

NAVIGATING PATERNAL HURDLES:
A STRENGTHS-BASED EXPLORATION OF THE WAYS
YOUNG BLACK MEN CONSTRUCT AND ENACT FATHERHOOD
IN SOUTHWEST PHILADELPHIA

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ABSTRACT

The literature on desistance and crime-prevention finds that paternal engagement is correlated with increased self-esteem, and decreased delinquency, criminality and recidivism for both fathers and children (Holmes et al., 2012; James, 2015; Makariev & Shaker, 2010; Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004; Visher et al., 2011). While there is a breadth of research examining the collateral consequences of justice-involvement, such as employer discrimination and housing insecurity, there remains a dearth of literature exploring how these consequences specifically impact fathering. Because paternal engagement has implications for public safety, it is imperative to identify the personal and environmental factors that facilitate or challenge paternal engagement and the ways that paternal identity construction influences how fathers engage with their children.

The current study employs a strengths-based perspective that acknowledges broader contextual forces that can impact marginalized fathers and explores the process of paternal identity construction and enactment within a novel framework that integrates perspectives from bioecological theory and identity theory. In particular, it investigates the ways young Black fathers navigate and adapt to different barriers to fathering, with a specific focus on police encounters and hypersurveillance.

The research design comprises a qualitative approach that begins with a narrative inquiry interview followed by a subsequent interview that expands on themes discovered during the narrative inquiry. The study draws from interviews with 50 Black fathers between the ages of 25-34, with at least one biological child, living in the 19143 zip code of Philadelphia.

Guided by the Dynamic Identity Construction and Enactment (DICE) model, the current study finds that social interactions with family, community, and criminal justice agents; internalized images of fathers and police in the media; and historical phenomena, such as mass incarceration and the crack epidemic cumulatively impact both paternal identity construction and fathering behavior for young Black men living in Southwest Philadelphia. This study suggests the use of the DICE model in research with marginalized communities, as it engenders a strengths-based lens by exploring both individual and contextual influences on individuals and communities.

Findings also suggest (a) a reframing of deviance, (b) the use of person-first language in order to lessen the stigma of a criminal record (i.e. using terms such as “incarcerated individuals” instead of “inmates”), (c) increased non-law related interactions between police and community members in order to enhance familiarity and assuage fear on both ends, (d) a shift towards community corrections in order for fathers to remain active in their children’s lives, and (e) a greater focus on community-based coparenting programs in order to ensure that fathers maintain access to their children.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Paternal engagement is associated with significant cognitive and behavioral advantages for both fathers and children, such as decreased criminality, an increased sense of life purpose, and greater economic-educational achievement (Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004). As a result of these findings, there has been a growing political interest in programming and policy implementation centered on fatherhood (Holzer et al., 2005). However, many of the programs and policies that stem from recent fatherhood initiatives tend to focus solely on increasing financial provision from fathers rather than improving paternal engagement (Solomon-Fears & Tollestrup, 2016). One of the principal assumptions behind this focus is that fathers, particularly low-income minority fathers, are intentionally evading their paternal responsibilities of financial contribution and familial support (Holmes et al., 2012).

These assumptions are the product of a deficits-based perspective that has served as a lens for decades of family research and policy (Lewis, 1959; Moynihan, 1965; Peters, 2007; Pinderhughes et al., 2001). The deficits-based perspective attributes factors, such as poverty, unemployment, delinquency and unwed births to “defective” cultural norms and values (Moynihan, 1965). By pathologizing these factors, ecological influences, such as segregation, law enforcement policies, and discriminatory employment practices, often go unevaluated (Peters, 2007). Scholars assert that family research lacking a critical exploration of context or an acknowledgement of community strengths often results in a discussion of “deadbeat dads.¹” This is due to the frequency in

¹ “Deadbeat” is defined in Black’s Law Dictionary (6th edition 1990) as “one who fails to pay his debts.” The term “deadbeat dad” has been used by many politicians in discussions

which researchers employing a deficits-based lens use white middle-class heteronormative² definitions of “good” and “bad” to describe their findings on fathering (Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009; Johnson & Young, 2016; National Fatherhood Initiative History, n.d; Peters, 1974; Sullivan, 1989; Taylor et al., 1990; Waller et al., 2010).

In contrast to the deficits-based perspective, some researchers and policy makers have adopted a strengths-based perspective, which incorporates an assessment of historical, cultural, social, economic, and political forces in order to accurately explore and understand family life in marginalized communities. A strengths-based perspective does not turn blind to potential deficits in the community, but rather attempts to comprehensively explore deficits from a contextualized standpoint while also highlighting strengths in order to portray a more realistic and well-rounded story (Anderson, 1999).

Empirical research using the strengths-based perspective has found that, despite heightened ecological barriers, such as concentrated poverty, disenfranchisement, a mass removal of male figures, and heightened police presence (Muhammad, 2010; Rios, 2011; Roberts, 2004, Wacquant, 2001), and counter to the racialized and politicized “deadbeat dad” narrative, Black men living in impoverished and stigmatized communities are involved fathers and provide significant levels of support to their children (Edin, Tach, &

of child support laws, including Clinton, Rep. Hyde, and Rep Sensenbrenner (Shields, 1997). This term is often used colloquially and has been adopted in research to describe fathers who does not provide for his children (Mincy & Sorensen, 1997).

²Heteronormativity is an ideology that presumes heterosexuality as normal and pervasive. Goldberg and colleagues (2017) explained, “The family is a primary site in which heteronormativity is produced and reinforced, with one type of family structure [nuclear family with a wife and husband] valorized over all others...heteronormativity fuses together gender, sexual, and family ideologies, or norms, whereby “doing gender,” “doing sexuality”, and “doing family” properly are inseparable from one another” (p. 3).

Mincy, 2009; Swisher & Waller, 2008; Taylor et al., 1990; Wade & Rochlen, 2013). This finding illuminates a stark contrast between the extant empiricism on Black fathers and the framework of most parenting policy and programming.

With this disparity in mind, scholars, such as Johnson and Young (2016), have called for strengths-based research that explores Black fathers' meaning making strategies and how men negotiate their father role in the face of stigma and challenges. The current research attempts to answer this call by examining the process of identity construction and enactment, and exploring personal, community-based and systemic facilitators and barriers to fathering for young Black men. In response to the breadth of literature detailing the collateral consequences of justice-involvement, such as housing insecurity and employer discrimination, the current study specifically examines the ways justice-involvement, hypersurveillance and interactions with police impact fathering.

This dissertation addresses five research questions: (1) Where and how do men receive stories and symbols of fatherhood that construct their identities as fathers? (2) How do men think they are perceived as fathers by (a) their children; (b) their children's mothers; (c) their family; (d) their community; and (e) greater society? (3) How do men live out their identities as fathers in their day-to-day lives? (4) Do interactions with police impact men's negotiations of fatherhood? And (5) What are the ecological conditions necessary for men to live out their identities as fathers?

Chapter two delves deeper into the empirical literature to illustrate why it is important to answer these questions and discusses the theoretical framework driving this line of inquiry. For this study, I developed an innovative conceptual model, the Dynamic Identity Construction and Enactment (DICE) model, which integrates concepts from

identity theory, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, posttraumatic growth theory, and Sites of Resilience theory as a way to comprise ecological and interpersonal influences in the development and enactment of varying identity roles. In line with the study's strengths-based approach, the DICE model considers context and relationships when exploring the ways participants make meaning of fatherhood and present themselves as father.

Chapter three details the methods used to answer the research questions. This study employs narrative inquiry and follow-up interview techniques with a sample of 50 Black fathers between the ages of 25-34 living in the 19143 zip code of Philadelphia. These specific methods promote a sense of agency and a collaborative process of knowledge production by amplifying marginalized men's voices. The transcripts from all 77 interviews (50 narrative inquiry interviews and 27 follow-up interviews) were analyzed using ATLAS.ti, a qualitative software that allows researchers to comb through data in an exploratory fashion. As a result of an iterative coding scheme, the study found the construction and enactment of fathering is impacted by community violence, role models, discrimination, maternal gatekeeping, and police interactions.

Chapter four describes the ways fathers enact the roles of protector and teacher in the face of community violence. Chapter five explores how participants' experiences with their own fathers, as well as with male role models in the community, serve to construct the participants' concepts of fatherhood. This chapter highlights the ways experiencing paternal absence serves as a catalyst for participants' commitment to engaged fathering. Chapter six identifies several ecological conditions necessary to enact fatherhood and highlights the ways fathers navigate, adapt to, and resist barriers to fathering in order to

fulfill their paternal identities. And chapter seven explores how policing practices impact fathering activities and explores intergenerational messaging about police. This chapter concludes that familiarity is the key for the transmission of supportive messages about police to the next generation and for cultivating a trusting relationship between officers and communities of color.

The concluding chapter outlines the theoretical, methodological, and policy implications of the findings. Guided by the DICE model, this study finds that social interactions with family, community, and criminal justice agents; internalized images of fathers and police in the media; and historical phenomena, such as mass incarceration and the crack epidemic cumulatively impact both paternal identity construction and fathering behavior for young Black men living in Southwest Philadelphia. This study suggests the use of the DICE model in research with marginalized communities, as it engenders a strengths-based lens by exploring both individual and contextual influences on individuals and communities.

This study finds that fathers with a criminal record are likely to experience employer discrimination and are therefore likely to experience housing insecurity and be unable to provide financially for their children. As a result, several of the men turned to the streets in order to support their families. Typically, this behavior would be defined as *deviant*, focusing solely individual level factors that result in criminal engagement (Sampson & Laub, 1992). I call for a reframing of deviance to not focus specifically on the illicit activity of the individual but to broaden the scope and acknowledge the deviant policies that disproportionately impact communities of color and block opportunities for engagement in conventional work. Contextualizing the individual's deviant behavior

curbs the pathologizing of individuals or communities and implicates systems and structures in conversations around prevention and deterrence.

I also support the use of *person-first* language (e.g. “individuals who are incarcerated”) when speaking about those who have had contact with the criminal justice system. Moving away from defining those by their justice-involvement (e.g. “inmates,” “felons,” “ex-cons”) can mitigate stigma and reduce discrimination and stratification that ultimately impacts fathering.

Findings highlight the ways direct and vicarious police interactions influence perceptions of police, fathering activities, and the messages fathers provide their children about law enforcement, which can lead to legal cynicism in the next generation.

Therefore, this study calls for heightened community engagement from officers and a shift away from militaristic traditional police culture that can foster distrust and isolation from the community and influence negative intergenerational messaging about police.

Findings also highlight the negative impact of experiencing paternal incarceration, both from the standpoint of participants who experienced paternal incarceration as a child and from participants who were incarcerated for a period of their children’s lives.

Without their own fathers around, the participants discussed a need to provide for their families as children and how this led many of them to engage in illegal activity. The participants also described how being incarcerated themselves during a period of their own children’s lives negatively impacted their children’s emotional and physical wellbeing, left their children vulnerable to negative influences, and caused tension with the mothers of their children, which ultimately caused issues with accessing their children upon release. Because of these findings, this study encourages the use of community-

based corrections in order to reduce the harms of incapacitation caused to those incarcerated and their families. Along the same vein, this study elucidated the need for a healthy coparenting relationship in order for fathers to be present in their children's lives. Therefore, this study urges parenting programs to focus specifically on coparenting skills.

Lastly, many of the participants discussed the importance of role models in achieving academic success, gaining employment, and learning how to be a productive parent. This was especially important for participants who experienced an absentee father. The findings thus promote the implementation of mentorship programs in schools to ensure that all students, and especially those who without positive male figures in their lives, can form a relationship with a positive role model.

In terms of future research, an important thread to consider is how familiarity and equitable interactions between officers and community members impact officers' appraisals of the community and perceptions of safety. This study finds that perceptions of officers' fear of the community impacts how community members respond to and perceive police, which impacts the messages community members pass on to the next generation. It is therefore important to explore what drives and can assuage officers' fears in order to encourage the transmission of positive messages about law enforcement to the next generation.

Many of the fathers discussed how experiencing paternal incarceration instigated their deviant behavior. However, it was not exposure to their fathers' criminal activities that had a criminogenic effect, but rather the participants identified the absence of quality time as the leading culprit for their engagement in illegal activity. It will be valuable to further explore generational trends in incarceration with a focus on the concept of time.

Other participants who experienced paternal incarceration did not have a criminal record of their own, and it will also be important to explore the protective factors deterring those without a criminal record who experienced paternal incarceration.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Fatherhood from a Deficits Perspective

In the last several decades, there has been increasing political interest in programming and policy implementation centered on fatherhood. During his presidency, Bill Clinton created the National Fatherhood Initiative to combat father absence and promote responsible fatherhood (National Fatherhood Initiative History, n.d.), George W. Bush allocated \$60 million to fund efforts that promote responsible fatherhood, and Barack Obama allocated \$75 million during his presidency for responsible fatherhood grants (Holmes et al., 2012).

The interest in fatherhood at the national level is driven by the fact that paternal engagement is associated with cognitive and behavioral advantages for both fathers and children (Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004). Specifically, research has found that father involvement supports children's social, cognitive, and physical development across the lifespan, is related to children's self-esteem and life satisfaction, and is associated with adult children's higher economic-educational achievement and lower delinquency (Flouri; 2005; Harris et al., 1998; Hirschi, 1969; Larzelere & Patterson, 1990; Wenk et al., 1994).

The positive impact father involvement has on children is complemented by the positive impact child engagement has on the father. Studies show that fathers who engage with their children are more likely to experience a stronger sense of life purpose and have increased job performance (Graves, Ohlott, & Ruderman, 2007; Palkovitz, Copes, and Woolfolk, 2001). Research also finds that fathers who were more involved with their

children after returning to the community from prison worked more hours per week, were less likely to engage in drug use, and were less likely to recidivate (Visher et al., 2013).

In spite of these findings, initiative-driven fatherhood programs have predominantly focused on facilitating financial contribution rather than supporting emotional engagement (Solomon-Fears & Tollestrup, 2016). The motivation behind these efforts is driven by assumptions that single-parent households are rampant and that fathers, particularly low-income minority fathers, are intentionally evading their paternal responsibilities of monetary and familial support (Holmes et al., 2012).

These politicized assumptions about “deadbeat dads” are historically rooted in findings generated through deficits-based “culture of poverty” research, which disregarded social, economic, and political contexts and attributed unwed births and “high incidence of abandonment of mothers and children” to “poor values” (Lewis, 1959; Massey & Denton, 1993, p.5). Informed by the culture of poverty theory, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Harvard sociologist and the Assistant Secretary of Labor, brought the deadbeat dad narrative to the political forefront when he wrote to the President in 1965 about the “Negro Problem” and the “tangle of pathology” (Moynihan, 1965). Within this report, Moynihan galvanized a narrative about urban people of color that attributed high rates of delinquency and unemployment and low-test scores to urban people of color’s “defective culture.” By pathologizing these factors, Moynihan disregarded ecological influences on the experience of Black families, such as segregation, law enforcement policies, and discriminatory employment practices.

Much research on Black families and fathers following the publication of Moynihan’s report is shown to neglect ecological influences and use a “deficits-

approach,” attempting to understand the causes and consequences of “the Negro problem” (National Fatherhood Initiative History, n.d.; Peters, 2007; Pinderhughes et al., 2001). Through an adoption of the deficits paradigm, much fatherhood research labeled impoverished Black fathers as “problematic anomalies” intentionally evading their paternal responsibilities (Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009; Johnson & Young, 2016; Peters, 1974; Sullivan, 1989; Taylor et al., 1990; Waller et al., 2010). Although this situation may be an accurate description of some fathers, it fails to describe the many supportive and engaged fathers (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1996). This negative view stemmed from the fact that, historically, fatherhood studies have most frequently assessed paternal involvement and behavior through the experience of white middle-class subjects, with researchers often finding themes of breadwinning and providing (Coltrane, 2004; Eggebeen et al., 2012; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Taylor et al., 1990). These themes were then generalized by many deficits-based scholars to fathers of all backgrounds, attempting to determine whether Black fathers fell into white middle-class heteronormative definitions of “good” or “bad” fathers without a contextual exploration of provision (Cochran, 1997; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). This ultimately led to a deprecation of fathers who were unable to provide financially for their families (Coltrane, 2004).

Formal child support payment has been particularly challenging for fathers living in segregated urban communities, as these communities were most strongly impacted by deindustrialization, globalization, and the suburbanization of manufacturing jobs during the 1970s and 1980s (Alexander, 2010; Garland, 2001). This led to a significant decline in legitimate employment opportunities and enduring economic instability (Wilson,

1987). Thus, men from diverse backgrounds were often labeled in deficits-based research as “deadbeat” or inferior fathers without mention of their provision of in-kind support or of their constricted abilities to provide financially under the existing economic climate (Cochran, 1997; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997).

These ill-informed labels about diverse fathers led to policy and programming, such as punitive child support enforcement and culturally inappropriate parenting programs that perpetuate stereotypes and stigmas about families in minority communities and do not accurately address community needs (Coard et al., 2004; Dumas et al., 1999; Holzer, Offner, & Sorensen, 2005; Kumpfer et al., 2002; Yasui & Dishion, 2007). Driven by the image of the “deadbeat dad”, child support reform beginning in the mid-1980’s focused exclusively on punitive measures (Mincy & Sorensen, 1998) and was found to disproportionately affect young Black men and result in noncompliance due to issues of unemployment and financial limitations (Holzer et al., 2005). Although child support has been found to have an effect in raising the income of female-headed households, research has found that low-income parents often prefer informal arrangements of support because of an inability to afford child support and therefore perceive child support regulations to be unfair, counterproductive, or punitive (Ha et al., 2008; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2010; Sorensen & Zibman, 2000; Threlfall & Kohl, 2015; Waller & Plotnick, 2001). Because of the prevalence of non-compliance due to the mismatch between the existing policy and the ways in which low-income parents use in-kind support, negative stereotypes continue to be propagated without discussion of the beneficial informal arrangements that exist within low-income families.

Additionally, the vast majority of parenting programs are based on European-American theories of normative child development and denigrates parenting styles that are typically used in African American families (Yasui & Dishion, 2007). Most research that tests these programs use predominantly European-American middle-class samples (Yasui & Dishion, 2007). Therefore, parenting programs that are considered “evidence-based” and implemented in diverse communities often have difficulty with recruitment and experience high levels of attrition in large part due to the disparity between the curriculum and cultural norms and community needs (Anderson, Kohler, & Letiecq, 2002; Kumpfer et al., 2002; Yasui & Dishion, 2007). Without incorporating the needs, structures, and strengths of specific communities in the program curriculum, diverse populations are not benefitted by effective and supportive parent programming and may ultimately feel stigmatized because their family practices and values do not align with the program’s principles (Henson, 2018).

With little acknowledgement of the healthy variety of ways in which fathers in different contexts care for their children, and due to a dearth of literature looking at the ecological influences on the construction and enactment fatherhood, the focus tends to remain on negative aspects of paternal behavior by underrepresented fathers, such as the failure to pay child support, and adverse effects on children (Cochran, 1997; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; Lamb, 2004). As a result, many low-income Black men believe that others do not trust them to raise children or obtain decent employment (Johnson, Levine, & Doolittle, 1999). These negative self-perceptions, known as “stereotype threat,” can lead to diminished performance in the role impacted by the stereotype (i.e. father) (Deux et al., 2007). Therefore, it is imperative in working with Black fathers to emphasize their

strengths and incorporate an ecological perspective, particularly for understanding how the construction and enactment of fatherhood could reflect adaptations to experiences of racial discrimination and prejudice (Deux et al., 2007; Fagan & Stevenson, 2002).

Moving Towards a Strengths-Based Perspective

Over time, a growing body of evidence served to challenge the deficits-based perspective and offer the basis of a strengths-based view of fatherhood (Williams & Wright, 1992). This view encourages an assessment of historical, cultural, social, economic, and political forces on meaning making and behavior in order to accurately explore Black fatherhood. A strengths-based perspective does not ignore fathering deficits, but rather comprehensively and contextually explores deficits while underscoring paternal strengths in order to portray a more realistic and well-rounded fatherhood story (Anderson, 1999). The strengths-based perspective frames Black families not as deficient or victims to their circumstances, but as strong systems that are able to adapt to discriminatory conditions (Billingsley, 1968; Hill, 1972; Staples, 1971). Strengths-based research has continued to challenge the traditional negative narrative of low-income minority fathers not caring for their children by exploring the ecological contexts of family life (Dodson, 2007; Edin, Nelson, & Paranal, 2004; Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009; Fagan & Stevenson, 2002; Gutman, 1976; Hyman & Reed, 1969; Roy & Dyson, 2010; Sullivan, 1989; Swisher & Waller, 2008; Wade & Rochlen, 2013).

Large contemporary data-sets, such as the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being (FFCW) study, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort, and the Early Head Start Evaluation, along with several other qualitative and quantitative studies, have

adopted a strengths-based perspective by examining the multiple roles fathers play (Cabrera et al., 2011a; Collett, Vercel, & Boykin, 2015; Edin & Nelson, 2013; Haskins et al., 1985; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2010; Swisher & Waller, 2008; Taylor et al., 1990; Tach & Edin, 2011; Wade & Rochlen, 2013). Through this research, it is found that nonresidential³ Black fathers are more involved, have more contact with their child, and provide more informal support than nonresidential non-Black fathers (Cabrera et al., 2008, 2011b; Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009; Hofferth, Forry, & Peters, 2010; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2010). Recent studies have also found that Black families have higher levels of egalitarianism than non-Black families, with Black fathers blending the traditional model of breadwinning with contemporary models of caregiving, leading to increased involvement in the day-to-day care of the child (Taylor et al., 1990; Livingston & McAdoo, 2007).

Strength-based studies additionally contribute to the deconstruction of the deadbeat dad stereotype. Research from the FFCW study dispels myths about unmarried fathers and has found that 81% of fathers provided financial help during pregnancy, 91% of fathers came to visit the mother and baby in the hospital following the birth, and 99.8% of fathers reported that they *want* to be involved in raising their children in the coming years (Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing, 2000). FFCW has also found that only 1 in 5 children born outside of marriage in the late 1990s was truly born to a “single” parent because mothers and fathers, although unmarried or possibly not cohabitating, were still romantically involved (Edin & Nelson, 2013). Qualitative research has similarly found that, for a large majority of unwed fathers, the father role is

³ “Nonresidential” refers to fathers who do not live with their children fulltime.

salient, with most men striving to be engaged with their children (Edin & Nelson, 2013; Roy & Dyson, 2010).

While debunking stereotypes through comparative work, the strengths-based literature also highlights the unique strengths of the Black family. Hill's study (1972) identified 5 unique strengths of the Black family: (1) strong kinship bonds among a variety of households, (2) strong work orientation in support of family ties, (3) high level of flexibility in family roles; (4) high achievement orientation particularly in the area of occupational and educational aspirations, and (5) strong commitment to religious values and church participation (Williams & Wright, 1992). Focusing on unique strengths moves away from the traditional narrative about the struggles and disadvantage of low-income minority communities and provides a better understanding of contextual factors, such as policing practices and community violence, that influence cultural norms and values that vary across Black families.

The Impact of Police on Fatherhood

It is particularly important to focus on the strength and adaptability of fathers who enact their paternal identities in the face of challenges, such as police presence that threatens both themselves and their children (Roy & Dyson, 2010). Police violence and racism or the perceived threat of either have been shown to have adverse consequences on the mental and physical health of Black boys and men (Najdowski, Bottoms, & Goff, 2015; Staggers-Hakim, 2016). A systematic review of empirical research on self-reported racism and health conducted by Paradies (2006) finds that heart disease, hypertension, depression, and sleep disturbance are all associated with frequency of discriminatory

events in subjects. Perceived and actual threat by police, specifically, are found to increase anxiety and fear amongst Black men and boys, alter Black men and boys' actions and behaviors to be perceived as less threatening to police, and impact racial socialization by parents to their children (Najdowski et al., 2015; Stagers-Hakim, 2016; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004).

Although there are many definitions of racial socialization (Lesane-Brown, 2006), Burt and colleagues (2012) boil it down to the dual task of (1) encouraging a child's positive Black identity through lessons about his racial and ethnic heritage and the promotion of cultural traditions that generate cultural, racial, and ethnic pride, and (2) teaching children how to cope in a hostile world. Parents' provision of racial socialization to their children is found to protect against adolescent aggressive behavioral and depressive symptoms, and to positively influence children's problem solving and coping skills (Henry et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2006; Scott, 2003).

Within the exercise of teaching children to cope in a hostile world, many Black parents transmit lessons to their children specifically on how to prepare for future police encounters (Fine & Weis, 1998; Dottolo & Stewart, 2008; Henry, Lambert, & Bynum, 2015; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015; Threlfall, 2016; Whitaker & Snell, 2016). This kind of law-related socialization is referred to as legal socialization, in which children learn about the criminal justice system through direct communication with their guardians as well as through direct observation and modeling of guardians' attitudes and behaviors (Lindstrom et al., 2011; Wolfe, McLean, & Pratt, 2017). Intergenerational messages about the law are found to have a stronger impact on adolescents' perceptions of police legitimacy than direct police contact (Wolfe, McLean, & Pratt, 2017).

With a few exceptions (Brunson & Weitzer, 2011), the majority of research on legal socialization focus either on children's experiences of legal socialization or on intergenerational messages transmitted by mothers (Wolfe, McLean, & Pratt, 2017). Although these messages, as mentioned above, can serve to protect children against aggressive externalizing behaviors, (Henry et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2006; Scott, 2003) research finds that the transmission of legal cynicism has a significant and long-lasting impact of youths' attitudes towards criminal justice agents and can impact whether youth later engage in law-abiding or law-breaking behavior. For instance, Cavanagh and Cauffman (2015) found that mothers' negative perceptions of law enforcement influenced youth attitudes about justice legitimacy, which predicted juvenile arrests. It is therefore important to further explore the themes discussed within the legal socialization process and the impact it carries through the succeeding generations.

Research Gaps

The literature summarized above illuminates a need for a strengths-based exploration of Black fatherhood using a contextualized model. As Dodson (2007) states, "a reflective analysis of U.S. African American family life is needed even more now than when originally proposed...because any attempt to bring theoretical clarity to human phenomena must be informed by an understanding of sociocultural, economic, and political contexts in which the phenomena occurs" (p.11). Many studies exploring Black families, and specifically Black fatherhood, use a deficit model to understand and frame the "Negro problem" (National Fatherhood Initiative History, n.d.; Peters, 2007; Pinderhughes et al., 2001). Those studies that use a strengths-based lens to explore Black

fatherhood are often solely focused on paternal behavior and the influence of fatherhood on child outcomes. There are very few studies using a strengths-based perspective focusing on paternal identity construction and enactment (Arditti et al., 2005). This dearth of research has led to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes about underrepresented fathers and has produced incentives for culturally inappropriate policy and programming, such as punitive child support policies that disproportionately impact low-income fathers (Coard et al., 2004; Dumas et al., 1999; Holzer, Offner, & Sorensen, 2005; Kumpfer et al., 2002; Yasui & Dishion, 2007).

Although important insights are gained through fatherhood research that explores how men perceive and enact various identity roles, such as provider and caregiver, there is still a need for the exploration of how ecological and interpersonal interactions influence the ways men construct the concept of fatherhood and how these definitions influence behavior (Adamsons & Pasley, 2013; Marsiglio et al., 2005). Ecological and interpersonal influences, such as employment and educational opportunities and interactions with police have been found to strongly influence perceptions of self and expectations for various identity status roles (i.e. provider, teacher, caregiver, protector) (Edin & Nelson, 2013; Najdowski et al., 2015; Staggers-Hakim, 2016; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). Therefore, it is important, when exploring identity construction and enactment, to not only examine personal characteristics, but to also explore the broader contextual influences.

Additionally, there have been no studies conducted on the impact of police surveillance and interaction on paternal identity construction and enactment. Although research has been conducted on how fatherhood is affected by other aspects of the

criminal justice system, such as incarceration (Arditti et al., 2005; Dyer, 2005; Lewis, 2015; Swisher & Waller, 2008; Tripp, 2001), the impact of experiences with police on fathering has yet to be explored. Police interaction with Black men has become a highly reviewed topic in the last several years due to increased exposure of mistreatment, abuse, and fatal encounters. Much of the research explores implicit bias in police and the perceptions of police threat by Black men (Crinchlow & Fulcher, 2017; Desmond, Papachristos, & Kirk, 2016; English et al., 2017; Robinson, 2017). However, no studies so far examine how interactions with police- whether arrest, stop and frisk, or daily presence- impact how Black men view themselves as fathers and enact their paternal role.

Following this line of inquiry, the literature on legal socialization often draws from the voices of mothers, children, or middle-class Black families and explores how messages translate across only one generation (Burt et al., 2012; Smith-Bynum et al., 2016; Cavanagh & Cauffman, 2015; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015; Threllfall, 2016; Wolfe, McLean, & Pratt, 2017). It is necessary to offer the voices of fathers, particularly low-income Black fathers, and explore the ways messages pass through multiple generations by researching both the messages fathers received growing up as well as the messages they pass to their own children.

Previous research has found that Black parents' experiences of discrimination influence the levels of cultural socialization and predict the level of armoring they provide to their children (Hughes, 2003; Stevenson et al., 2002). It is important to further explore the impact of direct and vicarious police encounters on the intergenerational transmission of legal cynicism (Wolfe, McLean, & Pratt, 2017).

Brunson (2007), in his study of young Black men's experiences with police harassment and violence, notes that, because young Black males are frequently studied as "criminals" and viewed as "menaces" in their communities, their viewpoints are rarely used as a "credible starting point for social inquiry" (p.72). The current study acknowledges the growing literature that highlights the importance of amplifying and valuing the voices of young Black men in conversations about law enforcement.

Theoretical Framework

This study introduces a strengths-based theoretical model that draws from elements of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, identity theory, posttraumatic growth theory, and Payne's Sites of Resilience theory to examine both individual and ecological influences on fathers' perceptions and behaviors. Informed by each of these theories, this research explores multi-level factors, such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, environmental context, and historical phenomena, that separately and cumulatively impact individuals and their communities. The current study not only identifies factors that support and impede fathering, but also explores the ways fathers enact resilience in the face of impediments to fathering.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) bioecological theory (BT) focuses on how person characteristics, time, and interpersonal interactions and interpretations of cultural images, or what he calls "processes", each influence an individual's psychological, cognitive, social, and emotional development. In the 1970s, in response to the growing political interest in family policies, and in opposition to the traditionally lab-based research on

children and families that he found inadequate and limited, Bronfenbrenner proposed an ecological model to explain how human development occurs. This model specifically identified psychological, social, emotional and cognitive development as emerging from the interaction between the individual and his broader context (Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

Bronfenbrenner's novel concept, coined the *Ecological Systems Theory* (EST), focused on four nested structures that each influenced human development. These four structures included the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. The microsystem was defined as the most proximal setting in which a person is situated, such as home or school. The mesosystem was defined as the interaction of microsystems, for example a parent-teacher conference at the school. The exosystem is an ecological setting in which the developing person is not directly situated but experiences its influence, such as the mother's workplace, which might impact the mother's stress levels and thus impact her interactions with the developing child. Lastly, the macrosystem includes institutional systems of culture or subculture, such as economic, social, education, legal, and political systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

The majority of family studies that use EST focus on the development of the child rather than the parent and very few examine the influence of contextual systems on development beyond the micro- and mesosystem (Zhang & Fuller, 2012). The few studies that focus on the development of fathers most frequently examine the influences of the community and workplace on the enactment of fatherhood, such as paternal involvement and disciplinary techniques, often judging the behavioral outcomes as "good" or "bad" (Castillo, Welch, & Sarver, 2012; Pinderhughes et al., 2001; Zhang &

Fuller, 2012). There is a dearth of research, and particularly strengths-based research, using EST to examine macro level influences on paternal identity construction.

In the decades following the original proposal of EST, Bronfenbrenner (1989) took a reflective and critical approach to the maturation of his model, admitting flaws in earlier iterations. The evolution of EST resulted in Bioecological Theory (BT) and the Person-Place-Process-Time model (referred to as the Multi-influence Model from here on out), which emphasized interpersonal interactions over ecological influences. Moving away from the additive nested contextual EST model, the four elements of the Multi-influence Model (process i.e. interactions; person i.e. personal characteristics; context i.e. ecological setting; and time i.e. temporality) are seen as simultaneously influencing developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

Process

Processes, or proximal processes, are seen as the “engines” for personal development, as interpersonal interactions and the observation of cultural images can construct an individual’s worldview and enable individuals to be self-aware, identify where they fit in the prevailing order and choose to actively alter their position (Tudge et al., 2009). The act of meaning making and then acting upon these internalized meanings are included in the definition of process. Process has been measured over time in a variety of ways including an examination of the ways in which fathers' behaviors reflect parenting beliefs, how parental employment affects fathering behavior, and the ways in which marital satisfaction affects fathering (Adamsons et al., 2007).

Person

Brofenbrenner (1995) believed that the personal characteristics individuals brought with them to social interactions and their environments could influence others' perceptions of them, which then influences interactions, which in turn can influence the individual's developmental trajectory. Brofenbrenner outlined three types of characteristics: (1) demand, (2) resource, and (3) force. Demand characteristics are those stimuli that are visible in all interactions such as age, gender, skin tone, and physical appearance. Resource characteristics are emotional or mental characteristics that are less overt, such as past experiences, skills, intelligence, access to good housing, and caring parents. Lastly, force characteristics include temperament, motivation, and persistence. Previous research has used fathers' position in the family (biological or stepfather), age, race, parenting beliefs, fathers' levels of marital satisfaction, and child gender to measure person characteristics (Adamsons et al., 2007).

Context

The Multi-influence Model includes the original focus of EST and assesses development as influenced by several layers of contextual systems, including the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. Family research has measured the microsystem as the family, the mesosystem as maternal employment and family type, the exosystem as parental work hours and fathers' employment status, and the macrosystem as gendered expectations for mothers and fathers (Adamsons et al., 2007).

Time

One of the core tenets of BT is that individuals change over time and that development is a dynamic and fluid process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Therefore, time is an equally important component in the Multi-influence Model. Bronfenbrenner outlined three levels of time: microtime, mesotime, and macrotime. Microtime is defined as the time in which interactions are taking place, mesotime explores the consistency of interactions, and macrotime situates the developmental process in a specific moment in history, colored by political, social, environmental, and economic events.

Incorporating Identity Theory

Bronfenbrenner never explicitly provided a methodological guide for testing the Multi-influence Model and never empirically verified his own theory; therefore, researchers have great discretion in deciding how to measure each element and to what extent (Tudge et al., 2016). The Multi-Influence Model's focus on "human development" is quite broad and can be interpreted in multiple ways, as demonstrated in its application across various existent studies (Adamsons et al., 2007; Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Zhang & Fuller, 2012). In order to narrow the model's focus, the current study incorporates tenets of identity theory and examines the influence of multilevel factors on paternal identity construction and enactment, specifically.

Identity theory, similar to BT, can be categorized under the umbrella of symbolic interactionism, as it focuses on how identities develop through what Bronfenbrenner would call "proximal processes" (Stryker, 1968). It is believed that when an individual takes on a status (i.e. father), he evaluates the varying roles within that status (i.e. provider, caregiver, teacher) and the behavioral expectations for each role, and constructs

and enacts an identity fulfilling those various roles (Maurer et al., 2003). These roles, expectations, and actions are defined by experiences, interactions, and interpretations of cultural images, such as portrayals of fathers in music and movies (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). In other words, the way a man constructs and enacts fatherhood is defined and motivated by the stories and symbols of fatherhood that a man receives throughout his lifetime.

Identity theory has been used in several research studies on fatherhood, most frequently to assess how centrality and the salience of and commitment⁴ to paternal identity influences paternal involvement in both married and non-married families (Maurer et al., 2003; McBride & Rane, 1997; Minton & Pasley, 1996, 2003; Stueve & Pleck, 2003). Few studies in identity theory examine more complex influences, such as the environment and varying interpersonal relationships on identity construction and enactment (Adamsons & Pasley, 2013). There is some research that attempts to understand the impact of complex issues such as mother-father relationships, maternal kinship, a criminal record, and employment status on father involvement for low-income Black fathers specifically (Hognas & Williams, 2017; McLeod, 2017; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). However, because most of this research is conducted using quantitative data from FFCW, findings lack a nuanced understanding of *why* these issues have an impact on fathering. There also still remains a dearth of research studying community-level impacts on constructing and enacting fatherhood. Marsiglio and colleagues (2005)

⁴ Centrality is the importance of a given identity, salience is the likelihood a man will enact a particular identity in a given situation, and commitment is thought to be impacted by the number of relationships supporting an identity and the importance of those relationships to the individual.

lamented this gap in research on identity theory and expressed a need for exploring how various contextual situations impact the ways in which men attempt to shape others' image of them as fathers. Fusing identity theory with the Multi-influence Model answers scholars' calls for a more contextualized and multifaceted approach to assessing identity development.

Resilience

While identity theory and the Multi-Influence Model get at the factors influencing paternal identity construction and enactment, in order to continue shifting the narrative away from the deficits-perspective, it is important to emphasize the agency, resistance, adaptation, and resilience demonstrated during meaning making and the enactment of fatherhood by marginalized and stigmatized young Black fathers. This study's definition of resilience is informed by both the concept of Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) and Payne's (2011) Sites of Resilience theory. PTG acknowledges the stress and disorder that can result from experiencing a seismic event and also highlights possible constructive outcomes from enduring trauma, such as personal strength and compassion (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006). PTG conceptualizes resilience as *reconfiguration*, where one experiences a seismic event and rather than recovering back to baseline, the individual transforms, changes shape, and becomes stronger and more resourceful in order to withstand future hardships (Lepore & Revenson, 2006).

Aligned with this strengths-based approach of resilience, Payne's (2011) Sites of Resilience theory opposes what he defines as the "problematic assumptions" found in traditional discussions of resilience, such as a middle-upper class orientation that may not consider resilience in negotiating police interaction and a failure to analyze the impact of

blocked economic and educational opportunities. Rather, Payne's (2011) theory of resilience highlights "the impact of individual and structural conditions on the lived experience of the men" (p.436). Specifically, it explores five dimensions, similar to those of the Multi-Influence Model, including phenomenology (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, development stage/age, etc.), relational coping (e.g., key relationships, race/culture, etc.), historical patterns or trends, structural systems (e.g., health care, education, unemployment rates, poverty rates, etc.), and incidents of social injustice. By acknowledging and exploring these five dimensions, researchers can achieve a more accurate and holistic picture of the influences and outcomes in men's lives.

Dynamic Identity Construction and Enactment Model

The lines of inquiry explored in the current research are guided by the "Dynamic Identity Construction and Enactment Model" (DICE; see Figure 1), which I constructed specifically for this dissertation. After reviewing EST and identity theory, I saw how components from identity theory could address the gaps in EST and vice versa and so I created a novel model that incorporated elements from both theories and also integrated notions of resilience, resistance and adaptation. Therefore, this conceptual model merges the Multi-influence Model and identity theory to explore the influences of processes, person, place, and time on paternal identity construction and enactment and acknowledges the ways participants navigate barriers to fathering in order to remain in their children's lives.⁵

⁵ Donati's relational theory of sociology is a re-emerging paradigm that can address both micro and macro influences on identity construction and enactment. This theory posits that individuals' beliefs and actions both influence and are influenced by individuals and social structures (Weaver & McNeill, 2015). It is said that an individual's social relations

Figure 1 outlines the inner-workings of this fused theory with the father in the circles on the left - defined by his characteristics and identity roles - which influence and are influenced by processes, time, and contexts. The model then shows how the father's behavior influences and is influenced by personal and ecological factors that construct the paternal identity. This paternal identity, that consists of definitions, expectations, and the centrality and salience of and commitment to fathering continues to be revised in response to the way fathers perceive and internalize others' responses to their fathering behaviors. The following chapter details the approach to data collection and analysis that address the research questions within this integrated framework.

with other persons and structures contribute to that individual's meaning making and evolution of self. Although this framework suits the current study, identity theory and the Multi-influence model were chosen, as this study attempts to directly extend the work of fatherhood identity scholars, such as Roy and Dyson, and to directly incorporate elements of Payne's Sites of Resilience into the theoretical framework.

