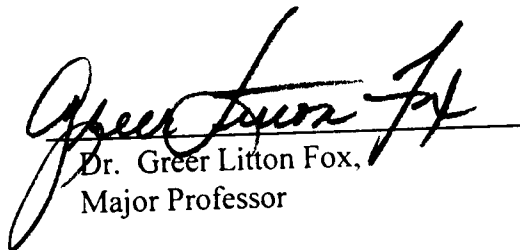
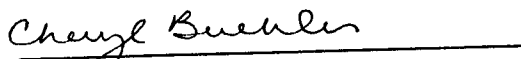


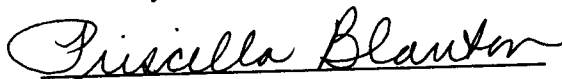
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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Carol Bruce entitled "Father Role Salience and Socioeconomic Indicators as Predictors of Father Involvement." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Child and Family Studies.

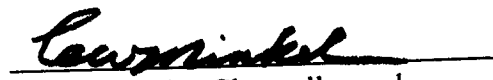

Dr. Greer Litton Fox,
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We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance.


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Associate Vice Chancellor and
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FATHER ROLE SALIENCE AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AS PREDICTORS
OF FATHER INVOLVEMENT

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
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Carol Bruce
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ABSTRACT

As fathers from socially disadvantaged populations have received little attention in the fathering research, this study attempts to identify the ways in which socioeconomic parameters influence father involvement. In addition, the influence of role salience is explored, in an attempt to identify possible motivational factors which shape the father's role. The sample consists of 150 residents of Knox County, Tennessee, who are between the ages of 18 and 55 years, and are fathers of children who are 18 years old or younger. African-American fathers, lower-income fathers, and fathers with a high school education or less are represented in proportions which are adequate to provide substantive results in a multiple regression analysis, although the sample is not representative of Knox County on these parameters. The author draws three major conclusions from the study which address the influence of the following factors on father involvement: 1) The father's race and its interaction with his sense of financial insecurity and the child's residential status; 2) The residential status of the child and its interaction with the father's level of income and his level of education; and 3) The degree to which the father role is salient to the father's identity and its interaction with the age of the child. Implications for future fathering research, clinical work with fathers, and educational programs aimed toward fathers are drawn from these conclusions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For most of this century, family researchers have given relatively little attention to the role of fathers in the family. Aries (1960) makes a similar observation regarding the development of historical interest in the family in general. He notes that in studying iconography of Western Europe dating from the 11th century to the twentieth century, the family does not appear as a social configuration until the 16th century. He argues that, before the 16th century, "The family existed in silence: it did not awaken feelings strong enough to inspire poet or artist. We must recognize the importance of this silence: not much value was placed on the family" (p. 363). Perhaps fathers have not been considered often in the family literature because, like the attitudes of early iconographers toward the family, they were not considered to be important enough to inspire family researchers of the early twentieth century.

In western culture, the twentieth century has been marked by a rise in the "separate spheres" doctrine, which identifies the home as the proper domain in which women should exercise their natural abilities and the work domain as the proper sphere for men (Coltrane, 1996). Demos (1982) notes two characteristics of the father role as described by this doctrine: fathering is part-time and it is carried out with some physical distance between the father and the daily operations of the household much of the time (p. 431). Historically, in the United States and Western Europe, there has been an overall trend toward a very limited role for the father.

The Family From the Middle Ages to the 18th Century

In striving to understand current social phenomena, it is often helpful to place it in its historical context. Aries (1960) traces the social evolution of the family from the Middle Ages through the 18th century, and notes several important cultural factors which significantly impacted with family functioning.

The Influence of Laws of Primogeniture

Aries begins by noting two factors which significantly altered patterns of family functioning during the Middle Ages. The first involves the impact of primogeniture laws on the family. During the 11th and 12th centuries, it was customary for husbands and wives to share joint ownership of property. Men and women were able to engage in financial transactions *independently* of one another and neither partner was more entitled to their property than the other. During the 13th century, this custom changed with the rise of laws of primogeniture. These laws set forth that family property would be passed on to the eldest son upon the death of the father. The expressed purpose of such laws was to protect the integrity of one's estate. However, one effect of these laws was a steady decrease in the authority and rights of women both in the family and in society (pp. 353-356). These laws remained predominant until they were challenged in the 18th century as being inequitable (for sons who were not the firstborn) and "repugnant" (p. 371). It is interesting to note, however, that while it was judged inequitable to deny sons rights to family property based on birth order, the reforms did not speak to the inequity of failing to extend those same rights to mothers and daughters. While the decline of laws of primogeniture had some effect of decreasing the authority of the patriarch, there was no

accompanying increase in the power of women in the family.

Changing Attitudes Toward Children

Secondly, Aries describes the changes in attitudes toward children which have occurred in Western culture since the Middle Ages. From the 11th through the 14th centuries, it was customary to send children out of their home to apprentice at a very young age (anywhere from 7 to 9 years old). They were expected to “contribute to the common task(s)” of the family (p. 368), while the parents’ duties to the child were primarily social and moral in nature. These attitudes began to shift in the 15th century when it became customary to send children to schools for education, generating a shift in attitudes toward childhood which distinguished it as a time which was different from adulthood and which recognized that children had needs that were different from those of adults.

In the 17th century, small children were considered primarily to be subjects of amusement. However, as they grew, the parents’ interests in the child focused on the child as an “instrument of matrimonial and professional speculation designed to improve the family’s position in society” (p. 403). Parents focused a great deal of attention on the education and careers (in the case of sons) and the future wellbeing of their children. This trend continued into the 18th century when attitudes toward children began to be more child-centered and less self-interested.

The Family in Early American History

Demos (1982) explores the social evolution of the family during early American history. He begins by arguing that during the colonial period the father was significantly

involved in the daily functioning of the home. In regards to parenting, he was expected to provide moral training and teaching for all of the children and professional guidance for his sons. He was a visible, ongoing presence in the home, as men during this time were predominantly farmers or craftsmen, and their work centered around the home. Women were believed to have an inferior endowment of the capacity to reason. They were thought to have a tendency to spoil children, and the father's presence was necessary to balance these weaknesses. Given that prevailing beliefs that children entered this world in a state of sin, "the steady hand of fathers was necessary to restrain [their passions], while encouraging [the development of their intellect]" (p. 427). At this time, it was commonly presumed that custody of the children belonged to the father.

These values began to shift during the 19th century, so that it was generally believed that the mother was the primary force in the lives of children. The media produced a great deal of literature addressing family concerns and child rearing in the form of advice books, magazine articles, and even advertising which carried the message that the mother carried primary responsibility for "proper rearing of the young" (p. 430). This new division in parental roles and the belief in the superiority of maternal parenting skills were further legitimized and formalized by changes in legal processes which began to grant custody of children to mothers when contested, whereas the assumption of father custody had previously gone unchallenged.

These changes were driven, in part, by a rise in sex-role ideologies which promoted the idea of separate spheres as previously noted. They were also accompanied by changes in our economy whereby income was produced outside of the home through

the exchange of one's labor for wages. The American economy was changing from being primarily rural and agricultural to being primarily urban and industrial. Coltrane (1996) notes that, while in 1871 two-thirds of the population was self-employed, by the turn of the century more than half of the population depended on wage-labor to support their families.

As the father's role in public life became dominant, his role in the family became more peripheral. Stearns (1987) notes that, as the real property base of our economy declined in significance, the basis of a father's authority in the family became less clear. A child was no longer dependent on his father alone for his ultimate livelihood. He also notes that, as schooling became mandatory for children, the father's role as the child's moral and practical tutor was further undermined. The school took on functions which had been a significant part of the father's parenting domain.

The Father's Role in Modern Times

In the early twentieth century, there were growing concerns regarding the father's relative absence in the home. While their roles as providers remained dominant, fathers were also encouraged to form more companionate relationships with their children, particularly with their sons. In the 1940s and 1950s these concerns became more urgent as experts openly criticized the rise of maternal influence in the home and warned of the negative impact of "excessive mothering" (Pleck, 1987). Many of the studies of fathering in this period addressed difficulties apparent in the functioning of boys whose fathers had not returned from the war or the negative effects of a "weak" father presence in the home. However, while fathers were encouraged to become more involved in the

lives of their sons, their role remained limited. As the “principal transmitter of culturally based conceptions of masculinity and femininity”, he was expected to “encourage instrumental behavior in his sons and expressive behavior in his daughters” (Biller, 1971, p. 107). By the middle of the century, media images of the wise, loving, and authoritative father proliferated.

The Influence of the Woman's Movement

The historical perspective suggests that there were two primary forces which altered the form and patterns of functioning in the family in our early history: the rise of primogeniture laws and the Industrial Revolution. Both of these forces reinforced the authority of many men in society and in the family. A third cultural force, which proved to have a significant impact on the family, evolved during the late 1960's as women began to enter the workforce in large numbers. In 1950, almost 60 percent of married couples in the U.S. lived in households which were headed by a sole male breadwinner. In 1990 the same figure was less than 14 percent and two of every three mothers of preschool children were in the workforce (Collins & Coltrane, 1995).

The impetus for the phenomenon of women's developing work roles is two-fold. One such impetus would be the economic forces which were at work during this time. Gerson (1993) points out that while middle-class women were returning to work in large numbers, men's wages were also stagnating which further influenced men's and women's roles in the family by making it a near economic necessity for a family to have two incomes. Gerson reports that “from 1979 to 1988 the median hourly wage for men fell 5 percent, and the bottom 75 percent of the male work force experienced wage reductions.

For white men serving as a family's only breadwinner, median inflation-adjusted income fell 22 percent between 1976 and 1984 (Mishel & Frankel, 1991, pp. 78-81; Phillips, 1990, p. 18). These figures demonstrate that it has become increasingly difficult for families to maintain their desired standard of living, and for some just to survive, with only one income.

Although economics have certainly played a part in the emergence of the working mother, feminist ideology has also played a part in encouraging many women to develop roles for themselves beyond those of wives and mothers. While feminists have sought to directly bring about changes in the roles of women in society, they have found it also necessary to explore and critique men's roles in both public and private spheres. Since the 1960s, feminists have taken the lead in critiquing the primacy of the male breadwinner role and its negative consequences for women and children, as well as for men themselves.

According to Coltrane (1996), the feminist critique is based on the idea that the "separate spheres" ideal helps men to maintain power over women. "The ideology that accompanies the separate spheres ideal suggests that women are inherently suited to serve men; that they are naturally and happily prepared to perform unpaid labor for men in return for protection and provision" (p. 27). He goes further to say that, "the problem lies in the ways that the separate spheres ideal has been used to further men's interests at the expense of women's" (p. 27). Not only is the inequitable division of household labor detrimental for women overall, but some women seem to suffer the negative consequences of such arrangements on a more personal level. Ross, Mirowsky, and

Huber (1983) found that psychological distress in married women is negatively correlated with the amount of labor that the husband contributes to the household. Others have found that women's risk of depression and marital satisfaction are also related to the division of household labor (Kessler & McRaie, 1982; Pleck, 1983).

Other scholars have argued that a separate spheres ideology has negative implications for the well-being of men as well as for women. Chodorow (1978) explores the ways in which men and women develop parenting patterns from a psychoanalytic perspective. She suggests that men learn to suppress the more nurturing aspects of their psyches early in life in an unconscious attempt to maintain a clear masculine identity. One consequence of this kind of socialization is that many men find it difficult as adults to feel and express a broad range of emotions. Coltrane (1996) speculates that caring for children has the potential for providing men with opportunities for leading richer emotional lives. In conducting a series of interviews with fathers of school-aged children, he found that both mothers and fathers reported that the assumption of greater child care responsibilities had a transforming effect on the fathers. These fathers developed "maternal [ways of] thinking" and engaged in a process of "reconstructing gender" as they expanded their roles as fathers (p. 83).

While Bernard (1981) characterizes a man whose family role is limited to breadwinning as an "emotional parasite" (p. 10), Stearns (1987) cautions us not to underestimate the emotional salience that is often inherent in the provider role. Fathers often believed that they were demonstrating their devotion to their children and family through adequate provision. Through his role as the provider for the family, a man could

express his hopes and dreams for his child's future. Lamb (1986) points out that the traditional father role is multidimensional, including the provision of sex-role modeling and moral guidance for the children, economic support of the family, and emotional support for the mother. However, the fact remains that men have had the leverage in the family to define their roles in a manner which limited their involvement, maximizing their autonomy and opportunity to invest in careers, in ways which women have been denied. Coltrane (1996) characterizes the trend toward more involved fathering as "an emerging democracy within families" (p. 21), and suggests that families stand to benefit overall from a more equal sharing of both the joys and the costs associated with "family work" (pp. 46-49).

Remaining Questions

Although a great deal of work has been accomplished in this area in the last two decades, to some extent, we seem to have raised even more questions. While discussion regarding the need for more "father involvement" is prevalent, it is not always clear exactly what we are seeking here. Do we simply want fathers to be more involved in the custodial caretaking tasks associated with caring for children? Do we want fathers to spend more time with children? Do we want fathers to be more emotionally connected with their children? To what extent are fathers already involved in these kinds of fathering activities? What are some other ways that fathers are enacting their role that make a positive contribution? Who might benefit from greater father involvement and in what ways? Are there costs associated with these kinds of changes in the father role, and if so, what form do they take, and who is incurring these costs?

The fact that men, generally, continue to resist further involvement in “family work” (Coltrane, 1996) raises important questions regarding the mechanisms by which involved fathers become more involved, as well as the mechanisms by which absent fathers choose to abandon. Gerson (1993) points out that changes in men’s participation in the family are complex in that while some men are becoming more involved and some remain relatively peripheral in the day-to-day functioning of the household, others are choosing to withdraw from family participation altogether. She also notes that attempts to understand these choices which refer solely to power dynamics or those which focus on the constraints that fathers experience are incomplete. Men’s roles in our society seem to be in transition. While they continue to enjoy an inordinate share of social power and privilege, their status is being challenged. Additionally, the economic advantages which have reinforced their social power are weakening as well, and for men of lower socioeconomic status, this leverage is even less secure. On the other hand, there is a current body of literature which suggests that many men see themselves as victims of social forces over which they have no control (Arendell, 1995; Bertoia & Drakich, 1993; Coltrane & Hickman, 1992). In truth, men operate in our society with both advantages and constraints. The dynamics which shape men’s choices are complex, and our attempts to explicate these dynamics should reflect an appreciation for that complexity.

Another difficulty in attempting to explain men’s choices regarding the father role is disciplinary. Gerson (1993) reviews several explanations for these choices which are psychological in nature and tend to be based in theories of personality. Her primary criticism is that such approaches fail to capture the influence of varied environmental

contexts in which men find themselves. On the other hand, approaches which focus primarily on social context fail to account for the limits of contextual influence. While context may provide constraints for one's choices, the individual ultimately retains the ability to exercise choice. Some may strive to overcome the constraints which their context imposes. This dichotomy between psychological and sociological approaches is one that has provoked a good deal of debate in academic circles, and it will be discussed more fully in the theoretical review. Some scholars suggest that a social psychological approach which incorporates the influence of individual dynamics as well as social context may be the most useful approach for dealing with the kinds of transformations being observed in families today (Stryker, 1991).

As noted by Gerson (1993), we can expect that the degree to which fathers involve themselves in parenting their children is likely to be influenced by their social and cultural contexts. However, these contextual factors are often ignored in much of the fathering research. The most apparent gap in our current approach to the study of fathering is the lack of attention to the experiences of fathers in socially and economically disadvantaged populations. We cannot presume that men of all races and economic statuses have experienced the same social and cultural contexts, and therefore we cannot assume that such forces have impacted on the roles of fathers in these subpopulations in the same way that they have for white, middle-class men.

While most scholars acknowledge the influence of the industrialization of our economy on fathering roles, there is not a great deal of discussion regarding the impact of these influences on socially and economically disadvantaged men. It is often argued that

although industrialization brought increased earning power for American families, these opportunities were not equally available to all. Many men were unable to attain the sole breadwinner status that became so common among middle-class White Americans in the 1950s. According to Gerson (1993), in 1955, 22% of all households had an employed wife and almost 9% of households were headed by a single mother.

