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P/PV

Young Unwed Fathers

Report from the Field

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CONTENTS

Page

FOREWORD i

I. INTRODUCTION 1
- Policy Context 2
- The Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project 3
- Research 6
- Organization of the Report 9

II. PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE 11
- Basic Demographic Characteristics of Fathers 11
- Neighborhood Risk Factors 13
- The Fathers' Children and Fertility-Related Behavior 15
- Education, Training and Employment History 17
- Basic Demographic Characteristics of Mothers 24
- Summary 27

III. FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS 29
- Coming to Terms with the Pregnancy 29
- Frequency of Father-Child Contact 45
- Fathers' Satisfaction with Frequency of Contact 48
- Fathers' Views of Fatherhood Development Activities 54
- Summary 58

IV. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT 59
- Education 59
- Job-Readiness 62
- Job Training 64
- Employment 67
- Summary 73

V. CHILD SUPPORT 75
- Informal Support 76
- Initiation into the Child Support System 83
- Formal Support: Program Outcomes 93
- Summary 98

VI. CONCLUSIONS 99

REFERENCES 103

APPENDICES

A. SUMMARY: *YOUNG UNWED FATHERS PILOT PROJECT: INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT* A-1

B. PROFILE OF THE SITES B-1

C. SAMPLE SELECTION AND REPRESENTATIVENESS C-1

D. COST ANALYSIS D-1

E. LENGTH OF STAY AND SERVICES RECEIVED E-1

TABLES

Page

1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FATHERS 12

2. EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AT INTAKE 18

3. TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT INTAKE 21

4. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS 26

5. FREQUENCY OF FATHERS' CONTACT WITH CHILD AT BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP 47

6. FREQUENCY OF FATHERS' CONTACT BY AGE OF CHILD AT FOLLOW-UP 47

7. AVERAGE NUMBER OF WEEKLY CONTACTS WITH CHILD BY TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER AT BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP 49

8. TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER AT BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP 49

9. EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT INTAKE AND FOLLOW-UP 69

10. AMOUNT OF INFORMAL SUPPORT REPORTED BY FATHERS DURING THE MONTH PRECEDING THE BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS . 80

C-1. RACE OF SURVEY SAMPLE AND OTHER FATHERS IN PROJECT C-3

D-1. PROGRAM COSTS, JANUARY THROUGH MARCH 1992 . . . . . D-3

D-2. MONTHLY PROGRAM COSTS PER SLOT D-3

E-1. LENGTH OF STAY IN THE PROGRAM E-2

FOREWORD

Public/Private Ventures' Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project was designed to see if young, economically disadvantaged fathers would enter a program that provided job training, education, counseling, and parenting and postprogram services for up to 18 months, and if participation would lead to increased capacity to support their children, both financially and developmentally.

A total of 459 young fathers enrolled in six operating sites, which were given flexibility in implementing the prescribed services, since there was no proven model to serve as a guide. P/PV's intent was to see if a preferred set of practices emerged from the pilot experience that could be shaped into a model for a formal research demonstration that would include an impact study.

Because so little was known about the lives and circumstances of young fathers and their willingness to participate in special skills-enhancement programs, P/PV also undertook, with support from The Ford and Charles Stewart Mott Foundations, to carry out an ethnographic study. Local ethnographers were hired in three of the six sites, and worked under the direction of an experienced ethnographer on P/PV's research staff. This report is largely the result of that ethnographic work, but it also includes analyses of program outcomes based on pre- and postprogram survey data.

Forty-seven fathers participated in the ethnography. Largely because of the enrollment patterns in the sites where ethnographers were located, 89 percent of the young men who participated in the ethnography were black, while 77 percent of the participants across the six sites were black. Otherwise, the participants in the ethnographic sample were very similar to the larger sample.

The project's *Initial Implementation Report* by Bernardine H. Watson, published in Fall 1992, documents the challenges and achievements experienced by the sites during implementation of the pilot project. The report's analysis of the sites' operational experience indicated that several of the most serious challenges were directly related to current federal policies and their administration. For example, the limited in-program financial support under the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) caused many fathers to take low-skill, low-wage jobs early in their program stay, before they had gained the educational and work-related skills that would allow them to pursue better-paying jobs with benefits and career potential. Likewise, pressure from local Child Support Enforcement (CSE) agencies to pay child support hastened many young fathers' departure from skills training and education courses. In addition, the rule that allows fathers to contribute only $50 per month directly to their children if the mother receives AFDC payments (any additional contribution goes to the state to offset welfare costs) appeared to reduce the motivation of some young men to improve themselves financially, and to contribute larger amounts for their children's development.

The implementation report concluded that current regulations and practice in JTPA, CSE and public welfare, and the limited coordination between those programs, presented serious barriers to attempts to interest young men in skills improvement programs, and to provide them with substantial education and training services. For this reason, we decided against pursuing a formal demonstration of any of the community-based models. The current Parents' Fair Share Demonstration, while it does not focus on young fathers, deals directly with some of these interagency issues.

This report provides, through the voices of the young men, strong support for the conclusions of our implementation study: that some federal policies and practices work as disincentives to the very outcomes that our society wants--that is, fathers who support their children's development and meet their financial needs. It also provides support for earlier ethnographic work by Mercer Sullivan, which indicated that most young fathers not only deeply care for their children, but try to support them financially, only lessening their efforts after coming to the conclusion that social policies often do not support their efforts.

Although ethnography does not provide the statistical assurance of some other research methods, it does allow a depth of examination, a sense of real life conditions and complexity, and an authenticity of voice that is often uniquely illuminating--especially in examining social issues about which policy debate seems to be guided as much by conjecture as by fact. Given the emotion surrounding any discussion about the young men who father children without the ability to support them, this report provides a grounding in reality that will be very useful to current discussions of welfare, child support, and employment and education policies. No easy solutions emerge, but some clear lessons do--on what policy should avoid, and what it should aspire to.

An ethnographic report gives the best return when fully read; a summary robs it of its unique strengths. We have in the last chapter offered some reflections that represent a distillation of the study's main points; but given the critical nature of the issues that caused us to undertake this study--and the striking insights it offers--we hope that you will take the time to read this research report from beginning to end.

Gary Walker
Executive Vice President
Public/Private Ventures

I. INTRODUCTION

The Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project was designed by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) to explore whether and how programs can improve the capacity of young men to care for their children, both as providers and parents. The major goals of the project included:

- To improve or reinforce the parenting skills of young fathers;
- To increase the employment and earnings potential of young fathers; and
- To motivate young fathers to declare legal paternity for their children and pay child support.

Another major goal was to increase our knowledge of young fathers--their responses to early parenting and relationships with their children; their employment and training needs; and their attitudes toward, and experiences in, the formal child support system--and assess the correspondence between their life circumstances and the services that the pilot programs offered.

The decision to conduct the demonstration as a pilot was based on the fact that the project was breaking new ground for both program operations and research. The literature on young unwed fathers is sparse; programmatic experiences are few; only a small number of young unwed fathers enter the child support system, and even fewer pay support orders. When the pilot was launched in 1991, there were few guidelines to estimate the response of young men to an intervention that linked concern with their personal development and economic well-being to their legal obligations as fathers.

The pilot project was conducted between March 1991 and August 1993 in six cities: Annapolis, Maryland; Cleveland, Ohio; Fresno, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Racine, Wisconsin; and St. Petersburg, Florida. Each program enrolled a minimum of 50 young fathers between the ages of 16 and 25 and provided them with education, employment and training, fatherhood development activities and case management.

The Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project was supported by six foundations--the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The Ford Foundation, the Levi Strauss Foundation, the Kaiser Family Foundation, the AT&T Foundation and the Scott Paper Company Foundation--as well as by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services, which operates the federal food stamp program and is interested in the employment-related outcomes for young fathers and their children.

This is the second of two reports on the project. The first report documented the sites' experiences with recruitment, retention, service delivery and interagency linkages.[1] This report presents a detailed look at selected aspects of the lives of the young fathers before and during program participation, as well as outcomes of the intervention.

POLICY CONTEXT

Much of the basic rationale and program concept for the Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project stem from four interrelated policy issues: poverty among children raised in single-parent households, the growing number of children born out of wedlock to teen parents, long-term welfare receipt among women who become mothers when they are teens, and declining earnings among disadvantaged males.

In 1991, 15.7 million children lived in single-parent families (32 percent of them with never-married mothers and 3 percent with never-married fathers) and about one-half of these children lived in households with incomes below the official poverty line (Quiroz and Ebb, 1993). Although the number of births to teenage mothers has fluctuated, declining from nearly 600,000 in 1960 to 472,000 in 1986 before rising again to 533,000 in 1990, the number and rate of births to unwed teenage mothers has increased steadily from 68,000 in 1960 (12 percent of all births to teens) to 361,000 (68 percent of all births to teens) in 1990.[2] Presently, about one-half of all babies delivered to white teen mothers are born outside of marriage; for black teens the proportion is 91 percent (Moore, Snyder and Halla, 1991).

In 1985, the federal government spent an estimated $17 billion on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), Medicaid and food stamps to assist poor women who had first given birth when they were teens (Burt and Levy, 1987). The AFDC program alone currently spends more than one-half of its budget on families that were first formed when the mother was in her teens (Danziger and Nichols-Casebolt, 1987/88) and it is estimated that over 40 percent of never-married women with children under the age of three who enter the AFDC system by the age of 25 will spend 10 or more years on AFDC (Ooms and Owen, 1990). Despite the net size of these investments in the administration and disbursement of assistance, many of the children born to teen mothers grow up in abject poverty. In 1986, 84 percent of children under the age of three in households headed by women who were 21 or younger were living below the official poverty line (Ooms and Owen, 1990).

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[1] For more detail on implementation, see *Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project: Initial Implementation Report* (Watson, Fall 1992). Appendix A presents a summary of the report.