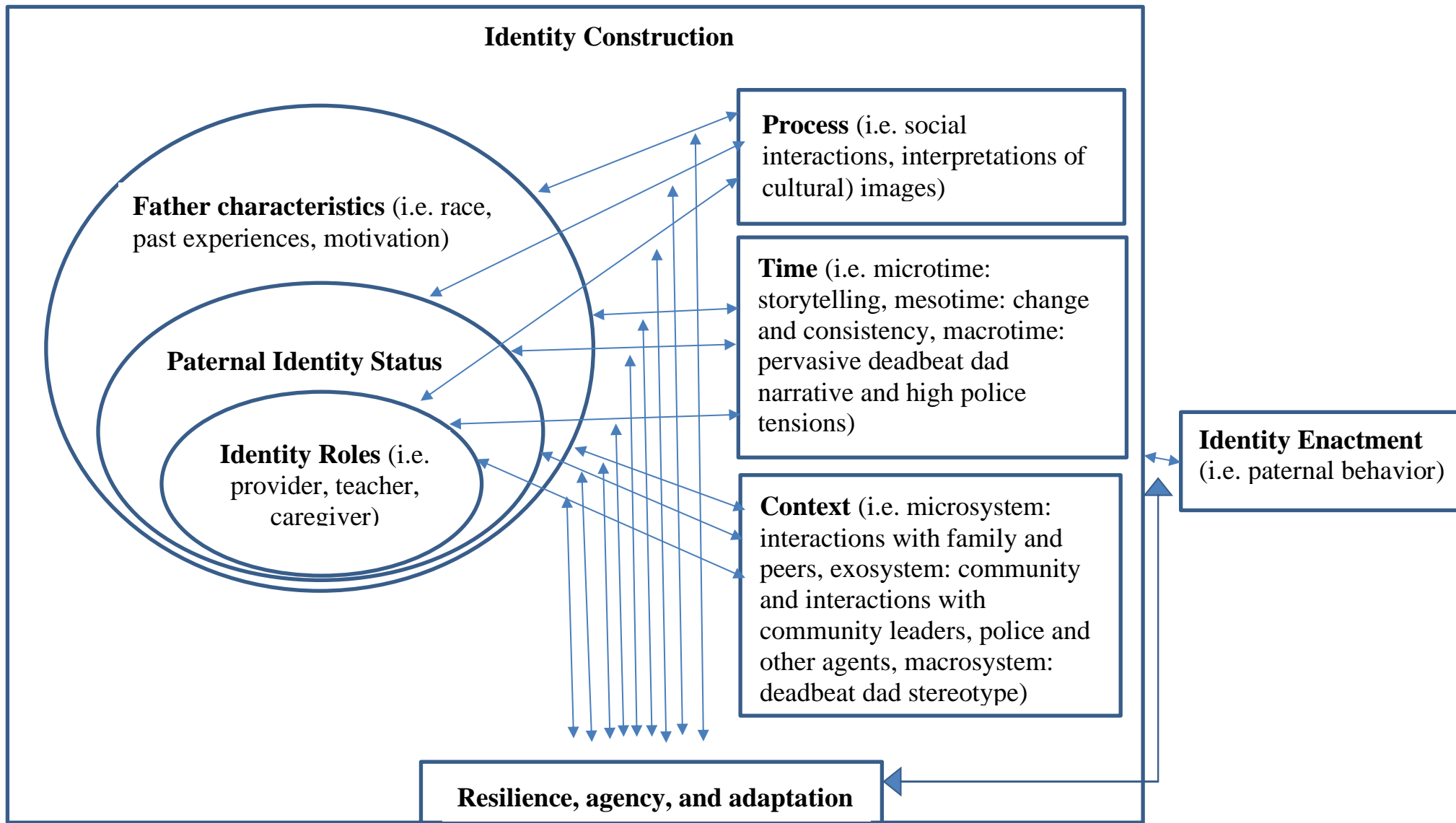


Figure 1. Dynamic Identity Construction and Enactment (DICE) Model

CHAPTER 3: THE STUDY

The previous chapter identified several research gaps including 1) a lack of strengths-based studies looking at contextual influences on paternal identity construction and enactment, 2) no known studies looking at the impact of police encounters on fathers' identities and behaviors, and 3) minimal research exploring legal socialization drawing from the voices of marginalized young Black fathers. To address these gaps, qualitative interviews were conducted with 50 young Black fathers living in a high-crime community to explore (a) how Black men construct and enact fatherhood in the face of stigma, discrimination, and structural challenges, and (b) the ways policing practices impact fatherhood.

Researcher Positionality

While the identified research gaps drove the current inquiry, there were also personal reasons I was drawn to this topic. For the last five years, I have worked closely with a prison-based fatherhood program, Fathers and Children Together (FACT). Interviews with key program stakeholders who worked in FACT's external office located in Southwest Philadelphia elucidated a disconnect between the ways in which they witnessed fathers behaving and interacting with their children in the community and the ways in which they felt the fathers in the community were being stigmatized and demonized through cultural stereotypes. Through these conversations, stakeholders lamented various issues, such as punitive child support policies that they felt contributed to the perpetuation of "deadbeat dad" narratives. They also criticized the deficit model for both overpowering discussions in media and research about Black fatherhood, and

disregarding community-based initiatives that facilitate and support paternal involvement.

After hearing these perspectives, I was inspired to explore Black fatherhood in the community context. I wanted to provide participants the space to speak on their strengths and the strengths of their community and I also wanted to make sure the men felt comfortable being candid about their perceived weaknesses. My experience with qualitative research has allowed me to hone my listening and probing skills, which many of the men in this study acknowledged, explaining after the interviews that they felt comfortable enough to “open up” and that they had “never talked this much.”

Considering the history of both deficits research and the “white savior industrial complex”⁶ (Cole, 2012), some were surprised by my desire to ask questions and truly listen. One participant at the end of his follow-up interview laughed, “You shocked me, I thought you were one of them white girls and all that stuff they’re doing. You’re not like I thought you was.” I did my best to be transparent about my positionality with the men, acknowledging my ignorance to the experience of Black fatherhood and communicating that I was here to learn from their stories as they were the experts on the topic.

Some participants challenged me, asking why I was interested or what I thought about my findings. I explained my relationship with FACT and discussed how I was not surprised by findings of paternal involvement, but I was impressed by the level of self-awareness and surprised by the complexity of perspectives on their neighborhood and the

⁶ Cole (2012) describes the White Savior Industrial Complex as a system in which people who support and benefit from oppressive policies are rewarded for “saving” those most affected by these policies on a micro level without attempting to change structural and systemic issues that perpetuate inequalities and disadvantage.

police and their willingness to hold themselves accountable for their actions and safety, all of which will be discussed in the following chapters.

My surprise at the complexity reflects how I've internalized dichotomous narratives often touted in media and research that categorizes places and people as "good" or "bad," "safe" or "dangerous," "street" or "decent." And in thinking about the self-awareness I witnessed, it is unsurprising, as an awareness of self is cultivated through social settings (Clark & Clark, 1939; Pinel & Bosson, 2013) and as Black men in America who are stigmatized, feared, and stereotyped, the fathers I interviewed learned to be self-aware at a very early age in order to position themselves to be seen as nonthreatening.

Conducting this study challenged some of my own preconceptions, further exposed my privilege, and honed my qualitative research skills. While the interviews explored a range of topics that ultimately painted a holistic picture of the fathering experience for young Black men living in Southwest Philadelphia, the protocol was structured by specific research questions that explored processes of paternal identity construction and fathering activities and behaviors.

Research Questions

The current study, which was approved by the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A), posed five research questions, all framed by the DICE Model depicted at the end of the last chapter. The first research question asks: Where and how do men receive stories and symbols of fatherhood that construct their identities as fathers? Stories and symbols or "roles and expectations," for a particular identity are constructed through

interrelational experiences, societal interactions, and interpretations of cultural images (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). By exploring the processes that inform participants' paternal identities, we can better understand the participants' worldviews and the ways the current generation of fathers are attempting to shift the narrative of Black fatherhood while grappling with negative stereotypes.

The second research question asks: How do men think they are perceived as fathers by (a) their children; (b) their children's mothers; (c) their family; (d) their community; and (e) greater society? Research finds that, for most men, a leading incentive for paternal engagement is others' positive appraisals of their fathering behaviors (Dyer, 2005; Dyer, Pleck, & McBride, 2012). It is also found that negative self-perceptions due to projected stereotypes (i.e. inadequate dads) can lead to diminished performance in the role impacted by the stereotype (i.e. father) (Deux et al., 2007). Therefore, it was necessary to understand how participants think others view the participants as fathers and explore whether these perceptions impact their behavior as fathers. This research question similarly attended to proximal processes as well as context, as the question explored perceptions from different levels of the ecological systems.

The third research question asks: How do men live out their identities as fathers in their day-to-day lives? In contrast to the first two questions exploring how participants make meaning of fatherhood, this question seeks to understand how participants act out the paternal roles that they have constructed and internalized. Most identity studies, when considering paternal behavior, solely focus on "father involvement" (Day et al., 2005). Some quantitative studies have broadened the definition of fathering to examine not only

the amount of interaction, but also the fathers' warmth-responsiveness and control, particularly in decision-making (Pleck, 2010). And several qualitative studies allow participants to define what being "involved" means to them, which allows for a much broader definition and can include cognitive involvement (i.e. thinking about their children) (Arditti et al., 2005; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999). However, most studies on father involvement have a fairly narrow and limited operationalization of the term, which is often portrayed as time fathers spend with children or tallied discrete events involving direct interaction with children (Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999).

A growing scholarship suggests that involved fatherhood is not just temporal or observable, but rather is multidimensional and includes a "broader and richer array of cognitive, affective, economic, spiritual, and ethnical tasks" (Amato, 1998; Hawkins & Palkovitz, 1999, p.25; Pleck, 2010). As exemplified in Hawkins and Palkovitz's (1999) review of the conceptualizations and measures of father involvement, and when looking at more recent operationalizations of paternal involvement (Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing, 2001), there are a myriad of definitions, and few, if any, accurately capture the complexity of the topic. Therefore, the current study allowed participants to describe what paternal involvement means to them and how they navigate their environment to fulfill that self-prescribed definition.

The fourth research question asks: Do interactions with police impact men's negotiations of fatherhood? As stated previously, perceived and actual threat by police are found to increase anxiety and fear amongst Black men and boys, impact intergenerational racial and legal socialization, and alter Black men and boys' actions and behaviors to be perceived as less threatening (Brunson, 2007; Najdowski et al., 2015;

Staggers-Hakim, 2016; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). Many of these studies bring attention to the intersection of race and gender by exploring the physical and emotional impact of police on Black women or Black men. The current study asked how police presence and interaction impacts Black fathers, thus exploring the intersection of race, gender, and parental status. Within the contextual model, this question addressed personal characteristics, as well as proximal processes through police interactions, and context, as tensions are particularly high between police and Black communities in the current climate due to increased media exposure of mistreatment, abuse, and fatal encounters.

The fifth research question asked what are the ecological conditions necessary for men to live out their identities as fathers? This question used a more macro lens in trying to understand how interactions, or “proximal processes” construct a paternal identity and how that identity is enacted within a broader context. By asking men about the barriers and supports to fathering, as well as the ways in which they negotiate barriers, policy and programming can be better informed on how to support engaged fathering.

Sampling

In an attempt to understand the construction and enactment of paternal identities within a stigmatized and impoverished neighborhood, 50⁷ Black fathers ages 25-34 were recruited from the zip code 19143 in the city of Philadelphia, which encompasses the Cobb’s Creek and Kingsessing neighborhoods in the Southwest section of the city. I was

⁷ A total of 56 fathers were recruited over a two-month period. During the initial interviews, it was revealed that six of the original 50 fathers I interviewed did not live in the 19143 zip code or were not between 25 and 34 years old. Therefore, I recruited and interviewed six more men in order to have a total of 50 qualifying fathers.

interested in the experience of Black fathers, specifically, due to the fact that these fathers are not only the subject of deficits-based assumptions, but also because Black communities are the most affected by police contact and surveillance (Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2012; Meehan & Ponder, 2006; Norris, Fielding, Kemp, & Fielding, 1992; Rios, 2011; Wacquant, 2002). I was interested in exploring the experience of Black fatherhood specifically in Southwest Philadelphia because it was an ideal site to study the effects of the criminal justice system on fatherhood.

This predominantly Black (84.7%) section of Philadelphia experiences high crime rates, high prison reentry rates, and high poverty rates (Philadelphia Inquirer, 2017; Roman et al., 2006; Statistical Atlas, 2015). Between April 18, 2017 and May 18, 2017, Cobb’s Creek had 51 violent crimes, ranking it 8th out of Philadelphia’s 55 neighborhoods, and 69 property crimes, ranking it 39th of 55 neighborhoods (Philadelphia Inquirer, 2017). Within the same time frame, Kingsessing had 15 violent crimes, ranking it 22nd of 55 neighborhoods, and 60 property crimes, ranking it 23rd (Philadelphia Inquirer, 2017) (See Table 1 for demographic breakdown of neighborhood compared to the city of Philadelphia and the U.S.).

Table 1. Crime and demographic comparisons (data gathered from Census American Community Survey, 2017 5 year estimate).

	Southwest	Philadelphia	USA
Black	80.3%	42.6%	12.7%
Hispanic of any race	3.3%	14.1%	17.6%
Below poverty	30.1%	25.8%	12.3%
Unemployment	16.1%	6.8%	4.1%
Median income	\$32,741	\$40,649	\$57,652
Less than HS education	15.5%	16.7%	12.7%
Renters	49.9%	47.8%	36.2%

The 19143 zip code encompasses the 12th and 18th police districts. From January 1st, 2017 to September 1st, 2017, out of the 22 police districts in Philadelphia, the 12th district had the 9th highest number of complaints made by civilians against the police department (n=23) and the 18th district had the second highest number of complaints made by civilians (n=36) (“Complaints against police”, 2017). Of the 22 police districts in Philadelphia, from January 2014-February 2018, the 12th district ranked ninth in number of pedestrian and vehicle investigations (n=104,084) and the 18th district ranked seventh in vehicle and pedestrian investigations (n=124,358). Of these investigations in the 18th district, 89.96% of civilians stopped were Black and 73.69% were male. Of these investigations in the 12th district, 91.17% of civilians stopped were Black and 73.47% were male (“Vehicle & pedestrian investigations”, 2017). As stated previously, 84.7% of residents living in the 19143 zip code are Black and 45.7% are male; therefore, the demographics of the individuals involved in these investigations are disproportionate to the neighborhood demographics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Zip code 19143 residents have an average income of \$31,000, a poverty rate of 30.1%, and an unemployment rate of 16.1% (Census, 2018). Of the family households with children under the age of 18, 62.1% are defined as “single moms,” 29.2% are defined as “married,” and 8.7% are defined as “single dads” (Statistical Atlas, 2015).

I chose this neighborhood, not only because of its high rates of poverty, incarceration, and crime, but also because of the connections I have to the neighborhood. Over the last four years, I have worked with a prison-based fatherhood program (FACT) and built relationships with the program’s external office located in Southwest Philadelphia. Through previous experience with primary data collection, I have found

that it is much easier to recruit research participants if there are respected individuals within the community who are willing to vouch for you and promote your work. After proposing the current research to FACT employees and board members and discussing with them the research motives and implications, they agreed to assist in recruiting and expressed how they felt the work is timely, necessary, and important.

In addition, while Southwest Philadelphia is characterized by crime and poverty, it is important to note that this neighborhood consists of several very active recreation centers, including Kingsessing Recreation Center and Myers Recreation Center. These centers provide unique opportunities for fathers and children to engage in community activities both together and separately. For example, Kingsessing Recreation Center offers boxing classes and training and hosts club football teams for different age children. Myers Recreation Center hosts a summer camp, drill team, dance classes, and basketball tournaments. Access to these activities can impact fathering behavior as well as perceptions of community and adds complexity to the narrative of Black fatherhood in a neighborhood that is structurally disadvantaged yet rich in extracurriculars.

The age limits were chosen for several reasons; beginning in 1981, Philadelphia experienced a spike in incarceration rates that persisted until 2012 (Prison Policy Initiative, 2014), therefore, men younger than 35 are more likely to have felt the effects of living in an era of mass incarceration and “tough on crime” policies, such as a mass removal of men from the community, heightened surveillance, and criminalizing policing methods, such as stop and frisk (Garland, 2001; Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2007; Roberts, 2004). Unemployment rates also spiked in Pennsylvania in 1983 and 1992 (Federal Reserve Economic Data, 2017), therefore a sample of men ages 25-34 could provide

varying accounts of community unemployment. Roy's (2006) qualitative fatherhood study with three age cohorts found that each cohort had significantly different experiences with their fathers and that the youngest cohort, ages 17-23, were the most likely to have a "vacated father." This group of participants from Roy's (2006) study would now be ages 27-33; therefore, recruiting fathers ages 25-34 reflects a sampling logic based on Roy's (2006) findings.

Pulling from Bronfenbrenner's concepts of macrosystems and macrotime, these men are situated within a specific moment in time that is impacted by specific political, economic, social, and environmental forces. Due to their similarities in age, these men have experienced the same presidential administrations, the same unemployment rates, the same rates of violence, the same technological innovations, and the same community structures. Therefore, a narrow view of experiences from men who may have more shared experiences due to their similarities in age provided a more cohesive and focused story of fatherhood.

Participating fathers had to identify as Black, live in the 19143 zip code, and have at least one biological child. There were also no disqualifiers based on family structure (e.g. residential v. nonresidential, multiple children with multiple mothers). There are many studies that look exclusively at one of these groups, and often the findings paint a monochromatic picture of Black families, negating diverse family structures that exist within the Black community (Johnson & Young, 2016). Therefore, this study included fathers from varying family structures to provide a more realistic understanding of the community experience.

To further maintain an accurate depiction of the community, although incarceration can create a particularly unique story about fatherhood (Arditti, 2005; Swisher & Waller, 2008; Uggen & McElrath, 2014; Wildeman & Western, 2010), it was important to include fathers in the sample who have spent time in prison, as the experience of incarceration is familiar to many of those residing in Southwest Philadelphia. In addition, the stigma of incarceration and collateral consequences experienced upon reentry is found to impact many previously incarcerated fathers' paternal identity and fathering activities (Arditti, 2005; Uggen & McElrath, 2014). Justice involvement, however, was not an eligibility requirement and several participants were free of a criminal record. Men on probation or parole, living in a halfway house, or under mandatory court-ordered treatment were included, as these are community-based barriers that restrict the fathers' ability to parent and warrant investigation.

Recruitment

I recruited fathers using both criterion sampling and snowball sampling. To ensure diversity amongst my sample, I used criterion sampling, which is a purposeful sampling strategy that identifies and selects cases that meet a predetermined criterion of importance (Palinkas et al., 2015). For the current study, it was important to diversify along the following criteria: father's residential status, number of children, children's ages, whether the father had been previously incarcerated, and the number of years previously incarcerated. I made sure that I did not oversample those who had been

incarcerated for a significant portions of their children’s lives, as the experience of paternal incarceration is found to have unique effects on paternal identity and enactment (Andersen, 2016; Arditti, 2005; Swisher & Waller, 2008; Uggen & McElrath, 2014; Wildeman & Western, 2010) and could therefore skew the findings. I also wanted to make sure there was a variety in fathers’ residential status and in the age ranges of the children participants discussed, as paternal involvement has been found to be, in part, determined by the age of child and father’s residential status (Bruce & Fox, 1999; Carlson, VanOrman, & Turner, 2017; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1986) (See Table 2 for participant characteristics and Appendix H for a demographic breakdown by participant).

Table 2. Sample Demographics (n=50)

Characteristic	Percent
Education	
Less than high school	11%
GED	11%
High school degree	45%
Some college	20%
College degree	11%
Master’s degree	2%
Number of Children	
1	36%
2	38%
3	16%
4 or more	10%
Residential status	
Residential	32%

⁸ Andersen (2016) finds that the impact of paternal incarceration on child outcomes is dependent on frequency and duration and should not be treated as a dichotomous event. Following Andersen’s (2016) methods, a “significant portion” was determined to be more than 1 year of the child’s life.

Non-residential	60%
Split custody	8%
Incarceration during period of child's life	
Yes	50%
No	50%

To recruit as many participants as possible in a short period of time, I also used snowball sampling, which is a non-probabilistic form of sampling defined as an accumulative and repetitive process where the researcher “accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants” (Noy, 2008). It is often used with “hidden populations,” such as individuals struggling with drug addiction or sex workers (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Although Black fathers may not typically fall within this category, due to the common occurrence of researchers negatively judging Black parenting against white middle-class heteronormative values (Bronte-Tinkew, Carrano, & Guzman, 2006; Coltrane, 2004; Edin, Nelson, & Paranal, 2004; Eggebeen, Knoester, & McDaniel, 2012; Johnson & Young, 2016; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Moynihan, 1965; Taylor et al., 1990), there was potential for initial skepticism about the motives of the study without community residents or peers promoting the research. To provide an additional incentive, I provided referrers a \$10 Visa gift card once their referral completed the first phase of the study. Anyone with legal authority or power over the individuals meeting such criteria (e.g. police, parole officers, probation officers or treatment providers), were not involved in the recruitment process, as this could have been construed as coercive.

Of the 50 qualifying fathers, 21 were recruited through other participants. The other 29 were recruited through my on-the-ground efforts. Each day during the two

month data collection period, I went around the neighborhood handing out flyers and posting them in different local businesses, such as corner stores, daycare centers, and barber shops. I would typically walk around with a sign-up sheet and, when an individual who received a flyer expressed interest, I would ask his paternal status, age and zip code. If deemed eligible, I wrote down his phone number and availability and scheduled the interview with him later that day.

Although a white, middle-class female outsider, I was able to quickly build rapport with the men I approached. The neighborhood began to feel familiar and community members, including those I interviewed or had previously approached, started to recognize my blue Toyota Prius and wave as I drove through. When I explained the study to those I approached, I emphasized that this work would provide them an opportunity to tell their story and that their story would hopefully be used to create positive change in their neighborhood. I was mindful to not make empty promises when speaking about outcomes, but I was transparent in my intentions for policy change and program implementation as a result of the study, which was well received by the participants. For example, one participant who had referred two other participants, stated at the end of our follow-up interview, “Your attitude is another thing. You didn't come across like you just doing this--I just want to get it done so you all can get up from out of my face. It wasn't that, nobody got that from you. It was like you was actually trying to get input to make the community better for guys to open up a little more.”

Most of the men I approached happened to be fathers who were very interested in speaking on the topic of fatherhood and specifically jumped at the opportunity to speak on the impact of neighborhood policing on fatherhood, even before being informed of the

monetary compensation. Those interested would often explain how they are not provided a platform to discuss such topics with those outside of their close circle of similarly situated men, so the idea of sharing their experiences with a broader audience was appealing. Some of the men described how they were especially eager to share their story with a white woman, so as to “set the record straight.” One participant explained at the end of our interview,

It's good that you're the one that's out here initiating, instead of somebody my color, instead of somebody Black. And that you see what we're going through and you're trying to make a change. And I think, to be honest, it starts with you all. Because we can sit here and we can talk about it and then it's like, we're talking to each other. Where as you could really understand or try to understand exactly what we're going through and you're a different race. I think it's a good thing, what you're doing is a good thing coming from you...for you to relay the message is a positive thing.

Some felt that a white woman serving as the messenger would give their stories credibility to policy makers and stakeholders. This perspective highlights participants' awareness of how decisionmakers often value the voices of some and disregard the voices of others, particularly those of Black men (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Maruna, 2001; Payne, 2011) and also underlines the need for studies that amplify the voices of Black fathers and considers their perspectives, strengths, and recommendations for change.

Data Collection Methods

The data were collected at two time points, beginning with an in-depth narrative inquiry. At the onset of each initial interview, I presented the participant with a consent form and asked whether he would like to review it independently or whether he would like for me to guide him through the document. The interview began once the document

was reviewed and the participant signed the consent form agreeing to be audio recorded and acknowledging the purpose of the research and the potential harms and benefits to participating. Fathers received a \$40 Visa gift card for completing the initial interview. Once I completed and reviewed the data from all of the initial interviews, I constructed a follow-up interview guide that expanded upon the themes found in the narrative inquiry responses (See Appendix F). Fathers received a \$25 Visa gift card for completing the follow-up.

The environmental context of the interviews was very important, as place shapes conversation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In an attempt to hold interviews in a convenient, welcoming, and familiar environment, all audio-recorded interviews took place either in the conference room at the Fathers and Children Together office⁹ located at 55th St and Woodland Avenue or in a private room at Myers Recreation Center, located at 58th and Kingsessing Avenue.

Narrative Inquiry

Following previous fatherhood studies that have successfully used narrative inquiry (LaRossa, 1995; Long et al., 2014; Stueve, 2000), the current study engages with this qualitative methodology to address all five research questions. Narrative inquiry is a collaborative and agenic process that amplifies marginalized men's frequently silenced voices (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Maruna, 2001; Payne, 2011). Storytelling guides

⁹ In regard to the potential for contamination bias, FACT's office solely focuses on resources for incarcerated fathers who participate in the prison-based program. Participants from the study did not receive any parenting resources from the FACT office before or after their interviews held at the office.

the interview process and borrows from identity theory and symbolic interaction theory in its focus on meaning making and actions (LaRossa, 1995; Stueve, 2000).

McAdams (1990, 1993) holds that identity can be viewed as a “life story” and analyzed using five story components: nuclear episodes, imagoes, ideological setting, generativity script, and thematic lines. Nuclear episodes are key events or “critical incidents” that are important indicators of identity. These episodes, when interpreted by the narrators, can indicate continuity, i.e. “who I am,” or indicate change i.e. “who I was,” and thus attend to Bronfenbrenner’s concept of time (Stueve, 2000). Imagoes are idealized role models who often reflect the stories and characters that their culture confirms (McAdams, 1990, 1993; Stueve, 2000). Ideological setting is the context of personal belief and value, which is shaped by social forces, such as interactions with family, friends, schools, churches, and other social environments, otherwise known as *proximal processes*. The generativity script notes how the story may continue, for example with describing how participants would like to father in the future, or how they would want their children to be as parents. Thematic lines are the recurrent content identified in the narrative during analysis.

Using McAdams’s framework and the DICE model, I developed an interview guide with open-ended questions focusing on critical incidents, imagoes, and ideological setting (see Appendix D). The interview was conversational and organic, employing probing questions when needed. By allowing the narrators to have control over the direction of the conversation, I co-created authentic data with the narrators, free of assumptions that can typically be found in many interview guides (Long et al., 2014). Some questions, such as “Can you describe any role models who may have influenced

you as a parent?” “How do people learn to be parents?” And “How do you think your child sees you as a parent?” were borrowed and adapted from Stueve’s (2000) Parenting Narrative Interview (PNI), which is grounded in McAdams’s framework. I also asked questions to gauge the participant’s social context by asking about schooling, work history, family experience, romantic relationships, and experience with the police and criminal justice system.

I incorporated some close ended questions in the narrative-inquiry prompt to understand participants’ experiences with police and how fathers “do” the identity they have constructed. Dyer and colleague’s (2015) Fatherhood Research and Practice Network Father Engagement Scale informs the majority of close-ended questions on fathering, while most of the questions about police experience have been adapted from the 2011 Police Public Contact Survey, which is a supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Subsequent Interview

I memoed for about an hour immediately following each initial interview. The memo contained information about the participant’s body language during the interview, reoccurring themes, topics that may have been overlooked or needed further probing, as well as any topics that seemed to bring the participant discomfort and should be avoided in the subsequent interview. These memos served to inform the subsequent interview guide, which ultimately addressed the original five research questions by asking

participants to reflect and expand upon their experiences and previous responses (See Appendix F).

I attempted to conduct follow-up interviews 4-6 weeks after the initial interview with each of the qualifying 50 participants. Due to disconnected numbers, incarceration, and disinterest, I was able to complete audio-recorded follow-up interviews with 27 participants. Because participants had developed a relationship with me through the first interview and gained a better understanding of my intentions for the study, they tended to seem more comfortable and candid in the subsequent interview, which resulted in rich description.

All of the identifying physical data, such as the child landscape (see Appendix G) were stored in a locked file cabinet, while all digital data were stored on an encrypted and password-protected drive. All participants were paired with a unique case number, which replaced any identifying information and was used to label all audio files and transcripts.

Analytic Plan

I hired a professional transcription service to transcribe the narrative inquiries and subsequent interviews. Upon receipt, I read through all of the transcripts while listening to the audio recordings in order to make sure all slang and jargon were accurately captured. Once these data were cleaned, I uploaded the transcripts into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative analysis software that allows researchers to comb through data in an exploratory fashion. My analysis comprised a four step process that began with open coding and included innovative mapping techniques.

Step 1

I began my analysis with line by line open coding, in which I summarized blocks of text with either one word or a verbatim sentence from the text (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). After analyzing the first 20 transcripts in this manner, I wound up with about 750 of these kinds of sublevel summary codes or what I am deeming, “microcodes.”

Step 2

In order to create main level codes, I printed out the list of 750 microcodes and cut them into strips. I then grouped the strips into seven big bucket themes such as “police” or “fatherhood.” Focusing on one theme at a time, I took each group of theme-specific strips and parsed them out to create about seven main codes per theme, such as “negative police perceptions” and “sense of responsibility.” This resulted in a total of 49 main codes.

Because the conversations with participants were guided by questions informed by the DICE model and McAdams’ framework, the main codes reflect attributes from each of these two concepts. For instance, main codes *Turning Points* and *Maturity* align with the DICE concept of time. *Neighborhood Impact on Parenting Activities*, *Negative Neighborhood Influence*, *Positive Neighborhood*, and *Negative Neighborhood* align with the DICE concept of context; *Influence on Fathers* reflects the McAdams concepts of imagoes; and *CJS Impact on Father* and *Perceptions of Father* align with both McAdams’ concept of nuclear episodes and the DICE concept of proximal processes.

For each of the 49 main codes, I took a piece of loose-leaf paper and wrote the main code in bold at the top and taped the affiliated microcodes (about 11¹⁰ per main code) onto the sheet in order to have a visual and easily be able to move around microcodes if needed. I referred to these sheets when creating the code book in ATLAS.ti, which included the main code name and its definition (See Appendix G). In ATLAS.ti, I was able to nest the affiliated microcodes within each main code so that I could continue coding at the microcode level while simultaneously attaching quotations to main codes. I found microcoding to be most useful because it served as a quotation indexing system when writing the substantive chapters. As I continued to code the next 57 transcripts, I made sure that any new microcode I created was nested within one of the 49 main codes.

I had two objective researchers read through the code book to see whether the terms and definitions made sense and whether the affiliated microcodes aligned with the definitions (Morse, 2015).

Step 3

In order to strengthen the reliability of my analysis, I engaged in four coding comparison exercises with my dissertation chair. Drawing from multiple transcripts and interview topics, I specified which segments we would separately code at the main level (Hruschka et al., 2004). Once we both completed the exercise, we compared our coding. If we had less than 80% agreement, I would make any necessary changes to the code

¹⁰ During this process, I continuously merged microcodes, which resulted in the elimination of about 200 microcodes.

book, either narrowing or broadening the definitions. With the revised code book at hand, we would recode the same text segments in order to reach at least 80% agreement.

Step 4

After solidifying the code book and coding all 77 transcripts at the microcode level, I uploaded all of the transcripts into a new ATLAS file and coded all of the transcripts again, but solely at the main code level. I referred to the code book as I went through to make sure I was coding accurately. Taking a second pass through the transcripts allowed me to gain deeper insights into the findings and identify any previously missed quotations.

CHAPTER 4: NAVIGATING THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The current chapter draws from interviews with young Black men to address research questions three and five by exploring how *context*, or community structure and dynamics, impact the ways participants enact fatherhood. In the face of community violence, fathers must learn to adapt in order to ensure their safety and the security of their families. Upon gaining their own sensitivities and street smarts, the participants can transmit lessons to their children on how to move through their neighborhood in a way that begets respect and deters conflict (Anderson, 1999). Navigating community violence influences fathers' adoption and enactment of the protector and educator roles. With a finger on the pulse of the landscape, the fathers display a deep understanding of their neighborhood's complexities and demonstrate a sense of agency in knowing they can make the neighborhood what they want it to be rather than solely bear the notion that their neighborhood is dangerous and deficient.

This chapter begins with a review of how fathers perceive their neighborhood and continues with an exploration of agency and how the fathers involve themselves in the neighborhood to maintain a sense of control and protect their family. The chapter concludes with a description of how the fathers demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity and the ways they act as protectors and educators with their children. The fathers' nuanced perspectives of the community demonstrate the importance of engaging with insider perspectives as their realities challenge traditional notions of resilience and binary categorization of "good" and "bad."

“It’s Got the Good and It’s Got the Bad”: Constructing the Neighborhood

When writing up the methods section of this dissertation in June of 2017, I Googled “men of Cobbs Creek”¹¹. The entire first page of search results was dedicated solely to media reports of homicides, assaults, and shootings, with images of Black men and headlines such as “Man Who Went on Stabbing Spree in Cobbs Creek Identified,” “Police Shoot, Kill Man Who Injured Son, Daughter, 3 Others,” “Authorities ID Man Shot During Alleged Robbery Attempt in Cobbs Creek”. Although the men I interviewed acknowledged the existence of community violence, their perspectives on the neighborhood painted a much more complicated picture in comparison to this vilifying media portrayal.

Early in the interview, Bryce described his neighborhood as “slightly dangerous.”

When I asked what makes it dangerous, he replied,

Just because there's a lot of drug trafficking, just that type of thing. With all the drugs comes violence at some point in time, so, I would consider it slightly dangerous. But, for the overall aspect actually, I would think that it's kind of close knit...it's just looking from the outside you're only going to see what's publicized so you would get kind of the wrong perception. But it's a healthy fear too that it'll give you, cause you need to know what's going on. Growing up there, it was close-knit. Bad things can happen at any time. It's unpredictable. Other than that, I think it's close-knit. I think a lot of the kids like each other from the neighborhood.

Bryce speaks about how the drug activity in the neighborhood inevitably creates violence. He explains how, although the media portrayal is sensationalized, it’s better to be informed and alert than oblivious because “bad things can happen at any time.”

However, he also acknowledges how it is a tight-knit community where the kids are close. His insider perspective exposes him to the unpredictability of the neighborhood

¹¹ Cobbs Creek is a neighborhood within Southwest Philadelphia

and also enables him to observe community kinship and kids playfully interacting with each other.

Dawan describes the community in a similarly nuanced way. He recognizes the violence and poverty in his neighborhood and also recounts the invaluable lessons the community instills,

My neighborhood. Well, you know it's poverty. My neighborhood is the lowest income that you can be in so it's like everybody's basically trying their hardest to get a dollar any way possible. It's like no jobs and stuff. They're not hiring felons and my neighborhood is like the bottom of the bottom for real for real. Everybody's out for themselves for real for real because everybody's out to feed themselves so it's like it's even hard to come up...My neighborhood is-one word to describe it is poverty. It's hard, but it make you-let's see, how can I explain this-it make you cold-hearted at the same time because everybody's out for themselves and nobody's showing love- genuine love at that because everybody's got their hidden own agendas. So, it's like my neighborhood is rough. For me, I wouldn't be here voluntarily because I know for a fact the stuff that it can bring to you. The stuff it can do to you. It's like basically--me, personally--I turned into a grown man at the age of thirteen.

I asked why,

Because basically my dad left. My mom was on her own. She was raising five. It was like, I'm the only male for real to represent the house. I had to become a man at the age of thirteen. Skipping all of the playing around and, like Michael Jackson said, I never really was a kid; I was always doing stuff a grown man supposed to do: provide for your family, taking care of your family. So, it's a gift and a curse, but where I'm from, it turns you to an adult fast, and that can be a gift and a curse. The gift can be-it can humble you fast at a young age and it can make you wiser and open you up to a lot of stuff that society put out there.

Dawan mentions structural issues, such as poverty and employment discrimination, as force multipliers of community violence and anger. Although Dawan describes the neighborhood as “the bottom of the bottom,” he remains grateful for the gift of his street education and its positive impact on his character development.

Aligned with the concept of Posttraumatic Growth and Payne’s (2011) Sites of Resilience theory, an ability to not only survive and adapt to structural barriers but to also

find positivity in a seemingly negative situation, is a true display of resilience. PTG scholars operationalize resilience or the ability to adapt to and cope with traumatic experiences as (1) relating to others, (2) new possibilities, (3) personal strength, (4) spiritual change, and (5) appreciation of life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Dawan states that growing up in his neighborhood can humble you, make you wise, and expand your understanding of the world, exemplifying *new possibilities* and *personal strength*. Posttraumatic growth scholars attempt to break binaries by acknowledging, as Dawan does, that trauma can, and often does, produce negative outcomes, and can also result in positive self-development and increased personal strength (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006).

Relating to others was frequently mentioned by the fathers as a means of coping with the surrounding violence. When I asked Jacqueses how he would describe his neighborhood to someone who had never been there before, he stated,

Surprisingly, the way I would describe my neighborhood, if you see it, it might not look like it's very...It's a community, because even though it is a blight, maybe dilapidated from abandoned houses, when we come together, we actually are together. It's times where I leave my daughter on the block all day, and what am I doing there, it's almost like, it's trustworthy. Even though from the outside, it may be like, okay it's a little dirty, a little messed up, but it's really not as bad as it seems. My block has a bad connotation because it's known for drugs and gun violence, but it's not that bad.

Like Jacqueses, many of the men were able to find solace in their support systems and social networks, which enabled them to feel comfort when surrounded by danger. When I probed after Ryun described the neighborhood as having its “good and bad,” he explained,

I mean it's still family oriented as far as like you know, you come around here. If say you lived around here and, grew up around here, you got to work one day or something. You can be like, 'oh, well when you come home, go to so and so's house down the street.' It's like that type of family thing, on my block anyway. Majority of my block is related anyway. It's cool as far as if you want to raise a

family. Like I said, its family-oriented... It's a good place to raise kids. It's cool to live here, like I said, it's got the good and it's got the bad.

Many of the men spoke about their block being a “family” and how everyone took care of one another. Exposure to community violence has significant implications for developing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; however, researchers find that social cohesion can mediate this effect by increasing a sense of trust and decreasing hyperarousal (Gapen et al., 2011). Although the current study did not directly measure participants’ mental or physical wellbeing, the fathers’ anecdotes identify social cohesion as a protective factor in the midst of community violence.

In response to being asked how he would describe his neighborhood to someone who had never been there before, Chamere stated,

I can say it got its normal, it’s rough.... some blocks is rough, some blocks is cool. You've got the neighbor to take care of they block, make sure everything cool, you drama free, the people respect that. Then you got some blocks where they just do what they want, sell drugs, hang on the corner, smoke, make it hard for the neighbors. But my neighborhood, the block I live on, it's like a bunch of kids. We all family. Everybody grew up on there together, so it's like we all family on my block.