In addition to different economic experiences, the social changes wrought by industrialization were unique for African-American men and for men of very low socioeconomic status. Jones (1985) describes the ways in which urbanization produced exceptional challenges and hardship for the African-American family in particular. The African-Americans who settled in the urban areas of the northern United States during the late 18th and early 19th centuries were typically coming from rural environments, where their life experiences were characterized initially by their roles as slaves, and later by their roles as tenant farmers and sharecroppers. Within the rural culture, black families survived by producing most of what they needed for subsistence themselves, and by relying on extended kin and community networks for support. However, in the urban culture, they were forced to purchase what they needed for subsistence, large kin groups were generally broken up, and community ties were comparatively loose. For the most part, mothers and fathers were now both working outside of the home for most of the day, and the children were often left to themselves to explore an urban environment which offered many opportunities for trouble.

Such notions as the “separate spheres doctrine”, the liberation of women, and newfound economic opportunity through industrialization are not easily applied to the

experiences of the black family and families of very low socioeconomic status in our culture. The failure to recognize the differential impact of varying cultural, social, and economic contexts on the family allows a white, middle-class bias to pervade in our work in often subtle ways.

Purpose of Study

While it would be unrealistic to hope to address all of these questions in this study, I have aimed to address two of the gaps in fathering research which were discussed above. First, this study attempts to identify some of the mechanisms by which men make choices regarding the enactment of the father role in a manner which recognizes the role of the individual in making choices, while grounding his decision-making in a social and economic context. I have done so by employing both social psychological constructs from identity theory and several different socioeconomic factors as predictors of father involvement.

The second goal of this study was to provide better representation of fathers of varying racial and socioeconomic status. This has been accomplished through oversampling techniques. In addition, I have strived to interpret the experiences of these fathers in a manner which is sensitive to the potential influence of unique characteristics of their cultural, social and economic contexts, and to avoid the "deficit-comparison" approach which is often apparent in studies which explore racial differences, by acknowledging demonstrated strengths and successful adaptation in the enactment of the father role within these subpopulations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fathering began to receive a marked increase in attention in the family literature in the late 1970's, and the interest in this area is still strong today. The relative recency of fathering research accounts for the proliferation of relevant concepts and lack of uniformity in their operationalization, both of which impede the development of a cumulative body of authoritative work. Therefore, particular attention must be paid to the ways in which "father involvement" is conceptualized and measured in the relevant studies, and these interpretations should be kept in mind when considering the findings.

In the most recent literature, fathering has been studied with regards to three fundamental questions of interest: (1) What are the consequences of varying degrees of father involvement for children; (2) What are the consequences of varying degrees of father involvement, particularly in terms of contributions to child care and housework, for mothers; and (3) What do fathers contribute to the family and what are the factors which influence the degree to which a father involves himself with his children?

The Consequences of Father Involvement

This study is concerned primarily with the last of the questions noted above. However, it is important to address the consequences of father involvement in order to justify exploring the nature and predictors of father involvement. Why should we be concerned with encouraging greater father involvement, if the consequences for such involvement are not well-understood, or are not determined to have generally positive outcomes?

While there is a significant body of research which explores the consequences of father involvement for mothers, the father's involvement with his children is typically conceptualized in these studies as being one element in the overall division of household labor and typically focuses on married parents of very young children. In this context, father involvement is most often assessed with a single item inquiring as to "the father's involvement in child care," along with several more items inquiring as to the father's involvement in other domestic responsibilities. As I am interested in a broader conceptualization of father involvement, which regards father involvement as extending beyond its associated domestic chores, I have chosen not to explore these works in this review, and have focused on works which examine the consequences of father involvement for men and their children.

Consequences for Children

The research addressing the issue of the effect of father involvement on child wellbeing indicates that there is not a clear relationship between the two. Furstenberg (1992) states that "Existing evidence suggests that the relationship between paternal involvement and children's well-being is mediated by a number of conditions - the mother's attitude toward paternal participation, her ability to collaborate with the father, the father's skill in establishing a warm relationship to his offspring, and the child's needs, among others" (p. 352). Marsiglio (1995a) observes that when a positive relationship is found between father presence and child outcome, its contribution tends not to be unique in a multivariate context, which suggests that there are other factors associated with father presence which seem to influence the child's wellbeing (p. 9).

Lamb (1987) does an excellent job of summarizing several key findings of the impact of father involvement on child wellbeing while also providing important qualifications for these findings. He notes that it is not only the father's presence in the child's life, but the quality of that presence in terms of the degree of warmth and closeness in the father-child relationship which best predicts positive child outcomes (and this is also true of the mother-child relationship). He notes that the father-absence research has found generally negative child outcomes when the father is absent from the child's life, but he suggests several possible mediating factors for this effect: the absence of a coparent to give the single parent assistance and relief, economic stress, social and emotional stress caused by the single mother's social isolation, and marital conflict pre- and post-divorce (p. 15). He provides a similar analysis of the effect of highly involved fathers on child outcomes. He notes that these children tend to demonstrate increased cognitive competence, greater empathy, less sex-stereotyped beliefs and a more internal locus of control. However, he goes on to suggest that these effects are not explained purely by the father's presence, but by other characteristics which the parents share. For instance, it is logical that the child would have less sex-stereotyped beliefs as the parents probably hold less sex-stereotyped belief systems when the father is highly involved. These children might be expected to demonstrate greater cognitive competence as the child is receiving the full intellectual resources and stimulation of two involved parents (p. 16).

While the authors noted above explore factors which qualify the positive effect of father involvement on children, some scholars have reported negative outcomes of high levels of father involvement. Russell and Radojevic (1992) note the following problems

which are associated with greater father involvement: marital difficulty, maternal stress for employed mothers, child behavior problems (although the direction of causality cannot be determined in this regard), lower self-esteem and social competence for the child, and greater difficulties with adjustment following divorce (p. 303). Thompson and Walker (1989) also note the association between greater father involvement and marital difficulties in stating that "father's solo child care is related strongly to diminished love for their wives and negative interaction in marriage, such as wives showing impatience, criticizing, or complaining" (p. 859). The negative consequences of greater father involvement for the marriage is understandable when one considers the degree of negotiation which is necessary between the marital partners when fathers take a larger role which may overlap with the mother's traditional role. We may anticipate that the negative influence that high levels of father involvement can have on the marital relationship may negatively impact the children as well.

Consequences for Men

While most of the research which explored this question in the 1970's and early 1980's focused on the consequences of father involvement for children, there has been some recent work which has explored the consequences of greater father involvement for men specifically. Barnett, Marshall, and Pleck (1992) conducted a study of 300 employed, married fathers to examine the effect of their perceptions of the quality of their fathering experience and psychological distress. They found that, although there was no significant difference in psychological distress for men who were and were not fathers, the father's perception of better quality in the father role does predict better psychological

functioning. Additionally, they found that a perception of the father role as being high quality seems to buffer the negative effects that difficulties in the work role has on psychological well-being. This would suggest that fathering can be very good for an individual's mental health when they find it to be a positive experience.

Consequences of Father Involvement Postdivorce

Several scholars have been particularly interested in the consequences of father involvement for children following a divorce, when the father does not retain custody of the children. Differences between studies in the conceptualization and operationalization of father involvement are most notable in this area of research. For the most part, father involvement postdivorce tends to be measured in terms of frequency of visitation and payment of child support.

King (1994) analyzed survey data on 2,220 children with noncustodial fathers from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. She found that the amount of visitation maintained by the father did not predict the child's wellbeing in terms of behavioral problems, perceived scholastic competence, feelings of self-worth, and intellectual attributes.

Simons, Whitbeck, Beaman, and Conger (1994) conducted a study using 207 single mothers. They examined the mother's and the child's reports of the quality of the father's parenting, and examined the relationship between the quality of the father's parenting and the child's externalizing or internalizing behavior problems. They found that the mother's perceptions of the father's parenting practices is related to externalizing behavior problems for both boys and girls. They also found that high degrees of

externalizing behavior on the part of boys tended to diminish the quality of parenting for the father.

Amato and Rezac (1994) conducted a most illuminating study of the effect of father-child contact postdivorce and child behavior problems. They employed a model which examined the effect of interparental conflict on this relationship as well. Using a sample of 1,285 children with noncustodial fathers from the National Survey of Families and Households, they found that, for boys, greater contact with the noncustodial father predicts lower behavioral problems. They also found that this relationship is moderated by the amount of conflict between the parents. In families with a moderate level of conflict, there is no significant relationship between paternal contact and child behavioral problems. In families of low interparental conflict, paternal contact predicts a significant reduction in child behavioral problems. In families of high interparental conflict, paternal contact predicts a significant increase in child behavioral problems.

This review is instructive for the study of fathers generally in that the absence of an effect of father involvement on child wellbeing may be attributed to model underspecification or problems in the conceptualization or measurement of relevant factors. Given the complexity of the mechanics involved in parent-child relations, it would be premature to conclude that fathers are not important to family functioning, particularly in the postdivorce context, simply because we have not yet developed theoretical models which adequately capture the intricacies of these relationships. The findings in regards to these issues in the general fathering literature can inform studies of the effects of father involvement on child well-being postdivorce in their suggestions that

we need to look beyond “father presence” and employ broader measures of father involvement, as well as developing models which account for possible mediating or moderating, contextual factors.

The Nature and Degree of Father Involvement

Family scholars are interested in both the degree to which fathers involve themselves with their children (quality) and the various ways in which fathers involve themselves in parenting (quantity). Most authors agree that the media image of the “new father” is exaggerated, and that fathers, generally, are not as involved as these images would suggest. There is a general consensus from time-use studies that fathers are doing more with their children than they were 30 years ago, but the change is modest (Furstenberg, 1992). Lamb (1987) reports that when mothers are unemployed, fathers tend to spend about 20 to 25% of the time that the mother does in engaging the children. When both the mother and the father are employed this figure rises to about 33%. He also notes that men are not necessarily actually engaging in more child care, but they are sharing a greater proportion of child care and this could be attributed to the fact that employed mothers tend to do less. Thompson and Walker (1989) state that fathers tend to care for the children in the evenings while the mothers perform after dinner chores, and on the weekends. In this capacity, these men are serving as “pinch hitters”, providing temporary relief for their partners, but they are free to pursue other activities when the mother is available once again.

There is also a general consensus on what it is that fathers actually do when they share “family work.” Most of the studies which examine the division of family work

view parenting as being one aspect of household labor. Therefore, father involvement tends to be operationalized as the amount of time he spends in "child care", and the studies are usually carried out with fathers of very young children. In these studies, it is generally found that fathers are more likely to engage in activities which involve playing with their children than in the domestic tasks usually associated with caregiving.

Coltrane (1995) notes that when men engage in child care they are typically referring to activities which involve "watching the kids, playing with them, disciplining them, teaching them skills, or promoting specific values" (p. 258). The physical caregiving tasks which are associated with caring for young children are typically left to the mother.

Russell and Radojevic (1992) draw the following conclusions: "(1) Fathers can be competent caregivers; (2) Fathers spend much less time than mothers in day-to-day caregiving and are less likely to perform physical caregiving tasks, irrespective of whether their partner is in full-time employment or not; (3) Of the time fathers spend with their children, more is spent in play than in caregiving; and (4) Fathers are more likely to interact with their children in triadic or family contexts, rather than in a dyadic context" (p. 298). Thompson and Walker (1989) point out that while men may "help out" with child care, they tend not to take on the responsibility for the full range of activities which are typically involved in caring for young children (p. 855). Lamb (1987) echoes these findings in stating that "Mothers' interactions with their children are dominated by caretaking whereas fathers are behaviorally defined as playmates. Mothers actually play with their children much more than fathers do but, as a proportion of the total amount of child-parent interaction, play is a much more prominent component of father-child

interaction, whereas caretaking is much more salient with mothers” (p. 10).

Coltrane (1990) conducted a study of 20 middle- and upper-middle income, dual-earner couples who identified themselves as having an equal division of household labor to examine the ways in which specific household activities were typically proportioned. He found that the highly-involved fathers tended to share the following child care tasks about equally: awakening the children, helping them dress, helping them bathe, putting them to bed, supervising them, disciplining them, and providing transportation for them. However, the mothers continued to assume primary responsibility for taking the children to the doctor, caring for them when they were sick, and arranging for child care.

McBride and Mills (1993) conducted a study of 100 middle- and upper-middle class, married couples with children between the ages of 3 and 5 to examine the levels of father involvement in child care. They found that overall, fathers continue to be significantly less involved than mothers in terms of their interaction with, accessibility to, and responsibility for their children. However, when both the mother and the father are employed, the gender gap in involvement narrows. In terms of interaction, fathers increase their involvement almost proportionally to the amount that the mothers interaction decreases. However, while the mother’s accessibility to the child decreases substantially when she is employed, the father’s increases only negligibly. The amount of responsibility assumed by the fathers and mothers remains virtually unchanged by maternal employment. The authors looked further at the interaction component to examine the division of labor for three components of interaction - play, functional

interaction, and parallel interaction. While mothers interact more with their children overall, fathers engage in more play with their children than mothers and spend more time in functional interaction with their children on the weekends than the mothers do. When both the mother and father are employed there is no difference in the amount that they interact with their children overall. These findings are significant in that, although fathers continue to involve themselves to a considerable degree less than mothers, it does appear that fathers are increasing their involvement when their partners are employed, and they appear to be engaging in some activity which goes beyond playing (although they continue to assume comparatively little of the “responsibility tasks” associated with child care).

Father Involvement in African-American Populations

Hossain and Roopnarine (1993) studied 63 middle-income African-American married couples with young children to determine the extent of these fathers' involvement with their children. They found that when the mother is employed full-time, the father spends approximately 70% of the time that the mothers do in child care. When the mother is employed part-time, the father spends approximately 60% of the time that mothers spend in child care.

This is interesting in comparison to the findings reported by Lamb (1987) regarding father involvement from studies which tend to underrepresent African-American men. In those studies, fathers spend approximately 33% of the time that mothers do in child care. This study would suggest that African-American fathers are more involved with their children than fathers in European-American populations when

there are controls for income and education. We could speculate that this may be attributed to the fact that the unique historical and contemporary economic circumstances of African-American families have given rise to patterns of caregiving that are less constrained by gender assignment than those found in less oppressed groups.

The Involvement of Noncustodial Fathers

Seltzer (1991) conducted a study with data from the National Survey of Families and Households for 1987-1988, using a sample of 1,350 divorced, custodial mothers. She analyzed the data to determine the level of involvement maintained by the noncustodial fathers and the degree to which it changed as a function of the time since the marital separation. She found that, for the sample overall, only about 25% of the children saw their father or had phone or mail contact with him at least once a week. Almost 60% had contact with their fathers less than once per month. In examining the changes in contact as a function of the time since the marital separation, she found that, up to two years following the separation, 42.7% of the children had contact with their fathers at least weekly while 28% had contact less than once per month. From three to five years after the separation, 33% of the children had contact with their fathers at least weekly, while 42% had contact less than once per month. After six years following the separation only 19% of the children had contact with their fathers at least weekly while 62% had contact with their fathers less than once per month. This study demonstrates that there is a significant trend toward decreased paternal involvement over time and generally low levels of paternal involvement postdivorce overall.

The findings regarding diminished father involvement postdivorce are not

surprising in light of the relatively low level of involvement that many fathers exhibit in the context of intact marriages. Fox and Blanton (1995) offered one explanation for why we might expect that fathers would find it difficult to maintain involvement following a divorce. They argue that,

Following divorce, noncustodial fathers lose much of the basis for the positional power that undergirded their authority with their wives and children. They must also deal with issues of autonomy or connectedness in very different ways; no longer can they count on a relationship with wives, as is often the case, for the only context in which they allow themselves to experience intimacy. Neither can they depend on wives to facilitate and mediate their relationships with children and to provide physical caregiving. Men are thus thrust into a situation in which they are faced with issues and tasks that often leave them feeling bewildered, lonely, powerless, and detached (p. 272).

If it is the case that fathers tend to have low levels of involvement with their children within the marriage, it stands to reason that they will struggle with efforts to maintain these relationships when the marital structure no longer exists to support their connection with their children.

Summary

The research on father involvement in the general context suggests that fathers are significantly less involved with their children than mothers, and that their involvement tends to be restricted primarily to playful interaction. However, several recent studies find that, relative to the mother's involvement, fathers increase their involvement in some

aspects of child care when both parents are employed. Noncustodial fathers are particularly under-involved with their children, in terms of the amount of contact that they have with their children, and this involvement tends to diminish with the passage of time after the divorce.

