants did not abuse their power when fathers were exerting their powerlessness in negative ways. The women would refer fathers to other practitioners, try to reframe situations, speak with fathers individually outside the group and generally attempt to gain buy in by sharing potential benefits of participation. However, some of the participants in the study recognized that the sense of powerlessness they experienced in their social roles negatively impact on the relationship with some of the fathers in the program.

While it was apparent from the women's stories that African American nonresidential fathers need psychosocial or emotional support, it could also be argued that the women working in these programs also needed support. The fathers came into services with a wide range of presenting issues that often exceeded the programs' ability to address. This led to some of the practitioners expressing the same sense of powerlessness as their clients. The participants stated that they received supervision and had staff meetings to discuss clients and case scenarios. However, many of the women did not know other women in the cities or areas who were working with fathers and sometimes they were the only women in the agency working directly with these men. It would be beneficial for them to explore some of the specific practice issues they face as African American women with other women.

Education

Many of the participants discussed that they became competent in their work with African American nonresidential fathers based on job experience. The participants stated that there was very little in their undergraduate or graduate curriculum to prepare them for practice with this population. In fact, many stated that their personal experiences helped them engage and work with the fathers. The value of personal experience among African American women is not uncommon. Banks-Wallace (2000) stated:

Many African American women view experience as a distinguishing feature that separates knowledge from wisdom. Knowledge in this sense is akin to having particular information, whereas wisdom is understanding how to apply the information appropriately to achieve the desired results in a given situation. Having wisdom based on experience is seen as crucial to individual and collective survival in the midst of an oppressive environment. (p. 38)

Still, in regards to social work education, beginning social work students should be exposed to unbiased and non-discriminatory information about practice with African American nonresidential fathers and fathers in general. This population should not only be included in class discussions and textbooks when the topic is child abuse and neglect or family violence. In cultural diversity courses, students should develop an awareness of their needs. In social work research courses, students should also be exposed to culturally appropriate frameworks that can guide research with this population. Social work students should be prepared to understand the social policies and institutional racism and sexism that impact service delivery to African American nonresidential fathers. Kosberg (2002) stated that there is a need in social work for greater attention toward the needs of men:

Indeed, CSWE has a Commission on the Role and Status of Women and a Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Expressions (formerly called the Commission on Gay Men and Lesbian Women) and NASW has a National Committee on Women's Issues...Organizational advocacy for the heterosexual male is missing. (p. 65)

In addition, social work students should be prepared for group work with African American fathers. Almost all of the participants and the majority of programs for fathers use groups to deliver services to this population. Several courses on group work should be

mandatory components of the social work curriculum (Hopps & Pinderhughes, 1999).

Fatherhood programs could be optimal sites for social work students' field experiences. They are small programs that offer opportunities for social work supervision and opportunities for students to not only be familiar with the population but to learn group dynamics. Students can learn case management, grant writing, counseling and there are also opportunities for non-traditional students who need evening and weekend hours. This increased exposure to the programs and the area of fatherhood would lead to more exploration of African American nonresidential fathers' issues in class. This might also lead to the addition of content on fathers' issues to the social work curriculum which would then contribute to the breakdown of the cycle of exclusion.

Policy

This study of African American who are fatherhood service providers had several implications for policy. Vann (2007) stated:

There is still the question of how best to counter the adverse impact of many existing legal and policy approaches. A frustration I often hear from fatherhood workers is that the policies and regulations of child support agencies, employment projects, housing authorities, family courts, and so on, are not supportive of fathers. In fact, they are often destructive and obstructive to fathers. It's hard to argue with that in many cases. My typical response is that in order to best meet the immediate needs of clients, programs must help them navigate the system as it is. (p. 267)

However, much of the immediate needs of fathers are the results of incongruent policies.

Therefore, how can clients be truly helped and empowered if we do not help them change systems that oppress them? Hopps, Pinderhughes, and Shankar (1995) stated:

...by not engaging in the necessary documentation or advocacy that leads to community building for betterment of the environment, jobs, and good schools that can free clients from their systemic entrapment, are not practitioners who are working with this population reinforcing [the social system equilibrium] instead while benefiting personally and professionally? (p. 49)

The programs where the participants worked focused on relationships and although they provided resources and contacts for fathers to address some of their individual issues with the system, there was no ongoing effort to challenge structural or institutional racism or sexism that the fathers experienced. In her study of fatherhood programs, Jordan Zachery (2009) stated “policy cannot focus simply on personal development while not challenging existing structures such as the child support system.” It is evident that advocacy and macro-level change have to be a part of services for African American nonresidential fathers in order for them to be truly helped.