Chamere describes the complexity of the neighborhood by acknowledging the diversity of activities across blocks. Blocks are so unique that many fathers, like Chamere, consider the one street segment that they reside on as their “neighborhood.” What makes Chamere’s neighborhood “cool” is a sense of familiarity; having a block-family curbed drama and provided protection.

EJ uses very similar language when describing the neighborhood. When I asked how he would describe his neighborhood, he stated, “it could be good, it could be bad.” I asked him to define “good” and “bad,”

We got people that show unity in the neighborhood. Community people who come out and do block cleaning. The kids grow up together, the families stay around long and start developing relationships and stuff like that. And then just like everywhere else, you've got your drama where sometimes people's lives spill out into the streets out of they house. Everybody don't live the same, and everybody has different issues.

James also described his neighborhood as a family growing up together. When asked how he would describe his neighborhood to an outsider, he responded,

I don't know. I don't know, just a group of kids growing up together. It be fine. I mean it's relaxed for the most part, of course gangs and that. I see it as a bunch of people just trying to make the best out of life, honestly. That's kind of hard to explain because there's so many different identities and everything else, but I think it's kind of a relaxed community where people, like I said, just try to make it the best they can, with whatever opportunities they are given, which is slight few. For the most part, people that you get in contact with, well for me, trustworthy people very protective over their community.

Similar to Chamere, EJ and James both recognize diversity in their neighborhood by noting different “identities” and “issues.” Seeing this kind of heterogeneity informs their more nuanced perspective of the neighborhood and disallows them from placing blanket labels of “good” or “bad” over the entire community; rather, they label it as both.

In addition to acknowledging the differences across community members, James demonstrates compassion by acknowledging that his neighbors are doing the best with what they have; they are enacting resilience by surviving in the neighborhood and making it work. James almost waves off the presence of “gangs” and sees their formation as an inevitability due to the lack of resources in the community. He continues by categorizing the majority of his neighbors as trustworthy and protective over their neighborhood, despite the challenges it presents. `

Many of the fathers, especially the ones who grew up in the neighborhood, felt a sense of pride over Southwest Philadelphia and appreciated the ways it motivated

personal growth. When I asked Bryce whether there was anything I had forgotten to ask or that he would like me to know about any of the topics we had discussed, he responded,

Maybe just we ain't all bad. We ain't all bad. The neighborhood is not always as bad as it's shown on TV. It's really close-knit neighborhoods around. They really are, but it's just overshadowed by the bad stuff. They don't show [the good stuff] on the news. It's got to be super bad for them to show that on the news.... It could be better. It could be better, but I wouldn't rather live nowhere else coming up. I love my city. I ain't gunna lie, I love Philadelphia. Even though I've been to other places, and I know people from other places, I'm glad I live here...Maybe I would have turned out better if I did, but I wouldn't change what I went through to become who I am today for nothing. I'd do it all over again the same way. To become who I am today, I would do it all again the same way.

Bryce's mom was sixteen years old when she gave birth to him. From ages 6 to 8-years-old, Bryce, his mom, and his two siblings lived in a homeless shelter until his mom was awarded Section 8 housing. Bryce's father was not around much, and when he was, it was usually to be an "enforcer" (one of Bryce's most prominent images of his father is him walking up to Bryce's school with a belt draped around his neck after being called by the school principal). Although Bryce's mom was incredibly involved in Bryce's life and worked hard to support the family, Bryce was frustrated by not being able to have what others did. So, he started rebelling against his mother and ultimately began to sell drugs in order to attain the status he desired. After several shorter stints in county jail during his younger years, Bryce, now a father of two, was sentenced to 4 years in upstate prison. He returned to the community only a year before our initial interview. Bryce has spent the last year volunteering in the community as a football coach with his brother as a way to "wipe away some of that bad stuff" he had done in his community.

Despite the struggles Bryce endured, he feels love for his community and appreciation for the ways it molded him. Bryce respects his neighborhood and is frustrated by the disrespectful way in which it is portrayed in the media. Without

broadcasting the positive elements of the neighborhood, Bryce feels as though he and his fellow community members are blanketly stereotyped as “bad.” In an attempt to refute this, he reassured me there was good in his neighborhood.

Through our conversations, the fathers acknowledge the dark side of the neighborhood when speaking about the crime, violence, addiction, and poverty. However, for the men, these challenges do not overshadow the light in the neighborhood, radiating through their support systems and familial bonds. If anything, the challenges are met by the fathers with gratitude, as they facilitated personal growth and provided deeper insights into social structures.

“It's pretty much up to you”: Maintaining agency in the neighborhood

For many of the fathers, the darkness in the neighborhood, composed with the shadows of guns and drugs, is viewed as something that can be either avoided or sought after. Although a few participants see engagement in crime as the only means to survive, most of the men speak about their ability to create or ward off danger. When discussing his neighborhood Bryce explains, “I think it is what you make it. If you want to make it good, you can make it good. If you want it to be bad, it can be very, very bad. I think it's pretty much up to you.” Rather than promoting a sense of powerlessness to the violence and structural barriers endured by the community, Bryce explains how community members have a say in the outcomes of their experience. The fathers didn't just see themselves as victims to their circumstances, but rather felt they could, to some extent, control their experience in the neighborhood. When I asked Gibril how he would describe his neighborhood to someone who has never been there before, he casually stated,

I would say it's a good neighborhood, you know what I mean? What you put in is what you get out of it. If you're hanging with the nonsense, you'll find nonsense.

If you come, just move in, stay to yourself, and you're a family man, the neighborhood will like you, so you come in minding your business, that'll go. But if you come in with your bullshit...you'll find it.

Although many of the men speak about the unpredictability of the neighborhood and the constant threat of danger, a lot of men also describe how you could avoid “bullshit” by staying to yourself and taking care of your family. Most feel like community members who end up shot or arrested or incarcerated “dug their own grave” by engaging in activities or lingering in areas they knew were problematic. For example, when I asked Chris if being arrested impacts a man's relationship with his child, he responded,

I think so, cause I mean being taken away from your child but you should understand whatever you do... got a consequence, even good stuff got consequences. So, I ain't really mad when a person get arrested... that's your fault, can't blame nobody else. You're the one that... took yourself away from your child.

This notion of accountability was mentioned in conversation with many of the fathers. When speaking about feelings of safety in his neighborhood, Aquil stated, “When it gets hot out, a lot of people get outrageous. I stay at the park, I stay with my son. The neighborhood is okay, it's just how you go about everything. If you don't get into a lot of trouble, trouble's not going to come your way. I guess I be cool.” Aquil explains that trouble can be avoided in his neighborhood; it is the ones who seek trouble who are confronted by it.

Cameron spoke similarly about how trouble was not so much an inevitability for community members but more so something that was sought, “I feel safe because I've been here all my life and I don't cause no trouble. But if you want trouble, trouble will find you.” The neighborhood was personified by participants as an organism that reacts and responds to intentions: the neighborhood gives trouble to those who enter with

negative intentions, while the neighborhood protects those with positive intentions and allows them to “be cool.”

When acting on positive intentions, there was a karmic level of respect provided by the community. For example, Marquis spoke about his ability to welcome or resist danger and later discussed the ways he engages with the neighborhood to gain respect and thus ensure safety for himself and his family.

I know I would never put myself in a position to be in danger, or the ones I love in danger. And I would do anything to prevent that. I always prepare for the unseen, even though sometimes you can't. But I do everything I can to keep sure me and my family and my neighborhood safe from any dangerous entities that may come through...

As a man, my community respects me and I clean up the block every day. I'm not the Block Captain but I might as well be, you know what I'm saying? I make sure the block is clean, make sure everybody's not doing drugs on my block or anything like that. I get people together and we do what we can to make the neighborhood look nice. As far as when you walk on our block, you never see trash there, you know what I'm saying? If I come home from work and I see trash, I bring it in the house and throw it away and go about my day and everybody respects me as far as that.

By enacting positivity, he is able to gain respect, which is often worn like a cloak of armor in the neighborhood.

When I asked EJ how he thought the community sees him, he smiled,

They love me. My block loves me because I'm vocal...I'm the guy that walks outside and I'm like, 'Hey, I don't know your name, man, but I see you every day. So, I'm just saying 'hi.' There's no need to just keep looking at each other.' Or when it's clean block I come out, "you got bags? You want me to come over to your side to help you?" My boys, I'm like, 'look we are going to do this whole side for Miss Terry and for Miss Rachel and for Miss Jenkins when it's snowing outside, we want to take care of them.' When you're cooking on the grill, we feed whoever come up. My boys, we got a nice porch and we got a nice sized pool. And I tell you, every single summer the kids line up around the steps. All of them, 'can we get in, can we get in?' I tell them, 'ask your parents. If they say you can get in, then get in.' So, from my knowledge, I know I'm good in my neighborhood.

By saying “I know I’m good in my neighborhood,” EJ is alluding to his safety, knowing that, because of his good deeds, trouble isn’t likely to knock on his door. He passes on this valued method of safety maintenance by teaching his children to take care of their neighbors.

In a conversation about neighborhood engagement, another father, Henry, explained,

If I went to the store, I’d ask you, ‘damn, Miss Abbie, you want something from the store? Alright, I’ll go grab it for you.’...Even if I’m like, say we live next door to each other. If I’m sweeping in front of my house, I’m going to sweep yours too. You ain’t got to say nothing, you ain’t got to thank me for nothing. We neighbors.

The activities that Marquis, EJ, and Henry engage in contribute to a sense of cohesion and trustworthiness, which, as research finds, can contribute to lower rates of neighborhood violence and death (Lochner, Kawachi, Brennan, & Buka, 2003; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997).

Although the fathers describe a level of unpredictability in the neighborhood, many still maintain a sense of agency and hold each other accountable for community violence. The fathers have an understanding that what you put into the neighborhood is what you get out of it. Therefore, many of the fathers intentionally engage with the neighborhood in a positive way in order to ensure safety for themselves and their families.

“Just Pay Attention at all Times Because Anything Will Happen”:

Navigating Violence in the Neighborhood

Proffering positivity was not the only way fathers attempted to avoid danger. Many of the fathers describe feeling unsafe and how this persistent unease germinated a

heightened awareness of their surroundings. Experiencing the neighborhood on a daily basis provided fathers with a sensitivity to different environmental factors that impact crime, such as weather and time of day. With this knowledge, the fathers learn how to adapt and navigate the neighborhood to maintain a sense of wellbeing.

The interviews for this study took place in the spring and summer of 2018. In addition to past experiences and relationships, the phenomena taking place around the time of the interviews were embedded in participants' responses, identities, and actions. Between January 1st, 2018 and August 30th, 2018, there were 72 shooting victims in Southwest Philadelphia, 16 of which were fatal (Philadelphia PD, 2018). On March 20th, two brothers, each in their 40s, who both worked at a local restaurant, were shot execution style outside of their home and left to die. On April 18th, at least 10 shots were fired at a 21-year-old father and his 1-year-old baby while the father was putting the baby in a car seat. On May 21st, a father was shot 10 times after he jumped in front of a gun aimed at his daughter, who was pregnant with twins. And on July 17th, skeletal remains were found in a suitcase located in Bartrum Village- the local housing project in Southwest.

When I asked Amir how he would describe his neighborhood to someone who had never been there before, he replied, "Anybody that's never been there can come and see for themselves. I wouldn't say it's not a good neighborhood to raise your children, but it's kind of like you're living in the face of death every day. You never know what's going to happen. You never know. Especially in the 19143. This is Southwest Philadelphia."

The sense of danger and unpredictability was noted in the responses of many participants.

Darius grew up living with 15 people in a two-bedroom apartment in the projects of South Philadelphia. His mother and aunt were both sex workers struggling with crack addictions. They would have sex with their clients while Darius was in the bunk bed next to them watching from the top bunk. They couldn't afford running water, so both the toilet and bathtub, he said, were often filled with feces. When he was 7-years-old, Darius's aunt's boyfriend made Darius his drug mule because the police would "never expect crack to be in a child's pocket." At eight years old, Darius was put in zip-ties by the police after hiding under his bed all night while the apartment got raided. Darius was in and out of prison throughout his young adult life for selling the same drugs he saw his mom smoking in the kitchen while he was playing video-games in the living room with his brother. These cumulative experiences gave Darius tough skin, but, when I asked whether he felt safe in his neighborhood, he responded,

No, not actually, no. I'm going to be honest, no. That's why I don't go outside at certain times of night. I used to go outside around here twelve o'clock at night, go to the store, Chinese store to get something to eat. Now I just say, 'No, hell no. I'll find something downstairs to eat.' I ain't going to the store because I seen at certain times of night around here, they start shooting for no reason. I was outside the other night thinking it was cool and it was eleven thirty. I'm like 'nothing's going to happen, it's not that late.' I go to the Chinese store to get me a couple of loosies. Man, as soon as I get to the Chinese store they start shooting and it was behind me and I'm like, I'm kind of glad the bullets ain't fire this way because I would have been shot in the head or the leg or something. And I'm like, it's only eleven thirty. Who was out here?! And it's a shame people beefing with these guys and it's a lot of kids on the block they shooting on. So why can't you just take that somewhere else, man? Come on. You don't have no regard for nobody's kids because you shooting. It could go through a window and go through a wall, it can hit anybody.

Darius initially hesitated to say he felt unsafe. Many of the men, when asked whether they felt safe in their neighborhood, responded similarly, seeing the good in their neighborhood, not wanting to demonize their neighborhood, feeling pride for their

neighborhood, wanting to seem tough themselves, but ultimately acknowledging a flowing undercurrent of threat. When I asked Jonah whether he felt safe in his neighborhood, he displayed the same grappling as Darius,

Jonah: I don't want to say yeah, I don't want to say no. I feel like anywhere anything can happen.

Abbie: Sure.

Jonah: Like, it's like I know like everybody in the community, so it is like I don't think anything is going to happen, but at the same time [pause]. Let me just answer, do I feel safe? No... No.

Abbie: And what makes you say that?

Jonah: Just like the violence there, just like when it does happen it is just like, somebody is shooting, everyone goes in the house, nobody comes back outside until the next day or the day after.

Jonah mumbled through the initial part of his answer while leaning back in his chair. However, when saying "...do I feel safe? No", he spoke with clarity in his voice and shifted forward in his seat. He stood firm on his second "no" and spoke about the violence and shootings with passion and exhaustion. Community violence is something he witnesses often, which makes him both frustrated and disappointed. His voice became smaller when talking about how shootings had an impact on people's daily activities, forcing community members to isolate and sequester themselves to the safety of their homes.

When I asked Keenan whether he felt safe in his neighborhood, his response reflected a similar struggle. He opened with, "Yeah and no, because there's a lot of guns

out there. I take care of myself. I'm not saying I'm the baddest guy, but I can hold my own." Then he paused, looking down in thought. After a beat he looked me in the eyes and said, "I know I'm not safe because you have some people who are gonna be able to rob you. They want to stick you up and, if you ain't got nothing, they wanna shoot you." Similar to Jonah, once Keenan surrendered his machismo, he displayed a sense of comfort in the honesty as he closed with, "No, I'm not safe in my community! No."

The constant threat of a stray bullet was mentioned and felt by many of the fathers. One father, Liam, had a similar experience to Darius just before our follow-up interview, "A couple weeks ago, I was sitting on the corner and this lady had got into an argument. I was standing on the corner and all you hear is 'Pop! Pop!' I was standing right on the corner... I guess the bullets flew past me or something. I don't know. I heard [two swishing noises]." The anxiety expressed by the fathers was based on first-hand experiences of "living in the face of death every day" (Amir). Henry explained,

It's scary to go outside nowadays. You really got to be careful. Not just me, everybody. Everybody got to be careful. It's spooky out here, and it get dangerous. Even when it look like everything going alright, we always got to pay attention. Always, always. That's for anybody. Just pay attention. Just pay attention at all times, because anything will happen. Tomorrow not promised to nobody.

The possibility of death was a daily concern for many of the fathers. This kind of hyper-awareness made the fathers sensitive to the environment and aware of the different elements that enabled violence, such as climate. When describing his neighborhood, Martin asserted,

Martin: My neighborhood is up and down.

Abbie: What do you mean by that?

Martin: A lot of crime...Towards the summertime, it gets hot, people are crazy.
Right now, there's a lot of crime in our neighborhood.

Abbie: What kind of crime?

Martin: A lot of shooters. A lot of shooters.

Martin explains how the heat brings more people outside, and, to the men, more people interacting inevitably means more conflict and gun violence. Their intuition and experience are supported by a breadth of research using theories such as Routine Activities, which finds that the more people outside, the more potential victims and thus more opportunities for crime (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Cohn & Rotton, 2000; Sorg & Taylor, 2011).

During a discussion on one of the recent neighborhood shootings, Joel stated,

Seeing everybody outside, not saying it's a bad thing, but seeing everybody out, seeing everybody doing stuff, and it's not even that hot yet. And the crazy thing is, these is images that I had growing up and just seeing bad stuff, bad stuff. I even have the image of a lot of people being outside, so now something bad might happen. Just from past experiences. Why can't I think positive about that?
...Because every time you turn around and the kid being shot as well is crazy. With all the shootings and stuff going on, even in the schools, kids getting shot up in the schools and stuff now, I just think everything is getting worse. And I just think this is going to be a very, very bad summer.

Exposure to community violence is correlated with increases in fear and mistrust (Ross & Jang, 2000; Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Many of the fathers, like Joel, express feelings of mistrust and fear that are often deep-seated from decades of exposure to violence. To answer his own question about why he couldn't think positively about the community spending time together outside, Joel drew from personal memories of summertime violence from his childhood. In response to Joel's experiences, he is on heightened alert during the summertime.

Because many of the men grew up in Southwest Philadelphia or in similar neighborhoods rife with poverty and violence, their anxious feelings were grounded in compounded trauma that served to strengthen their navigation skills. Exemplifying the PTG concept of reconfiguration, the participants describe drawing from past experiences with community violence to inform the ways they move about their neighborhood. Their trauma instigates a heightened level of resourcefulness that preserves their own safety and the security of their families. As one of the participants, EJ, explained, “You learn how to move in the jungle, you're alright. You can't get attacked once you learn how to move. You learn your little area, how to move a certain way, what to do and what not to do.”

Kwame echoed this sentiment, “You got to know the cracks and creases-- the in and outs--of the neighborhood and try to avoid the places of danger.” Having this informal street education facilitated feelings of safety for many of the participants. When I asked Terrance whether he felt safe in his neighborhood he seemed surprised as he nodded, “I do.” He continued, “and it might only be because I'm from here. So, I guess normal to me, as opposed to somebody that never seen a fight break out or heard a gunshot or something. I mean it sucks, it definitely sucks, but I don't feel unsafe. I know I've always got to watch my back and pay attention, but I don't walk outside in fear.” The participants exemplified posttraumatic-growth in their ability to be adaptive, with a heightened awareness of their surroundings. Adapting allows some participants, like Terrance, to subdue feelings of fear, a stress response that, if constantly activated, can lead to poor physical and mental health (Green et al, 2002; Pearson & Breetzke, 2014).

Many men modified their behaviors to avoid being out at night. Because I sensed hesitation in Darius's earlier admission to feeling unsafe, I responded by letting him know that he was the fifty-first person I had interviewed and that, out of the 51, not one participant said they felt completely safe. This support sent him on a spiral,

Oh yeah, I don't feel safe, not in this neighborhood. Southwest more dangerous than ever cause always someone getting shot. They find people in the waters, huh-uh, I'm not with that. You find somebody floating upside down in the water, no that ain't cool. Then they shoot people all crazy around here, man, the girl shoots a pregnant female not too far from here because her man married another woman. He left you alone, it's over with. You still shoot the lady and she was pregnant. Her dad jumped in front of the shots, he got shot eight times, nine times. Oh no, this ain't safe. That's why I tell my kids, 'You're not going outside.' No one goes to the store for me. If you all go to the store, you all walk together and it's going to be only in broad daylight. Thank God it's an hour ahead now. It's more light so I ain't got to worry about it being six o'clock and dark. It's not safe and I don't feel safe, I don't and it's too much going on in my neighborhood.

The crimes that made headlines around the time of the interviews intensified fathers' existing sense of danger in the community. As fathers, they were especially aware of their surroundings and had to create time and space boundaries for themselves and their children to feel safe. Chris, a self-taught tattoo artist and a self-proclaimed hipster who wore dark thick-rimmed glasses, spoke similarly about time and safety,

Chris: It's safe, but it's not safe. After a certain time of night, it's just really not safe to walk around. Everybody's off for the night.

Abbie: For any kind of person?

Chris: Yeah, for any kind of person. That's pretty much, it's not just this neighborhood. It's pretty much how it is in the city. I don't know, it's like at night, I guess because the more secluded and what not, there's less people outside to be more of a target. But it's really drug related problems, it's never any normal person. Every time something happens to somebody around here it's either an addict doing it or somebody doing it for separate reasons. But it's not a safe place to walk around at night for anybody.

Abbie: And what about during the day? What's it like?

Chris: During the day it's way more safe because there's way more police activity, I can say, than at night. The majority of times at night cops are sleeping anyway. So, it's a lot safer in the daytime because you've got a lot more eyes going on. And you've got a few things going on as far as community centers around the neighborhood. So, you have people that are actually up and attentive and watching the kids versus everybody got to sleep at night.

Chris notes the pluralism of the neighborhood, describing it as both “safe” and “not safe.”

He mentions a sense of safety in the daytime, in part, because of heightened police activity. Although many men describe feelings of fear and mistrust towards police, the same men often echo this sentiment of relief in their presence at night. For instance, when speaking about feelings towards the police, Kai smirked, “Man. I don't feel no kind of way, I just, depending on my situation, shit, if it's late at night and I'm walking and I see [the police], I'm happy, you know what I mean.” Perceptions of and experiences with police will be discussed in-depth in a later chapter; however, it is important to note here how night time evoked such deep feelings of vulnerability that police were welcomed company.

Embracing the Yin and the Yang of the Neighborhood

Although participants describe feelings of fear, they have learned to modify their behaviors to cultivate a sense of safety for themselves and their families. They are hyper-aware of conditions that exacerbate crime and danger, such as desolation, darkness, crowds, and heat. At the same time, they are aware of the conditions that promote safety, such as a police presence, community centers, and block cohesion, and do what they can to contribute to neighborhood positivity and security.

The ability to see the balance of light and dark in the neighborhood demonstrates posttraumatic growth and illuminates the fathers' ability to navigate adversity. In

response to experiences over the life course, the fathers adapt and set boundaries of time and space in order to build security. They find solace in their networks and support systems and are sensitive to the karmic forces of their community. They enact informal means of crime control by engaging in altruistic behavior that gain them an armor of respect and contribute to the community's cohesion. The fathers note structural barriers and limited opportunities, but do not view themselves as solely victims to circumstance. Rather, the fathers maintain a sense of agency and hold each other accountable for trouble caused and endured by the community.

These findings and frameworks lend insight into the ways context and proximal processes impact the construction and enactment of fatherhood. Experiences of community violence and interactions with neighbors and community members influence participants to adopt and enact the roles of protector and mentor. They see their purpose as fathers to keep their children safe and provide their children tools so that their children can ultimately keep themselves safe.

The following chapter looks at the ways historical and cultural moments, such as mass incarceration and the crack epidemic impact men's constructions of fatherhood. It also highlights the evolution of fatherhood and explores how many participants display posttraumatic growth and use their own father's absence to inform their definitions of fatherhood and incentivize "being there."

CHAPTER 5: EXPLORING THE GENERATIVE GENERATION

The current chapter explores research question one by examining where and how fathers received stories and symbols about fatherhood and highlights how participants employ a strengths-based lens when explaining the evolution of Black fatherhood. Most participants grew up without their fathers around. However, rather than solely showing animosity towards their absent fathers, many of the men demonstrate compassion for their fathers by contextualizing their absence. Most use their fathers' absence as a catalyst for their involvement with their own children, internalizing what *not* to do from their fathers and attempting to give their children experiences they never had growing up. Context, time, proximal processes and personal characteristics, such as race and gender, each and dynamically impact the ways participants come to define fatherhood.

I begin this chapter by demonstrating how participants feel stereotyped as Black fathers, which they attribute to the absence of previous generations. I then look at participants' experiences with their own fathers and explore some of the reasons, provided by the men, as to why many of them experienced paternal absence. I conclude with an analysis of how participants are redefining fatherhood as "being there" and how this definition is informed by various interpersonal interactions and family and other role models.

Viewing the "Deadbeat Dad" as a relic of the past

Samuel, a male cheerleader who lives in the local housing project, went through our first interview with his sleeping and smiling baby in his lap. Samuel's father got sentenced to 15 years in prison when Samuel was 2-years-old and, from there, Samuel's

step-father took over as the male role model. It took almost 10 years for Samuel to embrace his stepfather, but now, at 25, he calls him “dad.” When I asked Samuel why he thinks Black fathers are often seen as absent, he replied,

Most African American fathers are in prison, or were in prison, or are labeled as future inmates... A black man cannot walk these streets as a father without a label being on their back saying that they're a deadbeat... A black man, a black father can't live out in this world as a good father without being chastised, criticized, or judged for what they've done in the past or the present. They never judge you for the future unless they're police, then they've already labeled you as a future inmate.

Many of the participants explained that it wasn't just being a father but being a *Black* father that brought judgment and a predetermined negative label. Although Samuel notes the normality of the prison experience for Black men, which feeds the stereotypes of “deadbeat” and “criminal” (Fader, 2013; Rios, 2011), these stereotypes do not take into account empirical findings that systemic racism and police bias attribute to high rates of incarceration for Black men (Kochel et al., 2011; Rios, 2011; Tonry & Melewski, 2008). Samuel describes how Black fathers who have never even experienced incarceration are seen only as “future inmates” without the opportunity to be perceived as a good dad. Even though Samuel's father went to prison, Samuel expresses frustration that the carceral experiences of some are seemingly cast over all.

Many of the fathers I interviewed felt as though these stereotypes were inescapable despite their involvement with their child(ren). For example, Dawan, a man with big round eyes and tattoos covering his arms and hands, felt abandoned as a child and adolescent because his father was so inconsistently present in his life. The year after Dawan returned to his community after spending his teenage years in juvenile detention, he was arrested. He spent four years of his children's lives in jail pre-trial for a case he

adamantly claims was mistaken identity. Ultimately, after four years of awaiting sentencing, he took a plea deal and walked away with time served plus 10 years of probation. When discussing why Black fathers are often seen as deadbeat Dawan stated,

It's due to their lack of knowledge. Because when you look at the black man, they automatically think he sells drugs. The stereotype is like with me, when [the arresting officers] seen me, they automatically looked at me and say, 'Oh, he robbed that person because he had a beard and a hoodie on.' So, it's like they stereotype from the way you look. 'Oh, he got tattoos, he's a gangster.' The stereotype of Black man is at the all-time high because once they look at the Black man, they look at him like he automatically sells drugs or he's a gangster and don't know that that man probably owns...like me personally, I do own my own cleaning company... But that's like me personally, when I go around my baby mother, her family stereotyping me. 'Oh, he's probably a bad person. He do this and he does that.' But once they get to know me, automatically, 'he's a good person.' They say never judge a book by its cover. Everybody does that. Everybody looks at the book and 'This book is not-' Put it down. Don't know that book carry knowledge.

Dawan demonstrates the compounding nature of the stereotypes he endures. Black feminist scholars highlight the importance of using an intersectional framework, particularly when discussing women of color (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality looks at the multidimensionality of an individual's identity and the ways being situated within the intersection of sexism and racism impacts the lived experiences, specifically, of women of color (Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005). For Dawan, being *Black* and being *male* often come with compounded stereotypes about being "gangster" or a "deadbeat," or a "future inmate."

When I asked Samaj whether his looks impact how people perceive him as a father, he responded, "Sure. Yeah. Sure. Stereotype is clear; it's out there." I asked him to explain the stereotype, "That Black fathers aren't in their children's lives." I continued to probe and asked where he thinks the stereotype stems from. He replied, "There's a little

reality to it. I also think it's one of those things that happened in the past and kind of stuck. Not in the past, but fifteen, twenty years ago, but now it's stamped as stereotype.”

President Barack Obama, in his 2008 Father’s Day speech, spoke of this stereotype,

But if we are honest with ourselves, we’ll admit that what too many fathers also are is missing – missing from too many lives and too many homes. They have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men... You and I know how true this is in the African-American community. We know that more than half of all black children live in single-parent households... We need fathers to realize that responsibility does not end at conception. We need them to realize that what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child – it’s the courage to raise one.

Although many men acknowledged that there are some fathers in their community who are not actively involved in their children’s lives, this admission was often paired with a perspective that the deadbeat dad stereotype is mainly a relic of previous generations and that fathers today are evolving to be more present with their children.

Bryce similarly describes the deadbeat dad stereotype as outdated,

When I take my son to school or I pick him up from school, I see the dads dropping their kids off, picking their kids up. You can tell by the interaction that this is something they do all the time, so you know it's not just a one-time thing or they had nobody else to come. You can tell that they do it every day. I go to parent-teacher conferences for my kids. I see dads in there. I mean we get a bad rap. Anywhere I go and take my kids I see other kids with their dads so I'm like what I'm doing isn't anything special... I just think we get a bad rap from our past fathers. I think for the most part, when fathers are not incarcerated and they're alive these days, for the most part they'll be there from what I can see, or at least try to be there... As far as me and my brothers, we try to give them everything we didn't have so our kids know us. Our kids live with us.

Bryce describes the frequency in which he sees fathers with their children in his community and mentions how fathers these days have a bad rap because of absent fathers from previous generations. He explains how fathers today who are *able* to be involved, are.

Many of the fathers I interviewed mentioned three outcomes for men in their community: incarceration, death, or “the right path,” which was defined as avoiding violence and crime and being an *involved* father. Rather than blanketly stating that there are some “deadbeat dads” who aren’t in their children’s lives, Bryce uses a strengths-based perspective by noting contextual barriers that can impede a father’s presence. Despite these barriers, he adamantly states that fathers in his community are, at the very least, *trying* to be involved. This motivation to be an involved father, as Bryce explains, is incentivized, in part, by personal experiences of paternal absence.

Experience with paternal absence

Although some of the participants had loving and involved fathers, the majority of the men I interviewed did not have their fathers around when they were growing up. Ryun’s father was in and out of jail throughout Ryun’s life. I asked Ryun whether most of his friends had their fathers around when they were growing up,

It was weird, some of them had their dads, some of them didn't. But like I said, my block was family oriented. So, a lot of people come to my uncles, ‘yeah, your uncle is like my pop.’ My uncle was like my pop, he helped raised me. But the ones that had their dad, not too many of them had their pop though. Now that I'm sitting and thinking about it. Not too many. My older cousin, he lived on the block. He lived at Thirty-One and his dad lived at Thirty-Five. He didn't talk to his dad until he was like twenty... Yeah, he would walk past him and wouldn't say nothing to him. Because his dad was an asshole. All he wanted to do was get on or get high or get drunk, do whatever, you know? But that's how it was for most of us. If our dads was around, they was on some type of drug or just doing them.

Like Ryun, many of the participants implicated drugs when discussing reasons for their fathers’ absence. The fathers I interviewed grew up during the notorious “crack era” of the 1980s and early 1990s. Research finds that crack use at this time led to increased child neglect and abuse, prostitution, and family dissolution (Johnson, Golub, & Dunlap, 2000; Dunlap, Golub, & Johnson, 2008). The high demand for crack cocaine in inner-city

communities at this time led to a burgeoning black market that, participants explained, became an income source for several of the participants' fathers. This often resulted in their fathers' incarceration, death, or time spent on the streets rather than in the house with family. Some of the participants' fathers, including those who sold drugs, developed their own addictions as well, which contributed to their absence, as Ryun described.

Chamere similarly attributes his father's absence with crack era culture,

My dad, I don't know. See that was like the eighties and ...I don't know that era was crazy. It was the violence and all the drugs and all that from what I heard... I've got two sisters and we all got different dads and around that time all my sisters' dads, they all locked up for the same stuff. And that was around the same era, junior black mafia and all that, it was around that time. I feel like it was the culture back then. It's different now. It's like violence and stuff, but back then that's when drugs first came out, so it was different. From what I hear the stories though that's what I be thinking. A lot of people's dads from back then either got life in jail or killed or surrounded by drugs.

Chamere describes three outcomes similar to those mentioned above, "life in jail or killed or surrounded by drugs." Few fathers of the previous generation were seen as choosing the "right path."

Participants believed that most fathers from the previous generation were absent because of drug addiction, drug selling, or the war on drugs. When I asked Bryce what he thought contributed to the previous generation of fathers' absence he replied,

Jail. I would say ninety percent jail, because I think in the generation before us- our parents- a lot of these drugs and stuff was just hitting the streets. It was an epidemic, so they were just going crazy. Cases after cases and cases after cases and they probably didn't know how to cope with it because it all just...Overnight, the city was flooded with crack cocaine and I think it just drove them crazy and they just all caught cases, cases, cases, cases, cases and now all of them are locked up... That's what I think because almost everybody I know whose dad wasn't there was either dead or he was in jail.

Bryce similarly described two main outcomes for fathers of the previous generation: dead or in jail. Although these statements may seem dramatic, research shows significant

growth in both arrest rates and homicide rates in the 1980s and early 1990s. In the United States, drug-related arrests more than doubled from 581,000 in 1980 to nearly 1.6 million in the year 2000 (Boyum & Reuter, 2005). These growing arrests fueled growing racial disproportionality in the criminal justice system and by 1995, one in three (32%) Black men between the ages of 20 and 29 were under criminal justice control (King & Mauer, 2005). Homicide rates also peaked in 1980 at 10.2 per 100,000 population and stayed relatively high until 1990 when it began to steadily decline (Levitt, 2004). Often when presented, these statistics are stripped of the stories behind the individuals who endured the impact of heightened death and incarceration. The current participants' stories of their absent fathers breathe life into these facts.

Gibril describes his father, who worked as a window-cleaner, as strict, invested, and involved. Gibril grew up with his father in the home, which was a rare experience for the men I interviewed. However, when Gibril was 13-years-old, his father passed from what Gibril thought was a heart attack. Later, it was revealed to Gibril that his father's death was actually the result of a drug overdose, which Gibril now refers to as "the late 80s effect." When I asked whether he thought drugs were the leading cause of the previous generation's absence he responded,

However you look at it, drugs played a part in it. Either you was on drugs, selling drugs, got locked up selling drugs, and got killed. I would say that has to be a big part. Or, doing drugs and just wasn't a father because the addiction hit them so hard that they couldn't do both. So, I think drugs was the main thing in most people lives.

This sentiment was shared across many of the fathers. When discussing the deadbeat dad stereotype, Trey states,

It's not even true, that's the crazy thing. But it was where there was crack. That's all it was, it was crack. Because everybody's dad was locked up or he was high... was like locked up, dead, high, dad. So out of four men, one of them was a pop.

Trey explains, when he was growing up, only one out of four fathers was actively involved in his child's life, the other three were either in jail, dead, or on drugs. When speaking on the impact of drugs, Trey mainly drew from memories of witnessing his friends' family situations. Rather than being involved in the streets, Trey's father worked as a contractor. Trey's experience of paternal absence was due to his father's investment in work, not drugs. His father spent the majority of his time on the job, away from his family, earning him the label of a "rolling stone". This cause of paternal absence in the previous generation was mentioned by several of the fathers.

Chad's parents were married, and his father was "heavily involved." Chad spoke to me about the "family-oriented" block he grew up on and how most of the guys he grew up with are now dead as a result of gun violence. When we spoke about why he thinks so many fell victim to violence, he explained,

[Their fathers] didn't put the time in. They didn't spend enough time on them. They was all just like out and about. You would know because the cars would be gone all day, they don't come until night time. And then early in the morning they gone again. So, I see like the time we had lots of kids and everything 'I miss dad, I miss dad.' It'll change your kid by just being around. It can be eight hours of the day before you go to work. As long as you get eight hours with them it means something. These guys were gone all the time.

Chad describes quality father-child time as a protective factor, alluding to the notion that if fathers had been around more to guide, protect or fill idle time with activities, the guys he grew up with may still be alive. Like several of the other participants, Chad notes that having a father in your life makes a positive difference. Terrance similarly discusses the change, "It's hard to explain how people without fathers act and behave, but there is...it's

a difference in people with active fathers and people with absent fathers. You can kind of see it.” Having this insight encouraged participants to be active with their own children in order to protect and set their children up for success.

Exploring the Motivation Behind the “Generative Generation”

The participants’ investment in their children exemplifies psychologist Erik Erikson’s concept of *generativity*, defined as “an adult’s concern with guiding, nurturing and establishing the next generation” (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 1998, p.134).

Generativity is the seventh stage in Erikson’s (1950) eight stages of human growth. In his life cycle model, each later stage is viewed as dependent on healthy development in the previous stages; an unresolved trauma and maladaptation occurring in a previous stage will continue to impact subsequent stages (Rosenthal, Gurney, & Moore, 1981). Thus, in order to be “generative” and demonstrate concern for the next generation by moving beyond the self, an individual must have already developed a healthy sense of trust, autonomy, initiative, industriousness, identity, and intimacy (Christiansen & Palkovitz, 1998; Erikson, 1963, 1982, 1987).

The majority of studies on generativity draw from middle-class white samples (Hart et al., 2001); however, the few that compare outcomes by race find that Black parents are more likely than white parents to be “generative” (Hart et al., 2001; Jones & McAdams, 2013; Newton & Baltys, 2014). Researchers attribute this finding in large part to heightened social support, vigilant parenting approaches in response to racism and the impacts of segregation, and a desire to have a second chance at familial connection (Hart et al., 2001; Newton & Baltys, 2014; Roy & Lucas, 2006). Findings on social connection

and vigilance from the previous chapter, along with the current chapter's findings of a desire to connect with the next generation in response to an absent connection with the previous generation, bolster this argument and add to the generativity literature.

When asked "what does fatherhood mean to you?" over a third of the participants responded by saying "everything." "Fatherhood means everything to me...to me, a kid really needs his dad" (Chamere). "Everything. It means everything, just to see the smiles on these kids' faces, just investing into these kids the way they want to be invested in. I know what I wanted to be, I know the opportunities I had missed due to my parents and their busy lives" (Yusuf). Even though Yusuf grew up with his father in the home, his father was emotionally unavailable to him. Although Yusuf expresses gratitude for his father's work ethic keeping the bills paid and the lights on, because of work, his father could never attend any of Yusuf's performances or sports games. Yusuf explains how experiencing paternal neglect and disappointment at a young age motivate Yusuf to invest in his children in ways his father could not.

When I asked Yusuf whether he feels as though fathering has changed over time, he exclaimed, "Yes! I believe our generation, from the eighties on up, has very much stepped up to the plate and is trying to change this perception of the Black father." Some participants, such as Kwame, attributed their father's absence to generational trends, "they probably didn't have their fathers. And what the result was more so you know, monkey see, monkey do." Today's fathers, however, viewed themselves as breaking the chain in generational absence. The fathers noted that there was something unique about their generation of men that set them apart from their fathers and their fathers' fathers.

When I asked Hasan whether he felt like the meaning of fatherhood had changed over time in his community, he responded,

I would say it has changed throughout the years from what I'm seeing in my circle and the crowd that I'm around, as far as coming up and my father not being around or not seeing my friends' fathers around and stuff like that. So, we try to make the different change to be around them...We want to just play it a little different now. Instead of being, like we got treated, like our fathers be rolling stones and going out and doing whatever, running around, leaving us with our mom. Yeah, I want to be different, want to be around and actually doing stuff positive and being the impact on my kid.