The implications of these findings for this study are that, although fathers may be less involved than their partners with their children, we can expect to find that they are not uninvolved generally, and that the ways in which fathers involve themselves with their children are broadening, particularly for husbands of working wives. We can also expect to find that noncustodial fathers are much less involved than fathers who live with their children, but that these findings may vary as we broaden our measure of father involvement within this subpopulation beyond simply a quantitative measure of the amount of contact a man has with his child. Finally, we should expect to find that there may be racial differences in father involvement, and that these differences may vary within categories of economic status.

Factors Which Predict Father Involvement

A variety of factors has been identified as being influential for father involvement. Coltrane (1995) identifies several: culture and socialization processes, practical constraints introduced by one's economic circumstances, the degree of gender inequality in the partners' relationship, and certain demographic factors which include the age, gender, and number of children as well as the timing of the onset of fatherhood. From their own work, Russell and Radojevic (1992) have found that the following factors predictive the degree to which the father involves himself in caring for his child: having

attended the birth, being knowledgeable about child development and having had some opportunity to learn caregiving skills, having a less stereotyped masculine identity, having a job which is relatively undemanding, and having a partner who supports their involvement. They also report that the following factors predict father involvement based on longitudinal work: having had a cohesive, expressive and nonconflictual family of origin; participating in general household tasks; being satisfied with decision-making processes in the couple's relationship; having child-centered attitudes about parenting; being employed for fewer hours than the average father; having marital communication patterns which are child-oriented; and having a high level of commitment to the child. Thompson and Walker (1989) characterize highly involved fathers as having more children, younger children, and employed wives. Lamb (1987) partially corroborates this conclusion in noting that fathers tend to be more involved when there are younger children in the household, and goes further to note that fathers tend to be more involved with male children.

Volling and Belsky (1991) conducted a study of 119 middle- and working-class fathers of infants to identify some of the factors which influence father involvement. They found that the involvement of fathers with employed partners was influenced more by contextual types of factors. For these men, involvement was predicted by having been more involved in nontraditional domestic activities before the birth of the child, an increase in negative marital interaction since the birth of the child, and more stress in attempting to balance work and family demands. It should be noted that it seems likely that these last two factors may actually be a consequence of being more involved in infant

care. The involvement of fathers who were sole earners was more influenced by the father's personal attributes. The factors which influenced the involvement of these men included demonstrating a higher degree of interpersonal affect and having had positive marital interaction prenatally with an increase in this type of interaction following the child's birth. The authors anticipated these results in their hypotheses: "We hypothesized that personal characteristics of the father, namely, personality attributes, would be more influential in determining the quality of father-infant interaction and father responsibility for child care in single-earner families, where participation may be more a matter of choice, than in dual-earner families, where participation may be more essential for ensuring effective family functioning. In dual-earner families, on the other hand, we hypothesized that contextual factors - specifically, the quality of the marital relationship and the stresses associated with combining work and family roles - would better predict measures of father engagement and responsibility" (p. 464).

Predictors of Father Involvement in African-American and Lower-Income Populations

There is a good deal more research with a focus on minority populations which addresses this question, as there is political and policy interest in explaining the relatively high rates of father absence in these populations. Radin and Harold-Goldsmith (1989) conducted a study of 48 intact working-class families with children of preschool or kindergarten age to examine several potential factors which may influence father involvement. They found that the most influential factor in this population was the father's employment status, the second was the flexibility with which he viewed the father role, the third was the mother's employment status, and the final significant

predictor was the birth order of the child. Fathers were more involved when they were unemployed, when they held flexible views of the father role, when their partner was employed full-time, and with older children.

Christmon (1990) studied 43 African-American, unwed, adolescent fathers to examine some potential psychological factors which may influence the amount of responsibility the father assumed for his child. The predictors were conceptualized as being different aspects of the self and included the psychological self, the social self, the sexual self, the familial self, and the coping self. Each of these components had one or two subcomponents which were also tested for their predictive power. He found that responsibility was predicted by the familial self and the sexual self. This was interpreted as suggesting that fathers with better quality relationships with and feelings toward their families of origin and fathers who were more comfortable with their sexuality (their sense of masculinity) were more likely to accept responsibility for their child. In terms of the subcomponents, responsibility was predicted by superior adjustment which was a subcomponent of the coping self. This was interpreted as suggesting that fathers with a high degree of ego strength, which is indicative of a well-functioning coping system, accepted responsibility for their child more readily.

Hossain and Roopnarine (1994) conducted a study with 63 middle-income, married, African-American couples with children under two years old to determine the influence of certain predictors on father involvement. They found that the father's ability to communicate effectively within the family and his commitment to the family predicted his involvement in feeding and offering comfort to his child.

It is interesting that these studies do not reveal any appreciable distinctions between these fathers and white, middle-income fathers. However, the hypothesized predictors did not include many contextual factors, with socioeconomic predictors being most visibly absent from their models. This study will correct for this omission by exploring racial differences within a socioeconomic context.

Predictors of Father Involvement Postdivorce

There has been a great deal of concern, not only within our field, but throughout the public arena, with the alarming statistics regarding the trend toward minimal contact between a father and his children following divorce. Several studies have attempted to identify some of the factors which may play a part in determining the extent to which a father remains involved with his children.

Dudley (1991) conducted a study with 84 divorced fathers who maintained minimal contact with their children. He found that their reasons for their diminished roles fell into four groups. The largest group (n=33) attributed their minimal role to ongoing conflict with their former spouse. The second group (n=22) attributed their minimal involvement to personal problems such as substance abuse problems, demanding jobs, and the wishes of a new partner. The third group (n=13) attributed their minimal contact to the fact that their children were older teens and no longer could make the time to visit as they once did. The final group (n=12) reported that they lived too far from their children to maintain regular contact (their geographical distance from their children ranged from 150 to 3,000 miles).

Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Sheets, Fogas, and Bay (1993) conducted a longitudinal study with 378 families. They interviewed both the mothers and the noncustodial father

regarding the amount of contact maintained by the father at three points in time: wave 1 was conducted 2.5 months after filing for divorce, wave 2 was conducted one year following wave 1, and wave 3 was conducted 3 years following wave 1. They employed a social exchange model which predicted that the perceived affectional or interpersonal, material or tangible, and symbolic or moral costs and rewards would be related to the amount of contact that the father maintained with his children. They found that at wave 1, greater contact was predicted by (1) the quality of communication they had with their child and the degree to which the father enjoyed the visits; (2) being able to avoid tangible costs by maintaining visits; and (3) feeling obligated to the children. Less contact was predicted by (1) derogation by and conflict with exspouse and exspouse's interference with and opposition to visitation; and (2) believing that the visitation was harmful to the child. At wave 2, greater contact was predicted by (1) social encouragement to maintain contact and the child's enjoyment of the visits; (2) being able to avoid tangible costs by maintaining visits; and (3) feeling an obligation to the children and a commitment to parenting. Less contact was predicted by (1) the exspouse's interference with and opposition to visitation and other social demands; and (2) believing that the visitation was harmful to the child, feeling dissatisfied with the divorce decree, and feeling a lack of control over the postdivorce situation. At wave 3, greater contact was predicted by (1) social encouragement to maintain contact, good communication between the father and child, and good relations between the child and the father's significant other; and (2) feeling a commitment to parenting. Less contact was predicted by (1) the exspouse's opposition to visitation and other social demands; and (2) believing

that the visitation was harmful to the child, feeling dissatisfied with the divorce decree and a lack of control over the postdivorce situation. Overall there was little difference between wave 2 and wave 3. However, these later times differed from wave 1 in that the fathers' new partners and the fathers' increasing desire for adult social interaction became influential.

Ahrons and Miller (1993) conducted a longitudinal study with 98 divorced couples with noncustodial fathers. They conducted three interviews; the first interview was conducted one year following the divorce, the second was conducted three years after the divorce, and the third was conducted five years after the divorce. They analyzed the relationship between the couple's perception of the quality of the coparental relationship and the amount of involvement and contact maintained by the noncustodial father. They found that the father's perception of the quality of the coparental relationship did predict the amount of involvement he maintained (his reports of the degree to which he engaged in parenting activities with his child), but did not predict the amount of contact which he maintained with the child. They also found that the effect of the coparental relationship dissipated over time, so that it was no longer significant at wave 3.

Arditti and Kelly (1994) conducted a study of 225 divorced couples to identify predictors of the quality of the coparental relationship. They found that being able to discuss a wide range of topics with the exspouse, feeling satisfied with the custody arrangements, having fewer children, taking responsibility for the marital breakup, feeling close to the children before the divorce, higher education, and feeling satisfied with the property settlement predicted a higher quality of coparental relations. If it is true that the

quality of the coparental relationship predicts the amount of paternal involvement, then it can be anticipated these same factors may indirectly influence paternal involvement.

It is interesting that studies of father involvement postdivorce tend to focus on the influence of predictors which are specific to the divorce context (conflict with former spouse, demands of a new partner, unhappiness with divorce and divorce settlement). It stands to reason that examination of the involvement of divorced fathers would be well-informed by including the same kinds of predictors that have been shown to influence the involvement of married fathers, as well as those factors which are specific to the divorce context. Hypothetical models of involvement for divorced fathers should include economic factors, the father's attitudes, beliefs, and practices in regards to gender roles, and the father's attitudes toward parenting.

Social Psychological Predictors of Father Involvement

As this study will be employing social psychological theory for the development of its predictors, I have selected three studies for this review which have explored fathering issues using these types of predictors. Two of these studies employ constructs which arise directly from identity theory, while the third employs constructs which exemplify the meaning of these social psychological constructs without being labeled as such.

Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, and Buehler, (1993) developed a middle-range theoretical model which incorporate elements from symbolic interactionism, identity theory, and role theory to predict father involvement for noncustodial fathers. Using a convenience sample of 76 noncustodial fathers, they found that contact with the child,

payment of child support and involvement in specific activities with the child were significantly correlated with the father's parenting-role identity which was measured in terms of parental role satisfaction, perceived competence in the father role, role investment, and role salience.

Minton and Pasley (1996) conducted a study of 270 divorced noncustodial fathers and nondivorced fathers to explore the relationship between several social psychological factors and involvement and contact with their child. They found that, for nondivorced fathers, a perception of competence in the father role, satisfaction with the father role and a high degree of investment in the father role predict greater involvement with their child. For divorced fathers, both involvement with the child and the amount of contact with the child were predicted by a sense of competence and satisfaction with the father role. Additionally, they found that divorced fathers reported feeling less competent and less satisfied with the role than nondivorced fathers, but that the role was more salient to them.

O'Neil and Greenberger (1994) studied 102 middle-class fathers to explore the relationship between their commitments to their work and parenting roles and the amount of role strain which they experienced. They found that fathers with a high commitment to their work role and a low commitment to their parental role experienced the greatest degree of role strain. Fathers with a high commitment to their parental role and low commitment to their work role experienced the least amount of role strain. Additionally, those fathers with high commitment to their parental role experienced less role strain when they felt that their spouses supported them. While role commitment in this study is

not conceptualized in the same way that Stryker defines it in the context of identity theory, the authors defined it as including elements of its centrality to the self, the salience of these activities relative to other activities, and the desire to perform the role well. All of these components are closely related to the spirit of both identity theory and role theory (Burke, 1991; Stryker, 1991).

These studies suggest that the salience of the father role has good potential for predicting father involvement. The current study will test this possibility with fathers in a general context (both divorced and nondivorced), as well as testing its predictive potential with fathers of a broad range of socioeconomic circumstances.

Summary

A broad array of factors has been identified as having some influence on father involvement in both the marital and divorce contexts. Unfortunately, there has been little work done to synthesize these findings in a manner which would yield a coherent sense of what actually motivates father involvement. I am able to identify four general categories for this wide variety of predictors. The first would be contextual factors such as economic constraints, geographic proximity to the child, and demographic factors. The second would be the personal characteristics of the father including his attitudes toward parenting, his experience with child care, and his own psychological wellbeing. The third category would be factors associated with the coparental relationship including the quality of the relationship and the patterns for the sharing of tasks within the relationship. The last category would include factors associated with the father-child relationship and would include the father's commitment to the child and the quality of their relationship.

This study explored identity role salience (a characteristic of the father) and socioeconomic factors (contextual factors) as predictors of father involvement. While this design leaves out the influence of the coparental and father-child relationship, as well as several other father characteristics which could be considered to be pertinent in predicting father involvement, time and space constraints require some selectivity in this regard. As such, we must consider that this study explores only a subset of all possible predictors, and therefore, this model will necessarily be underspecified. However, this tends to be the case in most social science research, as human behavior is typically quite complex, and not easily predicted comprehensively using one succinct theoretical model.

The choice to explore the influences of role salience and socioeconomic factors on father involvement should be instructive, not only for their predictive potential independently, but for the interesting theoretical connection that exists between the two. Pleck (1997) argues that it is not enough to identify social-structural factors which may influence fathering, but that we need to identify possible motivational influences which may explain these differences. The degree to which the father role is salient for the individual may help to explain any differences in father involvement that we find by socioeconomic factors.

Theoretical Framework

As role salience is a factor of primary interest in this study, and as it is a construct which is very specifically situated within a theoretical framework, I will depart from the general literature review at this point to review our conceptual and theoretical understanding of this construct. Role salience is a construct which arises from identity

theory as developed by Stryker (1991). Identity theory itself arose from symbolic interactionism. I will begin this review of identity theory and the conceptualization of role salience with a brief review of the tenets of symbolic interactionism. Many scholars consider George Herbert Mead to be one of the fathers of symbolic interactionism. Mead (1934) argued that "mind, self, and society" arise from ongoing social processes. He proposed that the "self" is constructed as one engages in social interaction with others. The individual engages in a reflexive process where he "takes the role of the other" and sees the self from the perspective of those with whom he socially interacts. Mead refers to this aspect of the self as the "me" which embodies those attitudes and expectations of others which are incorporated into the self. The second aspect of the self is the "I" which represents that part of the self which is presented in response to the expectations of others.

Identity theory evolved most directly from structural symbolic interactionism. The structural symbolic interactionist perspective suggests that the dynamics by which society shapes behavior occur within social structures (social roles and social positions, including age, sex, race, and class) which shape the individual's interaction with others. One's positions and roles in society shape one's self-definitions as well as the definitions that others assign to them. These social structures have the effect of constraining further role-making opportunities by "[facilitating or constraining] who comes together in what social settings to interact with what interactional resources for what social purposes" (Stryker, 1992, p. 23).

Social psychological perspectives are complicated by the differing foci of psychology and sociology in their development and application of these theories, and this confusion is most apparent in the extension of the symbolic interactionist perspective. This tension is often depicted as a microscopic vs. a macroscopic perspective. Psychologists tend to emphasize the intrapsychic dynamics which influence identity formation (a microscopic perspective), while sociologists tend to emphasize the influence of the social environment on identity (a macroscopic perspective). In truth, this theoretical framework is most useful when it accounts for both dynamics, while also recognizing the extent to which both personal choice and social influence are limited in shaping the development of identity. Social factors will shape and often constrain an individual's behavioral choices while the influence of the social environment is limited by the power of the individual to develop and assess options and choose accordingly. Stryker expresses this idea aptly when he states that "We cannot fully understand cognitive structures and processes without seeing them as (at least in part) rooted in social structure and social processes; and we cannot fully understand social structures and processes without recognizing that implicated within these are cognitive structures and processes" (Stryker, 1992, p. 20).

As was noted above, the role salience predictor which will be examined in this study were derived from identity theory. While several noted sociologists have contributed significantly to the development of identity theory (Burke & Tully, 1981; McCall & Simmons, 1966), and each of these theorists employs different emphases, this

study uses the construct as developed by Sheldon Stryker (Stryker, 1968; 1987; 1991; 1992). Identity theory is a “specification” of the symbolic interactionist framework in that it describes the process whereby one’s commitment to a role shapes one’s sense of the self within that role. Commitment is defined as the perceived costs incurred by an individual were he to lose the relationships associated with the enactment of a given role. Commitment is considered to have two dimensions: an interactional and an affective dimension. Interactional commitment refers to “the size and connectedness” (Stryker, 1991, p. 23) of one’s social networks associated with a given role. Affective commitment refers to the “intensiveness of affect attached to the potential loss of of social relationships and activity associated with a given identity” (Serpe, 1991, p. 60).