Organizational Policy

Attention should be given to the policies and structures of social service agencies and organizations “that have the greatest potential for facilitating empowerment of minority clients” (Solomon, 1976, p. 27). There are several resources, such as the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, that are available to guide father-friendly practice, and hiring and educating staff to recruit, retain, and engage fathers. Legislations in the child welfare field have also been made to involve fathers in permanency planning (Coakley, 2008). Staff and supervisors in organizations will have to follow these policies and address personal biases if the true missions of organizations are to improve the well-being of the entire family.

Governmental Policy

Bronte-Tinkew, Bowie, and Moore (2007) stated:

While there is no single definition of a “successful” father, there is a growing appreciation for the diversity of fathers and their influence on child well-being. Policy makers will need to respond to societal developments by implementing policies that can empower all fathers to become active participants in their children’s lives. (p. 258)

In 2009, President Barack Obama created the White House Task Force for Fatherhood and Healthy Families, which is conducting regional town forums around the country to highlight what individuals, organizations, and communities are doing to address the challenges fathers and families face. There are also bipartisan task forces on responsible fatherhood in the Senate and the House and the Julia Carson Responsible Fathers and Healthy families Act of 2009 is still on the table. This legislation would provide more funding for services for fathers and the creation of state commissions to address policy barriers to families. The participants stressed the need for additional funding to provide intensive services that fathers require. In 2008, the Second Chance Act was signed into legislation and provided funds for services that prevent recidivism. Given the high percentage of African American nonresidential fathers in these programs with criminal backgrounds, The Second Chance Act should be adopted by all states. Advocacy and education is needed on this issue because not only do states have to adopt this legislation, employers still have to be willing to hire individuals with criminal records. In the 1850s, Frederick Douglass wrote “Until Americans abandoned the idea of the right of each State to control its own affairs, no general assertion of human rights can be of any practical value” (cited in Foner, 1987, p. 880). This remains true of equal treatment of African American nonresidential fathers, who only receive help and equal consideration in the rhetoric of federal legislation.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study uncovered the experiences of African American women who are fatherhood service providers. This study's findings included the women's motivation to foster change and equity, the impact of issues of power on the helping relationship with African American nonresidential fathers, and strategies for negotiating power and authority with this population. Based on the findings of this study, the following future research studies are recommended:

1. Repeat the same study and explore the outcomes of services with female fatherhood service providers of various backgrounds. The participants were not sure if women from other backgrounds would have the same motivation or success with African American nonresidential fathers as they did. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore the motivations of women from various racial backgrounds, how race, gender, and socioeconomic status impact their ability to create helping relationships and how they negotiate issues of power and authority.
2. Repeat the study with African American men who are fatherhood service providers and also explore the practice outcomes. Most of the literature on fatherhood programs or services for fathers recommend that males be hired to work with this population. It would be interesting to compare their motivations to those of the women in this study and also to explore the challenges that they face when working with fathers.
3. Explore the perspectives of African American nonresidential fathers on the impact of race, gender and socioeconomic status on the helping relationship. There have been several studies that ask the practitioners what they think fathers need or scales that try to measure the clients' perspectives of the therapeutic alliance. However, a qualitative study

that explores their perspectives would add to the practice literature across several disciplines.

4. Seek and evaluate programs that embrace a justice-based approach to helping fathers improve relationships with children as well as their relationships in larger society. There needs to be more research on responsible fatherhood programs and particularly those that employ macro-level interventions with African American nonresidential fathers. Many participants report positive outcomes in their outlook on life or personal relationships, but very little change occurs in their sustaining environment as a result of program participation. Therefore, more strategies for incorporating a client and community empowerment model need to be explored.
5. The attitudes of practitioners, particularly female practitioners, regarding African American nonresidential fathers needs to be addressed. The issues of transference and countertransference need to be more deeply explored. Although several policies and programs are in place, fathers are not accessing resources due to the various barriers they experience in the system. One of these identified barriers is the front-line staff in social service agencies. Strategies for educating staff or assessing potential staff would be beneficial for helping fathers access the necessary services. This would ensure that agencies truly turn rhetoric into practice for the benefit of children, families and society. Therefore, an evaluation of hiring practices and performance management could be completed in state agencies that provide family and children services to assess the degree of inclusion of fathers and compliance with federal and state policies that support father involvement.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, conclusions were presented based on the study's findings and discussed using relevant research literature. The first conclusion was that women who are fatherhood service providers are motivated in their work with fathers to foster equity and change. Secondly, women who are fatherhood service providers perceive that race, gender, and socioeconomic status impact the helping relationship. Finally, the third conclusion was that women who are fatherhood service providers negotiate power and authority in the helping relationship by finding balance and meeting clients' social and spatial needs. The implications of this research for theory, practice, education, and policy were discussed and recommendations for future research were suggested.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA DOCTORAL STUDENT SEEKS ASSISTANCE WITH
SOCIAL WORK DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Participants will be interviewed to learn more about providing social services to fathers.

