

LINKING AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHERS' RELIGIOSITY, INTIMATE PARTNER
RELATIONSHIP QUALITY, AND PARENTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT AND PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

by

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(Under the Direction of Gene H. Brody)

ABSTRACT

The present study examines links between African American fathers' parenting practices and the development of children's problem behavior and school engagement. Specifically, the hypothesized relationships included (1) that African American fathers' competence promoting parenting would be associated overtime with a decrease in children's problem behavior, (2) that African American fathers' competence promoting parenting would contribute to an increase in children's school engagement across time, (3) that African American fathers' contribution to their children's problem behavior would be mediated through children's school engagement, (4) that fathers' religiosity would be associated with African American fathers' intimate partner relationships, and (5) that African American fathers' competence promoting parenting would be influenced by the quality of their intimate partner relationships. The subsample for the present study, N= 255, was selected from a larger study of 867 families participating in Wave 1 and Wave 2 of the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS). Using structural equation modeling (SEM), the results were consistent with the proposed hypotheses. African American fathers' religiosity influenced African American fathers' intimate relationship quality. In turn,

African American fathers' parenting was indirectly influenced by their sense of religiosity through the quality of these relationships. Additionally, fathers' parenting yielded protective benefits to children's problem behaviors and their school engagement.

INDEX WORDS: African American Fathers, African American Children, Religiosity, Intimate Partner Relationship Quality, Parenting, School Engagement, Problem Behavior

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DEDICATION

To those who believed in me most.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to test a conceptual model of the links that African American fathers' religiosity, intimate partner relationship quality, and fathers' parenting demonstrate over time with children's problem behavior and school engagement. This chapter comprises a summary of the literature on fathers' parenting and involvement, with a specific focus on African American fathers. The chapter presents overviews of: (a) studies conducted with European American fathers, multiethnic samples, and nationally representative data bases; (b) studies conducted with African American fathers; and (c) the present study. The first two sections include a history of the research as it pertains to each set of studies, an overview of the contributions that fathers make to their children outcomes, and a review of the contextual factors that are linked to fathers' involvement and parenting practices. Both sections conclude with a summary of the current state of the literature. The overview of the present study includes a description of the conceptual model that was tested and the basis for each hypothesis proposed.

Since the mid-1970s, empirical studies of fathers and their influence on children's outcomes has increased considerably. This increase is linked to interest among social scientists and policy makers in the ways in which changes in American society and the families embedded within it influence parents' roles and children's development and well-being (Brown & Bumpus, 1998; Flouri, 2005; Hanson & Bozett, 1987; Marsiglio, 1995). Some of the changes include shifts in gender roles; an increase in women's participation in the work force; declines in men's wages; increases in divorce rates, single-parenthood, remarriage, and same-sex parenthood; childrearing by members of extended kinship networks; and an increase in fathers' involvement in daily child care responsibilities (Day & Lamb, 2004; Marsiglio, 1995; Teachman, Tedrow, &

Crowder, 2000). These changes influence both family life and the ways in which fathers' roles are conceptualized and examined in the social science literature.

Historical Overview of the Research on Fathers

Historical and empirical studies have documented changes in fathers' roles over time (Hewlett, 2000; Lamb, 1998, 2000; Mintz, 1998), which have shaped the way in which researchers examine fathering. During most of the 20th century, the role of the European American father was conceptualized as that of the sole financial provider for the family (Lamb, 2000) who was employed outside of the home while the mother worked as a homemaker, caring for the children (Lamb, 2000; Mintz, 1998). The relative amounts of time that fathers and mothers spent with their children each day led social scientists to assume that fathers had little interaction with their children and made only a small contribution to children's development (Lamb & Lamb, 1976). Accordingly, family researchers generally paid little attention to fathers' roles in child development; when paternal influence was examined, researchers focused on children's sex role development and the negative impact of father absence (Anonymous, 1970; Biller, 1969; Carlsmith, 1964; Forrest, 1967; Goodenough, 1957; Kestenbaum & Stone, 1976; Lamb, 2000; J. B. M. Miller, 1971; Mussen, Burnstein, Liberty, & Altucher, 1959; Mussen & Rutherford, 1963; D. Pedersen, 1966; Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957; Ullman, 1960; Walters & Stinnett, 1971). Studies that examined children's sex role development indicated that fathers were highly concerned with their children's development of distinct sex roles, encouraging their sons to be masculine and their daughters to be feminine (Goodenough, 1957; Mussen et al., 1959; Mussen & Rutherford, 1963). Some of these early studies reported that the relationship between fathers' nurturance and sex role development was stronger for sons than for daughters and that men whose childhood relationships with their fathers had been unsatisfactory had a

heightened likelihood of engaging in deviant sexual behavior or being homosexually oriented as adults (Anonymous, 1970; Mussen & Rutherford, 1963; Ullman, 1960). Father absence was found to be associated negatively with psychological well-being (Kestenbaum & Stone, 1976; J. B. M. Miller, 1971; D. Pedersen, 1966) and scholastic aptitude (Carlsmith, 1964) and positively with antisocial behavior (Siegman, 1966); sons of absent fathers displayed fewer culturally defined masculine behaviors than did boys whose fathers lived with them (Biller, 1968).

In the mid 1970s, the conceptualization of European American fatherhood changed. The role expanded to include nurturance, involvement, caretaking, and family work (Lamb, 2000; Lewis, 1985/86). These changes led social scientists to examine fathers' involvement and interactions with their children (Bridges, Connell, & Belsky, 1988; Lamb & Goldenberg, 1982). Studies that explored fathers' roles in the home found that fathers in dual-earner families spent greater amounts of time on family work activities than did fathers whose wives were full-time homemakers (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Lamb, Frodi, Hwang, & Frodi, 1983; Zaslow, Pedersen, Suwalsky, Rabinovich, & Cain, 1986). Studies that specifically addressed fathers' child care behaviors showed paternal involvement to be linked positively to children's psychosocial (Lamb, 1982) and attachment development (Bridges et al., 1988; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984), competence (Roberts, 1987), self-esteem, (LeCroy, 1988), and problem-solving capabilities (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984), and negatively to problem behavior (LeCroy, 1988).

These studies documented the contributions that fathers made to children's well-being and development, leading to further development in research on fatherhood. Investigators expanded their focus beyond married residential fathers to include noncustodial divorced fathers (King, Harris, & Heard, 2004; Lin & McLanahan, 2001; Madden-Derdich & Leonard, 2000; Rettig, Leichtentritt, & Stanton, 1999), custodial single fathers (Cohen, 1995; G. Greif & Greif,

2004; Heath & Orthner, 1999; Zhan & Pandey, 2004), and gay fathers (M. Allen & Burrell, 1996; Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Patterson, 2000; Peterson, Butts, & Deville, 2000). Researchers also began to examine variation in fathers' involvement and interactions with their children. Thus, by the end of the 20th century, scholarly investigations of the father's role in children's lives had developed from acknowledgement of the breadwinner and male role model functions to the full exploration of fathers' multifaceted influence on children's total development.

Fathers' Contribution to Children's Well-being and Development

The contributions that fathers within the general population make to children's well-being and development has been examined using two approaches. The first approach focuses on the relation between father absence and child outcomes, whereas the second approach deals with fathers' involvement and parenting practices. The following sections present overviews of empirical work based on each of these approaches.

Much of the literature on fathers' contributions to child development focuses on father absence. Research designs for these studies typically compare children living in two-parent nuclear families with children living in single-mother-headed households. The results indicate that children benefit from being reared and nurtured in two-parent households (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000; Downey, 1994; Farrell & White, 1998; Hoffmann, 2002; National Fatherhood Initiative, 2003; McLanahan & Booth, 1991; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Thomas, Farrell, & Barnes, 1996; Wu & Martinson, 1993). Studies with European American and ethnically diverse samples indicate that academic performance among children raised in homes that do not include fathers is poorer than that of children from two-parent families (Downey, 1994). Children and adolescents are also more likely to exhibit

behavior problems (Allhusen et al., 2004; Amato & Gilberth, 1999; Amato & Rivera, 1999; Culp, S., Robinson, & Culp, 2000), including delinquent activity (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1998; National Fatherhood Initiative, 2003; Thomas et al., 1996) and compliance with peer pressure to use drugs, when their biological fathers do not live with them (Farrell & White, 1998; Hoffmann, 2002; National Fatherhood Initiative, 2003).

In addition to the contemporaneous negative links between father absence and children's well-being, researchers have reported long-term negative associations (McLanahan & Booth, 1991; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Children raised in single-mother-headed families as a result of divorce are less likely to complete high school, enroll in college, or graduate from college, and are more likely to enter lower-status occupations and experience low levels of happiness in adulthood, than are those raised in homes with both biological parents present (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000). McLanahan and Bumpass (1988) found that girls who spent part of their childhoods in single-mother-headed families were more likely than those reared continually in two-parent families to give birth outside of marriage during adolescence and to experience marital disruptions during adulthood (Wu & Martinson, 1993).

Although these studies indicate that children benefit from being reared in homes in which both of their biological parents reside, they are limited by their use of "social address labels" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) as measures of children's relationships with their fathers. Typically, these studies compare the developmental outcomes of children who live in various family forms. Because they do not address the family processes that explain why family structure is associated with children's outcomes, these studies cannot explain the processes through which fathers contribute to their children's well-being and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Some empirical work indicates that children's well-being decreases in single-mother-headed homes not

only because of father absence in itself but also because of a lack of the economic, social, and cultural resources that the presence of an additional adult in the home can bring (Flouri, 2005).

The second approach that has been used to explore fathering involves examining the associations of fathers' involvement and parenting with child outcomes. Studies with predominantly European American samples show that fathers who are married to or cohabiting with their children's mothers are less involved than the mothers in daily household duties such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare tasks (Aldous, Mulligan, & Bjarnason, 1998; McBride & Rane, 1997). Rather, fathers' involvement with their children across various ages usually involves recreation, play, (Darling-Fisher & Tiedje, 1990; Marsiglio, 1991; Summers et al., 1999), or disciplinary action (Summers et al., 1999).

Examinations of fathers' involvement and parenting indicate that fathers contribute to several child outcomes. Married fathers and those in marriage-analogous relationships have been found to contribute to adolescents' psychological health, such that adolescents who have closer relationships with their fathers experience lower levels of psychological distress and depression (Harris et al., 1998). Findings with predominantly European American samples and nationally representative data sets indicate that, when partnered fathers are highly involved in parenting, children of all ages display few behavior problems (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Culp et al., 2000). When the parenting practices of fathers with preschool children include high levels of sensitivity and support for independence, the children's transitions into educational settings proceed smoothly and they display few behavior problems in school (Allhusen et al., 2004). Among samples of predominantly European American families with young adolescents, daughters who report receiving positive reinforcement from their fathers display little antisocial behavior (Kosterman, Haggerty, Spoth, & Redmond, 2004). Kosterman and associates (2004)

also found that close father-son relationships were associated with sons' development of norms that favor honesty and reject antisocial activity; these beliefs were reflected in the sons' behavior. When nonresidential fathers use authoritative parenting practices and provide child support, children display few internalizing or externalizing behavior problems (Amato & Gilberth, 1999). Both European American and African American adolescents are unlikely to engage in delinquent behaviors or to use substances when they have involved-supportive relationships with their fathers, whether or not the fathers live with their children (Brook et al., 2002; Harris et al., 1998; National Fatherhood Initiative, 2003; Thomas et al., 1996).