Rather than using their father's absence as an excuse to not be in their children's lives, Hasan describes how he and his friends use their fathers' absence as motivation to be involved as a positive influence in their children's lives.

Kwame's father was in and out of jail, and during the times his father was in the community, the co-parenting issues with Kwame's mother kept Kwame's father away.

When discussing influences on Kwame's relationship with his own children, Kwame explained,

Believe it or not, what I went through in my childhood with my dad- either you're going to be this way, or you're going to be the opposite... My dad wasn't terrible; he just could've been around more. I don't care what him and my mom were going through. I could've came to your place. I wasn't going to remember your address on the block. You could've told me to cover my eyes. If you're my dad, I would've listened like, 'Alright.' You could've took me where you lived at, but you didn't. So that's the part that was like...that's what influenced me. My dad not being involved in my life how he should is what influenced me to be involved in my kids' life.

Kwame describes a deep desire, as a child, to spend time with his father, yearning for his father to have the strength to navigate challenges in order to be with him. Informed by his experience with paternal absence, Kwame exerts effort to ensure that his children's desires to spend time with him are fulfilled.

When I asked Ryun whether he felt like fathers are more involved in their children's lives now than when he was growing up, he replied,

Now yeah...Because we didn't have... Well I can only speak from my personal view. I didn't have it... I told [my father] one day, 'I learned a lot from you.' He was like, 'what do you mean by that?' I said, 'everything you didn't do, I do.' He got a little emotional about it. I'm like 'I really mean it, the shit I had to go through, it was crazy. I had a step-pop, that nigga was abusive. He used to whoop my ass for nothing. I had done been put in the hospital and all that. Watch my mom get put in the hospital, all types of shit.' I was mad at [my father] for a long time, but like I said, a lot of pops were on drugs or was into the streets. So, I learned as I got older, it wasn't his fault. It was his addiction that was. He was more favored to the addiction then. They hid it from me that my pop was on drugs...But I didn't hold it against him. I told him, 'everything you didn't do, I knew to do so that my son would never go through that.' That's why I felt the way I felt when me and my son's mom broke up. 'No, he's coming with me.' I know what I went through, so I'm not going to let my son through that same thing.

Ryun had to endure great adversity in the wake of his father's absence. Like Chad, Ryun believes his father could have served as a protector against the harm he ultimately sustained. Although Ryun initially harbored anger towards his father, he now demonstrates, like other participants, a level of compassion for his father's addiction issues. This compassion is an example of PTG, which, as defined in the previous chapter, is related to optimism and the ability to adapt to and cope with traumatic experiences (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Ryun's ability to release hatred and show compassion demonstrates a level of personal strength: an item used to measure PTG. Ryun also demonstrates PTG in his ability to see different possibilities for his own parenting style in comparison to the neglect he felt from his father. In fact, Ryun has full custody of his son because, when he and his son's mother broke up, he wanted to manage any threat to his involvement with his child.

Samaj explains that striving to enact fatherhood in contrasting ways from the previous generation is common for his generation of men, "I think my generation of

people that were born in or around my same time are now looking at what they seen growing up as an example of what not to be. So, to try and be more attentive...as a father.” Much research labels fathers’ growing proclivity towards emotional involvement and away from solely breadwinning as “new fatherhood” or “contemporary fathering” (LaRossa, 1995; Townsend, 2002). These shifts are largely attributed to shifting gender roles due to the women’s empowerment movement and deindustrialization (LaRossa, 1995; Roy, 2004). For the current study’s participants, however, it is not structural barriers, such as unemployment, that incentivize them to take on a more involved caregiver role as a means to maintain a sense of importance in the family. Rather, the participants are motivated by a desire to give their children the love and comfort they yearned for as kids and were denied.

When I asked Nasir whether he felt the ways men behave with their children had changed over time in his community he replied, “Somewhat...being as though I never had a dad I always wanted to have a big family, and like just be there to support and just do everything that I didn’t have my dad do for me of course.” The previous absence fueled the current participants’ drive to be supportive and loving. Motivated to be different than the previous generation, Ahmad said he sees this younger generation of fathers spending time with their children in his neighborhood “a lot”,

I see them, when I come outside, most of my friends got kids, so they're with them daily, whether they're going to the store, taking them to the park or movies. I feel a father to be in the child’s life is really important because they grow up different without their fathers. The mother can do a lot but without a father, they can go down a different path. I didn't have my dad growing up, so I told myself, whenever I have a kid, I would never do the same thing my dad did to me...Being as though I got raised without my dad, I always wanted to give my son everything I never had. And do everything with him that my dad never got to do with me. So, that's why I try to do stuff like put him in football, basketball, anything to keep

him occupied from running the streets like I was. So, I just want to be the father to my son that my dad wasn't to me.

Like some of the other participants, Ahmad notes how fathers can provide guidance and keep children off the wrong path. Similar to Nasir's statement that he always wanted to have a big family in light of his father's absence, Ahmad describes how, even before having children, he set an expectation for himself to be a present and active father.

Many of the participants describe having feelings of *generativity*, or concern for the next generation, at a very early age, even before having children. For example, Jonah explains, "I told my mom, since I was like 15, I told her, 'I am going to be a father to my child that my father never was to me'." Erikson (1950) defines the generative life stage as happening in middle-adulthood, however, participants like Jonah, Ahmad and Nasir describe feeling concern for their children much earlier in their lives due to their fathers' absence. These findings challenge Erickson's (1950) assumption that traumatic experiences, like paternal neglect, occurring in earlier life stages are likely to create stagnation and narcissism in later developmental stages. Rather, using a PTG lens, the fathers gain a sense of purpose in becoming a nurturer and reach generativity in spite and because of their trauma.

Terrance's father was what some of the other fathers call "a rolling stone" or someone who is in and out of the child's life and difficult to connect with emotionally. Terrance lived alone with his father for several years but describes feeling more like a roommate than a son, with his father either at always at work or emotionally unavailable at home. When Terrance described himself as a good father, I asked what made him feel like he's "good,"

Because I'm always there, there's a lot of things that I drop for my kids, there's a lot of things I do to make sure my kids have. Just a lot of the things that I guess I was missing from my dad as far as the emotional side. I'm there for my sons in that way. Simple stuff from tucking them in at night, I'm there.

Striving to be and becoming a good father were almost a form of self-soothing for Terrance. Providing his child that which his father could not provide him contributes to Terrance's own healing process. Buddhist monk and author, Thich Nhat Hanh (2010), speaks about healing our inner "wounded child" who carries and externalizes the pain we experienced as a child as well as the pain we inherited from our ancestors. Hanh (2010) explains that we can heal our "wounded child" through mindfulness practices and by bringing awareness to our childhood trauma and pain. Although the participants did not speak outright about practicing mindfulness, they did express a keen awareness of their unmet needs as children, and a deep desire to ensure that their children do not experience the same wounds.

When I asked Martin how he thought his family saw him as a father he smiled, "My mom has actually told me that 'you're a better father than your dad ever was'... I was flattered, I needed to hear that because that's what I want. That's the point, that's why I feel we here. Our kids must be better than us, that's the goal." Previous research finds that impoverished Black men are often generative because of a desire for a second chance at familial connection that may not have been reached when they were growing up (Roy & Lucas, 2006). Both Martin and Terrance's statements align with Erikson's concept of generativity through their desire to connect with their child and give their children a better father than they himself received.

When speaking with Joel about why it seems more fathers are involved today than previous generations he explained,

Well from my perspective, it's not having a father in my life. And that just motivated me to be in my child's life once I had one. My prior experiences enabled me to be the best that I could be for my child. And that's not saying that that's going to be for everyone because it could go either way basically. But from my experience, the way I saw it, it's just that I'm going to take advantage of being in my child's life, because I didn't have it for myself.

Instead of focusing on the pain of paternal absence, Joel expresses gratitude for his prior experiences, as they enable him to be the best he can be for his child. Although many of the participants expressed frustration and sadness as a result of experiencing their fathers' absence, they often coupled those feelings with appreciation and motivation to do better.

Father v. Dad

Interview participants in Roy and Dyson's (2010) study of a community-based fatherhood program for low-income Black fathers noted a distinction between being a *father* and being a *dad*. To the men, "dads" represented the bare minimum of involvement and "reduced men to their physical capacity to procreate," while the term "father" was "loaded with respect" and represented consistent paternal engagement and caregiving (Roy & Dyson, 2010, p.149). Guided by this research, I asked the participants whether they thought there was a difference between being a "father" and being a "dad." Bryce responded to this question with an exclamation, "Yes!" I asked him to explain,

I think anybody can be a dad. Anybody can be a dad. It's just a title, but it's hard to be a father. It takes a lot to be father. Like my stepdad, my mom's I guess you just call him a fiancé. They've been together I think twenty years, and I'm thirty so he's been around since I was ten, nine...and he's always been like a dad to me...Like I told him my wedding's coming up, I want you to be right behind me. He's like 'no, that's for your dad.' I'm like 'yeah, that's why I want you to be right behind me.' He doesn't want to be coming between me and my pop. I'm like 'listen. Every time I've got to tell you the same thing. Every time. You are my father. That's my dad. He had me, he made me, but you are my father. My dad had his chance to be there, and he didn't want it. You were there. My favorite team's the Forty-Niners. That's your favorite team. Why do you think they're my

favorite team? The first game I ever watched was with you, and it was the Forty-Niners and I've been in love with them ever since. You are my father.' So, he started crying. He appreciated it.

Although paternal lineage is biological, the concept of a "father" is a social construct.

With fatherhood defined by the participants as *being there*, blood relation did not award a man the title of "father," but rather a man's investment and presence determined whether or not he would be considered a "father."

When I asked Chris whether there was a difference between "father" and "dad", he replied,

Being a dad just means that you exist, like you're a sperm donor pretty much at that point. Anybody can be a dad. To be a father though, to be a father is to pick your kid up off the ground when she falls off her bike and scrapes her knees, is to look under her bed for monsters when you know there's nothing there, and to look in the closet and to read her story time books and stuff like that.

Although there was a lack of consensus upon which term, "father" or "dad", was seen with respect and which was seen as "cheap", the current study participants echo Roy and Dyson's (2010) findings by repeatedly distinguished one as a "sperm donor" who's "in and out" and the other as someone who is emotionally invested in their children.

Many of the participants, such as Jacques, spoke about how their fathers, if they were around, only fulfilled the role of provider, "Even though my dad wasn't around coming up, he always provided for me. He wasn't in my life that much, but if I needed money, he had no problem dropping it off. I just had no father figure in my life, so I want to be in my daughter's life." I later asked Jacques how he would define fatherhood,

See a father is somebody that provides. All you did was, you're there. A dad's like you're involved in your child's life, you're doing things with them, you're doing things for them. If you're a father, you just, basically you're just giving sperm. All you did was provide that. But a dad is there, he's involved in every situation. Nothing will sway him about you. That's what being a dad is.

Jacquees did not view his father as a father because he was not *there*. To be awarded the title of “father,” there has to be involvement beyond financial provision.

The importance of being there was echoed by Josiah when I asked whether he felt the ways men behave with their children has changed over time in his community,

From my perspective, yeah, because if you grew up rough and it was tough for you, when you have a child, you don't want that for your child... You want the best for your child. You want them to do what you didn't do. You want them to have what you didn't have, if you can provide that. But if you can't provide it, that don't mean don't be there. That's what I've learned after having my first child. Because when I had my first child, I didn't have a job... But as people gave me so many comments and was respecting me because I was always around my child, even though they didn't know I was stressing because I didn't have a job at the time. But I was always around him, so when I seen people actually like respecting that, man I can't do what I want to do but I'm around. So, people respected more that I was around... So that's what I learned and that's what a lot of fathers need to know. It's not all about money. It's about being around. So as long as you around, your kid always going to love you, you always going to love your kid.

Research has found that men are more likely to consistently and actively engage with their children when they are positively appraised by those around them for being an involved father (Dyer, 2005; Dyer, Pleck, & McBride, 2012; Pasley, Furtis, & Skinner, 2002). Although some fathers find motivation from previous experience, others, like Josiah, find motivation in the respect they receive for *being there* despite financial struggles.

For Bryce, the importance of *being there* was realized through counseling in jail and solidified upon release,

You couldn't tell me when I went to jail I wasn't a good dad. My kids ain't want for nothing but that ain't making you a good dad. [The counselor] broke it down to me, ‘You're still a dead-beat. You take care of them financially, but they don't have a father. You ain't there really never. You're maybe there when they wake up or when they go to sleep but through the course of the day you don't interact with them, you don't teach them nothing, you don't do nothing, you just stuff money in their face. You could be a banker. You could be giving them a loan. How can they look at you like a dad?’ I'm, ‘Damn, that's harsh,’ but it was true. I was a dead-

beat. I may take care of them financially. He's, 'I guarantee your kids are so young they're never going to remember none of that stuff you bought them. All that money you sent them, they're not going to remember none of it. You want to know what they will remember is you tucking them in every night, you reading them stories, you playing the game with them and stuff like that. I guarantee when you go home they're not going to remember none of that stuff that you gave them,' and it was a reality check because not only did they not remember none of the stuff that I gave them, my daughter didn't even remember me.

I cried. It killed me. That's when I vowed I'd change cause that was devastating. My only daughter she doesn't even know me. It killed me. That's when I was like I'm done. It's crazy because everything I think happens for a reason cause I went to jail this time for something I didn't do. I just was with the wrong person at the wrong time, and I got caught up in what he did. But it was still a blessing cause the life I was living, I may not have done that, but I was breaking the law every day, and anything could have happened. I feel like it kind of saved me. To be who I am today, I'd risk going through whatever I went through all over again because today, I'm a totally different person, and my kids can be proud. They can look every day and say my dad's there. My dad loves us; my dad do this with us, my dad does that with us...I had them before I went to jail, but I was more so taking caring of them with money than time. Stuff that they don't remember. They don't remember money when they're that young. They don't remember sneakers or clothes. They're babies. They don't even care, but they would have remembered me being there all the time. If I had spent more time with my daughter, maybe when I went away she'd have remembered when I came back. That's the stuff I think about, and that's why now even if I'm flat broke not a dime in my pocket, we're going to do something. We can figure something out. There's things you can do for free so I try to just spend the most time with them as I can somehow some way. They're my driving force to stay out of trouble.

Bryce's daughter was only a couple of months old when Bryce left for jail, and while he was in jail, his daughter's mother refused to bring his daughter to visit. Although it's unknown whether his daughter, at such a young age, would have recognized him after so much time apart even if Bryce had been spending a lot time with her before going to jail, experiencing his daughter's discomfort and distrust concretized his counselor's opinion. Even though incarceration can be a traumatizing experience (DeVeaux, 2013, Goff et al., 2007; Haney, 2002), Bryce feels gratitude for the change in him that time away initiated.

From the day he returned home to his daughter's hesitant and wary expression, Bryce vowed to give his children *time* and not *things*.

Money used to mean a lot to James, who was a high-level drug dealer in a neighboring county during his late teenage years and early twenties. He explains how he used to make thousands of dollars a day just sitting on his couch and, at one point, owned 4 cars. At 22-years old, however, James had his first child and went on the run for three years from an attempted murder charge. However, trying to raise his son while constantly looking over his shoulder was too stressful and James decided, at 25-years old, to turn himself in. The case ultimately got thrown out, however, only a couple of months later, James was charged with a felony for possession with intent to distribute and served 8-months in jail. When speaking about his experience in jail, he stated,

I went to the zoo like the Thursday before I got locked up. And you know how you can look in the gorilla cage? Look through windows, it's like glass, looking at the baby gorillas. But I sat in jail, I sat on the table. I looked up at the correction officers and they in the glass, looking down at us, and I looked around and these motherfuckers is jumping on and off the tables and somebody over here bout to fight. It's like 'oh shit, I'm the fucking monkey now. I'm the gorilla. I'm the animal.' I went in my cell and I read books for the rest of the time. I said, 'I don't belong here.'

Upon returning to the community, James realized that he couldn't keep putting himself or his family in danger, and so he went looking for jobs and has stayed "legit" ever since.

Now, in discussing money and his children, he speaks on the insignificance of financial provision and the importance of spending time. When asked what it means to be a good father, James replied,

Just to be there emotionally, not even financially, I don't give a damn about that, I don't care about that. Finances don't build a child's brain you know, finances don't strengthen a child's emotions... Yeah, [the kids] don't care about [money]. They don't care about none of that shit. They don't care about nothing...it's like, 'Remember that time?' That's what you hear the most. 'Remember that time,

dad?' ...It's not financial at all. Life is not financial. It's not at all. It's about love, period.

Gibril similarly describes a good father as loving, supportive, and *there*. His definition draws on his own life experience with his father missing from his formative teenage years,

You know, support your daughter's ideas, being there, being at, like I said, after-school activities, down time, being there for her weaknesses, making her strong. You know, just being there. Being there for everything. Yes, being there. That's the main thing is just being there because you know I can watch her growing up, so just being around, you know what I mean? Catch all the wrongs to fix it.

Due to Gibril's father passing away when Gibril was 13 and his mom passing away when Gibril was 19, Gibril felt as though he didn't have enough guidance and protection. Nor did he feel as though he was provided the skills to cope with various challenges. After his mom passed away, Gibril dropped out of college and began hustling drugs on the streets. With a felony on his record, he has struggled to find gainful employment. In our first interview, Gibril told me he was addicted to Percocet and that, even though he was trying his best to be an involved father, sometimes his addiction took precedence over his children in terms of his time and resources. By our follow-up interview, Gibril had three weeks of sobriety under his belt and had found a job as a subcontractor for a moving company. Gibril expresses hope that being supportive, giving his daughter strength and fixing her wrongs will give her the foundation she needs in order to go down a different, better path.

Like Gibril, many of the fathers emphasized the importance of guiding their children rather than just being a "sperm donor". Bryce explains,

To me, fatherhood means being the sustainer, the provider and the guider. I think that's the three things your kids need from their father most. They need guidance for one over all. They need you guiding them in the right path. I think that's a

parent's main purpose. If you look at animals, they have their babies. They guide them and show them what they're supposed to show them then let them go. I think that's kind of what it is with humans, too. We have our babies. We're supposed to guide them, show them and get them ready for what the world is and let them go. So, I think guidance is overall and they need you to provide for them until they're able to provide. I think they need sustenance. I think they need structure. They need to be somewhere where they know it's the same. I think different places and different faces confuses kids. They just need stability. They need something solid. I think if you can provide them three things, you could have an incredible impact on a kid's life from the bad to the good. The smallest little things can deter them from the bad...Cause I know. I've done it, and I've been there, and my dad didn't do. I know if he did, I wouldn't have...if he had only done this.

Informed by his experience, Bryce believes that in addition to providing, a parent should serve as a protector, a guide, and a source of stability. He looks to parenting practices in the wild when constructing his definition of father. He sees animals guiding and modeling for their young and believes humans should be emulating that trend in order for children to have the best outcomes.

The Influence of Role Models

Although participants' definitions of fatherhood were, in large part, drawn from dreams of what they wanted their fathers to be, they were also informed by the role models they had growing up. Many of the participants learned what it meant to be a good father and what it looked like to "be there" from fathers, stepfathers, uncles, community members, or fathers played on TV. Although many of the men experienced paternal absence, the majority claimed a "father figure" who took them under his wing and supported them as they believed a father should.

Kai was one of the few participants who had an involved father living with him in his home while growing up. When I asked Kai what he learned from his father he responded,

Take care, be there for your kids. Like even if you can't financially do things for them, do something with them to make them remember.... And they'll never forget a memory so there's that. Because...my dad, he did a lot, he showed me--he taught me things, he was into cars heavy when I was young. And I'm still into cars too, I know I got that from him. But you know, he just taught me a lot. I got a lot of memories. I don't remember a lot of stuff that he bought, spent money on, besides my education, but I can remember things that we've done together, trips we took. You know like, you know, the time.

Kai's father served as a teacher and a positive role model. His father's presence cultivated unforgettable father-son memories. Because of this, Kai now values providing his children with *experiences* rather than *things*.

Shawn, with two tear drop tattoos under each eye, met his father when he was nine years old,

It was crazy. I used to always see my dad every day when I used to go to school, but it was like a situation where as though my mom kind of figured like he wasn't [my father] until we take the blood test. He... used to always give me money when I go to school, he used to be outside washing his car, and then I say probably like three years after that he just came to my grandma house and was like 'I've been trying get in touch with you, let you know that I'm your dad. We got to take a blood test and all.' We take the blood test and they swab us, and they came back, it was my dad.

I asked him how that felt, "It was good, I needed him in my life cause he do construction... someone always need their house fixed, always. I know a lot from him... I'm definitely blessed to have my dad teach me something, everything, teach me how to be a man." Shawn is able to compare his life with and without his father. Having experienced both and having observed his father's determination to be in his life, Shawn is now adamant about co-parenting, communicating, and getting through hardships with his children's mother so that he can live with his children and be a stable presence in their lives.

Both Gibril's mother and father, prior to their passing, acted as role models for Gibril. They instilled in Gibril the importance of education and, through their actions, taught Gibril how to prioritize school work as a parent,

My mom and dad, 'before you get home or when you come home, no playing. Do your homework first, then go play. Because if you go play, you might forget about your homework, get tired, go to sleep, and then you got to do it in the morning. Then you don't wanna get up in the morning'...So, I took school first. That's one thing I don't play about with my daughter, and she gets good grades and all that, so I don't have to be on her about that because we instilled it in her young. You know what I mean? Catch it young, it's a habit. So, she already got the habit of school.

Research finds that Black parents are more likely than white parents to view themselves as role models and pass down values and insights gained from personal experience rather than material items (Hart et al., 2001; Newton & Baltys, 2014). Gibril models his parents in the ways he interacts with his daughter and instills values of education and schooling.

For participants without present biological fathers, many turned to their stepfathers for paternal guidance and support. Amir's biological father was involved in the streets and eventually wound up in jail. When describing his relationship with his biological father Amir stated,

I know who he was, but I didn't really know him. I didn't know what he liked or where my dad goes when he's not with my mom. I didn't know none of that. I only know that my dad used to pull up in different luxury cars at a time. He would drop some money off to me and say, 'Are you okay?' 'Yeah, I'm ok,' and he'll pull off. I don't want your money. I don't want your money. I don't want none of them cars you're driving around. I don't want none of them fancy clothes that you be buying. I don't want none of that stuff. I want my dad. I want to talk to my dad.

In contrast, when speaking about his stepfather, he explained,

He was like an actual father when he didn't have to be. ...He actually taught me more than my dad actually taught me...He taught me about Islam. He taught me about family. He taught me how to be a man. He taught me how to take care of things that you don't need to take care of but just take care of it because you might receive a certain amount of blessing. He taught me how to have a heart.

Amir's biological father modeled what *not* to do as a parent, while his stepfather served as a positive role model and teacher who demonstrated the importance of *being there*.

Both of these experiences inform Amir's current definition of "good fathering" to include being communicative, responsible, and emotionally available to his children.

Ryun learned what it meant to be a responsible father by experiencing and witnessing both his stepfather and uncles,

[I learned] how to be a responsible man. I used to watch my uncles get up every day and go to work. Then come home and party. I learned how to balance it... My uncles, they go to work. None of my uncles were street dudes, as far as selling drugs and all of that... my uncles, they taught me a balance, go to work, come home take care of home, take care of the family, then do you. I mean my pop, he was a street dude. I would hear stories; my pop was known as, I guess, a drug dealer. He's one of them dudes that was taking what he wanted. So, I stayed away from that... Then my step-father... 'however, I have to take care of my peoples, I'm going to take care of them.' From my uncles it was the balance, my step-pop was 'no matter what you got to do, go get it. Just make sure you survive.' I got a kid that I have to take care of. I can't go to my son and be like, 'well I can't do this, that, or the third because of this other situation.' My son come to me, 'Dad, I need-' 'I got you. I'm going to get it.' I got to figure out and that's what I'll see from my step-pop, even from my uncles. My uncle has probably over fourteen kids. I done seen all of them go get it for their kids. So as a kid, I just grew up and I just watched. I'm really quiet and I don't talk too much about nothing, I'm just, 'alright, that's how you do that. I'm going to go ahead and do that too, but I'm going to do it my way.' You just have to learn from people you come up around. I was fortunate enough to have good people around me.

The concept of parental sacrifice became a salient theme across participants, mainly because they saw someone in their life, whether it was a stepfather, uncle, mother, or friend, going above and beyond for his children. The men characterized going above and beyond as working hard to keep the lights and heat on for the children's comfort, giving up personal passion projects to spend more time with their children, or choosing to buy something for their children rather than themselves.

Bryce spoke to me about a recent sacrifice he made for his child's seventh birthday,

For his birthday, I didn't have it. I was just going to find something we could do; go to a park or something for his birthday, but I felt like I had to do something. He's been on the honor roll every month...you've got to reward him. He had his honor roll ceremony four days before his birthday. The whole time he'd show me his certificate. He'd be like 'hey Dad, you going to give me my backpack for my birthday?' I've got to figure it out. I told my wife we've got to figure this one out. I know the bills. We've got to figure something out. She's like what do you want to do? Then I did something that I didn't think I would ever do, I sold my Xbox. I said 'you know what, it's more important. I can always get another Xbox.' You don't want him to feel like what he's doing is going unnoticed. You want him to know what he's doing is good. You want to give him a reason to keep it up.

Bryce learned to be a father from his uncle who took custody of all seven of his children and emphasized the importance of involved fathers, "He's like, 'listen you can't replace a dad. They need a dad.'" Bryce witnessed the sacrifices his uncle made and took note, understanding the importance of investing in his child. Bryce and the other participants explained how definitions of fatherhood and the ways they interacted with their children were influenced by internalized messages about provision, support, and love gained from direct and vicarious experiences with role models throughout their lives.

Those without a father or stepfather often turned to their mother for insight and influence. Many of these fathers held their mother in high regard and acknowledged the sacrifices she made to take care of the household. When I asked Renald who taught him to be a father he responded, "my mother." He explained that she taught him how to be "a man" by being "a provider" and "a shield." I asked what it meant to be a shield, "Just being their heart. Their backbone." Renald, throughout our interview, spoke about how much he loves his mom and respects her for taking care of him and his siblings all on her

own. Because of his mom's relentless support, he explains, he tries to see his son as much as he can.

When I asked Jason who taught him to be a father, he responded, "I want to say my dad did from not being here. But more so, my mom." I asked how so, "Because she was just there. 'Whatever you need, I got you. Anything, I got you. I'm not going to let you hurt, go through anything, I got you.' And that's the person that I am to this day. I try to be there for any problem, no problems, everything." Jason is able to see his mother's influence in his own parenting through his drive to be reliable and dependable for his children.

Quincy similarly viewed his mom as a role model. When I asked if there was anyone who influenced his parenting, Quincy responded, "My mom. She was strong and would make things happen. She made so many sacrifices and things like that so, definitely my mom." For these fathers, the value of being there for their children no matter what was shaped by perceptions of their mothers' resolute strength and devotion.

Friends' fathers also served as role models. When I asked Kwame who taught him to be a father he replied,

Myself and my uncle. I took the good things that he did and my friends' fathers--me seeing how they dealt with them--they would make me happy when their dads would do something for them...I talked to them on the phone and they be like, 'My dad just took me to the baseball game.' It was just the little stuff. I was like, 'That's so cool.' Sometimes they would take me too, but it was just so cool. So, I took those things and whether they cared for their children and I put it into myself. I took from all good things I seen growing up and just try to do the same thing or better even.

Without Kwame's father around, he was in awe of his friends' fathers' involvement. The joy that Kwame felt when seeing and hearing about the activities his friends would do with their fathers informed him of how his children might feel being around him. These

experiences motivate him to spend time with his children and be an even better father than what he saw growing up.

Similar to Kwame, Jonah's friend's father was more of a *father* to Jonah than Jonah's biological father. As Jonah explains, Jonah's biological father absolved himself of his fatherly responsibilities after he got remarried when Jonah was thirteen years old. Even when Jonah's biological father was around, Jonah laments, he only invested money into his children. Jonah's friend's father, on the other hand, invested *time*,

Like my friend Jay, his dad is like, he is really like a father to me. Like more than like my own father because like from a young age, like he said he was like 'oh I remember when your mom was pregnant with you.' And just like me and his son was like same age, same classes, all the time so it was like, he really was like a father. My sister had seen him recently at a funeral, they was like 'hey how are you doing?' He was like, 'how is my son doing?' She knew exactly what he was talking about, like 'he good, he is at my grandmas right now' ...Summertime he would take us to go over to the park, winter time is like they have this toy drive one block away it was right up the street and he would always take us there. When I think of fatherhood, like at a young age, like I picture the things I did with him. You know, my dad was cool, it was just mainly shopping, like a financial thing with him.

Doing things with Jay's father felt good and provided a sense of comfort for Jonah. These feelings and the connection these father-son activities cultivated was more meaningful than getting things from his dad. Jonah, therefore, defines "fatherhood" as something participatory and engaged. Aligned with other participants distinguishing between "father" and "dad," Jonah makes this distinction when he says Jay's dad was like a "father" to him and later refers to his biological father as a "dad" in the context of only being a provider.

For some participants, fathers portrayed on TV provided the most intimate glimpse of what an involved "father" looks and feels like. Many participants, such as EJ, speak about how they now attempt to emulate what they saw fathers doing in television

shows and movies when they were growing up, “You watch [fathers on TV], and you see yourself, if not in the beginning, later on in life, imitating stuff you've seen them do.”

One of the participants, Samaj, praised his own father for instilling valuable life lessons while he was growing up. But because Samaj’s father was in the military, he wasn’t as accessible as Samaj would have liked. Cliff Huxtable, as played by Bill Cosby in *The Cosby Show*, was able to fill the absence inherently experienced by a military brat. Cosby could demonstrate what it was like, as a father, to “be there” and therefore deeply know his children. Samaj has full custody of his two-year-old daughter and regards being a father as synonymous with being a teacher who is always available and present. Although he attributes this belief, in part, to the lessons from his parents, he also acknowledges the impact Cosby had on his parenting style. When speaking about images of fathers in the media, he reminisces, “I still reference Bill Cosby to this day because of the things he did with older children.” When I asked what specific things Cosby did that he liked, he replied,

It's almost like he knew that his children would mess up, but he gave them the opportunity to do it anyway. I think that was interesting. Wow, you kinda know that your children are dumb enough to do something stupid, but you're going to give them the free rein to do the stupid thing anyway. I think it's genius though. I think it's genius to do that...I think that was done that way because I think he knew his children well enough to do that.

Many of the fathers grew up taking notes from Bill Cosby on how to be a father, a partner, and a man. When asked about images of fathers Dawan saw in the media growing up he explained,

Great fathers. Bill Cosby. Great fathers. Uncle Phil. I had seen great fathers. That's why I just watch TV and just know that anybody who belittle their child or belittle their baby mother, they just a coward. They a coward because there's just no way. No way that you're going to put your kids in harm's way or disrespect your mother of your kids or just disrespect your kids, period.

During the interview, Dawan described how his father “abandoned him” when he was 3-years-old because of issues his father was having with Dawan’s mom. Dawan had to, therefore, learn from fathers like Cosby what it looked like to co-parent and give your child unconditional love. It was through TV shows that Dawan was able to learn what it meant to be a “great father” and a great partner and later emulate those traits.

When I asked Henry what images of fatherhood he saw in the media growing up, he responded,

I was watching Fresh Prince of Bel Air. Uncle Phil’s like the best “not father” to Will...I feel as though, how Rocky got like a statue, they made a statue of him...They mean something to somebody too. To some people, it be the world. I like that. I like Bill Cosby or Uncle Phil. They was great fathers...Especially in movies, I always wanted my dad to be like how the movies be. Like, dang, dad was with you every day, throughout the year, teaching you how to do stuff, from making the bed, to cleaning up, to playing basketball, or education or sports. Just being active with your child. And always having it, not just sometimes... No, I’m talking about throughout the year. Like a lifetime of memories. I feel as though that was the meaning of being a father to me. Really just being there. Just being there. That’s what some people just ask for. Some people just want you to be in they life. They don’t even want you to do nothing for them. Some people just want that company...That father and son time. Some people just want that, so they can understand who their father are, stuff like that.

Seeing fathers making memories with their children left a lasting impression on Henry and many other participants. For participants like Henry, Chad, Gibril, and Kai, being a teacher and spending quality “father and son time” were seen as the leading characteristics of a “great father.”

Moving Forward

The participants describe navigating the harms caused by paternal absence, such as feelings of abandonment and an inescapable deadbeat dad stereotype their generation of

fathers are subjected to regardless of contradictory behavior. Using a PTG lens however, the participants simultaneously demonstrate compassion for their fathers by acknowledging the contributors to paternal absence in the previous generation, such as drugs and incarceration. The PTG lens also serves to inform expressions of generativity and motivations to be loving and involved with their children.

Although Erikson's original theory of generativity holds that experiencing trauma, such as parental neglect, in early developmental stages is likely to disrupt an individual's ability to achieve generativity (1950), the participants demonstrate that experiencing paternal absence actually *incentivizes* feelings of generativity. Rather than presuming that trauma results in maladaptation, the current findings contribute to the concept of generativity by demonstrating how trauma can cultivate strength, appreciation for life, and a determination to safeguard the future generation from enduring the trauma experienced by the previous generation.

The actions participants take to demonstrate care and concern for the future generation is influenced by witnessing and experiencing their biological fathers in addition to various role models, such as stepfathers, friends' fathers, and fathers portrayed in the media. These examples enable participants to distinguish between a "father" and "dad," and encourage them to earn the title characterized by *being there*.

The next chapter discusses the various supports that facilitate paternal involvement as well as the barriers to *being there* that participants frequently lament, such as employer discrimination, unstable housing, and contentious relationships with the mothers of their children. Although external forces impede participants' ability to spend

quality time, ultimately the fathers determine that the biggest barriers are within the *self*, exemplifying the common thread of agency.

CHAPTER 6: NAVIGATING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO FATHERING

Like chapter four, this chapter addresses research question five by exploring the ecological conditions necessary for participants to enact fatherhood or *be there* for their children. This chapter also attends to research question two through a discussion on others' perceptions of the participants as fathers and how those perceptions a) impact the ways participants view themselves as fathers, and b) influence the ways participants enact fatherhood. Drawing from literature on human agency, PTG, and Payne's (2011) Sites of Resilience theory, the current chapter explores the various systems that hinder fathers' involvement and highlights the agentic ways fathers respond to these barriers.

Throughout the interviews, the men repeatedly cited two specific systems they have to navigate in order to spend time with and provide for their children: the criminal justice system and what I call "the family system." Having contact with the criminal justice system: (a) restricts participants' ability to move freely, thus limiting participants' ability to visit and travel with their children, (b) blocks economic opportunities, thus limiting the participants' ability to provide for their families, and (c) limits housing options, thus limiting the participants' ability to spend nights with their children. The "family system," comprised of maternal gatekeeping¹² and child support orders, limits participants' ability to spend time with their children and pigeonholes the fathers into the sole role of provider. Although these systems work both independently and together to hinder fathers from enacting their paternal identities, the participants ultimately claim a

¹² Maternal gatekeeping is defined as the mother's ability to restrict fathers' access to their children (Roy & Dyson, 2005).

strong sense of personal agency in their belief that the onus is on the man to jump hurdles in order to be an involved father.

This chapter begins with a look at how fathers manage the ways in which the criminal justice system limits their parenting abilities. It then explores how family court and maternal gatekeeping obstruct participants' ability to spend quality time with their children. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how fathers hold themselves accountable and attempt to transcend barriers that impede paternal involvement.

Navigating the Criminal Justice System

Ninety percent of the men I interviewed have an arrest record, with charges ranging from “improper sun screening” (blocking the sun in their car with an “improper device”) to attempted murder. Overall, the criminal justice system affects these fathers' ability to parent in three specific ways: restricting movement, restricting employment, and restricting housing.

Restricted Movement

Those on probation or parole often discussed the ways supervision stipulations disallow them from taking trips or going on adventures with their children. Bryce, who is serving a seventeen-year probation sentence, explains,

You can't trip at all. Any little thing, it could be over. That's just the worst feeling. How can you live normally? I've got to ask can I leave the city. If [my family] want to go to Atlantic City to the beach--it's Friday, five o'clock--we decide, 'let's go to the beach.' I can't go because the parole office closed at five o'clock and my parole officer, he wants to know a week in advance if I want to leave so where he can give me my answer.

As described in the previous chapter, the fathers place high value on creating memories with their children and providing them with experiences the participants never had as children themselves. Although Bryce claims accountability for the actions that led him to be on supervision, he is trying, as we learned in the previous chapter, to reinvent himself. By volunteering his time and efforts as a football coach and mentor, Bryce explains how he is atoning for the negativity he says he brought to his neighborhood through violence and drug selling. However, as noted here, Bryce's inability to freely take his children to the beach makes Bryce feel like he can't be a "normal" parent or escape his past, no matter how hard he tries.

Travel restrictions were particularly problematic for participants, like Kareem, whose children live out of state. When I asked Kareem, whose daughter lives in Atlanta, how being on parole affects his life, he stated, "A lot. It stops me from doing a lot of different things...Like traveling, stuff like that...I'm actually going down to Atlanta in the next month or so, and I just got to make sure it's ok with my parole officer before I can go." Although he expects his parole officer will approve the trip, having to take this step in order to see his daughter is an extra hurdle he has to jump to get there.

Other participants, like Kiwuan, disregard supervision stipulations in order to move freely with their children. When I asked whether being on probation affects Kiwuan's relationship with his children he responded, "No." I asked if he's allowed to leave the county, he smirked, "No. Do I? Yes. Have I? Yes. Am I going to keep going to? Yes... Let me tell you something, probation is a joke." Over the course of the year that Kiwuan has been on probation, he went from in-person check-ins once a month, to checking in in-person every three months, to now calling in every couple of months.

Kiwuan has figured out how to stay in good standing with a job in order to loosen the system's grip so that he can move freely with his children when and where he wants. Kiwuan's deliberate manipulation of the system in order to be spontaneous and travel with his children can be framed an act of adaptation and resilience.

The definition of resilience within Sites of Resilience theory draws from Franklin's (1999) notion of "personal resilience," or an individual's "effective management of the hassles of daily life, cumulating over one's life history, which enhances one's adaptive repertoire and efficacy in coping strategies" (p. 781). Kiwuan's life history involves a story of persistent avoidance and management of the criminal justice system. Kiwuan's father was a well-known drug dealer in the neighborhood and Kiwuan followed suit starting at the age of 15. Although he has since turned "legit," working as a manager at a cake factory for the last 5 years, he spent over a decade learning how to avoid the police and provide for himself on the streets, all gaining his high school degree. These experiences educated Kiwuan on how to work and resist the system in a way that allows him to still travel with his child while under supervision, thus displaying personal resilience.

Chamere, on the other hand, who has served five years of his 6-year probation sentence, feels powerless to the restrictions placed on him through community-based corrections. When I asked how probation affects his life, he responded, "A lot, I can't travel. It be stopping me from getting certain jobs. It be doing a lot. It holds you back from doing a lot. Probation holds you back." Not only does Chamere feel limited in his movement, but he also mentions how being on probation limits his job opportunities.

Even for those not on probation or parole, just having a criminal record was one of the most frequently cited reasons for unemployment.

