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Kendra R. Archer
The Perceived Role of Biological
Father Contact in the Self-Esteem
Development of Young African
American Women: An Exploratory
Study

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was designed to explore how young self-identified women of African American and African descent describe the connection between their father-daughter relationships and their self-esteem development. This exploratory study presents findings and narratives from the perspectives of 14 self-identified women of African American and African descent between the ages of 22- 30 who had face-to face contact with their biological fathers for at least five years throughout their lives. It was expected that the African American women in this study would speak to their experiences of paternal love or rejection in ways, which were tied positively or negatively to their self-esteem. The majority of participants (n= 9) saw a connection between their self-esteem and their relationship with their biological fathers. All nine women who reported seeing a connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem also reported having high self-esteem and “close” father-daughter relationships. Four key phenomenological themes describing how biological fathers positively shape an African American daughter’s self-esteem were identified: 1) support and positive reinforcement of daughter’s physical attractiveness and intellectual strengths, 2) general non-judgmental support, 3) conveying positive messages about racial/ethnic pride and standards of beauty, and 4) modeling appropriate boundaries for daughters in intimate relationships.

**THE PERCEIVED ROLE OF BIOLOGICAL FATHER CONTACT IN THE SELF-
ESTEEM DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN: AN
EXPLORATORY STUDY**

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

Kendra R. Archer

Smith College School for Social Work
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank each of the 14 women who demonstrated courage in sharing their individual stories and making enormous contributions to this project. I would like to thank my research advisor, Judith Josiah Martin for her support in moving this project forward.

I would like to thank Jehovah God, my biggest inspiration and through whom all things in my life have been made possible. Over the past two years of my life, I have come to witness revelatory aspects of life, which have humbled, changed, brought me on a spiritual journey closer to you. I look forward to rest of the journey.

To my mother and Shenquia, I'm not sure there are words to describe how much you both mean to me. To my mother, my rock, my fiercest support system, and the strongest woman I know, thanks for always being there. You've put up with my complaining, numerous flaws, and anxieties. I could not have survived this program without your supportive phone calls and wise words, delicious home-cooked Belizean meals, our inside jokes, and shopping trips. To my twin sister, Shenquia, we've been through a lot together and you'll always be my other half and I'll always be there for you. To Aunt Turn, thanks for keeping us strong during those difficult times and being like a second mother to us. To the loving memory of my beautiful Granny Rose, I will always treasure the times we spent together.

Thanks to all of my friends, family, and the Smith community for reaching out and supporting me as I agonized my way through this project! To my cousin, Charles for taking time to help. To Alcia, Joan, Davina, and Shaunna –thanks for the genuine support and sisterhood, you ladies helped to keep me on track during this program! To all of the mentors, teachers, and friends who have inspired and supported me over the years, I will never forget that this academic and professional journey could never have been possible without you believing in me. To Dr. Ophera Davis for being an incredible mentor and guiding me towards social work. To Ed and Pilar Gale, for being lifelong mentors and for encouraging me to apply to Smith.

To my own father, although our relationship has had its ups, downs, and hurts, you've inspired this project and taught me many lessons. I'll always cherish the vibrant moments of our relationship and hold on to the glimmering times of hope. Finally, I hope that this research project finds its way to the attention of fathers who might question the roles they have or can have in the lives of their daughters. Fathers tend to be undervalued and it is my hope that research will continue to focus on their unique roles in families.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Historical and socio-cultural forces such as slavery and institutionalized racism have negatively impacted African American families and fatherhood. For decades, the discourse about Black families has been negative and pathologizing. Black families have been depicted as “poor, fatherless, and dependent on government assistance” (Thomas et al., 2008, p. 529). Furthermore, research on father-daughter relationships in the African American community has primarily focused on the phenomenon of absent fathers (Barras, 2000; Wilson, 2002).

Contemporary research has noted that although fathers can have a positive impact on the well-being and positive psychological development of their daughters, the father daughter-relationship is the least studied relationship (Allgood, Beckert, & Peterson, 2012; Harris, 2002; Leavell, Tamis-Le Monda, & Ruble, 2012; Scheffler & Naus, 1999; Secunda, 1992; Thomas, Krampe, & Newton, 2008). More specifically, there is a gap in the literature covering father-daughter relationships within the African American community and as Thomas et al. (2008) observes, “there is often the presumed lack of father, both physical and psychological, in African American families (p.530).”

The lack of father-daughter research and father involvement amongst African Americans explains why little is known about the role that fathers play in the self-esteem development of African American women. Moreover, little is known about the relational

patterns within father-daughter relationships within this population. This lack of investigation and exploration of father-daughter relationships in this community indicates a need for more research considering how biological father contact affects the self-esteem development of an African American woman.

This qualitative exploratory study investigates the experiences of young self-identified African American women between the ages of 22-30 who have had face- to- face contact with their biological fathers for at least five years and explored how these women describe the connection between biological father contact and their self-esteem development. The purpose of this study is to give African American daughters the opportunity to have a voice in the research on African American father -daughter relationships and to express their unique experiences and perspectives on the impact of biological father contact on self-esteem. The following research question will be explored in this study: 1) What role does biological father contact play in self-esteem development of young African American women?

For the purpose of this study, the concept of father will be defined as the “biological father or procreator of the child” (Kraemer, 1991, p. 378). Furthermore, this study will consider more than the biological status or physical presence of the father, but rather the role and impact of “the psychological presence of the father” (Thomas et al., 2008, p. 532) as designated by the women themselves. According to Thomas et al. (2008), the psychological presence of the father is a “construct in the child” (p. 532) conceptualized on “ the child’s relationship with his or her father, his or her attitudes about the father, and the effects of significant others on both the paternal relationship and attitudes about the father” (p. 532).

The term self –esteem is defined as “the evaluation and appraisal of or attitude toward the self“ (Wagner & Ludtke 2012, p. 148). Moreover, the self-evaluative dialogue, which shapes

our self-esteem or “attitude toward self” is influenced by the information we receive from our social relationships with parents, teachers, and peers (Roberts & Bengtson, 1993; Wagner & Ludtke, 2012). Studies also show that “while it is important that a daughter identifies with her mother, a woman’s self-esteem, self-definition, and comfort with her femininity and comfort with her sexuality are influenced by her father’s acceptance” (Scheffler and Naus, 1999 p. 40). This research study aims to compliment much of the existing research on ways in which parental acceptance and support shapes positive self-esteem development for daughters.

A qualitative research method allowed the researcher to gather in depth information about the experiences of African American daughters for this study’s purpose. The qualitative exploratory method further enabled the researcher to gain more insight into the father-daughter dyad of the African American women who participated in this study through the use of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions. This method allowed participants the space to discuss aspects of their relationship, which may not have been directly inquired about by the interview questions, thereby creating the opportunity for further exploration in future research. A disadvantage posed by this qualitative method is that time taken to interview participants did not allow for the inclusion of a larger sample. Another disadvantage of this method is the possibility of research subjectivity, which could bias the study.

The information gathered from exploring the experiences of young African American women in this sample will support clinical social work by supplementing existing literature and enriching the understanding of racial and psychological issues affecting this population. In addition, this study hopes to provide narrative data, which will aid in the understanding of the perceived role of fathers in the lives of African American daughters and self-esteem development. This study also aims to identify key aspects of relational patterns and dynamics

within father -daughter relationships, and it is hoped that this study will promote positive “attitude toward self” (Wagner & Ludtke 2012, p. 148) for African American women.

Another goal is to identify key phenomenological themes based on experiences of African American women in this study about the connection between father –daughter relationships and self-esteem development. Understanding more about the father-daughter relationship and barriers to positive self-esteem development among African American women may allow clinicians to develop effective clinical interventions for working with African American families and aid in promoting open communication between an African American daughter and her father. This study is relevant because it may also inform anti-racist social welfare policies, which affect African American families and communities. In addition, African American families will benefit from policies and interventions that are more inclusive of fathers’ influential parenting roles towards their children.

In order to better understand how African American women are impacted by contact with their biological fathers, I turned to the mainstream psychoanalytic and sociological literature on father-daughter relationships and psychological development to contextualize my understanding of how fathers play a role in shaping women’s lives. Father involvement has been linked to increased expression of life satisfaction, improved mental health, and a diminished reporting of depression among adolescents and young adults (Thomas et al., 2008). Studies focused on father-daughter relationships have also found a positive relationship between women’s comfort or discomfort with their sexual experiences and their experience of being positively affirmed by their relationship with their father (Allgood et al., 2012; Harris, 2002; Scheffler & Naus, 1999; Thomas et al., 2008).

Research concerning father-daughter relationships and the role of fathers in women's psychological development is sparse. In the literature reviewed for this study, hetero-normative biases were also present. This bias may be due to the social constructions of gender and the gender components of a male and female father-daughter relationship. Another identified gap in the literature centers on how biological father contact specifically impacts women from specific ethnic and racial groups. This research study aims to further explore these gaps in the literature by investigating the experiences of a neglected area of father –daughter research.

This thesis is comprised of five chapters, which begins with a review of the literature on historical and sociological issues facing African American families. The literature review then moves on to a brief overview of research studies and theories on the father's role in both self-esteem development and attachment. A chapter regarding the methodology of this study follows the literature review to provide information regarding the research design utilized and the sample. Chapter Four presents narrative findings from the interviews and phenomenological themes relating to African American women's biological father contact and relationships.

Chapter Five will conclude this thesis and will summarize phenomenological themes and findings, limitations within this study, and address areas for future research. This introductory chapter has defined key terms utilized within this study, and briefly summarized this study's research purpose, method, and design. The next chapter, the literature review, will present an overview of past research in order to contextualize this qualitative research study.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter examines some issues connected to the study of African American father-daughter relationships and how father involvement impacts the self-esteem development of daughters. The literature review will present an overview of the contemporary research related to the primary research question of this study: What role does biological father contact play in self-esteem development of young African American women? The literature considering the complexities of race relations in the United States is vast and a full historical context analysis is beyond the scope of this research study. Hence, the first section of this chapter will present a snapshot of the current and historical context of societal issues facing African American families in order to provide a useful framework for understanding the challenges facing African American father-daughter relationships and the rationale for the focus of this particular study. This chapter will also consider the sparse literature on fatherlessness in the African American community and its emotional impact on African American daughters as most of the research has been on the impact of the father absence on African American males.

The second part of this chapter will shift focus to a brief overview of the psychoanalytic theory literature related to the biological father's role in child psychological development including attachment and self-esteem development theory. This chapter will also review the literature on the role of father involvement and acceptance in the self-esteem development of daughters. Finally, this chapter will conclude with its consideration of lesbian feminist voices on

the role of biological fathers in the lives of children. The alternative voices contribute opposing views, which will question the need for biological fathers and challenge the dominant hetero-normative and hetero-patriarchal undercurrent of the existing literature on parental roles in individual development.

Challenges for African American Fatherhood

In seeking to understand the role of biological fathers in the self-esteem development of African American women it is important to consider how historical and socio-cultural forces have shaped and impacted African American families and fatherhood. For decades, the discourse about Black families has been negative and pathologizing. Black families have been depicted as “poor, fatherless, and dependent on government assistance” (Thomas et. al, 2008, p. 529). In American society, the Black father has been portrayed as being an “invisible” (p. 529) figure both psychologically and physically in the Black family unit (Thomas et. al, 2008).

Although negative labeling of the Black family in the American media and academia began long before Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s report (1965), Black families were further pathologized and negatively impacted by the message of the Moynihan Report. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s report cast Black families as “a tangle of pathologies” and forecast that Black families were at the “heart of the deterioration of Negro Society” (Moynihan Report, 1965). The Moynihan report also argued that the rise in single-mother led Black families was due to cultural deficits within ghetto poor African American communities. Although the Moynihan report made an argument for the expansion of social welfare programs and vocational training programs for the Black community, it had an overall negative impact on the portrayal and representation of the African American community as cultural deviant or deficient. The Moynihan Report (1965) neglected to recognize the impact of centuries of institutionalized

racism, slavery, and legal disenfranchisement, which has led to the marginalization of the African Americans.

Some scholars argue that the Moynihan report had a negative rippling effect, which led to the fulfillment of the reports' forecast of the breakdown of Black families (Barras, 2000, Wilson, 2002, & Alexander, 2010). On the present state of Black families and fatherhood in America, Barras (2000) argues:

There were other ills suffered by African Americans in the United States that contributed to the destruction of families. They faced deliberate racial discrimination, which often expressed itself as economic and political repression and oppression. Further, the entire African American culture was under siege –every aspect of American life told blacks how they looked, dressed, and talked was not acceptable; they didn't fit in. Black people suffered from residual complex psychic and physical effects of slavery. Owing to the devastation produced by that peculiar institution, the pain of fatherlessness festers today in Black America (Barras, 2000, pg. 49).

The state of Black families and the presence of fathers within the Black family unit have been under a microscope of scrutiny for decades. By 1996, 60 percent of Black children were living in homes where the fathers were absent (National Fatherhood Initiative, 1995). Black children are 11 times more likely to grow up in single female parent led households than their White counterparts (U.S Bureau of the Census, 2002). However, fatherlessness is not solely an African American community phenomenon, fatherless households have been steadily on the rise in the United States on a whole for decades. The phenomenon of fatherlessness in America is actually transcending race and class with about an estimated 24.7 million children living in homes without their biological fathers (National Fatherhood Initiative, 1995). Moreover,

statistics show that about 40 percent of children who live in fatherless households have not seen their fathers in at least a year; 50 percent of children who were not living with their fathers had never visited their father's home (National Fatherhood Initiative, 1995).

Public discourse has centered on the issue of "missing Black fathers" along with a co-occurring debate about the lack of eligible Black men for marriage. Recent statistics show that the majority of Black women are unmarried in the United States today, including 70 percent of professional Black women (Alexander, 2010). In 2002, there were nearly 3 million more adult Black women than men in Black communities across the United States, which represents a gap of 26 percent (Alexander, 2010). In many urban communities in the United States in places such as New York City, the gender gap between Black women and men is rising to more than 37 percent (Tilove, 2005).

Throughout popular media, Black men have been portrayed and labeled as an "endangered species", with many asking the thought provoking question: "Where have the Good Black men Gone?" (Alexander, 2010). The issue of the lack of Black men available within Black men and women courtship circles took center stage in the late 90's and 2000's within popular culture as a rising crisis in the African American community (Alexander, 2010). Many voiced concerns about the challenges facing African American women particularly professional Black women who face current challenges in finding Black men counterparts of similar educational backgrounds.

Where Have all The Black Father's Gone? Historical and Socio-Cultural Considerations

The statistics we see today on single parent female households in the Black community and the implications of the impact of fatherlessness on Black children has a background that must be examined. For centuries, Blacks in the United States have endured racism, segregation,

slavery, and the brutal whip of racial devaluation by American society. Wilson (2002) refers to the enslavement of Black people in America as “the greatest social disaster to befall a free society” (p. 5) and argues that slavery weakened African American families. Moreover, “slavery prevented a Black man from either being a father or a husband; he could offer to the mother and the child “no security, no status, no name, no identity” (Wilson, 2002, p.7).

Not only did slavery weaken and separate families, it also destroyed the Black male’s sense of manhood, dignity, and worth. Later in history, Jim Crow segregation and racism put additional pressures on Black families (Wilson, 2002). Black men were once again put into the situation where they could not serve in protective roles. Urbanization and lack of jobs in many areas also prevented Black men from securing jobs and finally supporting their families (Wilson, 2002). Black women were often placed in the position of caring for children alone.

The legacy of Jim Crow, racism, and lack of equal employment and educational opportunities persist today. Harsh social realities continue to marginalize and disenfranchise African Americans. Today, the alarming number of Black men in the criminal justice system now threatens the structure and resiliency of Black families (Smith & Hattery, 2010; Chanery, 2009). Black men currently make up 13.6 percent of the United States population (US Census Bureau 2010), yet Black men make up approximately 40.2 percent of the United States prison population (US Bureau of Justice, 2010).