[2] The number of births to unwed teen mothers would be even higher if it were not for the decline in the teenage population and the option of abortion. Following the postwar baby boom, the number of teens dropped steadily from 1976 onward. Their numbers are expected to increase in the 1990s.

Child support from the absent father can augment the AFDC program, providing a small supplement to the cash income of AFDC households, and a larger supplement to the incomes of non-AFDC single-parent households. However, after decades of effort at the state and federal levels to establish and enforce support orders, evasion and non-compliance continue unabated (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1990). In the mid-1980s, 40 percent of poor female heads of household with children under the age of 21 had been awarded child support; less than a third of those actually received any of the support awarded (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1989).

The Family Support Act of 1988 requires states to pursue absent fathers more aggressively, establish child support orders and enforce the payments required. However, stricter enforcement is unlikely to affect positively the behavior of young and economically disadvantaged fathers. Indeed, the increases in child poverty and out-of-wedlock births to teen mothers are associated with the deteriorating economic condition of young men. Between 1973 and 1991, the average annual earnings of males 20 to 23 years old fell by nearly 31 percent and by more than 40 percent for males without a high school diploma. Many absent fathers do not graduate from high school; lack job skills; and earn little or no regular income, especially when their children are young (Lerman, 1993a).

THE YOUNG UNWED FATHERS PILOT PROJECT

In response to these issues and policy challenges, P/PV designed the Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project to explore programmatic approaches that would not only increase the earnings or earning potential of young men between the ages of 16 and 25 with children--so that they could achieve self-sufficiency <u>and</u> fulfill their legal obligations as fathers--but also improve or reinforce their parenting skills and involvement in the lives of their children.

Early reconnaissance of the field revealed that systematic attempts to attract and serve young fathers are few in number and limited in scope. Most programs for young unwed fathers are small community-based operations whose missions are rarely coordinated with major funding sources. As a result, the range and quality of services they are able to offer are seriously constrained--particularly in the critical areas of employment and training.[3] Public employment and training programs, in turn, have not generally worked effectively with disadvantaged males. Moreover, they have never specifically targeted young unwed fathers and offer none of the additional support these young men likely need to become responsible parents as well as productive employees. Finally, few, if any, attempts have been made to link employment programs and community-based support services for young fathers to the child support

[3] For example, the eight Teen Fathers Collaborative programs initiated through Bank Street College in 1983, and the more recent Adolescent Male Responsibility programs sponsored by the Urban League, have pioneered efforts that emphasize the psychological and personal development of young fathers. Although they have also sought to develop their potential to help fathers pursue education and secure gainful employment, their efforts have been constrained by limited resources.

enforcement system.[4] As a result, there is a paucity of knowledge on which to base our estimate of the response of young men to an intervention that links concerns for their personal development and earning potential to their legal obligations as fathers.

Developing the operations and research designs for this project required navigating in uncharted waters. The remainder of this chapter describes key aspects of the program and research designs.

Program Design

In the absence of a sufficient base of knowledge and programmatic experience to inform decisions about the optimal service delivery system, P/PV did not prescribe a single program model. However, the programs were required to enroll a minimum of 50 young fathers between the ages of 16 and 25; maintain contact with them for a minimum of 18 months; and incorporate four key elements into their service delivery systems: education, employment and training, fatherhood development activities and case management. These key elements and their rationale are described below.

1. Educational Opportunities. The relationship between educational attainment and income in the U.S. is well established. According to 1990 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the average monthly income of those without a high school diploma was $492, less than half the earnings of those whose education stopped with a high school diploma. Unemployment is also more prevalent among those without a high school diploma. In 1989, 75 percent of black male high school graduates were employed while only 56 percent of those without a diploma were employed (National Research Council Panel on High-Risk Youth, 1993). A high school diploma is a prerequisite for many jobs and training opportunities. At the very least, job training programs usually require mastery of basic skills. For these reasons, all sites were required to provide fathers with access to basic skills remediation and GED classes. Further, sites were encouraged to help those with a high school diploma or GED enroll in local community college or voc-tech programs.

2. Employment and Training Services. Sites were required to provide fathers with services, or access to services, that would enhance their opportunities for securing and retaining employment that paid a "family wage" (or opportunities to advance) and provided health benefits. These services included preemployment skills workshops, classroom vocational training or OJT, and job placement.

3. Fatherhood Development Activities. Previous research suggests that young unwed fathers experience considerable stress. Not only are they too psychologically and emotionally imma-

[4] Among the small number of programs that are operated through child support agencies or welfare offices are those located in Marion County, Indiana; Harford and Prince George's counties in Maryland; Kent County, Michigan; and Leon, Duvall and Hillsborough counties in Florida. The Kent County and Duvall County programs are participating in MDRC's Parents' Fair Share pilot demonstration.

ture for the roles and responsibilities that parenthood implies (Sullivan, 1985), the rights and role expectations for fathers, particularly those who do not live with the mother and child, are not clearly defined--leaving them with a sense of uncertainty and confusion (Buchanan and Robbins, 1990). Acknowledging these problems, P/PV sought to improve or reinforce the relationships that the fathers have with their children, develop their confidence and skills in parenting, and educate them about their legal obligations and rights as fathers. The cornerstone of fatherhood development was a 24-session curriculum created by P/PV. P/PV also provided the sites with a $5,000 seed grant to develop peer leadership councils and involve the young men in planning social and recreational activities for themselves and their children.

4. Case Management. Like other high-risk segments of the population, young fathers are not a monolithic group. We expected that they would enter the program with diverse personal, educational and employment histories and needs. To ensure that the young men received the range and type of services and guidance they needed, program staff were encouraged to provide ongoing case management. Case managers were urged to regularly assess the needs of individual fathers; help them set education, employment and personal goals; coordinate services to address their needs and realize their goals; monitor and reinforce progress; and provide ongoing guidance and support.

Case managers were also asked to encourage the young men to declare paternity, if they had not already done so, and support them in their interactions with the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) system.

The mandate to incorporate these service components into the program models was a broad one. Based on their own experiences, preferences and resources, each site had considerable latitude in choosing its approach to and emphasis on each of the required components. In addition to these requirements, some sites offered other ancillary or support services, such as mentoring, health care and legal counsel, while others did not. Across sites, then, differences in the program model varied along a number of dimensions, including the type and range of services offered, the number of program hours allocated to each key component, the timing or sequencing of the interventions, and the underlying philosophies, as well as practical considerations, that informed their thinking and decisions.

The Pilot Programs

The project was conducted in six pilot sites that represented a range of organizational structures and service delivery approaches. Among the lead agencies were two community-based organizations (CBOs) that offered the majority of services on site: Cleveland Works in Ohio and Goodwill Industries in Racine, Wisconsin; two Private Industry Councils (PICs): the Fresno PIC in California, whose contractors delivered most of the services, and the Pinellas County PIC in St. Petersburg, Florida; and two community-based managing agencies, or "brokers," that delivered the fatherhood curriculum and provided case management on site, but referred participants to established programs in the community for most other services:

Philadelphia Children's Network in Pennsylvania, and Friends of the Family in Annapolis, Maryland.

Three sites had very clearly defined program models: the model in Cleveland was built around job placement and job retention, Fresno invested heavily in training for specific occupations, and the Philadelphia program was anchored in development of strong peer support groups and intensive case management. The models at the three other sites were more loosely defined--the young fathers could follow a number of different paths through the program. (For a more detailed description of each of the six pilot programs, see Appendix B.)

RESEARCH

A priori, too little was known about young fathers or their likely response to a program intervention that linked concerns with their personal and economic well-being with their legal obligations as fathers to conduct a controlled experiment. Therefore, a pre-post intervention design was used to measure education, employment and parenting outcomes projectwide.

In addition to the outcomes study, an 18-month ethnographic study was conducted at three sites (Philadelphia, St. Petersburg and Racine) between Fall 1991 and Spring 1993. The purpose of the study was to explore in depth the life circumstances, motivations, attitudes and behaviors of young fathers. The major objectives of this study were: (1) to increase knowledge about young unwed fathers--their experiences in, and perspectives on, education, employment and training, involvement in income-generating activities outside the formal sector, fatherhood, and the child support system; and (2) to understand the correspondence between their life circumstances and the services that the programs offered.

The findings presented in this report are based on data collected from two samples. The outcomes study data were collected in all six sites from a total of 155 fathers at intake, baseline and follow-up. While a total of 459 fathers enrolled in the program, our sample includes only those who participated in both the baseline and follow-up telephone surveys. These 155 fathers are not a random sample of all participants. Rather, they are those who could be reached by the surveyors at both points in time and, overall, tended to be more active in the program and have somewhat higher levels of in-program achievement. (See Appendix C for further discussion of the representativeness of this sample.) The ethnographic data were collected in three sites from 47 fathers, including those who were not actively involved in the program.

Data Sources

The data were drawn from multiple sources. The following sections describe the major sources of data for the outcomes and ethnographic studies.[5]

Outcomes Study

Data on education, employment and parenting outcomes were collected from the 155 fathers in the survey sample. The four sources of outcomes data were the following:

Intake Questionnaire. At each site, case managers conducted a structured interview with each father prior to enrollment in the program. The intake questionnaire provided data on the characteristics of the fathers and their households, education and work histories, and how they heard about the program.

Baseline Telephone Interviews. Baseline telephone interviews were conducted with two cohorts of fathers. (See Appendix C.) These interviews provided data on their children, including their basic characteristics and living arrangements, as well as information on the fathers' informal and legal relationships to each child, frequency of contact and provision of material and financial support; mothers of their children, including their basic characteristics and living arrangements, as well as the fathers' relationship with them; knowledge and use of contraception; involvement in the criminal justice system; and selected characteristics of their neighborhoods.

Follow-Up Telephone Interviews. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with each cohort approximately 12 months after baseline. These interviews collected the same types of information that was collected at baseline about their living arrangements, knowledge and use of contraception, children and the mothers of their children. In addition, data were collected on the fathers' assessment of the usefulness of key program components and on their current involvement in school and the labor market.

Monthly Activity Logs. At each site, case managers completed monthly activity logs for each father. The logs provided information on individual participation rates and achievements in the major components of the program: education, preemployment workshops, vocational or skills training, employment, and fatherhood development activities. In addition, case managers completed a termination log at exit. These logs were submitted monthly to P/PV, where they were processed.

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[5] A cost study was also conducted in three sites (Cleveland, Fresno and Racine). See Appendix D.

Ethnographic Study

The ethnographic study collected more detailed and contextual data on the motivations, behaviors and life circumstances of 47 young fathers, representing about half of all those enrolled in the three programs between March 1991 and February 1992.[6] The study focused on their attitudes toward, and involvements in, education, employment, income-generating activities outside the formal sector, parenting and the formal child support system; also, their experiences in, and responses to, key elements in the program model. The two major sources of data used in this report are described below.

Life History Narratives. Detailed information on the motivations, attitudes, behaviors and life circumstances of young fathers, before and during enrollment in the project, was collected through life history interviews with 47 participants. To ensure consistency in data collection across the three sites, an inventory of the sorts of information we wanted to collect in the interviews was prepared by the ethnographic team. This inventory was modified throughout the study, based on ongoing analyses of the data by the executive ethnographer in collaboration with the field-based ethnographers.

In the initial interviews with each father, the ethnographers were encouraged to ask the fathers broad, open-ended questions in the areas of interest, and let the fathers talk. This approach gave us insight into what the fathers think is important, and the ways that events in one life domain affect, or are related to, those in other domains. Subsequent interviews repeated this approach whenever possible. As needed, the ethnographers asked more specific questions to ensure some consistency in coverage across participants and sites.

Altogether, 172 interviews were conducted. The length of these interviews ranged from two to five hours; most were between two and three hours long. All interviews were recorded on audiocassettes and transcribed immediately. Coding and analysis of the narratives were ongoing and were refined as the study progressed. ETHNOGRAPH software was used to organize and reduce the voluminous data.

In addition to the life history narratives, the ethnographers sought to corroborate the fathers' reports on their attitudes and behaviors through other sources and methods. These data were recorded in field notes.

Field Notes. At each ethnographic site, the ethnographers were nonparticipant observers in the fatherhood curriculum sessions and peer support meetings, the major group activities in each of the three programs in the study. In addition, they observed education classes, preemployment workshops and other program-related activities; participated in field trips that the fathers took with their children; attended weddings and birthday parties; visited many of their homes and neighborhoods; and, whenever possible, visited their job sites. These

[6] Twenty-five of the 47 fathers in the ethnographic sample also participated in the baseline and follow-up surveys.

observations and interactions were not limited to the 47 fathers in the sample. They included other fathers; family members, partners, current girlfriends and children; program staff; educators; volunteer attorneys; and representatives of CSE. The ethnographers' observations and impressions were documented in field notes, which were submitted to the executive ethnographer at P/PV on a monthly basis. Field notes were also coded and, when appropriate, merged with individual interview data.

Use of Data

Quantitative and qualitative data from the various sources were merged to describe the characteristics and life circumstances of young fathers and to contextualize and inform analyses of their personal and financial relationships to their children and the mothers of their children, as well as their aspirations, expectations and achievements in the program. This data analysis strategy compensates for the limitations of any single method and enhances confidence in the findings when data collected through one method support those collected through others.

Given the exploratory nature of the research, and the more extensive breadth and depth of data collected in the ethnographic study, certain sections of this report rely exclusively on data from the life history narratives and field notes. The number of fathers in the various analytic categories derived from the ethnographic data were quantified whenever possible. We emphasize that these data concern only a small number of fathers and are not presented as generalized estimates of the characteristics, attitudes or behaviors of the larger sample or population of young fathers. Rather, they are presented to lend much needed insight into the complex issues and diverse perspectives of young fathers--information that can be used to inform more structured inquiries of the larger population.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The report presents a detailed look at selected aspects of the lives of the young fathers before and during program participation, as well as outcomes of the pilot intervention. Chapter II describes the fathers who participated in the research, as well as their children, the mothers of their children and their neighborhoods. Chapter III examines the young men's experiences with fatherhood from the mother's pregnancy onward, and presents findings on parenting outcomes. Chapter IV presents education, training and employment outcomes. Chapter V examines the material and financial support that the fathers provided to their children informally; fathers' attitudes toward, and experiences in, the child support system; and outcomes associated with paternity declaration and formal support orders. Chapter VI discusses the policy implications of our findings.

II. PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

Even under the best of circumstances, successful transition to adulthood is often a challenge. It is especially difficult for youth, male and female, who become parents at a young age. Their lack of educational credentials, episodic work histories and other difficulties limit their prospects for successful transition into adulthood and parenthood. Many of the young fathers in our study entered the pilot program with multiple barriers to success. This chapter presents an overview of their basic demographic characteristics and life circumstances.

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FATHERS

Table 1 summarizes the basic demographic characteristics of the 155 fathers in the survey sample and 47 fathers in the ethnographic sample. The majority of fathers in the survey sample were black (68%), followed by Hispanic (16%) and white (12%). In the ethnographic sample, a larger proportion were black (89%) and there were no Hispanics. The ages of the fathers in both samples ranged from 16 to 26. Forty-eight percent of the fathers in the survey sample and 25 percent of the fathers in the ethnographic sample were under the age of 21. Fourteen of the fathers in the survey sample (9%) had married, but six of these had divorced before joining the program. Only two fathers in the ethnographic sample were ever married, one of whom had divorced before entering the program.

Few of the fathers lived alone. The average size of their households was four, though some lived with as many as eight other people. Fifty-five percent still lived with one (33%) or both (22%) of their parents. Thirty percent said that their youngest child lived with them.

Overall, the households that the fathers lived in were poor. Nearly two-thirds (65%) reported that their household received some form of public assistance in the six months preceding their enrollment, including food stamps (54%), AFDC (37%), General Assistance (25%), and Supplemental Security Income (15%). Sixteen percent said they lived in public housing.

Although the majority of fathers were themselves unemployed when they enrolled in the program, very few (16%) received food stamps in their own name. The majority in the ethnographic sample said they would do just about anything to avoid applying for assistance. Many said that the process was overly intrusive and bureaucratic, but their major objection was a view that the system promotes laziness and dependence. One father's response to a local newspaper article about the reasons men do not apply for food stamps or General Assistance is typical:

> It ain't got nothing to do with macho-ness . . . [It's that] they take you through this, take you through that, you gotta have this, you gotta have that--for what, man? I see a lot of folks get up on that stuff and try to sham on it . . . hang on it because they can, you know . . . And that is just not me . . . As long as I

Table 1

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FATHERS

Characteristics	Survey Sample	Ethnographic Sample
Race		
Black	68%	89%
White	12	11
Hispanic	16	0
Other	4	0
Age		
17 or Younger	5%	6%
18-20	43	19
21-22	26	43
23-24	16	15
Over 24	10	17
Average Age	21.4	21.6
Household Information		
Receipt of AFDC	37%	—
Receipt of Food Stamps	54	—
Public Housing	16	20%
Average Household Size	4	—
Number of Children		
Expecting First	3%	4%
One	61	36
Two	23	38
Three	8	9
Four or More	4	13
Sample Size	155	47

NOTE: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

> can work, man, or make me some money or somethin, anything . . . I'll do that before I go runnin out for food stamps or . . . assistance.

NEIGHBORHOOD RISK FACTORS

Whether their households were non-working poor, working poor or working class, many of the fathers in the ethnographic sample said there were rules in their households--for example, about attending school and talking to elders. According to the young men's accounts of their youth and the neighborhoods in which they grew up, however, even the best parents had to compete with the street culture for their children's attention. One young man, for example, described his two personalities--the one he showed his parents and the one he used to survive on the streets:

> The thing about my family . . . we was poor . . . but we was respectable . . . I never let my family see how I was out on the streets . . . When I came inside the door, I acted a different kind of way, according to my family's rules my mom set down for us and the manners she done showed us . . . But when I was out on the street I acted different. So I adjusted myself, I always taught myself to adjust to different levels . . . When I came in my house, I say yes mama, no mama . . . But then to survive on the streets where I live, it was a whole different personality that came outta me.

According to the fathers in the survey sample, most lived in high-risk urban environments. The majority (71%) reported that their neighborhoods had a great deal of criminal activity, including robbery, drug trafficking and murder:

> I thank God I'm still here . . . Most of the people I grew up with is dead or in prison . . . and a couple of them is on the run . . . It's a straight-up ghetto where I live . . . On my block, we got robbing, mugging, shooting, fighting, people getting killed . . . [But] my block is quiet compared to around the corner. Last year alone, about 15 people in the neighborhood got killed.

The employment opportunities that many described in their neighborhoods were limited and often based on exploiting the addictions of others. One father describes the commercial and business life in his neighborhood:

> My neighborhood's pretty bad . . . Because by them tearing down a lot of houses, they just leave it with empty lots, and those houses that's still standin . . . if they're not crack houses, they have speakeasies where they sell wine and liquor for a dollar. And the majority, everybody around there they just either on dope or they sell dope or they alcoholic or they sell alcohol. And the corner store, like the can goods been in there about 15 years . . . Some of the corner stores sell drugs, buy food stamps from the poor people, you know, the ones that's on drugs, [who] instead of them usin em to buy food for their kids, they

> sell em for dope . . . My alarm clock is a shotgun, you know . . . So it's pretty bad . . . I thank God every day that I make it to my destination and make it back.