In samples of predominantly European American youths in middle childhood and adolescence reared in two-parent families, father-child relationship quality is linked to academic achievement and future occupational attainment (Coley, 1998; Harris et al., 1998; McGrath & Repetti, 2000). In addition, in predominantly European American samples, fathers' parenting and involvement are linked to children's future relationships; adults who experienced high levels of paternal involvement as children also report high levels of intimacy, commitment, and trust within their adult intimate relationships (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984; Van Schaick & Stolberg, 2001).

Contextual Factors and Fathers' Involvement and Parenting

The literature on fathering indicates that the contribution of fathers' involvement and parenting practices to children's development and well-being varies as a function of contextual features. These characteristics include demographics, residential status, psychological functioning, religiosity, antisocial behaviors, child characteristics, family and interparental relationships, employment, and community characteristics.

Demographics

Research with nationally representative data sets and predominantly European American samples shows that as fathers' involvement with their children decreases as paternal age increases (Bulanda, 2004; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005). This association could be linked to child age, which will be discussed in more detail under child characteristics. Among both residential and nonresidential fathers, education level (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Bulanda, 2004; King et al., 2004; Marsiglio, 1991; Roggman, Benson, & Boyce, 1999) and income (Bulanda, 2004; Johnson, 2001; King et al., 2004; Lerman & Sorensen, 2000; McBride et al., 2005; Seltzer, 1991) are positively associated with father-child involvement. The finding that better educated and financially stable fathers are more active in their children's lives may indicate that fathers with greater resources are able to provide more recreational activities for their children; also, fathers with higher-paying jobs may have flexible work schedules that allow them to spend more time with their children. For nonresidential fathers, a lack of financial resources may interfere with their ability to obtain legal representation to gain consistent visitation with their children; they also may be unable to pay consistent child support, which could induce mothers to limit the fathers' contact with their children (N. Cabrera & Peters, 2000; Greene & Moore, 2000).

Residential Status

Residential status also contributes to fathers' involvement and parenting (Henley & Pasley, 2005; Johnson, 2001; Seltzer, 1991), which vary with coresidential conditions and geographic distance between fathers and their children. Johnson (2001) found, with an ethnically diverse sample that included European Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans, that unmarried fathers who did not live with their young children were less involved in their

children's lives than were residential fathers. In this study, mothers also reported that nonresidential fathers had been less likely to provide support, financial and otherwise, during pregnancy. Studies of predominantly European American samples and nationally representative data sets also indicate that nonresidential fathers are more likely to be involved with their minor children when they live in closer geographic proximity to them (Henley & Pasley, 2005; Seltzer, 1991). Fathers who live at a distance from their children may be prevented by the lack of geographic proximity from being as involved with them as they would like to be; conversely, they may have started to build new intimate relationships and to create new family units. Nonresidential fathers' involvement may also be associated with the amount of encouragement they receive from their children's mothers to participate in the children's lives (Seltzer, 1991), coparental support and conflict (Henley & Pasley, 2005), and the presence and influence of stepfathers.

Psychological Functioning

Several aspects of fathers' psychological functioning have been linked to the quality of their involvement with their children. These include locus of control (Galejs & Pease, 1986), depression (Ge, Conger, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Roggman et al., 1999), and stressful life events (Ge et al., 1994). Partnered European American fathers who feel that they have control over their lives are more likely to teach their children about the importance of good health benefits, balanced meals, and responsibility within their parenting (Galejs & Pease, 1986); those who experience high levels of negative emotionality tend to use harsh, inconsistent parenting practices (Ge et al., 1994). Fathers' depression levels are also negatively associated with their involvement with their children (Roggman et al., 1999). Thus, when fathers feel that they have

control over their lives and are functioning well psychologically, they use more skillful childrearing practices.

Religiosity

Fathers' parenting practices and level of involvement also vary with their religiosity (King, Elder, & Whitbeck, 1997; Roggman et al., 1999). Among partnered European American fathers, those who are religious report greater involvement and stronger relationships with their young children (Roggman et al., 1999). These fathers also believe that men should share housework and childcare tasks with their partners (King et al., 1997). Roggman and associates (1999) suggested that religiosity may be linked positively with fathers' parenting practices because it buffers fathers from negative experiences that could detract from their parenting abilities or because the religious group has specific teachings about fathers' roles that may influence their parenting. Johnson (2001), however, reported that, in a racially diverse sample of unmarried fathers, those who attended religious services less frequently were more supportive of their children's mothers, especially during pregnancy. This finding contradicts those of other studies in which religiosity was found to be positively associated with fathers' supportiveness. This contradictory finding may be related to Johnson's use of less advanced statistical methods compared with the other studies.

Child Characteristics

Child age, gender, and behavior have all been found to be associated with fathers' parenting practices and involvement levels (Aldous et al., 1998; Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Bulanda, 2004; DeLuccie, 1996; Deluccie & Davis, 1991; Harris et al., 1998; Henley & Pasley, 2005; King et al., 2004; Marsiglio, 1991; McBride, Schoppe, & Rane, 2002; Ogletree, Jones, & Coyl, 2002; Seltzer, 1991). Studies of nationally representative data sets and predominantly

European American samples indicate that, for both residential and nonresidential fathers, involvement with their children decreases as the children grow; because of this dynamic, fathers are more likely to be involved with younger children than with older children (Aldous et al., 1998; Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Bulanda, 2004; DeLuccie, 1996; Henley & Pasley, 2005; King et al., 2004; Marsiglio, 1991). This decrease in paternal involvement may be an artifact of the children's developmental stage, given that younger children require more care and attention from their parents than do older children (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; DeLuccie & Davis, 1991). The birth of siblings may also reduce the amount of involvement that parents are able to give to individual children as time passes (Aldous et al., 1998).

Child gender is also linked to both residential and nonresidential fathers' involvement and parenting practices (Aldous et al., 1998; Bulanda, 2004; DeLuccie, 1996; Harris et al., 1998; Harris & Morgan, 1991; King et al., 2004; McBride et al., 2005; Seltzer, 1991). Fathers are both emotionally and behaviorally more involved with their children when they have only sons (Aldous et al., 1998; Bulanda, 2004; DeLuccie, 1996; Harris et al., 1998; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Marsiglio, 1991) or have both sons and daughters than when they have only daughters (Harris & Morgan, 1991; Seltzer, 1991). Fathers' gender socialization of their sons is likely to account for this difference (Morgan, Lye, & Condran, 1988).

Children's behavior (DeLuccie, 1996) and temperament (McBride et al., 2002) have been linked to partnered fathers' involvement with their children in predominantly European American samples (DeLuccie, 1996). For children of various ages, fathers are more likely to share childcare tasks with their partners when the children display relatively high rates of behavior problems; this may be due to a need to share the demanding task of rearing these children (DeLuccie, 1996). Sociable temperament is positively associated with paternal

involvement, whereas emotionally intense temperament is positively associated with paternal parenting stress, among fathers of preschool children (McBride et al., 2002).

Family Relationships

Men learn about fatherhood and the roles that fathers assume in their children's lives through interactions with family members. Gage and Christensen (1991) found that partnered European American men derived knowledge about fatherhood from their interactions with relatives, neighbors, and friends in preparation for the transition to parenthood. Previous interactions within their families of origin and extended kin networks are associated with the nature of fathers' interactions with their children (Gage & Christensen, 1991; Shears, Robinson, & Emde, 2002). In an ethnically diverse sample that included Latino, African American, European American, Native American, and biracial biological fathers and other men who assumed a fathering role, the men's views of themselves as fathers and their perceptions of their attachment with their children was associated with the quality of the relationships they experienced with their own fathers during childhood (Shears et al., 2002). These findings suggest that modeling the behavior of the men with whom they associate throughout their own developmental histories is an important mechanism through which men learn how to be fathers.

Interparental Relationships

Several aspects of fathers' relationships with their children's mothers influence paternal parenting and involvement within the general population (Bradley & Corwyn, 2000; DeLuccie, 1996; Feldman, Nash, & Aschenbrenner, 1983; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Henley & Pasley, 2005). In predominantly European American samples and nationally representative data sets, coparenting conflict (Henley & Pasley, 2005), marital conflict (Harris et al., 1998), and poor marital quality (Bradley & Corwyn, 2000; Harris et al., 1998; Henley & Pasley, 2005) are

negatively associated with fathers' involvement and investment in their relationships with their children. Among European Americans, both husbands' and wives' marital happiness predicts fathers' involvement and satisfaction with the paternal role (DeLuccie, 1996; Feldman et al., 1983). DeLuccie (1996) reported that emotional interactions between fathers and mothers predict the extent to which fathers participate in child care tasks; fathers who perceived their partners as warm shared more child-care responsibilities than did fathers who felt that their wives were cold, aloof, or detached.

Employment

Among predominantly European American samples and in nationally representative data sets, partnered fathers' employment and home settings have been found to be interrelated (Aldous et al., 1998; Averett, Gennetian, & Peters, 2000; Beitel & Parke, 1998; Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999; Bulanda, 2004; McDonald & Almeida, 2004; Roggman et al., 1999). Work schedules (Aldous et al., 1998; Beitel & Parke, 1998; Bonney et al., 1999; Bulanda, 2004; Marsiglio, 1991; McDonald & Almeida, 2004; Roggman et al., 1999), experiences in the workplace, and the need to balance work and family responsibilities (Bradley & Corwyn, 2000; Corwyn & Bradley, 1999) are linked to fathers' parenting and involvement. Fathers who work fewer hours are more likely to engage in leisure activities and read to their children (Aldous et al., 1998; Beitel & Parke, 1998; Bonney et al., 1999; Bulanda, 2004; Marsiglio, 1991; McDonald & Almeida, 2004; Roggman et al., 1999). McDonald and Almeida (2004) found that, although paternal involvement was linked to fathers' work schedules, an increase in work hours did not always influence the ability of fathers to provide emotional support to their children. In the workplace, Bradley and Corwyn (2000) reported that high levels of work strain were negatively associated with fathers' socioemotional investment in their infants' lives and that fathers who

experienced conflicts between work and family responsibilities were less accepting of the parenting role.

Community Characteristics

Community violence and disadvantage, as well as other aspects of neighborhood quality, are associated with partnered fathers' parenting and involvement among European Americans and members of other racial and ethnic groups (McBride et al., 2005; Summers et al., 1999). Among a sample of European American and African American fathers and father figures, McBride and associates (2005) found that neighborhood quality (i.e. suitability to raise children, amount of home ownership) and neighborhood cohesiveness are associated with father-child communication and fathers' participation in their children's school activities. Specifically, fathers living in communities in which neighbors had close relationships with one another were more involved in their children's educational activities; in neighborhoods in which a greater proportion of residents owned their homes, fathers talked more frequently with officials at their children's schools.

Summary of the Current State of the Fathering Literature

In general, the social science literature on fatherhood has grown during the last half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. Studies have documented the association of child outcomes with fathers' absence from or presence in the home and have specified the ways in which fathers' parenting and involvement vary with contextual factors such as paternal and child characteristics, the quality of a variety of family relationships, and fathers' experiences at work and in their communities. Nevertheless, several areas require additional exploration. Research must progress beyond comparisons of social address labels to examine further the association of fathers' parenting practices with variations in child outcomes. Prospective studies

that examine this link are particularly needed. More studies of fathers from ethnic and racial minority groups within the United States are also needed; far fewer studies have examined parenting among African American fathers than among those of European American ethnicity.

Historical Overview of the Research on African American Fathers

The empirical work on African American fathers has grown over time but is relatively limited compared with the large literature focused on European American fathers. African American fathers have not received as much attention because of the historical use of European American culture as a standard. Compared with that standard, other groups' experiences were considered either irrelevant or inferior. Thus was formed the long-standing "deficit model," from which stereotypes arose that did not take into account the vast differences in European American and African American fathers' social experiences. The enslavement and subsequent discrimination that inevitably contribute to the African American experience restricted African American fathers' ability to hold the provider role ascribed to European American fathers (Bruner, Bernhard, & Kutler, 1996; Dickerson, 1995; Dill, 1997; Hyde & Texidor, 1988; H. P. McAdoo, 1998; Staples, 1971). Nevertheless, African American fathers were criticized as absent, uninvolved evaders of their parental responsibilities (Gadsden & Smith, 1994; H. P. McAdoo & McAdoo, 2002; I. E. Robinson, Bailey, & Smith, 1985). These negative stereotypes led early researchers largely to disregard the roles that African American fathers assumed in their families. Any studies that did address African American fatherhood were grounded in those stereotypes (Cazenave, 1979; Cochran, 1997; H. P. McAdoo & McAdoo, 2002; J. L. McAdoo, 1993, 1997); father absence and its negative impact on children's well-being was a major research topic (Alston & Williams, 1982; Carter & Walsh, 1980; Donini, 1967; F. A. Pedersen, Rubenstein, & Yarrow, 1979; Sciara, 1975). Some early studies examined the provider role

among middle-class African American fathers, who perceived themselves as providers for their families (Cazenave, 1979; R. J. Taylor, Leashore, & Toliver, 1988). Few early studies, however, examined African American fathers' childrearing roles. The research that was conducted indicated that African American fathers were highly involved in childrearing responsibilities, including their children's racial socialization, in ways that enhanced their children's positive adjustment (W. R. Allen, 1981; J. L. McAdoo, 1981; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990).

Most research on African American fathers has been conducted since the early 1990s. At this point, social scientists began to take into consideration diversity among African American fathers. Samples included African American fathers of various income levels (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999; Bluestone & Tamis-LeMonda, 1999; Smetana, Abernethy, & Harris, 2000; Smetana, Metzger, & Campione-Barr, 2004) living in a variety of community contexts (Black et al., 1999; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Hoard & Anderson, 2004), both residential and nonresidential fathers (Anderson, Kohler, & Letiecq, 2005; Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1996; Brody, Stoneman, Flor, & McCrary, 1994; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Hamer, 1998; Thomas et al., 1996), single custodial fathers (Coles, 2002, 2003; Hamer & Marchioro, 2002), and incarcerated fathers (R. R. Miller, Browning, & Spruance, 2001; Tripp, 2001). Researchers moved beyond examining father absence to focus on paternal involvement among both residential and nonresidential fathers (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Coley & Morris, 2002; Henley & Pasley, 2005; Johnson, 2001; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000; Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998).

African American Fathers' Contribution to Children's Well-being and Development

As with studies of fathers in the general population, research on African American fathers' influence on child outcomes has focused on father absence and on fathers' involvement

and parenting practices. African American children raised in single-mother-headed households are more likely than those living with both parents to be impoverished because of the significant income difference between single-parent and two-parent families (Peters, 1985; Scanzoni, 1971). African American children whose fathers do not live with them are more likely to drop out of school and attain fewer years of education compared with those who live with both of their parents (Heiss, 1996). Mandara and Murry (2000) found that African American adolescent boys from married-parent families had higher levels of self-esteem, self-control, feelings of personal power, achievement orientation, and self-competence than did those who were raised in single-mother-headed homes, even after controlling for family income. African Americans fathers' absence has also been linked to early sexual activity and childbearing among their offspring (Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985; Moore & Chase-Lansdale, 2001). In sum, similar to studies with the general population, living with both parents is associated with positive developmental outcomes among African American children, whereas living in single-mother-headed families is associated with negative outcomes.

African American fathers play an active role in their children's lives and contribute to several child outcomes. African American fathers' interactions are linked with adolescents' psychological functioning (Coley, 2003; Salem et al., 1998). African American adolescent girls who perceive their fathers as angry and alienated from them are at an elevated risk for emotional problems (Coley, 2003). Conversely, when female adolescents spend time with their fathers and view their fathers as significant figures in their lives, their risk of developing depressive symptoms, anxiety, and poor coping skills is diminished (Salem et al., 1998). Contemporaneous data indicate that African American adolescents whose fathers are highly involved in positive relationships with them are unlikely to engage in problem behaviors such as delinquent activity

(Coley, 1998, 2003; Salem et al., 1998) and substance use (Brody, Flor, Hollett-Wright, & McCoy, 1998; Brody, Ge, Katz, & Arias, 2000; Caldwell, Sellers, Bernat, & Zimmerman, 2004; Farrell & White, 1998; Jordan & Lewis, 2005; Salem et al., 1998; Stewart, 2003). In addition, African American fathers' parenting contributes to children's educational outcomes (Amato & Gilberth, 1999; Black et al., 1999; Coley, 1998; G. L. Greif, Hrabowski, & Maton, 1998; McBride et al., 2005). Fathers' nurturant play and financial support contribute to African American preschool children's cognitive and language development (Black et al., 1999). In middle childhood, African American children's likelihood of displaying problem behavior in school is negatively associated with their fathers' use of control in their parenting (Coley, 1998). Fathers contribute to adolescents' academic success and achievement through firm discipline, high involvement, and open communication with the youths (G. L. Greif et al., 1998; McBride et al., 2002).

Contextual Factors and African American Fathers' Involvement and Parenting

As with fathers in the general population, several contextual characteristics are associated with variation in African American fathers' parenting and involvement. These variables include demographics, residential status, family relationships, interparental relationships, employment, and community characteristics.

Demographics

The nature of African American fathers' parenting and involvement is associated with the demographic characteristics of age (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992), education, (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; King et al., 2004), and income (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992). Among partnered African American fathers, paternal age is negatively associated with involvement with preschool children (Ahmeduzzaman

& Roopnarine, 1992). Education (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; King et al., 2004) and income (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992) levels are associated with parenting characteristics among both residential and nonresidential African American fathers. Specifically, education level is positively associated with involvement (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992) and negatively associated with distancing (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999) in fathers' relationships with their children. The resources that high education and income levels provide may buffer fathers from financial strain, which could interfere with their involvement in parenting.

Residential Status

Empirical studies that have examined the association between residential status and African American fathers' parenting practices have yielded contrasting results. Some studies found a significant link between fathers' residence and their involvement with preschool children and adolescents (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Coley & Morris, 2002; Salem et al., 1998), such that mothers (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999) and adolescents (Salem et al., 1998) reported greater involvement in all aspects of parenting among residential than nonresidential biological fathers. This association may result from the relative access to their children that residential and nonresidential fathers have; the latter may see their children only during scheduled visitation periods. Other studies, however, found nonresidential fathers to be just as involved with their children (N. J. Cabrera et al., 2004; Jordan & Lewis, 2005) and influential on their children's well-being (Coley, 1998; Jordan & Lewis, 2005) as residential fathers.

African American fathers' geographic proximity to their children and the number of locations in which children from multiple relationships live are potential barriers to father-child involvement (Hamer, 1998). Using personal interviews, Hamer (1998) found that fathers who

lived closer geographically to their children were more likely to be involved with them.

Difficulties in maintaining contact arose for fathers deployed on distant military assignments, those without transportation, and those who could not coordinate schedules with the children's mothers (Hamer, 1998). Hamer also reported that fathers with children from more than one relationship had difficulty apportioning their time among children in different households, especially when those households were not in close proximity to each other.

Family Relationships

As noted previously, empirical research with the general population indicates that fathers' involvement and parenting practices are influenced by their family relationships, including those with extended kin. Although few studies have examined this association for African Americans, those that are available show that family relationships influence African American fathering through the process of ethnic and cultural socialization (Terrell, 2005). With a sample of African American married, divorced, and widowed fathers, Terrell (2005) found that fathers were more likely to be empathic and to have less inappropriate expectations for their children when their own childhood experiences included close family relationships with caregivers who taught and modeled racial and ethnic tolerance. This nurturance by accepting caregivers translated into empathy and acceptance toward their own children when these men became fathers. Terrell also found that men whose childhood families affirmed their ethnic identity had more positive attitudes towards their own children's establishment of independence and autonomy. Thus, fathers who came from homes in which they gained a strong sense of self, identity, and independence wanted their children to gain these attributes as well. Extended family members influence partnered African American fathers' involvement through the provision of social

support (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992). This support was positively associated with fathers' investment in the socialization and care of their preschool children.

Interparental Relationships

Although a limited number of studies have examined the influence of the interparental relationship on African American fathering, the few studies that have been conducted show it to be a strong predictor of fathers' level of involvement with children (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Hamer, 1998; J. L. McAdoo, 1993). Coley and Chase-Lansdale (1999) found closeness between unmarried mothers and fathers to be positively associated with fathers' involvement with their 3-year old children. Hamer (1998) found that noncustodial fathers who have friendly, nonconflicted relationships with their children's mothers felt encouraged to maintain consistent contact and involvement with the children.

Employment

Empirical studies have demonstrated a link between African American fathers' level of involvement and employment (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Hamer, 1998). Among both residential and nonresidential fathers, those who are employed are more likely than those who are unemployed to be involved with their preschool children (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Coley and Chase-Lansdale (1999) suggested that employment is a marker for responsibility and stability, both of which are linked to acceptance of the fathering role. Employed fathers are also free of the distractions that come with the financial hardships linked with unemployment. Mothers are more willing to give employed fathers access to their children because of their ability to provide; some mothers deny fathers access to their children if the fathers do not provide financial child support (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Working long hours at one or more jobs reduces the amount of time that noncustodial fathers have to spend with children of various

ages (Hamer, 1998). Clearly, time spent away from home decreases fathers' opportunities to engage in activities with their children.

Community Characteristics

Community characteristics are linked to African American fathers' parenting and involvement (Letiecq & Koblinsky, 2004). Letiecq and Koblinsky (2004) interviewed focus groups that included both biological and social fathers of preschool children. Fathers reported that they protected their children from community violence by supervising and managing their behavior, monitoring their activities and involvement in neighborhood life, teaching them peaceful ways to handle conflict, and teaching them how to protect themselves in their homes (for example, not opening the doors for strangers and dialing 911 in emergencies) and neighborhoods. Fathers also took direct, personal action to protect their children from neighborhood dangers. They confronted problems with neighborhood violence by chasing drug dealers away from their blocks and attempting to build or restore social bonds in the community.

Summary of the Current State of Research on African American Fathering

The social science literature that focuses specifically on African American fathers has grown since the early 1990s, expanding in scope. Not only have researchers begun to study African American fatherhood in greater depth, they also have begun to examine fathers' diversity. The deficit model on which most of the early research about African American families was based is giving way to an exploration of the contributions that fathers make to their children's development and well-being through their presence, involvement, and parenting practices. Research also has begun to address the contribution of contextual factors to variations in African Americans' fathering.

Although the literature on African American fathers is growing, several issues need to be addressed. More attention should be given to understanding the ways in which African American fathers' parenting practices contribute to change over time in children's prosocial and antisocial outcomes. The ways in which African American fathers' parenting practices vary based on the contextual factors of religiosity and intimate partner relationship quality also has received little systematic attention. The present study was designed to address these needs.

The Present Study

The purpose of this study is to test a conceptual model of the links of African American fathers' religiosity, intimate partner relationship quality, and fathers' parenting over time with children's problem behavior and school engagement (see Figure 1). The first panel in Figure 1 depicts the hypothesized relationships among fathers' religiosity, intimate partner relationship quality, and fathers' competence-promoting parenting. African American fathers' religiosity was hypothesized to be associated with high-quality intimate partner relationships. High-quality intimate partnerships, in turn, were hypothesized to be associated with fathers' use of competence-promoting parenting practices. Competence-promoting parenting practices were identified in the current study as high quality relationships between fathers and children, fathers' using of high levels of inductive reasoning and low levels of harsh-inconsistent discipline. These variables were selected because previous empirical studies have found parental warmth, limit setting, consistent discipline, inductive reasoning, and avoidance of harsh punishment to be associated with positive child outcomes (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994). Several of these parenting characteristics have been linked positively to African American children's academic achievement and negatively to their engagement in problem behaviors (Brody, Flor, & Gibson, 1999; Brody, Murry, Kim, & Brown, 2002; Ge, Brody,

Conger, Simons, & Murry, 2002; Kim & Brody, 2005; L. G. Simons, Simons, Conger, & Brody, 2004). The contribution of religiosity to intimate relationship quality has been documented both in the general population and among African Americans (Brody et al., 1994; Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). Mahoney and associates (2001) found religiosity to be positively associated with marital satisfaction, marital commitment, and couples' use of adaptive communication skills. Among African Americans, the frequency with which parents attend religious services and the importance of this attendance in their lives promotes supportive and responsive family relationships (Brody et al., 1994). Brody and associates (1994) also suggested that the positive link between parental religiosity and the quality of relationships among parents and extended family co-caregivers creates an environment that promotes nurturant-involved parent-youth relationships. On the basis of this evidence, African American fathers' religiosity was hypothesized to be associated with the quality of their intimate partner relationships.

Fathers' religiosity (depicted in the first panel of the conceptual model, Figure 1) was also hypothesized to be linked indirectly with their parenting practices via its link with intimate partner relationship quality. In studies conducted with the general population, fathers' religiosity has been linked with their parenting practices and involvement with their children. Religious fathers report greater involvement and stronger relationships with their children than do nonreligious fathers (Roggman et al., 1999). Fathers' religiosity levels are also associated with their gender role attitudes and views on sharing childcare tasks with their partners (King et al., 1997). These associations, however, have not been documented specifically among African Americans (King et al., 1997; Roggman et al., 1999). The present study is designed to determine

whether high levels of religiosity are associated with positive parenting practices and close father-child relationships among African Americans as well.

In the current study, African American fathers' competence promoting parenting practices were hypothesized to be associated with the quality of their intimate partner relationships. Although this link has not been examined in equal detail with African American populations, numerous studies with European American samples have shown that fathers who have stable, harmonious, and supportive marriages are likely to be involved with their children and to use positive parenting practices that support the children's development (Belsky, 1990; Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991; Bradley & Corwyn, 2000; Brody, Arias, & Fincham, 1996; Brody, Pillegrini, & Sigel, 1986; Coiro & Emery, 1998; Cox, Owen, Lewis, & Henderson, 1989; DeLuccie, 1996; Dickstein & Parke, 1988; Feldman et al., 1983; Floyd, Gilliom, & Costigan, 1998; Harris et al., 1998; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Henley & Pasley, 2005; Kitzmann, 2000; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). Among African Americans, close relationships with their children's mothers are positively associated with fathers' levels of involvement with their children (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Gavin et al., 2002; J. L. McAdoo, 1993). This finding includes noncustodial fathers, who are more likely to maintain consistent contact and involvement with their children when they have friendly, nonconflicted relationships with the children's mothers (Hamer, 1998). Thus, high-quality relationships between fathers and mothers have been found to be associated with positive parenting processes and close relationships between fathers and their children.

The first and second panels of the conceptual model in Figure 1 illustrate the prediction that African American fathers' competence-promoting parenting would be associated over time with the child outcome variables of problem behavior and school engagement. Several empirical

studies support this prediction (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Black et al., 1999; Coley, 1998, 2003; Harris et al., 1998; Kosterman et al., 2004; Salem et al., 1998). African American children who experience warm interactions with their fathers exhibit high levels of prosocial skills and experience low levels of conflict with their peers at school (Coley, 1998). Warm, supportive relationships with their fathers reduce the likelihood that African American adolescents will use substances (Jordan & Lewis, 2005; Stewart, 2003).

The existing literature also indicates that African American fathers' involvement and parenting contribute to children's educational outcomes. When African American fathers have high educational expectations for their children and include high levels of involvement, warmth, and control in their parenting, their children attain high levels of educational achievement (Coley, 1998; G. L. Greif et al., 1998). African American fathers also support their children's academic success by helping with schoolwork, encouraging achievement and extracurricular activities, and drawing on community and family resources to support their children's educational endeavors (G. L. Greif et al., 1998). African American children's academic success is also associated with the frequency with which their fathers talk about school (McBride et al., 2005) and their fathers' financial support (Amato & Gilberth, 1999; Black et al., 1999). These studies converge to suggest that African American fathers' competence-promoting parenting practices would be linked negatively with children's problem behaviors and positively with children's school engagement.

Finally, African American fathers' contributions to children's problem behavior were hypothesized to be mediated through children's school engagement (Figure 2). Previous research indicates that high levels of school engagement are negatively related to children's engagement in delinquent activity and other problem behaviors (Gerard & Buehler, 2004;

O'Donnell, Hawkins, & Abbott, 1995; R. D. Taylor & Lopez, 2005). With an ethnically diverse sample that included European Americans, Hispanic Americans, and African Americans, Gerard and Buehler (2004) found children's school attachment and academic achievement to be linked with conduct problems. With a sample of African American adolescents, Taylor and Lopez (2005) found that school attendance and school attentiveness were negatively associated with problem behaviors. Similar results emerged for the association of school bonding and achievement with serious delinquent activity and substance use with a sample of aggressive male adolescents (O'Donnell et al., 1995). On the basis of these findings, the association of fathers' competence-promoting parenting practices with children's problem behavior was hypothesized to be indirect, through fathers' influence on school engagement.

Summary

In the present study, prospective contributions of African American fathers' parenting practices to children's problem behavior and school engagement were assessed. The study was conducted using data provided by a subsample of families at Waves 1 and 2 of the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS), a multisite study of contextual contributors to African American youths' health and development (Cutrona, Russell, Hessling, Brown, & Murry, 2000). Families in the subsample were headed by both biological parents of the target children. The data were collected when the children were in fifth grade and 2 years later when they were in seventh grade. Fathers reported their competence-promoting parenting practices, including the quality of their relationships with their children, their use of harsh-inconsistent discipline, and their use of inductive reasoning. Fathers also reported their religiosity levels. Fathers' and mothers' reports of marital quality, perceived warmth, and perceived hostility were used to create a multi-informant measure of interparental relationship quality. Target children reported their school

engagement, disordered conduct, smoking, and association with deviant friends. The following hypotheses were advanced.

Hypotheses

1. Fathers' religiosity will be associated with their intimate partner relationship quality.
2. Fathers' competence-promoting parenting will be influenced by the quality of their intimate partner relationships.
3. Fathers' religiosity will be indirectly linked to fathers' competence-promoting parenting through its association with intimate partner relationship quality.
4. Fathers' use of competence-promoting parenting practices will be associated with a decrease in children's problem behavior across a 2-year period.
5. Fathers' competence-promoting parenting practices will be associated with an increase in children's school engagement across a 2-year period.
6. Fathers' contributions to their children's problem behavior will be mediated through the children's school engagement.

The predictions depicted in the theoretical model were tested using structural equation modeling (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) which allows multiple predictions to be evaluated in a single analysis while controlling for measurement error.

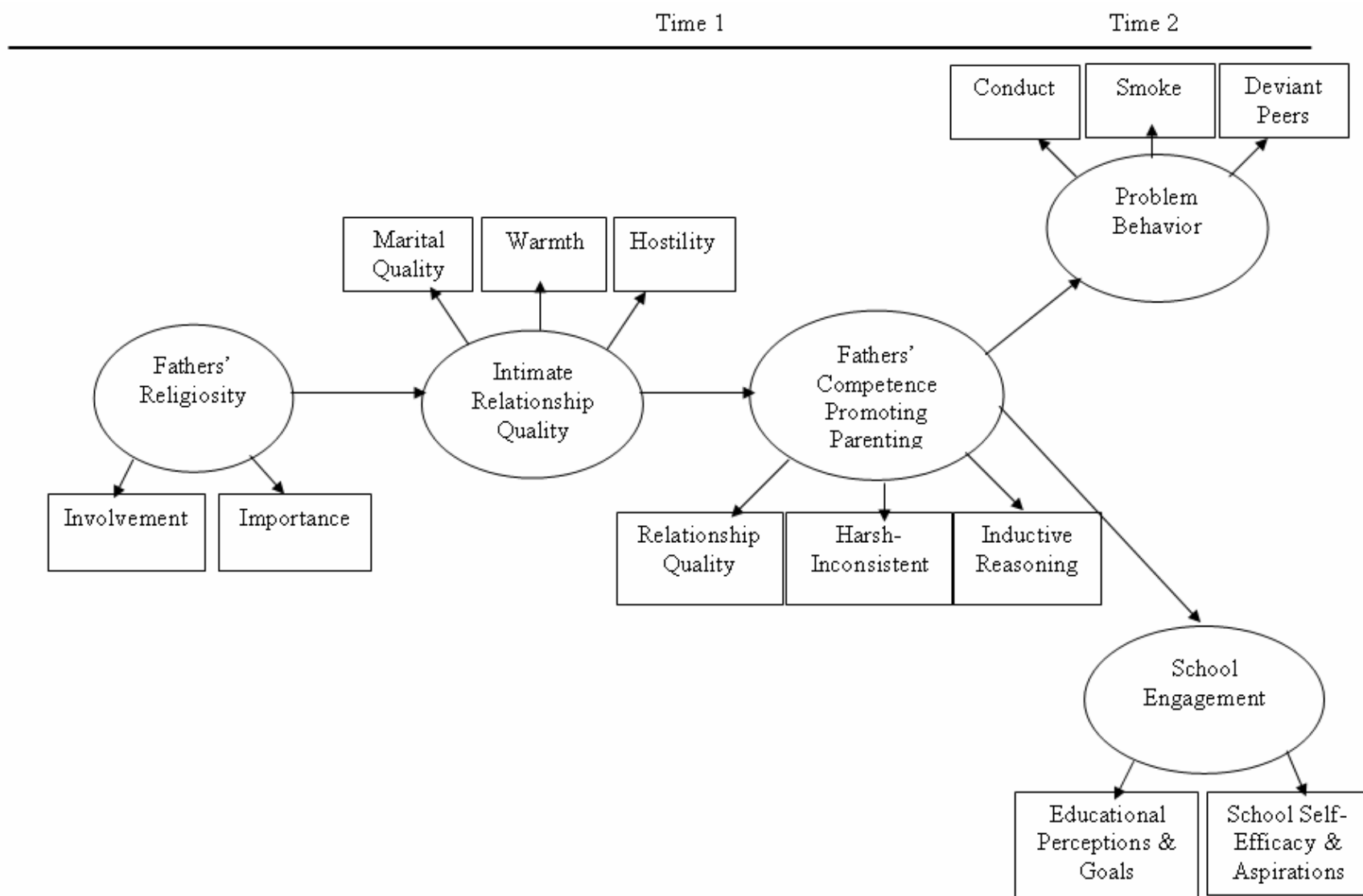


Figure 1. Conceptual Links Between Fathers' Religiosity, Intimate Partner Relationship Quality, Parenting, and Child Outcomes.