Alexander (2010) argues that the growing incarceration rates amongst African American men has led to the emergence of a new caste system in America similar to the racial caste system socially constructed by slavery and Jim Crow laws of the early 20th century. Today, the United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world and the racial disparities represented within the penal system makes this all the more alarming (Alexander, 2010; Smith, E., &

Hattery, A. J. 2010). Statistics show that “the United States imprisons a larger percentage of its Black population than South Africa did at the height of apartheid” (Alexander, 2010, p. 6). In Washington DC, approximately three out of four young Black men can expect to serve time in prison and similar rates of incarceration can be found in Black communities and poor urban Black communities across the nation (Alexander, 2010).

The racial disparities in the American penal system are not justified by statistics on drug crimes. Statistics show that People of Color and Whites use and sell illegal drugs at remarkably the similar rates (Alexander, 2010; Smith, E., & Hattery, A.J. 2010). Yet in some states, Black men have been admitted to prison at rates twenty to fifty times greater than those of White men (Alexander, 2010). Black men are often subjected to defacto racial profiling and violations of their civil liberties by law enforcement on a daily basis in many neighborhoods throughout the United States. Racial discrimination operates on a level that is widely accepted and justified by labeling Black men as felons, criminals, and menaces to society.

Moreover, Alexander (2010) provides an analysis of how the mass incarceration of Black men impacts Black families in the United States. Many Black men with a history of incarceration are unable to be ‘good’ fathers due to their second -class citizenship status in American society. Alexander (2010) argues:

More African American adults are under correctional control today –in prison or in jail, on probation- than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began. The mass incarceration of people of color is a big part of the reason that a black child born today is less likely to be raised by both parents than a black child born during slavery. The absence of black fathers from families across America is not simply a function of laziness but, immaturity, or too much time spent watching Sports Center. Thousands of black men

have disappeared into prisons and jails, locked away for drug crimes that are largely ignored when committed by whites (Alexander, 2010, pp. 175).

One of the main issues with the mass incarceration of Black males is that a felony record labels many Black men and subjects them to legal discrimination in areas of employment, education, housing, and all other privileges that most United States citizens are afforded. Individuals with prison records are disenfranchised and barred from participating in every significant sector of society. A felony record forces a Black man into an existence of endless closed doors and bared from opportunities which would enable him to become a fully integrated and productive member of society. If a Black man is labeled a criminal or a menace to society, his subjection to society's underclass is justified. In fact, it is seen as a condition that he has earned and deserved. In many cases throughout the United States, a Black man is denied significant opportunities to contribute to his family productively. Despite his best intentions, societal discrimination prohibits him from fulfilling his socialized role as provider of his family.

As a result of their inability to provide financially and serve as roles models of productivity, many Black men often become frustrated, thereafter abandoning their father roles. The rippling effect of such frustration is that society continues to label Black men as the pathological absent father. In turn, Black men often bear the blunt of the backlash from their families, communities, and Black women who may share their frustrations, but fall into destructive cycles of scapegoat and blame. Many of the challenges facing Black fathers go relatively unchallenged and ignored. While not every Black father in America is poor or caught up in the criminal justice system, the crisis of mass incarceration and its impact on countless Black families and communities is an issue that merits concern and consideration.

Alternative Truths Offered to the “Absent Black Father” Narrative

A few studies (Thomas et al., 2008; Leavell et al. 2012) present findings challenging the dominant narrative about the absent and pathological Black father. The Thomas et al. (2008) study was a cross-cultural study which examined the impact of non-residential or non-custodial (a father who does not reside with the child) father presence on adult children’s lives. The study considered how father presence, family structure and feelings of closeness to the father affected African American and White adult children with non-resident fathers. Thomas et al. (2008) found that many African American non-resident fathers still played a significant role in their children’s lives. Researchers in this study also found a high level of African American father – child involvement. Results found that a “considerable portion of African American non-resident fathers visited their children on a daily and weekly basis, while at the same time a substantial portion rarely had contact with their offspring” (p. 529).

Researchers in the Thomas et al. (2008) study surveyed 650 total participants between the ages of 18 and 88 through contacts at Southern California University. The main subset within the sample in this study consisted of 196 African American participants and 454 White participants for a total of 650 participants. The study was mixed gender and 48% of the participants were men and 52% were female. Participants answered questions on the Father Presence Questionnaire (FPQ) which “tapped into three dimensions of their relationship with their father: feelings about the father, the physical relationship with the father, and perceptions of the father’s relationship with them” (Thomas et al., 2008, p. 533).

The Thomas et al. (2008) study examined how race, family structure, and income differences affect the adult children’s perceptions of their family structure, mother support for the father’s relationship with the child, and their perceptions and attitudes of their own

relationship with their father. The findings of this study countered the dominant discourse regarding the pathology of Black fathers and presented another perspective to challenge the dominant narrative about Black father absence. The Thomas (2008) study also found that African American adult children with fathers not living in their home felt closer to their fathers than did their White peers. Moreover, African American adult children were more likely than Whites to believe that their mothers supported their relationship with their father and to report positive perceptions of their parents' relationship in spite of separation or divorce.

One area of limitation within the Thomas et al. (2008) study was its discussion on why there was a difference between how African American adult children and White adult children perceived their non-resident father involvement. How does culture and the societal discourse about a particular group's family structure shape the expectations that children have of their fathers? Were African American adult children more likely to report satisfaction with their fathers after any level of contact with their fathers than White adult children, because society had taught them not to expect contact from an African American father in the first place? Did White adult children have higher expectations for their fathers based on the values attached to fathers within their culture?

Leavell et al. (2012) examined the activities that low-income ethnically diverse fathers from African American, Latino and White backgrounds engaged in with their children in early childhood. In the study, researchers surveyed a total of 426 fathers from various research sites across the United States. Leavell et al. (2012) examined gender differences in the father's play with their daughters as compared to their sons. Their findings supported previous hypotheses, which indicated that fathers often engaged in physical play with boys and more literacy oriented play than with their daughters.

The Father's Role in Development: Attachment

In answering the question about the father's role in child development and attachment, theorists from attachment have elevated the father's role at crucial levels of a child's psychosocial development. Jones (2007) argues that the loss of the attachment father in a child's first formative year of life can have an important effect on the child's mastery of key psychosocial developmental milestones. According to prominent attachment theorist Bowlby (1982), children in secure attachment relationships use their caregiver as a secure base from which to explore their environment. Moreover, "over time children develop internal working models of their experiences with their caregivers that will guide their intra-and interpersonal well-being" (Leavell et. al, 2012, p. 3). The Brown et al. (2012) longitudinal study examined child attachment security among fathers and children in early childhood. Researchers in the study found that father's level responsiveness and sensitivity to the child's needs highly correlated to the child's sense of attunement and attachment security to the father (Leavell et al., 2012).

Bowlby (1982) also posits that children often suffer mourning due to the loss of any caregiver or attachment figure because parents are central to their existence. Moreover, loss of a father attachment figure impacts "the mother and her ability to be fully immersed with the infant" (Jones, 2007, p. 46) and "this alteration in attachment may then lead to impaired development of self object differentiation, reality testing, frustration -tolerance, capacity for basic trust and confidence, and disrupt the proceeding tasks of separation-individuation" (p.46).

Defining Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is defined as "the evaluation and appraisal of or attitude toward the self" (Wagner & Ludtke 2012, p. 148). Self-esteem involves self-evaluation, which emerges as an "internal dialogue concerning one's worth" (Roberts & Bengtson, 1993, p. 263). Moreover,

research proposes the perspective that social experiences affect psychological development and wellbeing by shaping an individual's self-evaluative internal dialogue (Roberts & Bengtson, 1993). According to this perspective, our self-evaluative dialogue which shapes our self-esteem or "attitude toward self" is influenced by the information we receive from our social relationships with parents, teachers, and peers (Roberts & Bengtson, 1993; Wagner & Ludtke, 2012).

Father Involvement and Self-Esteem

The presence of a father in the lives of his children has been associated with many positive effects and outcomes. Quality time spent with fathers has been linked to increased expression of life satisfaction, improved mental health, and a diminished reporting of depression among adults (Harris, 2002). Father involvement in the life of a child has also been found to increase self-esteem, academic achievement, and stability in peer relations (Harris, 2002). Studies show that young children and adolescents whose parents demonstrate "affection, acceptance, and support, are likely to report lower anxiety and depression, greater happiness and scholastic achievement, and fewer behavioral problems (Thomas et al., 2008; Barnes & Farrell 1992; Gecas & Schwallbe, 1986). However, Allgood, Beckert & Peterson (2012) observe, that "while a majority of the psychological literature focuses on parent-child relationships in early children's development, relatively little theoretical and empirical work has focused on the nature, activities, and impact of parent-child relationships in adolescence and early adulthood (p. 97).

With the advent of more father-child research, studies have shown associations with *positive* outcomes for children, which actually relates to *positive* forms of father involvement (Allgood et. al, 2012; Leveall, 2012). According to research on the impact of the father-child relationship on self-esteem, there are three types of father involvement, which have positive

implications and outcomes for self-esteem: *engagement, accessibility, and responsibility* (Lamb, Pleck, Carnov & Levine, 1985). Allgood et al. (2012) summarizes the three types of father involvement:

Engagement includes a father's direct interaction with his child. Accessibility refers to a father's physical or psychological availability to his child. Responsibility involves providing the care of the child, as distinct from the performance of care. Each of these types of involvement directly relate to a child's well-being (p. 95)

Examples of what might be referred to as a father's accessibility, which may result in positive outcomes for a child's self esteem, may include activities such as cooking or being easily accessible to the child via communication methods such as telephone or email (Allgood et al., 2012; Lamb et al., 1985).

In examining the role of fathers specifically on the self-esteem development of daughters, the Scheffler and Naus (1999) study found a positive relationship between the comfort or discomfort of women with their sexual experiences and their experience of being positively affirmed by their fathers. Scheffler and Naus (1999) surveyed 57 female university students over 21 years old and asked to them to complete questionnaires. The questionnaires measured the young women's perceptions about their "father's regard for them, perceptions about their father's feelings about their mother, fear of intimate relationships, and self-esteem" (Scheffler and Naus, 1999, p. 39). The findings of Scheffler and Naus (1999) confirmed: "while it is important that a daughter identifies with her mother, a woman's self esteem, self definition, and comfort with her femininity and comfort with her sexuality are also influenced by her father's acceptance" (p. 40).

Although the results of the Scheffler and Naus (1999) research study are dated, the study supports that there is a positive correlation between the perception a daughter has of the positive affirmation of her father and her comfort with her own womanhood. Race, ethnicity, and socio-cultural background of the research participants were not discussed in the Scheffler and Naus (1999) study, which is a limitation of the study. In addition, the study was conducted in Ontario, Canada, which has a different historical and socio-cultural landscape than the United States.

The Allgood, Beckert and Peterson (2012) study provides contemporary findings here in the United States, which supports theories about the positive association between father involvement and self esteem. Allgood et al. (2012) study utilized the Father Involvement Scale (FIC) to assess the association between father involvement and women's self-esteem. Ninety-nine single women between the ages of 18-21 were asked to reflect on their relationships with their fathers. Allgood et al. (2012) examined the correlation the women's sense of their father being involved in their lives and their answering of questions related to "self esteem, life satisfaction, and psychological distress" (Allgood et al., 2012, p. 95). Researchers confirmed that the women who were connected with their fathers had higher levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction and a lower level of psychological distress as compared to the women who reported not having a positive relationship with their fathers (Allgood, et al., 2012). This study presented compelling results. However, a major oversight of this study is that the researchers neglected to present any socio-cultural data on the race, ethnicity, or socio-economic background of the participants in this study.

The Difference of a Father's Love

As the Scheffler and Naus (1999) study found, daughters are impacted by their experience of paternal love or rejection in a way that is tied to their concepts of self-esteem and

value. Most of the research on the impact of parental acceptance on children has focused on the mother's behavior (Rohner, 1998). However, a father's love or rejection is now believed to have a powerful influence on the "social, emotional and cognitive development and functioning of children" (Rohner, 1998, p. 158). Suzanne Fields (1983) believed that the impact of a father's role in self esteem development lies in the possibility that a father's love is perceived as being earned whereas a mother's love is perceived as being unconditional. Scheffler and Naus (1999) proposed that differences between a father and a mother's love and children's perceptions and reactions to the implications of these differences are an area where more research is needed. Much of the literature the exploring difference of a father's love presents theoretical frameworks to conceptualize the phenomenon. Further research is needed in designing appropriate empirical studies to explore these themes.

The Impact of Father Absence

Kieffer (2008) observes that much of the clinical literature on fathers and daughters focuses upon developmental difficulties engendered either by the physically or emotionally absent father" (p. 77). Research supports that the absence of the father typically results in negative outcomes, life adversity, and the feelings of hurt and disappointment by daughters by East, Jackson, & O'Brien, 2006). East et al. (2006) conducted a small phenomenological qualitative study, which explored 9 women's perceptions about the fathers who were absent from their childhood. East et al. (2006) collected qualitative data via in depth individual interviews with the women and were asked to talk about the bond they had with their fathers. The women were between the ages of 22- 46, lived in a father absent environment due to parental discord for a minimum of 4 years during their childhood. Overall, East et al. (2006) found that the women

expressed “feelings of hurt and diminished respect for their fathers” (p. 252) due to their perceptions that their fathers “lacked interest” (p. 252).

The East et al. (2006) study contained some limitations in that it sampled a small group of women. Another limitation is that the researchers, who were a group of nurse practitioners, did not specify the race and ethnicity of the women. Nevertheless, the individual interviews provided the researchers with a window into the emotional world of women who held on to the mental residue of hurt and disappointment left over after a disrupted father attachment.

Countering Views to Father Involvement

One challenging point to consider is the idea that father involvement may not always be positive. The Mori (1999) study in Tokyo, Japan found that father involvement to the point of being perceived by their daughters as being overprotective can be negatively impacting for young girls. In this study 319 girls were surveyed in junior high school and high school in Tokyo, Japan. Mori (1999) was interested in looking at how the father daughter relationship and a girl’s femininity had an impact on a girl’s self esteem. Paternal rearing and girl self- esteem were measured and it was found that “father’s overprotection had a significant negative correlation in the junior high school students, but not in the high school students” (p.45). The measures used in this study of girl’s femininity seemed culturally based and subjective. The age of the girls in the study seemed to play a role in the girl’s perceptions of their father’s involvement. Perhaps women perceive their father’s high level of involvement, parenting strategies, and involvement differently in retrospect and as they grow older. The universality of the Mori (1999) study needs to be further investigated within the United States and within a more contemporary research framework.

Lesbian and Alternative Voices on the Father's Role

Another point to consider in this study and in the other empirical studies outlined in this literature review is the hetero-patriarchal and hetero-normative value laden theoretical frameworks contained therein, which posit heterosexual two parent households as being the ideal. Families such as same-sex parents and single adopted parent households may not subscribe to the hetero-normative values around family and ideals two opposite sex parents or even of two parent households. The voices which counter hetero-patriarchal narratives and ideals pose a challenge to the current literature and research which argue that both biological father and mother roles are distinct and each serve as necessary and complimentary in child development.

Lesbians in particular have often been excluded from the literature on family and parent rearing. Many lesbian couple parents reject the heterosexual assumptions around reproduction and stereotypes of gay adults as anti-family (Goldberg & Allen, 2007; Donovan, 2000). Goldberg and Allen (2007) sought to explore lesbian parents' preferences and intentions around male involvement in their children's lives. This was a qualitative study, which interviewed 60 lesbian women who were transitioning to parenthood about their thoughts on having a male father figure in their children's lives.

Goldberg and Allen (2007) found that many of the women had a sense of ambivalence about their feelings about male involvement in their children's lives. However, the study found that 23 women were in what they named as "the deliberate women" (p. 360) group. The deliberate women group believed that having a male father figure involved was important in the lives of their children. However, the deliberate women believed their motivation for wanting a male father figure involved had much to do with the fact that they already had specific men in

mind for the role. Many of the women wanted their children to have positive relationships with the male father figures whom the women themselves had access to as children such as fathers, uncles, grandfathers, and “other healthy quality men” (Goldenberg & Allen, 2007).

The Goldenberg and Allen (2007) study also found that lesbian women felt comfortable exercising their autonomy as parents in choosing “healthy and quality men” for their children and less restricted by the biological construct, which dictates how many hetero-sexual families views parentage. In this study, the gender of the lesbian women’s children made a difference in their responses. The child’s gender “shaped women’s perceptions of the need for and reasons for male contact, such that having a boy engendered greater reflection about how they would solve the “man problem”, whereas having a girl elicited mind relief” (Goldberg & Allen, 2007, p. 360).

The work of Goldenberg and Allen (2007) offers lesbian mothers the opportunity to:

challenge us to rethink developmental theories and to consider the potentially politicized nature of the assumptions that underlie these theories (e.g. every child needs a mother and a father) and to question the use of rigid gender roles as proxies for normal development (Goldberg & Allen, 2007, p. 363).

However, Goldberg & Allen (2007) neglected to further discuss the lesbian parent participants’ perceptions of how having a male father figure was more necessary for a son than for a daughter. Why is a father figure more crucial to the development of a boy than of a girl? How did the women define “the man problem” they encountered with their sons? If rigid gender roles are in fact insignificant societal constructs, why does a child’s gender matter in determining whether or not he or she would benefit from having a male father figure?

The research studies, theories, and socio- historical considerations outlined in this literature review provide a context for exploring the specific experiences of African American

daughters with their biological fathers. The self-esteem and attachment theories also provide a lens for exploring how African American women interviewed for this study describe the connection between their biological father contact and their self-esteem. The next chapter, Chapter Three describes detailed methods utilized to examine the perceptions of African American women regarding the connection between their biological father contact and their self-esteem development.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The mainstream father-daughter research in the literature review of this study highlights that, “much of the clinical literature on fathers and daughters focuses upon developmental difficulties engendered either by the physically or emotionally absent father” (Kieffer, 2008, p. 77). Moreover, statistics (National Fatherhood Initiative, 1995; Thomas et al., 2008; U.S Bureau of the Census, 2002) have painted a grim picture regarding fathers within African American families and studies of the father-daughter dyad within African American families have been sparse. In addition, East et al. (2006) observes, “little is known about the experiential aspects of the father...from the perspective of young people themselves” (p.253). A qualitative method was used to discover a set of phenomenological themes about how an African American woman’s self- esteem is impacted by contact with her biological father.

This chapter presents the methods of research used to explore young African American daughters’ experiences with their biological father contact and their perceptions of how contact with their biological father related to their self-esteem development. Through individual semi-structured interviews with 14 self-identified African American women, the following research question was explored: 1) What roles do biological fathers play in the self- esteem development of African American women?

Research Method, Design, and Rationale

This study utilized a qualitative approach to explore the role of biological father contact in the self-esteem development of 14 young self-identified African-American women between the ages of 22-30. An advantage to using this method was that the open-ended questions used in interviews allowed participants the opportunity to expand on their narratives and report topic areas, which would be beneficial to address in future research in this area.

The qualitative research design allowed participants to provide detailed descriptions of their relationship with their biological fathers, offering the researcher the opportunity to gain a rich understanding of the complexities of African American father-daughter relationships. Since extensive research has not been done concerning African American father-daughter relationships, it was useful to implement a qualitative study in order to explore and develop a set of phenomenological themes about the topic. A disadvantage to the qualitative method is that the researcher interprets the data and analysis may contain subjectivity. The flexibility offered by this research design was beneficial and permitted participants to elaborate on their experiences with their biological fathers. The sample size of the research was small due to the limitations on time allotted for this study.

This study utilized a qualitative research approach and it is thought that the issue of sample size may have been better addressed by a quantitative research study design. In addition, another advantage of a quantitative study is that it allows for the use of a hypothesis and has more objectivity built into the data analysis. However, a quantitative design would not have thoroughly captured the experiences of daughters and ultimately a qualitative design seemed more beneficial to utilize with the research questions of this study.

Sample

The researcher used snowball sampling to recruit participants. After receiving approval from the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) at Smith College School for Social Work (Appendix A), the researcher contacted personal contacts in person, via email or telephone, or via social networking sites such Facebook. The researcher then contacted these potential participants and discussed with these potential participants the purpose of the study and the inclusion criteria needed to participate. A copy of the informed consent (Appendix B) and recruitment information (Appendix C) was either mailed or emailed to participants prior to conducting the interviews so that potential participants could review components to their participation prior to deciding if they would like to proceed with the interview. Once an individual expressed interest in participating, the researcher collaborated with them to arrange a time and date to meet for the interview. After each participant was interviewed, the researcher asked that they refer other potential participants who may meet eligibility requirements and be willing to participate in the study. The snowballing sampling method proved to be useful and successful in this study. The researcher received many leads from participants in this study through word of mouth referrals. Most of the participants in this study were found via participant referrals and Facebook snowball sampling recruitment methods.

The participants in this study self-identified as women of African American or African descent who are citizens of the United States by birth or naturalization and who currently reside in the United States. Participants were between the ages of 22-30, and had face-to face contact with their biological father for at least five years throughout the course of their lives. In this

study, father is defined as “the biological father or procreator of the child” (Kraemer, 1991, p. 378). Self- Esteem is defined as “the evaluation and appraisal of or the attitude toward self (Wagner & Ludke 2012, p. 148). This study explored relationships between African-American women and their biological fathers. This study also explored how young African -American women described the connection between contact with their biological fathers and their self-esteem.

Data Collection

Data collection was gathered via semi-structured interviews conducted in the researcher’s private office at an outpatient mental health clinic or in a location convenient for both the participant and the researcher. This researcher adhered to the NASW Code of Ethics and received approval from the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) at Smith College School for Social Work (Appendix A) prior to data collection. Prior to each interview, participants were given an informed consent agreement describing components of the study and their rights as human subjects. Potential risks and benefits of participation were also addressed in the informed consent (see Appendix B).

A number of steps were taken to ensure that confidentiality was maintained in this study. The researcher did not ask participants to provide identifiable information when completing the demographic survey (Appendix D). The researcher verbally explained confidentiality to participants and allowed time for participants to ask questions relating to the study prior to conducting the interview. The informed consent forms were kept separate from the completed tapes. The interviews took place in the researcher’s private office or a location convenient for the participant and researcher to protect confidentiality.

The researcher reviewed the informed consent with participants and allowed time to answer any questions pertaining to the study prior to beginning the data collection. Before conducting the interview, the researcher verbally explained that the participant could withdraw from the interview at any point. After the interview, participants could withdraw from the study until April 1, 2013. The researcher provided all participants with a paper copy of community referrals for adult mental health services (Appendix B) prior to conducting the interview. Participants were asked to read and sign the informed consent agreement and complete a short demographic questionnaire before the interview began. After receiving written consent, participants were given a copy of the informed consent agreement document and encouraged to keep the copy for their personal records. The researcher then utilized the interview guide to direct discussions during the interviews. Upon review, recording the interviews allowed the researcher to be more aware of pertinent themes, which surfaced during the interviews.

During each interview, the researcher explained definitions of “biological father” and “self-esteem” utilized in this study to each participant and allowed each participant to ask questions about any of the definitions. All questions asked in the interview were open-ended to allow the participants opportunities to explain their experiences and provide the study with inclusive research. The researcher asked the participants to discuss topics relating to the participant’s relationship with their biological father and the connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem. The topic of African American father-daughter relationships included gender identity, self-esteem development, racial identity, family system dynamics, attachment, and experiences of parental acceptance and rejection. Interviews ranged in time from thirty minutes to sixty minutes in order to collect comprehensive data.

Specific information regarding the participants' individual identity (name and age) was separated from the research data. All interviews were assigned a separate research identification number, in order to separate identifiable information. The researcher hired a professional transcription company to transcribe the audio -tapes and a confidentiality pledge was sought and signed (Appendix E). The research advisor of the researcher had access to the data after all identifying information had been removed.

Data from the interviews was stored separately in a locked cabinet or on a password protected computer in the researcher's home. All data will be kept in a secure location for a period of three years as required by Federal guidelines. Data stored electronically will also be protected. After the three -year period, all data will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

The transcription company hired by the researcher transcribed the data verbatim from the audio files of the tape- recorded interviews. The researcher provided the transcription company with specific instructions on transcribing the interviews to ensure accuracy and confidentiality in the handling of the audio recordings. The researcher also reviewed, edited, and proofread the transcriptions of the audio data to ensure accuracy.

The researcher analyzed data collected from the demographic questionnaires manually. The researcher reviewed the transcriptions separately and identified repeating themes and commonalities. The repeating ideas found in the separate transcripts were then combined from all the transcripts into composite list for the entire sample. This list was used to decipher common themes. If there was an overlap between question responses, the researcher organized the topics according to the theme rather than the response to the particular question. Identified themes were organized into more abstract concepts.

Theoretical frameworks utilized in this study may have influenced what data the researcher interpreted as relevant when coding themes in data analysis. This study explored the role that biological fathers have in the self-esteem development of African-American woman and sought to gain the daughters' perspective in this research. Self-Esteem, attachment, and feminist theories provided useful frameworks for this study. The researcher's understanding of the role of the father in attachment as a caregiver that guides a child's "intra-and interpersonal well-being" (Leavell et al., 2012, p. 3), which is rooted deeply in the aforementioned theories, may have influenced how the data was analyzed by the researcher and what themes were selected as pertinent for this study.

Expected Findings

Mainstream research presented in this study shows that women who are connected with their fathers report higher levels of self-esteem, life satisfaction, and a lower levels of psychological distress as compared to women who reported not having a relationship with their fathers (Allgood, et al., 2012). Studies show that children and adolescents whose parents demonstrate "affection, acceptance, and support, are likely to report lower anxiety and depression levels, greater happiness and scholastic achievement, and fewer behavioral problems (Thomas et al., 2008; Barnes & Farrell, 1992; Gecas & Schwallbe, 1986). It is expected that this study will provide findings, which supports the research outlined in the literature review of this thesis. Findings in this study may provide implications regarding clinical practice interventions and anti-racist social welfare policies geared towards African American families.

It is expected that the African American women in this study will speak to their experiences of paternal love or rejection in a way that is tied to positively or negatively their self-esteem. African American women who have had positive experiences and contact with their

biological fathers may report higher levels of self-esteem and a greater level of comfort with themselves whereas women who have had ambivalent or more negative experiences with biological father contact may report lower levels of self-esteem or discomfort with themselves. It is also expected that some African American women will make the connection between self-esteem and biological father contact. An unexpected finding may be that African American women may express perceptions that their biological father contact had no impact on their self-esteem development, gender, or racial identity.

There are a few possible limitations that may emerge in this study. This study's small sample size and snowball sampling method decreases the generalizability of the population. Some foreseen challenges that may arise in this study are that some participants may respond in a manner they feel is socially acceptable. Participants may also underreport negative experiences or overexploit positive experiences in order to reply in a manner that seems more favorable to the study or what they perceive the researcher desires their answers to be. The researcher identifies as an African American woman and a daughter. The researcher's experiences with her biological father and perceptions of connections between her biological father contact and her own self-esteem development, may affect how the researcher interprets the narratives of the participants.

This Methodology Chapter reviewed the research design and summarized expected findings supposed by the researcher prior to conducting the interviews. The next chapter, Chapter Four will present narratives from the interviews to discuss the findings of this study. Chapter Four is organized to present information regarding: 1) the demographic information for the participants, 2) the narratives and perceptions of the participants on their relationships with their biological fathers, 3) relational dynamics and patterns between fathers and daughters, 4) and 5) daughters' perceptions of the connection between their biological father contact and their

self-esteem. Chapter Four will also present narratives containing any additional commentary from African-American women on father-daughter relationships and issues of racial identity, family, and self-esteem.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The purpose of this study is to develop a set of phenomenological themes about African American father- daughter relationships and the connection between biological father contact and self-esteem. This qualitative exploratory study investigates the experiences of young self-identified African American and women of African descent who have had face- to- face contact with their biological fathers for at least five years and explored their experiences with biological father contact and perceptions on the connection between biological father contact and self-esteem development. A review of the literature uncovered that although fathers can have a positive impact on the well- being and positive psychological development of their daughters, the father- daughter relationship is the least studied relationship. Moreover, the literature review revealed that there is a lack of research on father –daughter relationships and father involvement within the African American community and little information is known about the relational patterns within father-daughter relationships within this population.

This chapter contains the findings from interviews conducted with 14 self-identified African American and women of African descent who had face- to -face contact with their biological father for at least 5 years throughout their lives. The interviews began by obtaining demographic information from participants through a short survey, which included: age, geographic information, relationship status, professional and educational information, and

information on current and past household type system. Interview questions were open-ended and designed to explore African American father-daughter relationship dynamics, opinions on the roles and responsibilities of an ideal father, and African American women's perceptions of the role their biological fathers played in their self-esteem development.

This study considered more than the biological status or physical presence of the father, but rather the role and impact of “the psychological presence of the father” (Thomas et al., 2008, p. 532) conceptualized on each woman's relationship with her father and attitudes about her father. The definition of father as “the biological father or procreator of the child” (Kraemer, 1991, p. 378) was discussed with each participant prior to questioning. Interview questions were designed to gather more information on relational dynamics within each woman's father – daughter relationship. Questions were also designed to gather additional commentary from African American women on father-daughter relationships and issues of racial identity, family, and self-esteem.

The interview questions were divided into nine main sections. The first sections were organized to support the participants' comfort level during the interview and to gain an understanding of each daughter's opinions on roles and responsibilities which would characterize an “ideal” father”. Questions were also designed for the researcher to gain some understanding of each daughter's perceptions about her own father and their relationship. The data is organized as follows:

- 1) Demographic Data
- 2) Opinions on an “ideal” father's roles and responsibilities
- 3) How daughters describe their own fathers and their father-daughter relationship
- 4) How daughters describe their needs in father-daughter relationships

- 5) Perceptions on the role their biological fathers played in their gender and racial identity development
- 6) Thoughts on self-esteem
- 7) How daughters describe the connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem
- 8) Additional commentary on raising daughters and considering issues of intersectionality and self-esteem.
- 9) Additional commentary on fathers in modeling intimate relationships and imparting messages about self-esteem

Demographic Data

Participants (n=14) were recruited via snowball sampling and the social network of Facebook and were residents of various geographic areas across the United States including: Centerville, Virginia; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Oakland California; Chicago, Illinois; North Carolina, Washington, DC; and New York City. It was explained to participants that the interview questions would pertain to their biological father and clarified that their biological father did not have to identify as African American or of African descent. Participants ranged in age from 22 years old to 30 years old.

All of the participants (n=14) self-identified as a woman of African American or African descent. Two of the participants also identified as “biracial”. During the interview, the majority of participants (n=12) reported their biological father to be African American of African descent. Two participants reported that their biological father is “Caucasian”. When asked to identify religious affiliation, the half of the participants (n=7) answered that they did not ascribe to a religious affiliation. Four participants answered “Christian”, one participant identified as

“Episcopalian”, one participant identified as “Catholic”, and one participant identified as “Baptist”.

When asked about the highest level of education completed, the majority of participants (n=12) reported that they had been college educated with a Bachelor’s level college degree. One participant reported that she had received a Master’s degree. One participant reported to be an “undergraduate student” with the highest level of education being high school. Eight participants were current graduate school students working on a Master’s degree. When asked about current means of employment, eight participants reported to be graduate students, one participant reported to be an undergraduate student, one participant reported to be a “Human Resources Manager”, one participant reported to be a “Social Worker”, one participant reported to be a “Fundraiser”, one participant reported to be an “Editor”, and one participant reported to be a “Part-time Writer”. When asked about the household system they grew up in, eight participants reported that they grew up in a “two –parent” household, three participants reported that they grew up in a “blended family” household, and three participants reported that they grew up in a “single” parent household. When asked about current relationship status, most of the participants (n=9) reported to be “single”. Regarding relationship status, two participants reported to be “engaged”, two participants reported to be “married”, and one participant reported to be “in a relationship”.

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Characteristic	Number of Participants (n=)
<u>Race</u>	
African American or African Descent	12
Bi-racial	2
<u>Age</u>	
22-30	14
<u>Years of Biological Father Contact</u>	
0-5 years	0
5- 15 years	1
15> years	13
<u>Religious Affiliation</u>	
Christian	4
Baptist	1
Catholic	1
Episcopalian	1
No Affiliation	7
<u>Type of Household System Grew Up In</u>	
Single Parent	3
Two-Parent Household	8
Blended	3
<u>Highest Education Level</u>	
High School	1
Bachelors Degree	12
Masters Degree	1

The findings and narratives of the participants are organized into themes and presented as follows: 1) opinions on an “ideal” father’s roles and responsibilities; 2) how daughters describe their own fathers and their father-daughter relationship; 3) how daughters describe their needs in father-daughter relationships; 4) perceptions on the role biological fathers played in their gender and racial identity development; 5) thoughts on self-esteem; 6) how daughters describe the connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem; 7) additional commentary on raising daughters and 8) considering issues of intersectionality and self-esteem; and 9) additional commentary on fathers in modeling intimate relationships and imparting messages about self-esteem.