Nearly three-quarters of the fathers (74%) in the survey sample reported that many young men in their neighborhoods have been in trouble with the police. The majority said they had close friends or family members who had been in trouble with the law (65%). Eighty-four percent said it is easy to get drugs in their neighborhood and 76 percent said that many of the young men in their neighborhoods use drugs. Nearly one-third (n=49) of the fathers in the survey sample and about half (n=23) in the ethnographic sample reported that they had sold drugs before they entered the program. Nearly three-quarters (n=16) of the fathers in the ethnographic sample said they were between the ages of 12 and 15 when they began selling or running drugs. As one father described his own experience, selling drugs was a "natural thing for young boys" in his neighborhood:

> I was 12 . . . Where I lived at it was just a natural thing that . . . the older guys get you connected up or if an older guy admired a young guy, a young boy, which they call us young boys and old heads, that's how it is . . . If they admire a young boy, the old heads take him under, you know . . . have him on a corner to sell or might have him go deliver somethin or take somethin to somebody . . . It's good money . . . I made about $200 a day but I'd spend it within that day because I might get some girl--I mean at the age of 12 years old, I'd get some girls and get my friends and buy a whole box of penny candy, potato chips, soda, Tastykakes, hoagies . . . everything, you name it, I just treated. I mean that's how I used to do . . . When I get money, I treat everybody. I never was tight with money.

In many of their neighborhoods, youth activities are limited. Nearly all (87%) of the young men in the ethnographic study who got involved in the drug trade in their teens said there were few constructive alternatives. Only seven (15%) of the fathers in the ethnographic sample, for example, had ever participated in any youth employment program. As one father put it:

> They ain't got no recreation centers, pools and all that kind of stuff . . . And what they got in my neighborhood is so little that it always be too many people . . . hundreds of people at one little activity . . . And there ain't no jobs for the young people . . . old people neither . . . I mean if people can't do nothin with theirselves, their time . . . they ain't got no inspiration, I mean they ain't inspired to do nothin . . . So most of us end up in situations where we in trouble . . . with the law, layin up and havin kids cuz there's nothin else to do . . . And then like we still ain't gonna be able to take care of em cuz there ain't nobody to take you and show you how to go about doin things the right way . . . which is somethin that they shoulda did before the bad things happened to you.

About two-thirds of the fathers in the ethnographic sample mentioned that they wanted their children to have more opportunities than they had, and to grow up in better neighborhoods:

> The neighborhood I live in is too dangerous for a child that's just comin up . . . It's even too dangerous for a grown person like me who's been around it all his life . . . All these dudes in this neighborhood . . . that do whatever kinda crime you can think of . . . be always crying about the system . . . I just tell em go do something about it . . . Do the system, don't do your neighbors . . . I really don't like to have my children around this type of negative environment.

Another father who lived in a similar neighborhood was worried about whether the neighborhood might have more influence on his child's future than he could exert as a parent:

> My neighborhood got mens standin on practically every corner, they got big cars and the gold, the ladies, all that . . . which is the major influence on kids comin up here . . . Ain't no one tellin the kids that they gotta graduate to do what I do cuz it ain't true . . . I don't want that kinda stuff around my kid, see my little kid see all that and he gonna wanna know about that . . . and why should I have to explain some bad stuff like that to him when this shouldn't even be in his face . . . But I'll explain it so he can understand how life is, but that don't mean I can get him to see cuz he might see the same way they see, like, "Dad, why do I gotta get an education when I can just jump out and make money . . . You all say we can't jump out and make money without an education and it's bein done . . ." And I don't want him thinkin like that . . . so I'm gonna have to show him what positive way to go and how it might take a long time but it would be the right way . . . And that's one of the reasons I signed up for this program cuz a parent needs help on how to handle these kinda situations . . . A dad is only one person [a child] sees . . . and there's a lot more of them [negative role models] in the neighborhood that can convince him to go a different way.

Also absent from their neighborhoods were positive outlets for recreation, for themselves and especially for their children. In some of the neighborhoods, they described and the ethnographers observed drug dealers, addicts and prostitutes conducting their business in schoolyards and on children's playgrounds. When they are not there, their litter is--in the form of crack vials, syringes, roaches and broken glass.

THE FATHERS' CHILDREN AND FERTILITY-RELATED BEHAVIOR

This section describes the number of children that the fathers in the two samples said they had, the basic characteristics of their youngest child--the focal child for this report--and the fathers' knowledge and use of contraception at baseline.

All Children

Sixty-four percent of the fathers in the survey sample reported that they either had one child (61%) or were expecting their first (3%) at the time of intake. (See Table 1.) Of those with two or more children (35%), 51 percent said all their children had the same mother. Five men said they had fathered children with three different women.

The fathers in the ethnographic sample reported having more children.[7] A much smaller percent of the fathers in the ethnographic sample (40%) said they had either one child (36%) or were expecting their first (4%). Of the 25 fathers in this sample who said they had two or more children, only seven (28%) said that all their children were with the same mother. Four fathers had children with three or more women. Seventy-seven percent (n=36) of the fathers in the ethnographic sample fathered their first child when they were teenagers.

Youngest Child

Of the 148 fathers in the baseline survey sample with children who were living,[8] the majority (81%) said they were either present at the birth of their youngest child or saw the child at the hospital soon afterward. Almost all (93%) of the fathers in the survey sample said they were identified as the father on the child's birth certificate, though about one-third (n=16) of the fathers in the ethnographic sample confided that they had never actually seen the birth certificate.[9]

At the time of the baseline survey, the ages of their youngest child ranged from less than one month to seven years. Their average age was 19 months. Fifty percent were 14 months or younger and 75 percent were 25 months or younger. Thirty percent of the fathers said they lived in the same household as their child and 82 percent of these fathers said the child's mother also lived with them.

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[7] It is likely that these differences are due in part to more accurate reporting to the ethnographers. A number of the fathers in the sample who revealed additional children did so only over time.

[8] Five fathers were expecting their first child at baseline and two fathers had no children because their only child had died. Three additional fathers reported that one or more of their children had died. Descriptive statistics presented throughout this section on fathers' relationships with their children and the mothers of their children are based on the 148 fathers with living children.

[9] At least two fathers in the ethnographic sample said that the mother had put her current boyfriend's name on the child's birth certificate. The mother and the maternal grandmother of one of these two fathers were in the process of having the birth certificate legally changed. Nearly all the unwed fathers in the ethnographic sample assumed, erroneously, that this constituted legal declaration of paternity. Several fathers in this sample confided that they, in collusion with the mother, intentionally omitted their name from the birth certificate. These fathers were employed at the time the child was born and the mother was already receiving AFDC. They did not think it was in either their own or their child's best interest to be identified as the father.

At baseline, the majority of fathers in the survey said they liked to be around their child (97%) and wanted to be an important part of their child's life (97%). Most of the fathers reported frequent contact with their youngest child. Fifty-seven percent of the survey sample said they had seen their child every day or almost every day in the month preceding the baseline interview. Only 7 percent reported no contact with their child. About two-thirds (68%) of the fathers who did not live with their children said they would like to see them more often.

Ninety-four percent said they had purchased something for their child in the month preceding the baseline interview, and about half said they had given the mother some cash, informally. Thirty percent (n=44) in the survey sample said they had support orders set for their youngest child. Only three of these fathers said they had made a formal child support payment during the month preceding the baseline interview.

Fertility-Related Behavior

To assess the fathers' knowledge in this area, the baseline survey included eight true-or-false questions about contraception. On average, the fathers correctly answered only half the questions, indicating a general absence of basic knowledge.

The majority of the fathers were sexually active at baseline. Seventy percent of the fathers in the survey sample reported that they had engaged in sexual intercourse at least once a week in the month preceding the survey. Of these, 51 percent indicated that they or their partners used contraceptives all the time and 23 percent said they never used birth control. The remaining 26 percent said they used contraception irregularly. Only 36 percent of the sexually active fathers said they had used condoms at least once during the month before the interview.

Data from the ethnographic interviews indicate that the majority of the fathers in that sample at least are at high risk for additional pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

At the time of their enrollment, 57 percent of the fathers had neither formal attachments to the labor force, nor were they enrolled in any education or training program. However, at the time of their intake interviews, 75 percent said they wanted to get a job or a better job.

Educational Attainment

The majority of fathers in the survey (62%) and ethnographic (75%) samples left school before graduation and did not have a GED at the time they enrolled in the program. Eighteen percent of the fathers in the survey sample and 36 percent in the ethnographic sample said they left school before the 10th grade. (See Table 2.) The majority of these fathers had

Table 2

EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AT INTAKE

	Survey Sample	Ethnographic Sample
Highest Grade Completed		
8th Grade or Less	3%	6%
9th Grade	15	30
10th Grade	17	19
11th Grade	35	21
12th Grade	23	19
Vocational School	3	—
Some College	5	4
Degrees Earned		
High School Diploma	28%	23%
GED	10	6
Enrolled in at Intake		
High School	10%	6%
GED	4	6
Voc-Tech	2	—
Sample Size	155	47

NOTE: For highest grade completed, percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

already left school or were at risk of leaving school before the pregnancy. Only 10 percent in the survey sample and 4 percent in the ethnographic sample said they left school due to their girlfriend's pregnancy. Of the five white fathers in the ethnographic sample, three were homeless at the time they left school--two had either run away or been kicked out of the house and another's entire family was without permanent shelter.

Among the many reasons that fathers in the ethnographic sample gave for leaving school, the most frequently mentioned were boredom or lack of motivation (33%); desire to "get rich quick" through drug dealing and other hustles (30%); expulsion, usually for fighting (26%); the pull of peers (22%); prejudicial treatment by other-race students and teachers (22%); family problems (20%); and frequent moves or changes of household (18%).

Eighty-three percent (n=27) of the fathers in the ethnographic sample who did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent when they entered the program said the importance of education was stressed in the households in which they grew up. Leaving school, they said, either created or exacerbated tensions between themselves and their parent(s).

Of the 11 fathers in the ethnographic sample who had either graduated from high school or were still enrolled at the time they entered the program, nearly half had left school before returning to graduate. Unlike those who left school and did not return, these fathers were all from relatively stable two-parent, black, working-class households. For example, one young man describes how he was drawn away from school by the glamour of street life until his parents discovered what he was up to:

> When I stopped goin to school and started getting into selling drugs . . . it was all a fun thing to me . . . I really wanted to hang in the streets and get to know negative people, to tell you the truth. It was really like an honor for me to know big time people drivin around in cars. That was really, I could say, like my role model . . . even though I wasn't brought up that way. I was brought up in a church background, but it was somethin like new to me . . . something that I really had to get involved with . . . Our family really wasn't never poor. I always had money in my pocket from my parents, always had food on the table and clothes, so I wasn't never really doin it for the money . . .
>
> When my parents found out . . . they got on me real tough. They made me get back in school because I was doin all this during school hours . . . My older brother was tryin to help me out too cuz he could see what I was doin . . . He hooked me up with an after-school and weekend job at the place where he worked.

The young men did not always leave school to earn money illegally, however. Some took after-school and weekend jobs to earn money to buy clothes and pocket money. Occasionally, these turned into full-time jobs with employers who did not support school attendance:

> The owner used to ask me to don't go to school and just come in to work because we'd get so busy where he needed my help . . . I was so caught up with making money that I just stopped going, you know, just so I could work. And my mom didn't know about it . . . When she think I was at school I was really at work, workin with him from 10 to 6. And plus I was already sick of school so I didn't see nothin wrong with it.

Nearly all of the fathers in the ethnographic study who left school without a diploma said they regretted it.

Employment and Training

Twenty-eight fathers (18%) in the survey sample had participated in some type of job training program in the three years prior to their enrollment in the young fathers program. (See Table 3.) Seventeen fathers had completed this training program and 10 said it led them to a job.

Of the 155 fathers in the survey sample, only 36 (23%) were employed when they entered the program, though 82 percent had held some job in the preceding 12 months. The average hourly wage they earned in the highest paying job they had in the year prior to intake was $5.41. Of the 36 fathers who were employed at intake, 50 percent earned $5 an hour or less and were working 30 hours a week or less. Their average weekly wage was $150. Few (17%) worked for employers who offered any type of health insurance plan.

Most had sporadic work histories. Sixty-one percent of the fathers who were employed at intake had been on their jobs for four months or less and one-quarter had been on their jobs for less than one month. The median length of time the fathers spent at their most recent job was three months, with 46 percent holding the job for two months or less.

In addition to their participation in the formal sector of the economy, we know from the ethnographic study that at least 40 percent (n=19) of the fathers had generated some legal, albeit off-the-books, income through hustling--either on their own (e.g., helping a neighbor move, shoveling snow, drywalling and repairing appliances) or as casual laborers (e.g., roofing, unloading trucks and rough carpentry). Much of the work that they did, especially the casual labor, was hazardous without training. At least seven of the fathers said they had been seriously injured doing this work--for example, falling off rooftops or injuring their backs lifting heavy freight. Because they were casual laborers, however, the "bossmen" were not obligated to pay for medical treatment and the fathers were not eligible for workman's compensation. Several also mentioned that the people for whom they did the work did not always pay them.

A sizable number of fathers in the ethnographic sample also reported that they had earned money through illegal means in the year preceding their enrollment in the program, some in more than one way. The largest number mentioned income from drugs (45%), followed by

Table 3

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT INTAKE
(Survey Sample)

Prior Training	
Participated	18%
Completed	11
Received Job	6
Employment Status During 12 Months Prior to Intake	
Employed	82%
Average Wage, Highest Paid Job	$5.41
Average Weekly Hours of Highest Paid Job	34
Jobs with Health Benefits	22%
Employment Status at Intake	
Employed	23%
Average Hourly Wage	$5.19
Average Weekly Hours	27
Jobs with Health Benefits	17%
Sample Size	155

> carry out things like they s'posed to be carried out . . . Whereas a female I think they look at them as bein more understandin . . . more obedient . . . They think all young black males ain't got no discipline . . . I can't say exactly what it is but I just feel we always have that barrier against us because we're young and we're black men.

Another father described how he was repeatedly passed up for promotions:

> When I first got the job, they said it was an equal opportunity job . . . and at first, it seemed like that because they kept tellin me, you know, you're our best worker and very soon you're gonna get a raise and we're gonna promote you . . . so you'll be up there with everybody else. But then as they started hirin people of different races, well they were hirin the same race but not my race, and it was like these people were movin up and I wasn't goin nowhere . . . So I was like this ain't right here, you know, so I went in and voiced my opinion to the boss . . . I didn't voice it in a negative way . . . I didn't use no color phrases or anything like that. I asked him like, well "Bobby just got a raise and a promotion and I was here before him, is it that my work is not up to standard or is there somethin wrong with me? I'm here every day, I'm on time . . . I wanna know whether it's my work, if it's my work then tell me what I'm doin wrong and I can do it right . . . so next time a raise come up . . . I can get it" . . . And you know he was like, no, that ain't how it is . . . so I just let it go . . . And then it was just the same way . . . new people come and they get positions and they makin more money than I am. I'm a family man, I got rent, I got bills to pay but yet they were still not payin me like they were payin other people comin in with no experience. . . They was getting $6 an hour . . . I was still gettin $5.25 . . . So I started voicin my opinion again . . . and then I got laid off for voicin my opinion . . .
>
> I decided to resign and I wrote a letter . . . I said: "The only regret I have is [in] America . . . color still means somethin . . . When I go to work, I put my all into that job, I'm not satisfied with half-done jobs . . . and usually my work's up to standards and sometimes over standards . . . If I'm a janitor, I'm gonna do that job so everything shines when I'm finished with it. But when people start comin in, new people and they start gettin raises and they're the opposite color then I feel like . . . I wanna voice my opinion about it . . . That day I voiced my opinion about it they said I'm a troublemaker and they laid me off . . . so that's why I'm resigning."

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS

Although the focus of the pilot project was on young fathers and the personal and financial relationships they have with their youngest child, one cannot ignore the important role that the mother plays in these relationships. The following profile of the mothers is based on

information collected from the fathers of their mutual children in the baseline telephone survey and, therefore, should be viewed cautiously.[10]

The 155 fathers in the survey sample reported 180 mothers.[11] The ages of these mothers ranged from 15 to 35. (See Table 4.) Half the mothers were 20 years old or younger and the majority (73%) were between the ages of 17 and 22. On average, the mothers were five months younger than the fathers; 28 percent were one or more years older. Fifty-one percent of the mothers had given birth to only one child, and 82 percent had one or two children.

Overall, the mothers had more education and training than the fathers in the sample--perhaps reflecting the larger number of opportunities and services for young mothers vis-a-vis young fathers. Over half (53%) of the mothers had obtained a high school diploma or GED. Thirty-seven percent were enrolled in some type of education or job training program and over one-quarter (28%) were employed. In 35 percent of the cases, fathers did not know whether the mothers were recipients of AFDC. Eighty-one percent of the mothers for whom we have information did receive AFDC.

Fifty-six percent of the fathers described the relationship they had with the mother of the youngest child during pregnancy as marital (3%) or serious (53%). Twenty-three percent reported that they were casual lovers or friends of the mothers at the time of the pregnancy. By the time the baseline survey was administered--and the average age of the youngest child was 19 months--only 43 percent described their relationship as either marital (11%) or serious (32%). Nearly one-quarter described their relationship as nonromantic and child-centered. Another 19 fathers described their relationship as either hostile or nonexistent.

Young men who had fathered a child by more than one woman were even less likely to have an ongoing romantic relationship with the mothers of their older children. Forty-one percent characterized their relationship with the mothers of their older children as either hostile or nonexistent.

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[10] Efforts were made to include the mothers in the ethnographic study--to get their perspective on the issues and to corroborate what the young men told us. However, since the programs did not involve the mothers in any systematic way, it was difficult for the ethnographers to gain access to the women, especially when their relationships with the fathers were conflict-ridden. The ethnographers had some informal interaction with about a quarter of the mothers, usually at program functions or weddings. Only three mothers participated in joint interviews with the father. Most others either refused an interview or did not show up. According to some fathers, the mothers thought that the ethnographer was an advocate for the father--collecting information for the welfare office or to support a father's claim for custody. Current girlfriends who were not the mothers were much more cooperative, but their inclusion is beyond the scope of this report.

[11] The 47 fathers in the ethnographic sample reported 71 mothers and a total of 91 biological children.

Table 4

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS
(Survey Sample)

Age of Mothers	
17 or Younger	13%
18-20	39
21-22	23
23-24	9
Over 24	15
Mean	21.1
Median	20.0
Number of Children	
One	51%
Two	31
Three	14
Four or More	4
Employment and Education	
Employed	28%
Diploma or GED	53
In School or Training Program	37
Sample Size	180

NOTE: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding or multiple-status sample members.

SUMMARY

The majority of young men in our survey and ethnographic samples come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Their early entry into fatherhood was but one challenge they faced at the time they entered the program. Their lack of education credentials, sporadic work histories, criminal involvements and other social barriers indicate limited prospects for labor market success without assistance. Interventions are clearly needed that have the capacity to handle the diverse set of barriers faced by young fathers.

Nearly all of the fathers in the study want to be an important part of their child's life. Most had recent contact with their child, though two-thirds said they would like to see their child more often. The next chapter takes a closer look at the young men's responses to the pregnancy and to the relationships that they had with their youngest child at baseline and follow-up.

III. FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

> *I was gonna be like one of them guys where she be down there and I'll be here, you know, just be like I give money here and there, go see my kid every once in a while, that's the type of view I had . . . It changed though when I heard the guys in the program talkin that they got their kids, they're with their kids. I see how it really means something to be with your kid, I mean really be with your kid and girl and try and work it out.*

An important objective of the pilot was to help young unwed fathers establish or sustain contact with their children. Toward this end, the programs were required to incorporate fatherhood development activities into their service delivery systems, including implementation of the P/PV *Fatherhood Development Curriculum* and provision of social and recreational activities for the fathers and their children.

Very little is known about the relationships that young unwed fathers have with their children or the mothers of their children--during the pregnancy or following their birth. A small, but growing body of evidence shows that a sizable number of young fathers are involved in the lives of their children when they are young, but their involvement diminishes over time (Furstenberg and Harris, 1993; Lerman, 1993b). We are only beginning to ask why some young fathers are involved initially and others are not, why so many who are initially involved do not or cannot sustain contact, and what programs can do to help.

This chapter explores selected aspects of the relationships that the fathers have with their youngest child and their views of the fatherhood development activities. The first section of the chapter presents an analysis of the fathers' initial reactions to news of the pregnancy and impending fatherhood. The second section presents findings on the frequency of contact that the fathers had with their children at follow-up, as well as the fathers' satisfaction with this contact. The third and final section presents the young men's views of the fatherhood development component of the program.

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PREGNANCY

At the time their partners became pregnant, the young men in the ethnographic sample were involved in a broad range of situations with respect to their involvement in school, the labor market, crime and relationships--with the young woman and her family, peers and their own families. Their early responses to the possibility of fatherhood also spanned a broad range--from happiness and acceptance to depression, anger and denial.

This section describes their initial reactions to the pregnancy and, more important, the meaning of the event to them. As one might expect, none had a singular reaction or response--initial reactions were generally mixed--happy and scared, depressed and uncertain, or angry

and confused. The analysis focuses on the reactions that the young men labeled as dominant and were supported by their often lengthy accounts of events surrounding the pregnancy. While the presentation highlights the responses of a few individuals, these were selected because they represent the perspective of young men in the various response categories.

Happiness and Acceptance

Of the 47 young men in the ethnographic sample, 43 percent (n=20) said they were happy when they learned that they were to become fathers. The majority (n=13) had known their partners for a year or more before becoming sexually involved, usually because they lived within several blocks of one another and/or had friends in common. All said they had been in a serious romantic relationship with the woman for at least three months before conception. Although eight admitted that they had "occasional flings" outside the relationship, all said they were committed to their pregnant girlfriend, whom they referred to as their "main lady." Only one of the 20 young men in this group doubted his partner's sexual fidelity. However, he chose not to raise it as an issue because he wanted a child so badly:

> Even though we were married back then, she would leave me for three or four days at a time because she had this problem with drugs . . . I always knew that she was probably with other men and that the baby might not be mine . . . But a doctor told me once that I might have a low sperm count . . . and I was afraid I might never have a child . . . That's why I got married at a young age in the first place was so I could have a child before it was too late . . . So when she told me she was pregnant, you could just say that I jumped at the opportunity to claim it . . . He's three years old now, and I still don't know if he's mine biologically, but he's mine because I've always loved him and I'm the person he calls daddy.

Three other fathers in this group also thought they were infertile, mainly because they had been sexually active for a number of months or years and, to their knowledge, had never caused a pregnancy:

> When I first had sex I didn't really know I could get a girl pregnant . . . But after I learned some facts about it at school, I just thought like my juice ain't no good because none of the girls I been with ever blowed up [got pregnant] . . . And like while my buddy's be worried like "oh no, I hope she don't come up pregnant," I was like the reverse . . . So now you can see why I say I was surprised . . . and happy when my girl told me we was gonna be parents.

The majority (n=17) of these young men had very limited knowledge of birth control before the pregnancy and before their participation in the program. Only five could say for sure that their partners had ever practiced any method of birth control, and only three could recall ever having a discussion with them about it. Four of the five were aware that their partner had stopped taking birth control pills before the pregnancy. They and others in this group

were aware of two male-controlled methods--withdrawal and condoms--which some said they used "occasionally," usually when the woman insisted. Both male methods require discipline and control, qualities they said they lacked. Condoms, they complained, spoiled the pleasure. They also said condoms were ineffective because they would either come off or "explode." From their accounts, very few knew how to use them correctly.

Nine of the young men in this group said they and their partners either planned to have a child or "must have wanted it" because neither did anything to prevent it. The remaining 11 said it was a surprise, albeit a pleasant one. Among the most frequently mentioned reasons they gave for their positive response, 14 said they were in love, eight said they had always been fond of children and six said the pregnancy would help their partners escape abusive family living situations. In addition to these reasons, many also talked about their felt need for a child because their lives lacked purpose or meaning. In the words of one young man who was 21 when his first child was conceived:

> Like the majority of guys my age, I wasn't financially set to have a child. Emotionally, yes I was. I just wanted it. I figured I had to do something to prove that my existence was worthwhile. Not something to prove that I was a man, just something to prove that I had a purpose for being on this earth . . . Before I knew I was going to be a father, if I lived to be 75 or if I only lived to be 30 it didn't matter to me. Now I'd love to reach 75 just so I could see him grow. And I think that's the biggest thing it's done for me.

In the minds of other fathers, the pregnancy was linked to their survival or redemption. In their accounts of what was going on in their lives around the time of the pregnancy, 10 described lifestyles that they believed headed them for an early demise. The pregnancy, they said, "rescued" them from either death or incarceration.[12] All of these young men had been out of school and unemployed for most of the 12 months preceding conception, if not longer. As they tell it, their days were spent hanging out with other young males, talking to girls, joy riding in stolen cars and occasionally looking for straight jobs. All 10 said they earned some money through "hustling," which included selling or transporting drugs, collecting gambling or drug debts, stealing--ranging from petty theft to armed robbery, and fencing stolen goods. These activities, once considered "thrilling," or in the economic sense, "rewarding," were becoming too dangerous. Each knew other young men like themselves who were either paralyzed by a bullet, dead or in prison. Whatever feelings of invincibility the magical thinking of adolescence once afforded them were clouded or in conflict with a growing awareness of their vulnerabilities and mortality. In the words of one young man whose first job was "slinging dope" with his brother at the age of 15:

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[12] Three other young men in this response category were involved in the drug trade. Although they talked about the risks and a desire to get out before it was too late, they did not associate this with their desire for, or easy acceptance of, the pregnancy.

> It took some months before our reputation started getting bigger and that's when all the violence really started . . . Our reputation started preceding us and people started talkin about us like we were super heroes, super people. They was talkin about us like we were invincible, that we couldn't die and stuff. So like when they spoke of me and my brother, they spoke like fiction, they was like, yeah, we saw him get hit by a car and we saw him get cut or stabbed and he acts like it doesn't hurt . . . But deep inside we was hurtin, but you know you didn't wanna let nobody know that you was hurtin emotionally or had them inner feelings. So we just dealt with it, rolled with the blows you know--got shot a few times, cut up with a machete . . . Any place a scar can be I got one.

When his girlfriend called and told him she was pregnant, he was happy. During the pregnancy, he accompanied her to the clinic and participated in Lamaze classes:

> I was like I'm gonna be the best dad there is, you know . . . [And to think that] before I had my son and joined this program I was one of those people who I see now and I don't want nothin to do with em, I don't associate with them. Because that's not how I want society to look at me. I want them to look at me as a responsible parent and father, you know.

This metamorphosis, however, did not occur overnight. He learned that getting into the drug trade was much easier than getting out. With a ninth-grade education and no reportable work experience or references, his employment options were limited. Also, in the first year after his child was born, his life and the lives of his girlfriend and son were in jeopardy:

> It's like really easy to get into the drug business . . . But it's hard to get out. [The violence] really didn't stop until about eight months after my son was born . . . People was still tryin to kill me. I called [a kingpin] and told him I wasn't in it no more, I wasn't in the gang no more, but people were trying to still take me out and I needed some kind of something to keep the people from trying to take me out . . . I wanna be able to walk down the street with my girlfriend and my baby and not have somebody ride by and take a pop shot at me and miss me and shoot her or the baby, you know . . . I was gettin real scared about walkin alongside of her and my child.

Another young man told us about events in his life that led to his decision to become a father at the age of 16. Like others in this group, he was not motivated by the desire to become a man or to prove his manhood. Rather, he was trying to escape the dangers of his youthful existence:

> I was into a lotta crooked shit as far as drugs is concerned, you know. I was sellin and using a little too. And it just seemed like my life was going pretty smooth, you know, 15 years old, I always had some change in my pocket and no worries or nothing . . . But then my buddy got killed in this house that we

> was dealing out of [sigh] and like I was supposed to be with him that night but somethin came up and I didn't make it over there . . . So all the time after that happened, I kept thinkin that coulda been me, that coulda been me that was taken out that night. And so I started worrying a lot about if the police don't get me another drug dealer would . . . So I started thinkin about if I had a child, my life might go a little straighter and so a couple months after my buddy was killed I just asked my girlfriend to stop takin her birth control pills cuz I wanted to have a baby with her . . . She thought about it . . . and she seen how it could help her out of the situation she was in cuz her mom was a piper [crack addict] and she wanted to get out of that environment . . . So like the next day she stopped takin em [birth control pills] . . . just threw em in the trash . . .
>
> I knew I was a little too young to be a father, but I knew that if I had a child, maybe I would settle down and not get in no more trouble. And to this day, I say that baby really saved my life . . . He changed my life around a lot because now I have a responsibility . . . I can't be out runnin the streets . . . After he was born, I had no choice but to deal with all those things that I didn't want to deal with. And I did it because for the first time in my life, I had something to care about.

These young men gradually distanced themselves from their male companions and criminal activity, though it was not always easy and not always complete. The cost for many was a feeling of social isolation:

> We just didn't have things in common any more. They were still out there jumpin in stolen cars and I needed to get my life straight . . . that education I missed out on, a job, that kind of cooperation with my girl so we could raise the child right. I didn't have time to hang with them . . . They said I was gettin too serious about life. I told em I don't wanna be a player no more. I got responsibilities and it's too dangerous out there . . . I gotta settle down and get myself ready so I can take care of this child I made. They just say "bye, see ya later" and that was it. All of a sudden I got no more so-called friends. Sometimes, before I started coming to these father groups, I would get so lonely that I wanted to just jump back with my boys because I had NOBODY until I got hooked up with this group . . . Who knows what I mighta did if I didn't get into this group?

Some did occasionally "jump back with the boys," usually when they were discouraged by their efforts to find jobs or had difficulties in their relationships with their partners. Six confided that they continued to rely on illegal means for generating income while they looked for "straight jobs," though they said they cut back on their involvements and took fewer risks. Among those who continued to deal drugs, a few mentioned that they quit selling to women who were mothers because the money came from food stamps and other sources that

were intended to support children, not drug habits. Four of the young men in this group were arrested and convicted of crimes during the pregnancy. Three were incarcerated around the time the child was born or soon afterward.

About one-third (n=7) of the young men in this group said they postponed telling their parents about the pregnancy until they had jobs and could "prove" to them that they were capable of shouldering the responsibility. The majority, however, acknowledged paternity to members of both families early in the pregnancy. Most said their parents were disappointed, upset or angry at first, though they were usually not surprised. Over time, most black parents offered to help their sons until they got on their feet. White parents were less tolerant, and offered their sons little or no material or moral support.

Over the course of the pregnancy, most said they experienced stress, occasional bouts of depression or periods of self-doubt, mostly because they could not find stable employment. These feelings compounded periodic tensions in their relationships with their pregnant partners and 70 percent (n=14) said they had occasional separations or "cooling out" periods. Three said they were so frustrated in their efforts to find a job and deal with what they referred to as their partners' moodiness that they "hit" or "shook" them. Although they said they expressed immediate remorse, their partners withdrew from them for the remainder of the pregnancy. Two others said they broke up with their partners, though they maintained some contact--sometimes directly, but more often through relatives or mutual friends.

For the most part, however, the majority of these fathers maintained contact with their partners, asserted their commitment to the as-yet unborn child, and began purchasing sundry items in anticipation of birth. Nearly three-quarters (n=14) also said they were involved in various aspects of prenatal care--for example, encouraging their partner to exercise, accompanying her to the clinic and participating in Lamaze classes. As they described it, their involvement in these preparatory activities forged an attachment to the child while it was still in the womb. Further, these demonstrations of commitment did not go unnoticed--by their partners and especially her relatives. Comments like "he sure is growing up fast" and "he's really showin his colors of bein responsible," they said, reinforced their involvements and nurtured changing identities.

Also during the pregnancy, these young men began to construct future narratives about the sort of lives they wanted their children to lead. In the process of doing this, they said, they became increasingly aware that realization of the aspirations they held for their children would be constrained if they did not set goals for themselves as well. Many said they wanted to continue or further their education--so that they could get better jobs and set an example for their children. The aspirations that they had for their children remained consistently high.

Aspirations for themselves and commitment to personal change peaked around the time their children were born. Often, they were expressed as promises to their partners under very emotional circumstances, usually after seeing the child for the first time. Many of their

promises were unrealistic, given their limited educations and linkages to the labor market. About three-quarters (n=15) were frustrated or discouraged workers at the time they joined the program. The main reason the fathers in this group gave for joining the program was employment assistance, followed by a desire to improve their parenting skills.

Depression

Thirty percent (n=14) of the young men in the ethnographic sample said they experienced what they described as depression or a "deep sadness" when they found out they had caused a pregnancy. Eight of the young men in this group said they had known the young woman for at least six months. Three said their relationships were serious, and five described them as casual friendships. The remaining six said they had little or no relationship with the young woman. Most of the young men in this group were still very much involved in male groups or "posses" and frequently referred to themselves as "players." As one 18-year-old put it:

> I just couldn't picture myself as a father at such an early age. Because at the time, the only thing I was doin was whorin really . . . I was a player and to tell you the truth, it really was like a mistake thing to me because she was just like one of em to me. That was my attitude, that's the way I looked at it. It was very stupid the way I looked at it back then . . . but I was young at the time and it was a thing about who could get the most girls . . . And back then I was just lookin at it like I slipped real tough and I just didn't know what to do . . . I didn't know the first thing about what I should do . . . I got so depressed.

These young men also had very limited knowledge of birth control methods and sexually transmitted diseases. Like the young men in the other group, they practiced withdrawal or used condoms when their partners insisted. From their descriptions of the problems they encountered with condoms, none used them correctly. About three-quarters (n=10) confided that they had multiple partners and only three said they had seriously considered the consequences of unprotected sex. They were more concerned about contracting a sexually transmitted disease than causing a pregnancy, however. Four thought that they were too young to cause a pregnancy:

> To tell you the truth, I didn't think I was old enough to make a child. It sounds funny now that I got some facts straight . . . But like I never heard too much about teen fathers, just teen mothers, so I always thought that boys had to reach a certain age before they could get a girl pregnant.

Several young men seriously chastised themselves because they had not used a condom or "pulled out" when their partner asked. One young man who was in a serious relationship with the woman he impregnated blamed himself and directed all of his anger inward:

> When she popped up pregnant it was like a shock . . . This whole dark cloud came over me . . . I got like really depressed and I really hated myself because this whole mess was all my fault . . . She always, ALWAYS, told me to put on a rubber when we was havin sex. Sometimes I would. But sometimes I would just slip it off, you know, just try and get over on her . . . So I had nobody to blame except myself . . . My dreams about growin up in the right order, you know, gettin financially secure and then easin myself into a family life with her just went right down the drain.

About three-quarters (n=10) described the weeks and months following news of the pregnancy as a period of mourning for their lost youth. Several also said they felt intense guilt for having "ruined" the young woman's life:

> I was young. I was playful back then . . . But when she told me she was pregnant, I took it just like it was a death sentence . . . It meant I had to grow up before it was my time to grow up . . . And it was like all of a sudden the life was just sucked out of me and I felt so sad . . . [and] guilty because it wasn't just about my life that was wrecked . . . I had wrecked this poor girl's life.

Several also expressed concern for the futures of their unborn children. These concerns were typically expressed in association with dismal estimates of their own life chances:

> I kept thinkin how that baby we made would suffer cuz his parents was just teenagers that don't really know nothing about life . . . I just want that child to have a better future than the one I got . . . I don't have too much to show for my life . . . I don't have anything to show, really . . . My education's no good and from what I seen around my neighborhood, there's dudes that got their diplomas and most of them don't even have jobs . . . If you wanna know the truth, I want that baby to do a lot better in life . . . Do anything in life 'cept be like his father . . . I don't consider myself a good example for how I want him . . . or her . . . to come up . . . But I can't let myself get more downed about that than I already am . . . or that child ain't gonna come up with any father cuz I'll just be like six feet under, you know.

Nearly all of the young men who talked about their depression also talked about how alone they felt in the weeks and months following news of the pregnancy. Several of the young couples cut themselves off from family, friends and services, including prenatal care, throughout most of the pregnancy. One young man's account is representative:

> We were like two miserable sacks of something that just couldn't move apart. And it wasn't like we were really supportin each other. Like, how it was, we didn't really even have anything to say to each other . . . We were both really like down in the dumps big time, mostly because we didn't know what we should do and we were too scared to tell our parents . . . We didn't tell any-

> body about it until she was like going on seven months. She didn't go to the clinic or nothin.

Many others, however, passively withdrew from their partners as well as family and friends during the first two or three months of the pregnancy, if not longer:

> When I found out she was pregnant, I just stayed in my room and didn't talk to nobody for like weeks . . . Well, it was more like months . . . That depression state lasted for about two months. I thought I was going crazy.

Each, in their own time and in their own way, realized that they had to do something to help them come to terms with the pregnancy, as well as overcome their depression. Typically, these thoughts translated into looking for a job and efforts to participate in the pregnancy. Both proved difficult.

Depression and guilt were usually accompanied by feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy. They talked about not knowing what they should do or doubting whether they were capable of doing the things that they thought a father should do. In the minds of most of these young men, fathers were supposed to provide for their children. One-half said they earned some income through illegal means, though most said that as expectant fathers they needed to get more respectable sources of income. However, with neither diplomas, work experience nor connections, most described the days they spent "walking around the city" in search of jobs (the strategy described by most) as discouraging and frustrating. About two-thirds (n=9) eventually found something, mostly through temporary employment agencies or in part-time or seasonal jobs. Their hours were sporadic and within two to four weeks, they found themselves looking for work again or hustling. A few (n=3) did find steady work and tended to clock exhausting hours at one or two jobs, mainly because they had little comprehension of what or how much they might be expected to provide. One young man who impregnated a woman he hardly knew told us:

> I didn't know what to do, but I had to do something before I . . . Well, I don't know what I mighta done . . . I was so depressed. So I knew like I had to get a job. I had to get money. So I started working myself to death . . . I worked the third shift and first shift for nearly three months because I thought that it was money that made you a father. You know, I was sayin he gonna have this, he gonna have that and you know it was just too much pressure that I was puttin on myself. Finally, I decided that I better tell somebody about all of what I was going through because I just couldn't cope with it on my own. So like I started talkin to my older brothers who had kids and they gave me some good support . . . tellin me how it is and to calm down. So as time went on, especially after my son was born, I thought to myself that I don't need to have lots of money to be a good father. The main thing I need to give him is love and spend a little time with him, you know. That's when things really changed because I didn't know how it was until I became a father. I thought it was all a

> money thing, but now to this day, I see it's not a money thing. It's the time and love you give to the child.

Many also tried to become involved in the pregnancy. As they tell it, they were excluded from most discussions and decisions about the pregnancy--beginning with those concerning whether or not the young woman should have an abortion. Further, their efforts to become involved were neither encouraged nor reinforced. Many said most of the time they felt left out or in the way:

> To tell you the truth I didn't even know how I was s'posed to act . . . My girlfriend was goin through her own little emotions and couldn't be bothered with me . . . And it just seemed like her mom was doin those things I wanted to do and there wasn't no place for me . . . In fact I think . . . [my girlfriend's mother] hated me at first cuz of what I did to her daughter . . . And like I felt responsible and I wanted somebody to tell me what I needed to do . . . I was so downed out and there was no one, NO ONE, I could talk to . . . I was scared to tell my parents and my friends was still into that lifestyle that got me in this mess in the first place, and so like I felt they probably would just laugh at me or tease me about how players ain't s'posed to get involved on the feelings side of what they's doing . . . I sure could have used this program back then.