The second key construct in identity theory is identity salience. Identity is conceptualized as being hierarchical where various role-identities occupy differing positions of salience. Salience is defined as “the probability of evoking a given identity across or within situations of interaction” (Stryker, 1991, p. 23). One’s commitment to a given role will then determine the salience of that role-identity in the identity hierarchy. The higher a given role-identity is in one’s identity hierarchy, the more likely it is that one will enact that role in a manner which is consistent with the expectations of significant others as well as the expectations of society at large. Stryker goes further to hypothesize that the more salient a given role-identity is, the more likely it is that the individual will actually seek out opportunities to enact that role (Stryker, 1992).

This theory is very specific in its postulations regarding the nature of the link

between one's identity and the enactment of specific roles. As such, Stryker notes (1991) that this theory is limited, first, in that the self is more than simply role-linked identities. Secondly, he notes that the identity is shaped by emotional as well as cognitive processes. Lastly, he notes that individuals do not always have options in making choices regarding role behaviors or that their options may be uniquely constrained by larger social influences. Acknowledging each of these assertions to be true, he states that this theory has been "developed explicitly as a *limited* theory, invoking a theoretically delimited set of explanatory variables and principles to deal with highly circumscribed behavior" (Stryker, 1991, p. 28). This theory provides a model for understanding how identity, defined in a particular manner, may influence the choice of role behaviors, when choices can be made, through specific cognitive processes.

Figure 1, below, illustrates the manner in which role commitment influences identity salience which then influences role behaviors according to identity theory.

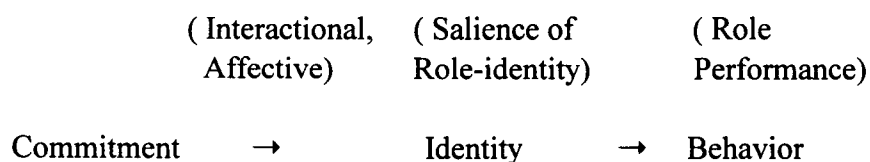


Figure 1. Model for Relation of Elements of Identity Theory

It should be noted here that this process is conceptualized as being bidirectional. As such, it is true, that the dynamics also work in the reverse to some extent. The degree to which one enacts a role is likely to reinforce the salience of that role identity. Additionally, the salience of a particular role identity may influence one's commitment to that role-identity. While Stryker acknowledges that the model can work in the reverse direction, the identity theorists maintain that the primary manner in which identity and behavior are linked is as depicted in Figure 1 (Serpe, 1991).

Study Goals

As was stated earlier, there were two primary goals for this study. The first was to examine the potential of identity salience in predicting the degree to which a father is involved with his child. The second goal was to examine the ways in which various indicators of socioeconomic status may influence father involvement. Based on theoretical considerations and the findings of fathering research thus far, the following indicators of socioeconomic status were examined: the father's level of income, level of education, employment status, and race. In addition to these objective measures, I have examined the influence of the father's perceptions of how insecure his financial situation is as a subjective measure of economic wellbeing. Each of these socioeconomic concepts, along with the concepts of father role salience and father involvement are defined and operationalized in the next chapter.

In addition to examining the influence of role salience and socioeconomic factors on father involvement separately, it was anticipated that role salience may explain the

influence of socioeconomic factors by acting either as a mediator for socioeconomic factors or by moderating the relationship between socioeconomic factors and father involvement.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide the details of the procedures that were used in developing the sampling frame and collecting the data. In addition, I provide a detailed description of the conceptual and operational definitions of the variables employed in this study.

Sampling Procedure

The data used in this study were collected in two waves. The first wave of data collection was conducted in the summer of 1996 by the Social Science Research Institute at the University of Tennessee, under contract to Dr. Greer Litton Fox (Department of Child and Family Studies, University of Tennessee). The SSRI collected information on 148 subjects in a telephone survey of respondents selected through random-digit dialing procedures. This sample was primarily white, middle- to upper-middle income, and more educated than could be considered to be representative of Knox County. Therefore, during the summer of 1997 I collected an additional 60 interviews using a sampling frame designed to yield a higher proportion of lower-income men, African-American men, and men with lower levels of education.

The target population for this study is fathers of children from birth to 18 years old. The study population, that is, the population from which the sample was drawn, was men in households in Knox County which had telephones. Sampling bias was introduced at this point because the study population excludes those fathers who are not members of

a household, and those who live in households which do not have telephones. The findings of this study, then, must be interpreted in light of the fact that the study has not included a portion of fathers who are particularly likely to be at the lowest socioeconomic levels.

The sampling frame used in the second wave was designed to maximize our potential for accessing fathers of lower socioeconomic status within the constraints of the data collection method. As the original SSRI sample was collected using a telephone survey, it was necessary to collect the supplementary data using the same technique. I began by examining each of the census tracts in Knox County, using information from the 1990 Decennial Census, to create a small database of socioeconomic indicators for the 80 census tracts comprising Knox County. Included in the database were the following five variables for each census tract: the percentage of high school graduates, median household income, rate of unemployment, proportion of rental units, and median rents for each tract. These indicators were selected as it was anticipated that the areas with the lowest socioeconomic status would have more residents who did not graduate from high school, lower levels of median household income, higher rates of unemployment, a higher proportion of rental units, and lower median rents (an illustrative page from this database is attached in the appendix). After collecting this information on all of the census tracts within Knox County, I computed averages and standard deviations for each variable. Next, I assigned dummy variables (0 and 1) to indicate those tracts which were characterized by being one or two standard deviations below the mean in a particular

category. The number of "1's" assigned to a tract were totaled, and the tracts were arranged in descending order so that those tracts which had the most indicators of lower socioeconomic status were at the top of the list (the first page of this list is included in the appendix). Out of the 80 census tracts, 66 were characterized as ranking one or more standard deviations below the mean on none or only one of the indicators, and there were no tracts which were characterized by only two of the indicators. The remaining 14 tracts were one or more standard deviations below the mean for three or more of the socioeconomic indicators; this subset of census tracts served as the geographic base for sampling.

The next step was to mark the boundaries for each of the tracts in the lower socioeconomic subset and to identify all of the streets within these 14 tracts on a county streetmap. Using the street names as a point of entry, I consulted a cross-reference telephone directory to determine the three-digit telephone exchanges assigned to households in these tracts. This process revealed that 10 different three-digit telephone exchanges were assigned to these geographic areas. However, further comparison of the street map with the cross-reference directory revealed that these exchanges are in fact assigned to the entire area within I-640 and the Tennessee River, which includes tracts which are not characterized as having a primarily lower socioeconomic status. This suggested that a telephone survey of these tracts could produce individuals from middle and upper socioeconomic statuses as well. Thus, while not perfect, I concluded that this method would maximize my potential for reaching men from lower socioeconomic status,

while still preserving random selection.

The final step of preparation of the telephone sampling frame was to form the replicate sheets for the telephone survey (a copy is attached in the appendix). Because the 10 telephone exchanges were not assigned uniformly across the geographic area represented by the tracts, some means for reproducing this nonequal representation of exchanges on the replicates had to be devised. To do this, I divided the exchanges into three groups: the first included the exchanges which were assigned most frequently by the telephone company, the second group included exchanges which were assigned less frequently, and the third included exchanges which were assigned least often. It was not practical to determine the frequency of assignment of the exchanges through a direct count, but examination of telephone numbers assigned to one major street from each of the tracts within the target area revealed that these groups of exchanges were roughly represented at a proportion of 4:2:1. The exchanges were listed on the replicate to reflect this proportion. The four-digit trailers were assigned to the exchanges using a random number table. Though cumbersome, this procedure provided the highest potential for attaining a random sample of fathers within a population which would yield the highest proportion possible of men of lower socioeconomic status for telephone interviews.

Collection Procedure

The telephone interviews were conducted by this author and a trained assistant. Calls were made on weekdays and weekends, and during the afternoons and evenings, to increase the chances of reaching individuals who worked varying shifts. When a resident

was reached, we identified our affiliation with The University of Tennessee and the purpose of our study, and asked if there was a male resident between the ages of 18 and 55 who was also a father in the household. If we were speaking to this individual, we asked if he would participate in an interview about his fathering experiences which would last 15-20 minutes. If there was an individual who was eligible for the study living in the household, but not present at the time, we asked for a more convenient time to call again.

Seventy replicates were completed, resulting in a total of 2100 telephone numbers as the sampling frame. Each replicate contained 30 telephone numbers and in itself provided an accurate representation of the study population. A maximum of four attempts were made for each number, including those with busy signals, answering machines, when there was no answer, or when we were asked to call back. Out of the 2100 telephone numbers called, we completed 60 interviews; this represents an efficiency rate of only 3% for this approach to data collection. A total of 70 hours were spent making these calls over a period of five weeks.

Breakdown for Successful and Unsuccessful Contacts

Of the 2100 calls, 48% did not reach a human being. This occurred due to repeated busy signals, no answer, repeatedly reaching an answering machine, or the number having been disconnected or inoperable (details provided in Table 1). The telephone numbers which resulted in our reaching answering machines and some of those numbers for which there was no answer were likely to have been residential phones. However, there is no reason to believe that these residences were more or less likely to

Table 1

Outcomes of Telephone Survey: DADS Wave 2, N=2100 Numbers Dialed

Disposition	Percentage
Busy	2%
No Answer	12%
Answering Machine	5%
Disconnected	18%
Inoperable	11%
Business Contacted	18%
Households Contacted	34%

have an eligible resident who would consent to participate in the study; therefore there is no indication that these “missed opportunities” introduced any significant bias in the sample. We did not leave any message on the answering machines and the identification of our telephone numbers was blocked, so that it cannot reasonably be argued that these residents were intentionally avoiding our calls. Of the total numbers dialed, we identified 18% as businesses and 34% as households.

Breakdown for Eligibility

Of the 700+ numbers which were reached and were residences, 87% reported that they did not have a resident who was eligible for the study. One-half of the ineligible households had residents who did not fall in the desired age range, one-fourth had no children, and one-fourth were single mothers. It is possible that some of those who reported that they were not eligible for the study may have been eligible but unwilling to

simply refuse to participate. However, a comparison of the percentage breakdown of our respondents by reason for ineligibility to the percentage breakdowns of residents within the targeted census tracts (according to 1990 census data) reveals that the study breakdown is reasonable. Respondents who did not fall within the required age range accounted for 43% of our ineligible respondents, which corresponds perfectly with the census report of 43% of the residents within the targeted tracts who do not fall within this age range. Of those who were age-eligible, 77% of the respondents in our survey indicated that they either had no children or were single mothers. This figure compares reasonably well to the census report of 88.5% of residents within the targeted tracts who are childless or single mothers.

Refusal Rates Among Eligible Households

Of the randomly generated 2100 numbers, only 92 (4.5%) were reachable residences with an eligible respondent for the study. Of those 92 residences which had eligible residents, the father's partner refused in 9% of the cases (the female partner expressed that "he" was not interested in participating, but we were not able to directly invite the father to participate) and the eligible resident personally declined to participate in 26% of the cases. The 60 interviews which were completed represents a 65% success rate for recruiting eligible men to participate. In fact, the response rate was 71% when we were able to speak directly with potential father respondents.

It is possible that those individuals who declined to participate are qualitatively different from those who consented in ways which are relevant to our study, thus

introducing potential unmeasured biases. While we did not ask for reasons when a respondent declined to participate, it is possible that some of these individuals may be very involved fathers, who care very much about the fathering role, but simply did not wish to spend 15-20 minutes doing a survey, or who were not inclined to participate in university-sponsored studies (perhaps due to privacy issues). However, it's also possible that the men who refused to participate were characterized by being uninvolved fathers or fathers who don't find their fathering role very important. Both of these possibilities should be considered when interpreting our results.

Sample

When both waves are combined, the final sample totals 208 cases. While the sampling in tracts which were targeted to produce greater numbers of men of lower socioeconomic status improved our sample somewhat, the sample still fails to be representative of Knox County residential fathers in some dimensions. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of residential fathers (ages 18-55) in Wave 1, in Wave 2, in the sample overall, and in Knox County according to race, level of education, and level of income. The available census information is limited to fathers who are living with their children, therefore nonresidential fathers in the sample have been excluded for purposes of comparison. Unfortunately, the limitations of the available census data affords no opportunity for assessing the representativeness of the nonresidential fathers in this sample.

Our goal was to obtain a more representative sample of African-American men

Table 2

Distribution of Demographic Indicators for Residential Fathers (18-55 yrs old) in the
Study Sample and in Knox County (Per Cent)

Sociodemographic Indicator	Wave 1 (N=109)	Wave 2 (N=41)	Total Sample (N=150)	Knox Cty
Race				
Black	6%	34%	12%	6%
Education				
<h.s. diploma	10%	12%	11%	17%
H.S. Grad	19%	25%	20%	27%
Some	23%	44%	28%	27%
College				
Bach. Degree	26%	16%	23%	18%
Grad/Prof	22%	3%	18%	11%
Income				
<10k	5%	9%	6%	11%
10k-20k	10%	19%	12%	21%
20k-30k	13%	19%	14%	20%
30k-40k	17%	28%	19%	18%
40k-50k	15%	9%	14%	12%
50k-75k	21%	13%	20%	13%
75k-100k	7%	3%	6%	3%
>100k	12%	0%	9%	2%

and men of lower socioeconomic status. In the wave 2 sample and in the DADS sample overall, black men are actually overrepresented among fathers who live with their children. However, this is not entirely undesirable, as it will allow us a better opportunity to examine the within group differences in the experiences of this population.

The figures for educational attainment suggest that the DADS sample continues to underrepresent those fathers who have no college and overrepresent those fathers with Bachelor's Degrees and graduate or professional training. This pattern mirrors a common response bias in telephone survey samples, and should be considered when interpreting the results of the study.

The figures for levels of income follow the same pattern as those for educational attainment. Families with incomes under \$30,000/year are underrepresented, while families with incomes over \$50,000/year are overrepresented. As with education, this departure from representativeness will have to be considered when interpreting the results from the study. Specifically, there are limits to external validity, and the potential range of variability among the underrepresented sample segments has been constrained to an unknown extent.

Although oversampling the lower-socioeconomic tracts in Wave 2 failed to bring our total sample to a point where it is representative of Knox County, it did improve the representativeness of the study sample on the two socioeconomic indicators of education and income. Unfortunately, the departure from representativeness in the SSRI sample was so severe, that correcting for it with a sample of only 60 individuals was not enough

to attain representativeness. Nonetheless, the efforts of the oversample have provided a larger pool of individuals of lower socioeconomic status for examination. We succeeded in increasing the number of individuals with family incomes which are less than \$20,000 from 26 to 49; the number of individuals with no college education from 45 to 67; and the number of black fathers from 10 to 31. This is of most benefit when the data are analyzed using a regression of socioeconomic indicators against father involvement, as the central limit theorem suggests that the sample mean will more closely approximate the population mean on any given variable when the sample size exceeds 30; and the larger the sample size, the more assured we can be that the sample distribution will approximate that found in the population (Dudewicz & Mishra, 1988).

A particular disappointment in the sampling of the lower-socioeconomic tracts was our failure to access larger numbers of men who are not high school graduates. It may be that these men are more likely to decline to participate in studies, a selection bias that others have noted in survey research. It would stand to reason that individuals with less education are less inclined to participate in university-sponsored research studies. The possibility that these men are also less involved with their children or find the father role less salient than those who participated will have to be considered when exploring these relationships in the study.

As this study is concerned with the involvement of fathers with their children who are 18 years old or less, the sample has been restricted and reduced to 150 cases. Table 3 demonstrates that this restriction does not appreciably alter the socioeconomic character of the sample.

Table 3

Distribution of Sociodemographic Indicators in Restricted Sample (N=150)

Sociodemographic Indicator	Restricted Sample (n=150)	Total Sample (N=208)	Knox Cty
Race			
Black Men	15%	12%	6%
Education			
<h.s. diploma	12%	11%	17%
H.S. Grad	20%	20%	27%
Some College	31%	28%	27%
Bach. Degree	22%	23%	18%
Grad/Prof	16%	18%	11%
Income			
<10k	5%	6%	11%
10k-20k	14%	12%	21%
20k-30k	16%	14%	20%
30k-40k	20%	19%	18%
40k-50k	10%	14%	12%
50k-75k	17%	20%	13%
75k-100k	7%	6%	3%
>100k	8%	9%	2%

Measures

This study employs three multiple-item scales and six measures which involved only single-item measures. I begin this section with a full discussion of the conceptual and operational definitions for the variables (when appropriate), as well as the results of the reliability and validity analyses of each of the multiple-item scales.