Perceptions on Roles and Responsibilities of an “Ideal” Father

This section contains narratives of responses to questions regarding characteristics, personality traits, strengths, and descriptive words they would use to characterize an ideal father. The researcher began the interview with this question in order to initiate thought and conversation about fatherhood and parent-child relationships. The researcher also wanted to initiate conversation, which would help participants to eventually describe their own fathers and daughter father- relationships. Participants were asked to provide their opinions on the roles and responsibilities of an “ideal” father.

The findings from this section will contain narratives of the participants and will be organized according to themes and sub-topics contained within the narratives. Findings of women’s perceptions of the ideal father are organized into the following two sub-topics: 1) the ideal father in relationship to a daughter and 2) the ideal father in gender identity development. All of the participants in this study (n=14) described biological fathers as being “important” in

the lives of children. Seven (n=7) women reported that they had contact with other father figures such as uncles and step-fathers. Most of the women (n=9) listed words such as “supportive”, “protector”, “provider”, “trustworthy”, “caring”, “receptive” and “non- judgmental”, and “responsible” to describe an “ideal” father. Moreover, in speaking to the impact of an “ideal” father’ “being there” for his children, one 25 year old daughter also said: “The ideal father considers his parenthood his first job and his livelihood his second”. In describing an ideal father, one woman summarized that she felt that an “ideal father” sees his role as going beyond the procreator of the child and includes providing financial, physical, and emotional support. This daughter made the following statement:

I think an ideal father is one who understands that being a father is not just spewing sperm and calling it a day, you know, having a financial obligation to that child and even going further to have an emotional obligation as well to that child. So you’re not just there to pay for diapers or to pay for school, or to pay for this, or to pay for that, you actually being engaged in that child’s experience so you know what is happening with that child at schoolyou’re there when that child is ill or you know, just needs to be able to talk or whatever. So being a father is more than just the surface, it’s more than just making sure that things are okay, it’s actually being present.

The theme of the ideal father as one who has an “emotional obligation” to the child emerged throughout other narratives. Many of the women not only used attributes to describe their vision of an ideal father, they also expanded upon descriptive words to include their opinions on the appropriate roles, responsibilities of an ideal father in relating to his children.

The majority of daughters (n=12) expressed feelings that an ideal father should be “present” in their children’s lives beyond the role of financial provider.

Eight participants answered that “being there” for children translates into children receiving the message that their father loves them. Many women (n=9) also described “being there” as being a physical presence for the child to engage with and “feel comfortable talking to”. One 28 –year-old woman expanded on her thoughts related to an ideal father “being there”:

I think that a father is like I said someone that is supposed to be there at all times for the little, for the big, for everything. If a father has in his mind that he is just simply going to be there, often times it's enough, when it gets translated into that love, when it gets translated into that every life’s lesson, it's what that child is going to communicate then to their children and so on and so forth because you never will have a child say I can't answer that or I can't go to my dad in this time of need. Even if a father didn't do anything else for his child if he's going to be there for his child then that's enough.

Another theme, which surfaced throughout the narratives, is the “ideal” father who supports children in pursuing their interests, goals, and passions whether the interests are educational, creative, or occupational. Several women (n=6) mentioned that an ideal father is “willing to learn about what his child is interested in” and “supports the child” in pursuing their interests. Likewise, one 24- year-old daughter expressed that she felt fathers should introduce their children to their passions and interests in order to create a “reciprocal partnership” between father and child. This daughter said the following about this topic:

I think that a father should be willing to introduce the child to things that he’s interested in or things that are part of his occupation or things he cares about and also a father who is willing to do the same for the child to discover what the child’s passions are, to

support and engage in activities that support those passions and interests.Fraternally, bringing the child into the father's world bringing the father into the child's world I think it is very important. It has to be a very reciprocal partnership.

Another daughter, a 25 –year –old woman also had the following to say:

To me, the ideal father is one who is present and supportive, and who takes his role seriously. He adapts to what his child requires; for example, if his child is impulsive or a little irresponsible, he is slightly overprotective to make sure she doesn't get into trouble. On the other hand, if his child is generally responsible and making sound decisions, he gives her the freedom to take her life where she wants it to go.

The most consistent theme expressed throughout the majority of the interviews (n=13) is the perception of the ideal father as a “role model” to children. One 28 –year-old woman described an ideal father who serves as a role model in the following way:

An ideal father is someone who is there for every aspect of his offspring's life; someone who is able to help that child form into the adult that they will eventually become.

A father is a role model and ideally a father would bring up a child to be the adult that he would be proud to call his child.

Three women described an ideal father as one who provides structure, discipline for children, while simultaneously providing support for the interests of his children. One 24-year-old daughter had the following to say about an ideal father:

He also provides clear structure and boundaries so that the kids know that they have a structured life. He provides emotional, financial, and intellectual support to the family.

He supports the kid's interests and encourages their interests. He also is not afraid to discipline his kids and make it clear that it is discipline and not abuse.

Another 24-year –old woman described an ideal father as one who provides structure discipline for children that is not based on fear, or intimidation, but is productive and provides the opportunity for “learning moments”. This daughter had the following to say about this theme:

I would also think that the disciplinary gesture would be one that is not one of fear, but more one of like respect and integrity and willing to pass those traits on not necessarily through aggression or violence or anything like that. But providing discipline in a structured manner that is productive and allows for learning moments.

The key findings in this section spoke to qualities that many daughters identify as the “ideal” father in relationship to children in general. The majority of daughters (n=12) expressed their belief that an ideal father should provide more than financial support and should be “present” in their children’s lives beyond the role of financial provider. The most consistent theme expressed throughout most of the interviews (n=13) is the perception of the ideal father as a “role model” to children. In addition all of the participants in this study (n=14) described biological fathers as being “important” in the lives of children. Seven (n=7) women reported that they had contact with other father figures such as uncles and step-fathers.

The Ideal Father in Relationship to a Daughter

This section pertains to how daughters described the ideal father in relationship to a daughter. Participants were asked to offer their opinions on how an ideal father should relate to a daughter. Daughters also expressed opinions on the roles and responsibilities of an ideal father.

Many daughters (n=8) expressed that an ideal father is “respectful”, “understanding”, and “sensitive towards his daughter. One woman who described having a close relationship with her own father, described how he helped to inspire her opinions on what an ideal father should offer to his daughter by validating her. She expressed:

I think a father should be respectful, kind, and careful with his daughter. I know that I was extremely sensitive growing up and my dad made sure to acknowledge - and never berate me for - my anxiety and depression. He made me feel like my opinions were important and like what I had to say mattered to him, while at the same time reminding me that I had a lot of learning left to do...and that we all have a lot of learning left to do.

The majority of women (n=11) offered the opinion that an ideal father should be a “protector” for his little girl. Three women described that an ideal father should relate to a daughter “with the best interest at heart”. Five women expressed that an ideal father should talk she should be able to talk to him about “anything” and an ideal father should “be there” for a daughter whenever she has a problem. One woman expressed the following:

For me an ideal father is somebody that protects you obviously, kind of being – supposed to be daddy’s little girl and he has your best interest at heart. Has a good heart, he just talks to you“ I’m there for you”....when you’re having a problem you should sometimes be able to talk to him.

In addition, one woman added that the ideal father should be there to offer advice and guide a daughter without being “too intrusive”. She remarked:

The ideal father is there to provide advice and to act as a springboard when his daughter needs to bounce ideas off of someone. He guides her without being too intrusive, and allows her to form her own opinions as long as those opinions don't negatively affect her wellbeing. He encourages her efforts and fills in the gaps left by her educators.

Some daughters (n= 6) expressed that they felt that an ideal father should engage a daughter in conversations about sexuality, sexual health, and relationships. These women all shared the

belief that an ideal father should be “open” and “receptive” to having “uncomfortable” conversations around sexuality. One woman expressed that an ideal father “should give his daughter space when it comes to her body and her development as a woman.” Another woman described:

I think they should be able to talk about anything really you know, even really uncomfortable conversations like you know about sex and boyfriends. I think that an ideal father is like open to that stuff.

Key findings in this section spoke to qualities that many daughters identified as the “ideal” father in relationship to daughters. The majority of women expressed the opinion that an ideal father should be a “protector” for his little girl. Many women expressed that an ideal father should be “receptive” and “open” in talking to a daughter about issues of sexuality and relationships, and should provide a space for her to feel comfortable talking about her problems.

Ideal Father Roles in Gender Identity Development

This section contains narratives of participants’ opinions on the roles an ideal father plays in the gender identity development of a daughter. Participants were not asked specifically about the ideal roles of fathers in gender identity development, but some participants (n= 6) offered opinions about gender and the role that a father could play in helping to empower their daughters around issues of gender. The narratives about a father’s role in gender identity provide informative qualitative data on how African American daughters perceive the role of biological fathers in contributing to their gender identity development and imparting positive identification messages for women in the face of societal marginalization and inequality.

Some women (n=5) believed that women are sometimes treated “differently” due to their gender in society. Quite a few women in this study (n=6) also shared experiences involving

being in what they described as “unhealthy” relationships with male partners in which they later felt they were “settling” for less than they deserved. According to one woman, fathers could “empower” their daughters around aspects of gender” and daughters should “never feel that they have to prove themselves” to their romantic partners. She expressed:

I think ideally, it would be nice if fathers could really empower their daughters around certain aspects of gender. I’ve heard stories of fathers who tell their daughters things like you could do – you should never feel like you have to prove yourself to your partner. And you can like – you can really do whatever you want. Don’t feel like you’re out to prove your worth and that you are of equal worth of any male partner.

Moreover, the same woman shared opinions on why she feels it might be different to receive messages of empowerment from a father as opposed to a mother. She expresses:

Perhaps a father can uniquely empower a daughter as opposed to a mother who might – a mother could say the exact same thing, but it might add a slightly different angle coming from a man, because he's a man. So I think those kinds of empowering messages could be really, really beneficial for a lot of women.

In addition, the same woman also cautioned against making generalizations or drawing the conclusion that only a father could empower a daughter around issues of gender due to his male identity. She also offered advice regarding how fathers may approach empowering their daughters around issues of gender as an opportunity to offer something positive and unique to the gender development of their daughter. She expresses:

But at the same time, it's tricky, right, because you don't want to suggest that a woman – women can't empower themselves, right and that you need a male figure. But if you are suggesting that a father needs to tell a daughter that she's empowered then you're

suggesting that she needs to get her empowerment from a male person. That's kind of problematic. But.... I don't think that means he [the father] shouldn't do it.

Finally, when offering commentary on the role of ideal fathers in daughters' gender identity development, one woman felt that fathers "should encourage daughters to embrace the full spectrum of their humanity, to try to counteract any messages that would try to limit daughters and who they feel like they are and could be".

Key findings from this section offered daughters' opinions on the roles ideal fathers could play in aspects of positive gender identity development for daughters. Participants were not asked specifically about a father's role in gender identity development, but some participants (n= 6) offered opinions about a father's role in raising important gender issues relating to value, worth, and empowerment for their female daughters. Although some women felt that empowerment messages do not need to come solely from a male, they emphasized that fathers could offer something "different" to the process of gender identity development than a mother. The later sections will contain narratives giving examples of the conversations and relational dynamics, which shaped the participants' understanding of gender and their own gender identity development.

How Daughters Described Their Own Fathers

This section contains narratives describing the participants' biological fathers and aspects of their father- daughter relationships. Participants were asked to use words to describe their biological fathers. All of the women in this study (n=14) reported having contact with their biological fathers "for most of their lives". Ten women were currently in contact with their biological father by phone, email, or in-person meetings. Two participants reported that their fathers were deceased. One woman reported that she had not been in contact with her biological

father on a frequent basis at the time of this study. Most women (n=10) described having “close” or “positive contact” with their biological fathers. Two women described feeling “ambivalent” or “indifferent” towards their fathers”. One woman described having a “mysterious” and “awkward” relationship with her father. One woman described having a “strained” relationship with her father.

In using descriptive words, the majority of women (n=11) described their fathers as “providers” for their families. Half of the self-identified African American women (n=7) who participated in this study also identified their own fathers as role models. Six women in this study expressed that their fathers possessed some of qualities of an ideal father and described their fathers as “supportive”, “present”, “emotionally available” and “easy to talk to”. One woman who describes having a close relationship with her father who is now deceased had the following to say about her father’s “provider” and caretaking role:

When my mom, couldn’t take care of me he was the provider. In a lot of the families you know you hear a single parent as the mom, but for many years he was a single dad. He took care of me and my sisters on his own until he became sick with cancer. So, in a lot of ways, like I said my responses would be the same because I could say that he was the provider; he was my protector; he was my single parent. So, it wasn’t like my mom had that role or at least shared that role. He was my parent so he did everything that he needed to do. He attended my PTA meetings. He educated me, made sure that I went to school. You know, made sure he told me the important things in school.

One woman had the following to say about her “morally responsible” father to whom she grew up being very close to:

I think he has some – he has a kind of piousness to him...I think he just has a very kind of – he's bit righteous about like about what people ought to do morally. He's very kind of morally grounded and he has very strong beliefs about how people ought to behave and I think sometimes, they're even a little bit less flexible than other people's description like he comes down very hard on some of the other men in our family who have done what he would consider kind of morally irresponsible things especially about parenthood and fatherhood and being good husbands, things like that. He would give them no room. He considers them kind of like devious characters. This is one term he would use to describe other men that make choices that are hurtful to people in their family hurtful to women particularly.

Moreover the same woman also had the following say about her biological father:

In some ways, he can be a role model. I think a lot of people would say my father was not the most kind of stereotypically masculine fellow. He's very thoughtful. He's very quiet. He's very compassionate. I mean he did provide a model of kind of the diversity of what a man can look like and what African American men can look like.

Another theme, which surfaced was common characteristics or descriptive words used among the women who grew up having a more “distant” or “indifferent” relationship with their fathers. Several women (n=3) who grew up having more “distant “relationships with their fathers described him as being: “controlling, self-centered, or “stubborn” when relating to daughters and others. One young woman expressed the following about her biological father:

Stubborn in his own world, controlling, self-centered at times, and I think those words are coming up in terms of his relationship to others. By himself, I think he is ambitious, he's smart, he still stubborn. Stubborn goes all around to describe him.

A summary of the key findings in this chapter includes descriptions of the participants' own biological fathers. The majority of women (n=11) described their fathers as "providers" for their families. Half of the African- American women (n=7) who participated in this study identified their own fathers as role models. Six women in this study expressed that their fathers possessed some of qualities of an ideal father and described their fathers as "supportive", "present", "emotionally available" and "easy to talk to". Several women (n=3) who grew up having more "distant" relationships with their fathers described him as being: "controlling, self-centered, or "inconsiderate" when relating to daughters and others. One woman also described feeling that her father was a role model of an African American male who did not fit traditional male stereotypes of hyper-masculinity. She expressed her admiration of him due to his level of engagement with fatherhood, being a good husband, and holding other fathers accountable for "choices that are hurtful" to people in their family and "hurtful to women particularly."

Father- Daughter Relationship Challenges

This section presents narratives exploring relationship struggles identified by the participants in this study. Participants were asked questions about their father-daughter relationship. Participants in this study were asked if there was anything about their relationship or contact with their biological father that they would change. In response to this question, all participants (n=14) in this study identified "challenges" in their father -daughter relationship.

Throughout the narratives, father-daughter relationship struggles related to the following topics were identified: 1) lack of communication and communication barriers and 2) empathic failures between father and daughter. In addition, some daughters (n=3) expressed feelings that their father did not get to take the time "to get to know them" as individuals and to learn about their interests, personal goals, and passions. Two women reported that an obstacle in

their father-daughter relationship was the “judgmental” and “critical” attitude their fathers had towards them.

In describing a father-daughter relationship there were lack of communication and empathetic failures, one woman had the following to say about the most challenging aspect of her father –daughter relationship:

I think one of the biggest challenges with him growing up was that I did not have a voice. I don't mean that in like a stubborn way or like a spoiled way, and I think some of it is also cultural because both of my parents are Jamaican, but there's this, I mean, yes, there's this idea that children should be seen and not heard kind of mentality. I think I spent a lot of time resenting the fact that he controlled so much of my life and I did not live with him.

Another woman spoke to the “mystery” or lack of communication in her father –daughter relationship. She said the following.

There's a lot of mystery--there's a lot that goes unsaid. That makes it very awkward for my dad and I. I know that if I'm angry at the world and I think I have a valid point or if I want to sound smart I go to my dad I can vent about it... But our relationship is strained because he and I are barely touch-and-go and had a somewhat tumultuous relationship growing up. I think neither of us have really gotten over it but because there is such a “silent don't talk about your feelings consensus” for my father and we never got that out. So our relationship is very surface right now.Interestingly enough we very rarely say I love you. If you ask why I would not be able to answer it because it is not-- it's just weird.

In summarizing the findings of this section, all participants (n=14) in this study identified “challenges” in their father –daughter relationship. Father-daughter relationship struggles related to the following topics were identified as: 1) lack of communication and communication barriers, and 2) empathic failures between father and daughter. In addition, some daughters felt that their father did not get to take the time “to get to know them” as individuals and to learn about their interests, personal goals, and passions.

Father-Daughter Relationship Highlights

This section will present narratives and findings related the highlights, positive relational attributes, and “special moments” in the father-daughter relationships of the daughters in this study. Most women (n= 13) in this study identified having at least one “highlight” from their contact or relationship with their biological fathers. Relationship highlights were related to the following sub-topics: 1) closeness of the father-daughter relationship, 2) shared interests and hobbies, 3) comfort with communication, and 4) affirming or “stand-out” moments for the daughter.

Most women (n= 8) reported that they had “things in common” and shared interests and hobbies with their fathers, which positively contributed to the closeness of their relationship and the time they spent with one another. One woman had the following to say about her close-father daughter relationship and their comfort with communicating with one another:

I think my father and I are very close. Everybody in the family has remarked upon how similar we are, in terms of tendencies (very deliberate and methodical in pretty much everything), affectations, viewpoints, and sensitivity. As a result, we share a lot of the same interests. When everybody gets together, my father and I usually end up sitting at

the kitchen table talking - for hours-about everything. What's going on in the world, family drama, his music classes, my writing, books, dogs, etc.

Another woman had the following to say about the highlights of her father -daughter relationship:

We kind of like joke about anything, and I can talk to him about like – you know, really adult things, about things that I wouldn't have to feel embarrassed about and things that my friends are shocked and say” you talk to your dad about that? You joke with your dad about that? It's not like I see him as a friend, because I think that can be dangerous. He is my father and I see him in that role. I respect him, I look forward to him. I don't see him as a buddy, but we do some share some traits that friends share in that way.

Several participants (n=5) also shared stories of highlights or “special moments” during, which their father's openly stated or communicated his love or appreciation for them. One woman shared the following story:

We were at a mall, we were with my father choosing some shoes and we all went out to eat. I see my boyfriend and he was with some girl. So like I guessed he was he was dating her or whatever. You know everyone was basically clowning me like, ah, we just saw your boyfriend. I'm sitting alone on the train and my father came over to me and he says “you know, you don't have to worry about him or whatever because I love you”. So a lot of those moments are special to me but really the one stands out, it really, it really stands out.

In summarizing key findings of this section, most participants (n= 13) identified having at least one “highlight” from their contact or relationship with their biological fathers. Relationship highlights were related to the following sub-topics: 1) closeness of the father-

daughter relationship, 2) shared interests and hobbies, 3) comfort with communication, and 4) affirming or “stand-out” moments for the daughter. Most women (n= 8) reported that they had “things in common” and shared interests and hobbies with their fathers, which positively contributed to the closeness of their relationship and the time they spent with one another.

Daughters’ Perceptions of Relationship Needs

This section contains narratives of women in this study who identified needs or areas of their father-daughter relationship that they would change. Participants were asked if there is anything about their past or present relationship that they would change. Many participants (n=7) who reported having close relationships with their fathers stated that there were areas of their father –daughter relationship that they would change. Relationship needs identified by daughters in this study were related to the following topics: 1) improved comfort in approaching fathers about daily concerns, 2) empathy from fathers, 3) positive reinforcement, and 4) physical affection.

Some participants (n=5) related that they needed a father who they could feel comfortable “going to” in times of need. Two women were optimistic that their relationship with their father would evolve to meet that need. Two women were not optimistic about the present state of their relationship with fathers.

One woman had the following to say:

Do I have needs? Yes and they are needing a father that I can be happy to go to. I want a father to come over and be able to help me fix a light bulb or something if I need it. I want a father to be able to tell us about stuff in the house that we don't know how to fix but you go to your parents for things like that. Yeah. But I wouldn't do good to think that that's the person he's going to be because it's not who he is. So yeah I pretty much

expect it but I'm still struggling with the decision to accept it. It's not easy but yeah that's who he is. As terrible as a statement it is to say, it is what it is.

Some participants (n=4) conveyed that they needed more positive reinforcement in the form of their father's openly saying "I'm proud of you". One woman had the following to say about this relationship need:

There have been times that I've needed more from the relationship. For example, I recently went home for a week to visit with my family and I decided to ask my parents why they had rarely said "I'm proud of you" while I was growing up. It wasn't my intention to hurt their feelings - I was genuinely curious because I hadn't realized I needed that until my husband started saying it to me. My mother was immediately defensive, which is understandable given her past, but my father took in everything I said and considered it. That's how he handles everything: examining the evidence and holding it up to his own opinions and experience. He *listens*, even as he's speaking, and that's a quality I hold very dear and try to emulate all of the time.

Another woman expressed why her father was not her "main source of support":

Yes that is the number one thing in fact I always felt like I wasn't really good enough in his eyes and like even if we were coming home and I had like 5 As and one A- his focus was always okay why did you get an A- you know what is this about? So it always like no matter what I did I didn't feel like he was you know he would say sometimes I mean like sometimes he would say I'm proud of you but I know in his heart that I know in my heart how he expects is not really what I would like is one thing and that is the also the reason why I'm not running to him or why he's not my main source of support is because I always don't feel that you're not truly proud of me and you still would want me to have

done something differently. But I would change that I think we would have had a better relationship if that was the case. Or he would just open, if he was just proud of whatever I did any moment I think I'd be more willing to speak with him and want to spend more time with him.

Another woman spoke of physical affection needs in her parental relationships:

One thing that I think was missing from my childhood is physical affection. There wasn't a lot of hugging, let alone touching, in my family and I've turned into an unusual adult as a result: physical affection makes me nervous and I avoid it at all costs. It was (and still is) a hurdle in my relationship with my husband and it makes me sad to realize that there was a way of transmitting affection that I never really experienced (except at the airport and family reunions).

Many participants (n=7) who reported having close relationships with their fathers stated that there were areas of their father –daughter relationship that they would change. Relationship needs identified by daughters in this study were related to the following topics: 1) improved comfort in approaching fathers about daily concerns, 2) empathy from fathers, 3) positive reinforcement, and 4) physical affection.

Lasting Lessons on Gender Issues

This section will contain narratives of women's perceptions on the lessons they learned from their father about different aspects of gender identity. Participants were asked questions about the role that their father played in gender identity development of self –identified African American daughters. The open-ended questions were designed to gather information about the daughter's perceptions on the role that their fathers played in their development as women. The open ended questions were also designed to gather information on issues that African American

daughters found pertinent regarding issues of their gender identity development and the contributions that their biological father may or may not have made to their understanding of issues pertaining to gender. The researcher also hoped to gain an understanding of how fathers deal with gender issues and how these experiences affected the self-esteem of these women. Findings from this section will present women's perceptions on how they were affected by messages and lessons they received from their father about their gender and gender issues.

Several women (n=7) expressed that their fathers had conversations with them about their gender identity development. The gender identity development conversations were related to four topics: 1) sexuality and relationships, 2) reproductive rights issues, 3) body image/size and 4) puberty. Six of these participants expressed feeling that their father could have approached these topics "differently", "more effectively" or "sensitively". One woman expressed that her father "could have been more sensitive" in his approach in a way that would consider how certain messages "could be "detrimental" to the father daughter relationship. One woman felt that her father approached his conversation about reproductive choices in an "open", "nonjudgmental", and "affirming" manner.

One woman shared the following story about how her father introduced a "wall" in their relationship by preventing her from sitting on his lap when she got to a certain age because "she was becoming a woman". She said the following about how this experience affected her relationship with her father:

I remember when I was in my single digits maybe just approaching double digits and my father and I were extremely close. I loved my dad and my dad was my everything. He was my hero. That's what daughter's want to see when she grows up with her father. Her father is that knight in shining amour. And I sat on his lap..... And he said 'no you

can't sit on my lap anymore'. I looked at him because I was thinking that's such a stupid thing to say. And he said 'No now you are grown and you are not allowed to sit on my lap anymore'. He didn't go into details. I read through the lines go figure at what 10 years old but I never forgot thatbecause as much he was trying to tell me that I could easily be taken advantage of and I was becoming a woman and I wasn't to sit on a man's lap – what I took away from that was, dad this hurts. This is my dad. Maybe a better way to say that would be you know what you shouldn't sit on any other man's lap you know that right? You're my daughter and I love you, but that didn't happen. I went away with--and there is a new wall that you just built. So I think dads have to be extremely sensitive when they deal with deal with daughters. ..You never know what message you are actually conveying when you think you are saying outright, you think you are teaching them something extremely important and the message that you're actually communicating is something that is going to be detrimental to you in your daughter's relationship in the future.

Another woman expressed that her father had “uncomfortable” conversations with her about her weight and size that were particularly “hurtful”. This woman also expressed feeling that her father could have approached his conversations with her about body image in a more “sensitive” way that considered her feelings, individuality, and personal experiences around the issue. Another woman had the following to say about the issue.

I think the one thing that has been the most difficult and still is the most difficult thing is the way, he hounds me that I don't work out enough. And sometimes its phrased for health reasons, sometimes its phrased for physical reasons, and sometimes its “oh well you are going to, you're going to be on stage one day and they say the camera adds 10

pounds, you need to lose this weight.” And so, that has been very difficult, just because, you know its... and like having it take awhile for, you know as a young girl growing up, to figure out like what is going on with my body and how I feel about it, and have this other outside thing adding another source of like oh this is what your body needs to be. To me that’s the most difficult thing, and that’s thing we probably butt heads about the most.

Out of the seven women (n=7) women who reported that that their biological fathers had discussions with them about gender issues, only one woman reported that her father dealt with conversations around gender issues in an affirming manner. This woman, who had a “close” relationship with her father expressed that her father dealt with a conversation around abortion and demonstrated support for a difficult decision she had to make.

When I was 19 with this partner I got pregnant and we chose to have an abortion. I didn’t tell my parents until two years ago when I was 25. I told my mother first and you know, she cried and she felt bad that I didn’t feel like I could talk to her, you know that she wasn’t there for me for that. Then a couple months later I ended up telling my dad and his reaction was very different. It was ‘Oh honey I think you know, you made a great decision and it’s your body and you are entitled to that and that’s on you. You learned how to make the decision that was right for you...He was just like, ‘No, this is your body and it is your decision.’ He’s like, ‘I happen to agree with this decision. ...It was clear that he was proud of me for being empowered to say ‘This is not where I want my life to go’, and to make a decision around that.

Key findings from this chapter show that several women (n=7) expressed that their fathers had conversations with them about their gender identity development. The gender

identity development conversations were related to four topics: 1) sexuality and relationships, 2) reproductive rights issues, 3) body image/size and 4) puberty. Six of these participants expressed feeling that their father could have approached these topics “differently”, “more effectively” or “sensitively”. Out of the seven women (n=7) women who reported that that their biological fathers had discussions with them about gender issues, one woman who reported having a “close” relationship with her father expressed that her father dealt with a difficult conversation around reproductive issues in a way that was positive and affirming.

Lasting Lessons on Racial Identity Development

This section will contain narratives of women’s perceptions on the lessons they learned from their fathers about their racial identity. Participants were asked questions about the role that their father played in their life as an African American woman. The open-ended questions were designed to gather information about the perceptions of daughters on the role that their fathers played in their understanding of race and their racial identity development. Questions were also designed to gather information on issues that African American daughters found pertinent regarding issues of race and racial identity development and the contributions that their biological father may or may not have made to their understanding of issues pertaining to race and racial identity. The researcher also hoped to gain an understanding of how fathers dealt with racial identity issues for their African American daughters and how these experiences affected the self-esteem of these women. Findings from this section will present perceptions on ways in which these participating daughters were affected by the messages and lessons they received from their biological fathers about race and racial identity.

Most participants (n= 12) expressed that their own fathers did not play any specific role in their racial identity development. Within the narratives of African-American daughters (n=2)

who reported that their fathers talked to them about issues of racial identity, two main themes emerged: 1) lessons of racial pride and 2) lessons about racism faced by African Americans in the United States. One woman had the following to say about how her father approached issues of racial identity:

I think he's been very clear about, that sort of context about African Americans in society, like people might think different from you. You might have to work harder, or represent yourself differently than a white person going into a job interview or an audition or something. He has taught me to be proud of who I am ...I'm black and to be proud of that, and to be accepting of that... and I've never heard that we couldn't talk about race, or couldn't talk about difficult things. And also that we are an exceptional black family, and that again its like that reinforcement that I am exceptional as a black woman to be doing the things that I'm doing or... and because I'm from my family and have this support system behind me, and he knows that him being around is unique, in a lot of black families. And he's not being braggy about it. And I think he's also wanted us never to demand less for ourselves because we are black or anything like that. And to you know... not put up with anything.

Another self-identified biracial woman of African descent described how her Caucasian father approached issues of racial identity:

Things that I specifically adopt from my father, a woman of color I think I will say specifically having a white father, for me is that he always told me that you have a place at the table and you can push people like me around. You can stand up to me and say I disagree. Yes you have a voice. So for me to have a father that says, "This system is fucked up and racism is fucked up". And even knowing this as a white person and

saying “I’ll work towards changing it for my daughter because I don’t want her to grow with it.” I think that was one of the first lessons that I learned from him.

One woman expressed that she felt that African American daughters should look to their mothers for “heritage driven lessons” about aspects of racial identity such as body image, standards of beauty, and hair. She had the following to say:

I was subjected to racism. I don't really think I needed my father to show me something or teach me something that would have helped me deal with that better. I kind of think it's more a mother's responsibility. You know African American girls you have stupid things like hair, that you need your mother --the society is not going to show you that your hair is beautiful or your hair can't be treated like a little white girl's hair is treated. But in all honesty do you look to a father to show you those kinds of things? I think an African American child needs to look to their father if it's a boy, mother if it's a girl for those specific heritage driven lessons.

Another woman had the following to say about how her father approached issues of racial identity:

And it's interesting because I don't think he and I have really had any conversations explicitly around like my race. I really don't think that we have. I mean yeah, I just can't have but I can't think of any but I mean I think, it's interesting because I think he sees me as his strong daughter first, not my race first. And not even so much my gender like you're a strong, empowered, opinionated, sometimes bratty kid, also, like you're strong because you should be strong because I taught you to be, not because you need to be a strong woman. Because he didn't really talk to me about those things any different than my brother who is darker than me. I only really remember having had

conversations around race with my mother. You know I mentioned like I don't really remember my father saying, 'Hey [R] as a black woman, you should like remember this or as a woman of color remember this -- I don't remember those conversations. I think it was just like you have to have these values of support. I mean like he just gave me support no matter what....

A review of the key findings in this section indicated that most participants saw their own fathers as playing a minimal role in their racial identity development. Within the narratives of African American daughters who reported that their fathers talked to them about issues of racial identity, two main themes emerged: 1) lessons of racial pride and 2) lessons about racism faced by African Americans in the United States.

Daughter's Perceptions on Their Self-Esteem

This section will present narratives and findings on women's perceptions of their own self-esteem. Participants were asked questions about their self-esteem and self-perceptions. During each interview, the researcher explained the definition of self-esteem utilized in this study, which was defined as "the evaluation and appraisal of or attitude toward the self" (Wagner & Ludtke 2012, p. 148). Women in this study generally discussed their self-esteem according to the following sub-topics. Comfort with self, perception of one's physical attractiveness, perception of one's self as being capable, self-love, and feeling worthy of receiving love.

Most women (n=11) in this study expressed that they have a "positive attitude" towards themselves. Many women (n=7) who described having positive attitude themselves also described themselves as "capable" and comfortable with themselves. One woman stated the following regarding her attitude towards her self:

“I feel that I have very high self-esteem. I know I’m attractive. I feel attractive. I know I’m smart, I feel smart. I don’t have that negative opinion of myself- it like doesn’t make sense to me”.

Another woman had the following to say:

I definitely feel like at this point in my life, my attitude towards myself is very healthy. I have a healthy thought about who I am is because I think I have taken like the time or least the kind of experiences and I try engage in activities so I can learn myself better. I think my attitude for myself is healthy because I finally get like who I am, what I’m about, in terms of that what made my goals and how I want to see my life evolve ...I think I still have a strong sense of what that looks right now but then at the same time I also see what my limitations are like I can get honest with myself about my weaknesses, about my vulnerability, about my fears. I am not just a woman and I’m not just black but I am also you know a human being with a spirit and a mind and I still think that I experience life and I think because I know myself in that way or the positive and the negative and I accept them. I think it is why I felt like my self-esteem is pretty healthy and I think that allows me to still like I don’t have sort of control over everything but I do have some control over the things that happen in my life.

Another woman had the following to say about her attitude towards herself:

I feel positive about myself and I feel I think that there are of course things that I would want to work on and change. There are things that I am working on and changing.... But as far as every –in all other aspects, my professional related, social, intellectual wise, I think I have a very positive self image of myself ...I feel like I am a beautiful

person, I feel like I am worthy of love and friendship and all those things. I don't think I have negative self-talk going on for me.

Some women felt they had a positive attitude towards themselves because they experienced themselves as capable. Another woman who expressed having a "mostly positive" attitude towards herself had the following to say about her self-esteem:

I think good days I can like get along with myself. I think that's a hard one sometimes because I feel like there are so many different parts of the self or of myself and I think for the most part I am okay with myself. I wouldn't say I'm completely in love with myself, I know that I'm capable with regards to certain things like I know I'm capable in certain respects and I know that I am perceived as being smart and whatever, you know. Do I always feel like that? No, I guess a lot of people don't, but that's okay too. Do I always see myself as attractive and desirable? No. Do I always feel at peace with myself? No. So, I'm okay with myself. You know at this point, I won't necessarily die if as those things stand and I am okay with that, I think.

Several women (n=3) in this study expressed that they had a "low" self-esteem and "disliked" themselves at times. One woman described her self-esteem in the following way:

I have incredibly low self-esteem, so I don't think particularly highly of myself. I think I'm unremarkable in pretty much every way and that, to me, equals failure. If I'm proud of anything, it's my ability to write. Unfortunately, that means when I received a bad mark on a paper, or when my manuscript got rejected by several literary agents, my self-esteem dropped. I listen when people tell me I am valuable in some way, and I half believe them while they're speaking, but the moment I'm by myself again I find a reason to go back to feeling worthless. I spend a lot of time mulling over past situations, thinking about things

I've said or done and cringing at the memory. I'm my own worst enemy in this way, and that makes me dislike myself a little more.

Some participants (n=6) who reported that they had high self-esteem also reported self-esteem struggles around physical attractiveness. Out of the eleven women who expressed having a “positive attitude” towards self, several women (n= 6) women reported self -esteem struggles around physical attractiveness and perceptions of self-worth. One woman had the following to say about her thoughts on her self-esteem struggles around physical attractiveness, and how they may have developed:

So I know some of it is internalized just because of the culture we live in. Just by knowing on paper, I can't really live up to the standards. Like my hair you know a lot of times I straightened it. I know that this is due to Eurocentric standards of beauty. I think the other part that isn't from media or from dominant culture it's just from peers in school. Like I'm pretty slim. I know that being slim is the ideal in magazines and stuff. I mean I went to all black schools all my life. And you know they like thick girls. I don't have any curves, I still don't have any curves--not yet you know—I'm still working on it. I would cry almost everyday because I hated my body. I would cry to my fiancé during the first couple years of our relationship. I mean like “ why are you with me, my body is terrible?” Well music videos... they have big butts...I mean and I'm black, so I'm supposed to have ass but I don't. It really bothers me. As I've gotten older, I realize that--the pain that I felt is real.

In summarizing the key findings in this section, we find that the women in this study generally discussed their self-esteem according to the following sub-topics: 1) comfort with self, 2) perception of one's physical attractiveness, 3) perception of one's self as being capable, 4) self

–love, and 5) feeling worthy of receiving love. Of the women who participated in this study, most (n=11) expressed that they have a “positive attitude” towards themselves. Many women (n=7) who described having positive attitude themselves also described themselves as “capable” and comfortable with themselves. Out of the eleven women who expressed having a “positive attitude” towards self, several women (n= 6) of these women reported self- esteem struggles around physical attractiveness and perceptions of self-worth.

The Father –Daughter Relationship Connection to Self-Esteem

This section presents key findings related to the primary research question of this study: What role does biological father contact play in the self-esteem development of young African American women? This section will also present findings of how African American women in this study described the connection between their biological father contact and their self-esteem. Participants were asked if they felt there was any connection between their self-esteem and their relationship with their fathers. Most participants in this study (n= 9) spoke of seeing a connection between their self-esteem and their relationship with their biological fathers. All nine women who reported seeing a connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem also reported having high self-esteem and “close” relationships with their fathers. Several participants reported seeing no connection (n=5) between their self-esteem and their father-daughter relationship. Of the participants (n=3) who reported having low self-esteem, two of those participants reported having “close relationships” with their fathers.

Table 2: The Father –Daughter Connection to Self-Esteem by Described Self- Esteem

Generally Described Self-Esteem	“High/Positive”	“Low/Negative”
Father –Daughter Relationship Connection to Self Esteem? (N= Participants)		
<u>Positive Connection</u>	9	
<u>No Connection</u>	2	3

Table 3: The Father –Daughter Connection to Self-Esteem by Described Relationship Type

Generally Described Type of Father-Daughter Relationship	“Close”	“Strained”	“Indifferent”
Father- Daughter Relationship Connection to Self-Esteem? (N= Participants)			
<u>Positive Connection</u>	9		
<u>No Connection</u>	2	2	1

Four key phenomenological themes describing how biological fathers positively shape an African American daughter’s self-esteem were identified: 1) support and positive reinforcement of daughter’s physical attractiveness and intellectual strengths, 2) general non-judgmental support, 3) conveying positive messages about racial/ethnic pride and standards of beauty, and 4) modeling appropriate boundaries for daughters in intimate relationships.

One woman who describes having a close –relationship, described her relationship with her father as “the anchor of my soul upon which I build my sense of self” and further explained that her father made her “feel special” and “loved”. She said the following:

Even after 18 years of his absence and only having 12 years of a relationship. I mean everything that I know in terms of how I see myself is directly related to how special my father made me feel as a young child. I still use that as kind of like my assessment tool. I really evaluate a lot of my relationships and a lot of my decisions. I kind of weigh them and I get this notion from my father what was the absolute very best for me and I use that to kind of guide me even now. I surely believe because he loved me first and he made me feel special first and he always made me feel like I’m better first before anybody else did. I think I’ve been able to hold onto that over time. And now I feel like as a young woman I’m able to own it better. But I think just that notion that my Dad is treating me like I was good enough. So, you don’t have the right to treat me like I’m not good enough. Or you don’t have the right to tell that I can’t do because my father would tell me that I can do. I mean my relationship with him is still like the anchor of my soul on which I build my sense of self because he loved me first.

Another woman agreed that there was a clear connection between her biological father contact and her self-esteem and expressed the following:

Yeah definitely, you know he’s always been very proud of me and you know, no matter what I do he is there on the sidelines cheering or he is saying are you sure? How much is this? What do you need? He is always so caring and yeah I also think that makes a difference in my self-esteem. And I think it is exactly I know I can always go to him

and I'm no longer afraid of making a mistake. That's helped myself-esteem because if I do run into some issue of -- I can go to him for support and know that I'm not going to be judged.

Another woman described the ways in which her father "helped" her to "build confidence. She expressed the following:

I was self-conscious, insecure, and depressed. I needed my father to respect my issues and help me build confidence. I needed him to remind me that I was worthy of accolades, and that if I messed up footing during long jump, it wasn't indicative of my value as a person. He taught me to look at others with an inherently generous eye, and to assume the best in each person.

Women (n=2) spoke of messages their fathers conveyed to them about notions of racial and ethnic pride and standards of beauty. One woman had the following to say about how her father's feedback on her beauty impacted her self-esteem:

Yeah just him telling me that I'm beautiful or telling me about well the features that I have so I'm half Nigerian and half -- My dad is Nigerian and my mom is black, African American. So he comments from time about features that come from "him" which are like the African, the Nigerian features like high cheeks bones and the things like he'll comment on those things. So I guess he was commenting on how I am beautiful because of him, which is because of the Nigerian heritage I guess which is like all fathers do that. But he will just talk about the features that I got from him. And now recently or in the recent past I mean when I sent him my photos he is like oh you're so beautiful, all those things and I think that does help my self esteem. I think that helped me feel even more positive because he's the one person I was scared of his reaction.

Another woman had the following to say about this topic:

You know there a lot of people who struggle with things that I didn't and it was mainly because of what my father had instilled inside me. Like you know this whole – “am I beautiful or am I good enough or do I look like the dominant culture?” issue I learned a lot of people struggling with. That wasn't something that I ever dealt with. So I definitely think that he had some real thoughts on that because he always encouraged me like, you are beautiful... I've learned that from my father and also from my family, but my father told me that. I would definitely say that he has a lot of influence and impact on me and also in my decision of who I date and you know what I look for in a man. He has definitely had a lot of influence on my decisions and who I am as a person also.

Other women (n=3) expressed how their fathers modeled appropriate boundaries in intimate relationships and communicated messages about their self-worth and value by treating them with “respect”. One woman said the following:

Always the thing that kind of stuck with me that allowed me even when I was in an unhealthy relationship, friendship or romantic relationships with guys. At some point I would say “S [phonetic] daddy wouldn't treat you like this? Every time like literally this is what I would tell myself .. so why are you tolerating it? And then honestly that would be the little things that would give me enough strength to say, okay we'll we need to discontinue this relationship.

Another woman who described having a close relationship with her father said the following about the influence of her father treating her with respect:

He always taught me that I have to be treated with the utmost respect and that my opinion mattered and is valid. I remember having a relationship when I was in high school and it was not an equal partnership between me and my partner and my father was always very

adamant about pointing out that this relationship is toxic and that I don't deserve to be treated like this. You know I -- because of a hard head I continued on in this relationship for a while, but he never, he always stood his ground and said...You deserve more than this and this is not okay...Good fathers don't always do that, and I think that that has been what helped me be able to get out of that relationship, and then all subsequent relationships after that. I feel like I have a lot of, not power, a lot of control and to say this is or is not what I want. So I think that's one of the biggest things that he's instilled in me, not just in personal issues, but you can also when it comes to a work environment, where I like may or may not have been treated with respect. I know, I literally can say 'Would my dad have liked this?' or 'No, he would not.' So I need to change it, I need to revise that. So I think that is one of the biggest things I have learned from him.

Although many women in this study described a connection between a close relationship with their fathers and positive self-esteem, some women (n=2) reported having close relationship with their fathers and low self-esteem. One woman had the following to say about this issue:

So intellectually, I'm very confident-- not in an arrogant or haughty way like I don't think I'm better than anybody, but when I speak or talk I feel okay. As far as my appearance I have very low self esteem despite my father telling me I'm beautiful about all my years my dad used to say, so I really don't like the way I look, but I -- my self esteem was high in some regard and very low in another.

Several participants reported seeing no connection (n=5) between their self-esteem and their father daughter relationships. Three of the participants who reported seeing no connection between their self-esteem and their biological father contact also reported having "strained"

relationships with their biological fathers. One woman had the following to say about her perception of the role her father played in her self-esteem development:

I actually have no idea. I think that is based so much on a type of connection, I think. Like me being able to connect with myself in a certain level or him being able to connect with me and that connection was kind of absent, so I feel like him like playing a role in terms of my self-esteem, seems so irrelevant like there's so like not a connection there at all, which I think is also telling as well in some ways. Probably, people would say like, deep down maybe, but I think just thinking about it I'm like, I don't know.....

This section offered several key findings for our consideration. The majority of participants in this study (n= 9) spoke of seeing a connection between their self-esteem and their relationship with their biological fathers. All 9 women who reported seeing a connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem also reported having “close” relationships with their fathers. Several participants reported seeing no connection (n=6) between their self-esteem and their father daughter relationships. Four of the participants who reported seeing no connection between their self-esteem and their biological father contact also reported having “strained” relationships with their biological fathers. Of the participants (n=3) who reported having low self-esteem, two of those participants reported having “close relationships” with their fathers.

Additional Commentary on How Fathers Can Support Daughters with Issues of Intersectionality and Self-Esteem

This section will present narratives of additional commentary offered by the participants on the role of biological fathers in supporting African American daughters with issues of intersectionality and self-esteem development. Bowleg (2012) defines intersectionality as:

a theoretical framework for understanding how multiple social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, SES, and disability intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reflect interlocking systems of privilege and oppression (i.e. racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism) at the macro social -structural level (p. 7) .

Participants offered their opinions on needs that African American daughters have within father-daughter relationships as they pertain to issues of intersectionality and the unique societal realities faced by women of African descent in the United States. Women also offered opinions on how fathers can play specific roles in supporting their African American daughters. These additional findings and the implications for further research will be further discussed in Chapter Five. The following three phenomenological themes emerged in the findings: 1) fathers imparting values around individuality and worth beyond gender, 2) father's awareness of male gender privileges, and 3) fathers supporting daughters in challenging societal beauty standards.

Four women (n=4) spoke about the marginalization and objectification of Black women in society and suggested that fathers can play a role in imparting positive messages to their daughter around self-esteem and self-worth. One woman had the following to say:

Like we grew up in a society where historically, Black women have been stereotyped or categorized or pigeonholed as ass, breast, and legs. There's not much more to you than that. Like your pigeonholed for your body or seen for your body and your skin before you're seen for who you are as a person. While the mother can impart certain characteristics in terms of that identification of self and how to see self, I think the father also plays a role in that because then you have an idea of what it is that you can expect and understanding that you're more than just these physical attributes as a female, there's more to you than that.

Another woman spoke about how fathers can support African American daughters with body image and standards of beauty issues:

The first thing that popped to my head was like body image and standards of beauty and like in the US like it's definitely like light skin or straight hair. And like it is all these things, and I think it is important to challenge the stereotypes. Everyday and especially women of color, are like why I'm not even represented in this magazine, or if I am and it's like, "Okay, well, where do I fit in here?" But I think it would be really awesome and amazing if my father was like where are those things, and even if they aren't maybe also being on a basic level and not perpetuating like all that stuff.

Another woman spoke of specifically about dilemmas and issues of intersectionality:

I think within the culture sometimes, I think that the emotional layer is often not as verbalized or spoken about as it can be and I think that emotional layer for an African American female is inescapably linked to what it means to be African American. You're not just female because you are an African American first like people perceive you as other before they perceive you as female first, unfortunately. And I think being female, being African American being able to develop your own emotional understanding of self and what self is with everything that society places on you is important. I think that emotional connection between the child and the father is even more important because then, you know, you have your mother and being -- going along with stereotypes, you know most mothers are usually more present in the lives of African American female children than the fathers are, which is unfortunate. And I think if the fathers are more emotionally present, should even be physically present in some cases, the idea of an African American young girl growing up in terms of understanding how she sees herself

and what it is that she can expect of the world or expect of others, or expect of many in general I think is really important.

Another woman spoke of her opinion on how African American fathers can support African American daughters by understanding the barriers faced by African American women and to understand how race and gender intersect:

I think that African American fathers have a responsibility to, as far as they can, understand the barriers that African-American women face. Coming from a class I recently had where a white father said:” I’m like really overwhelmed with having to take on a burden of having a girl child. Because then all the problems of gender I now have to deal with that I’ve been exempt from this whole time.” And that kinda blew my mind! And I think he's right. I think that African American fathers have responsibility to understand both how race and gender intersect and how that produces a uniquely awful in some ways and perhaps in some ways empowering experience for black women. I think that's their job. And they don’t really have the right to take on the race stuff, but not the gender stuff. I think that's a problem.

Several participants (n=4) offered advice for fathers in helping their African American daughters in navigating issues of intersectionality. One woman expressed that a father’s role in helping an African American daughter in navigating issues of intersectionality include:

To provide good examples of African American role models and to help educate the daughter on important people that have come before her not only in his life but... also in history, and to be able to have discussions about difficult things that might happen in her life relating to race, to understand... A father should be someone she can talk to like if

something happens, in the news, so she can have someone to talk to. And so that he can be able to explain that kind of thing.

Another woman gave the following advice on how fathers can support daughters with issues of intersectionality around identity, racism, and societal devaluation:

It's hard to say how they could do it, but I think being really self-reflective is like the greatest gift that they could potentially give their child and really like checking in what their experience has been. That's mothers and fathers. I think fathers particularly because women, I think, are more often encouraged to reflect and be responsible and have an impact. But for fathers to really take the time to figure out how they experience gender, gender is not just a female – about women. It's about men and what the male identity is.

Several women (n=3) expressed that the responsibility of supporting African American daughters with gender identity and intersectionality should “not be left up to mothers alone” to handle. One woman shared her opinion on how fathers need to share the responsibility of engaging with their daughters around their experiences as part of “an undervalued female racial group” with the mother. She expressed the following:

I don't think they have the right to like leave that to the moms. I think that it's their responsibility to engage with that and understand their privileges as men and their privileges as black men. And all the stuff around physical appearance, I think that black women have to deal with as part of an undervalued female racial group. It's such a shallow country anyway. I think I've come to believe that's one of the worst things. It's so difficult. I think they need to understand again, as much as they can, what it's like to navigate that stuff and if they can look to their partners, should they be black women. Look to them as a source of information about that and really validate and

understand and listen to what they have to say. Like first understand what history is and what the various perspectives they're different. And then try to be reflective about their role about how to help their daughters navigate that.

Key findings in this section are that three phenomenological themes emerged in the findings: 1) fathers imparting values around individuality and worth beyond gender, 2) fathers' awareness of male and gender privileges, and 3) fathers supporting daughters in challenging societal beauty Standards. The majority of participants shared opinions on how fathers should address issues of intersectionality. Some women provided advice to fathers on how to support their daughters with issues of intersectionality and self-esteem. Several women expressed that the responsibility of supporting African American daughters with gender identity and intersectionality should "not be left up to mothers alone" to handle. The last section in the findings chapter will present additional commentary on participants' perceptions of how fathers impart values about self-esteem through modeling intimate relationships.

Additional Commentary on Fathers in Modeling Intimate Relationships and Imparting Messages About Self-Esteem

Further commentary from the opinions of participants on the role of fathers in modeling intimate relationships and imparting values about self-esteem are offered in this final section of findings. Although, participants were not specifically asked about how an ideal father should relate to the mother or within the parental dyad, most participants (n= 10) offered opinions on the role of the ideal father in modeling "healthy" and "positive" relational patterns within the parental dyad. This theme is relevant to this study because that majority of women (n=10) connected positive models of intimate relationships to positive messages a daughter might receive about "what to expect" in terms of treatment by their intimate partners in the future. As mentioned in a previous section on Ideal Father Roles and Gender Identity Development, quite a

few women in this study (n=6) also shared experiences involving being in what they described as “unhealthy relationships” with male partners. The majority of women in this study (n=10) emphasized that fathers could be exemplary male figures in a daughter’s life who could help a woman to set appropriate standards, expectations, and boundaries in interpersonal relationships which could help her to uphold her self-worth.

The majority of women in this study (n=10) also connected notions of self-value and self-esteem to their ability to recognize when they are being valued or devalued in a relationship. One woman specifically shared her opinion on this issue as it pertains to African American women. She had the following to say:

I’m big on self- esteem. Like, you know, that determines who she dates or what she settles for. And so in African American women, I think it’s important that it’s instilled in them. You know, their self- worth, their self- esteemSo I think self -esteem is something that should really be instilled in African American females from a father perspective. It should be instilled in your child, “Like you’re beautiful. You know, you don’t have to get that from someone else or from any other man or being in abusive relationships and things like that. And that’s something that’s a cause all over but I think it’s really significant in the African American community. So, you know, mainly, instilling it in your child or you know, some comments or something that will boost their self- esteem and they won’t just have to settle for this.

The majority participants in this study (n=10) also specifically identified fathers as role models for intimate relationships. Ten women also expressed that fathers were “exemplary male figures” who imparted powerful messages of what a daughter should or could expect from

significant male figures in her life and set the standard for her interactions with future male figures.

Themes of the implications of a father showing respect towards the daughter's mother also surfaced in the interviews of (n=8) women. Women generally felt daughters receive messages about "what to expect" intimate relationship by observing the way their father related to their mothers. In speaking on this topic, one woman expressed that observing positive interactional dynamics between their parents positively influences daughters. Furthermore, the daughters may also be positively influenced by the example of their fathers showing respect towards mothers, which may in turn develop their confidence in seeking out similar relationships of mutual respect and positive regard. This participant had the following to say:

And even the presence of the father being in a relationship with that mother as well certain types of behavior. So that a young woman can then go out and say: okay, this is what I see around me, this is what I know how to expect...I know what the standard is, I've seen my father show my mother respect and show us respect in a certain way and help us to see what it is that we are on the inside, not just how people perceive us, that I can feel confident in going out into the world and getting that for myself or knowing that I am more than just those attributes.

Another woman also expressed: "A daughter is going to shape how she is going to look at every man she deals with, the father is her example. You cheat on her mother and she knows she is probably going to go into the world thinking that men cheat."

Ten women specifically expressed that the presence of a father in a daughter's life is "shaping" her expectations around issues of loyalty and positive interactions with all other male romantic partners in her life. One woman emphasized that a father: "should be able to talk to her

about things that are going on in her life and he should be an exemplary male figure in her life. So that she knows what a good relationship looks like with a man. That she has a model of a good person, but also of a good husband and friend.”

Some women (n=3) also expressed that “ideal” fathers who are African –American could model positive messages to daughters about future relationships with African-American men. One woman expressed:

And also like he should... if your father is an African American, if he’s a good person, and he’s an example of what a good African American man should be, and I personally think it’s important to see an African American man loving a Black woman and that also provides something for the daughter that is not in the media all the time, to have that reinforced and shown.

Key findings in this section show that the majority of participants in this study (n=10) specifically identified fathers as role models for intimate relationships and messages about self-worth and value. Other women expressed that African-American fathers could model healthy relationships with African American women which could counteract messages these daughters often get from the media about African-American relationships and families.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings, narratives, and phenomenological themes gathered from fourteen self-identified women of African American or African descent who were interviewed about their contact and relationship with their biological fathers and their self-esteem. The data was presented in ten main sections and topics. Individual comfort levels may have influenced the depth and degree of the detail provided by the participant.

Most women described having “close” or “positive contact” with their biological fathers. Some described having “ambivalent”, “indifferent”, or “strained” relationships with their biological fathers. Most women reported that they had “things in common” and shared interests and hobbies with their fathers, which positively contributed to the closeness of their relationship and the time they spent with one another. Relationship needs identified by daughters in this study were related to the following topics: 1) improved comfort in approaching fathers about daily concerns, 2) empathy from fathers, 3) positive reinforcement, and 4) physical affection.

The majority of women described their fathers as “providers” for their families. Half of the African American women (n=7) who participated in this study, identified their own fathers as role models. Six women in this study expressed that their fathers possessed some of qualities of an ideal father and described their fathers as “supportive”, “present”, “emotionally available” and “easy to talk to”. Several women who grew up having more “distant” relationships with their fathers described him as being: “controlling, self-centered, or “inconsiderate” when relating to daughters and other

In this study, positive self-esteem for African American women correlated with positive and “close” father-daughter relationships. The majority of participants (n= 9) saw a connection between their self-esteem and their relationship with their biological fathers. All nine women who reported seeing a connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem also reported having a high self-esteem and “close” relationships with their fathers. Four phenomenological themes surfaced in participants’ expression of the connection between their father- daughter relationships and their positive or high self-esteem. The main themes included the following: 1) support and positive reinforcement of daughter’s physical attractiveness and intellectual strengths, 2) general non-judgmental support, 3) conveying positive messages about

racial/ethnic pride and standards of beauty, and 4) modeling appropriate boundaries for daughters in intimate relationships. Women who reported seeing a connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem also reported having “close” relationships with their fathers.

Daughters in this study also expressed opinions that fathers are role models for intimate relationships and messages about self-worth and value. Participants expressed that they received messages about setting expectations and maintaining appropriate boundaries in relationships from their fathers. This theme is relevant to this study because the majority of women connected positive models of intimate relationships to positive messages a daughter might receive about “what to expect” in terms of treatment by their intimate partners in the future. They also expressed that the presence of a father, expression of interest, and positive ways of relating to his daughter would help daughters to set standards around their self-esteem and self worth, which could in turn help them in setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries in intimate and professional relationships. Furthermore, participants expressed that fathers served as role models in their ways of interacting with their daughters and the mothers of their daughters. Other women expressed that African American fathers may model healthy relationships with African American women which could counteract messages African American daughters often get from the media about African American relationships and families.

Most participants expressed that their own fathers did not play any specific role in their racial identity development. However, several women reported that their fathers had conversations with them about their gender identity development. The gender identity development conversations were related to four topics: 1) sexuality and relationships, 2) reproductive rights issues, 3) body image/size and 4) puberty. Six of these participants expressed

feeling that their father could have approached these topics “differently”, “more effectively” or “sensitively”. The majority of women expressed the opinion that an ideal father should be a “protector” for his little girl. Another theme, which surfaced is that many women expressed that an ideal father should be receptive and open in talking to a daughter about issues of sexuality, relationships, and should provide a space for her to feel comfortable talking about her problems.

The majority of daughters in this study expressed that an ideal father should provide more than financial support and should be “present” in their children’s lives beyond the role of financial provider. The most consistent theme expressed throughout the majority of the interviews is the perception of the ideal father as a “role model” to children. In addition, all of the participants in this study described biological fathers as being “important” in the lives of children. No participant expressed that fathers do not play a role in lives of daughters or African American women.

Several participants also shared opinions on how fathers should address issues of intersectionality and offered advice to fathers on how to support their daughters with issues of intersectionality and self-esteem. Finally, several women expressed that the responsibility of supporting and having meaningful conversations with African American daughters about gender identity and intersectionality should “not be left up to mothers alone” to handle and that fathers should be aware and “reflective” of both their gender privileges as men and the societal barriers their African American daughters face as part of an “undervalued female racial group”.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of young self-identified African American or women of African descent between the ages of 22-30 who have had face-to-face contact with their biological fathers for at least five years and to develop a set of phenomenological themes about how these women describe the connection between biological father contact and self-esteem development. Individual interviews with women who identified as African American or of African descent who had face-to-face contact with their biological fathers for at least 5 years were conducted to explore how African American women describe their father-daughter relationships, the role of their biological fathers in their lives, and the connection between biological father contact and self-esteem. This chapter discusses the findings in the following order: 1) key findings, 2) implications, 3) limitations, and 4) conclusion.

Key Findings

Participants in this subject group ranged in age from 22-30 years of age and all self-identified as women of African American or African descent. Fourteen (n=14) women participated in the study. When asked about the highest level of education completed, the majority of participants (n=12) reported that they had been college educated with a Bachelor's level college degree. At the time of this study, eight (n=8) participants were current graduate

school students working on a Master's degree. A more diverse sample would have been beneficial to the study due to the homogeneity in the group along lines of socio-economic status and class possibly limiting generalizability.

Young African American women in this study described the psychological presence of their fathers characterized by their relationships and attitudes towards their fathers. By gathering the perspectives of African American daughters, this study sought to address gaps in the literature on father-daughter relationships which observed, "while a majority of the psychological literature focuses on parent-child relationships in early children's development, relatively little theoretical and empirical work has focused on the nature, activities, and impact of parent-child relationships in adolescence and early adulthood (Allgood, Beckert and Peterson, 2012, p. 97). Moreover, the study hoped to address gaps in research on African American father-daughter relationships as identified by researchers such as Thomas et al. (2008) who observed that "there is often the presumed lack of father, both physical and psychological, in African American families (p.530)."

The researcher considered the hetero-patriarchal and hetero-normative value laden theoretical frameworks contained therein, which posit heterosexual two parent households as being the ideal. The researcher also considered the research on lesbian voices which counter hetero-patriarchal narratives pose challenges to the current literature and research which argue that both biological father and mother roles are distinct and each serve as necessary and complimentary in child development. The results of this study revealed that African American daughters saw biological fathers as being "important" in their lives. No participant expressed that fathers do not play a role in lives of daughters or African American women. However, further

empirical studies are needed on African American father- daughter relationships, which are more inclusive of Black feminist and lesbian voices.

Results in this study indicate that self –esteem for young African American women may be influenced by father-daughter relationships. In this study, positive self-esteem for African American women correlated with positive and “close” father-daughter relationships. Most participants in this study (n=9) reported seeing a connection between their self-esteem and their own relationship with their biological fathers. All nine women who reported seeing a connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem also reported having high self-esteem and “close” relationships with their fathers. One of many women who spoke of the relationship between her biological father contact and self- esteem, described her relationship with her father as “the anchor of my soul on which I build my sense of self because he loved me first”.

Participants also expressed that a father’s presence, expression of interest, and positive ways of relating to his daughter could help daughters to set standards around their self-esteem and self- worth. Adversely, most of the participants who reported that they did not see a connection between their father-daughter relationship and their self-esteem also reported having “strained” or distant relationships with their father. These findings support previous research, which demonstrates that our self-evaluative dialogue which shapes our self –esteem or “attitude toward self” is influenced by the information we receive from our social relationships with parents, teachers, and peers (Roberts & Bengtson, 1993;Wagner & Ludtke, 2012). These results also support previous research by Allgood et al. (2012) which purported that women who were connected with their fathers had higher levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction and a lesser

level of psychological distress as compared to the women who reported not having a positive relationship with their fathers (Allgood, et al., 2012).

According to many women, they had “things in common” and shared interests and hobbies with their fathers, which positively contributed to the closeness of their relationship and the time they spent with one another. Relationship needs identified by daughters in this study were related to the following topics: improved comfort in approaching fathers about daily concerns, empathy from fathers, positive reinforcement, and physical affection. These results seem to support father attachment research by the Leavall et al. (2012) longitudinal study, which examined child attachment security among fathers and children in early childhood. Researchers in this study found a high correlation between a father’s level responsiveness and sensitivity to the needs of the child and the child’s sense of attunement and attachment security to the father (Leavell et al., 2012).

There were many additional findings in this research study, which confirm previous research done on father-daughter relationships and self-esteem. The role of fathers in modeling intimate relationships and messages about self-esteem was the most recurrent theme raised by African-American daughters in this study regarding the role of fathers in the self-esteem development of African American women. Women offered much unsolicited information on the role of fathers in modeling intimate relationships and described a clear connection to self-esteem.

One unexpected finding in this study is that co –parental relationships were offered as models of intimate relationships and foundations of emotional security by the African American women interviewed in this study. Daughters in this study expressed opinions that fathers are role models for intimate relationships and provide messages about self-esteem through modeling such relationships. Several participants offered that ideal fathers could transmit messages of self-

worth and positive self-esteem by treating their children's mothers with "respect" and avoiding "cheating" and/or infidelity, which was often interpreted by the daughters as disrespectful and hurtful. Other women expressed that African-American fathers may model healthy relationships with African American women which could counteract messages African daughters often get from the media about African-American relationships and families. Women who reported observing less conflict in their parental relationships also reported having "closer" and more positive relationships with their fathers. One woman even spoke highly of her father for his level of engagement with fatherhood, being a good husband, and holding other fathers accountable for "choices that are hurtful" to people in their family and "hurtful to women particularly."

Most women who spoke of the connection between father-daughter relationships and comfort with intimate relationships also connected positive models of intimate relationships to positive messages a daughter might receive about setting expectations and maintaining appropriate boundaries in relationships. Participants also expressed that they received messages from their fathers about "what to expect" in terms of treatment by their intimate partners in the future. Throughout the narratives, participants that expressed that having a positive sense of one's worth or value was connected to the development of positive self-esteem. Moreover, many African American women interviewed also spoke about the positive messages that daughters receive from fathers about their "worth" as being a protective factor against daughters later becoming involved in "unhealthy" relationships with men. Several women interviewed expressed how they were able to recall the standards their fathers set for them regarding their "worth" when they found themselves in compromising or abusive relationships. Several daughters also communicated that their fathers transmitted messages about their self-worth by telling them that they are "beautiful". These findings relate to the Scheffler and Naus (1999)

study, which found a positive relationship between women's comfort or discomfort with their sexual experiences and their experience of being positively affirmed by their relationship with their father. Scheffler and Naus (1999) also found that "while it is important that a daughter identifies with her mother, a woman's self-esteem, self-definition, and comfort with her femininity and comfort with her sexuality are also influenced by her father's acceptance "(p. 40).

Other unexpected findings from this study include daughters reporting that their fathers played a role in shaping their gender identities and helped them to formulate their understanding about growing up as a woman. Another recurring theme is women expressing that an ideal father should be receptive and open in talking to a daughter about issues of puberty, sexuality, relationships, and should provide a space for her to feel comfortable talking about her problems. Most women communicated that their own fathers could approach the aforementioned topics and conversations in a more open and sensitive manner. Some women who reported having "close" relationships with their fathers also reported that their fathers taught them that gender did not have to be a barrier to achieving their goals.

The final set of unexpected findings relate to issues of intersectionality described by the participants in this study. The researcher utilized the theoretical framework of intersectionality to interpret the findings related to interlocking social identities such as race, gender as they relate to systems of privilege and oppression. In the findings chapter, intersectionality was defined as a "theoretical framework for understanding how multiple social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, SES, an disability intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reflect interlocking systems of privilege and oppression" (Bowleg, 2012, p. 7). Although the researcher did not specifically ask questions of the participants related to how fathers can play a role in teaching their daughters about growing up as a Black woman in the United States or

issues of intersectionality as they relate to self-esteem, many participants shared opinions and advice for fathers on this topic. Several women expressed that growing up as an African American woman meant a unique set of intersecting issues and societal challenges including racism, gender barriers, and identity dilemmas around Eurocentric/westernized standards of beauty. Most participants who spoke about the role of fathers in racial identity development unequivocally agreed that the responsibility of supporting and having meaningful conversations with African American daughters about gender and intersecting identities should “not be left up to mothers alone” to handle. In addition, one participant felt that fathers should be aware and “reflective” of both their gender privileges as men and the societal barriers their African American daughters face as part of an “undervalued female racial group”.

The researcher was surprised to find that only one participant made reference to the societal statistics on fatherlessness in the African American community. None of the participants mentioned statistics on single female lead households, the impact of current mass incarceration rates on Black males, or the history of slavery had on fatherhood in African American communities. In addition, none of the participants mentioned being personally affected by any of the societal issues mentioned above. Perhaps the limited sample size and socio-economic status of the study participants may have affected how participants saw themselves in relation to stereotypes and statistics on African Americans. Furthermore, the researcher did not specifically ask questions about how the participants responded to statistics on African American families.

Implications

Research presented in both the literature and findings implicate the need for additional study on father –daughter relationships in general and within the African American community. In doing so, clinicians working with families in African American communities will be equipped

in developing more effective interventions in their clinical practice. If there is more information about how daughters' self-esteem, racial, and gender identity are affected by biological father contact and involvement, clinicians will be better equipped and informed to recognize dynamics specific to these types of relationships. Research that contrast the impact of mothers on self-esteem development of African American daughters to father-daughter research could provide a clearer picture on the self-esteem, and self worth development of this population

Family policies affecting African American families, co-parental relationships, and father involvement will be improved if more research becomes available. Moreover, research on African American families which demonstrate the benefits of father involvement could inform the legal system in the development of laws which are more inclusive of fathers' roles in African American families. Research on father presence in African American families will also inform the development and implementation of anti-racist social welfare policies geared towards Black families in the United States. Theory could also benefit from how fathers and daughters relate in marginalized and underrepresented groups such as African Americans. As mentioned throughout the literature review of this study, the father-daughter relationship is the least studied of all relationships and within the African American families there is often the presumed absence of fathers.

Limitations

A limitation in this study is the small and fairly homogenous sample size of the participants, affecting the external validity of study. The participants identified as women of African American or African descent and are residents of various geographic regions of the United States including: Centerville, Virginia; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Oakland, California; Chicago, Illinois; North Carolina, Washington DC, and New York City. Most of the participants

reported that they were college graduates and were pursuing Master's degrees at the time of this study. Furthermore, most of the participants reported growing up in two-parent households.

This study also did not collect the demographic data on the sexual orientation. Themes discussed in this study are not generalizable to other populations due to the homogenous sample. Although it was hoped that a more diverse sample along lines of socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and household systems, time and resources were limited which impacted obtaining a larger and more diverse sample.

Interview questions were developed by the researcher and may include bias due to the researcher's personal experiences as an African American daughter. Participants may have over-reported positive qualities or underreported negative qualities or relationships in order to reply in a manner that seemed more favorable to the researcher and study. A strength offered by the qualitative study method is that participants typically offered unsolicited information and discussed issues related to gender identity, self-esteem, how African American women are affected by father absence and presence prior to being asked questions on these topics by the researcher. Participants may have anticipated that this information was useful to the researcher due to the recruitment materials.

Although interview questions were open-ended in anticipation of gathering more inclusive responses, some participants may have felt uncomfortable discussing dynamics and difficult areas of their father-daughter relationships. Moreover, interview questions were typically geared towards daughters who had relational experiences with their biological fathers, which may have been difficult for daughters with deceased fathers or limited contact with their biological fathers. All women volunteered to participate in this study and did not receive compensation. The sample of African American women in this study all had contact with their

biological fathers and many participants had “close” and “positive” relationships with their biological fathers and may be more apt to discuss their father-daughter relationships than the general population of daughters and African American women.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research may benefit from including voices of fathers of African American daughters and other ethnicities within the African Diaspora. In addition, future research may also benefit from the inclusion of voices of underrepresented groups within the African American community such as Black lesbians, feminists, and LGBT self-identified people of African American and African descent in the research on father involvement and father-child relationships. The following questions were left unanswered by this research study and can serve as helpful steering points for future research on self-esteem, identity, and father-daughter relationships in the African American community:

- 1) How do co-parental relationships between mothers and fathers influence African American daughters' future intimate relationships and self-esteem?
- 2) How can a father's treatment of issues of intersectionality influence an African American woman's self-esteem?
- 3) How can fathers facilitate conversations about puberty, sexuality, and relationships in ways that positively shape and support self-esteem development for their African American daughters?
- 4) How can parental and specifically father-daughter relationships counteract negative media, historical, and societal messages on self-esteem and beauty standards for African American daughters?

- 5) How does the societal and historical discourse about a particular group's family structure shape the expectations that African American daughters have for their fathers? Are African American adult children more likely to report satisfaction with their father after any level of contact with their fathers more than White adult children because society had taught them not to expect contact from an African American father in the first place?

Conclusion

This study provides useful research regarding various aspects of father-daughter relationships in the African American community from the perspective of African American daughters. The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of young African American daughters with their biological father contact and to develop a set of themes about how they described the connection between their biological father contact and their self-esteem. The key findings and the implications to the field of social work were reviewed and several limitations within the research design were outlined. Suggestions for further research on African American father- daughter relationships and families were also made.

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APPENDIX A
HSR APPROVAL



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

March 2, 2013

Kendra Archer

Dear Kendra,

Thank you for making all the requested changes to your Human Subjects Review application. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marsha Kline Pruett" followed by a flourish.

Marsha Kline Pruett, M.S., Ph.D., M.S.L.
Acting Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Judith Josiah-Martin, Research Advisor

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant,

I am a Master' level student at Smith College School for Social Work and I am conducting research to learn more about the role of biological father contact in the lives of African -American women. I am interested in exploring how young African American women describe the connection between contact with their biological fathers and their self-esteem. Participation will provide the opportunity to lend your voice to this exploratory study. This study will be presented as a thesis and may be used in possible future presentations and publications.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have indicated interest in to sharing experiences related to your contact with your biological father. Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to first to sign and date this consent form. After giving consent, you will be asked to answer a set of interview questions. The interview will last approximately 40 minutes and will include demographic questions (age, education level, geographic location), open-ended questions that will include more details, and specific questions related to your self-esteem. Participants will be required to identify as Black, female, citizens of the United States who have at least 5 years of face-to face contact with their biological fathers. Participants must be able to speak and read English and must be 21-30 years of age.

Participating in this research study may have some risks. The topic of this study is sensitive and some participants may experience some emotional discomfort. It is possible than in discussing their father-daughter relationships some participants may experience some uncomfortable feelings. In considering the possibility of any potential risks, the researcher will provide the participants in this study with a list of referral sources for psychotherapy or mental health counseling services at the time of informed consent. Benefits to participating in this study may include the opportunity to discuss a topic of importance and to gain some additional self-awareness.

As a participant you can expect confidentiality of all information that you disclose during the interview. Interviews will be audio-recorded, categorized by numbers, and all identifiable information (name and age) will be separated from the contents of the interviews. The researcher will be the only person conducting the interviews. If someone is assisting with the transcription, they will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement to protect your information. As a student, my research advisor will have access to the data after all identifying information has been removed. Per the federal guidelines, the interview tapes will be kept in a secure location for three years and will be destroyed after that time.

Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw before and during the interview. Following the completion of the interview, you may withdraw at any time up until April 1, 2013. Any information that you give before withdrawing from the study will also be discarded. If you have any questions about your rights or any aspect of this research study, you may contact Kendra Archer at ~~417-675-3337~~ or via email at karcher@smith.edu or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413)-585-7974.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Please Keep a copy of the form provided for your records.

Thank you for your participation.

Signature of the Participant

Date

Signature of the Researcher

Date

Referral Sources for Mental Health Services and Other Support

1. The New York Counseling and Clinical Social Work Service, P.C.

160 West End Avenue, Suite 1N
New York, NY
212- 362- 1086

2. Henry Street Settlement

40 Montgomery Street
New York, NY 10002
212-233-5032

3. Helpline

212-532-2400
24- hour hotline

Massachusetts Referral Sources

4. Service Net, Inc.

129 King Street
Northampton, MA 01060
413-585-1300

5. Smith College Counseling * Must be affiliated with Smith College

Elizabeth Mason Infirmary
69 Paradise Road
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
Phone: (413) 585-2800

National Resources/ Helplines (for referral to specific mental health service or support resources in your community)

5. Mental Health America
Phone: 1800-969-NMHA (6642)

6. Hopeline
Phone 1800-442-HOPE (4673)

7. Help Finding a Therapist 1800-THERAPIST (1800-843-7274)

8. Mental Health InfoSource 1800-338-7657

For information about supporting National Fatherhood Initiatives

9. National Fatherhood Initiative

<http://www.fatherhood.org/>

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT INFORMATION

Dear Friends/Colleagues,

I am currently recruiting participants for my Master's in Social Work in Social Work Thesis Project and I am seeking your help. Through a qualitative research study, I am exploring the role of biological father contact in the self-esteem development of young African -American women. Eligible participants for this study must:

- Be a United States citizen by birth or naturalization and currently reside in the United States.
- Self-Identify as an African- American woman or a woman of African descent
- Be between the ages of 21-30
- Have had face-to face contact with her biological father for at least 5 years throughout her life.
- Interested in lending her unique voice to research on the role of fathers in African-American daughters' lives.

If you know someone who may be interested in participating or learning more, please contact me as soon as possible for more information! Please reply to this email at shirley.greene@unh.edu or call me at ~~217-675-3337~~.

Thank you!

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic Information of Participants

The following questions are asked to get an understanding of your identity and background; you may skip any questions that you choose not to answer.

1. Please state your age _____
2. Please state where you currently reside _____
3. Please state your relationship status _____
4. Do you ascribe to any religious affiliation?
YES _____ NO _____ If yes please specify _____
5. What type of household system did you grow up in?
Single Parent _____ Two –Parent _____
Blended _____ Adopted _____ Other (Please specify) _____
6. What type of household system do you live in now?
Single Parent _____ Two –Parent _____
Blended _____ Adopted _____ Other _____ (Please specify) _____
7. What is your current profession or means of employment? _____
8. Please state the highest level of education that you have completed

Biological Father Contact and Self- Esteem Development Qualitative Interview Guide

Questions:

1. In this study, father is defined as “the biological father or procreator of the child” (Kraemer, 1991, p. 378)

How long have you been in contact with your biological father throughout your life?

- ❖ Are you currently still in contact (face-to face, email, phone, other) with your father?

2. As a woman, how would you characterize an ideal father?

- ❖ What type of father is he?

- ❖ What are the roles and responsibilities of an ideal father?

3. In relationship to a daughter, how should an ideal father relate?

- ❖ Are there any roles or responsibilities that a father should have specifically in a daughter’s life?

4. In your opinion, are there any specific needs that an African American daughter has within a father /daughter relationship?

- ❖ Are there any specific roles and responsibilities that a father should have in the life of an African American daughter?

5. How would you describe your father?

- ❖ What are some words to describe your father?

- ❖ What roles and responsibilities did you father play in your life?

6. How would you describe your relationship with your father? If your father is currently deceased, what type of relationship did you have with your father when he was alive?

- ❖ Do you do any activities or spend time with your father? Father –daughter outings, etc. If so, what are some of the things that you and your father do together?

- ❖ Have there been any challenging moments? If so, what are some of those challenging moments?

- ❖ How has your father related to your family?

7. Is there anything about your present or past relationship with your father that you would change?

- ❖ Would you change anything about the way you and your father related to each other?

8. In this study, self-esteem is defined as “ the evaluation and appraisal of or the attitude toward self (Wagner & Ludke 2012, p. 148).

Describe your “attitude toward yourself”. In other words, how do you feel about yourself?

- ❖ What are your perceptions about yourself? When you think about yourself?
- ❖ How important are you to yourself?

9. Has your relationship with your father shaped your self-esteem or attitude yourself throughout various stages of your life (as a little girl, adolescent, and young adult)?

- ❖ If so, in what ways has your father shaped how you saw yourself and your attitude towards yourself throughout various stages of your life?
- ❖ Are there any positive beliefs that you have about yourself that you may have gotten from your father? Any negative beliefs?
- ❖ Can you think back to any moment(s) in your relationship with your father when influenced the way you perceived yourself?
- ❖ Has your father shaped the way you see or feel about yourself as an African- American woman?

10. Have there been any highlights or special moments in your relationship with your father?

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Volunteer or Professional Transcriber's Assurance of Research Confidentiality

This thesis project is firmly committed to the principle that research confidentiality must. All volunteer and professional transcribers for this project shall sign this assurance of confidentiality.

A volunteer or professional transcriber should be aware that the identity of participants in research studies is confidential information, as are identifying information about participants and individual responses to questions. The organizations participating in the study, the geographical location of the study, the method of participant recruitment, the subject matter of the study, and the hypotheses being tested are also be confidential information. Specific research findings and conclusions are also usually confidential until they have been published or presented in public.

The researcher for this project, - Kendra R. Archer - shall be responsible for ensuring that all volunteer or professional transcribers handling data are instructed on procedures for keeping the data secure and maintaining all of the information in and about the study in confidence, and that that they have signed this pledge. At the end of the project, all materials shall be returned to the investigator for secure storage in accordance with federal guidelines.

PLEDGE

I hereby certify that I will maintain the confidentiality of all of the information from all studies with which I have involvement. I will not discuss, disclose, disseminate, or provide access to such information, except directly to the researcher, - insert name of researcher - for this project. I understand that violation of this pledge is sufficient grounds for disciplinary action, including termination of professional or volunteer services with the project, and may make me subject to criminal or civil penalties. I give my personal pledge that I shall abide by this assurance of confidentiality.

_____	Signature
_____	Date
_____	Kendra R. Archer
_____	Date