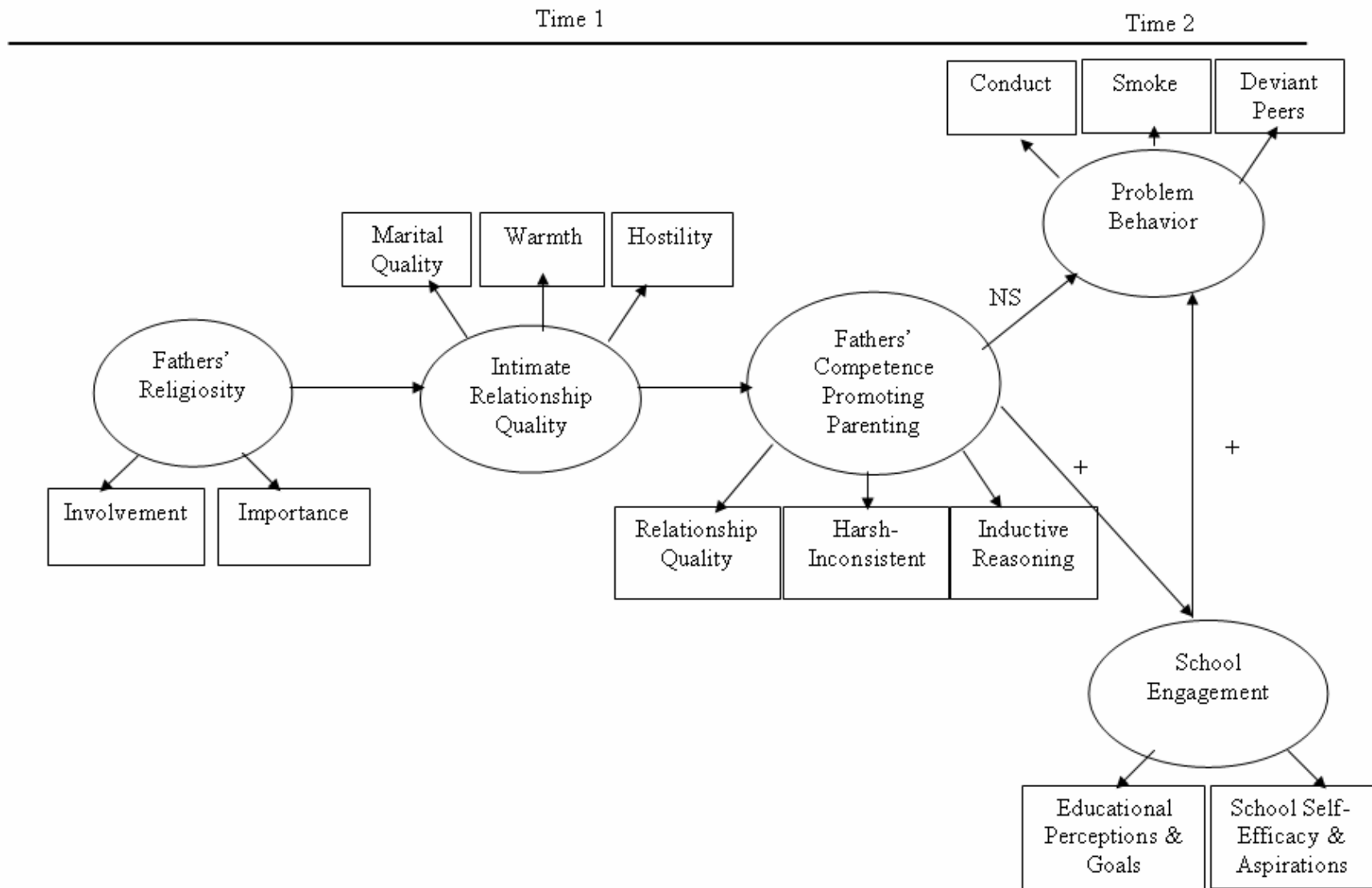


Figure 2. Mediational Links Between Fathers' Parenting and Children's Problem Behavior Through School Engagement.

CHAPTER 2

Methods

The purpose of the current study was to examine variations in African American fathers' parenting based on contextual factors and the contribution of fathers' parenting to child outcomes overtime. This chapter presents a description of the overall FACHS project, including the procedures and methodology used. The sample for the current study is described and overviews of the data collection procedures and the measures that were analyzed are provided.

Description of the Family and Community Health Study

The Family and Community Health Study (FACHS) is a multisite, panel study of neighborhood and family effects on health and development. It was designed to examine contextual risks and resources that contribute to African American family functioning and child development in contexts other than inner cities. Using identical research procedures described in the Sampling Strategies section. The participants were African American families with children who were 10 and 11 years old when first contacted. Data were collected in rural, suburban, and metropolitan areas of Georgia and Iowa.

Participants

A total of 867 African American families with a fifth-grade target child (mean age = 10.50 years) were recruited for FACHS; this sample included 462 families (213 with boys and 249 with girls) in Iowa and 405 families (187 with boys and 249 with girls) in Georgia. The sample for the current study was composed of 255 families who took part in Waves 1 and 2 of the FACHS in which the target children (mean age = 10.51 years, $SD = .56$; 48.9 % boys, 51.1% girls) lived with both of their biological parents. Fathers' mean age was 38.60 years ($SD = 7.19$) and mean educational level was 13.70 ($SD = 8.19$). Mothers' mean age was 35.82 years ($SD =$

5.19) and mean level of education was 13.40 years ($SD = 7.02$). These families' mean household income at Wave 1 was \$38,328.19 ($SD = \$22,167$).

Sampling Strategy

Families were recruited from neighborhoods that varied in terms of percentage of the population that was African American and the number of children and families living below the poverty line. Characteristics of block group areas (BGAs), clusters of blocks within a tract defined by the Census Bureau, were examined to select neighborhoods from which the sample was recruited. Naturally occurring neighborhood boundaries, such as major thoroughfares or rivers, are used whenever possible in defining BGAs. In Iowa and Georgia, BGAs in which 10% or more of the population was African American and 20% to 100% of families with children lived below the poverty line were sampled. The families included in this report lived in 259 BGAs, 144 in Iowa and 115 in Georgia.

Families were recruited from metropolitan and nonmetropolitan BGAs that excluded inner-city areas. The sampled BGAs were located in small towns in northeastern Georgia, a suburban area adjacent to Atlanta, and the greater Waterloo and Des Moines areas of Iowa. Lists of African American families with a target child of the appropriate age were compiled by community coordinators in Georgia; in Iowa, the lists were derived from school enrollment information. Potential participating families were selected randomly from these lists and letters introducing them to the study were sent. Subsequently, research staff members visited the families' homes to explain the study procedures and invite the targeted family members to participate. Of the families recruited, 72% provided complete data. Primary caregivers received \$100, secondary caregivers received \$50, and target children received \$70 as compensation for the time they spent taking part in the study.

Procedure

Before any data were collected, four focus groups in Georgia and four in Iowa examined and critiqued the self-report instruments. Each group was composed of 10 African American women who lived in neighborhoods similar to those from which the study participants were recruited. Group members suggested modification of items that they perceived to be culturally insensitive, intrusive, or unclear. Comments from the focus groups were used to revise the instruments, after which the protocol was pilot tested with 16 families, 8 from each state. During the pilot tests, researchers took extensive notes concerning participants' reactions to the questionnaires and offered suggestions for further changes.

To enhance rapport and cultural understanding, African American university students and community members served as field interviewers to collect data from the families in their homes. Prior to data collection, interviewers received 1 month of training in the administration of the self-report instruments. Two home visits, each lasting 2 hours, were made within 7 days as the families' schedules allowed. During the first visit, informed consent was obtained; parents consented to their own and their children's participation. At each home visit, the self-report questionnaires were administered to the father, mother, and target child in an interview format. Each interview was conducted privately between one participant and one interviewer, with no other family members present or able to overhear the interview. Instruments were presented on laptop computers; the questions appeared in sequence on the computer screen, which both the interviewer and participant could see. The interviewer read each question aloud and entered the participant's response using the computer keypad.

Measures

Fathers' competence promoting parenting. Father-child relationship quality and fathers' use of harsh-inconsistent discipline and inductive reasoning at Wave 1 served as indicators for the construct of fathers' competence-promoting parenting. Relationship quality was assessed using four items on which fathers indicated (a) how enjoyable it was to be a parent to the child, on a response set ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*); (b) their satisfaction with the child, on a response set ranging from 1 (*very satisfied*) to 4 (*very dissatisfied*); (c) how happy they were with the relationship with the target child, on a response set ranging from 1 (*very happy*) to 4 (*very unhappy*); and (d) their experience in raising the child, on a response set ranging from 1 (*very easy to raise*) to 4 (*very difficult to raise*) (Conger, 1988d). Alpha coefficient for this scale was .57. Fathers' use of harsh-inconsistent discipline was measured using a nine-item scale ($\alpha = .49$) that addressed the frequency with which fathers lost their tempers when the child misbehaved, used physical punishment, and did not follow through with disciplining the child; the response set ranged from 1 (*always*) to 4 (*never*) (Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 1989). The six-item Inductive Reasoning Scale (Thornberry et al., 1989) focused on the extent to which fathers gave the target child reasons for their decisions; asked for the child's opinions about family decisions; and disciplined the child by reasoning, explaining, or talking ($\alpha = .73$). The response set ranged from 1 (*always*) to 4 (*never*).

Children's school engagement. Children's school engagement was assessed at Waves 1 and 2 using their self-reports on the Educational Perceptions and Goals Scale (Conger, 1988e) and the School Self-Efficacy and School Aspirations Scale (Conger, 1988c). The eight-item Educational Perceptions and Goals Scale addressed children's feelings of closeness to their teachers, their academic performance, and their perceptions of teachers' and classmates'

opinions about that performance; these items were rated on a response set ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Additional items addressed the amount of education the children would like to attain and the amount they believed they would actually attain; the response set for these items ranged from 1 (*less than high school*) to 3 (*more than high school*). Items on the Educational Perceptions and Goals Scale were standardized, then summed. Cronbach's alphas for this scale were .65 at Wave 1 and .69 at Wave 2. The seven-item School Self-Efficacy and School Aspirations Scale dealt with the target children's liking of school, feelings of belonging or boredom in school, the effort they devote to schoolwork, and the importance of grades. Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Cronbach's alphas for this scale were .66 at Wave 1 and .67 at Wave 2.

Children's problem behavior. The construct of children's problem behavior was indexed at Waves 1 and 2 using three self-reported indicators: conduct disorder, smoking, and association with deviant peers. The Conduct Disorder section of the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children, Version IV (DISC-IV) (Shaffer, Fisher, Lucas, & Board, 1998) addressed the frequency during the previous year with which the target child had engaged in deviant acts such as shoplifting, physical assault, lying, fire setting, cruelty to animals, vandalism, burglary, and robbery, as well as the seriousness of those acts. Cronbach's alphas for this scale were .72 at Wave 1 and .75 at Wave 2. Smoking was measured using a two-item smoking intentions and expectations scale and a willingness to smoke scale. Target children reported their intentions to smoke during the next year using a response set ranging from 1 (*do not plan*) to 4 (*definitely will*); they reported the likelihood that they actually would smoke during that year on a scale ranging from 1 (*definitely will not*) to 4 (*definitely will*). On a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all willing*) to 3 (*very willing*), target children reported their willingness to smoke more than one

cigarette, one cigarette, and no cigarettes. The items on the smoking scales were standardized and summed. The combined reliabilities for smoking intentions and willingness were .65 at Wave 1 and .83 at Wave 2. FACHS used a shortened version of a scale originally developed by Elliott and associates (1995) to assess children's association with deviant peers. The children indicated, on a scale ranging from 1 (*none of them*) to 3 (*all of them*), the proportion of their friends who ran away from home, stole, used substances, physically assaulted others, or had sex (Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985). Cronbach's alphas for this scale were .88 at Wave 1 and .87 for Wave 2.