Participants will be given a \$25 gift certificate as compensation for 60-90 minutes of their time.

In order to participate in this research, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- MUST BE AN AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN
- MUST BE OVER 25 YEARS OF AGE
- MUST HAVE A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER IN SOCIAL WORK OR A RELATED FIELD
- MUST PROVIDE DIRECT SERVICES TO FATHERS (I.E. FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS, EMPLOYMENT TRAINING, EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS, COUNSELING, FAMILY SERVICES, ACCESS/VISITATION SERVICES, MARRIAGE PROMOTION, ETC.) **CURRENTLY OR WITHIN THE PAST YEAR**
- MUST HAVE WORKED WITH FATHERS FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR

For more information or if you are interested in sharing your professional experiences through this research, please contact Latrice Rollins at mspelman@uga.edu or (404) 395-9380.

NOTE: All inquiries and interviews will be strictly confidential.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled “WOMEN PROVIDING SOCIAL SERVICES TO FATHERS” conducted by Latrice Rollins from the School of Social Work at the University of Georgia (404-395-9380) under the supervision of Dr. Tony B. Lowe, School of Social Work, University of Georgia (678-407-5289). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to explore ways in which the women understand and talk about providing services to fathers. This study will also examine how social forces impact women’s professional relationships with male clients. If I volunteer to participate in this research, I will be asked to do the following things:

- 1) Meet at a time and place that is safe and convenient for me.
- 2) I will choose or be assigned a pseudo-name to protect my identity that will be used within the dissertation report.
- 3) Participate in an audio taped interview about providing services to fathers that will last approximately one hour.

- 4) Answer questions about career choice, successes and challenges of work, and best practices with fathers.
- 5) If necessary, the researcher may contact me by phone to clarify my information.
- 6) I will receive a \$25 gift certificate to any Applebee's restaurant for my participation in this research. This incentive will be received whether I complete the interview or not.
- 7) In order to process the gift certificate for my participation, I will complete a separate payment form for the researcher to collect my name, mailing address, and social security number.

The completed payment form will be sent to the School of Social Work's business office and then to the UGA Business Office. The researcher has been informed that these offices will keep my information private, but they may have to release my name and the amount of compensation paid to me to the IRS, if ever asked. The researcher connected with this study will protect my private information and will keep this confidential by storing the form in a secured location. However, the researcher is not responsible once my name, social security number, and mailing address leave her office for processing of my gift certificate.

The benefits for me are that this research study allows me to talk openly about my experiences to an interested outsider without fear of penalty or repercussions. I will contribute to the knowledge base about women's professional experiences and providing services to men. The researcher hopes to learn more about the influence of social forces on helping relationships.

No risk is expected but I may experience some discomfort or stress when answering questions about challenges of work. I am free to withdraw my participation at any time should I become uncomfortable with the interview.

A verbatim transcript of the interview will be created from the audio tape. The audio tape will be destroyed immediately after transcription. No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the interview, will be contained in the transcripts. All research material, including the consent form, will be kept in a locked file cabinet in which the researcher only has access.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project.

I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
Telephone: <u>(404) 395-9380</u>		
Email: <u>mspelman@uga.edu</u>		
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Pseudonym:Interview Questions:

1. What motivates your interest to work with fathers?
2. How would you describe your interactions with your clients (fathers)?
3. What are the unique rewards (if any) in providing social services to fathers?
4. What are the unique challenges (if any) in providing social services to fathers?
5. Describe a typical day at your place of employment.
6. Describe any pleasant experiences while working with a father or group of fathers.
7. Describe any uncomfortable situations while working with a father or group of fathers.
8. What role should women play in the Fatherhood movement?
9. What leadership opportunities in the Fatherhood movement are open to women?
10. Describe your interactions with other male practitioners.
11. Describe any enjoyable experiences you had while working within the Fatherhood movement.

12. Describe any unpleasant experiences you had while working within the Fatherhood movement.

Demographics:

1. Age:
2. Highest educational degree:
3. Annual household income range:
4. Area of study:
5. Present position/job title:
6. Present employing agency/organization type (public agency, private, non-profit, etc.):
7. Practice area (i.e. child/family, legal, etc.):
8. Years in practice:
9. Marital status:
10. Number of Children: