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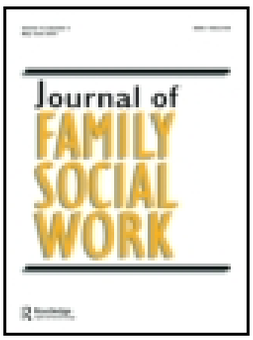

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Fathering attitudes and behaviors among low-income fathers

Juan J. Barthelemy[a] and Tanya M. Coakley[b]

[a]School of Social Work, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA; [b]Department of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a fatherhood intervention designed to improve the fathering attitudes and behaviors of fathers who are low income from metropolitan and rural communities in Louisiana. The study was successful in recruiting a sample of predominantly African American fathers ($N = 57$) and retaining the participants over time. An adequate number of fathers achieved the intervention goals to obtain employment, increase their earnings, and complete educational (i.e., Graduate Equivalency Diploma [GED]) training. In addition, after having completed the program, there was a statistically significant improvement in fathers' relationship with the mothers of their children. Additionally, there were increases in fathers' positive attitudes about being a father, perceived closeness with their children, amount of contact with their children, and satisfaction with the amount of time spent with their children; however, none of these differences were statistically significant. Most of the fathers gave favorable reports regarding the fatherhood program's goals and delivery.

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Father involvement; fatherhood; fathering attitudes; low income fathers; minority fathers

Introduction

In the United States, 24 million children (33%) grow up without their biological fathers (Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006). Of their respective populations, 42% of Hispanic/Latino children and 66% of African American children have absent fathers (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015). Children whose fathers are not a part of their lives are more likely to live in poverty, drop out of school, and engage in risky behaviors such as using alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs (Nock & Einolf, 2008; Rosenberg & Wilcox, 2006). Additionally, they are more likely to enter the juvenile justice system and more likely to be incarcerated later in life (Flouri, 2005; Nock & Einolf, 2008). Studies also suggest that a father's absence early in a child's life has negative cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial effects on the child's development (Cabrera, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2007; Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, Pruett, & Wong, 2009; Pruett, 2000). The body of father involvement literature discusses the quality of fathers' presence in and contributions to their children's

CONTACT Tanya M. Coakley tcoakley@uncg.edu Department of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, P.O. Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402-6170.

lives on a continuum from not at all involved (e.g., absent) to adequately involved (see Coakley, Shears, & Randolph, 2014; Flouri, 2005; Lamb, 2010; Malm, 2003; Malm, Murray, & Geen, 2006). The premise of father involvement research is to increase fathers' direct or indirect involvement with their children or on their children's behalf to reduce negative biopsychosocial outcomes during childhood (Roberts, Coakley, Washington, & Kelley, 2014; Cabrera et al., 2007; Cowan et al., 2009; Flouri, 2005; Malm, 2003; Malm et al., 2006; Pruett, 2000).

Hindrances of father involvement

The reasons that fathers are either absent or not adequately involved in their children's lives are complex and inter-related. A number of underlying societal factors in the United States that are beyond fathers' control affect fathers' involvement with their children—poverty, race and ethnicity, nationality, culture, and gender roles are just some of the reasons that prevent fathers from fully participating in their children's lives. Societal racism and discrimination have had profound effects on numerous facets of African American and Hispanic and Latino fathers' lives. African American men are more likely than non-Hispanic White men to have low educational achievement (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2010), poor health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, 2013), and substandard and unhealthy housing (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). They are also more likely than non-Hispanic White men to be incarcerated (Carson & Sabol, 2012), be unemployed or have low incomes (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013), and live in poverty (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2013). Any of these factors to which men of color are disproportionately exposed can adversely affect their ability to function competently as a parent.

Thus, the ecological perspective provides a useful framework for understanding the experience of fathers and their involvement with their children. This perspective takes into consideration the expectations about fatherhood that men must meet as well as the socioeconomic challenges fathers must address to provide financial and nonfinancial (e.g., emotional) support to their children during childhood. Problems between parents that stem from financial stress and disagreements can hinder their ability and willingness to work together on behalf of their children (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). It is imperative that fathers have an amicable relationship with their child's mother because mothers have the role of a "gatekeeper" in child-rearing. As a gatekeeper, a mother has the power to make final decisions about the manner in which the child is

raised, as well as to control the amount of father–child contact (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowski, 2008). According to Berger and Langton (2011), father involvement is inextricably linked to the quality of the mother–father relationship and to conflict within the mother–father relationship. Furthermore, father involvement heavily influences resident and nonresident fathers' level of involvement in their children's lives (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008).

According to Lamb (2010), most of the barriers to fatherhood stem from the socialization experiences of men. Many fathers' struggles with illicit substance and alcohol abuse, mental illness, poor parenting skills, domestic violence, and criminal activity hinder their involvement with their children (Jaffee, Caspit, Moffitt, Taylor, & Dickson, 2001; Waller & Swisher, 2006; Wilson & Brooks-Gunn, 2001). Fathers' personal issues may contribute to familial problems such as shared parenting disagreements and domestic violence issues that indirectly affect fathers' relationships with their children (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; McLanahan, & Beck, 2010). In sum, numerous inter-related barriers exist for fathers internally as well as within their families and environments that affect the quantity and quality of fathers' involvement (Cowan et al., 2009).

Interventions with fathers who are low income from minority backgrounds should thus emphasize employment services while addressing the societal factors that place these fathers at a disadvantage (Behnke, Taylor, & Parra-Cardona, 2008; Nelson, 2004). However, the greatest challenges of father involvement programs are recruiting fathers to participate in such programs and retaining them in the programs so they can benefit from the full effect of the interventions (Butler et al., 2013; Durant et al., 2007; Jones, Steeves, & Williams, 2009). The purpose of this article is to evaluate the effectiveness of a fatherhood intervention with fathers who are low income.

Propositions

We propose that fathers who complete the fatherhood intervention will

(1) improve their attitude about being a father
(2) increase their closeness with their children
(3) increase their amount of contact with their children
(4) increase their satisfaction with the amount of time spent with their children
(5) improve their mother–father relationships
(6) obtain employment.

Method

This pretest posttest study of 57 fathers who were low income was conducted from Fall 2009 to Spring 2010. All study activities were approved by the Institutional Review Board of a university from the Southern U.S. region.

Recruitment

Recruitment was conducted by our research team of faculty and staff from a Southern university's Department of Social Work. Team members consisted of African American males who had degrees in human services and who were certified as parent educators. The characteristics of our team members were instrumental in engaging fathers and maintaining their interest. Using a purposive sampling method, the participants were recruited from the local community, which comprised five Southeastern parishes in Louisiana. These parishes were selected because they had some of the highest Black poverty rates in that state (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Our recruitment efforts produced 100 referrals from local community organizations, faith-based organizations, grassroots community outreach, Child Support Enforcement, and social services agencies, including the county Departments of Social Services. Additionally, referrals were received from city and criminal courts, the Department of Corrections, and the Probation and Parole Re-entry Program. The research team explained the study purpose and risks to prospective participants either by telephone or in person. Team members communicated the importance of the study and the research team's need to understand and support fathers' fathering needs through an intervention. This was a critical step in persuading fathers to trust the team members and subsequently agree to participate.

The inclusion criteria were fathers whose status was (1) noncustodial, (2) low income, or (3) no income at all. A focus of the program was to help African American fathers who were noncustodial improve their relationship with their children and to better understand their child support obligations. However, there was no stated exclusion criteria for fathers. Therefore, the project investigators accepted all fathers who showed up to participate regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Sample

Table 1 provides a description of the father sample. The study sample consisted of 57 biological fathers. Most of the participants were African American (86.2%). Fathers' ages ranged from 21 to 49 years (M = 34.27, SD = 8.62, N = 56). On average, the highest grade that fathers had completed was the 11th grade. The majority of fathers had never been married (69%). The fathers had

Table 1. Fathers' characteristics.

Variable *N* = 57	%
Legal status	
Biological father	100.0
Has a child age ≤ 18 not living with him	100.0
Custodial status	
Has full or joint custody	80.1
Does not have custody	19.9
Race/ethnicity	
African American	86.2
White	10.3
Other	1.0
Age	
18–20	6.9
21–30	39.7
31–40	36.2
41–50	10.3
51–60	6.9
Education	
Less than high school	24.6
High school degree	31.0
Graduate Equivalency Diploma	32.8
Technical/associate's degree	18.6
Bachelors degree/4-year college degree	1.7
Employment	
Full-time	29.8
Part-time	15.8
Temporary, pick-up, or occasional jobs	26.3
Unemployed	28.1
Marital status	
Single	69.0
Married/partnered	6.9
Divorced/separated	24.1
Types of employment	
Construction worker, concrete finisher, carpenter, painter, contractor, remodeling	29.8
General laborer, stock/busboy, dishwasher, fast-food worker	28.1
Cook, fast-food preparer	10.5
Lawn care, landscaping, garbage collector	10.5
Pipe fitter, electrician, plumber	7.0
Warehouse duties, load and unload	1.8
Cashier, clerical, tax preparer, sales, assistant manager, offset printer	1.8
Other	3.5

histories of unemployment, underemployment, and part-time employment. Most fathers had worked either in construction or home improvement (29.8%) or in the restaurant or fast-food industry (29.8%). Several participants (26.3%) reported that over the past 6 months prior to this study, they had been homeless or lived in an emergency shelter at some point, and 24.6% reported that they had lived in a halfway house at some point.

Parenting

Participants reported having from one to seven children (mode = 1, $M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.42$). Moreover, the participants reported having fathered

children with a range of one to five different mothers (mode = 1, M = 1.75, SD = 1.14). When asked how many of their children lived with them most of the time, 80.7% reported zero children, 14.0% reported one child, and 5.3% reported two children.

Child support

With regard to child support orders, 17.2% of the participants reported that they were supposed to pay child support. Specifically, 12.1% reported having one child support order, 3.4% reported having two child support orders, and 1.7% reported having three child support orders. Others reported that they did not have existing child support orders. According to their self-reported information, the fathers' payments ranged from $100.00 to $583.00 per month. The average child support payment was about $264.20 per month. Child support records were made available for 15 of the participants in the program. According to the child support records, child support payments ranged from $100.00 to $1,020.00 per month. Arrears ranged from $300.00 to $21,056.00.

Legal issues

Approximately one-half of the participants reported that they had been convicted of a misdemeanor crime. In addition, more than one-half reported that they had been convicted of a felony offense. A few fathers (5.5%) reported that they had been convicted of a violent crime, and none reported that he had been convicted of spousal or child abuse. Additionally, 14.5% reported that they had been arrested for driving under the influence (DUI) or driving while intoxicated (DWI), and 16.1% reported that they had been incarcerated/jailed for committing a non-child-support-related offense. Sixteen (28.1%) participants reported that they were currently on probation, and 8.8% reported that they were currently on parole. Furthermore, 24.6% reported that they currently had charges pending. In addition to legal problems, 19.6% of the participants reported that they were currently in an alcohol/drug treatment program.

Intervention

The Full-Time Fathers Program (FTFP) was established through the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative for the purpose of increasing fathers' involvement in their children's lives (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance [USDHHS, ACF, OFA], 2016). The Responsible Fatherhood Initiative's aim is to help fathers be "present in a child's life, actively contributing to a child's healthy development, sharing economic responsibilities, and cooperating with a child's mother in addressing the

full range of a child's and family's needs" (USDHHS, ACF, OFA, 2016). The Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit provides useful strategies for identifying community needs regarding fathering in the community. Based on results from the needs assessment conducted by the investigators of our study, the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative curriculum was adapted to fit the needs of the target Louisiana community.

The FTFP emphasized 10 of the 19 chapters from the Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum (USDHHS, ACF, OFA, 2016). There were five major components of the FTFP: (1) a fatherhood curriculum, (2) child support services, (3) a peer support group, (4) employment assistance and job placement, and (5) tracking of parents' participation. Each participant was assessed and an individualized intervention was developed based on the father's unique needs. The fathers were required to participate in each component of the FTFP training as a part of the program completion. The staff (which included contracted licensed professional counselors/parent educators and contracted job trainers) conducted the program with fathers on the university's campus and at various locations within the communities.

The goal of the fatherhood curriculum was to improve fathers' relationships with their children, significant others, and their children's mothers. Fathers received instruction to enhance their parenting skills, fatherhood roles, and nonfinancial responsibilities (e.g., to emotionally support children). Fathers explored their values and learned how to develop positive values in their children. They also discussed how race and racism affect their lives and learned strategies to cope. Staff facilitated discussions to help fathers understand how alcohol and substance use/abuse will deteriorate families.

The child support services curriculum had the goal of ensuring that fathers understood how to navigate the child support system and knew their legal rights as a parent in terms of custody sharing and visitation. Team members were responsible for educating the participants regarding the child support process and helping them to understand their child support status. Sometimes this required that the staff help participants identify their child support workers. The peer support group was essentially a means for fathers to support other fathers emotionally and provide guidance and encouragement to remain in their children's lives as active and positive parents.

The goal of the employment assistance and job placement curriculum was to improve fathers' economic status by providing job training, employment services, and career-advancing education (USDHHS, ACF, OFA) such as Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification, so they would be better able to contribute financially (e.g., child support payments) to their children's well-being. They also learned about dressing appropriately for the workplace. This curriculum was also structured to enhance fathers' ability to maintain employment by teaching them to adopt new behaviors and skills to enhance responsible work habits (e.g., consistent attendance and punctuality), conflict resolution and

effective communication, social, and interpersonal skills. This was important given their limited work experience and their need to learn how to handle disagreements and problem solve when conflicts arise at work, as well as how to not argue or become disrespectful with coworkers or employers or quit a job in haste. Finally, given the challenges of recruiting and retaining African American fathers in an intervention, a goal of the program was to track parents' participation to assess the effectiveness of a program designed to help fathers overcome the major social and ecological barriers to their involvement with their children.

At the beginning of the program, the staff developed individual service plans for each participant. This plan was used to identify the necessary services to help each participant to succeed in the program. The staff then made the necessary referrals to address the needs identified in the individual service plan. Services could include GED training, housing, job placement (participants were referred to Career Solutions), or clothing for employment. Several logistical measures were taken to ensure that fathers would be able to attend and participate in the program with ease. The staff ensured that fathers knew the schedule of the program and had a reliable means of transportation to attend the FTFP sessions.

Participants met for 1 to 2 hours once a week for 6 weeks. The program was provided free of charge and refreshments were provided. The program sessions were scheduled on days that were convenient for participants and that did not interfere with their work schedules. In addition, the sessions were designed to be brief so they would not become cumbersome for the participants.

Measurement

Form 1: Background Form

The Background Form is designed to collect basic demographic information about participants. The form contains 24 items such as age, ethnicity, marital status, educational status, and living arrangement. There are also items regarding how the participants heard about the program and what they hope to gain from their participation in the program.

Form 2: Assessment Form

The Assessment Form has 18 items designed to identify potential barriers to maintaining employment and paying child support. Sample items include employment history, financial benefits received during the last 12 months, relationship with each child's mother, and amount of time spent with each child.

Form 3: Program Evaluation Form

The Program Evaluation Form was used to gather data on participants' attitudes and behaviors with regard to fathering and the father–mother relationship, as well as their evaluation of the FTFP program. This form

asked participants to rate the program, curriculum and the instructor using a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *disagree*, 4 = *strongly disagree*). Sample items include "the information was presented clearly and the overall course was worthwhile." None of the assessments used was a standardized instrument; thus, the scales' reliability and validity are undetermined.

Data analysis

Frequency distributions and percentages were tabulated for demographic data using SPSS (version 20.0) to examine the distribution and central tendencies of variables. Pretest and posttest data were analyzed using chi-squared tests to determine if there were any significant differences in attitudes and behaviors related to fathering before and after the program.

Results

Impact of FTFP

We examined the influence of the fatherhood program on fathers' perceived fathering attitudes and on their behaviors. The results are provided for those participants who had completed the pretest and posttest at the time of this report.

Propositions

(1) To improve fathers' attitudes about being a father: The results indicated a positive change in attitudes about being a father. However, these results were not statistically significant.
(2) To increase fathers' closeness with their children: The results indicate a positive change in attitudes about how close fathers feel to their children. Fewer fathers reported feeling "not close at all" or "somewhat close" compared to those fathers who reported feeling "very close" to their children. These results were not statistically significant.
(3) To increase the amount of fathers' contact with their children: The results indicated that there is little positive change in the amount of time fathers spend with their children. These results were not statistically significant.
(4) To increase fathers' satisfaction with the amount of time spent with their children: The results indicated a positive change in attitudes regarding satisfaction with the amount of time fathers spend with their children. Fewer fathers reported feeling "very dissatisfied," while more fathers reported feeling "somewhat satisfied." These results were not statistically significant.

Table 2. Relationship with child's mother.

Overall, how would you describe your relationship with the other parent (mother)?				
	Pretest		Posttest	
	n = 54	%	*n* = 54	%
No relationship	6	11.1	0	0
Very hostile	2	3.7	1	1.9
Somewhat hostile	6	11.1	1	1.9
Neutral	13	24.1	10	18.5
Somewhat friendly	10	18.5	14	25.9
Very friendly	17	31.5	28	51.9

Note. χ^2 (5, N = 54) = 13.65; $p < .05$.

(5) To improve the father–mother relationship: There was a statistically significant change between pretest and posttest scores for the variable, "Overall, how would you describe your relationship with the other parent?" Although fewer participants reported "no relationship" after the intervention, there was a slight increase in "very hostile" and "somewhat hostile" responses. There was also a slight increase in "somewhat friendly" and "very friendly" responses. The results show that there was a positive change in fathers' perceptions of their relationships with the other parent (see Table 2). These results are important because research has shown that a lack of fathers' involvement in their children's lives is related to strained relationships with their children's mothers (Fagan & Barnett, 2003).

(6) To obtain employment: Forty percent of the fathers increased their education level and completed GED training during the program, which better positioned them to obtain a job. Fifty percent of the participants gained employment and increased their earnings while in the program.

At the time of this postintervention report, 27.27% of the participants had obtained employment and were currently working. This information is slightly inconsistent with self-reports about employment. This inconsistency can be attributed to the timing of the survey that asked about employment. Participants were given surveys at the beginning of the program. Therefore, some participants had obtained gainful employment by the completion of their program. Table 1 gives a complete list of the types of employment fathers had in the past 12 months prior to beginning the program.

Program evaluation

The vast majority of participants (96.3%) felt that they mastered the material in the program. Moreover, participants reported that the program provided useful information that could help them (1) maintain a relationship with

Table 3. Impact of full-time fathers program (percentages).