Restricted Employment

A little over 9% of individuals living in Southwest Philadelphia were unemployed in 2017, more than double the national rate of unemployment at the time (Census, 2018). About half of the fathers I interviewed were unemployed or doing odd jobs here and there while seeking employment at the time of our initial interview. Most attribute their joblessness to employer discrimination due to their criminal record. Although, as described in the last chapter, most participants define fatherhood as “being there” and spending quality time with their children, the men express feeling societal, familial, and internal pressure to also fulfill the traditional paternal role of *provider*. By limiting their economic opportunities, a criminal record hinders participants’ ability to perform their desired range of fathering roles.

When I first saw Jason, he was walking alone down the street with big bright energy, headphones in, singing out loud and smiling at everyone he came across. During our first interview he spoke about how he wants more positivity in the neighborhood. When I asked how that can happen, he replied, “Treat people as if you want to be treated...I walk up and down the block every day, even if I’m in a terrible mood, with a big smile on my face...I think when we met... I was smiling, walking down the street with groceries doing music. That’s just me.” Jason was unemployed and actively looking for a job at the time of our first interview. Eight years prior to our interview, when Jason was still a teenager, he was convicted of a felony for drug possession with intent to distribute. Two years prior to our interview he was convicted of a theft misdemeanor. For each

charge, Jason was only sentenced to probation, never experiencing any extended jail time. When I asked him what kind of job he was looking for, he replied,

Jason: I'm the type of person that would take any kind of job but if I had a choice to choose a job, I would like a clothing store, hate to say this, like a McDonalds, I like food. [Laughs] So, yeah stuff like that.

Abbie: And have you put in applications?

Jason: Every day, all day. Literally coming from South Philly just now, I was putting in applications in my whole day up there.

Abbie: Why do you think you're finding such difficulty?

Jason: Being as though, me personally, the background situation, it's kind of bad. I feel as though once I do get a job, it's like they already stereotyped me. So, I think more so, they don't like my background.

Several fathers with records exemplify PTG by accepting the need for others and seek out help from family and friends in order to secure employment. However, Jason, like many, felt as though, because of his criminal record and the corresponding criminal stereotype, his job options were limited. A criminal record creates a ceiling some participants, such as Gibril, feel they cannot break through, "I haven't been in trouble in seven years, but it's still held against me cause I got a felony on my record. So, it's like 'damn, how do y'all want me to better myself?'" Jason, however, still remains positive and smiling despite the barriers and stereotyping he endures.

Other participants resisted barriers to employment by creating economic opportunities for themselves. After working for two years as a laborer for a construction company following his year and a half incarceration, Darius was let go. As a 34-year-old with a GED and criminal record, he has spent the last two years unemployed because he can't find a job willing to match his last salary. When I asked how he has been making it work in the meantime he responded,

I'm trying, doing little odd jobs for my family and stuff. So, I will call and ask if they need me to do anything, cut the grass, take trash out for people that can't do it, try to put little things together in their houses if they need help. That's what I'm trying to do to make money, trying to make ends meet.

Darius tries to stick with “clean” hustles because, he says, he doesn't want to put his family in danger. He is able to turn to his support system to find alternative means of work.

Other participants, such as Sam, are willing to take on illegal hustles in order to make more money. Sam grew up in the projects with his family heavily involved in the streets. Although Sam's mom means everything to him, without his father around, and his mom working several jobs to support him and his siblings, Sam had limited guidance growing up. With negative influences and the ability to run the streets at an early age, Sam started getting into the stick-up game, making money by robbing drug dealers and corner stores. After a long run, Sam got charged with four counts of attempted murder for a shooting he claims he didn't actually commit. But, because the shooter was part of Sam's crew, Sam willingly took the fall, even though, he says, he was scared. Expecting a life sentence, Sam was relieved to receive only four years of incarceration and attempted to turn “legit” upon his release five years ago. However, the difficulty of finding a job, coupled with the pressure to provide for his children, pushed Sam back into his old ways,

Shit, [my kids] the reasons I got locked up so many times and did so much bad shit. I had to do it all for them...like robbing people--I was robbing a lot of people in stores in a row. In a row... I got caught for that too last year, but I would beat it because they didn't have no evidence, so I beat the case, but I got caught for that. So, I chilled off of robbing like stores actually and just stuck to people because they can't tell. Well, hustlers can't tell. I left the stores alone. But a lot of the shit I did, I had to do for they stuff, school stuff, or haircuts. Haircuts killed me. That's why I got dreads, because I was tired of haircuts. I could not keep paying eighty

dollars, eighty dollars every two weeks for all four of us. It was killing me... But if I didn't have it, I had to go get it.

After getting caught last year, Sam has since stayed out of trouble and has been working for a grocery store. Although willing to overlook his criminal record, the job does not pay enough to comfortably support himself and his family. When I asked Sam whether there was anything that limited his ability to parent, he responded,

Yeah. My record. My record. I can't get past that. I can't get these four attempted murders off my record. So, every time I go to a job... I can get the interview, the second interview and all that, and then, at the second interview, when I sign that paper for the piss test and background check, it's over. It's over. It's just over. So, if it's no background check, it's cool. If there's the background check, my record hold that weight and I ain't getting it.

To clarify, I asked how the stigma of his record specifically limits his ability to parent,

Sam: Because I'll never get the job I need. My checks will be gone before I even get them. I get paid tomorrow, and that one already gone. Already gone.

Abbie: So, you feel like it affects your ability to provide?

Sam: My phone will be off. I got to sacrifice that. The boy's haircuts coming up. And it's the weekend and I just hate saying no to them. Even when they just ask for a dollar for a water ice, it bother me to say 'no' or 'I don't got it.' But that's all because I can't get the job that I need to balance it out.

Although charismatic and a self-proclaimed hard worker, Sam feels he cannot get past his record to get the job he desires. However, Sam's determination to never have his children in need has pushed him to provide by any means necessary. Whether it was risking his freedom and life by engaging in illegal activity or now sacrificing his own needs for the needs of his children, Sam expresses how he supports his children no matter what.

Dismissed by potential employers, several other participants similarly and hesitantly turned to the streets in order to provide for their families. Dawan says that he never intended to sell drugs but that the life "chose" him. He started selling drugs at the

age of thirteen after he walked in on his single mom crying with an eviction notice in her hand, "I need eleven hundred or we're going to have to live in the street." He turned around, went outside, came back, and "threw the money at her." He explained to me, "I always used to have to make it happen." Dawan was sent to juvenile placement at sixteen years old and came back home at nineteen. Only a couple of months after returning home, Dawan caught the mistaken identity case and was in jail for four years before pleading guilty as a means of regaining his freedom. Since returning to the community with a felony on his record, Dawan has had trouble finding legal means to financially support his family. In response to being asked when he started hustling again, he said,

That was probably three years ago. But it's like by force. It's like I was applying to jobs and they kept telling me, 'We don't hire felonies' and stuff like that. I wasn't giving up so I kept applying and kept applying, but once my baby's mother started tripping about my kids, it's like, I can't do nothing. So, after that, for me personally--like I told you--it's a choice. Right now, I don't want to sell no drugs. I don't want to do nothing that's going to be putting me in harm's way. But it's like I don't want to see my kids go without. So, it's like for me personally, if I could get a job so easy, like everybody else, I'd be working.... selling drugs and being a father, it definitely is bad because you're putting your kids in harm's way. And anything that puts my kids in harm's way, I don't want to be about it. So, it is bad.... My mindset is 'I'm doing this to feed my family.' There's a difference. Now, I'm doing it to get out. The streets, the game, everything. Clean my hands and promote positivity because I feel as if I did all this bad stuff since I was thirteen to this age. I don't want to die in this type of state of mind or this state of body or anything. I'd rather give back for the rest of my life and do good.

Dawan wants and attempts to find legal work, however, after constant rejection, Dawan demonstrates resistance against employer discrimination and enacts personal agency by choosing to make money for his family the best he knows how. The feelings are complex, however, because he is aware that his means of supporting his family also puts them in danger. Even though selling drugs deviates from his values and beliefs, he currently sees no other option to fulfill his paternal provider role.

In contrast to Dawan, Bill grew up in a family-oriented home with both parents. His father was a hard working “strong silent type” who put Bill through Catholic school from pre-kindergarten through high school. Despite his support system, after graduating, Bill was drawn to the thrill of the streets. After several years of “ripping and running,” Bill was arrested and sentenced to 8 years in prison. When I asked what kinds of resources he thought could help fathers in the community, he responded,

Employment resources. I believe that would maintain a big help in the community. You know, because give somebody the chance to go ahead and work and maintain. That would shift a lot of it. I could say the drug dealing, I would say that, that would shift over more to that fact, you know what I mean? If you give somebody a chance to work, there's a couple bad apples, but I'm pretty sure if a resource, listen, ‘You gotta do X, Y and Z, we got you guys lined up with employment, you go to this, that and the third,’ I'm pretty sure that everybody wants to, everybody wants a chance living legally, you know, at least try to get the American dream.

Undoubtedly, if Dawan was part of my conversation with Bill, he would have agreed with Bill’s statement. The majority of the fathers I interviewed support the idea that providing employment resources to fathers would curb crime in the community.

Upon returning from jail six years ago, James has stayed “legit,” working in kitchens at different restaurants. At the time of our first interview, James had just been hired as a chef for a high-end restaurant in a wealthy neighborhood in Philadelphia. He was still working there and doing well at the time of our follow-up interview a month and a half later. When I asked James what community resources he would request from the mayor if given the opportunity, he exclaimed,

Business. Business loans. I know a lot of people with plans. I know a lot of people that are capable of them, just don't have the resources. Business, because if we want somebody to see different, give them a chance. Business. If you want somebody that wants something, if you want somebody that gets something, if you want somebody to stop something, give them some dough. I bet you they won't do the same shit they're doing. I was out here shooting at people and

everything else and I was selling crack. Once I realized that shit was making me twelve thousand dollars in a week I was, 'Man, I'm not shooting a motherfucking person. I don't got time to be shooting. Ya'll can shoot motherfuckers.' You know what I'm saying? What the fuck am I shooting somebody for?...I'm not shooting nobody. Money will change a motherfucker's life. Change a motherfucker's mindset period. Change your whole lifestyle. You don't want nobody running around here selling drugs or you don't want them out here killing people? Give him some money. See what he will do. You can only give a motherfucker a chance. If they fuck it up theirself, that's their problem. Give them some money, I bet you less shit happen, and you see it.

James believes that, if provided an opportunity to make legitimate money, most individuals would willingly get off the streets in order to receive a sufficient paycheck out of the danger zone. As a result, James believes, with ample job opportunities, less crime would occur.

Although Darius is currently out of work, his experience with his last employer supports James's theory. When I asked Darius what resources he would want in the community as a father, he stated,

Basically, just some place for a man to go where he can get a job or something, not just for him but also his son too. Like teaching them stuff, hands on, practical stuff like that. That would make it a lot better in the neighborhood, you won't even see a lot of people on the corner no more. Like I see two people I did see on the corner, they have jobs now. They off the corner, they don't even want to stay on the corner no more...Anything hands on that you can teach me, any good father would be like, 'I'm going to take this on and I'll see how much money I'll make. I'll make ten times as much as I would selling drugs doing this? I would do this instead of selling drugs.' That's why I stopped selling drugs, because I was making good money, I was fine. I was like 'I don't need this, I'm making more money in a month than I am selling drugs, like six hundred a week, I need to stop.' And I stopped.

When provided an opportunity to make money the conventional way, Darius quickly left the drug game. However, it's not only providing the opportunities but also providing the support and education to navigate opportunities that will likely result in more gainful employment, including for their children in the future.

I met Terrance at the playground attached to a local recreation center where he was alone, closely watching his four-year-old son attempt (and fail) to climb up the swirly ladder. Whenever Terrance went over to help his son out, the boy's wide brown eyes would fill with joy and he would reach out to his dad, preferring to climb into Terrance's arms than on the jungle gym. Terrance works for a moving and hauling company and has his own catering company on the side. When speaking about work, Terrance expressed frustrations that people in his neighborhood "act like it's hard to find a job." When I asked why he thinks some people say there are no employment opportunities, he replied,

Terrance: I think it's a thing of fear and also maybe a thing of not being taught and actually doing it. Because you know, I was actually taught how to do resumes and fill them out and my dad actually took me to different places to go look for jobs and got me comfortable with it and asking for myself and things like that, so I guess if there's more of that early on in people's lives, I think that'll help a lot.

Abbie: Why did you say fear?

Terrance: Fear of rejection. Fear of getting teased, being different. All your friends doing this, but you got to be at work for eight hours, you know, things like that.

Terrance recognizes the advantage he gained from his father's guidance and the limiting insecurity felt by many community members. From the interviews, it was evident that those without role models directing them towards legitimate occupations were more likely to take to the streets. The streets were where these participants were guided by their own kind of role models. The streets are an accessible income source that is familiar for many and often perceived as a job they can always turn to when in need.

Sites of Resilience theory recognizes some expressions of resistance as resilience (Payne, 2011). Providing for their children by any means necessary exemplifies the

participants' tenacity and agency in the face of discrimination. For the fathers, being on the streets is a goal-oriented adaptation to blocked opportunities. Although those in the streets acknowledge that some of their actions may put their families in danger, all view their illegal activity as a temporary solution and take precautions to keep their family out of harm's way. In understanding the greater context, the fathers' illegal hustles can be framed as acts of resilience.

Restricted Housing

Without the ability to make a significant income because of scarce opportunities and employer discrimination due to their criminal record, many of the fathers deal with housing instability. Without a consistent or comfortable place to stay, it is difficult for some fathers to have their children stay with them. Although many of the participants want to live full time with their children, the housing situation, for some, only permits shorter visits. For these fathers, the inability to be there every night for their children misaligns with their concept of fatherhood. As Renald explained, "A father is a person that's in their kid's life every day, seven days a week. A father's a person whose kids wake up from a nightmare and will run into his arms. That's what a father is." Another participant, Taaj, explained, "I'm not no weekend dad. I didn't sign up to have kids on the weekends." With this stance on fathering, lack of stable housing is a source of great tension for many participants. Although most participants have learned to overcome movement restrictions and barriers to legitimate employment, most fathers see little opportunity to personally resist housing insecurity. Instead, they call on community level supports and resources to assist them in overcoming their instability.

Many of the fathers only have the finances to rent a room and are unable to control their roommates' lifestyles. In our first interview, Liam described all of the tools his mother used to beat him as a child: extension cords, two-by-fours, cast iron skillet. At 6-years-old Liam ran away from his mother to his father's house where his father told him he could stay but had to fend for himself; Liam turned to the streets. At 23, Liam was shot in the back of the head and stayed in the hospital for two years relearning to walk and talk. Eight years later and almost back to fully functioning, Liam struggles to find work because of his criminal record, public mugshot, and lack of a high school degree. With only his Social Security check supporting him, Liam rents a room from a woman and her mother, who is addicted to crack and often leaves paraphernalia around the home. When describing why Liam's children do not live with him, he explained,

Because of how my life is going right now, having a hard time trying to find places to stay, it's just, it's not acceptable for them to be here, going through that with me... if I had a different chance or different opportunity, of course they wouldn't be [at boarding school], would be with me going to school, I would be taking them to school every day... picking them up every day.

Although Liam wants his children at home with him, he is aware that he cannot provide them stability and security and has therefore chosen to put their safety first by sending them to a boarding school for disadvantaged youth.

Many of the fathers expressed that they want their children in the home with them and are actively working towards facilitating that desire. Kwame is one of the few men I interviewed without a criminal record and with a high school degree, yet Kwame still had difficulty finding a well-paying job despite "looking religiously" for one. A well-known experiment conducted by Devah Pager (2003) found that Black males without a criminal record are less than half as likely to receive consideration by employers compared to their

white counterparts. The same study found that white males *with* a criminal record were still more likely to be considered for employment than Black males *without* a criminal record (Pager, 2003). This study not only highlights the stigma of a criminal record, but also highlights racial disparities in employment. Pager believes this is, in large part, attributed to racial stereotypes generated from racial disparities in the criminal justice system. As noted in the previous chapter, even those without a criminal record feel the effects of the criminal justice system through the stereotypes blanketly placed on urban Black men.

At the time of our first interview, Kwame was working the overnight shift, loading and unloading large packages for the U.S. Post Office. Despite having a job, he was not making enough money at the time of our first interview to have his own apartment and therefore could only afford to rent a room in a house with other residents. Our follow-up interview began with Kwame telling me that he was in the process of looking for a second job as a delivery truck driver in order to “make more money for the kids.” When I asked Kwame whether his children ever stay with him, he responded,

No, not right now. But they are about to start staying with me again. They don't stay with me because there isn't enough space for them right now for real for real, but they're about to start staying with me again. That's another reason why I'm aiming towards having my own place again.

The fathers are willing to hustle in whatever way they have to in order to be involved with their children, whether it's picking up an extra shift, a second job, like Kwame, or turning to the streets. The unfortunate reality, however, is that when picking up more work, legitimate or not, it often takes time away from being with their children and can challenge the children's safety by limiting supervised time spent with a father who can serve as a protector and positive role model.

For many of the fathers, there is a catch-22 when attempting to fulfill the multiple paternal roles they hold. To be a provider, they need to put more time in at work; to be a father who is spending both days and nights with their children, they need to make enough money to have a stable home. To be an involved caregiver, they need and want to spend quality time with their children. Even though most fathers, as described in the previous chapter, find financial provision trivial in the grand scheme of fathering, there is still a need to create a basic level of stability for themselves and their children in order to be functional caregivers. But, when most of their time is dedicated towards making money, the fathers are unable to truly *be there* with their children. This conflict of interest is only amplified by the additional need to navigate various barriers, such as employer discrimination.

Housing instability can exacerbate maternal gatekeeping behavior as well. Growing up, Nasir witnessed domestic violence in his home. His father, often using brass knuckles, would leave Nasir's mother with cuts and bruises. The times that Nasir stepped in, Nasir wound up in the hospital with broken bones. Experiencing this trauma caused Nasir to act out and landed him in a juvenile detention facility for his junior-high school years. Nasir explained that, although he has tried to stay out of the streets, his affiliations with certain family members have resulted in him being shot, stabbed, and kidnapped. As a 30-year-old man, however, Nasir has distanced himself from his family and is now trying to stay on a more stable path.

Nasir has eight children with four different women and pays child support for seven of the children. About a year before our first interview, Nasir was kicked out of the home he was sharing with one of his children's mothers. With no family to turn to, he

slept in a local park for a week and a half. The mother of his youngest decided to take him in before they shared any children together. Now, with a 6-month-old and a part-time job as a cook in a nearby museum, Nasir has the means to rent a room in a house.

Although he is on good terms with the mother of his youngest, there is a lot of tension between him and the three other mothers of his children. When speaking about why, despite his efforts, he doesn't see two of his children as often as he would like, he explained,

[Trying to be present] is not enough for [my children's mother] ...like I told her, 'you know, I'm renting a room, I'm trying to get housing situated. Just need a few weeks, I don't like my kids to stay in the same bed as me.' She had a problem with that, 'oh you know you just don't want to see him- it don't matter, don't have to see him.' Done blocked me. 'Don't call for him, don't ask for him!' Next time I saw and heard from her, she need a babysitter because she was on her last strike at work, so she needs someone to watch them. So that's the only reason I seen my kids.

Although there are compounding factors contributing to the tensions between Nasir and the mother of his children, his housing situation only serves to exacerbate the already negative judgement his children's mother has of him. The mother's anger, fueled by Nasir's inability to host, resulted in over a month of blocked attempts to see his children.

When asked what resources would be helpful for fathers in the community, one of the more common responses I received was "housing." When I asked Durrell about community needs, he responded,

Housing. Housing, housing, housing...If men was able to get a lease, they know that they could get some partial custody or not even custody, just knowing that they can get their kid, they should be able to get funding for housing...Sometimes, they can't even afford to bring kids over to someone else's house or their pride is telling them to not bring them over to they own [house], 'I'm saving up for my own'... I think if they gave housing out like they give a woman a house- just because I don't [receive welfare] shouldn't make me ineligible. I still take care of my kid.

Many of the men lament the lack of resources for fathers in comparison to the number of resources available to mothers, especially when the fathers feel there is so much more stacked against them due to discrimination. Although responsible fatherhood programs do exist, few programs adequately meet the needs of many fathers (Roy & Dyson, 2010). The participants voice wanting resources, not only to ensure their own stability, but to also ensure their involvement in their children's lives. As Durrell states, housing can deter engagement in quality family time at home because the father may not want to bring his children into an unfit housing situation. He also notes how housing can limit a man's ability to be awarded a custody agreement, which, for some, is perceived as the only way to be involved with their children.

The Family System

When I asked Aquil how often he saw his son, he responded, "Not as much as I want to... Probably, like, once in a blue because of drama with his mother." I asked whether he tries to talk to his son in-between their visits, he said, exhausted, "I try to, yes, I try to. But I've got to go through [his child's mother], so it's like this big problem." The participants implicate maternal gatekeeping as the biggest barrier to spending time with their children. The mothers are regarded by most of the fathers as literal gatekeepers with the power to deny or grant fathers access to their children. Maternal gatekeeping, as Roy and Dyson (2005) explain, is "more than mothers' values or beliefs about paternal involvement. It is an active process of negotiating overlapping role expectations as partners and parents, and it requires a focus on 'what goes on' between mothers and fathers" (p.305).

Of course, the mothers' voices are missing from this discussion and so I'm sure there is more to the mothers' motives for gatekeeping behavior and arranging child support than what these findings present. These findings do, however, provide insight into how fathers perceive gatekeeping, which is helpful when thinking about initiatives to promote co-parenting. The consistency across the fathers' opinions and experiences also elucidates a current cultural phenomenon of coparenting tension, at least in Southwest Philadelphia, that is perpetuated by the widespread use of family court.

When I asked Bryce to identify what could deter a man from being involved in his child's life, he explained,

I think the number one thing that deters a man from being in his child's life is the baby mom. It depends on your baby mom: if you got a good baby mom, everything is so much easier. It's so much easier to co-parent when you have a good baby mom. But when you have a vengeful, spiteful baby mom that's mad cause y'all didn't work out or you're working out with somebody else. - it just be so many things that they're mad at you about, and they... use these kids as bait. You know what I'm saying? It's like 'why!?' There are so many dads out there that don't want nothing to do with their kids. Why would you treat a dad that do [want to be with his kids] like he's one of them?

The status of the romantic relationship between the participant and his child's mother is frequently cited as the cause of gatekeeping behavior. Mothers were often referred to as "bitter" or "spiteful" towards the father because of his disinterest in being romantically involved with her. As a result of these feelings, according to Bryce, mothers use their children as pawns, disallowing the father from seeing their children until the father spends time with the mother as well.

Other fathers cited generational paternal absence as influential over maternal gatekeeping decisions. Experiencing paternal absence as a child has incentivized most participants to redefine fatherhood and *be there* for their children. On the other hand,

many participants believe that their children's mothers' experiences of growing up with an absent father has led those mothers to trivialize paternal involvement (Gaunt, 2008). Some mothers may now prefer to raise their child(ren) on their own, as their mothers did, as a means to ensure order and boundaries and resist the conflict they may have witnessed in the home as a result of their fathers' absenteeism (Anderson & Danis, 2006). This approach, however, can impair fathers who want to be involved. Matt explained,

My mom is like that. My sister is like that. They don't need no man because they did it on their own. But, at the end of the day, that's why women are in trouble. I believe, a strong woman, you need it. It ain't just going to be no strong dad. If you got both, I always believe, like right now, if you could train my generation to get out of that mindset, they good forever. You're good forever if you can get out of that mindset where you're thinking you can do this shit on your own because, it wasn't meant to work that way. You're going against the grain and you just got to break the curse and just give in. I just think that women have got to break that curse because that's exactly what's going on or they might not necessarily didn't have anything or a father around- they might've got their father or their mom around and they're like, 'I don't need you.' But really, nah, we're raising this kid together. That's ours, not mine, yours, your mom's and your dad's. It takes a village to raise a kid, but at least let the mom and the dad set the damn fundamentals of what they supposed to do.

Matt believes, like many of the other men, that two involved parents are necessary to cultivate a healthy and stable environment for a child. According to the participants, past generations of absent fathers in their community, or "the curse" as Matt refers to it, have informed mothers that they need to be self-reliant and block fathers from being involved in order to protect themselves and their children from experiencing conflict or disappointment. The existing literature supports this claim and finds that gatekeeping behavior is often used as a form of protection (Rutter & Schwartz, 2000), and is especially used against fathers considered "high-risk" with a history of incarceration and unemployment (Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007).

Because many present-day mothers in their community expect fathers to lack familial commitment, the participants believe that these mothers are only looking for financial provision from fathers in order to avoid emotional attachment and distress. This defense mechanism of self-reliance can be framed as a functional display of PTG from experiencing paternal neglect. Rather than opening themselves and their children up to potential disappointment and harm, some mothers enact human agency and take on the responsibility of raising their children on their own as a means to protect their family from repeating a painful history. However, according to Ahmad, gatekeeping can be harmful, not only to the father, but also to the child and, ultimately, the mother, as the child builds growing anger and resentment towards her for gatekeeping,

Being as though they grew up without a father as well, they feel as though they don't need you to take care of that child. But later on, down the line, she will realize it's not her needing you, the child needs you. So, at the end of the day, once the child grows up and understands things and old enough to realize...once he or she finds out the truth, the child's going to wind up disliking you because he or she found out you're the reason why they wasn't able to see their father and it's not just the father didn't want to be with the child, it's the mom keeping them away from the father...I know a lot of people that wants to be in their kid's life and the mom is stopping them...you can't buy time with money. And that is most of the girls' cases now-a-days, financial things. But you can't buy kids love with money. They going to love you just by being there and spending your time. So, that's probably some of these parents cases out here now. Some of the fathers are being kept from they kids because of the mothers. So, they're forced not to see they kids and have to go through courts and everything else to decide whether, when, you can or cannot see your child. I don't think that should be something you should have to do if both of y'all had that child. Y'all had the child. Y'all shouldn't have to have the courts to decide when he can get them, or if he can see them or not, or if he's fit to see them or not. That's something y'all should be able to discuss as adults.

Ahmad claims that women today solely want fathers to provide, but, as discussed in the previous chapter, fathers value creating moments with their children. Gatekeeping, therefore, disallows fathers from fulfilling their desired paternal identity.

Aligned with the extant literature on coparenting, not *all* mothers participate in gatekeeping behavior, and often those who do engage in gatekeeping encourage or facilitate paternal engagement at other times, whether as a result of being overburdened with responsibilities and needing assistance or because of a change in the quality of the mother and father's friendship or romantic relationship (Fagan & Cherson, 2017). Gatekeeping behavior was frequently described by the fathers as nonlinear and reactive to specific events, such as if the father started seeing a new woman (Fagan & Kaufman, 2015).

Some nonresidential fathers, on the other hand, have never experienced maternal gatekeeping and are able to see their children multiple times a week. When I asked Henry whether his son ever stays with him, he responded, "Yeah, some nights, some nights. That's one thing I can say she done, she ain't that controlling or possessive, like she do let him stay the night and all that."

According to Lewin and colleagues (2015), the co-parenting relationship "refers to the way parents work together to care for their children, and is separate from their romantic, legal, or financial relationships" (p.140). Although Henry still views his son's mother as a gatekeeper who can or cannot permit sleepovers, Henry's strong co-parenting relationship with his son's mother grants him access.

In order to remain in their children's lives, some fathers strongly invest in coparenting. Henry explained,

One more thing I can say, my child mother, she help with me, so it make it easy. She want to be in a relationship with me, so she use my child for certain stuff. But far as a parent, she help me so it make it easy for me. I ain't really got to go so hard. We'll talk on the phone, 'Alright, what do you need? You need Pampers. Alright, I'm going to buy him two packs. You going to buy the milk? Alright.' That's how we do. Teamwork make the dream work. We got to communicate

someway, so I don't care how much I dislike her, or I don't, I got to keep it respectful, so we can get certain stuff across cause we share a child together. You feel me?

Henry is willing to put aside his differences with his children's mother in order to be in his child's life.

Kiwuan similarly has a very strong relationship with the mothers of his children. He explained, "They embrace me as a father. They don't push me away. Nobody never denied me to see my kids, you know, whether we was on good terms or bad terms." When I later asked Kiwuan what he would want men in his community to learn from a fatherhood program he replied, "I would want them to learn first and foremost, we all need to stick together, that's number one, for these kids' sake...we got to stick together and make sure that we're taking care of these kids and trying to get along with the moms for the kids' sake." Kiwuan's emphasis on coparenting has allowed him unrestricted access to his children.

Navigating Family Court

Coparenting between mothers and non-resident fathers is the strongest and most consistent predictor of positive father involvement and is shown to have a direct positive impact on children's behavioral outcomes (Feinberg, Kan, & Hetherington, 2007; Futris & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2007; Gee, McNerney, Reiter, & Leaman, 2007; Karreman et al., 2008; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008; Sobolewski & King, 2005; Stright & Neitzel, 2003).

However, many of the fathers believe that the accessibility and ease¹³ of obtaining child support orders for mothers these days has disincentivized coparenting.

When I asked Taaj whether child support impacts family dynamics in his community, he exclaimed,

Yeah, cause that's the first shit they run to. [The mothers] ain't gotta talk much, they ain't gotta be rational, they don't gotta understand, they don't gotta care, it's made for them to not give a fuck. It's made for if you--unless you like that on your own--it's made for you to not give a fuck.

Taaj feels as though the availability of child support makes some women turn blind to the fathers' viewpoints and discourages negotiation and compromise. Although some mothers and fathers are able to work out disagreements through positive communication, other fathers, such as Joel, feel as though mothers would rather turn to the court as the first resort than resolve their conflict informally,

It shouldn't take a mediator or a judge to determine your situation. It shouldn't even get to that point. You should be able to be an adult, you should be able to talk things out, get things done yourself. Nowadays, everything is court, court, court, court. Why should we have to go to court, why should we have to listen to somebody else tell us what we have to do? Why can't me and you come to an agreement and decide what we to do?

Renald similarly looked down upon turning to the system for answers,

I don't want to be in the courts with my child's mom. Like I told you, we're not enemies. We might be enemies right now, but she know me and I feel like it's going to come to her mind. She'll be, 'I don't know what made me do this to y'all. I was wrong for doing that.' Even if we don't be together, we don't got to be together. We can come to an agreement without having to be all up in the system. I don't want system all up in my business.

Both Renald and Joel have had to deal with the criminal courts and perceive any kind of legal involvement in their lives, including family court, as invasive. When speaking

¹³ In order to file for a child support order online, all one must do is complete, sign, and date an application, intake questionnaire, and complaint form ("E-Services", n.d.).

during our follow-up interview, Taaj described family court as “white man shit.” Child support enforcement policies were, in fact, created in the 1970s in response to growing divorce rates; these policies were not initially designed to deal with unwed births or low-income families, the majority of whom are families of color (NCSL, 2012; White, et al., 2016). Because of this, barriers to paying child support such as unemployment and incarceration were not taken into consideration. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, congress revised laws that increased punishment for noncompliant fathers, such as automatic wage-withholding, driver license suspension, passport and professional license revocation, or even incarceration (White et al., 2016). Although the purpose was to reprimand “deadbeat dads,” the system was equally punishing “dead broke dads” or those “willing but struggling,” which disproportionately and negatively impacted Black fathers, sparked anger and resentment towards the system, and instigated conflict within families (White et al., 2016). Many of the current study’s participants perceived the family court system as a means of control and oppression over impoverished communities and families of color.

If nonresidential fathers aren’t already subject to a child support order, many, such as Sam, report receiving threats of child support during arguments,

They can do it, so they throw it out there. Some baby mom's even throw it out there if you all arguing, ‘I’ll put your ass on child support’... the first thing they go do instead of co-parent. Instead of trying to work it out as co-parent and go about our life, the first thing they do is run and put you on child support. So no, now we're not cool, I'm not taking them to no park with you or none of that. I'm taking them on my own fucking time. You do you and I'm going to do me. Now no child support, maybe we all can go out and then go our separate ways and still be cool. But they use that shit to their advantage.

Being put on child support feels like a betrayal to Sam, resulting in bitter feelings towards the mothers. After being put on child support, Sam no longer advocates for coparenting and goes out of his way to spend as little time as possible with the mother.

Yusuf describes how being put on child support not only discouraged coparenting and conflict resolution, but also caused him to start viewing his child as a burden.

Abbie: Do you feel like child support impacts family dynamics in your community?

Yusuf: Deeply. I believe they just add the illusion of families don't have to stick together due to this financial medium that you can go to or financial services institution that can provide this type of structure for you. It actually separates and hinders a family even more.

Abbie: Yeah, a couple of guys have mentioned that because there's this safety net, there's no real need to work together as a team.

Yusuf: Yeah, there's no need for them to submit or resolve. That's a great word. 'Resolve.' Saying because you also have this price tag over your head. You make your child feel like an asset and a bill more than a human being cause now you going to have resentment when you're working long days. You're tired, have to work...but you understand your purpose of why you're working because you have to front this bill and support your dream. So, your child in a sense can become an irritant... the idea of a child, because I'm not even going to get a chance to spend time with this child. I have to fight to spend time with this child. I have to pay money for this child when I'm not around, and when I already have things that this child can use if the child is with me.

Even though children cost fathers, whether they are formally or informally contributing, the fact that child support mandates a certain amount per month can cause fathers to start viewing their children as a "bill." Yusuf expresses his frustrations in the fact that, because he's working hard to pay his child support bill, he rarely gets to see his child. When he's not working, Yusuf has to fight with his child's mother to see his child. And when he can see his child, he's spending money on his child in addition to the mandated payments that

are supposed to cover all costs related to the child. This cycle, as Yusuf explains, can lead to resentment towards both the mother and the child.

EJ describes a similar predicament when asked whether most of his friends are involved in their children's lives,

Well, yeah. First of all, I don't condone not being a father to your kids, and then even with that, that's a sticky situation. A lot of women put a lot of these guys on [child support]. All of the people I know are active fathers, unless there's something stopping them from being an active father like the mother of the child, or-yeah, bottom line, that's usually it. That's the only determining factor. Even the ones paying child support still like to be with their kids. It's bittersweet. Cause it's like, you work hard to have money with your kids, but you pay child support, you still end up having to work even harder and you still have to keep the kids. That's a lot--a lot of people I know going through that right now, that they get their kids a majority of the time and they still pay a majority--they pay all child support. But they look at it like, this is my only way to make it work.

According to EJ, most fathers who pay child support are still involved in their children's lives. This results in the fathers paying a double expense- spending on child support and spending when physically taking care of their child. Because of the double expense, some fathers will pick up extra work shifts in order to make ends meet.

Many fathers are willing to take on the double expense in order to access their children and spend quality time with them. For other fathers, the double expense becomes too much, and they refuse to provide additional support beyond the child support order. For example, in response to Renald's son's mother taking Renald to family court, Renald has vowed to no longer help his child's mother outside of the parameters set by the court,

When I went down to the court she was there, and she was, 'Yes, I want six hundred dollars,' and I'm, 'Why? Are you kidding me? Like I'm not a good father? But, okay.' And they took it, just for the simple fact I didn't bring my receipts or none of that because I didn't think it was nothing so when I go on the 25th and I've got my receipts for my rent and all my benefits and my 401k. Everything they're taking out, they take out for my kids and everything so when I go back, I'm going to take all of that. I wouldn't say she can't have nothing but you're trying to take everything. You're taking from my other kid. So, I just feel

like they need to take some of that down. That's my son, of course I'm going to take care of him. If you want to do it this way, then so be it. All that means is when you need something, you can't call me no more... She needed help paying her car, I've got you. That's my son's mother, of course I would. It's not going to happen no more though.

Although some fathers acknowledge that child support could be a good thing for children whose father was completely absent, they believe this situation to be rare. All of the fathers on child support that I interviewed felt they were sufficiently involved with their children or at least attempting to be in the face of gatekeeping prior to the child support order. Because of this, child support was viewed by the fathers as a “petty” punishment and a hurdle to jump in order to be granted access to their children.

When asked what would deter a man from being in his child’s life, Gibril responded,

The main thing: they break up with mom. The baby mom put them on child support because, you know, putting someone on child support is like ‘damn, I'm already helping out the little bit that I got. I understand I might not be there when you always want me to’, but putting people on child support is like, ‘Alright, this is all I'm giving you, this is all I'm doing’... some females do it out of spite and then ruin a guy ...Because now it's to the point we're working for nothing. I'm already getting pennies, you taking this amount of money, I might as well quit my job not to pay that. Some people stay strong, but hypothetically if I was to get a job at McDonalds and get put on child support, it's like, why am I working here? I'm not coming here to make jail money so that’s probably the main reason.

To resist child support, Gibril speaks about deliberately quitting his job because, without an income, the court cannot hold him accountable. Family court is perceived by many of the fathers as *against* fathers, with an incentive to “bleed them dry” without any consideration for the collateral consequences. Because many of the fathers can only find minimum wage employment or under the table odd jobs, child support requirements can disable fathers from supporting themselves and therefore from supporting their children.

When I asked Zakiah what could deter a man from being involved in his child's life he replied, "child support." I asked why, "Because...you can't do anything. It's like you're bound. Some days, some months, it gets to a point to where I can barely take care of myself sometimes because they take so much." He then stated how felonies can also deter a father's involvement because it's "hard to get work after a felony." I asked how difficulty finding work impacts paternal involvement, "You don't have any money. You can't barely take care of yourself, so how you going to be around your kids like that?" As a result of experiencing employer discrimination, Zakiah has difficulty not only meeting his child support payments, but also supporting himself. These compounding issues, he says, can deter a man from spending time with his child, as the father may not want his child to see him in that vulnerable of a state.

Even those with well-paying jobs feel the burden of child support. When I asked Yusuf, who works for a major airline, whether he feels like he has sacrificed for his children, he replied,

Yusuf: My child support custody battles is restricting my time, taking from some of my funds that I can have aspirations with and seek out different ventures, investments and different things like that. So, it's definitely put my life on hold, for things I want to do but, I rather take care of my children than [my own needs].

Abbie: You said that you pay almost a thousand dollars a month in child support, right?

Yusuf: That's for one child. I pay fifteen hundred total.

Abbie: So how do you feel that affects your life?

Yusuf: It makes me have to go to work. I have a night job and maybe make up to six figures if I do overtime, I guess, but I have to kill myself. I live there. I'm talking about a hundred and sixty hour bi-weekly pay period. Talking about eighty in forty; eighty in a forty-hour week...time is money in every minute so you you're using all your time to chase money, you don't have time for nothing

else ... so it's just a constant rat race. I get it done, but it's a sacrifice I've made across the board.

Many of the fathers are willing to make the sacrifice and speak down on fathers who let child support deter them from being involved with their children. However, some fathers, especially those who spoke about financially supporting their children regardless of the court mandate, felt as though child support was truly “mother support,” with their money going into the mother’s pocket rather than towards their child’s expenses.

Even though Josiah has a strong relationship with his child’s mother and spends a lot of time with his daughter, he still hears threats of child support because he refuses to put money into his daughter’s mother’s pocket,

[My child’s mother and I are] very close, we cool. No confrontations, no nothing. Because I ain't want confrontation here and there. A little confrontation here and there, but I get [my daughter] every week, she's well taken care of and still, to this day, she still sometimes threaten me with the child support. And I'm like, I don't understand why. I get [my daughter] every weekend and she go to parties, she go to Chuck E. Cheese, she go out to eat, she do this, she come home with new clothes, stuff like that. It's like, why is you threatening me with child support? But this her problem: she think when she call me for money she supposed to get it. But no, I don't have to give you money. I have my daughter every weekend. I take my daughter out, she got everything.