Multiple-Item Scales

Three of the variables included in this study were measured using multiple-item scales. These include: father involvement, father role salience, and financial insecurity.

Father Involvement

Father involvement is the dependent variable for this study. Father involvement has been conceptualized in several ways in the fathering research and there has been a wide variety of approaches toward operationalizing it. For the purposes of this study, father involvement is defined to be the frequency with which a father engages in specific activities with his child. This conceptualization of father involvement is limited to the behavioral dimension of involvement. In addition to behavioral conceptions, current fathering research examines fathering behaviors in evaluative and attitudinal terms (Fox & Bruce, 1996). While the quality of parenting and the father's attitudes toward the father role can be considered to be important aspects of father involvement (Palkovitz, 1997), I have chosen to restrict my conceptualization of father involvement to its behavioral components for the purpose of this study.

The conceptualization of father involvement is further complicated by recognition of the multidimensionality of the behavioral enactment of the father role. A

multidimensional measure of father involvement has been developed and tested in another study (Bruce & Fox, in press). This measure includes four dimensions of this aspect of father involvement including: custodial caretaking, socioemotional functions, teaching functions, and executive functions. The 9-item measure employed in this study includes items which represent the teaching and socioemotional functions. The fact that this measure excludes custodial caretaking and executive functions should be considered in interpreting the results of this study.

This variable is measured using a 9-item scale which was adapted from Ahrons and Miller (1993), but also reflects our earlier work with father involvement (Fox & Bruce, 1996). The parenting activities included in this scale have been selected to provide a concise measure which covers a broad range of activities that a father may typically engage in with his child, regardless of the child's age or the father's particular parenting style. The participants were asked how often they engage in the following activities with their child:

- a) spending time together one-on-one
- b) playing together
- c) joining the child in activities that he or she likes
- d) teaching the child new skills
- e) watching television together
- f) attending events that the child participates in
- g) including the child in the father's favorite activities
- h) attending church with the child

i) doing household chores together

The answer choices were never or hardly ever, sometimes, often, or almost every day (scores of 1, 2, 3, or 4 respectively). The reliability for the scale using Cronbach's alpha is .81. The means for the items range from 2.12 to 3.15, and the items' standard deviations range from 0.96 to 1.1. None of the items stood out as having a large influence on the Cronbach's alpha and they all correlated reasonably well with one another. A factor analysis using principal components and a varimax rotation revealed that the items split on two factors, with items a-d loading on the first factor and items e-i loading on the second. Given the types of activities included in each group, it seems plausible that the groups are distinguished by the age of the child for which the activity is most appropriate. Indeed, a t-test indicates that fathers of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are more involved in the activities in the first group (INVYOUNG) than are fathers of children over six years old. Fathers of school-aged children and adolescents are more involved in the second group (INVOLD) of activities than are fathers of children less than six years old (Table 4).

One issue which should be considered in interpreting this scale is its reference point for quantification. As the scale does not specify exactly how frequently an activity should be performed to be considered to have been performed sometimes or often, these measures are necessarily subjective. Subjective differences were especially apparent when administering this survey to married men and when administering it to men who do not live with their children. Married men often responded, "No, my wife does most of that", while divorced men or men who never married did not verbalize that they were

Table 4

Results of T-Test Analysis for Age Against Involvement Groups 1 and 2

Involvement Group	Mean Involvement for Age Group 1	Mean Involvement for Age Group 2	t-value	Significance (p)
Group 1 (items a-d)	3.2	2.15	2.45	.015
Group 2 (items e-i)	2.9	2.59	-4.18	.000

employing such a reference point. Nonresidential men would often respond, "Well, we do a lot of that when they are with me", suggesting that they were referring to the proportion of the time which they have with their children which is spent in a given activity, even if the time that they have with their child is necessarily limited. There is no way of knowing whether these differences in reference points for quantification were uniform across all married fathers or all nonresidential fathers, but as it was apparent for some, given their comments, these differences should be considered when interpreting the results for the influences of married versus unmarried men and residential versus nonresidential men. In addition, these observations illustrate the importance of ensuring a uniform reference point for father involvement measures in future studies.

The validity of this scale is not easily assessed. As we do not know much about what would predict a high degree of father involvement (that is a large part of the purpose of this study), constructs which would be expected to correlate highly with father involvement on theoretical grounds are not easily identified. We also have no measures of other criteria which might be expected to correlate with a measure of high involvement, and these types of criteria are also difficult to identify given what little we

know about the implications of father involvement. The best approach would be to assess the validity of the involvement scale based on its content. The results of the factor analysis suggest that we have succeeded in including involvement activities which would be typical of fathers of older and younger children. Clearly, we have not included all possible types of activities which fathers typically engage in with their children, but we have assembled a reasonably good inventory of activities which represent the socioemotional and teaching dimensions of parenting. Nonetheless, when interpreting the results, it will be important to recognize that the measure surveys the fathers' involvement in only a small sample of all possible fathering activities.

Salience

One of the predictive variables of primary interest is the degree to which the father role is salient for the participant. Role salience is defined to be the priority that one role holds over others in a hierarchical identity structure. The items for this scale were chosen to reflect the degree to which the participant is likely to seek out (or avoid) opportunities to enact the role, as well as general statements that reflect a generally positive (or negative) attitude toward the father role as one aspect of his identity. This variable was measured using a 10-item scale and the respondents were asked whether the statements were not true, somewhat true, or very true for them (scores of 1, 2, or 3 respectively).

The items included:

- a) I don't feel comfortable with a lot of kids running around. (R)
- b) I'd rather work overtime than watch my kids in the evening. (R)
- c) I prefer the company of adults to spending time with kids. (R)

- d) I like being known as a father.
- e) I miss the running around that I did before I had children. (R)
- f) Before I spend money on myself I ask if my kids might need something more.
- g) I want people to know that I have children.
- h) Being a father has changed me a lot.
- i) I enjoy volunteering in kid's activities like sports or scouts.
- j) It annoys me when people I don't know ask if I have kids. (R)

The items which are marked by an "R" were reverse-coded. The means for these items range from 2.38 to 2.88, the standard deviations range from .37 to .77, and the items correlate well with one another. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .61. None of the items appear to have a large influence on this figure. A factor analysis of the items reveals that the items load on three factors. Items "a-e" load on the first factor, items "f-i" load on the second, and item "j" stands alone on a third factor. A possible distinguishing character for the first two factors is that the first group appear to refer to the desire for association with children, while the second group refers more specifically to the enactment of the father role. Item "j" seems to refer directly to one's feelings about the father identity. All of these factors are legitimate aspects of the salience of the father role. While item "j" stands alone in the factor analysis, it does correlate well with item "e" ($r=.335$, $p=.000$), and therefore it will be retained in the scale.

In collecting this data, we measured several additional variables which could be expected to correlate well with salience, and could be used as indicators of construct validity for this scale. One such item, which measured the "good father identity"

construct, asked the participant if they agreed that, "If a man puts a roof over their heads, food on the table, and clothes on their backs, he's done enough to be a good father to his children." Men who find the father role to be highly salient to their identity might be expected to strongly disagree with this statement, given Stryker's proposition that higher identity salience leads to a greater likelihood that the role will be enacted in a manner which is consistent with social expectations (Stryker, 1992). Even when the provider role is considered to be of primary importance, fathers are generally expected to contribute in other ways as well, such as providing leadership and moral guidance, if not companionship or emotional nurturing (Lamb, 1986; Pleck, 1987). The bivariate correlation between these two variables indicates that they are related as expected ($r=.216$, $p=.008$). The larger study also surveyed the participants on two items which tap into possible ambivalence regarding taking on the father role. These items were "It took me a while before I truly felt like a father to this child," and "I wanted this child to be my last one." A participant who finds the father role highly salient to his identity may be expected to disagree with these statements, as Stryker suggests that men who find the father role more salient are more likely to seek out opportunities for enacting the father role (Stryker, 1992). The correlations between these variables provide support for the anticipated relationship ($r=-.283$, $p=.001$; $r=-.245$, $p=.004$). Lastly, the larger study assessed the degree of satisfaction which the partner felt about being a father. He was asked if he agreed with the following three statements: 1) "Being a father has given me a lot of pleasure"; 2) "I feel very close to my children"; and 3) "I am very proud of being my children's father". An individual who finds the father role highly salient would be

expected to strongly agree with these statements, as Stryker proposes that an individual who finds a role highly salient would be expected to express positive affect toward the relationships and activities associated with the enactment of that role (Stryker, 1991).

The bivariate correlations between these variables are all significant (1) $r=.190$, $p=.021$; 2) $r=.308$, $p=.000$; 3) $r=.264$, $p=.001$). In summary, the salience scale appears to have good validity as it correlates well with the father's opinions regarding the obligations of the father role, a lack of ambivalence in taking on the father role, and his satisfaction with being a father.

Financial Insecurity

In addition to objective indicators of financial status, such as income, education and employment status, we also explored the individual's subjective economic wellbeing by inquiring as to his sense of the security of his financial situation. Financial insecurity is defined to be the degree to which the participant's economic wellbeing is uncertain.

This variable (financial insecurity) was measured using an 8-item scale. The father was asked whether the following statements were not true, somewhat true, or very true for him (with scores of 1, 2, and 3 respectively). The items included:

- a) We have enough money to meet all of our expenses each month (R).
- b) I feel very secure about our financial situation(R).
- c) It bothers me when my kids ask for money and I can't give them what they need.
- d) Money problems frequently cause problems in our family.
- e) It is hard for us to live on our present income.
- f) I worry about having enough money for retirement.

- g) I worry about how to provide for my parents or other relatives as they get older.
- h) I worry about having enough money for my children's education.

The means for these items range from 1.39 to 1.89, and their standard deviations range from .62 to .97. All of the items correlate well with one another. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .78, and none of the items appear to have a large influence on this figure. The factor analysis reveals that the items load on two factors, with items "a-e" loading on factor 1 and items "f-h" loading on the second. The items in the second group are distinguished by sharing a future orientation, which may be more characteristic of older participants. A regression of the age of the father against his scores on the items in the second group indicates that the financial insecurity scores rise for older fathers, and that this increase occurs most rapidly for men in their twenties ($p=.079$). However, financial insecurity, measured by the whole scale, is not differentiated by the age of the father. Therefore, it would not be expected that the father's age should be taken into consideration when exploring the relationship between financial insecurity and the father's involvement with his child.

There are several constructs which were assessed in this study which may be used to validate this scale. The most obvious would be the father's income. It would be reasonable to expect that men who report higher incomes would be less likely to perceive their financial situation as being insecure. This appears to be true, as income and financial insecurity are significantly correlated ($r=-.471$, $p=.000$). One may also expect that less educated men would tend to be less financially secure. As expected, education and financial insecurity are also significantly correlated ($r=-.164$, $p=.046$). A third criteria

would suggest that men who are not employed would be more likely to report being financially insecure than employed men, and in fact, employment status and financial insecurity do correlate significantly ($r = -.280$, $p = .004$). One final measure which could prove useful in assessing the validity of this scale, is economic mobility. This construct was assessed by asking about the financial status of the respondent's family of origin and for their family of procreation, with the mobility score being the difference between the two. Upward economic mobility is negatively correlated with financial insecurity ($r = -.202$, $p = .014$). Using this scale unemployed men, men with lower incomes and less education, and men who are downwardly mobile economically (relative to their family of origin) tend to report being more financially insecure. This outcome suggests that this scale has good validity.

Single-Item Measures

This study used several additional measures which were assessed using single items. The child's residential status was represented as a dummy variable, with a "0" indicating that the child lives with the father and a "1" indicating that the father and child do not live together. The father's race is also a dummy variable, with a "0" indicating that the father is European-American and a "1" indicating that the father is African-American. The survey yielded no Hispanic or Asian respondents. Employment status is a dummy variable with a "0" indicating that the father is employed full or part time and a "1" indicating that he is not employed.

The father's annual income was assessed using an 8-point scale as follows:

1 - less than \$10,000

2 - \$10,000-\$19,999

3 - \$20,000-\$29,999

4 - \$30,000-\$39,999

5 - \$40,000-\$49,999

6 - \$50,000-\$74,999

7 - \$75,000-\$100,000

8 - more than \$100,000

The father's level of education was measured in terms of the number of years of schooling completed and the child's age was measured in years.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Multitple regression analysis was used to determine which of the hypothesized predictors (sociodemographic indicators and salience) are statistically predictive of father involvement.

Regression Assumptions

A first step in using regression analysis is to verify that the assumptions for regression analysis have been met. The first assumption is that the errors between what we would predict from the model and what we would find in the general population are normally distributed. The residuals from the model can approximate these errors, and their distribution can be checked using a normal probability plot (Figure 2). This plot indicates that the distribution of these residuals are very close to normality. A test of skewness verifies this conclusion (skewness=.02).

The second assumption is that the variance of the errors is homogeneous, or that it does not vary with the predictors. A plot of the predicted values for involvement against standardized residuals (see Figure 3) verifies that the error variance appears to be constant.

The third assumption is that the errors are not correlated with one another. As we have not taken repeated measures from our participants, there is no reason to believe that this might occur in this data set. Lastly, I checked for outliers and found no cases which stand out as having exceptionally large studentized residuals.

I conclude that all of the assumptions for regression analysis have been met,

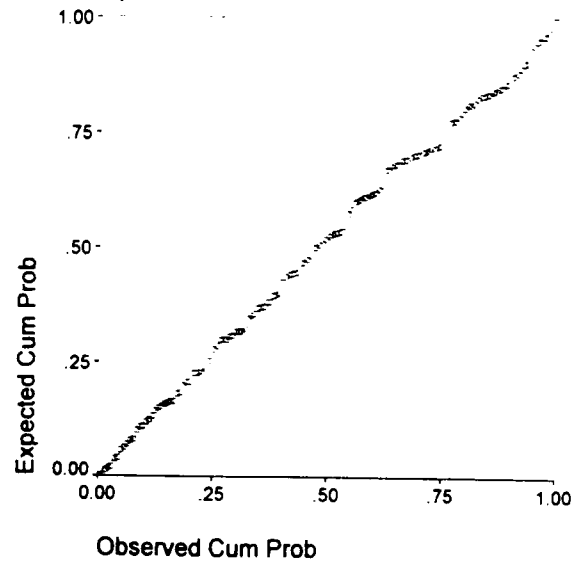


Figure 2. Normal Probability Plot

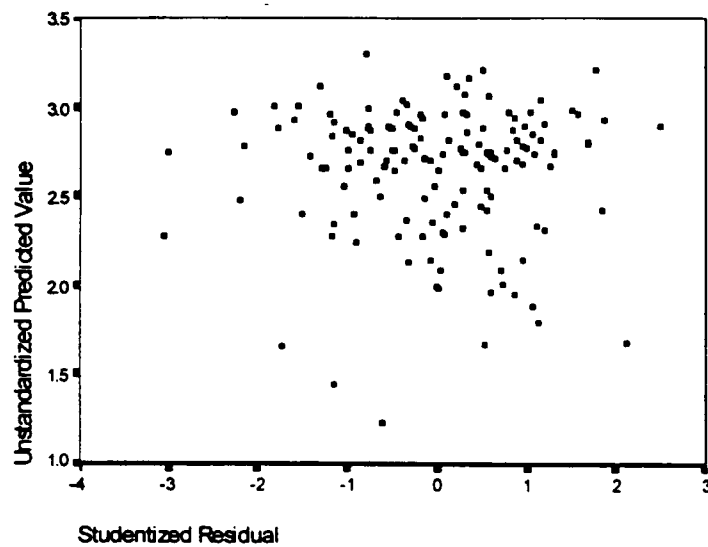


Figure 3. Residuals vs. Predicted Outcome Values

permitting its use in estimating the proposed model of father involvement.

Multicollinearity in the Data

In addition to checking that the assumptions for regression analysis have not been violated, it is important to explore the degree of multicollinearity which may exist in the data. As this model employs several socioeconomic variables, it would be anticipated that there would be some collinearity in the data, as it is expected that indicators such as education and income will vary together. A bivariate correlation table for all variables included in the regression model is included in the appendix. When multicollinearity is present, and when it is severe, the parameter estimates which result from the regression analysis are typically unstable. This means that a very slight modification to the data set, such as removing one case, would dramatically alter the parameter estimates. When it is determined that there is severe multicollinearity in a data set, there are alternative analytic approaches to regression analysis; however, these alternative approaches typically bias the estimates by making small modifications directly to the data matrix, as in ridge regression analysis (Myers, 1990). In this instance, it is necessary to make a determination as to which approach provides the most useful model, even if neither approach will produce a perfect model.

One approach to assessing the degree of multicollinearity in a data set is to examine the variance inflation factors for each variable (Table 5). The recommended cutoff for variance inflation factors in determining the degree of multicollinearity for a model of this size is 1.86. This figure is exceeded for four of the terms in this model: race, salience, race*residence, and education*income*residence. However, Myers

Table 5

Variance Inflation Factors for Terms Included in Model

Term	VIF
Race	2.29
Residence	1.65
Child's Age	1.24
Salience	2.45
Race*Residence	2.62
Race*Financial Insecurity	1.53
Income*Residence	1.50
Educ*Income*Res	2.63
Age*Age	1.50
Age*Age*Salience	1.70

(1990, p. 369) suggests that a useful rule of thumb is that VIF's under 10 are generally not a cause of concern; in other words, the instability in the parameter estimates caused by this level of multicollinearity causes less damage to the model than would the bias introduced by alternative techniques.

Regression Results

I began an exploratory analysis by simultaneously entering all of the variables into the model which were hypothesized to be predictive. Those variables which did not contribute significantly to the model (at the $p=.05$ level of significance) were deleted (financial insecurity, father's income, education, employment status, and child's gender). I then proceeded to test various interaction terms using a General Factorial ANOVA

technique. The selection of potential interaction terms was guided by a visual examination of bar graphs; when a visual trend was apparent, the terms were tested statistically. The terms which were determined to be significant in the General Factorial ANOVA were then entered simultaneously into the regression model to examine the nature of the interaction. Any of the original variables which proved to have no main effect, but were significant in interaction with another term, were again entered as single-order terms in order to filter out shared variance with the interaction term.

The final step was to enter the terms hierarchically in two steps in order to separate the contribution of the socioeconomic indicators from the contribution of role salience in accounting for the variance in father involvement. Sociodemographic variables were entered simultaneously in the first step, followed by the child's age and role salience which were entered simultaneously in the second block. The model which resulted from this analysis contains four first order terms, four two-way interaction terms, one quadratic term, and one interaction term with a quadratic factor. The F-statistic for the fit of the model is significant at an alpha of .0001 ($F_{13,135} = 9.811$), and the R^2 value indicates that the model accounts for 49% of the variance in the data. Table 6 provides the results of the analysis in further detail.

Predictive Variables

The variables which proved to significantly predict father involvement fall into three sets based on interactive relationships between them. The variables are grouped together as follows: 1) father's race, child's residence (which is discussed again as a main effect and in interaction with other variables), and financial insecurity; 2) child's

Table 6

Results of Regression Analysis

Variable	B	SE	β	p	F	R ²
Step 1				.000	6.873	.309
Father's Race	-.468	.150	-.293	.002		
Child's Residence	-.755	.123	-.490	.000		
Financial Insecurity	-.110	.089	-.096	.220		
Income	-.042	.064	-.053	.509		
Education	-.031	.085	-.025	.716		
Race*Residence	.502	.205	.222	.008		
Race*Financial	.533	.239	.211	.038		
Insecurity						
Income*Residence	.531	.152	.285	.001		
Education*Income	-.586	.289	-.170	.045		
*Residence						
Step 2				.000	9.811	.488
Child's Age	.029	.008	.261	.000		
Age*Age	-.006	.002	-.286	.000		
Role Salience	.899	.212	.413	.000		
Age*Age*Salience	-.012	.006	-.194	.054		

residence, father's level of education, and father's level of income; and 3) father role salience and the child's age.

Father's Race and its Interaction with Child's Residence and Father's Perception of Financial Insecurity

The parameter estimate for the father's race suggests that black men tend to be less involved with their children than white men by .468 units, as an average across all levels of financial insecurity and the father's residential status with his child. (Figure 4). The mean level of involvement for white fathers is 2.73, while for black fathers the mean level of involvement is 2.27.

This relationship takes on some interesting variation when observed in interaction with the father's residential status and his perceived level of financial insecurity, respectively. The coefficient for the race*residence parameter indicates that the slope for the race-involvement regression line increases by .502 units for nonresidential fathers (Figure 5), such that the racial difference in father involvement is no longer apparent when looking only at nonresidential men.

The mean level of involvement for black and white nonresidential fathers is exactly the same (2.10). This result suggests that the influence of race on father involvement exists only for fathers who live with their children. This relationship also has implications for the influence of the child's residence on father involvement, as the relationship is no longer significant for black fathers. Black fathers who live with their children are not significantly more involved with their children than those who do not live with their children.

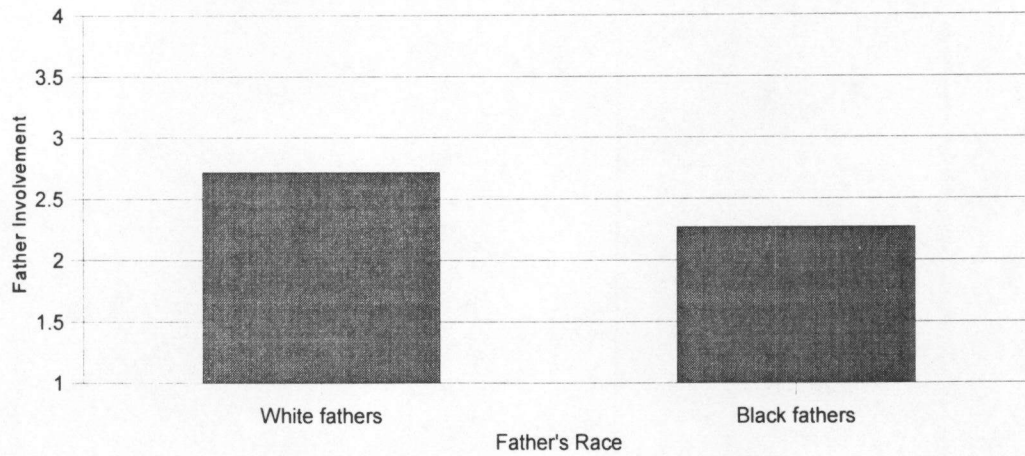


Figure 4. Mean Level of Involvement by Father's Race

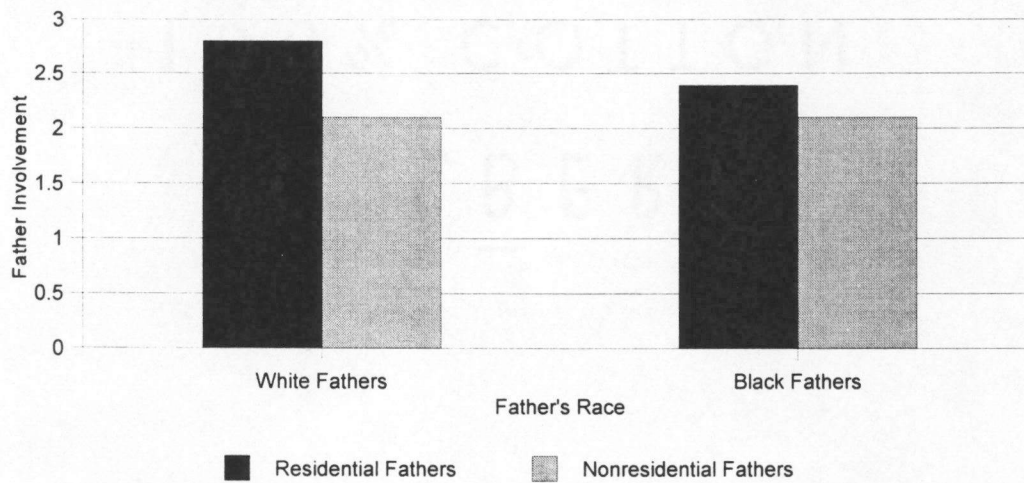


Figure 5. Interaction Between Father's Race and Child's Residence Against Father

Involvement

The influence of subjective feelings of financial insecurity on father involvement is not apparent until it is viewed in the context of the father's race. The relationship between these variables for black men is such that involvement increases by .533 units when the perception of financial insecurity increases by one unit on the three-point scale. Figure 6 illustrates the influence of financial insecurity on father involvement for white and for black fathers. This figure illustrates two important results for black fathers. First, black fathers who feel that they are more financially insecure tend to be more involved with their children. Secondly, the gap in father involvement between white and black fathers narrows as financial insecurity increases. In fact, the difference is no longer significant beyond a level of financial insecurity of 2.00, or when the father perceives his financial situation as being at least somewhat insecure. This result, along with the finding for the interaction between race and the child's residence, suggests that white fathers are more involved than black fathers only when their children live with them, and only when they perceive their financial situation as being very secure. Another interesting point is that, in the case of the interaction of the father's race and the child's residence, the gap in involvement between white and black fathers narrowed because white, nonresidential fathers are less involved, whereas residential and nonresidential black fathers remain at the same low level of involvement. However, in the case of the interaction between the father's race and financial insecurity, the same gap narrows because black fathers who perceive their financial situation as being at least somewhat insecure are more involved than black fathers who report their financial situation as being secure, and are as involved as white fathers with moderate to high scores for financial insecurity. This fact is

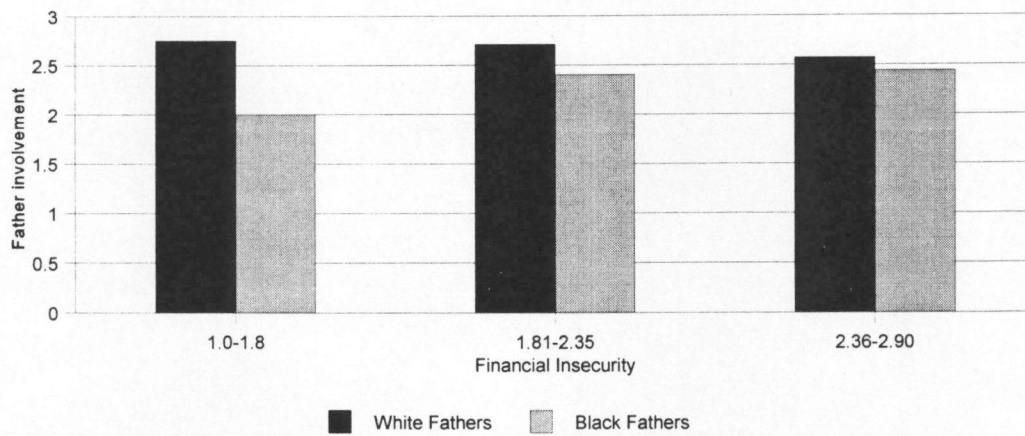


Figure 6. Interaction Between Race and Financial Insecurity Against Father Involvement

especially important to note as the group of black fathers with at least some feelings of financial insecurity amounts to 60% of the black fathers in this sample (compared with only 34% of the white fathers).

Child's Residential Status, and its Interaction with Income and Education

The parameter coefficient for residence indicates that, as an average across all levels of income and race, nonresidential fathers are less involved than residential fathers by .755 units. The mean level of involvement for residential fathers is 2.77 (on a scale of 1 to 4) and 2.10 for nonresidential fathers (Figure 7). It would be expected that nonresidential fathers would be less involved than residential fathers given that nonresidential fathers tend to have less access to their children than fathers who live with their children. This is likely to be the result of simply having less time with the child.

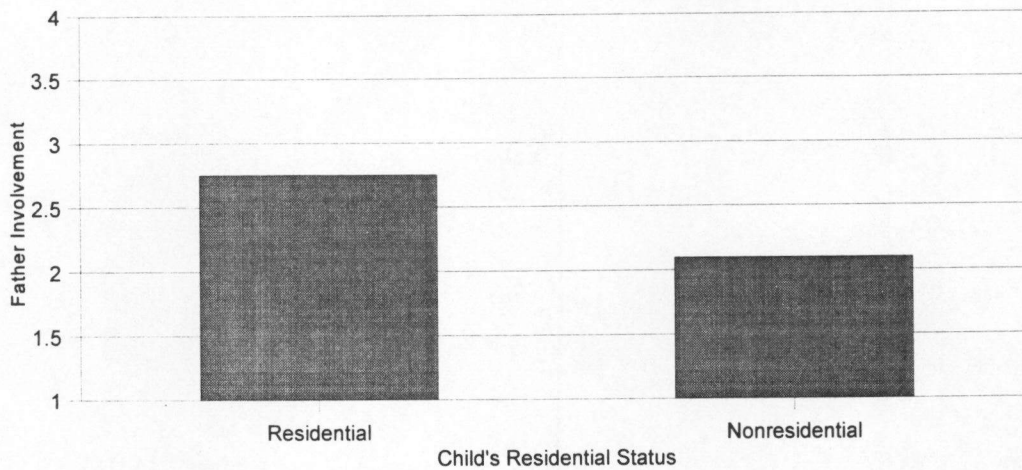


Figure 7. Comparison of Mean Levels of Involvement for Residential and Nonresidential Fathers

However, the mechanics which influence the involvement of nonresidential fathers become more complex when viewed in the context of two socioeconomic factors. First, income appears to have a positive influence on the involvement of nonresidential fathers, such that as income increases by one unit (approximately \$20,000), father involvement increases by .273 units (Figure 8). As their level of income rises, nonresidential fathers become more involved and the gap between residential and nonresidential fathers decreases. The difference in involvement for residential and nonresidential fathers is no longer apparent beyond a level of income of \$40,000

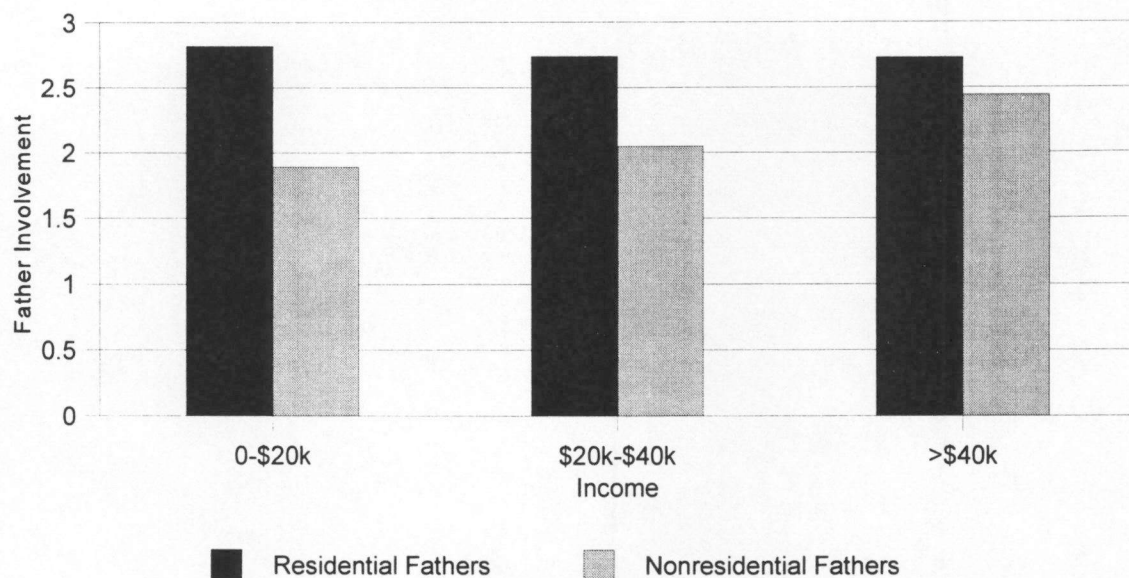


Figure 8. Interaction Between Income and Residence Against Father Involvement

(which amounts to 25% of the nonresidential fathers in our sample).

This relationship takes on further complexity when examined in the context of the father's level of education. Figure 9 illustrates the interaction between education and income for nonresidential fathers. The positive influence of income on father involvement is still apparent for nonresidential fathers with at least some college, but the relationship is reversed for fathers with no college education, such that less educated, nonresidential fathers with higher incomes are less involved with their children. Furthermore, for nonresidential fathers at the lowest levels of income, those with no college education are significantly more involved with their children than those with at least some college.