(*N* = 54)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	NA
Helped me understand my child support situation	46.2	25.6	7.7	0	20.5
Helped me understand my legal rights and responsibilities with respect to my children	56.4	33.3	7.7	0	2.6
Provided group support	64.1	33.3	2.6	0	0
Helped me to learn about community services	52.6	36.8	7.9	0	2.6
Helped me to be a better parent	63.2	28.9	7.9	0	0
Provided me with specific job opportunities and getting job interviews	44.7	34.2	13.2	0	7.9
Improved chances of getting/keeping a good job	51.3	33.3	12.8	0	2.6
Improved my chances of being involved with my children in the future	68.4	31.6	0	0	0
Helped me to see that other people have similar problems	64.1	25.6	10.3	0	0
Gave me hope about my future	74.4	25.6	0	0	0
Improved how well I communicate with my child's other parent	66.7	25.6	5.1	0	2.6
Improved how well I co-parent with my child's other parent	63.9	25.0	5.6	0	5.6
Changed attitude about relationships with others	59.0	30.8	7.7	0	2.6
Understood my situation	64.1	35.9	0	0	0
Overall, how would you rate the program?	84.6	15.4	0	0	0

their children (100%), (2) communicate appropriately with a coparent (97.4%), and (3) enhance their knowledge about community resources to improve their ability to care for and support their children (97.4%). Participants also indicated that they received the assistance they were seeking from the program (98.1%), and the majority (84.6%) rated the fatherhood program as "excellent" (see Table 3 for a complete list of responses).

Discussion

A meta-analysis of father interventions conducted by Lundahl, Tollefson, Risser, and Lovejoy (2008) indicated that fathers' participation in parenting training programs was associated with positive child outcomes. In this study, the FPTP participants had an increase in positive attitudes about spending time with their children, an increase in positive feelings about their closeness with their children, and an increase in positive attitudes regarding how they feel about being a father. However, these results lacked statistical significance.

The significant findings regarding the mother–father relationship lend support for continued support and skill building for fathers to improve the relationships between fathers and the mothers of their children. This is essential to provide in the absence of a two- parent family, which is reported to have significant benefits for children (USDHHS, ACF, OFA, 2016). The benefits of two-parent families include better economic status, child well-being, and so on. This indicates that continued emphasis ought to be on addressing the FTFP's goal to encourage the formation and maintenance of healthy coparenting between two parents.

This study's sample was composed entirely of biological fathers. According to Berger and Langton (2011), biological fathers will invest (referring mainly to nonfinancial investments) in their children more than social fathers. Various theoretical perspectives attribute this to biological fathers' legal and normative obligations, which are much more defined and accepted than social fathers' obligations (Berger & Langton, 2011). Additionally, these perspectives suggest that this investment by biological fathers in their children can be explained by evolution and fathers' goal to pass on their genes and ensure their children's success. This may explain why our sample of biological fathers had high levels of positive regard for their children and interest in being involved in their lives. These theories imply that social workers may need to approach father involvement efforts differently according to whether they work with biological fathers or social fathers. This is particularly important given that it is typical in the African American community for a social father to assume the fatherhood role in the absence of a biological father (Jayakody & Kalil, 2002).

Our findings also showed that when participants felt better about their role as fathers, they were more likely to increase their participation as fathers. Furthermore, when participants increased the quantity and quality of time spent with their children, they met the goals of the program. The findings indicated an increase in participants' positive thoughts about fathering and an increase in spending time with their children.

As demonstrated in this study, employment is an area that requires multilayered attention. For instance, many men are required to pay child support but continue to fall behind on their obligations. Additionally, improved employment opportunities may serve as a catalyst to fulfill their responsibilities, but the underlying issues cannot be ignored. Many of the FTFP participants who had difficulty obtaining adequate employment had also experienced legal problems and were dealing with alcohol and substance abuse issues. Therefore, practitioners and researchers who work with fathers must address those issues simultaneously during the provision of employment assistance services because they will likely disrupt any employment progress.