Fortunately for Josiah, the threat of child support has not impacted his ability to spend quality time with his daughter. For other fathers, the threat or filing of child support is often coupled with a denial of child access until the mother receives what she wants from the father. As a result, some fathers act with agency and take matters into their own hands by filing for custody.

When I asked Kwame whether his relationship with his youngest child is going to be affected by being put on child support, he replied,

No, because my heart is bigger than the disaster. I love my kids as much as I can. I'm going to be upset, but I can't let that take place in them. It's my job. I feel like

I would be failing as a parent if I let that. And it's crazy because when we were at court, she was whispering to me trying to flirt with me. She mention, 'you taking your custody?' I said, 'yeah, I'm taking you to custody. What you think? I'm not supposed to want to see my son?' She was like, 'I mean I wasn't expecting you to.' And I'm just like, 'what? Why would I not want to see my son?'

I asked whether he thinks her surprised reaction to him wanting custody was grounded in her experience with her own absent father,

I think she's ruined, like her mindset is like: the baby dad ain't this route. And it's like even sometimes when she did this stuff in the past I would be like, 'why do you think?' She would be like, 'is you coming? Oh, because I was going to do this because I didn't think you was coming.' I would be like, 'why would I not come? When was there a time when I said I was going to do something as far as pertaining to the baby and then I didn't do it?' And the only time anything like that ever happened was because of something that she did. New situation is, alright they are trying to put me on child support, you are trying to get money out of me, okay. I'm going to get custody for him... They not going to run me up the roof and through the ceiling... I figured out, sometimes you've got to fight fire with fire. But I'm doing it in the legal terms instead of blabbing back and forth with her. I'm going to make sure I'm still in my child's life and make sure my child still knows who I am. I can't let her ruin my legacy of being a parent. I can't let her deprive me or my son of beautiful moments and years that we supposed to be having...I'm not going to let it defeat me.

Kwame's description of his son's mother exemplifies the low expectations today's mothers hold for fathers in the participants' community. Kwame's son's mother never expects Kwame to come through for her in spite of his presence. His presence, however, seems to not be enough, as his son's mother is filing for child support. In order to "fight fire with fire" and ensure that Kwame can resist maternal gatekeeping behavior, Kwame plans to file for custody of his son. He explains how, instead of "blabbing back and forth," he is going directly to the court.

Although many fathers lament their children's mother's quick decision to file for child support instead of coming to an informal resolution, Kwame finds the formal route

to be the most direct and simplest way to stay involved in his son's life. Joel similarly used the family court system to resist maternal gatekeeping behavior,

I was in a situation where I didn't want to be with her anymore. So, she was doing spiteful stuff or holding my daughter from me. And I'm like, 'Let me see my daughter.' And just giving me a hard time about it. But I'm the type of person, I'm no dead beat and all of that and my child resembles me so, I want to see my child. So, I just took the proper precautions of taking her to court...for custody. But even when we was going through our stuff, I was on top of my game with all my paperwork, making sure I had everything for her, taking care of her, keeping all my receipts, everything I do.

When I later asked Joel if there was anything that limits his ability to parent, he replied, "Besides the situation that I went through with my baby momma, her holding my kid from me, no. Yes and no. I learned to adapt, and you got to adapt with every situation...I just learn to adapt to it, and I take a different step or a different way about it." Filing for custody was a form of adaptation, resistance, and resilience for Joel. Rather than allowing gatekeeping behavior to relinquish him from his parenting duties, Joel held a sense of agency and took it upon himself to ensure that he remained involved in his child's life.

Maintaining Agency in the Face of Barriers

Participants most frequently attributed maternal gatekeeping and the mothers' use of family court to (a) the mother's hurt feelings because of the father's disinterest in a romantic relationship, and (b) the mother's personal experience of paternal absence. However, many participants, even those who mentioned these reasons, saw fathers as accountable for inciting gatekeeping behavior as well. When I asked Rob what might deter a man from being involved in his child's life he replied,

As far as deterring them from wanting to be in their kid's life, I mean, everybody's situation is different. I think that most men dealing with their mother of their child, you make it what you want it to be, you know what I mean? I think the

biggest problem may be their ego, it may be pride, may be a lot of things, but most of the time, men create their own problem with the situation. Not to say that the female's completely innocent, but if she feels secure and you make her feel a certain way, she doesn't have a reason to go nowhere else, you know what I mean?

Rob acknowledges that if a man goes out of his way to make the mother of his child feel secure, he likely won't end up in a predicament where the mother is keeping the child from him or threatening child support.

While some participants place full blame on the mother for disagreements and tension, others, like Rob, hold fathers accountable for their part in the matter. Every action is perceived as a reaction to something else; life is seen as thrust forward by perpetual calls and responses. Gatekeeping behavior is regarded by some as a reaction to an issue caused, in part, by the father. Depending on the situation, this issue could involve the man's "ego" or "pride," or, as Kareem states, the "selfishness" of the father.

When asked what could deter a man from being in his child's life, Kareem stated,

Most of the time it's just selfishness. But there is no circumstance that should ever stop you from being a part of your child's life. No matter where it is, whether it's jail, whether it's distance, whether it's disagreements with the child's mother or father or whatever, shouldn't be no circumstance to stop you from being a part of your child's life.

Kareem believes the father needs to be adaptive and resilient in the face of all barriers to seeing his children.

Liam replied similarly when asked about deterrents,

The streets, females, drugs, a lot of different things. Some of these men out here just not ready to be fathers like I wasn't. But at the end of the day you can't just forget or look past certain things that's mandatory for your life, and kids is mandatory. Mandatory for you to be a father.

In spite of enduring employer discrimination, housing instability, and gatekeeping behavior, the men did not just view themselves as powerless victims. Rather, they

maintained a sense of agency, as Bill stated, “Only limit you have is yourself as a parent. That’s it.”

Dawan, who lives with and takes care of his ill mother, goes out to the county where his daughters live every day, “I can’t go a day without seeing my kids. I don’t play that.” Even though he and his daughters’ mother are no longer together, he explained they’re “working it out.” When I asked what fatherhood meant to him, he replied,

It means to basically never give up on your family, no matter what. Never run. You never leave—I won’t even say your baby mother- you never leave your significant other, regardless. So, fatherhood basically means to never give up. Even when times get hard, like you feel as though your relationship with your woman is at a loss, you don’t never give up on your kids. So, fatherhood to me is never give up.

Persistence is a running narrative throughout the interviews. Most participants shared stories of adaptation, displaying resilience in the face of numerous barriers, including community violence, paternal neglect, employer discrimination, housing instability, and maternal gatekeeping. Because most fathers could see their role in creating some of the barriers for themselves, whether through committing crime or causing feelings of insecurity in the child’s mother, they held themselves accountable for navigating and overcoming the barriers. Although at times some feel powerless to external forces and go through periods lacking determination and motivation, most echo Dawan’s sentiment of “never give up,” especially when it comes to fathering.

Gatekeepers and Agents

The current chapter examines the ways that various formal and informal systems work independently and together to limit men’s capacity to engage with their children. Although the fathers place higher value on spending *time* with their children, they are

enlisted as financial providers by both the mothers and the court system. However, often because of their criminal history record, most participants' ability to provide is hindered. In the face of these compounding barriers, these fathers display resilience and have learned to act with agency and adapt as a means to fulfilling their desired role as caregiver. Many fathers work double time or pick up a second job, legitimate or not, in order to appease the mothers and the judicial system and thus unlock the door to spending quality time with their children; others emphasize their co-parenting relationships in order to dissolve any maternal gatekeeping behavior; and some take legal precautions and file for custody to ensure their presence with their child.

The men acknowledge their ability to assuage or exacerbate the barriers they face and put the onus on themselves to create their desired outcome. By experiencing compounded trauma through community violence, paternal neglect, and systemic gatekeeping, many of the fathers have developed problem-solving skills that allow them to navigate barriers in order to fulfill the paternal role of caregiver.

The next chapter explores how participants navigate the police in their community and how policing practices impact fatherhood. Although most fathers have learned over time, through both direct and vicarious experiences, to distrust and avoid the police, they display PTG in their ability to relate to police and teach their children objective lessons about law enforcement.

CHAPTER 7: NAVIGATING THE POLICE

The current chapter attends to research question four by exploring how police interactions affect men's negotiations of fatherhood. It also touches on research question two by examining participants' internalized perceptions of officers' perceptions of the participants and how this can affect fathers' behaviors. These internalized perceptions can influence participants' decisions about keeping their families in the house to maintain a safe distance from law enforcement as well as influence the messaging participants impact to their children about the police. Placed within the current moment of heightened tensions between police and communities of color, the findings demonstrate the ways context, time, processes, and personal characteristics impact the relationship between police and communities of color and the ways fathers communicate with their children about police.

This chapter first looks at the historical context of the relationship between police and the urban Black community in Philadelphia. It then explores the messages about police that participants received from their family, friends, media, and the community while growing up. I follow this with descriptions of participants' experiences with officers and the behavioral adaptations participants make in order to navigate police. I explain how these direct and vicarious experiences construct paradoxical viewpoints on police and influence the messages participants communicate to their children about law enforcement. The chapter concludes with a call for community-oriented styles of policing in order to foster positive intergenerational messaging about police.

Historical Context

Critical race theorists often describe how, upon the emancipation of Black slaves in the US, whites in power sought ways to maintain a social hierarchy (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2007). By implementing targeted efforts, such as criminalizing vagrancy and monopolizing free inmate labor, it is believed that white leaders were able to cloak racial injustice under the guise of criminal justice (Alexander, 2010; Muhammad, 2010). As criminal justice agents, police officers are seen by some as the frontline in maintaining the racial and social order (Alexander, 2010; Haldirpur, 2019; Rainwater, 1967; Rios, 2011). From the time of Jim Crow until now, media images portraying the relationship between the Black community and police have been predominantly violent (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2010; Kaminski & Jefferris, 1998; Oliver, 2009). These images involve photographs of police sic'ing dogs on Black citizens, video footage of officers hitting Rodney King more than 50 times with batons, headlines noting the 41 times police shot Amadou Diallo, cell phone footage of police choking Eric Garner, and surveillance footage of police killing 12-year-old Tamir Rice. Although there are certainly images of police officers assisting Black citizens and playing sports with children in Black communities, these stories do not often trend as strongly or influence attitudes towards police as much as those more violent and negative images (Kaminski & Jefferis 1998; Sigelman et al. 1997; Weitzer & Tuch 2004; Weitzer, 2002).

The media portrayal of tensions between the two groups accurately reflects the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD)'s history of tension with communities of color. Survey research conducted in 1926 by social worker Anna J. Thompson found that African American males made up 3.7% of the total population in Philadelphia but

accounted for over 20.5% of the arrests made in a 6-month period in 1924 (Johnson, 2004). Over the next century, communities of color were continually disproportionately arrested, harassed, and brutalized by police with minimal accountability (Gemby, 2015; Johnson, 2004; Schneider, Agee, & Chronopolous, 2017).

An investigation made by Philadelphia's Police Advisory Board (PAB) in 1967 found that 43% of all complaints to the PAB were for brutality charges. Two-thirds of all complaints made to the PAB were by Blacks, despite the fact that Blacks made up only about 25% of the population at the time. In response to the 932 cases brought to the PAB over its 9 years of existence, only 20 officers were suspended, 30 reprimanded, and 1 fired (Schneider, Agee, & Chronopolous, 2017). This lack of accountability supported sociologist Lee Rainwater's (1967) claim that police officers were "dirty workers." Schneider and colleagues (2017) explained Rainwater's theory on how police officers perform tasks "that mainstream society wanted done but did not wish to recognize overtly," such as confining and controlling out-groups and those disenfranchised (p.4).

Twenty years following the PAB investigation, in 1987, a report conducted by the Police Study Task Force (PSTF) on the PPD described a "history of favoritism, corruption and brutality" and stated that the PPD was "unfocused, unmanaged, under-trained, under-equipped, and unaccountable" (Dombrink, 1988). Participants in the current study grew up in the 1980s and 1990s in predominantly Black neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia. Many of the participants' parents and grandparents witnessed and experienced the police corruption and brutality listed here and described by the PSTF report. These direct and vicarious generational experiences served to influence the messages participants received about the police while growing up.

Learned Messages about Police

Transmitting Legal Cynicism

When I asked Yusuf what messages he received about the police growing up, he replied, “They ain't shit...Police are a gang in our community. I’m not saying every community, but in our community, Philadelphia, where we’re from, police are a gang for the most part.” I asked him to elaborate,

They are a gang, they’re a group of people out here creating their own type of order. They don’t go by the book, they don’t go by the rules because it is a jungle out here on their end as well. They can get shot at any given time, but they have guerilla tactics, and they definitely do it across the board. And it's also... racial profiling. If you’re a young black man in the hood, you getting your rights taken away from you... If you say something wrong, you get punched in the mouth. The cops will swing on you at any given time out here. They will abuse your rights and will physically beat you up any time out here if you say anything they don't like.

I asked whether his parents spoke to him specifically about how to interact with police.

He replied, “Yeah, stay out of their way. Any means necessary, stay away from the police...because you will lose your life.”

Many participants received messages about the gang mentality of the PPD. Rob explains, “The cops themselves are probably the biggest gang in the U.S... yes, they're there to protect and serve, but also, history has shown us and they...done things that weren't serving and protecting.” Amir speaks similarly, contrasting the officers’ duties to their actions,

Anybody who's anybody always knew that the police were in a gang. My mom told me that her grandmother told her this: that back in the slavery time police were actually called slave catchers. They made [police] catch slaves. Growing up with that image you be thinking, ‘You're not supposed to be here, sir. This badge and this gun on you- ain't more slaves out here anymore. You're here to stop crime and protect and serve. What are you serving? Ya’ll are supposed to be protecting us instead of whatever you're doing with the justifiable murders.’

Amir was taught that police were and are what Rainwater (1967) considers “dirty workers,” with the purpose of maintaining a power hierarchy and racial order, spurred by white supremacist ideals. Both Rob and Amir describe how police officers’ duties to protect and serve have been and still are contradicted by officers’ actions.

Growing up, Zakiah learned, “Fuck them. Just fuck the police. Don't talk to them. Police are bad...I was brought up to just not go to the police for anything. Like I go to my family, go to my friends if I'm in any type of trouble.” Kai learned similar lessons, “growing up, it was always like you don't talk to the cops, you don't tell nothing.” Negative perceptions were taught to Darius as well, “they said the police are...not right, they're not cool.” And Shawn, “My mom’s and them, they would just say don't trust...Yeah. I just don't trust them.”

Bill similarly learned distrust,

My dad always taught me to never, which is sad, to never trust the police. He used to write my constitutional rights on plank cards and putting them in my bookbag when I started going to high school and he said, ‘They stop you, you memorize these constitutional rights, the amendments and you know your rights you have as a US Citizen.’

These messages of distrust that Bill and the other participants received are a common theme in legal socialization, which is defined as “preparing young African American children, particularly boys, to survive interactions with police or other members of authority” (Whitaker & Snell, 2016, p.304). Bey explains the prevalence of legal socialization in his neighborhood,

Being honest, in this neighborhood and this community...they teach you that. There's not very many African American families, especially not in this neighborhood - maybe in the middle of Fulcroft, maybe they might escape a lesson- around here, your parents will tell you or even if it's your brother or your cousin, they're going to tell you ‘listen man, just listen to them. Don't grind, don't do this.’ Or they might give you toxic information, but they're going to give you

information. I got toxic information. I've been told how to run, hide, and I've been told, 'yo man, just give them your ID.' I've been told all of that stuff. I've been told don't argue with them if you want them to leave. I know how to deal with cops.

As found in previous studies, many participants were taught proactive avoidance as a means of survival, but, if a police interaction was forced upon them, they were told to comply and act respectfully (Brunson & Weitzer, 2011; Weitzer & Brunson, 2009).

Respect as a Means to Survive

When I asked Matt whether influential adults ever spoke to him about the police, he replied, "Of course." I asked the content of those conversations,

I was taught from the house, when you get those policy enforcers come to you, you talk to them with respect. You don't fidget at anything. That's fucking rule number one. I don't know how these people get shot. I'm just like, 'what fucking block did ya'll grow up on that you motherfuckers is pulling anything out your pockets when them people is around?'

Matt explains how he learned to move around police in a way that seems non-threatening.

In order to survive police encounters, Matt has internalized that he can't fidget or make sudden movements and must speak with respect. Because of the prevalence of "The Talk," Matt is shocked when other Black men act out of accordance with these rules and sees getting shot by police as a fated outcome of their seemingly careless behavior.

When I asked Jacques, who has a permit to carry a gun, how he feels when he sees the police, he replied, "I know all cops aren't bad. But again, like I never know what to expect with them, so I always be cautionary. 'Yes officer, no officer.' 'Do you have a gun in your car?' 'Yes, I do.'" I asked how he learned to speak like that during those interactions, "I don't even know...when I'm going through a situation, I do it with respect, I be as politely as I can because I don't want to agitate anybody because, like I said, I can

be a statistic- he can have a bad day, I could get rowdy, he could shoot me.” Speaking to police with respect was taught to and enacted by participants as a survival mechanism.

When I asked Samuel what influential adults would tell him about the police while growing up, he replied, “They would basically tell me to respect the police as if I would respect my parents because if you don't respect the police as you would respect your parents, as a black man, you will be arrested.” Samuel was taught that, because of his skin color, police would immediately see him as deviant. Therefore, speaking with respect was used as a means to avoid disrespect rather than because of an innate admiration.

Terrance received similar lessons about the outcomes of using respect, “My dad would always tell me how to handle getting pulled over: talk nicely, remain calm, be respectful and all that stuff, and that got me out of a lot of traffic tickets...Everybody don't get that talk though. I'm glad I got that talk.” Terrance not only received this message but enacted the lesson and saw positive results. When I later asked Terrance whether he feels police encounters impact men’s feelings of masculinity, he explained,

You can't just talk to people any way, like we understand that you've got a position of authority or you've got your badge, your gun, you're protected and all that other stuff. But you can't, you've still got to treat people with respect, especially people who grew up being taught that respect is important- that's one of the most important things to have as a human, as a man. So, I guess in an area like this where people are a little more angry, feeling disrespected is a hard thing to deal with.

I asked why he thinks people in his area would be more angry, “Some of it would be conditions of growing up, things they dealt with in their life. Fear, fear of doing something different than what they see. I don't know, there's a lot of fear, probably more

fear than anything.” According to Terrance, speaking with respect is a behavioral adaptation used in the community to assuage fear.

Kai describes how speaking with respect is a way to maintain peace in the face of potential threat,

I got somebody that I know got my life in their hands, like this just me personally, I'm not going to be the person to be disrespecting them and getting all irate and all that shit, I'm going to just keep my mouth shut, probably apologize for whatever happened...I'm not going to make this person that got my life in his hands really...act out or whatever.

Because of the violence that occurs in the participants' community and because of the systemic violence that many participants encounter, most learned to respect everyone as a means to navigate life with minimal conflict.

Experiences and Perceptions of Police

The participants' current perceptions of police, although informed by intergenerational messages of distrust, respect, and compliance, are equally influenced by their own direct and various experiences and observations of the police. Samaj explains, “When you get older, you can learn from yourself.”

When I asked how many times participants had seen police in the last 30 days, most responded “every day.” Some went to the extreme in saying, “A hundred million [times],” “Thirty-thousand [times],” or “every 5 minutes.” Suffice to say, witnessing the police was a frequent occurrence for all participants living in Southwest Philadelphia. Interacting with the police was an equally common occurrence for participants. In response to Tyrone telling me about a recent police encounter where he was stopped (while wearing his work badge), questioned, “gripped up,” and let go upon discovery of

no outstanding warrants, I asked how that experience was for him. He replied, “I mean, it happens a lot...it's just one of those things you get used to. You get used to it and keep it moving.” Research finds that the majority of U.S. citizens do not come in contact with police. Eith and Durose (2011) found that in 2008, only about 17% of Americans had face-to-face contact with a police officer. In contrast, every single participant I interviewed, most of whom were recruited at random and all of whom did not need to have criminal justice involvement to qualify for the study, had at least one story, whether positive or negative, about a direct interaction with the police.

These interactions have a direct influence over the participants’ perceptions of police. Through the interviews, the men describe virtuous cycles in which respect from officers begets respect from the community, and vicious cycles in which fear begets fear (Lea & Young, 1993). Our discussions highlight the importance of procedural justice and the ways community-oriented policing serves as the bedrock for procedurally just interactions and thus as the basis for positive appraisals of police by community members.

Virtuous cycles

Although many were unable to recall a single incident when asked to speak about a positive personal interaction with police, several participants were able to recount at least one experience they deemed positive. When I asked Josiah if he ever had a positive interaction with police, he replied,

I had one positive interaction. He said that I didn't stop at the stop sign all the way, so he pulled me over. He checked my license. He checked my registration. And I believe my insurance was old. He came back and he was like, ‘Listen, you didn't give me a hassle or nothing like that. Your insurance is old, you have to renew it. I'm supposed to take your car but park your car. Don't let me see you

driving for the rest of the night. But if I see you driving again, then I'll have to take it.' So that was a good break. Yeah, they have nice cops over there.

As a testament to Joel and Terrance's received lesson on using respect to stay safe, Josiah was able to get out of a ticket because he did not give the officer a "hassle." Because Josiah was spoken to with respect and given a warning, he can now say that "nice cops" exist. As found by Tyler and Wakslak (2004) police can maintain an air of legitimacy when civilians believe officers are exercising their authority fairly and not "using their badge as an advantage."

When I asked Durrell about any positive interactions he has had with police, he told me,

I got stopped actually. I was on foot. I had my bulge sticking out and I guess he drove past and seen it...I have my license to carry. They was in the car, and he looked. When I looked at him, he was just moving forward, and this guy parked at the corner. As I was walking across the street, he started walking with me. I just kept walking. He just said, 'please tell me you have your permit to carry for that.' I said, 'of course.' I said, 'why didn't you ask for that at the car? You drove past me.' He said, 'because the habit of taking the chance of just having to chase you down, knowing that you have a weapon, you could turn around and turn it on me. These young guys is crazy. I don't know how to react to them now, but I have to do my job, and I'm going home to my family.' I told him myself, 'I'm doing the same thing. I might not be a cop, but it's the same thing trying to keep myself safe. I have to keep myself safe at all times.' That was a good little interaction. I had never met that cop before. I had never even seen him before, and he was kind of kind.

During this encounter, the officer enacted transparency, another core tenet of procedural justice, by explaining why he stopped Durrell. You could hear the surprise in Durrell's voice when he describes the officer as "kind." Durrell spoke to me about encounters he had in the past that he felt were unjust and warranted an apology that he never received. However, this positive experience allowed Durrell to experience an officer who was fair, which shifts his perceptions to some degree, as he sees that an interaction with an officer could be "good."

Bill, who has a teardrop tattoo below his left eye and the name of his daughter tattooed above his right, told me about a positive interaction that exemplified officer neutrality, the third component of procedural justice,

Down the street from my house, [the officer] was a Caucasian guy, he was cool. He was like, 'Yeah man, we get a lot of these calls and stuff', because my tattoos and stuff...because there was supposed to be a shooting, guy had a bunch of stuff on his face. So, he was like, 'Yeah man, we got to.' He didn't come up to me nasty, had no gun drawn or nothing, he just said, 'Brother, listen.' He said, 'I got a call that somebody with teardrops and stuff on their face shot somebody,' said, 'Listen, I just want to search you man.' He in the car talking to me mind you, 'I'm not bum-rushing you, I'm trying to do nothing. Is it cool if I just search you man and just keep you going?' I said, 'That's fine, brother, you and I got no problem with that.' He searched me, he said, 'Thank you man,' he said, 'I'm not sliding up on you or none of that.' He said, 'I'm just trying to hurry up and go home.' And that was it.

When I asked Bill how he feels when he sees the police, he responded, "Very cautious when I see the police. Like, I know for certain they're not my friends by no means." This positive interaction challenged Bill's judgment of police, claiming that this officer was "cool." By discussing his own vulnerability and explaining why the stop was occurring, the officer facilitated a social connection that broke down the inherent power dynamic between police and the community and allowed Bill to feel safer during the interaction.

The participants express how officers who engage and respect the community are often the ones who receive respect from the community. For example, Jacques explains,

A lot of cops love their job and they do their job and those are the ones that I respect and give all the praise...one cop, he's on my block all the time, get out the car with their badge and everything. He's a decent guy. He loves being a cop. If more people was like him, it would be a way better world... he come through help people with their bags, shoot around with the kids on the court... he's not like one of them extra. He don't do too much.

Like Jacquees, many participants want officers to engage with the community. They see an investment in the community as a sign of respect, and respect, as described early, often translates to a feeling of safety.

Public safety imposed through positive police engagement with the community is the theory behind community-oriented policing (COP). As described by Mayes (2017),

COP encompasses the following four principles: a reorientation towards two-way conversations with the community; a focus on solving problems; addressing concerns specifically identified by the community; and a commitment to using non-enforcement tactics and resources for solving problems (Skogan, 1995). It responds directly to concerns of police legitimacy by aiming to foster enhanced trust of police and higher ratings of police performance through consistent and respectful policing (Gill et al., 2014).

Participants often describe direct and vicarious police interactions as positive when they see officers participating in community activities and doing favors. Many spoke with a smile as they discussed seeing videos of officers playing sports with community members or dancing with kids in a schoolyard. For instance, Joel explains, "it's good when I'm on Instagram or Twitter and I see a video of when the police officer playing basketball with the kid or something. Stuff like that gives you a good feeling rather than hearing a cop shooting somebody or killing somebody." Chamere experienced this kind of community engagement first hand,

One time we was playing basketball. [The police] came and played basketball with us. One time we was boxing with the boxing gloves, they came out there and played with us... the cops around my way- Tiny Jim, Reddick- they been around for years. They watch me grow up and they know my mom and my dad.

Growing up with this kind of connection has made Chamere supportive of the police.

Chamere did not challenge his four-year-old son wanting to dress up like a police officer for Halloween or the fact that his son wants to be a police officer when he grows up.

When I asked Chamere how he would feel if his son became a cop, he replied, "I

wouldn't be mad. That'd be good. I'd tell him to be detective...Shit, I'd turn into a cop right now if I could. I wouldn't be a drawing one, I'd just be a cool cop."

Henry told me about an experience he had when he was 15-years-old with a "cool cop" who exemplified behavior indicative of community-oriented policing,

A cop helped me and my friend get our first job...working at a pretzel factory on Ninth Street, cleaning...like sweeping floor, mopping...This how it happened. Now, we were selling weed, me and my friend... We fifteen-, sixteen-years-old...I stole [the weed] from my big cousin. We bagged it up, we made two hundred dollars apiece. We still had all these weed jars on us, and this how it happen. I would sit on the step, smoking up my weed, me and my friend. We'd cut school and everything. We smoking the weed, being bad. The same cop that locked my dad up --My dad did like a three-year sentence upstate. He did three years. - [The cop's] name Rodriguez. I'll never forget his name, Rodriguez. He cool as ever, man, cool as ever. He ride past and he see us. When he see us, I try to hide...he had stopped and he got out the car, I said, 'oh my God this weed was just tasting so good, now I got to throw it away.' I hide it behind my back, and I sat on it. I'm like, he ain't ever going to see this joint. But I'm so stupid, I got all these weed jars in my pocket. He can see them. Like if I get up it sound like I'm jingling bells. I sound like Santa Claus coming down the chimney, no bull crap. He like, 'Get on the wall.' He always mess with me. He be playing though. He's like, 'Get on the wall.' I'm like, 'I'm not getting on the wall.' That's what I'm telling him, 'I'm not getting up.' He like, 'Man, get on the wall.' I'm like 'ugh man,' so I get on the wall. He's like, 'You too. You his friend?' I'm like, 'Yeah.' I'm looking at my man, we about to run bro because he going nut shit today. I'm thinking he really going to lock us up. He's like, 'Alright.' He tapped us and shit. He's like 'what's this?' He take all the weed out my pocket and put it on the step. He like, 'You got some weed on you too?' My friend, he scared. 'Yeah, I got some weed on me.' And he just gave his up. I'm like, 'Why you give it up? Let him find it'...He put it on the step. He turned around, he's like, 'Look. I'm not even going to lock you all up.' He said, 'You all too young to go to jail. You fifteen, you sixteen. I'm not going to lock you all up. What I'm going to do is--You all want money?' We like, 'Yeah, we want some money.' He said, 'That ain't the way you supposed to be doing it though. You all selling weed. You all ain't even in school. You all are outside'...I'm like, 'Yo, I need some money, bro. What you saying? You going to give me my weed back, bro? You not going to lock me up, give me my weed back. Officer, that shit selling right now. I want my weed. You feel me? I want to buy some sneakers.' He like, 'No, you not selling weed.' He took it, he put it in a bag. We thinking he going to give it back to us. He start crushing it and threw them down the sewer...I'm like no, he didn't just do that. He smelt more weed, that was the weed I was sitting on-it was on my back pocket. Take that out, step on it, rip it all up. He said, 'Listen, be down at 9th and Christian first thing tomorrow morning'...He said, 'Everything I broke, you all going to get back, but you all not

going to get that exactly back. You all going to get your money, and you all going to work for it.' We like, 'Alright man.' He said, 'I'm telling you, be up. If you don't, I'm going to lock you all up.' We like, 'Alright.' He really came and got us that next day. He picked me up first and then he picked my friend up, took us to the jawn. Told the owner who we was, got us our first job. That's the first job I had in my life. I said, 'That's decent.'

And I told my dad. My dad was happy. He was crying, because I had went to go see him in a visit in the jail. I'm like, 'Yo, guess who gave me a job?' He like, 'Who?'...I'm like, 'The cop that locked you up.' He said, 'The cop that lock me and got me in the jail right now?' Like, 'Yeah.' He like, 'Oh, man, that's what's up, man.' He was crying and everything. 'Damn, Rodriguez gave you a job for real?' He was like, 'Yeah, that's what's up, man. Tell Rodriguez I said thank you, man.' I'm like, 'Alright, I'm going to tell him.' And I told him and shit, he's like, 'Man, tell your dad I didn't want to lock him up, but I had to, he didn't give me no choice, I had to lock him up- dad had all these drugs on him. I had to lock him up man. I had to. New person with me, I had to lock him up. You know I'd let him go,' he like, 'but this time I couldn't. I had to do my job.' I'm like, dang man. He really came to court, took my dad and all that, but he had to, that's his job.

As Henry explains, Rodriguez was both familiar with Henry's experience of paternal incarceration, and also aware of the need for employment in the disadvantaged community he was patrolling. Instead of using enforcement tactics, Rodriguez used community resources to problem solve, which both Henry and Henry's dad felt was "decent." Rodriguez's conversation with Henry allowed Henry to not hold any animosity towards the officer and to realize that, when Rodriguez arrested Henry's father, he was just doing his job.

For Bryce, who has mainly had negative encounters with police throughout his life, experiencing a positive interaction facilitated a broader view of police,

I don't know why, my car got a gas light and everything, I just didn't look at the dash the whole time that I'm riding on E. The whole time and then soon as I finally decide, I looked at it, 'Oh slam! I'm on E. I've got to go get some gas.' You feel the vibration when you run out of gas and it cut off. I said, 'Oh!' In the middle of the street. I'm trying to get it to turn the corner, 'C'mon turn.' Nothing. I ain't got no funnel, nothing. I hopped out. I've got a big car. I've got a Crown Victoria--a big car--so I'm trying to push it and nothing's happening. It's too big just for one person and it was crazy because two white people came up to help me

push my car. That caught me off guard, and it was a white boy and his girlfriend. His girlfriend came first. His girlfriend came, 'Do you need help?' I'm, 'Yes, but you're a lady. I don't need you. No, it's cool.' She's, 'No, I'll help you. Come on, babe, let's help him.' So, we're pushing it. The cop comes up, 'What's going on?' I'm, 'Damn, I just ran out of gas, that's all.' He's, 'Well, how can I help?' I'm, 'Alright, if you want to help, I need a funnel and I need somebody to take me to the gas station.' He's, 'Hop in.' I'm, 'Nah. [laughs] You can just take the funnel and the five dollars. You can bring the gas back. I don't want to leave my car here.' He's, 'Man, get in the car.' I ain't never got in the car and I wasn't getting arrested...I got in the backseat. The cops, they won't let you sit in the front because they've got their guns and stuff up there. I was in there, 'Oh, my god.' Gas stations like five blocks away. I'm, 'This is taking forever.' I wasn't really worried about nobody seeing me. I was just claustrophobic of being in there. I've never been in there and not being arrested. 'Am I going to get out of this jawn¹⁴? Did they just trick me to get in?' So, once I got out, I got the gas, he brung me back. He put the gas in the car for me and everything...I was, 'Dang, good looking.' 'Don't worry about it. That's what we're here for.' He knew it too. He cracked a little chuckle. He just started laughing, got in the car, 'Ya'll got us all wrong.' There's some of them still good, I guess.

Because of history, the media, and other direct negative experiences, most participants assume most police are going to act unfairly. Any positive interaction, therefore, acts as a contestation to that assumption rather than a confirmation of the belief that most police are fair. This interaction with the police, where the officers acted as guardians rather than warriors, enabled Bryce to see that there are still some "good" officers despite the current climate.

The participants acknowledged the need for "warriors" (Rahr & Rice, 2015) in their neighborhood, "This neighborhood would be on fire if it weren't for the police...It would be people crimes all over the place right now...Believe it or not, they slow it down a little bit...Being around" (Matt). "At the end of the day...there's less shootings, there's

¹⁴ "Jawn" is a common slang term used in Philadelphia that is synonymous with "thing"-it can replace essentially any noun. For example, someone could say "could you pass me that jawn?" in reference to a ketchup bottle. Or, like in Bryce's case, "jawn" refers to the cop car.

less bull-crap going on. There's a lot of cops out here now, so all that crazy stuff is barely going to happen now” (Aquil). However, when police act as warriors, as Jacques and Chamere state, they need to not be “drawling” or “extra.” Rather, those who are enforcing the law need to be respectful, neutral, transparent, and also supplement warrior acts with acts of guardianship, as Bryce experienced.

These needs reflect the tenants of procedural justice. Whether a police interaction is deemed “procedurally just” depends on the (a) quality of decision making, (b) quality of treatment, and (c) trustworthiness (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004). The quality of decision making is measured through perceived neutrality and consistency, the quality of treatment is measured by whether the individual feels as though the authorities treated him with dignity and respect and acknowledged the individual’s rights, and trustworthiness is measured by whether the individual feels as though the authorities were acting out of benevolence and a “sincere desire to be fair” (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004). The participants descriptions of procedurally just interactions support previous research that finds that procedurally just interactions can make a positive impact on preconceived negative judgments and positively influence perceptions of police (Fagan & Tyler, 2005; Tyler, Fagan, & Geller, 2014; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Wolfe, McLean, & Pratt, 2017)

When I asked Jason if he had been stopped by the police while in a public place within the last year, he responded, “not much, probably five times.” I asked how those experiences were for him,

Very degrading I want to say. Because it's like, the approach on a situation, they're not coming up to you, you know, ‘Excuse me sir, we hear that are drugs and guns in this area, we just want to check you’, you know. Talk to me as if I'm a human being. They walking up, ‘You, get on the wall’, pat me down, pulling my pants all hard and ripping shirts and stuff like that just to check to see if I have a gun or anything like that...A friendly ‘hi’ is cool. I say ‘hi, how's your day going?’

Stuff like that. Not just this random ‘get up against the wall’, seven cops coming out of nowhere, feeling like I done killed somebody...I don't like that.

Jason describes how he wouldn't be as upset about being stopped if the officer had enacted procedural justice and spoken to him as an equal. However, because of the officers' aggressive manner, Jason feels degraded and hyper-criminalized.

Sam, on the other hand, told me about officer “Tiny” who he described as “cool,” not because he lets people off who are in the wrong, but rather because Tiny enforces the law in a respectful way, while also engaging with the community using nonenforcement tactics.

Tiny is cool as shit though. Tiny will pull up and be like, ‘What you got on you? I know you got something. Don't make me chase you.’ And you can tell Tiny, ‘Man, I got some weed on me, I'm about to smoke it. I ain't got no gun.’ ‘Go ahead and smoke your weed, man,’ and pull off. Like Tiny is cool, he's a cool white bull. I like him. But he'll do his job too when he's got to. That you've got to respect, you've got to respect that. Tiny will let you slide, he won't tell you to get up just for sitting there like other cops would and that's why Tiny's cool. But then he'll do his job too when he has to, so you can't be mad at that. These other ones are just dickheads from the get-go. They pull right up, ‘Don't live here, get the fuck up.’ ‘First of all, who are you even talking to? I ain't got to do nothing.’ So now that whole thing is going left from here. I think certain people like Tiny know that. There's a way to approach these niggas in the hood. There's a certain way to go about your job where you ain't got to be such a dickhead and still get your job done. Tiny ain't a dickhead, but he still gets his job done.

Familiarity with the neighborhood provides officers insight into the ways respect, marked by civility, neutrality, and transparency, is valued in the community and how respect begets respect. It is this kind of community-oriented policing that facilitates community buy-in and positive appraisals, even when enforcing the law.

When I asked Kiwan whether he ever had a particularly negative interaction with the police, he responded, “Hell yeah...When they came and got me!” I asked him to tell me about that experience and he paused, “No, they didn't do nothing wrong to me,

nothing like that. It was my fault they was there.” Because the arresting officers acted in accordance and enforced the law while still showing respect, Kiwuan perceives the officers and experience as legitimate. Because the interaction was not hostile, Kiwuan was able to lower his defense mechanisms and take accountability for his actions.

When I asked Jacques whether he feels like police are protecting his neighborhood, he replied,

Some yes. I can definitely say some cops do their job...A cop isn't an easy job at all. Being overzealous may get you shot or whatever. Because a lot of guys who sell drugs, they respect cops because it's like- my job is selling 'til I get caught, your job is to catch me. I know what it is, if I get caught, I get caught, so be it. I can't get mad at that.

Marquis supported Jacques's statement, “The way I see it is [the police's] job is to protect...Even with my incarceration, I didn't spit on the police or anything and say derogatory things. I complied wholeheartedly because I did something wrong and that's your job, to take me away and correct me.”

When I asked Kwame whether he felt like cops have a bad reputation in his community, he responded,

Yes. Yes, the cops have bad reputation in my community. Some people make excuses. Some people just be like, they try follow the trend. ‘Man, F the cops because they be locking me up.’ ‘Well why are they locking you up, bro?’ ‘No man, they are locking me up because I had some dope on me. But they didn't know that though.’ Or ‘no man, they locked me up because I was on house arrest and I had went to the store and I had went up the street after that. Then they had come and locked me up, but what did they lock me up for though?’ ‘Bro, that's why they locked you up. That makes sense. They did what they were supposed to do right there. The locking you up part is right.’ But when they lock you up and bang your head up against the wall, and you're not doing nothing, alright, that's different. But if they lock you up and you're resisting arrest and you was like ‘F you’ and spit at one of them and then they punch you in the face, you kind of brought that on yourself, I don't see how that's really wrong. Like I said it's a two-way street, you've got some good cops.