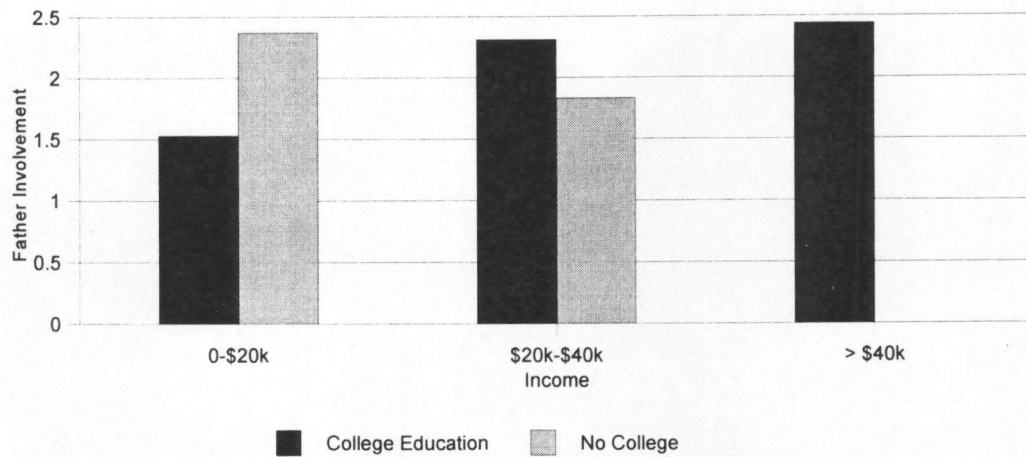


Figure 9. Interaction Between Education and Income Against Involvement for Nonresidential Fathers

Although income was measured in the survey using seven categories, and education was measured as a continuous variable in number of years, it was necessary to collapse these variables into fewer categories. I had originally tested the income variable in three categories (low: up to \$20k, medium: from \$20k to \$40k, and high: beyond \$40k) and the education variable in five categories (less than a high school degree, high school graduate, some college, bachelor's degree, and graduate or professional schooling). This design required that I adequately fill 15 cells for residential and nonresidential fathers. The design proved to be untenable for the nonresidential fathers as this sample includes only 24 cases in this subpopulation. I chose, therefore, to collapse the education variable into two categories, those with some college education and those with no college

education. This design allowed enough cases in each cell to be able to detect the trend discussed above.

Before leaving the analysis of the role of the child's residential status in predicting father involvement, it is reasonable to examine the role of the father's marital status as well. A father who lives with his child would often be married to the child's mother, but many men live with their children and their children's mother without actually being married to their partner. In fact, in this sample, 83% of the residential fathers are married (although we do not know if they are married to the child's mother), 8% are living with their partner, and 11% are neither married to nor living with a partner.

This kind of variation in marital status is also apparent among nonresidential fathers in that most of these men are neither married nor living with a partner, while a smaller proportion are married (presumably to someone other than the child's mother). The proportion of the nonresidential fathers who are divorced is 54%, 17% are never married, and 29% are (presumably) remarried.

If we broaden our idea of marital status so that we are actually considering whether or not the father is living with a partner (married or not), we can create a four-way typology for couple status and residential status, and examine which of these parameters is the stronger predictor for father involvement, using a t-test analysis.

Table 7 provides the mean levels of involvement for each category of residential and couple status. A t-test analysis reveals that there is no significant difference in father involvement between the fathers who do and do not live with a partner within the

Table 7. Mean Levels of Involvement by Father's Partner and Residential Status

Residential Status	Partner Status	Involvement	n
residential	w/ partner	2.8	114
residential	no partner	2.6	11
nonresidential	w/ partner	2.15	18
nonresidential	no partner	1.99	7

categories of residential status ($p=.191$ (res), $p=.547$ (nonres)). However, the significant difference is apparent between those fathers who do and do not live with their children within the categories of couple status ($p=.023$ (w/partner), $p=.027$ (w/o partner)). This analysis allows us to conclude that, while both residential status and couple status predict father involvement on their own, it is the father's residential status which holds the predictive power when they are examined together. Therefore, only the father's residential status will be retained in the model, without regard to the father's marital status.

Role Salience and its Interaction with Child's Age

As shown in Table 6, role salience has a main effect such that, when other variables in the model are held at their mean values, an increase in role salience of one unit predicts an increase in the father's involvement of .899 units. However, this figure is difficult to interpret in light of the extreme negative skew in the distribution of the salience variable. Figure 10 illustrates that the fathers' reports of the salience of the father role were skewed toward the higher end of the scale. Although the scale ranged from an average of 1.0 to 3.0, the range for these fathers on this scale was 1.9 to 3.0,

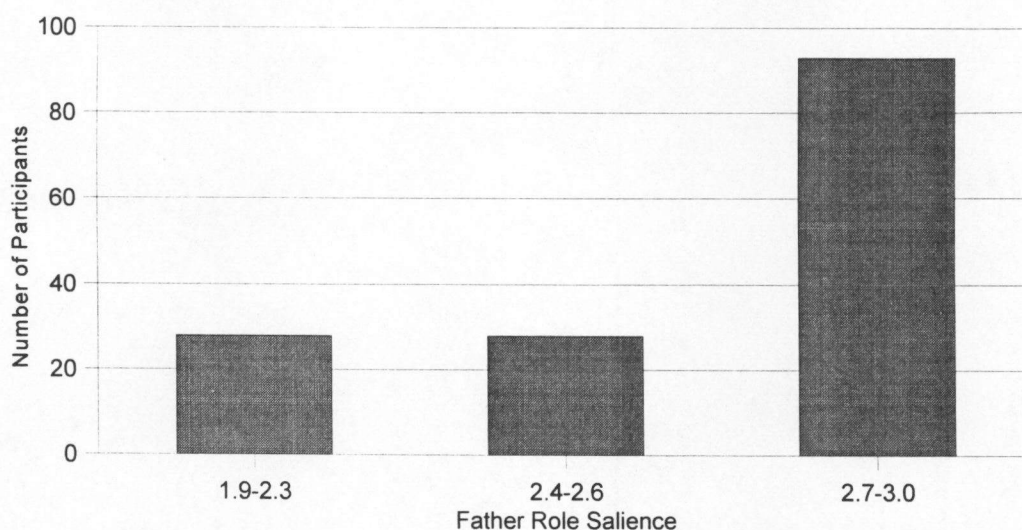


Figure 10. Distribution for Father Role Salience

suggesting that all of the fathers reported that, on the average, the father role is at least somewhat salient to their identities. The median for this scale is 2.8, indicating that more than 50% of the fathers fall above the mean (mean=2.69, standard deviation=.26). The distribution on this variable is such that 60% of the fathers score above the mean, 20% score one standard deviation below the mean, and the remaining 20% of the participants fall two or three standard deviations below the mean. This skew is likely to be attributed to the influence of social desirability, in that most study participants are motivated to present a positive image of themselves, and therefore measures of this type will tend to be skewed toward the higher end of the scale.

The difficulties with the skewed nature of the distribution are apparent when we

attempt to interpret this parameter's coefficient. The number of fathers who actually scored one unit or more below the highest score on this scale is small. However, there is still much to learn about the behavior of fathers who find the father role somewhat salient as opposed to highly salient (and along the continuum between these extremes) that is of value.

Figure 11 illustrates the average levels of involvement for fathers who scored above the mean for salience, one standard deviation below the mean, and two or three standard deviations below the mean. The positive influence of salience is apparent from this diagram.

The influence of role salience on the father's involvement is further explicated by observing the nature of this relationship at varying ages of the child. The child's age has a main effect on father involvement as well. On the average, men tend to be more involved with older children. However, this variable behaves in a negatively quadratic fashion so that father involvement increases until approximately age 9, and then decreases through adolescence (Figure 12).

The interaction term for the child's age and role salience indicates that the slope for salience against involvement changes in a negatively quadratic fashion (Figure 13). The quadratic nature of the interaction can be best understood by observing the changes in the main effects of salience on father involvement, in the absence of other terms, for each age group. There is no significant effect of salience on involvement for fathers of toddlers, although there does appear to be a positive trend developing. Salience affects father involvement in a positive manner for fathers of preschoolers ($B=1.047$). The effect

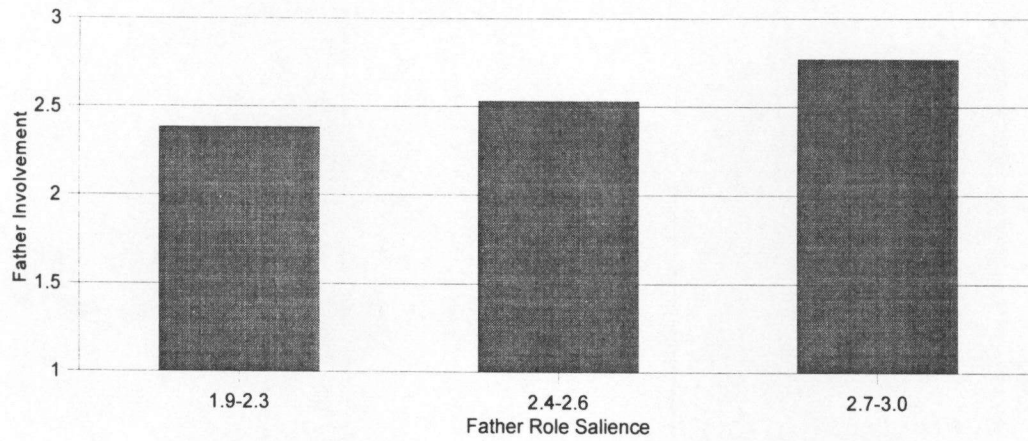


Figure 11. Mean Levels of Involvement by Father Role Salience

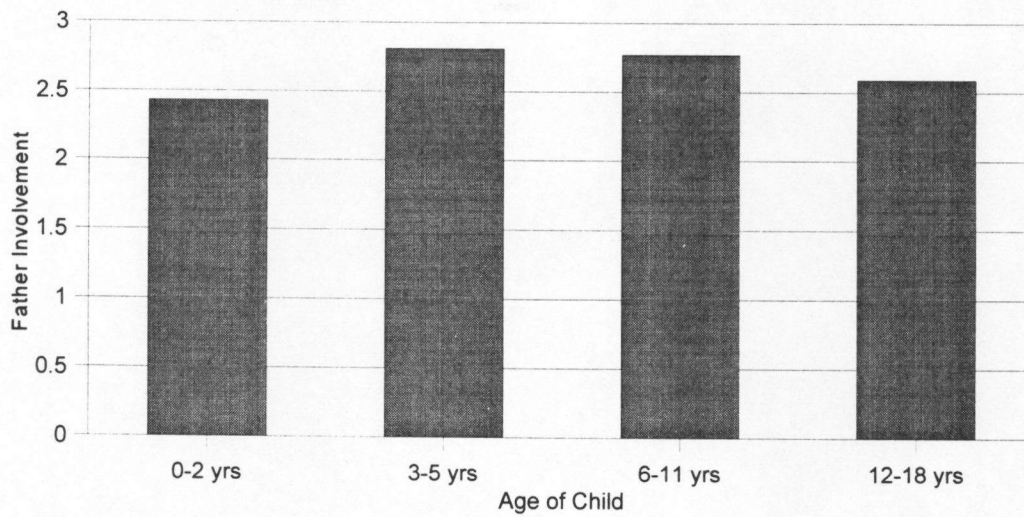


Figure 12. Mean Levels of Involvement by the Age of the Child

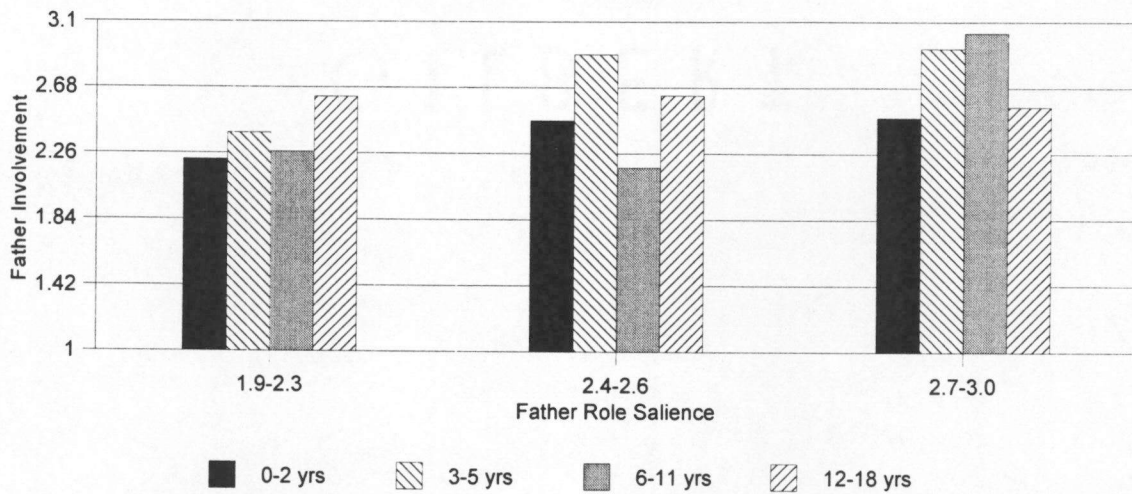


Figure 13. Interaction Between Role Salience and Child's Age Against Father Involvement

of salience on father involvement increases for fathers of school-aged children ($B=1.166$). Finally, the effect of salience on father involvement becomes insignificant once again for fathers of adolescents. The effect of salience on involvement changes across the age groups so that it begins at age 3, increases through 11 years old, and then again becomes insignificant. If one were to plot the predicted slopes of salience against involvement by the child's age, the plot would produce a concave curve.

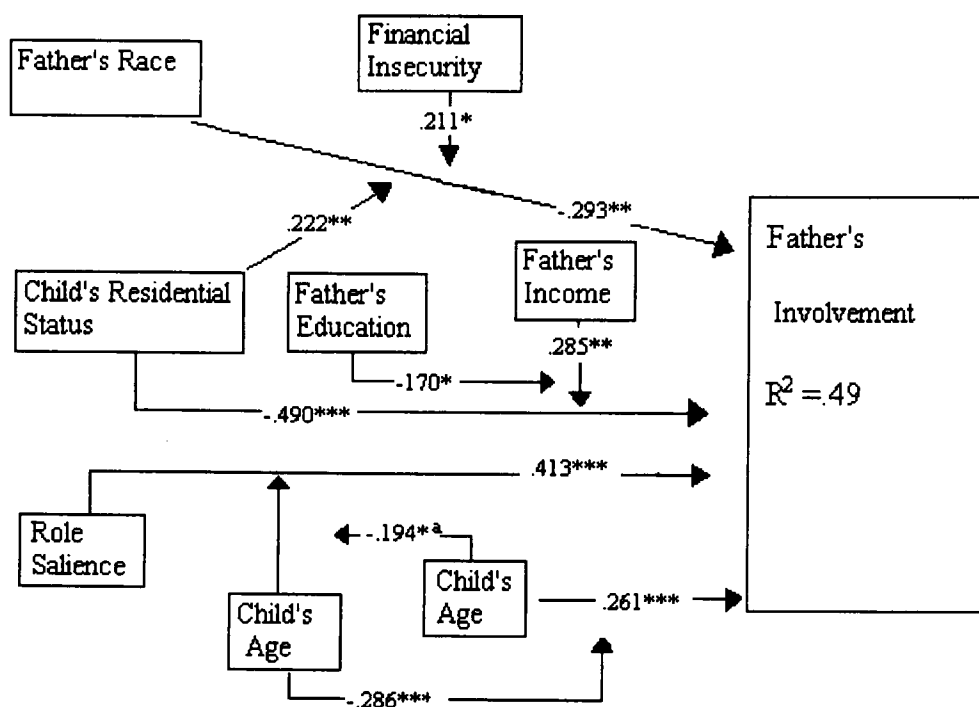
Nonpredictive Factors

It was expected, based on the literature review, that the father's employment status and the child's gender would predict father involvement. Neither of these factors proved to be predictive in this study. Fathers who were employed at least part-time had a mean

of 2.65 on the four-point scale for father involvement, while fathers who were not employed a mean of 2.71 for involvement. The difference between these scores is not statistically significant. Fathers of sons had a mean of 2.65 for involvement, while fathers of daughter had a mean of 2.66. The difference between these scores is also not significant.