Other challenges included finding employment for participants with extensive criminal backgrounds and alcohol/substance abuse issues. Consequently, staff members continue to pursue networking and relationship building with community stakeholders to improve communication. This makes it easier to obtain data such as child support records. Additionally, relationship building is a critical component of establishing employment opportunities for individuals who are difficult to place in a job setting. The FTFP staff also acknowledges the difficulties that transportation issues may pose for participants. Although participants are provided with bus tokens, not all participants live in areas that are accessible by public transportation. Thus, it is necessary to hold activities in various places

within the community to make them more accessible to participants who live in different areas and who cannot afford to pay transportation fares.

Limitations

Because of the small sample size used in this present study, we caution readers that the findings might not be generalizable to the larger population of fathers who are low income. An additional limitation of the study involves the inconclusive study results. Although we have some indication that the program helped some fathers improve interpersonally and economically, we cannot definitively state its effectiveness. We conjecture that the issue is methodological (e.g., larger sample size needed) and statistical (e.g., parametric test needed), given that the results were in the predicted direction. Additionally, the fathers provided a positive evaluation of the effectiveness of the FTFP (see Table 3).

There is a need for future studies on the FTFP using rigorous methodology and data analysis. A comparison group, pretest, posttest, follow-up design is suggested. Additionally, the outcome data need to be collected at a continuous level to ensure that the most sophisticated statistical tests are used. We also suggest a follow-up period of at least 6 months to determine the participants' ability to retain and apply the learned attitudes and behaviors. Further, because we used a sample that included many fathers who are disadvantaged who had chronic familial and economic challenges, it is possible that they need more time to absorb information from the curriculum. Therefore, researchers should account for possible instances where participants could have a setback and need to receive additional doses of the intervention. Further, researchers can appraise whether changes are needed in the frequency, intensity, or duration of various parts of intervention's curriculum.

There also was a limitation concerning the breadth of available data. Specifically, child support records were not available for all participants at the time of this report. We were therefore unable to ascertain whether there was an increase in child support payments as a result of participating in the program.

Additionally, our results showed that approximately 20% of fathers reported that their children lived with them "most of the time." Given that the sample consisted of noncustodial fathers, a probable explanation for this result is that African American noncustodial parents who do not have physical custody commonly have an informal agreement that entails "liberal visitation rights," and thus these parents remain actively involved in their children's lives (Wolf, 2016, p. 1). Consequently, *noncustodial* is not synonymous with *no visitation* or *never lives with the child*. Although an African American father might not have custody, he might still be welcomed as part

of the family, and he may even assume primary caretaking duties in his own home the majority of the time.

Also given the complex nature of the relationship of some fathers (e.g., having multiple partner fertility or having offspring by more than one woman), it is possible for a father to have resident and nonresident status. Thus, he could be nonresident to one or more of his children and yet have at least one other child that resides with him who he is raising. Our results indicate that some participants were required to pay child support for children who did not live with them. This explanation is very likely, as approximately 24% of the participants had fathered from one to five children with different women.

Future research with African American fathers should provide a clearer explanation regarding what is being asked and should offer an opportunity for fathers to enter a response for each child they have fathered. Additionally, it is important that future research provide additional culturally sensitive responses that are unique to African Americans' family compositions and family arrangements.

Conclusion

When fathers cannot financially support their children, they are at risk for being denied child visitation by the mother of their children (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). Furthermore, they are in jeopardy of being jailed or repeatedly fined if they are not able to pay child support. Therefore, we recommend that social workers implement an ecological approach such as the FTFP to address the barriers to father involvement so fathers can stay adequately involved. The explicit benefit is that fathers will learn and apply viable strategies to support their children financially and nonfinancially and thereby help their children avoid negative biopsychosocial outcomes. There are implicit benefits as well: fathers will take pride in their ability to effectively parent their children, and fathers will achieve self-reliance by establishing their own economic stability instead of relying solely on the government for prolonged financial assistance. Moreover, the example fathers set for their children could be instrumental in breaking the cycle of fathers who are uninvolved due to limited parenting and social skills and low incomes.

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