Chris responded similarly when I asked whether he feels like the criminal justice system has impacted fatherhood in his community,

I really don't. I don't like blaming things like that on the criminal justice system because it's really decisions that we make. So, if you make the decision to assault somebody, you can't look at a cop in a negative manner for locking you up, you can't. Now, if the cop- it happens but it doesn't happen frequently, where a cop will roll up and just get out and fuck you up for absolutely no reason. It happens, this is reality, but it's also reality that it doesn't happen frequently. Out of a hundred officers, you might get five that will do some stupid shit like that... With good and bad, as far as justice, neighborhoods, anybody for that matter, the bad things are always highlighted while the good things are always wiped out. People scream about your failures from the top of their lungs from the highest mountain in the world, but they will whisper about your accomplishments.

As discussed in previous chapters, the participants hold themselves and others accountable for their actions. They explain how an officer's job is to enforce the law, and if an officer can do so in a way that is not "drawling," then minimal animosity can be directed towards police, despite the outcome. However, when an officer does engage in misconduct is when it becomes hard for participants to support and justify the officers' actions. Although Chris describes the rarity of unsolicited police brutality, evaluations of police are fragile (Augustyn, 2016; Kaiser & Reisig, 2017; Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Wakslak, 2004), and one negative interaction can negate previous positive experiences and dissolve an individual's confidence in the police.

Vicious cycles

The procedural justice model posits that assumptions of police violence and maltreatment can be "unlearned" or, at the very least, challenged and altered by accumulating more direct and vicarious positive and fair interactions (Augustyn, 2016; Fagan & Tyler, 2005; Kirk et al., 2012; Lea & Young, 1993; Tyler & Lind, 1992; Tyler

& Wakslak, 2004; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). However, just as negative perceptions can be unlearned, positive perceptions can be unlearned as well. When I asked Henry how he feels when he sees the police today, he replied,

I ain't even got no feeling no more when I see them...When I see them, it's just like I see a normal person just with a uniform on...They don't really do they job- what they supposed to do, protect the people, really help the people, you don't see that too much going on...I still look at them like high authority. I still respect cops, I still respect the law, I respect everything...I don't feel like they as fair as they once was. They once was like one of the most fairest and the most honest people of all. Nowadays man, they just like us. They can hurt you, they can make you love them when you want, they can make you hate them when you want. They just like us. No different, just with a badge and a uniform.

Since Henry's experience as a teenager with officer Rodriguez, he has had several encounters with police that he characterizes as "disappointing" and "frustrating." As a result, even though Henry still respects officers, he no longer views them in a positive light.

One of the main reasons participants distrust police is because, as Henry said, "they can hurt you" without being held accountable. Bey explains,

[The police] beat up my little cousin...because he was playing with somebody that we know in the store... playing with him, he snatched his phone. He didn't do it like he was robbing him. I guess that's what [the police] said, and they came in the store. [The police] beat him bad, and that was back in the day...It offends me, it bothers me that there's no consequence for stuff like that because it makes it bad for good policing, and it makes it bad for the relationship between police and the community. It makes it bad for the relationship between the system and the community. This is the reason why the cops have to deal with no snitching laws. That's the reason why the cops have to deal with people who don't trust them, and they can't get the information when somebody really did some shit to an old lady because nobody fuck with [the police] cause [the police] jumped them for no reason- that's why. So yeah, we don't like what happens to old ladies, but fuck you...That's the reason why when there's some real shit, people be like I ain't saying nothing cause the trust....The remedy for it is if they just held wrong accountable... they've got the blue code and people on the street know they got the blue code cause some of us family members is fucking cops. My uncle was a fucking police. He told me police don't snitch. If a police snitch none of the police ain't going to fuck with him, and then what if he got to need backup?

Motherfuckers take their time. His life's on the line cause he still has to go against all of us. Yeah, so we know that you all don't snitch so don't come knock on my door ask me tell nobody on the street. Get your ass away from my door.

Although Bey shows empathy for good police who get grouped into the stereotype of bad police, he explains how the stereotype is substantiated by direct and vicarious experiences of police brutality and harassment. Bey airs his frustrations about the lack of officer accountability and the resultant lack of trust from the community. As a ramification of this distrust, there is a lack of community collaboration with the police to address crime.

Samuel spoke similarly, describing the community's fear of officers due to their lack of accountability.

You have a lot of people out here that are afraid of the police. They're afraid because of situations like back in the day--in the nineties--when the guy got beat by the cops and they're afraid of things like the movie Fruitvale Station which is another historic event that did happen in 2001. These situations that have happened to these African American young men--these black young men...I'm not trying to be racist or anything, but that right there for the black community, it doesn't make them feel good when the police get a slap on the wrist and get to keep going, and that's even like [rap group] N.W.A. said. I don't want to say 'F the police' because I'm friends with most of the police officers in the neighborhood, but some police officers like it says in the N.W.A. song, black police showing up for the white cops. Some police officers take it above and beyond for no reason, and I'm not a racist person--I don't like bringing race into everything--but they need to understand that we have rights, too.

Samuel describes how historical events have shaped perceptions and built resentments. Because of personal relationships with police, he does not blanketly demonize law enforcement or say he wants the police department eradicated. Rather, he calls for officers to be penalized for their wrong-doing and, specifically, to treat the Black community with the respect they deserve.

When I asked Zakiah, a truck driver with a tongue ring and long braids falling down his back, how many times he has been stopped by police in the last 12 months, he told me, “it’s hard to count.” I asked if he ever felt the reasons for which he was stopped were legitimate, “No, it’s never a legitimate reason.” He described how he’ll frequently get stopped while walking to the corner store and asked for his ID because he “fits the description.” I asked how those interactions make him feel? “Angry. It’s like, leave me alone. I’m walking down the street. What can I possibly be doing? I just feel like they want to mess with us.” “And when you say us?” I asked. He responded directly, “Black people.” Sam similarly stated, “[The police] just all around not for us.”

Even those who see the police as human and sympathize with the ways police endure a negative stereotype still see a very clear line separating “us” and “them” with “us” defined as communities of color and “them” as “the ones in blue.” As EJ states, “I don’t see no color with them, I just look at them all the same. They all blue.” This dividing line, however, is believed by participants to be drawn and deepened by police rather than initiated by communities of color. The empirical research on police culture finds that many officers often view civilians with suspicion and create an “us-versus-them orientation” in order to cope with unforeseen dangers inherent to the job (Silver et al., 2017).

Fear Begets Fear

Many of the participants describe how officers’ unfamiliarity with the neighborhood cultivates fear and distrust of the community, which, in turn, fuels community members’ fear and distrust of police, hence the “vicious cycle.” When I asked Bey if he ever had a negative interaction with the police, he responded,

I think that the one part that I disagree with and what my problem would be with them is like, if you're scared, don't be no cop. They shoot people and they be bitching... You scared, your punk ass, if you scared, why you out here doing this? This ain't for you... You ain't got to be smoking nobody... when they kill somebody over selling some loosies and shit, I'm like, 'You're a cop, it's your job to make judgment'.... If I was a cop and I came down the street and I seen some little kids doing some stupid shit, it's my job to be like you all need to get booked or I'm about to tell your mom. Like it's really my job to be like, 'I've got to report this one because you might set another fire and burn the whole jawn down.' Or if I know you and I can scare you, I'm making a judgement call... I mean if your life in danger, your life in danger but you be so scared that you be shooting people. I be like, you was just scared... I fear young cops, I'm scared of them. I'm scared of them, I don't mess with them.

Fear elicits fear, as Bey describes being scared of young officers who he believes are particularly anxious in unfamiliar communities. Bey told me about an incident where he and his child's mother got into an argument and she went down to the police station. A white officer and a Black officer came to Bey's door to ask him to sign some papers pertaining to the fight. Bey explained how the Black officer spoke to him calmly while the white officer was standing to the side with his hand on his gun, "So I'm just standing there talking to [the Black officer]...but I can't take my eyes off the other cop because he's got his hand on the gun...so I'm getting mad because that's a threat" Bey called the white officer out, but the officer denied having his hand on his gun. Bey replied, "you obviously got your hand on the gun, and you're going to say you're not holding it?...You can't even admit or say, 'oh damn instinct,' nothing? I would have respected you if you'd have been like 'police instinct. My fault, bro. You ain't no threat right now. It's all good,' but I'm standing in my doorway, my children in here and you're holding a gun. For what? What's that mean?" Bey turned to the Black officer, "that's ignorant, man. You need to talk to bull when you get back in the car. He going to be the reason why somebody come

at you with some bullshit cause he's doing extra shit. People take that shit to offense for real for real.”

Gibril similarly describes officers’ fears of the unknown. He believes that police-community relationships facilitate a level of comfort for officers, which in turn fosters less police misconduct. Because of this belief, he criticizes the common practice of purposefully placing officers in neighborhoods where they do not have connections,

I know there's a whole lot of bad cops out this jawn. I can't call them bad because it's just they scared. You know? They scared, especially if they in a neighborhood that's violent, they scared...Retrain people that's more familiar with certain neighborhoods. You always heard this, ‘There's a cop in their neighborhood, go put him down North,’ no this cop in this neighborhood, put him in this neighborhood, he have a relationship, it's about relationships...Some of these cops are scared. I ain't going to say just white cops in Black neighborhood, there's some Black cops that's in some of these neighborhoods that's scared. So, any movement is just like- trap a scared person in a corner with a gun what are they going to do? Get out of there.

Gibril displays a level of awareness and empathy in his stance that officers are “scared” rather than inherently “bad.” The participants describe how many officers have internalized the historical and current criminalization of the Black community and therefore perceive the participants and their fellow community members as threatening. The participants implicate this kind of fright and suspicion as the igniter of conflict.

Because participants regularly navigate community violence and, as described in earlier chapters, are aware of their own stress responses, the participants are aware of how officers’ stress can manifest negatively in encounters with the community. With this awareness, some participants describe how they would rather stay inside than be outside and risk having to navigate officers’ suspicions and anxieties.

When I asked Cameron whether he has been stopped by the police while walking over the last 12 months, he rolled his eyes, “Yeah, many times. Just a stop and frisk.” I asked how many times,

I would say about ten times...They think this phone is a gun swinging in my pocket...It's embarrassing and when you've been going through it so long you get frustrated. Like what are you all doing? You didn't see me sell nothing, I ain't smoking nothing, I'm just walking from A to B, but you see two, three black people talking and congregating- the cops, they make you want to stay in the house.

A breadth of literature discusses how community violence and crime can force community members to retreat indoors (Fick, Osofsky, & Lewis, 1998; Haldipur, 2019; Jenkins, 2002); however, fewer studies look at how policing can limit activity for those in hypersurveilled communities. Sam described feeling equally as frustrated when I asked what kind of changes he would want to see from the police,

Tell them to just leave us the fuck alone. They bother us too much man. They make you want to go the fuck in a house. So, it make you not do certain things with your kids. Because three dads can't sit on the step and let they sons ride they bike up and down the street because if the cops just so happen to ride by while they at the end of the block on the bikes, and us three is at the top of the block on the steps, now they fucking with us. ‘Why you all sitting there?’ ‘Our kids riding bikes.’ ‘Where they at?’ ‘Do it fucking matter? They right there! Now what? Just leave us alone man. If you don't actually see us doing something hand to hand or gun, leave us the fuck alone. We just sitting on our steps. What you got to pull up and ask us what we doing for?’ And now when they pull off, we just, ‘Get ya'll's bikes and come on. We going in the house.’ And that just fucked up the whole day with your kids because the cops want to keep riding, circling the block. Get the fuck out of here.

To add to the previous chapter, unjust policing is yet another barrier participants have to navigate when engaging in fathering activities. Sam and his friend's time outside with their children was tainted by what they see as the unnecessary burden of police harassment due to a criminal stereotype applied to their entire community.

When I asked Joel if he feels safe in his neighborhood, he shook his head, “No.” It isn’t the community violence, however, that made him feel unsafe, but rather officers’ stress responses,

The other day I had got pulled over. I had went around the bus. I knew I was wrong whatever...the cop asked for my license and registration. But me, forgetting about everything that's going on right now, it was in my bookbag in the back seat. So, my first reaction is reach back. And as soon as I reached back, he was like, ‘What are you doing? What are you doing? Don't reach back there!’ He started yelling at me. It just hit my head like, snap what am I doing? He could've easily pulled out his gun and just shot me and I'd have been dead. I didn't think about it until after I tried to do it and it's like, why should I even have to think like that. You just asked for my license, I'm just getting you my license and registration, not thinking that I can't even reach back in my own car. I could have been dead...It's just crazy that I have to think like that.

Ahmad explains how the community is more fearful of the police these days because police are more fearful as well,

Now-a-days if you get pulled over [community members’] hands is on the steering wheel hanging outside the window before [the officer] can even get to the car. I don't think we should have to react that way. And, ya’ll’s supposed to protect us. I don't want a gun pointed at me if ya’ll tell me to get my registrations and when I lean over to get it, I turn back to a gun in my face when I've been asked to hand you something.

Both Ahmad and Joel are disappointed by the fact that they have to navigate officers’ fears. Another participant, Bill, got pulled over recently in his work truck at 8am. When asked for his license and registration, he told the officers he would prefer to be handcuffed and put in the back of the squad car while they search the truck and gather his papers themselves than try to reach for anything in his truck. “I seen him fidgeting with his gun, I said, ‘Oh yeah, you can go ahead and handcuff me and put me in the back.’”

Jonah made a similar statement when speaking about how he feels “a little scared” when he sees the police,

I don't know what might happen, they might be like 'can I see your ID?' I might be reaching for my wallet and anything can happen. Like I understand, it is really a dangerous job, and I understand...in that instant it is like either fight or flight...now if I get pulled over by a police officer, I'm just gonna say, 'listen, my wallet's in the back pocket. I'm not getting it, you gonna have to get it if you want to know who I am, I'll tell you who I am, but if you want to like verify it, you got to get my wallet, I don't feel comfortable right now.'

The participants suggest that in order to assuage officers' fears, and therefore their own anxieties of being the victim of a stress response, police should either be from the community they are stationed or increase their amount of social interaction with the community in order to gain a greater understanding of how the ecosystem functions.

When Bey told the story of the two officers, he explained how, in reflecting on the interaction, he felt compassion for the white officer because he was unaware of his surroundings and was therefore on high alert,

I was like that's scared police...if I would have saw him again, I would have been like 'you know what, man? I ain't even worried about that shit cause I really know you was the fuck shook cause you was like 'we're coming down here for some hostile shit. Everybody outside, it's nice outside...' But what you're coming around here for is not that kind...' Now the black cop knew [the call was] some bullshit. Like [Bey's child's mother is] mad, and this some bullshit. This ain't about to be long or nothing. We just got him to sign the papers, and we could leave. He know nothing comes from these type of situations, and that's the only thing that I think cops need to be trained...I know they train them...but they don't train them in dealing with the people.

Bey describes how the white officer may have already been anxious about engaging with what he thought might be a hostile man in a fit of rage, and that this anxiety and fear likely intensified with the amount of people outside on the block seemingly surrounding him. However, because this situation was familiar for the Black officer, Bey perceived the Black officer to face the same experience with ease. From these observations, Bey concludes that, at the very least, trainings are necessary for officers to become more familiar with the community and thus feel less frightened and threatened.

Bryce agrees,

In the day, it used to be a lot of cops where your family knew them; we all knew them so they're looking at it like 'we're trying to make a difference.' But now, it's like they're bringing cops from all over that don't know anything about...all they look at is like the black guy is a potential criminal, potential criminal. Watch him. Why are you standing there? He's probably hustling when actually he's just waiting on a bus...You bring in these different ethnicity cops that don't come from these type of neighborhoods into these neighborhoods to police it, so they stereotype. They know what they see on TV. They know that we're supposed to be super predators, all that. That's what they think so they are already on edge with us. It isn't even that they're really like racists or anything like that. It's just that they mis-educated. They think every one of us is very dangerous, so they just want to make it home. So that's why I think a lot of the shootings from cops comes from they don't understand. I think in order to be a cop in this area, you... should be from this area, and I think that should be for every area. That's like taking a person that was born around here and putting him in an upper-class neighborhood as a cop. He's already going to have a vendetta against them because he's like, 'you're all uppity. You all don't know the struggle.' So, any chance he can give them a hard time, he's going to give them a hard time. So, I think that in order to be a cop in the neighborhood you should come from that neighborhood or at least around that neighborhood. I think that would exclude a lot of cop shootings because a person that comes from here could understand, and he could know everybody, and he could have a better sense for who you are.

Bryce alludes to many of the participants' stories about police viewing their lawful mundane routines with suspicion. Unlike Sam and Zakiah, Bryce believes this outlook to be a defense mechanism stemming from fear rather than blatant racism and this fear to be an outcome of internalized and unchallenged criminalizing messages about the Black community. Bryce believes familiarity with Black communities can challenge these messages and provide officers with a more holistic and realistic perspective, thus decreasing tension and fright.

The Yellow-Light Talk

Like participants describe the omnipresence of legal socialization when growing up in their communities, they similarly discuss the mandate of having similar

conversations with their own children. When asked whether Bryce had spoken to his children about the police, he replied, “In this day and time every black child coming up now...You've got to. That's like teaching them don't go in dark alley ways. It's mandatory now.” Sam similarly responded, “I think every father has that conversation with their kids, everyone, especially if you live in the hood, you have that conversation with your kids about cops. I know that for sure. That's one of the first ones, sex, cops.”

Because of participants’ direct and vicarious experiences with police, in conjunction with the messages received about police while growing up, concepts of police engagement, proactive avoidance, respect, compliance, trust, and distrust are often told to their children in the same breath. While many participants humanize, empathize, and respect the police, witnessing or directly experiencing police harassment and brutality confirms some of the more negative and disorganized messages participants received about police while growing up. The participants, therefore, relay to their children messages that are often complex and pluralistic. They impart in their children what I deem *The Yellow Light Talk*- not conveying absolute approval of the police, but not telling their children that all police are bad. They acknowledge the existence of both good and bad police and tell their children to err on the side of caution.

Bill’s children are 8- and 6-years old and he has yet to speak to his children about police. When I asked if he plans to, he stated,

Yeah, I'll have that conversation with them, in which I'll let them know all police officers are not bad. You can call the police in case of emergency, but police are not your friends. You have to be cautious with all agencies like that. I mean, you use them for emergency responses and things of that nature if you're being wronged. But you do not fully trust them. You always be cautious. That's all.

Jason said he would communicate a similarly complex perspective,

Part of me wants to say just stay away from them, but at the same you do need them because they're here to protect us. More so, I would tell my kids...just try to stay out of trouble and stay far away from them, as far as you can if there's no trouble being caused. As far as trouble goes, if there's any trouble, then yeah, call them immediately, you know don't try to handle the situation yourself, stuff like that. So, it's kind of a semi-situation you know, stay away but you know, if you need them, call them.

There are multiple threads within both Jason and Bill's messaging. Police are portrayed as saviors at the same time that they are portrayed as menaces: "they're here to protect us," but "do not fully trust them."

Some fathers try to teach a more coherent lesson, while still acknowledging the complexity. Renald spoke about how he is trying to facilitate a more positive perception of police in his daughter who doesn't like them as a result of witnessing officers arrest and take away her father,

Sometimes my daughter be like, 'I don't like cops, dad.' I am, 'Don't say that baby' ...I told them, 'you've got some cops that's bad and you've got some cops that's good. You can't think like you don't like them. They're there to protect you. You might be walking the street one day, and somebody might be following you and there's going to be a cop right there and that cop gunna protect you. Daddy might not be around but that cop's going to be around.'

Chris told me a similar story when I asked what he has told his daughter about police,

That they're not all bad and that the images that she sees on TV and more on social media is not all it is. Like I try to let her know there's good and bad...In her eyes they taking away her daddy, so they're bad. So, I have to explain to her, 'They're not bad for taking daddy away. I know you're mad at them for taking daddy away, but you have to understand that they wouldn't have been here if daddy didn't do something bad. So, daddy was bad, and they were coming to put daddy on punishment.'

Exemplifying accountability as discussed in the previous chapters, neither Renald and Chris blame the police for doing their job. Despite the police doing something harmful in their children's eyes, Renald and Chris want their children to feel confident in the police and go to the police when in danger. However, an integral part of their generational

messaging is acknowledging the existence of bad cops as well. As Keenan said, “I would just give him all positive stuff like, ‘Not all cops are bad...Just watch out for them.’”

This kind of warning clause appeared in most *Talks*. For example, Cameron states,

I don't put in they head, don't talk to cops and all of that. That's what a lot of people do too with their children this day and age, this generation. That's not what it's supposed to be...’Anything wrong, you call the cops. The cops is here to help you. You stop a cop [when] you feel uncomfortable, somebody touch you, somebody say they going to hurt you, in danger, you call these cops. You flag this cop down.’ I tell them that all the time. But I broke down to them too, ‘you don't want to play games with these cops, as far as acting crazy in front of them or doing all that.’

Cameron wants his children to believe in the police and view them in a positive light.

However, Cameron also cautions his children to act in a manner that seems calm and rational in police presence so as to not be perceived as a threat or confirm officers’ potential stereotypes.

When I asked Joel whether he thinks he’ll speak to his daughter about the police, he responded “Yes, I’m going to have to.” I asked what he would say,

Because of the color of our skin, we have to be different. We have to think differently, we have to do things differently. There's going to be times where you might be harassed by a police officer not knowing the reason why, but this is just the circumstances that's going on right now in life. And there's things that we need to deal with, so these are the precautions that we need to take to make sure that we are okay.

I asked what those precautions would be,

Well if I was explaining to her, always be respectful to a police officer. You don't want to tick a police officer off. You don't. That's the first thing. Even if they pull you over, at least apologize. Even if you don't know what you did or nothing, ‘Sorry, officer, sorry for what I did,’ or whatever. But always be respectful. Always call them ‘Sir’ or ‘Miss.’ Don't come off with a bad attitude or a shitty attitude because more than likely, they're above you at the end of the day and they can really do whatever they want to at the end of the day. So, they can lock you

up or basically beat you, do whatever they want to. So always be respectful towards the police.

As respect was taught to the participants as a survival mechanism, the participants provide the same lesson to their children. Compliance and respect are values these Black fathers feel they have to instill in their children to keep them safe, not only in the community, but also in the face of police. As Ahmad stated, “All cops are not bad...but the majority of them are. So, I would just basically let him know how to interact with them. Not to give them no reason to harm you or say anything bad to you. If they stop you, just comply with their needs and that's it.”

Yusuf wants to give a similar lesson to his children, “Avoid them because you can lose your life. If you don't choose your words or your actions wisely you can lose your life... I mean we know how to play the game now, we know how to speak, and we know how to conduct ourselves at this age, but in youth, it be rough.” The participants describe playing a “game” in order to get through police interactions alive and unharmed and provide their children the same instructions.

Although direct and vicarious experiences altered intergenerational messaging to some degree, there was a fair amount of consistency. Henry even referenced the lessons he inherited when I asked what he will tell his children,

Same thing my grandpop told me, like being respectful to law enforcement, understanding there's rules to be followed. They tell you to do something, you do it no questions asked. I don't care if they give you attitude, I don't care what they mood swings is, you are not them, so don't give them what they give you. Always show people respect. Always allow somebody that got a little bit more power than you to have that power because you ain't got to be in front of that person for too long anyway, so give them what they want. Respect them. Respect them, period. If you feel as though you're in trouble and you feel as though something about to go bad, call the cops. Don't call me, call the cops. That's they job. They getting paid for it, make them work. Call them.

Because of their own experience inheriting messages, the fathers are very sensitive to the influence they can have over their children's perceptions of police. Therefore, the fathers are hyper-aware of how they speak to their children about police and attempt to instill both trust and caution.

Bryce was so aware of his parental influence that, rather than speaking to his children with a potentially biased tone, he decided to have a police officer speak to his son directly,

I don't want my son to get the perception of the cops that the media is portraying, and I couldn't tell him what he needed to hear about the cops because I had my own vision of them, so I just wanted him to talk to a cop, and there was a cop that I knew was a good cop. I knew him growing up, and he was always a good cop. I wanted him to talk just so my son could know that all cops aren't bad. You can call one if you need them, and you might see them around the neighborhood not as a cop- they're regular people, too. So, I let him talk to him, and they talked for a while. Now he's like, 'Dad, I want to be a cop.' I don't really like cops, but at the same time, I know the world would be worse off without them.

This level of self-awareness was common amongst the participants. Like Renald and Chris, Ryun's son was present when Ryun was arrested. Ryun spoke about the thoughtfulness needed in *The Talk*,

I don't never tell him to run away from the police. I always let him know if there is something wrong to go to the police. Like I said, kids do what you tell them. So, if you instill in them that the police is bad, that's how they are going to treat him. I let him know, the police are here to protect you. So, if you are ever in trouble, you get lost, somebody try to do something to you, go to the police. You just tell them like that. I know I've had my bad run-ins with the cops, but I'm not going to put that on my son, because he don't know nothing about none of that. So, like I said, we bring him up respectful, he will be respectful to the police.

Despite the media perpetuating what participants describe as an "us versus them" narrative by only highlighting incidents of police misconduct in Black communities, the fathers want their children to have a more well-rounded view of police. Overall, the intergenerational transmission of lessons related to law enforcement shifts slightly in

response to participants' own cumulative direct and vicarious experiences; however, lessons of respect, compliance, and caution remain consistent.

Conclusion

As outlined in this chapter, processes, or the internalization of cultural images, along with interpersonal interactions have significant impacts on meaning making and fathering activities, such as proactive avoidance or engaging in the *Yellow Light Talk*. Highlighting the dynamism of the elements within the DICE model, context, time, and personal characteristics, by way of tensions created by media coverage of high profile police shootings, media coverage of crime in Southwest Philadelphia, and stereotypes about community members based on race, gender, and income, influence interactions between police and community members. These interactions influence perceptions, which can create expectations, and influence future interactions.

When individuals experience negative interactions, especially cumulatively over time, an expectation is created that all future interactions with police will be negative. This framework cultivates distrust that is enacted through often avoidant behavior and fuels legal cynicism that is transmitted to the next generation. Similarly, for police, the participants believe, because of media-fueled stereotypes and unfamiliarity, officers set expectations for community members to be threatening, which results in fear that is then manifested through police misconduct.

On the other hand, witnessing community-oriented style policing and experiencing procedurally just interactions is likely to construct a belief that positive future interactions with officers are possible. This framework cultivates trust that is

exhibited in support for officers and transmitted to the next generation. For police, participants believe that familiarity with the community debunks criminal stereotypes and allows officers to feel safer and thus engage more positively and calmly with community members.

The findings highlight the cyclical nature of these relationships as fear of the community, enacted through misconduct or anxious behavior, often results in fear of the police and avoidant behavior, which perpetuates an unfamiliarity and sustains a vicious cycle. Alternatively, respect for the community, enacted through behaviors such as transparency and neutrality, are likely to result in respect for the police and more interaction, which increases familiarity and decreases fear, hence the virtuous cycle.

The fragility of these cycles is made obvious, however, as the participants describe how negative interactions can very easily negate positive appraisals of police. Although positive experiences can neutralize negative experiences, those negative experiences, as has been found in previous research (Augustyn, 2016; Fagan, Tyler, & Geller, 2015), carry more weight and are less likely to be forgotten. Because most participants had both good and bad experiences with the police, they perceived the police to be both “good” and “bad.”

As a result of this pluralistic perspective, the intergenerational messaging passed from participants to their children about police is often complex and encourages caution. Ultimately, participants acknowledge the need for law enforcement and call for more community-officer engagement; however, with the stipulation of expressed mutual respect and humanization.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

Main findings

Guided by five research questions and the Dynamic Identity Construction and Enactment (DICE) Model, the current study sought to explore personal and contextual facilitators and barriers to fathering. The purpose of the interviews was to understand how context, time, personal characteristics, and social interactions or “proximal processes” with family, community, criminal justice agents, and the media serve to construct definitions of fatherhood and influence the ways participants enact fathering. The resultant story is a complicated, multivalent one that demonstrates the ways fathering is influenced by community violence, discrimination, and police misconduct as well as personal agency, resilience, and generativity.

Identity Construction

The DICE model posits that identity construction is, in part, impacted by a) proximal processes, such as social interactions and the interpretation of cultural images, b) time, including personal change and shared historical moments, and c) context, including the family, community, and cultural beliefs. Research question one attends to the concept of identity construction by asking where and how participants receive stories and symbols of fatherhood. The findings from chapter five suggest that proximal processes, time, and context each have a significant influence over the ways men construct their definitions of fatherhood. Through interactions with their own fathers and role models, as well as through internalized messages from the media, participants were most likely to define fatherhood as *being there*. Because of historical and cultural phenomena, such as the crack epidemic and mass incarceration, many of the fathers, as

children, experienced paternal absence and felt robbed of quality time with their fathers. This backdrop of paternal absence inspired participants to become generative at an early age and “break the chain” by investing time into their children.

Research question two similarly focuses on identity construction by asking whether others’ perceptions of the participants as fathers influence the ways participants see themselves as fathers. As discussed by the participants in chapter six, the absence of the previous generation of fathers due to the historical and cultural moments mentioned above created a deadbeat dad stereotype that influences the ways fathers today are viewed by their children’s mothers, society, and family court systems, regardless of fathers’ actions or desires to be involved with their children.

These perceptions are interwoven with the fathers’ personal characteristics- another key component of the DICE model. Because the crack epidemic and mass incarceration disproportionately impacted disenfranchised communities of color, the discrimination stemming from these phenomena centered around and continues to stigmatize communities of color. As a result, participants feel as though their Blackness and masculinity incite others to perceive them as deviant and deadbeat. The fathers, however, do not engage with what sociologist Cooley (1902) coined as the “looking glass self.” Rather than developing their concept of self by internalizing these perceptions and thus absolving themselves of their paternal identity because of irrespective criticism, the fathers challenge this view by resolutely adopting both their desired caregiver role and the provider role that is expected of them and key for many of them to gain access to their children.

Ultimately, most participants construct their paternal identities through acts of resistance and resilience. As a result of experiencing the pains of paternal absence, many of the men understood the importance of being present with their children. The fathers consciously and agentially compose their paternal identity in opposition to the identities (e.g. rolling stones) they attribute to their absent fathers. And as a result of enduring the stigma that comes with being an urban Black father, the men adopt both the provider role and the caregiver role in order to support their families and remain involved fathers.

Identity Enactment

As stated previously, identity construction and enactment is a dynamic process that cannot be disentangled. Research question three asks how participants live out their identities as fathers. The findings suggest that, because of neighborhood context, maternal gatekeeping practices, and involvement with the criminal justice system, enacting fatherhood for young Black men living in Southwest Philadelphia requires adaptability, strength, and persistence.

Chapter four describes the ways fathers enact caregiving by personally adapting to community violence as a means of ensuring their children's safety. With a finger on the pulse of the landscape, the fathers are able to gage when to move around their neighborhood and when to keep their family safe at home. The fathers transmit lessons of adaptability to their children when teaching how to care for their residential block and gain respect by giving respect to neighbors. By imparting these lessons, participants are communicating accountability and acknowledging their children's power to either elicit violence in the neighborhood or keep it at bay.

Chapter six outlines how fathers enact providing while constrained by systemic barriers, such as employer discrimination, restricted movement, and child support orders. Some fathers maintain a healthy coparenting relationship and do not have a criminal record, which enable them to easily provide for and spend time with their children. Most participants, however, described the need to take a second job, turn to the streets, or violate their parole/probation stipulations in order to enact their caregiver and provider roles. The agency and resilience displayed through the men's construction of the father identity is reflected in the ways participants enact fatherhood by relentlessly hurdling barriers in order to both provide for their children financially and be deeply involved in their children's lives in a way that most of their own fathers were not.

Research question four attends to identity enactment by asking whether interactions with police impact men's negotiations of fatherhood. Chapter seven describes the ways that militaristic policing practices impact fathering activities, making some fathers want to stay inside with their children in order to avoid irritating or potentially harmful interactions with law enforcement. This chapter also explains how the messages that participants received growing up, in addition to their own personal and vicarious experiences with police, influence the ways participants teach their children about the police. In reference to the DICE model, it is the social interactions and interpretations of images seen firsthand and in the media, along with the context of the neighborhood and the cultural moment of high profile police shootings that influence how fathers perceive the police and internalize a need to protect their children. As a result of adopting a protector role, the fathers teach their children to be cautious and respectful when interacting with law enforcement.

Lastly, research question five asks what the necessary ecological conditions are for men to live out their paternal identities. All of the findings chapters touch on this topic as they each explore the barriers and supports to fathering. Overall, in order to easily enact fatherhood and *be there*, the fathers need to have a) access to gainful legal employment, b) stable housing, c) the ability to move and travel freely, d) a healthy co-parenting relationship with their children's mothers, and e) a positive and trusting relationship with the police. Without access to these conditions, the fathers required a heightened level of personal agency, persistence, and resilience in order to remain involved and care for their children.

Policy Implications

In response to the call from Tracie Washington, the President of the Louisiana Justice Institute, the current study attempted to shed light on the actors and processes that produce the need to build resilience. In a public campaign responding to the media's descriptions of New Orleans as "resilient" in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Washington exclaimed, "Stop calling me resilient! Because every time you say, 'Oh, they're resilient,' it actually means you can do something else to me." In an interview on MSNBC, Washington explained, she doesn't want her community to have to be resilient; rather the government should address and fix that which creates the need to be resilient in the first place (Kaika, 2017). With this in mind, the study's findings have implications for criminal justice, policing and family policies.

First, in order to curb the pathologizing of individuals and communities when speaking about deviant behavior, it is important for research to turn the lens on

oppressive policies that can result in criminal engagement. Second, in order to reduce social stratification, it is necessary to reduce the stigma of (a) justice involvement and (b) being a Black man in America. Third, in an attempt to reduce police misconduct and assuage police-community tensions, policing practices should involve community engagement and enhanced trainings for officers patrolling unfamiliar neighborhoods. Fourth, in order to keep families together and mitigate the disadvantage that children of incarcerated parents experience (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014), sentencing reforms are necessary. Fifth, for those fathers who are currently in prison, it is important to ensure access to enhanced visitation with their children in order to maintain social bonds that can ease the reintegration process and enhance children's well-being. Sixth, in order to support engaged fathering, parenting programs should focus on coparenting and the child support system should be reformed to consider the roles fathers play outside of "provider." Lastly, in order to increase community cohesion and decrease delinquency, mentoring programs should be implemented in all schools, and particularly in schools within neighborhoods that have limited male role models due to high incarceration and unemployment rates.

Reframing Deviance

Several of the men I interviewed spoke about turning to the streets out of desperation in order to support their families. Although these men desired a legitimate job, because of compounded barriers including employer discrimination due to their criminal records and limited access to travel because of parole or probation stipulations, the fathers found it difficult, if not impossible, to find steady legal work. Their engagement in the streets would typically be labeled as *deviant behavior*, as they are

participating in illegal activity (Sampson & Laub, 1992). However, as the men describe, their deviant behavior is the result of oppressive policies that disproportionately impact communities of color, such as militaristic policing, mandatory minimum sentencing, punitive child support policies, and employer access to criminal records (Emory et al., 2019; Garland, 2001; Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2007; Holzer et al., 2005; Mincy & Sorensen, 1998; Roberts, 2004; Tonry & Melewski, 2008). Rather than pathologizing the individual or community when discussing the men's activities in the streets, it is important for criminal justice research to turn the lens on policies that can result in deviant behavior and think about how to implement structural change that unlocks social stratification and provides equal opportunities for engagement in legitimate work.

Reducing Stigma

One of the leading reasons fathers have to be resilient is because of the stigma that stems from justice involvement. A growing body of research over the last decade has focused on the collateral consequences of justice involvement (Aaker, et al., 2011; Chamberlain & Wallace, 2015; Clear, 2007; Dyer et al., 2012; Gottschalk, 2009; Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002; Travis, 2005). Although changes have been made to assuage the long-lasting impact of a criminal history record, such as the elimination of criminal records questions on job applications and the reinstatement of voting rights for those with felonies in certain states, the current narrative demonstrates that more has to be done¹⁵

¹⁵ In fact, a recent study conducted by Emory, Haralampoudis, and Nepomnyaschy (2019) found that race is likely being used now as a proxy for criminal justice involvement by employers in states that disallow employers from considering arrests or that have banned employers from asking about criminal records. Comparing employment of black fathers in states that allow employers to consider criminal records ("least protective") and states that do not ("most protective"), the researchers found that, for

and that the collateral consequences have a generational impact by hindering fathering activities.

In order to both minimize stigma and ensure stability upon reentry, it would be important for U.S. prisons and jails to adopt a similar principle of normality, as seen in Norwegian prisons (Labutta, 2017). With punishment defined solely as the “loss of freedom” rather than the loss of rights or humanity, Norwegian prisons are designed to resemble life outside of prison as much as possible. Those inside have access to items such as kitchen utensils, room keys, and street clothes, and none of the Norwegian prison staff “deliver” services. Rather, medical, educational, employment, clerical, and library services are imported from the community. This import model familiarizes those inside with community resources that can be called upon during the reentry process and ease reintegration.

While in prison, incarcerated individuals are linked to employment opportunities, and those at the end of their sentences are able to actually leave the prison campus during the day to go to work in order to instigate healthy habits and routines. Many of the current study’s participants lament their inability to gain employment and obtain stable housing during the reintegration process, which impacted their ability to provide for and spend time with their children. By maintaining community ties and a level of autonomy during the incarceration period, and by ensuring employment and housing prior to release, the reentry experience can be far less shocking or difficult to navigate than for

black fathers with records, those living in the most protective states were 15% less likely to be employed than those in the least protective states. Black fathers with no criminal records were also 10% less likely to find work in the most protective states compared to those in the least protective states.

those who have been removed, isolated, and stripped of independence (Labutta, 2017; Roberts, 2004).

Similarly, as a way to reduce stigma, the language used around those who have spent time in prison or jail must be addressed. Referring to those with a criminal history record as “ex-cons” or “felons” continues to define those individuals by their justice-involvement. Even the term “inmate” strips the individual of any other identity he or she may hold during the incarceration period, such as “mother” or “father.” In the 1990s, a proposal for “people first” language emerged in an attempt to shift the lexicon away from the labels “retarded” or “disabled people” and replace it with the term “people with disabilities.” The American Psychological Association (APA) produced a document requiring those constructing meaning and knowledge through publications to (1) put people first, not their disability (e.g. *disabled person*), (2) do not label people by their disability (e.g. *epileptics*), (3) do not overextend the severity of a disability (e.g. *the disabled*), (4) avoid suggestion of helplessness (e.g. *stroke victim, confined to a wheelchair*), and (5) avoid offensive expressions (e.g. *cripple*) (Halmari, 2011). These requirements acknowledge the weight of language in its ability to create meaning and therefore influence perceptions and policies (Renzl, 2007).

The current study’s participants describe how stereotypes and discrimination due to their record influence their own and their children’s opportunities to succeed. Therefore, it is imperative to use “person-first” language when speaking about those who have experienced justice-involvement in order to humanize, ensure generational equity and alleviate some of the collateral consequences of a criminal record.

Policing

The findings highlight a necessary shift away from punitive, militarized “traditional police culture” (TPC) that is found to foster distrust for and isolation from citizens towards a more community-oriented approach that promotes officers as “guardians” of the community rather than “warriors” against the community (Rahr & Rice, 2015; Silver et al., 2017). TPC is defined as “a set of attitudes and values, developed as coping mechanisms for police work’s unique and inherent strains” that incorporate a “desire to ‘maintain the edge’ in encounters with citizens” and a “crime-fighting orientation” (Silver et al., 2017). In order to move away from the TPC, police departments should increase efforts to engage more with the community and recruit a more highly educated and diverse population, as these have been correlated with less use of force and more engagement with the community (Lasley, Larson, Kelso, & Brown, 2007; Rydberg & Terrill, 2010; Silver et al., 2017).