Summary

Regarding the predictors of father involvement, role salience was found to be predictive, and was differentially so depending on the age of the child. Racial differences in father involvement were found to differ depending on the father's residential status and his perceptions regarding the security of his financial situation. Differences in involvement between residential and nonresidential fathers were found to vary depending on the father's income and level of education, as well as the father's race. The full model, incorporating the results shown earlier in Table 8, is illustrated below (Figure 14).



^a This element models the quadratic interaction effect

Figure 14. Fitted Regression Model for Predictors of Father Involvement with Standardized Beta Coefficients

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the performance of role salience and sociodemographic factors in predicting father involvement employing a study sample in which lower-income and African-American fathers are well-represented. The goals for increasing the representation of these often underrepresented populations of fathers were successful, although we still fell short in accessing large enough numbers of these men to make the sample truly representative of the study population.

I had anticipated that father role salience might explain some of the differences that were found in father involvement by the socioeconomic factors. This did not turn out to be the case. Salience did not act as a mediator for the socioeconomic indicators, as it did not affect the proportion of variance explained by the father's race, the child's residence, nor any of the interaction terms which involved these predictors. Additionally, it did not moderate any of the relationships between these factors and father involvement. We must conclude, therefore, that the influence of socioeconomic factors on father involvement which were identified in this study, are not explained in any way by the degree to which these fathers find the father role to be salient in their identity hierarchies.

There are three major findings from this study which merit further discussion. Each leads to conclusions which can inform our approaches to research, clinical work, and educational programs seeking to understand and to encourage greater involvement of fathers in the lives of their children.

Racial Differences in Father Involvement

The first major finding is that the patterns of father involvement in the African-American population cannot be understood without examining them in their socioeconomic context. Father involvement is not a function of race alone. Although black fathers are less involved, on the average, than white fathers, this difference varies depending on the degree to which the black fathers perceive their financial situations to be insecure. Black fathers who report that their financial situation is at least somewhat insecure (which is the majority of black fathers in this sample) are no less involved than white fathers at the same levels of financial insecurity. This finding provides important new information, given that the literature review revealed no other studies of father involvement among African-American fathers which directly examined the influence of socioeconomic factors. In addition, this result suggests that conclusions based on the differences between racial groups (black and white fathers) may be less important than conclusions drawn from the variance within the groups (variation as a function of financial insecurity).

Allen's (1981) and Hossain and Roopnarine's (1993) studies of middle-income, African-American fathers suggest that the patterns of absent or peripheral father involvement which were considered earlier to be typical in African-American families (Frazier, 1949; U.S. Department of Labor, 1965) are apparent only among low-income black fathers. The current study contradicts these findings by showing that it is the black fathers who perceive their financial situation as being very secure who are least involved with their children. This phenomenon is understandable if we consider that black men

who report their financial situation as being insecure are likely to be receiving some messages as to having failed to provide adequately for their family, either from society as a whole, from their child's mother, from extended family or peers, or from themselves. It could be that these men feel greater pressure to contribute to the family in other concrete ways, as they cannot fall back on their success as providers as evidence of their contribution as fathers. On the other hand, black fathers who feel very assured regarding the security of their financial circumstances may be less involved if they feel that they have done an adequate job as the "good provider." While authors such as Jones (1985) and Liebow (1968) discuss the patterns of family desertion among men who fail to adequately provide for their families, this study demonstrates that there may be a significant portion of these men who respond by becoming more involved in family care.

This study yielded another interesting finding regarding the involvement of black fathers; however, it is one less easily explained. This analysis revealed that there is no difference in father involvement between residential and nonresidential fathers for African-American men, and that black residential fathers are significantly less involved with their children than white residential fathers. The identification of factors which explain this difference is impeded by the fact that we have so few black residential fathers in this sample ($n=13$). While we do not have adequate power for detecting possible interaction terms, a t-test suggests again that the difference between white residential fathers and black residential fathers is not significant for fathers who report their financial situation as being at least somewhat financially insecure. More importantly, a comparison of black and white nonresidential fathers indicates that black nonresidential

fathers who consider their financial situations to be at least somewhat insecure are significantly more involved than their white counterparts. These observations reinforce the conclusion that racial differences cannot be adequately understood without examining them in their socioeconomic context, and in both cases it is the subjective perception of one's financial status which is most influential.

The findings regarding the influence of racial differences in father involvement can inform our research first by demonstrating that race must be examined in its socioeconomic context, and that this context should include subjective measures as well as objective measures of economic wellbeing. These findings also present a challenge for future researchers to explore the mechanisms which may explain these differences. The father's personal sense of having succeeded or failed as the family provider and the salience of this aspect of the father role for him, as well as the messages he receives in this regard from others may provide one possible explanation for the racial and socioeconomic differences in father involvement.

Mental health practitioners and social service workers who work with families should recognize that, despite common perceptions that black fathers are peripheral or absent in the lives of their children, a significant number of black fathers maintain as much involvement with their children as white fathers, and that these fathers are distinguished by their perceptions regarding the security of their financial situations. In fact, black nonresidential fathers who are financially insecure maintain greater involvement with their children than their white counterparts, suggesting a degree of adaptation that the white fathers have yet to obtain. White nonresidential fathers who are

financially insecure can be encouraged to seek concrete ways to contribute to their children's lives, even when their ability to make a substantial financial contribution is limited.

Educators should be challenged by this study to recognize that the African-American family often exhibits many strengths and adaptative abilities which get lost in the complexity of socioeconomic factors which impact on family functioning in this population. It is tempting to expose our students only to the picture which is depicted by aggregate statistics, but we are doing a disservice to those we are teaching, and those we are teaching about, when we do not make the extra effort to pull out the details that are often lost in the aggregate, and present the more complex, but more accurate picture of family functioning in the many subcultures which exist in this nation.

The Influence of Socioeconomic Factors on Nonresidential Father Involvement

A second major finding of this study is that the differences in involvement between residential and nonresidential fathers are greater when there is a disparity between the father's level of education and his level of income. As would be expected, residential fathers are more involved than nonresidential fathers, but education and income influence father involvement among nonresidential fathers such that their level of involvement is significantly greater under two separate conditions: (1) high income and high education; (2) low income and low education.

The fact that nonresidential fathers who have a disparity between their levels of education and levels of income are less involved than those nonresidential fathers with commensurate levels of education and income is not easily explained. The literature on

the involvement of nonresidential fathers focuses primarily on the influence of specific interpersonal factors associated with the father's relationship with his ex-spouse and his child postdivorce, as well as his feelings and attitudes toward the resolution of the divorce proceedings. Arendell (1995) found that, while all nonresidential fathers face a variety of obstacles in attempting to maintain an active presence in their children's lives, some fathers seem to negotiate these demands and adapt more readily than others. One possible implication of the findings of this study regarding the influence of socioeconomic parameters on the involvement of nonresidential fathers is that the nonresidential father's socioeconomic status may have some impact on his ability to successfully manage these socioemotional factors and maintain higher levels of involvement with his child.

It is conceivable that fathers without college credentials who earn higher incomes may experience greater job demands than those whose incomes are commensurate with their educational levels. Perhaps when very high professional demands are combined with the special challenges of maintaining an active presence in the life of a nonresidential child, the father's role in his child's life suffers. This explanation would be compatible with the findings of O'Neil and Greenberger (1994) who found that fathers with low commitment to their parent role and high commitment to their professional role experienced a greater degree of role strain. The direction of causality between these three factors is not clear, and it is possible that when there is a great deal of role strain, it is the parental role that suffers.

An explanation for the lower involvement of nonresidential fathers with college

credentials but lower incomes would involve a different dynamic, and a reasonable explanation would depend, to some extent, on how the individual came to be earning less money than would be expected given his level of education. There may be some cases in which the individual has chosen a vocation which earns lower income, despite having the educational credentials which would provide options which would produce greater income; perhaps because the lower-paying job provides intrinsic or intangible rewards which are more important than the foregone earnings. There will also be cases in which the individual cannot compete for the higher-paying jobs, despite having college credentials. His disadvantage may be due to a variety of shortcomings on the part of the individual, or it could be due to being denied opportunities through discrimination. In either case, we might speculate that such men may carry a sense of injustice, a sense of being cheated out of what they have earned through forces beyond their control.

Arendell's (1995) study of divorced fathers indicated that divorced fathers who maintain minimal or no involvement with their children responded to their new situations in a manner which was heavily influenced by notions held about masculinity which emphasized material and economic success. She argues that "What is clear is that men's role as family providers persists, with masculine identity being inextricably linked to success as an income earner" (p. 26). Arendell also observed that these men were characterized by a preoccupation with a sense of having been victimized and having had their rights violated through the divorce. She explains that, "the story shared by a large majority of these divorced fathers was one of perceived injustice and discrimination, resistance, and frustration and discontent...The majority story was one of men

preoccupied with identity maintenance and repair and self-assertion" (p. 16). While this study does not allow us to draw conclusions regarding the motivations and psychological dynamics influencing the lesser involvement of these nonresidential fathers, it can be noted that there is a logical connection which would suggest that those individuals who feel cheated professionally and economically might also be those who are more likely to feel cheated through a divorce and, consequently, find it more difficult to maintain an active presence in their child's life postdivorce.

These conclusions can inform our research on the involvement of nonresidential fathers by suggesting that the choices that these men make regarding family roles should be examined in the context of their professional and economic circumstances.

Specifically, we need to look more at their experiences in balancing work and family demands and their feelings regarding whether they are "making it" professionally and economically as they impact on their involvement with their children. Are their professional and economic circumstances what they feel that they should be? How do their professional and economic circumstances influence their masculine identities directly, and how might these experiences indirectly influence their performance of the father role postdivorce?

Mental health and social workers who are working with fathers in postdivorce adjustment are encouraged to juxtapose their clients' professional roles with their family roles, and explore how perceived success or failure professionally and economically may influence the clients' interpretations and emotional responses to the divorce and subsequent adjustment in their family roles. These professionals can facilitate positive

adjustment in their clients by exploring with them the essence of masculine identity, and helping them to expand their notions of the male role so that their sense of masculinity is enhanced through greater involvement and closer relations with their children.

The Influence of Role Salience on Father Involvement

The third major finding of this study is that the degree to which the father role is salient to the father's sense of identity influences involvement for fathers of preschool and school-aged children. This finding corroborates the findings of Ihinger-Tallman, Pasley, and Buehler (1993) and Minton and Pasley (1996) regarding the positive influence of role salience on father involvement, and expands on these findings by suggesting that this relationship is moderated by the age of the child. It may be that fathers who strongly prefer to be involved with their children find that they can act on this most fully when the child is between the ages of 2 and 12, when the opportunities for involvement are least constrained by factors related to the child's age. A possible explanation for the lack of a salience effect on involvement for fathers of infants, toddlers, and teens is that fathers may have less choice regarding their roles in their children's lives during these periods of the child's development. A father of a very young child may find the father role highly salient, but be restricted in his involvement with the child due to difficulty in relating to a child who is nonverbal and less physically active (and less mobile) than older children. A father of an adolescent may find the father role highly salient, but finds it difficult to be highly involved in his child's life because adolescents typically choose greater involvement and identification with peers than with family.

This finding makes an interesting contribution to the fathering literature, as well as the theoretical work in social psychology, by suggesting that although a role may be highly salient, which in turn suggests that the father would seek out opportunities for enacting his role, the opportunities for role enactment may be limited by other factors. This is a beautiful illustration of the assertion, brought out by Gerson (1983) and Stryker (1992), that the most useful theoretical perspectives should tap into both the personal-psychological and social-environmental influences which shape an individual's behavior, and that these factors should be explored in each other's context.

This study informs the work of family researchers on two counts. The first draws upon the finding regarding the importance of examining social and psychological influences together, and encourages researchers who are interested in identifying the forces which shape the enactment of family roles to employ social psychological perspectives in doing so. Secondly, Stryker (1992) discusses the decline of interest in social psychological perspectives in social science research and suggests that one reason for this may be the difficulty associated with operationalizing some of its constructs. This study makes a strong contribution to the literature in testing a scale for measuring role salience which has had good success in predicting role enactment, as well as demonstrating good validity and good reliability. In addition, the appearance of the two salience subscales in the factor analysis suggests that there is more work to be done in fully operationalizing the theoretical dimensions which compose this construct. Other scholars are encouraged to continue to experiment with more ways to operationalize this variable and to explore its predictive ability for a variety of family roles.

Clinicians are encouraged to explore the meaning of family roles to their clients, and to place this information in an environmental context which reveals other factors which may further encourage or inhibit positive enactment of the role. Educators are especially encouraged to pass on to their students an appreciation for the potential that this theoretical perspective has for producing testable constructs with good potential for predicting behavior, and thereby increasing our understanding of the social and psychological mechanisms which produce or inhibit the behavior.

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APPENDIX

Identity Salience and Socioeconomic 108

REP:

Attempt ____ Attempt ____ Attempt ____ Attempt ____ Final

Date Time Disp Date Time Disp Date Time Disp Date Time Disp Disp

[illegible]

Demographic Indicators for Census Tracts in Knox County

TRACT	HSGRAD	UNEMP	HHINC	POVSTAT	OCCHUNIT	RENTUNIT	MEDRENT	RENTPER
1	64.8	19.5	6536	39	722	692	216	51.2
2	53.4	8	13750	43	563	484	263	85.96
3	51.7	9.1	11217	32.4	1040	734	248	70.57
4	55.5	14.4	10000	31.6	361	55	237	15.23
5	51.7	11.9	11573	39.3	1219	817	247	67.02
6	48.6	21.2	6035	51.5	1494	1073	148	71.82
7	60.2	19.7	5933	58.6	1033	1033	195	100
8	56.7	7.7	14562	32.5	943	583	316	61.82
9	100	9.5	7565	66.6	312	299	308	95.83
10	75.7	4.3	12331	53.9	746	657	291	88.06
11	95.8	6.6	8712	49.1	1895	1820	277	96.04
12	57.9	21.3	6043	59.2	687	519	128	75.54
13	47.7	15.1	12289	6.4	624	288	312	46.15
14	38.2	22.3	7936	56.5	1333	890	196	66.76

Identity Salience and Socioeconomic

Tally of Demographic Indicators for Selection of Low-Income Census Tracts

GRAD1SD	GRAD2SD	UNEMP1SD	UNEMP2SD	INC1SD	POV1SD	POV2SD	RENTP1SD	REntp2D	RENTM1SD	RENTM2SD	SELSUM	TRACT
1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	9	6
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	9	14
0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8	7
0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	8	12
0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	7	1
1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	6	5
0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	5	9
0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	5	10
1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	3
1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	4	11
1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	2
1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	13
1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	29

Bivariate Correlation Table

Pearson Correlations

	Income	education	employment status	race	financial insecurity	role salience	involvement
Income	1.000	-.325**	-.275**	-.168*	-.404**	-.019	.091
education	-.325**	1.000	.212**	-.034	.206*	-.061	-.056
employment status	-.275**	.212**	1.000	.092	.280**	-.088	.038
race	-.168*	-.034	.092	1.000	.233**	.000	-.286**
financial insecurity	-.404**	.206*	.280**	.233**	1.000	-.087	-.126
role salience	-.019	-.061	-.088	.000	-.087	1.000	.279**
involvement	.091	-.056	.038	-.286**	-.126	.279**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

VITA

Carol Bruce entered the graduate program in the Department of Child and Family Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in August, 1995. She completed her Bachelor of Science degree in Family and Community Development, with a specialization in Marriage and Family Counseling, at the University of Maryland, College Park, in May, 1987. In addition to her Bachelor's degree, Ms. Bruce holds an Associate of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland.

Ms. Bruce worked as the Assistant Director of the campus child care center at Montgomery College while she completed her Bachelor's degree at the University of Maryland. She relocated to Tucson, Arizona after completing her undergraduate work, and worked as a director for a large child care center. In 1989, Ms. Bruce shifted her professional focus to the field of counseling, and began working as a Residential Advisor at the Tucson Job Corps. She spent several more years in two additional counseling positions; first as a Program Manager for a residential treatment facility for adolescent girls in northern Arizona, and subsequently as the Lead Counselor in a shelter for runaway youth.

While completing her Master's degree at the University of Tennessee, Ms. Bruce has worked with Dr. Greer Litton Fox on several research projects which focus on the experiences of fathers in low-income populations. She will be continuing her education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in pursuing her doctorate degree in Human Ecology with a concentration in Family Studies.