Fathers' religiosity. Two indicators were used to assess fathers' religiosity. The two-item Religion and Religious Importance Scale (R. L. Simons, 1995a) addressed the importance of religious beliefs in fathers' daily lives, ranging from 1 (*very important*) to 4 (*not at all important*), and the frequency with which fathers sought spiritual comfort and support during difficult times, ranging from 1 (*often*) to 3 (*never*). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .71. The Religious Involvement Scale (R. L. Simons, 1995b) included five items concerning fathers' church attendance, leadership in religious services, and attendance at religion-oriented events. The response set ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*). The alpha coefficient for this scale was .84.

Intimate partner relationship quality. Intimate partner relationship quality was assessed by summing fathers' and mothers' scores on marital quality and on perceived warmth and hostility. In FACHS, a shortened version of a scale originally developed by Huston, McHale, and Crouter (1986) was used to assess marital quality. The modified version included two items on which fathers ($\alpha = .84$) and mothers ($\alpha = .89$) rated their happiness and satisfaction in their relationship; their scores were significantly correlated ($r = .52, p < .01$) (Huston, Mchale, & Crouter, 1986). The response set ranged from 1 (*extremely happy*) to 6 (*extremely unhappy*) on

the first item and from 1 (*completely satisfied*) to 5 (*not at all satisfied*) on the second item. The items on this scale were standardized and summed. Perceived warmth was assessed using nine items on which each parent indicated whether the other, during the past 12 months, had helped the respondent with something important, behaved lovingly and affectionately, and verbally expressed love. The response set ranged from 1 (*always*) to 4 (*never*). Alpha coefficients were .90 for fathers (Conger, 1988a) and .91 for mothers (Conger, 1988b), with a significant correlation ($r = .48, p = .01$) between parents' reports. Perceived hostility was measured using 12 items concerning the frequency with which one's partner shouted, criticized, threw things, or used physical force. The response set ranged from 1 (*always*) to 4 (*never*). Alpha coefficients were .84 for fathers (Conger, 1988a) and .87 for mothers (Conger, 1988b); parents' reports were significantly correlated ($r = .38, p = .01$).

CHAPTER 3

Results

Correlations Among Constructs

Table 1 presents the correlations among the theoretical constructs. Consistent with predictions, fathers' religiosity was significantly and positively correlated with intimate partner relationship quality ($r = .34, p < .05$). Contrary to theoretical predictions, however, fathers' religiosity was not significantly related to fathers' competence promoting parenting. As predicted, intimate partner relationship quality was positively associated with fathers' competence promoting parenting ($r = .53, p < .001$). Fathers' competence promoting parenting was related to children's problem behavior ($r = -.37, p < .05$) and school engagement ($r = .32, p < .001$) in the expected directions. In addition, a negative association emerged between school engagement and problem behavior ($r = -.43, p < .001$). These results indicated promise for a formal test of the model.

Testing the Hypothesized Longitudinal Paths to Changes in Children's Problem Behavior and

School Engagement

Measurement Models

The hypothetical models were analyzed via structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 5.0 software (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) SEM was chosen because it allows the unique contributions of several variables to be tested at once, it takes into account measurement error, and it measures both direct and indirect relationships (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2000). The AMOS software uses the full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation method to handle missing data. FIML does not delete cases missing from one or more waves of data collection, nor does it delete cases that are missing data for one or more variables within a wave

of data collection. This avoids potential problems, such as biased parameter estimates, that are more likely to occur if pairwise or listwise deletion procedures are used to compensate for missing data (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999; Wothke, 2000). Table 2 presents the correlations matrices, means, and standard deviations for the models forecasting fathers' contributions to children's problem behavior and school engagement. Figure 3 presents the results of the structural model for fathers' impact on youths' data. The figure also includes the factor loadings of the manifest variables on their respective latent constructs.

Table 1

Correlations for Study Constructs

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Problem Behavior T 2	--						
2. Problem Behavior T 1	.78**	--					
3. School Engagement T 2	-.43**	-.12	--				
4. School Engagement T 1	-.33*	-.57**	.27*	--			
5. Religiosity T 1	-.26 ⁺	-.26*	.25*	.12	--		
6. Intimate Relationship Quality T 1	-.30*	-.29**	.07	.19*	.34*	--	
7. Fathers' Competence Promoting Parenting T 1	-.37*	-.45**	.32**	.19 ⁺	.14	.53**	--

** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$, ⁺ $p < .10$

Table 2

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for All Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Religious Involvement	1											
2. Religious Importance	.33**											
3. Marital Quality	.20**	.90										
4. Perceived Warmth	.09	.09	.76**									
5. Perceived Hostility	-.20**	-.07	-.61**	-.51**								
6. Relationship Quality	.01	-.01	.37**	.29**	-.24**							
with Target												
7. Harsh-Inconsistent Discipline	.11	.13	.10	.11	-.23**	.20**						
8. Inductive Reasoning	.10	.05	.25**	.31**	-.15*	.36**	.15*					
9. Conduct Disorder W1	-.07	-.06	-.17*	-.17*	.23**	-.29**	-.10	-.07				
10. Smoking W1	-.12	.06	-.07	-.13	.19**	-.09	-.14	-.01	.22**			
11. Deviant Friends W1	-.14	.01	-.14	-.04	.09	-.12	-.09	-.13	.43**	.25**		
12. Educational Perceptions & Goals W1	.01	-.02	.08	.09	-.07	.13	.05	.07	-.29**	-.22**	-.25**	

Table 2 (continued)

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for All Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
13. School self-efficacy & School Aspirations	.04	.01	.17*	.11	-.12	.16*	.02	.10	-.35**	-.08	-.22**	.45**	
14. Conduct Disorder W2	-.04	-.05	-.22	-.11	.17*	-.21**	-.09	-.11	.40**	.07	.20*	-.30**	-.14
15. Smoking W2	-.09	-.05	-.12	-.08	.25**	-.17*	-.18*	-.13	.18*	.18*	.14	-.25**	.11
16. Deviant Friends W2	-.13	-.15*	-.17*	-.05	.14	-.08	-.09	-.07	.35**	.17*	.43**	-.10	-.15*
17. Educational Perceptions & Goals W2	.04	.20**	.06	.04	-.01	.19*	.11	.04	-.10	-.05	-.02	.20**	.12
18. School self-efficacy, & School Aspirations W2	.04	.07	.09	.10	-.06	.26**	-.01	.14	-.21**	-.04	.43**	.13	.26**
<i>M</i>	8.63	6.17	17.97	56.43	36.59	14.36	30.46	18.16	1.22	18.03	22.36	23.40	21.69
<i>SD</i>	3.64	1.12	2.76	9.66	8.18	1.48	2.86	3.37	2.06	2.56	4.59	2.91	3.13

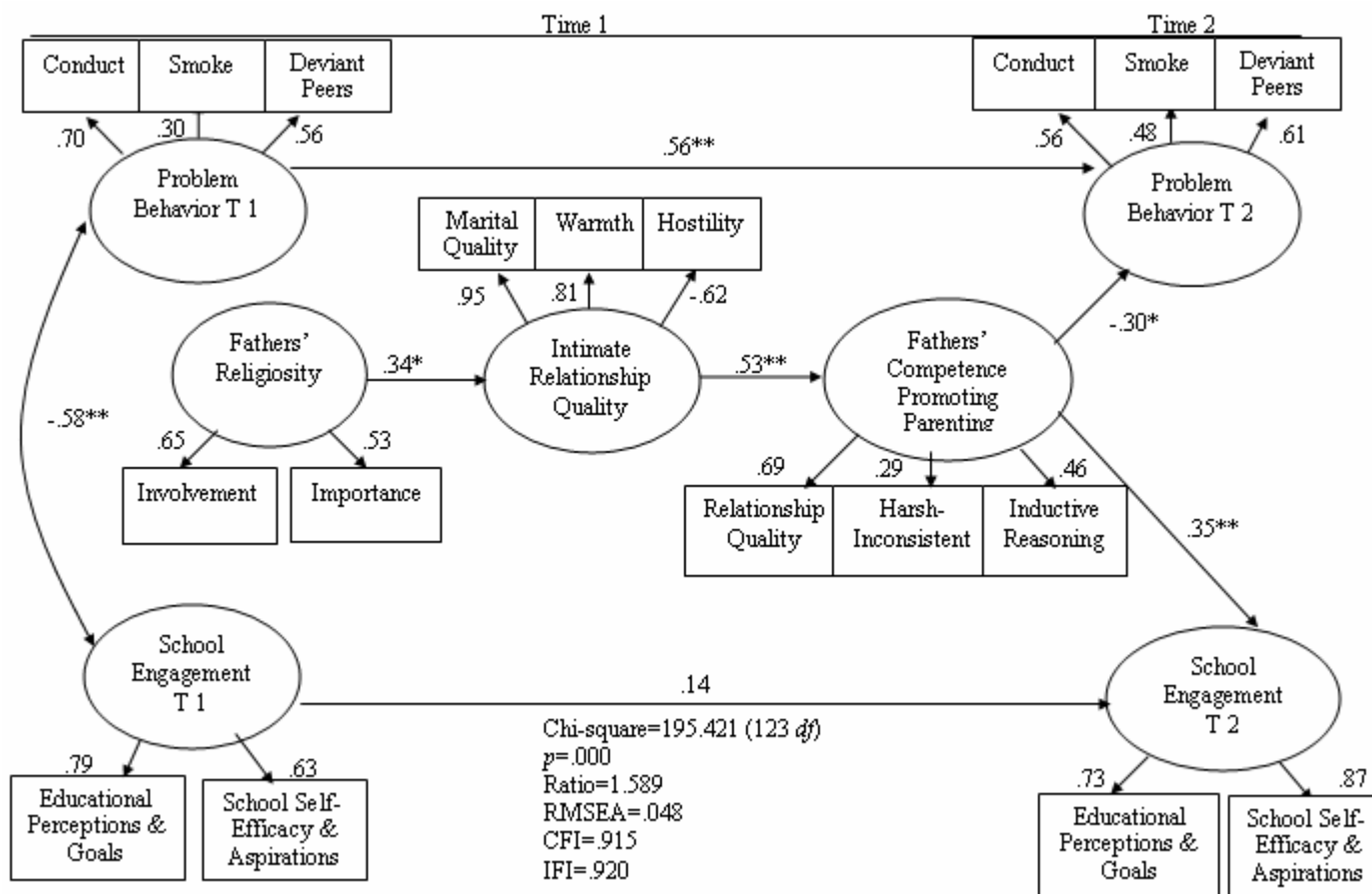


Figure 3 Structural Model of Fathers' Religiosity, Intimate Partner Relationship Quality, Parenting, and Child Outcomes

As expected, fathers' and mothers' combined reports of marital quality, perceived warmth, and perceived hostility loaded significantly on the latent construct of intimate partner relationship quality. Target children's self-reports of conduct disorder, smoking, and association with deviant peers loaded significantly and positively on the problem behavior latent construct. The significant factor loadings that target children's self-reports of educational perceptions and goals, school self-efficacy and school aspirations confirm their usefulness as indexes of the latent construct of school engagement.

Structural Model

After determining that the measurement model fit the data as specified, the structural model was tested. It also fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 195.42$, $df = 123$, $p < .00$, $\chi^2/df = 1.59$).

According to Arbuckle and Wothke (1999), a χ^2/df ratio between 1 and 3 indicates a good fit.

The comparative fit index (CFI) was .92 and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was .05. The structural coefficients (β s) represent tests of hypotheses about theoretical constructs.

The results were consistent with the proposed hypotheses. Fathers' level of religiosity was positively linked to parents' relationship quality ($\beta = .34$, $p < .05$), which, in turn, was positively associated with fathers' competence promoting parenting ($\beta = .53$, $p < .01$). Fathers' level of religiosity was hypothesized to be indirectly associated with fathers' use of positive parenting practices through its association with intimate partner relationship quality; this association was confirmed through a Sobel test (2.27, $p = .02$).