Many of the participants called for more positive interactions with police and spoke highly of personal past experiences with the Police Athletic League (PAL). The current study finds that acts of community engagement, such as participation in sports games, backpack giveaways and cook outs enhance community perceptions of police and increase community members’ willingness to interact with officers. This results in officers’ increased familiarity with the community, which can dissipate officers’ fears and thus alleviate tensions. Funds should therefore be allocated to more community engagement activities, particularly in neighborhoods with a heightened police surveillance.

Additionally, many of the participants underscored the notion of fear and called for more cultural and contextual competence amongst officers who may be unfamiliar with the neighborhood. Many of the men spoke about how they feel new officers should be buddied up during their training with an “old head” from the neighborhood, or a respected long-term resident, who could educate the officer on community dynamics and provide insights into deciphering between precarious and benign situations.

Last summer, I taught a Victims in Society course at the same time I was conducting the initial interviews. During class, we watched a documentary entitled *Concrete, Steel, and Paint*, about a restorative justice initiative led by Mural Arts Philadelphia in which victims and survivors in the community created a mural alongside incarcerated individuals at Graterford Prison. While watching the documentary, I thought of the discussions I was having with my dissertation participants concerning intergenerational messages about police and realized that this would be a great model for police, fathers and their children in Southwest Philadelphia. I believe it would be effective to create an initiative in which fathers and their children and officers and potentially officers’ children created a mural or completed some kind of community-based project side by side. This kind of program would strive to humanize both the community and law enforcement by engaging each other in dialogue and working together towards the same goal.

Sentencing

Many of the men spoke about experiencing paternal incarceration when growing up incited feelings of abandonment and contributed to their own delinquent behaviors.

Because their fathers were no longer around to contribute to the household, many of the

participants felt pressure to provide for their families and turned to the streets to do so. The participants also had more opportunities to get in trouble, as their fathers were no longer around to supervise, and their mothers often worked multiple jobs in order to make up for the lack of family income.

The men also spoke about how their own time in jail or prison negatively impacted their children and caused conflict in the coparenting relationship, which made it difficult to regain access to their children upon release. The current narrative supports research demonstrating that the effects of lengthy sentences and imprisonment are not only detrimental to those incarcerated (Sykes, 1958), but also to the families of those incarcerated (Comfort, 2003). In order to avoid the broad and long-term damages of confinement, community-based corrections should be more widely used, especially for those who have a loving and active relationship with their children.

Criminologist Michael Tonry recently published a meta-analysis covering the last fifty years of American sentencing reform and concluded that community correctional programs can “reduce re-offending, improve offenders’ and their families lives, and compared with imprisonment reduce public expenditure” (2019, p.18). He explained,

For offenders for whom supervision makes sense, well-managed, well targeted, and adequately funded community programs can reduce reoffending... Almost all prisons are resource-poor and unable to provide adequate drug, mental health, and other treatment, vocational training, and education programs that can help prisoners lead law-abiding lives later on. Imprisonment worsens prisoners’ physical and mental health and shortens their life expectancies. The resulting stigma and collateral legal consequences foreclose opportunities and access to resources that make their later lives more difficult, their employment prospects worse, and their lifetime earnings less. Imprisonment damages and often impoverishes prisoners’ families and children (p.19).

Ultimately, Tonry proclaims, “The case for greater use of community punishments is a no-brainer” (p.18). When determining sentencing outcomes, it is important to consider

the long reach of incarceration and mitigate the generational trauma and marginalization that incapacitation can cause.

Visitation

For parents who are currently in prison, enhanced visitation programs are needed to counter the deleterious effects of parental incarceration. The literature shows that visitation can lessen the “pains of imprisonment,” lower recidivism, and assuage children’s anxieties and feelings of abandonment (Bales & Mears, 2008; Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2002; Duwe & Clark, 2011; Henson, 2019; Johnston, 1995; Mears et al., 2012; Poehlmann et al., 2010; Sykes, 1958; Visser, 2011). The respondents who had been incarcerated for a period of their children’s lives explain the importance of visits and describe how they soothed negative emotions and allowed for an easier transition back into the child’s life upon release.

Traditional visits, however, with spatial and physical limitations can be stressful and subject the children to dehumanizing processes, such as searches (Christian, 2005; Codd, 2007; Comfort, 2003; Henson, 2019; Poehlmann et al., 2010). Therefore, enhanced visitation that allows touch and extended periods of quality time is particularly important (Henson, 2018). Programs that facilitate activities between the fathers and children, such as sports, card games, board games, art projects, and even family therapy, allow fathers to engage in and create “priceless” moments within the confines of the offending space that typically robs fathers of that ability.

Many families who have a loved one in prison, however, do not have the means to travel to the prison for visits. Sixty-two percent of parents in state correctional facilities and 84% of parents in federal facilities are incarcerated more than 100 miles from their

families and the overall cost of prison visitation for family members is found to be an average minimum of \$80 per trip (Boudin, Stutz, & Littman, 2012; Christian, 2005). It is therefore necessary for the prison or local organizations to provide transportation to families free of charge in order to maintain and strengthen important familial bonds.

Parenting

Child support policies have become increasingly punitive over the last several decades, which has led to high rates of noncompliance and increased financial strain for many low-income fathers (Holzer et al., 2005; Mincy & Sorensen, 1998). The current study's participants stressed the financial burden of child support orders and found them to be unfair and counterproductive, as they often forced fathers to take up additional employment and thus inhibited the quality time they could spend with their children. Many of the fathers described a willingness to provide for their children and spoke of informal coparenting arrangements they had with their children's mother. They found the family court system outdated in its narrow conception of fathers as providers.

Although the Office of Child Support Enforcement has begun encouraging states to provide noncompliant fathers with work-oriented services rather than jail time, modify child support orders for incarcerated noncustodial fathers, fund fatherhood programs that aim to enhance not only payment compliance but also paternal involvement, and pass through child support payment to families without reducing the family's welfare assistance, these changes have not been mandated or slated into law and therefore not all states have implemented these suggestions ("Child Support Pass-Through and Disregard Policies for Public Assistance Recipients," 2017; "How the Child Support System Affects Low-Income Fathers," 2012; "Jobs not Jails," 2015; "Work-Oriented Programs for

Noncustodial Parents,” 2014; McCann, 2019; Murray, 2019; “Realistic Child Support Orders for Incarcerated Parents,” 2012; White et al., 2016). In order for families across the country to avoid excessive punishment and conflict, it is important for all states to employ these changes and continue to create means to counter the damage caused by the system’s punitive measures.

Along the same vein, the current findings lend support to research that has identified strained relationships with the child’s mother as the primary barrier to fathering (Friend et al., 2016). When discussing topics community-based fatherhood programs should include, almost all participants noted coparenting skills. The fathers’ stories of maternal gatekeeping can inform program curricula; however, it may be necessary to include mothers in fatherhood programs in order to directly address coparenting issues (Froehle, 2008).

Mentorship

Lastly, the importance of mentorship became clear as the men discussed their current definitions of fatherhood and the role models who influenced them. Mentorship, whether directly from the participants’ fathers or from extrafamilial figures, had an influence over participants’ feelings of security and happiness, employment opportunities, perceptions of the legal system, and construction and enactment of paternal identities. It could, therefore, be important to implement a mentorship program in all schools, and particularly for Black boys in schools located in neighborhoods with high incarceration and unemployment rates where there may not be an active male role model in the home.

Systematic reviews of mentorship programs find varying results and call for greater fidelity in program implementation and more rigorous evaluation designs (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Sanchez, Hurd, Neblett, & Vaclavik, 2018; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). However, some evaluations do find promising outcomes particularly for Black boys that participate in mentoring programs, such as greater academic scores (Gordon et al., 2009, Wittrup et al., 2016), improvement in problematic behavior (Keating et al., 2002), enhanced social skills (Hurd & Sellers, 2013), and stronger beliefs in the importance of educational attainment (Hurd et al., 2012; Somers, Wang, & Piliawsky, 2016).

Credible messengers or desisting individuals with similar backgrounds and characteristics to justice-involved youth are found to be the most effective mentors with justice-involved youth. These individuals are said to be the “most qualified and empathic persons to support prosocial changes with hard-to-reach, high-risk youth” due to their ability to build mentoring relationships based on shared experiences and understanding (Lopez-Humphreys & Teater, 2018, p.193; Lynch et al., 2018). Although I am proposing a mentorship program to be implemented as a means of crime prevention, prior to involvement in delinquent activity, informed by the success of credible messengers, it would be important to have individuals from similar neighborhoods who encounter similar stereotypes and systemic barriers to serve as the mentors.

Theoretical Contribution

As discussed earlier, most identity studies do not look at contextual influences on identity construction and enactment. Most studies looking at fatherhood solely examine

the ways in which fathers behave and how that behavior impacts their children (Cabrera et al., 2011a; Taylor, 1990). There are very few identity studies that actually examine how fathers construct their paternal identities and the processes that contribute to meaning making. This research gap is especially prominent for low-income Black fathers, as the literature has mainly focused on white fathers and middle-class Black families (Coltrane, 2004; Eggebeen et al., 2012; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Taylor et al., 1990). Similarly, few studies exploring identity theory look at both identity construction *and* enactment within the same population (Arditti et al., 2005). The DICE model adds important nuance to identity theory by exploring multi-level influences on identity construction and enactment and highlighting the cyclical nature of meaning making and behavior.

Although Bronfenbrenner's multi-influence model addresses various levels of influence on human development, the DICE model sharpens Bronfenbrenner's focus on "human development" by looking at multi-level influences specifically on identity construction and enactment. The current study also deviates from the typical application of the multi-influence model, most often employed to study the development of children, by exploring the development and performance of identities later in life.

The DICE model can be employed with any population and should be used particularly in studies of marginalized communities as it engenders a strengths-based lens. By examining both contextual, social, political, and economic influences, as well as personal characteristics that allow for discussions of accountability, studies guided by the DICE model can capture a holistic picture of an individual or community.

Methodological Implications

The current study used innovative techniques of narrative inquiry and subsequent interviews to address the five posed research questions. I used narrative inquiry to amplify father's often-silenced voices in family studies. Men, particularly Black men living in a criminalized community, are likely to have unique stories about masculinity, fatherhood, and stigmatization that only they, who experience these issues, can rightfully tell (Payne, 2011). As Payne (2011) lamented, "traditionally, the social sciences have never permitted- or tolerated- the men's personal accounts or worldviews" (p.437). The use of narrative inquiry in the current study can be used as an example for future research on ways in which researchers can work *with* participants in exploring study questions and participants' worldviews.

The influence of time and context is not only considered in the conceptualization of identity, but it is also understood as part of the data collection process. One interview captures an individual in a specific moment in time in his life, which is influenced by innumerable factors, such as stressors he may have encountered prior to the interview, nerves brought about by the interview process, etc. Therefore, the second interview allowed me to interact with the father in a different context and time, which highlighted aspects of the individual that may have been absent or suppressed during the first interview. Although fairly time and resource consuming, the extension of data and span of time involved with participants provided a more accurate and honest exploration of the research questions than would a single interview. Although follow-up interviews are most frequently employed to track change in experience or perceptions, even those studies that

are not longitudinal should consider this two-time-point interview model in order to gain greater validity in the findings.

Limitations

One limitation of the current study is the amount of attrition from the initial interview to the follow-up (46%). However, because this study was not tracking change over time, getting in-depth insight from at least half of the original sample was sufficient in adding more nuance to the findings. Another limitation is the lack of data triangulation, which involves collecting evidence from multiple methods, such as observations, interviews, and documents in order to corroborate the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Due to a lack of resources and time constraints, one method of data collection was employed: interviews. Ideally, the study would have involved observations of parenting activities in places like schools and recreation centers. It would have also been important to observe family court cases in order to shine light on the child support order process. Interviewing mothers, children, and police would have also added great depth and validity to the findings.

A third limitation of the study is the lack of member checking, which consists of “taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.127). Again, due to a lack of resources and time constraints, I was unable to complete this process. However, I plan to engage in member checking before publishing any of the findings to ensure that my interpretation of the data is accurate and to see if the participants can identify any other implications from the findings. In the meantime, I

have stayed as close to the data as possible, letting the participants speak for themselves through the quotes and removing any personal judgments or characterizations.

Future Research

It an attempt to further disentangle the virtuous and vicious cycles of police-community relations, future research should interview police officers on their perceptions of deviance and community interactions and explore the ways officers adapt to patrolling unfamiliar neighborhoods. Much research on procedural justice focuses on the experience of community members and their perceptions of police; this research would fill a gap by looking at how engaging in procedurally just interactions shapes police officers' perceptions of the community and thus impacts police-community relations.

Researchers should also investigate the experience of being both a child of an incarcerated parent and an incarcerated parent with a child. The intergenerational trend of incarceration became evident in the fathers' stories. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore how incarcerated fathers who experienced paternal incarceration when growing up understand the intergenerational trend and identify the community-based protective factors or systematic reforms they believe should be implemented in order to break the chain. In addition, and aligned with a strengths-based approach, scholars should conduct research with individuals who have experienced paternal incarceration but do not have a criminal record in order to identify the protective factors that mitigated the criminogenic effects of having a parent in prison.

Lastly, one of the unintended public health findings of my dissertation is an omnipresence of Percocet addiction amongst young Black men living in Southwest

Philadelphia. Several of the fathers I interviewed spoke about how, after being the victim of a gunshot wound or an assault, they were prescribed Percocet for pain management. In many cases, this spiraled into an opioid addiction that often led to further violence and victimization. It would therefore be important to further investigate this cycle to potentially shift the ways we treat those who have been wounded from community and gun violence.

Conclusion

Although there is extensive literature on the collateral consequences of justice-involvement, there remains a critical gap in our understanding of how those consequences impacts fathering. Many studies that focus on fathering, particularly in marginalized communities, employ a deficits-based framework that often assumes Black fathers are intentionally evading their paternal responsibilities. The current study employs a strengths-based lens that explores barriers and facilitators to fathering and highlights the participants' adaptability, personal strength, and relentlessness in being there for their children.

Despite their limitations, the findings of this dissertation have many important implications for theory, policy and practice, and research. To summarize, the findings add nuance and context to existing models of identity construction and enactment, inform policies that can enable engaged fathering and assuage community-police tensions, and motivate and serve as a basis for further research into intergenerational incarceration, legal socialization, and the ways direct and vicarious experiences and interactions influence community perceptions of police and police perceptions of community.

Because both fathering and positive appraisals of police are found to be protective factors against criminality for both fathers and children, any and all efforts to enhance engaged fathering and increase trust and engagement between communities of color and police are important to explore. This study moves forward our understanding of the ways young Black fathers construct and enact fatherhood in the face of various systemic and community-based barriers and exposes the fragility of police perceptions and the ways familiarity between officers and community members can lessen legal cynicism across generations.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL



Research Integrity & Compliance
Student Faculty Center
3340 N. Broad Street, Suite 304
Philadelphia PA 19140

Institutional Review Board
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu

Certification of Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects

Date: 28-Sep-2017

Protocol Number: 24585
PI: WOOD, JENNIFER
Review Type: EXPEDITED
Approved On: 28-Sep-2017
Approved From: 28-Sep-2017
Approved To: 27-Sep-2018
Committee: A1
School/College: LIBERAL ARTS (1800)
Department: CLA:CRIMINAL JUSTICE (18350)
Sponsor: NO EXTERNAL SPONSOR
Project Title: Enacting fatherhood in disadvantaged communities: Exploring paternal identity and its practices in Southwest Philadelphia

The IRB approved the protocol 24585.

If the study was approved under expedited or full board review, the approval period can be found above. Otherwise, the study was deemed exempt and does not have an IRB approval period.

If applicable to your study, you can access your IRB-approved, stamped consent document or consent script through ERA. **Open the Attachments tab and open the stamped documents by clicking the Latest link next to each document.** The stamped documents are labeled as such. Copies of the IRB approved stamped consent document or consent script must be used in obtaining consent.

Before an approval period ends, you must submit the Continuing Review form via the ERA module. Please note that though an item is submitted in ERA, it is not received in the IRB office until the principal investigator approves it. Consequently, please submit the Continuing Review form via the ERA module at least 60 days, and preferably 90 days, before the study's expiration date.

Note that all applicable Institutional approvals must also be secured before study implementation. These approvals include, but are not limited to, Medical Radiation Committee ("MRC"); Radiation Safety Committee ("RSC"); Institutional Biosafety Committee ("IBC"); and Temple University Survey Coordinating Committee ("TUSCC"). Please visit these Committees' websites for further information.

Finally, in conducting this research, you are obligated to submit the following:

- **Amendment requests - all changes to the study must be approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of the changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects**

APPENDIX B: IRB MODIFICATION APPROVAL



Research Integrity & Compliance
Student Faculty Center
3340 N. Broad Street, Suite 304
Philadelphia PA 19140

Institutional Review Board
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu

Modifications are Approved

Date: 04-Apr-2018

Protocol Number: 24585
PI: WOOD, JENNIFER
Review Date: 04-Apr-2018
Committee: A1
School/College: LIBERAL ARTS (1800)
Department: CLA:CRIMINAL JUSTICE (18350)
Sponsor: NO EXTERNAL SPONSOR
Project Title: Enacting fatherhood in disadvantaged communities: Exploring paternal identity and its practices in Southwest Philadelphia

On 04-Apr-2018, the IRB approved the following modifications:

The investigator has modified the research tools, incentive structure, exclusion criteria, and research questions, all to lessen the burden on participants and to narrow the scope of the project.

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.

**Are you a FATHER living in the
19143 zip code?**

MAKE MONEY TELLING YOUR STORY

You may be eligible to participate in research if:

- **You are ages 25-34**
- **You live in the 19143 zip code of Philadelphia**
 - **You are African American**
 - **Have at least one biological child**

**Respondents will receive a \$40 AmEx gift card for
completing an interview and an additional \$25 for
completing a follow-up interview**

**Refer someone who completes the first interview and
receive a \$10 AmEx gift card**

**To find out if you qualify for the study,
please call or text Abbie Henson at 917-327-7980**



APPENDIX D: NARRATIVE INQUIRY GUIDE

Background

1. How would you describe your neighborhood to someone who has never been there?
2. Did you grow up in this neighborhood?
3. Where do you consider home? How long have you lived there?
4. Who lives with you, either sometimes or all the time?
5. How often do you see fathers with their children in your neighborhood? What do you see them doing with their children?
6. Do you think most fathers in your community actively participate in their children's lives? Why or why not?
7. When you were growing up, did most of your friends have their fathers around?
8. Do you think the meaning of fatherhood has changed over time in your neighborhood? If yes, how so?
 - a. What do you think has contributed to this change?
9. Do you think the way men behave as fathers has changed over time in your neighborhood? If yes, how so?
 - a. What do you think has contributed to this change?
10. **(Use Fagan handout- "Children Layout" for questions 8-10)**
11. Are you currently employed? If yes, what is your current employment?
12. Do you/Did you find it difficult to find employment? If yes, what do you think contributed to this difficulty?

Internalizing Stories and Symbols

13. What do you remember most about your childhood?
14. How involved were your parents with you as an adolescent?
15. Can you describe an experience you had with your father that captures your overall relationship with your father?

16. Who taught you to be a father?
17. What does fatherhood mean to you?
18. How did you feel when you found out your child's mother was pregnant with your first child?
 - a. How did you feel when you found out your child's mother was pregnant with your second child?
19. How did having your first child affect your life?
 - a. How did having your second child affect your life?
20. Do you think there's a difference between being a "father" and being a "dad"? If yes, what are the differences?
21. What does it mean to be a "good" father?
22. How would you characterize yourself as a father?
23. What does it mean to be a man?
24. When did you first feel like a man?
25. What were the images of fatherhood that you were taught through your family?
26. What were the images of fatherhood that you were taught through your community?
27. What were the images of fatherhood that you were taught through the media?
28. Are there any role models who have influenced you as a parent? If so, who? How did they influence you?

Perceptions of Participants as Fathers

29. How do you think your child sees you as a father? Why is that?
30. How do you think your child's mother sees you as a father? Why is that?
31. How do you think your family sees you as a father? Why is that?
32. How do you think your community sees you as a father? Why is that?
33. What do you think impacts how people perceive you as a father?

34. Why do you think so many Black fathers are depicted as absent and “deadbeat”?

Enacting Fatherhood

35. In the last 30 days (week if residential) did you talk with your child/children?

- a. If yes, how often?
- b. How (phone, text, social media)?
- c. If no, why not?

36. In the last 30 days (week if residential) did you spend time with your child/children?

- a. If yes, how much time?
- b. If no, why not?

37. In the last 30 days (week if residential) did you have a meal with your child/children?

- a. If yes, how many meals?
- b. If no, why not?

38. In the last 30 days (week if residential) did you watch over or care for you child/children when other adults were not around?

- a. How many times?
- b. If no, why not?

Interactions with the CJS

39. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood? Why or why not?

40. Did any influential adults ever speak to you about the police when you were growing up? If so, what did they say?

41. In the last 30 days, how many times did you see the police?

42. Over the last 12 months, have you reported any kind of crime, disturbance, or suspicious activity to the police?

43. Over the last 12 months, have you reported a non-emergency such as a traffic accident or medical emergency to the police?

44. Over the last 12 months, have you approached or sought help from the police for something I haven't mentioned?

45. If you or someone you cared about was in trouble, would you call the police for help? If no, why not?
46. Over the last 12 months have you been stopped by the police while in a public place?
 - a. How many times?
 - b. What were the reasons the police provided for the stop?
 - c. Did you view this reason as legitimate?
 - d. What was this experience like for you?
47. Over the last 12 months have you been stopped by the police while driving a car or motorcycle?
 - a. How many times?
 - b. What were the reasons the police provided for the stop?
 - c. Did you view this reason as legitimate?
 - d. What was this experience like for you?
48. Have you ever had a positive interaction with the police? Describe
49. Have you ever had a negative interaction with the police? Describe
50. How do you feel when you see the police?
51. What do/will you tell your children about the police?
52. Has your child ever interacted with the police? If yes, can you tell me about this interaction?
53. Has a friend's child ever interacted with the police? If yes, can you tell me about this interaction?
54. Do you try to actively avoid the police? If so, how?
55. Do you think being arrested impacts a man's relationship with his child? If yes, how so?
56. Do you think being incarcerated impacts a man's relationship with his child? If yes, how so?
57. Have you ever been incarcerated? If so, when and for how long?

- a. Tell me about your relationship with your child/children while you were incarcerated
58. Do you feel like your community has been impacted by the criminal justice system? If yes, how so?
59. Do you feel like the criminal justice system has impacted fatherhood in your community? If so, how?
60. Do you think that experiences with the police affect men's feelings of masculinity? If yes, how so?

Barriers and Strengths in the Community

61. Do you go to any community groups or meetings?
62. How often do you go to your child's school?
 - a. How do you feel going to your child's school?
63. How often do you go with your child to the doctor's?
 - a. How do you feel going to your child's doctor?
64. Do you feel like there are resources in the community that support you as a father? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?
65. What community resources do you think would be helpful to have as a father?
66. Is there anything that limits your ability to parent? If so, what is it?
67. Are there places in your neighborhood that you avoid going to with your child/children?
 - a. If so, where and why?
68. Are there conditions in the neighborhood that make it difficult to be what you consider a good father? If yes, what are they?
69. Are there conditions in the neighborhood that make it easy to be what you consider a good father? If yes, what are they?
70. Do you have any mentors who have played a role in your parenting?

71. What changes would you like to see in the neighborhood that would make it easier to parent?
72. Is there anything I've forgotten to ask or that you would like to tell me for the purposes of this study?

APPENDIX E: CHILDREN LANDSCAPE

1. How many biological or legally adopted children do you have who are age 19 or younger? _____
 We have a few questions about each of these children. Let's start with your oldest child.

Child's Name:	Is this child male or female?	How old is this child?	Where does this child primarily live?
#1 Name:	01 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year or ____ months or ____ years	01 <input type="checkbox"/> With his/her MOTHER and me (we live together) 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with me 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with his/her MOTHER 04 <input type="checkbox"/> About half the time with me, half with [MOTHER] 77 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: _____)
#2 Name:	01 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year or ____ months or ____ years	01 <input type="checkbox"/> With his/her MOTHER and me (we live together) 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with me 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with his/her MOTHER 04 <input type="checkbox"/> About half the time with me, half with [MOTHER] 77 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: _____)
#3 Name:	01 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year or ____ months or ____ years	01 <input type="checkbox"/> With his/her MOTHER and me (we live together) 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with me 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with his/her MOTHER 04 <input type="checkbox"/> About half the time with me, half with [MOTHER] 77 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: _____)
#4 Name:	01 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year or ____ months or ____ years	01 <input type="checkbox"/> With his/her MOTHER and me (we live together) 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with me 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with his/her MOTHER 04 <input type="checkbox"/> About half the time with me, half with [MOTHER] 77 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: _____)
#5 Name:	01 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year or ____ months or ____ years	01 <input type="checkbox"/> With his/her MOTHER and me (we live together) 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with me 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with his/her MOTHER 04 <input type="checkbox"/> About half the time with me, half with [MOTHER] 77 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: _____)
#6 Name:	01 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year or ____ months or ____ years	01 <input type="checkbox"/> With his/her MOTHER and me (we live together) 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with me 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with his/her MOTHER 04 <input type="checkbox"/> About half the time with me, half with [MOTHER] 77 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: _____)
#7 Name:	01 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year or ____ months or ____ years	01 <input type="checkbox"/> With his/her MOTHER and me (we live together) 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with me 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with his/her MOTHER 04 <input type="checkbox"/> About half the time with me, half with [MOTHER] 77 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: _____)
#8 Name:	01 <input type="checkbox"/> Male 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year or ____ months or ____ years	01 <input type="checkbox"/> With his/her MOTHER and me (we live together) 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with me 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly with his/her MOTHER 04 <input type="checkbox"/> About half the time with me, half with [MOTHER] 77 <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: _____)

APPENDIX F: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW GUIDE

Some of the topics that we discuss today might seem repetitive from our previous interview. Please just answer fully, even if you feel like you're repeating yourself.

Fatherhood

1. Has anything changed in terms of employment, housing, or custody since our last interview?
2. Remind me, where do your children live
3. In the last 30 days (week for res), how often have you spoken to your child? What kinds of things have you spoken about?
4. In the last 30 days (week for res) how often have you seen your child? What kinds of things have you done with your child?
 - a. If the response to 1 and 2 is "not often"- what has contributed to this?
5. (For those not asked) How did you feel when you found out your oldest child's mother was pregnant with your oldest child?
 - a. Younger child's mother?
6. Do you feel as though you've sacrificed for your children?
 - a. If yes, what have you sacrificed?
7. A lot of participants have mentioned the absence of fathers when they were growing up, what do you think contributed to this absence? Do you think that those contributors still impact father absence in your community today?
8. Did your child's mother have her father around when she was growing up?
 - a. If no or yes, do you think this impacts her relationship with you? How so?
9. What do you think are some of the things that might deter men in your community from being involved in their children's lives?
10. Do you feel like addiction has had an impact on fatherhood in your community?
 - a. Can you talk to me about the use of percocets in your community?
11. Do you feel as though most men in your community actively participate in their children's lives? Why or why not?

- a. Do you feel like there's a difference in participation between fathers in your age group and those who are younger?
12. What are some of the activities you do with your children?
 13. Are the majority of activities you do with your child in or outside of the neighborhood?
 - a. If outside, why are you more likely to do activities outside neighborhood?
 14. Are you officially paying child support? If yes, what went into this decision making process?
 - a. If yes, do you feel like this affects your relationship with your child?
 15. Do you feel like federal programs, such as food stamps, subsidized housing, and welfare have impacted family dynamics in your community?
 16. Would you like to participate in a community-based fatherhood group?
 - a. If you were in a fatherhood program, what kinds of things would you want to learn or get help with?
 17. If you were in a fatherhood program, should the program help fathers to know (1) how to deal with police and (2) what to teach their children about interacting with police?
 - a. If yes, why do you think this is important?
 18. How would you feel about speaking with a counselor about different topics and issues?
 19. If you could speak with the mayor to pitch a resource for your community, what would ask for?

Crime and safety

1. Since our last interview, have you approached or sought help from the police?
 - a. If yes, what was the situation?
2. Since our last interview, have you been stopped by the police while walking or in a public place?
 - a. If yes, what was that experience like?
3. Since our last interview, have you been stopped by the police while driving a car or motorcycle?
 - a. If yes, what was that experience like?

4. Do you feel like the police are protecting your community? Why or why not?
5. Do you feel like police have a bad reputation in your community?
 - a. If yes, how do you think you remedy this?
6. Do you feel like what we're seeing in the media with police shootings of unarmed black men has changed perceptions of police in your community? How so?
7. Do you feel like people in your community are more or less fearful of cops these days?
8. Do you act differently when you see the police? I.e. taking your hands out of your pockets, etc.
9. Do you actively avoid the police? To what extent?
10. Are you on probation or parole?
 - a. If yes, how does that affect your life?
 - b. Does it affect your relationship with your child at all?
11. A lot of participants, when asked what changes they would like to see in the neighborhood, have mentioned decreased violence and shootings, do you see the police having a role in this change? Why or why not?
12. What kind of changes would you want to see in police practices?
13. What kind of trainings do you think would be important for officers?
14. Would you be willing to participate in a conversation with police about police-community relations?

APPENDIX G: MAIN LEVEL CODE BOOK

❖ **CHASTISEMENT**

Any time a respondent mentions experiencing abuse or being disciplined while growing up. Also, any time a respondent discussing disciplining, or ideas about disciplining, their own children.

❖ **CJS IMPACT ON FATHER**

Any mention of how being on probation or parole or in prison impacts him as a father. Any mention of CJS collateral consequences, such as unemployment.

❖ **CO-PARENTING**

Any mention of the relationship with their children's mothers, whether it be positive or negative. As well as any perspective provided on co-parenting.

❖ **COG/BEHAV/MED ISSUES**

Any mention of the respondent's family's, child's or own medical, behavioral, or cognitive issues.

❖ **CRIMINAL HISTORY**

Any mention of prison, probation, or parole. As well as any mention of past criminal involvement or lack thereof.

❖ **DEADBEAT DAD NARRATIVE**

Any mention of the deadbeat dad narrative or things that contribute to negative images of fathers

❖ **DEFINING FATHERHOOD**

Any mention of what a good father should be, such as supportive or a source of unconditional love. Any mention of what a good father is not.

❖ **DEFINING MASCULINITY**

Any mention of what it means to be a man, or when the father first felt like a man

❖ **EDUCATION**

Any mention of the father's or child's school experiences

❖ **EMPLOYMENT**

Any mention of whether the father is employed or unemployed or if he has experienced difficulty with finding employment

❖ **EXPERIENCE W/ TRAUMA**

Any mention of experiencing loss or traumatic experiences throughout the father's life

❖ **FATHER JOY**

Anytime a father mentions the joy, happiness or love he gains from fathering

❖ **FATHER=TEACHER(GENERAL)**

Any mention of what a father should provide for or teach his child. Any mention of what he directly provides or teaches his child. Any mention of what/how the participant's father taught him.

❖ **FATHERING INCENTIVE**

Any mention of why the father or fathers in general may want/not want to be fathers or how they are motivated to parent. Includes any mention of how they felt when they found out about the pregnancy or any mention of wanting a paternity test.

❖ **INFLUENCE ON FATHERS**

Any mention of role models or tv shows, movies, musicians, or individuals who have influenced the father positively in his father role. Any mention of anything or anyone that

directly (both positively and negatively) affects the father's ability to parent/deters fathers' involvement.

❖ **INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE**

Any mention of how the interview process is affecting the father

❖ **LEARNED MESSAGES ABOUT POLICE**

Any mention of the lessons (both positive and negative) fathers received about the police from their family, community, or the media growing up.

❖ **MATURITY**

Any example of the father demonstrating a mature stance, such as not giving into drama anymore, providing kids in the community positive advice, or demonstrating self-reflection.

❖ **NBHD IMPACT ON PARENTING ACTIVITIES**

Any mention of things in neighborhood, such as violence or drug corners, impact parenting activities or routine activities with children.

❖ **NBHD NEEDS**

Any mention of what the father the father wants in the community or thinks the neighborhood needs.

❖ **NEG FATHER GROWING UP**

Any mention of negative experiences with or perceptions of their own father, including father being absent for a period of time.

❖ **NEG FATHERHOOD TODAY**

Any mention of how fathers are not as present in their childrens' lives in today's society.

❖ **NEG MOM GROWING UP**

Any mention of negative experiences with or perceptions of their mother growing up, including mother being absent for a period of time..

❖ **NEG NBHD**

Any mention of violence, danger, or negativity in their neighborhood

❖ **NEG NBHD INFLUENCE**

Any mention of how the neighborhood negatively impacted the father directly or negatively impacts other community members

❖ **NEG PARENTS GROWING UP**

Any mention of negative experiences with or perceptions of both parents growing up

❖ **NEG POLICE PERCEPTIONS**

Any negative perception of police, such as that cops are a gang or ignorant. Any mention of not wanting to interact with the police, being afraid of the police, or viewing the police as ineffective. Includes negative perceptions of the CJS in general.

❖ **PARENTING LIFESTYLE**

Any mention of the day to day activities or living arrangements with child.

❖ **PERCEPTIONS OF FATHER**

Any mention of how his children, family, or community sees him as a father, including mention of recognition for being a good father.

❖ **POLICE AND RACE**

Any mention of the interaction between police practices and race.

❖ **POLICE INTERACTION**

Any mention of the father's or the father's child's direct or vicarious (positive and/or negative) experiences with police. Any mention of witnessing police practices in the neighborhood.

❖ **POLICE NEEDS**

Any mention of the what the father believes officers need to do in order to have a better relationship with the community

❖ **POS CHILDHOOD**

Any mention of fun and fun childhood or positive experiences as a child.

❖ **POS FATHER GROWING UP**

Any mention of positive experiences with or perceptions of own father growing up, including positive perceptions of father's parenting practices.

❖ **POS FATHERHOOD TODAY**

Any mention of how fathers are involved and active in today's society, including any reference to a positive change in their own fathers current involvement.

❖ **POS MOM GROWING UP**

Any mention of positive experiences with or perceptions of his mother growing up, including positive perceptions of mother's parenting practices.

❖ **POS NBHD**

Any mention of positive things in neighborhood, such as the parks, community events, or resources. Any mention of feeling safe in the neighborhood or the neighborhood feeling close knit.

❖ **POS PARENTS GROWING UP**

Any mention of positive experiences with or perceptions of both parents together growing up.

❖ **POS POLICE PERCEPTIONS**

Any mention of knowing cops who are friends or family. Any description of the police as cool, effective, helpful, or potentially helpful. Any mention of his own willingness or his child's willingness to engage with the police. Any mention of the ability to see police as both good and bad. Any display of empathy for the job police officers have.

❖ **PRISON IMPACT ON CHILDREN**

Any mention of how paternal incarceration impacts children.

❖ **RACE**

Any mention of racial issues, such as the difficulties of black men in America, the Black Lives Matter movement, or perceptions of white families in contrast to black families.

❖ **RESIDENCE**

Any mention of the father's past (including when he was growing up) or current living conditions.

❖ **SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Any mention of how the father has sacrificed for his child or takes ownership of the responsibilities that come with having a child.

❖ **STREET LIFE**

Any mention of the code of the street, street-oriented individuals, or street involvement in the past or present or both. This can also include mentions of being on the run.

❖ **SUPPORT SYSTEM**

Any mention of extended family or even community members stepping up and caring for the father when he was growing up. Also any mention of the father stepping in as a father figure for other family members. Any negative mention of extended family.

🔗 **TEACH MESSAGES ABOUT POLICE**

Any mention of the lessons that fathers will teach or have taught their children about the police.

🔗 **TURNING POINTS**

Any mention of events in life that “changed” the father positively or negatively.

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Pseudonym	Age	Highest level of edu	Incarcerated for portion of child's life	Residential status¹⁶	Number of children	Multi-partner fertility
Kwame	25	HS degree	No	Non-res	3	Yes
Jacquees	28	College degree	No	Non-res	1	N/A
Jason	27	Missing	No	Non-res	2	Yes
Bey	32	HS degree	Yes	Res	3	Yes
Chris	30	HS degree	Yes	Non-res	1	N/A
Samuel	25	Some college	No	Res	2	No
Durrell	28	HS degree	No	Non-res	2	No
Matt	28	HS degree	No	Non-res	1	N/A
Samaj	28	College degree	No	Res	1	N/A
Rob	33	Some college	No	Res/Non-res	2	Yes
James	31	Some college	Yes	Non-res	2	Yes
Kareem	29	HS degree	Yes	Non-res	2	Yes
Quincy	27	HS degree	No	Non-res	1	N/A
Bill	26	HS degree	Yes	Non-res	2	Yes
Keenan	28	HS degree	No	Non-res	1	N/A
EJ	28	Some college	No	Res	3	No

¹⁶ Res = child/children reside with the father most or all of the time. Half = child/children reside with the father about half the time. Non-res = child/children rarely or never reside with the father. Residential status is difficult to capture with an either/or label of “non-residential” or “residential,” as this status changed frequently over short periods for some fathers. Several participants, because of their experience of multi-partner fertility, were residential with some children and non-residential with others or hosted children about half of the overnights during the year with one child and resided with another child full-time. Although these labels attempt to accurately describe the fathers’ situation at the time of the interview, the complexity of this status should be acknowledged.

Marquis	30	College degree	Yes	Non-res	1	N/A
Martin	27	Some college	Yes	Non-res/Half	2	Yes
Gibril	30	Some college	No	Non-res	1	N/A
Kai	31	Some college	No	Res/Non-res	4	Yes
Amir	27	Missing	No	Non-res	1	N/A
Tyrone	33	Missing	Yes	Non-res	1	N/A
Henry	25	Less than HS	No	Non-res	1	N/A
Hasan	25	HS degree	No	Res	1	N/A
Terrance	30	HS degree	No	Res/Non-res	2	Yes
Yusuf	32	Some college	No	Half	3	Yes
Ryun	32	HS degree	Yes	Non-res	1	N/A
Joel	27	College degree	No	Half	1	N/A
Aquil	29	HS degree	Yes	Res/Non-res	2	Yes
Nasir	30	HS degree	No	Non-res	9	Yes
Josiah	32	Missing	Missing	Half	5	Yes
Bryce	30	GED	Yes	Res	2	No
Sam	30	HS degree	Yes	Res	4	No
Cameron	30	HS degree	Yes	Res/Non-res	3	Yes
Maurice	29	Less than HS	No	Half/Non-res	3	Yes
Ahmad	26	GED	Yes	Half	1	N/A
Chamere	25	GED	No	Half/res	2	Yes
Kiwuan	31	HS degree	Yes	Res	2	Yes
Taaj	25	Less than HS	No	Non-res	2	No
Shawn	27	HS degree	No	Res	2	No
Jonah	25	Missing	No	Half	1	N/A
Trey	25	Less than HS	No	Res	2	No
Darius	34	GED	Yes	Res	6	No
Liam	32	Less than HS	Yes	Non-res	2	No
Dawan	26	Missing	Yes	Non-res	2	No
Zakiah	30	HS degree	Yes	Non-res	3	Yes

Renald	31	GED	Yes	Non-res	2	Yes
Chad	28	HS degree	Yes	Non-res	1	N/A
Nafir	27	HS degree	No	Res/Non-res	3	Yes
Sean	27	Master's degree	No	Half	1	N/A