The structural model also included hypothetical links of fathers' competence promoting parenting with children's problem behaviors and school engagement across time. The results presented in Figure 3 confirm the hypotheses that fathers' competence promoting parenting at

Wave 1 significantly contributed to children's reports of problem behavior ($\beta = -.30, p < .05$) and school engagement ($\beta = .35, p < .01$) at Wave 2. These results show that high-quality father-child relationships, which include low levels of harsh-inconsistent discipline and high levels of inductive reasoning, were linked to low levels of problem behaviors and high levels of school engagement among children 2 years later. Because the initial levels of children's problem behaviors and school and engagement were controlled, the pathways in the structural models account for actual change in children's problem behavior and school engagement across time (see Figure 3).

Mediational Effects

Fathers' impact on children's conduct disorder, smoking, and association with deviant peers was hypothesized to be mediated through fathers' impact on children's school engagement. The analyses met all four of Baron and Kenny's (1986) conditions for mediation: (a) fathers' competence promoting parenting was significantly associated with children's school engagement ($\beta = .35, p < .01$); (b) fathers' competence promoting parenting was associated with children's problem behavior ($\beta = -.30, p < .05$); (c) the mediator, school engagement, was significantly related to changes in problem behavior ($\beta = -.37, p < .01$); and (d) the contribution of fathers' competence promoting parenting to children's problem behavior was not significant in the presence of school engagement ($\beta = -.13, ns$; (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The mediational model is depicted in Figure 4, and the data fit the model well: $\chi^2 = 181.93, df = 122, p < .00, \chi^2/df = 1.50$. These analyses support the hypothesis that fathers' competence promoting parenting indirectly influences children's engagement in problem behaviors through children's school engagement, as the results illustrated in Figure 4 and the Sobel tests of indirect effects presented in Table 2 indicate.

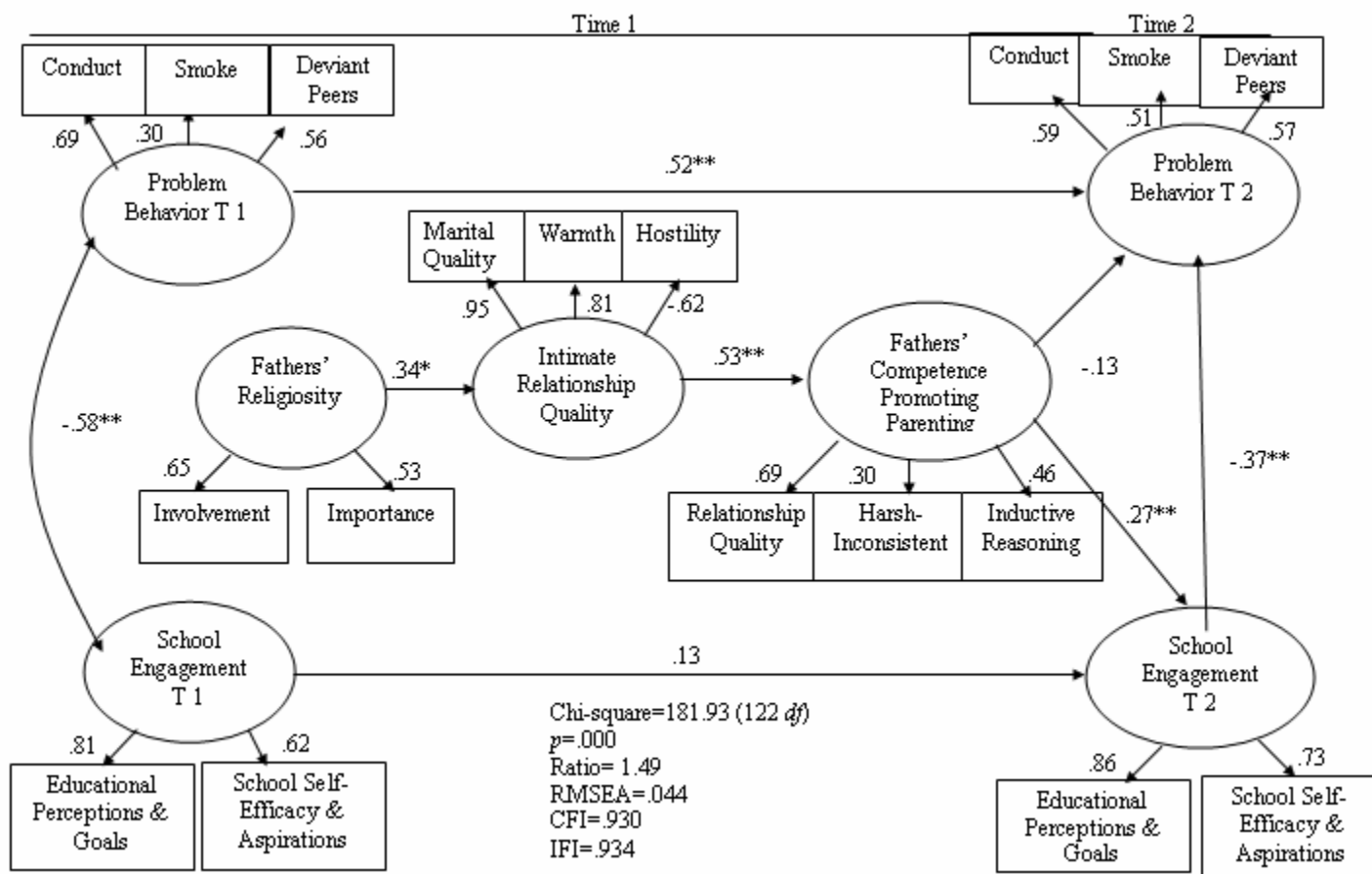


Figure 4. Mediation Model of Fathers' Religiosity, Intimate Partner Relationship Quality, Parenting, and Child Outcomes

Table 3

Sobel Test for Indirect Effects

Indirect Effects	Sobel Test	<i>p</i>
Fathers' Religiosity → Intimate Partner Relationship Quality → Fathers' Competence Promoting Parenting	2.27	.02
Fathers' Competence Promoting Parenting → Children's School Engagement, Wave2 → Children's Problem Behavior Wave 2	2.04	.04

Alternative Structural Models

The possibility of gender effects was explored although no predictions were advanced regarding them. Multigroup comparison procedures that were available from AMOS 5.0 were used to determine whether target child gender conditioned any of the paths in the model. The sample was divided by child gender and a two-group invariance model was estimated by imposing equality constraints on every estimate. One equality constraint was relaxed at a time for the specific coefficient under investigation, allowing the coefficient to differ across groups, and the model then was re-estimated. If the coefficients differed across groups, relaxing the equality constraint would result in a significant improvement in fit. None of the coefficients differed according to target child gender.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

No prospective longitudinal studies have examined the links between African American fathers' parenting and children's development of problem behavior and school engagement. Few studies have examined the contribution of religiosity and intimate partner relationship quality to fathers' competence-promoting parenting practices. The current study was designed to help fill the need for this information. Using data from in-home interviews with fathers, mothers, and children, the analyses supported the hypothesized contributions of fathers' competence-promoting parenting practices to children's development of problem behavior and school engagement. These findings extend the results of previous studies in which these links were examined contemporaneously by demonstrating that the pathways between fathers' parenting and children's outcomes remain robust over time. The results contribute further to the existing literature by documenting the contributions of religiosity and intimate partner relationships to variations in fathers' parenting practices.

Summary of Results

Religiosity and Intimate Partner Relationship Quality

Fathers' levels of religiosity were hypothesized to be associated with intimate partner relationship quality. The analyses supported this hypothesis; paternal religiosity was linked positively with marital quality and perceived warmth from the intimate partner and negatively with perceived partner hostility. These associations are consistent with those that emerged from previous studies of the influence of religiosity on marriages and other intimate relationships (Brody, Stoneman et al., 1996; Brody et al., 1994; Call, 1997; Mahoney et al., 2001; L. C. Robinson, 1994; L. C. Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Studies conducted with primarily European

American samples have shown religious orientation and religiosity among intimate partners to be linked with higher levels of intimacy (L. C. Robinson & Blanton, 1993), commitment, relationship satisfaction, and adaptive communication skills (Mahoney et al., 2001; L. C. Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Research with African Americans has shown that religious involvement promotes the development of supportive and responsive family relationships (Brody, Stoneman et al., 1996; Brody et al., 1994). Brody and associates (1994) found African American fathers' formal religiosity to be associated positively with harmonious marital interaction and negatively to interparental conflict.

High religiosity levels among African American fathers are beneficial to their intimate partner relationships for several reasons. Connections with religious groups give couples access to resources such as social support, marital and pastoral counseling, family activities, family services, and, in some cases, financial assistance (Abbott, Berry, & Meredith, 1990; L. C. Robinson, 1994; R. J. Taylor & Chatters, 1986; R. J. Taylor, Thornton, & Chatters, 1987). Couples experiencing multiple stressors such as illness, death, marital difficulties, and financial strain may be more comfortable accepting support from familiar religious networks than from providers perceived as "outsiders" (Pargament, 2002; Weaver et al., 2002). Couples experiencing chronic financial strain also may find the religious community to be a familiar and convenient source of support (Pargament, 2002).

Many religious organizations highly value the marital relationship and have a vested interest in strengthening marriages within their congregations (Stanley, Markman, St. Peters, & Leber, 1995). This investment has led several religious groups to develop and provide marital enrichment programs, marriage counseling, premarital counseling, couples' ministries, and couples' retreats. Both fathers and mothers who are very involved in religious settings can take

part in these marriage-strengthening initiatives, improving their relationships as a result. Many religious groups espouse the belief that marriage is a lifelong commitment; fathers who are deeply involved with these groups are likely to internalize these beliefs and feel that divorce is not an option (Booth, Johnson, Branaman, & Sica, 1995). These men may be willing to devote considerable effort to maintaining strong, close bonds with their wives.

Intimate Partner Relationship Quality and African American Fathers' Parenting

As hypothesized, the quality of fathers' intimate partnerships was positively associated with their use of competence-promoting parenting practices. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies, in which fathers' behavior toward their children was linked with their interactions in their intimate relationships (Belsky, 1990; Belsky et al., 1991; Bradley & Corwyn, 2000; Brody, Arias et al., 1996; Brody et al., 1986; Coiro & Emery, 1998; Cox et al., 1989; DeLuccie, 1996; Dickstein & Parke, 1988; Feldman et al., 1983; Floyd et al., 1998; Harris et al., 1998; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Henley & Pasley, 2005; Kitzmann, 2000; Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). Studies conducted with primarily European American samples have shown that fathers who experience stable, high-quality intimate relationships are more likely to use positive parenting practices that include high levels of involvement, communication (Brody, Arias et al., 1996; Brody et al., 1986), positive affect, and sensitivity (Belsky et al., 1991; Brody, Arias et al., 1996; Brody et al., 1986). When fathers receive high levels of warmth from their partners, they are more likely to share responsibility for child care (DeLuccie, 1996). In African American families, interparental relationship quality predicts fathers' parenting processes and level of involvement (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Gavin et al., 2002; Hamer, 1998; J. L. McAdoo, 1993); when fathers experience high levels of satisfaction and cohesion in their intimate partnerships, they are more likely to provide financial support for their children, to participate in

caregiving, and to be actively involved in their children's lives (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Gavin et al., 2002). The current study extends this literature by examining the role of religiosity in shaping African American fathers' and mothers' romantic relationships.

The positive links between intimate partner relationship quality and African American fathers' parenting practices can be attributed to several processes. Interactions between intimate partners can influence parenting via spillover effects; the emotional quality of the marital relationship can spill over into the father-children relationship (Belsky, 1990; Belsky et al., 1991; Brody, Arias et al., 1996; Coiro & Emery, 1998; Dickstein & Parke, 1988; Harris et al., 1998; Kitmann, 2000). High-quality intimate relationships that include high levels of warmth and low levels of hostility may generalize to the parenting role, leading fathers to maintain close, high-quality relationships with their children and to take an active role in disciplining their children and encouraging them, through positive reinforcement, to engage in prosocial behavior. Other researchers have suggested that the link between marital interactions and parenting could be an expression of parents' general interpersonal skills (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). African American fathers who have positive relationships with both their intimate partners and their children may have good interpersonal skills or generally amiable personalities. Future studies should examine the role of fathers' relationship skills and personality characteristics in determining the quality of their intimate relationships and parenting processes.

The links between intimate partner relationship quality and fathers' parenting processes also may result from moderating or mediating variables that the current study did not address. Stressor pileup is one such variable. Several studies have found paternal stress to have a negative influence on fathers' parenting processes and interactions with their children (Galejs & Pease, 1986; Ge et al., 1994; Roggman et al., 1999). If stressor pileup moderates the influence of

intimate partner relationship quality on fathers' parenting processes, the added stress of a low-quality intimate partnership might overwhelm fathers and decrease their ability to parent effectively. Future research should also address the possibility that fathers' psychological functioning may mediate the link between intimate partner relationship quality and parenting practices. Although these associations have not been evaluated specifically with an African American sample, fathers who experience high levels of negative affect are likely to use harsh, inconsistent parenting practices (Ge et al., 1994) and fathers who experience high levels of depression tend to be uninvolved with their children (Roggman et al., 1999).

Indirect Association between Religiosity and African American Fathers' Parenting

The current study also hypothesized an indirect link between fathers' religiosity and fathers' parenting through intimate partner relationship quality. This indirect link was significant. High levels of religiosity among fathers positively contributed to their intimate partner relationships; positive interparental relationships, in turn, created supportive environments in which fathers developed high-quality relationships with their children that included inductive reasoning and excluded harsh, inconsistent discipline. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies in which the same indirect association has been detected (Brody et al., 1994).

Although the current study is one of a few that have examined the particular links between religiosity and parenting specifically among African American fathers, religion and spirituality make important contributions to African Americans' family lives in general (Brody, Stoneman et al., 1996; Brody et al., 1994; Hill, 1971, 1999). Couples' involvement with religious organizations gives them access to resources that include social support networks, family counseling, parenting support groups, and family activities. The social support that

partnered African American fathers can receive from religious organizations may have helped them to cope with marital stress that otherwise could have undermined their ability to parent effectively (Brody, Stoneman et al., 1996; Brody et al., 1994).

African American Fathers' Parenting and Children's Problem Behavior

Consistent with the proposed hypotheses, a negative link emerged between children's development of problem behaviors and fathers' competence-promoting parenting practices. Several studies have found fathers' parenting to be a protective factor against children's manifestation of problem behaviors (Allhusen et al., 2004; Amato & Gilberth, 1999; Amato & Rivera, 1999), including engagement in delinquent activities (Harris et al., 1998; National Fatherhood Initiative, 2003; Kosterman et al., 2004; Thomas et al., 1996) and substance use (Brody et al., 1998; Brody et al., 2000; Caldwell et al., 2004; Farrell & White, 1998; Hoffmann, 2002; Jordan & Lewis, 2005; Kosterman et al., 2004; Salem et al., 1998; Stewart, 2003; Thomas et al., 1996). Studies using contemporaneous designs with samples of African American families indicate that children whose fathers are involved, supportive, and warm toward them avoid problem behaviors, including the use of alcohol and other drugs (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Black et al., 1999; Coley, 1998, 2003; Harris et al., 1998; Kosterman et al., 2004; Salem et al., 1998).

The present study's findings are consistent with the hypothesis that fathers protect their children from engagement in problem behaviors by maintaining high-quality relationships with them that include discussions about the consequences of stealing, drinking, smoking, and associating with delinquent peers (Brody et al., 1998; Brody, Flor, Hollett-Wright, McCoy, & Donovan, 1999). Children who have high-quality relationships with their fathers also may feel free to talk to their fathers about peer pressures to engage in these activities. Such conversations provide fathers with additional opportunities to advise their children about the best ways to

manage these situations. Fathers' close relationships with their children may include knowing their children's friends and the kinds of activities in which they engage together; this knowledge facilitates parental monitoring.

African American children are less likely to engage in problem behaviors when they have acquired self-regulatory skills (Brody, Kim, Murry, & Brown, 2004; Brody et al., 2002).

Through fathers' use of consistent discipline, children develop the ability to anticipate the consequences of their actions. When fathers provide consistent consequences for antisocial behavior such as delinquent activity or substance use, children become less likely over time to engage in such behaviors because they know that negative consequences will follow. Fathers' use of inductive reasoning helps children to understand the importance of rules and facilitates the children's development of a future time orientation. If fathers explain to their children that rules are established to protect them and give reasons why delinquent activities and substance use can lead to negative developmental trajectories, children become more likely to incorporate these reasons into their own thought process and develop a future orientation (Brody, Murry et al., 2004). Such children are more likely to adhere to parental standards even outside the home and are better able to resist peer pressure (Wills, Murry, Brody, Gibbons, & Gerard, in press).

African American Fathers' Parenting and Children's School Engagement

As predicted, African American fathers' parenting was positively associated with children's school engagement. Fathers who have high-quality relationships with their children may take an active role in their children's education by monitoring (McBride et al., 2005) and assisting with schoolwork, stressing the importance of achievement, encouraging the children to participate in extracurricular activities, and taking part themselves in school-related events (G. L. Greif et al., 1998).

The links between African American fathers' parenting and children's school engagement may also be explained through fathers' disciplinary practices and their use of inductive reasoning. Children may be more likely to be engaged in school if they know that their fathers will take the necessary action to ensure that they put forth their best efforts academically. When fathers explain to their children the importance of education to their future quality of life in the context of an emotionally and instrumentally supportive relationship, children may become more likely to internalize their parents' educational aspirations for them. Because little empirical work has examined the influence of African Americans fathers' parenting on children's school engagement, future research should explore these and other aspects of fathers' parenting that make positive contributions to children's school engagement.

Mediational Effects

As hypothesized, the association between African American fathers' parenting and children's problem behavior was mediated through children's school engagement. This mediational effect has not been examined in previous studies. Its emergence in the present study builds on research in which high levels of school engagement were found to be negatively related to children's engagement in delinquent and other problem behaviors (Gerard & Buehler, 2004; O'Donnell et al., 1995; R. D. Taylor & Lopez, 2005). Studies using nationally representative data sets have found that children who report higher levels of school attachment and academic achievement are less likely to report conduct problems (Gerard & Buehler, 2004). Previous studies with African American samples indicate that adolescents who display higher levels of school attendance, school attentiveness, school bonding, and school achievement are less likely to participate in delinquent activities or use substances (O'Donnell et al., 1995; R. D. Taylor & Lopez, 2005).

Several explanations are tenable for the mediational link from fathers' parenting to problem behavior via school engagement. Children who are highly engaged in school are likely to be involved in school-related activities such as musical groups, sports, and clubs. Previous studies have reported that children who are more involved in extracurricular activities have less unsupervised time and are less likely to participate in delinquent activities or to use substances (Borawski, Ievers-Landis, Lovegreen, & Trapl, 2003; Flannery, Williams, & Vazsonyi, 1999; Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Diaz, & Miller, 2000; Pettit, Bates, Dodge, & Meece, 1999). High levels of school engagement may also protect children from engagement in problem behaviors by fostering a future rather than a present orientation. Future-oriented children are less likely to participate in high-risk behaviors such as drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana or tobacco, and engaging in unsafe sexual activity (Brody et al., in press; Robbins & Bryan, 2004; Somers & Gizzi, 2001). The children in the current study may have been less likely to display conduct disorders, to smoke, and to affiliate with deviant peers because they perceived the negative effects these activities can have on their future aspirations. Future studies should be designed to determine whether other variables, including future orientation and participation in school activities, mediate African American fathers' contribution to children's avoidance of problem behavior.

Although the conceptual model did not include any hypotheses concerning gender differences, analyses were conducted to determine whether gender conditioned any of the pathways in the models; no differences emerged. This result could be due to sample size, which does not have enough power to detect gender differences.

Limitations

This study contributes to existing research by examining the links among paternal religiosity, intimate partner relationship quality, fathers' parenting, children's school engagement, and children's problem behavior. Several limitations, however, must be noted. First, the current study was not intended to be exhaustive. Models that include parameters other than those in the present model could also account for variation in the outcome variables. In addition, only two waves of longitudinal data were used to detect change over time, offering only a limited glimpse of African American families' interpersonal dynamics (Collins, 1996). The current study may have benefited from the inclusion of additional waves of data to determine whether fathers' parenting practices continue to influence children's ongoing development throughout adolescence and into adulthood. Finally, the use of secondary data analysis is limited because the time that passes between data collection and its eventual analysis can weaken the findings' generalizability to current contexts. Furthermore, the researcher's limited exposure to the full context in which secondary data were collected may restrict the researcher's knowledge of particular circumstances that are important to an accurate interpretation of the data.

Implications

The current study's findings have important implications for the development of community- and family-based preventive interventions. On the basis of the significant links that emerged among religiosity, intimate partner relationships, and fathers' parenting processes, program developers should consider these variables when developing interventions to enhance the well-being of African American families and children. Programs designed for partnered African American mothers and fathers should include religious groups and organizations as a resource because of the positive links that emerged between religiosity and effective family

processes. In addition, preventive interventions designed to increase children's and preadolescents' engagement in educational activities and decrease problem behaviors among them should convey to parents the knowledge that marital and parenting roles cannot be compartmentalized (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000); the emotional tone of the interactions that take place between parents can spill over into parent-child relationships. On the basis of these findings, parenting programs should focus not only on parenting skills but also on marital communication to enable parents to handle conflict in more effective ways. The inclusion of marital communication skills is particularly important for parenting programs designed for fathers because the quality of interaction within the marital dyad is one of the most consistent and powerful predictors of paternal involvement (Feldman et al., 1983) and father-child relationships (Belsky, 1990; Belsky et al., 1991; Brody, Arias et al., 1996; Coiro & Emery, 1998; Dickstein & Parke, 1988; Harris et al., 1998; Kitzmann, 2000).

Future Directions

Social science research on African American fathers has a considerable distance to go before it adequately documents fathers' contributions to their children's well-being and development. In particular, more information is needed to determine the amount and type of paternal involvement that contributes to or detracts from children's well-being. This information is needed to help policymakers establish guidelines for visitation between nonresidential fathers and their children. Additional longitudinal analyses are also needed to determine the influence of African American fathers on children's long-term outcomes. Future studies should include more than two points of data collection that take place during a variety of developmental stages to gauge the endurance of the positive effects of African American fathers parenting and to identify the parenting behaviors African American fathers use at different developmental stages

in their children's lives that promote the children's optimal development over time. The influence of employment status and workplace demands on fathers' competence-promoting parenting should receive more attention. For example, future research should examine variations in fathers' parenting and level of involvement that are associated with frequent travel, home-based work, swing shift or night shift work, and work shifts lasting 12 or more hours per day. The literature on African American fathering would also benefit from additional research on the ways in which paternal unemployment influences fathers' psychological functioning, which has been found to influence parenting. Pathways through which African American fathers contribute to their children's academic engagement and protect them from developing problematic behaviors were identified in the current study. Future studies can use this information to map new trails through the largely unexplored territory of African American fathers' contributions to their children's optimal development.

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