More than one-half (n=8) said their partners were too preoccupied with their own situations and "had all these programs and people to help them." About three-quarters (n=10) mentioned that at some point during the pregnancy, they looked for a program or support group for young fathers but found none:

> I found out that there ain't really no resources in the black community . . . The YMCA, that's all males but it really ain't for young fathers or nothin. The Boys Club, there ain't no male counselors there, nothin for young fathers and really nothing for young boys because that Boys Club . . . they got it on the same street that the prostitutes is at and it's like a hang out spot for drug dealers down there, you know . . . Until this young fathers program came along there was nothing for us, just a lot of counseling and help for women. Men are like left on their own to deal with it and like if your girlfriend or your wife is pregnant, sometimes men be goin through some depression, you know, you be thinkin about certain things and you ain't got nobody to talk to. But if a lady's goin through that, she got all kinds of pregnant women groups to go to and they can help them and stuff like that. But for a man, you ain't really got nobody. You all alone by yourself unless you find a group like we got now through this young fathers program.

The partners of two of the young men in this group had miscarriages, five or six months into the pregnancy. Once again, both young men lapsed into what they described as a deep depression:

> At first, I took the pregnancy like heavy news . . . I thought it was a big obstacle that I was gonna have to get over . . . [At first, I didn't do much, but] after about the third month . . . I started to work hard . . . I worked hard at work, I worked hard at home, I worked hard with the kids [partner's other kids]. I did a lot of planning and work. I did so much and then I joined the father's program and was going, taking the GED thing and all that. And then it hit, the big one-two, boom, boom, it was gone. And that was the biggest boulder thrown at me in my life. It was very difficult after we lost the baby. I couldn't sleep. I lost my job because I didn't have an interest in working, I didn't give a damn. I didn't care if I slept out in the street because I had lost something, a part of me. And before the baby was even born, I was attached to it . . . And me and her both just decided that God took him out because I wasn't ready, because I wasn't prepared . . . And I guess you could say that it was a warning that if I really want one, that I'll have to change the things that I'm doing wrong and correct it, and then I can have a child. So that's what I've been doing.

Most of the 12 other fathers came to terms with the pregnancies by the time their children were born. Many, however, did not tell their parents about the pregnancy because they were afraid. Rather, their parents learned about it through the neighborhood grapevine, the young woman's parents or their own observations. In several cases, the parents did not know until after the child was born. When confronted, none of these young men denied responsibility.[13] For example:

> Her mom called and told me that the baby was born two weeks ago and it was mine. She told me I had a daughter. She said if I didn't want to be bothered, I didn't have to, but she thought that my parents should know. She asked me were they there and I told her no. But, you know, my mom was there, my dad was at work. She said that she would call back later in the week . . . to see if I had, you know, talked to them. I didn't say anything to my parents about it and I really started to get depressed and scared again. I was like, oh no, I've got a daughter. I got a child, you know . . . A couple days later . . . my dad called me into the kitchen and told me that he had talked to her and everything. He had invited them over because my mom wanted to see the baby and all . . .
>
> When they came, I was hesitant to come downstairs, you know, and at the point right when I first came down the steps, I didn't even have no sort of emotion or thoughts . . . I was just like there . . . Basically, her mom and my parents you know they really did most of the talking and we just sat there like two bumps on a log. We didn't have too much to say, you know, cuz we didn't know each other real good or anything . . . They gave me the baby to

[13] Four of the young men in this group said that they did go through a "denial stage" at some point during the pregnancy.

> hold and I thought I was gonna break down . . . But then I just told her, you know, I was going to take responsibility of being the father to her . . . I would do what I could to make her life good, you know.

Many said their relationships with the young women were awkward or strained, in part because they did not know one another very well. In two-thirds of the cases (n=8), their mothers or other adult female relatives mediated the relationship between the expectant young parents and/or opened the channels of communication with the young women's parents or guardians. Only two reported that their fathers were involved in the negotiations between the two families, though six said their fathers or other male adult members in their families talked to them about "upholding the family name" or not "stepping off" from their responsibilities. The advice their fathers gave, however, was almost always brief and usually vague, such as: "You're a man now, take care of your responsibilities to that baby," "You always gotta show respect to your child's mother" or "You know what you have to do."

Most of these young men, however, still had little sense of what they needed to do or, if they did, how to go about doing it. About half said they were scared and depressed after the child was born and lacked the motivation or stamina to stick with anything--whether it be school, job searches, work or watching a television show from start to finish. Three-quarters (n=8) said the young fathers program gave them something to look forward to each week. The most attractive components of the program were the fatherhood curriculum and peer support sessions, followed by education.

The parents of many of these young men contributed to the support of the child and, in many cases, kept their sons connected to the baby. Unlike the parents of the fathers in the other group, however, the mothers of these young men were more likely to "take charge" of the situation. For most of the fathers, this was a relief. After a few months in the program, however, several mentioned that they wanted to play a more active role in the lives of their children.

Anger and Denial

Twenty-eight percent (n=13) of the young men said their initial reaction to the pregnancy was either anger, denial or some combination of the two.

Anger

Five of the six young men who said their dominant initial reaction to news of the pregnancy was anger had lived with their partners for a year or more before conception. The relationships they described, however, were markedly different from all others in the sample in two important ways. First, the women were all between seven and ten years older than the men. They had their own apartments and good jobs and were, for all intents and purposes, supporting the young men who lived with them. The young men, by their own admission, were unemployed and "freeloading," though several confided that they earned some income

through illegal means on an as-needed basis. They had little or no commitment to the relationship, which they said met their basic needs (usually food, housing and clothing) and the woman's need for a man, though there was some pretense of commitment. All had multiple partners and, with their live-in-partners at least, they insisted that the woman practice some reliable method of birth control, usually the pill. Two said they routinely checked their partners' dispensers to make sure they were, in fact, taking their pills.

Second, around the time of the pregnancy, the women were pushing the young men to commit to a long-term exclusive relationship and to share household expenses. Each of the young men said he played along with this "up to a point." For example, they tried to be around the house a little more when the woman was not working and would occasionally secure a temporary job or leave the newspaper opened to the "Help Wanted" section. But all said they drew the line when the conversation turned to the woman's desire to have a child with him--the ultimate commitment. News of the pregnancy evoked anger because the woman stopped taking her pills without his consent and, therefore, "tricked" him into fatherhood. One young man's depiction of his relationship and events that preceded the pregnancy is typical:

> The women I look for got something goin for theirselves . . . They take care of their self and they independent, you know, got their own house and got their own jobs and stuff . . . And they don't minds that I don't work too much or nothing cause they makin enough to get by and the only thing missin from their life is they ain't got no man. So it's like I fill that role for them and we's both happy for a while. Like with this woman that's pregnant by me now, me and her had a good year, year and a half, before she started catching this attitude about what I do when she's at work all day . . . Then she started complainin that I don't spend enough time with her and I only come in and come out when I want to . . . And she followed up on that with other arguments about she wanted me to move all my clothes over to her house . . . She wanna start keeping tabs on me . . . askin all kinds of questions like she my mother . . . I have to admit I sorta went along with all her little noises cuz I had a good situation with her and really I didn't wanna leave cuz it would hurt her feelins and she really done a lot for me. But then she really tricked me by stoppin with the birth control pills and gettin pregnant. That's when the truth really came out about how desperate she was to try and control my whole life, tie me down you know. So I just told her I ain't gonna deal with her on that level and I just left.

Two of these young men continued living with the woman after the pregnancy and said they joined the program to show they were trying to do something with their lives. The other three cut off all ties to their partners during the pregnancy. In their minds, their responsibilities did not begin until the "baby was out of her stomach." Following birth, however, none of the three assumed any ownership or responsibility for their children. They joined the program only after the mothers filed a formal complaint for child support:

> To tell you the truth, that child's three years old now and I don't know nothin about her . . . I seen her once when she was about six months old, but I haven't seen her since . . . Her mother knew I didn't want no children from the start . . . I was always straight up with her on that subject . . . So since she's the one that made that decision to go ahead and have one . . . it just made me always consider that child was all hers, not mine . . . The only reason I'm comin out to this program, really, is to keep child support off my back for a little while.

For the most part, these young men were marginal participants in the young fathers program. Four enrolled in education classes. One attended classes regularly and passed two sections of his GED. The others attended only sporadically. The only component of the program any of them participated in consistently was the fatherhood curriculum.

One other young man who was in a more sincere and committed relationship also described his initial reaction as anger because the woman planned the pregnancy without his approval. He said they agreed to have an abortion and he got the money together for her to have one, but she didn't follow through:

> I joined the service and about a month before I was set to go she told me she was pregnant. I was angry because I knew she was plannin this all along . . . to have a child before I left . . . I didn't blow up or nothing . . . I just told her well I'm not ready and I know you aren't ready, and she said like right. I said we'll get our money together before I leave and we'll have an abortion and everything will be cool by the time I come back home. So we got the money together and she had an appointment to go. I called to check up on her on that day and it turns out she never went. She said well, I feel as though I want to keep the baby, I don't wanna get an abortion. I was so angry because she knew I wasn't ready to be a father. I was doing too much and when I was to be a father, I wanted to be home and be a provider for my child. So from that day on, our relationship just started slipping.

Throughout the pregnancy and after he returned home from the service, he was angry with the woman and ambivalent about the child. Over time, however, he committed himself to the child, but not the woman:

> The first month after I came home from the service, my attitude was not to be around her. But I felt that I wasn't gonna let my child be fatherless and be another statistic on the street. When I finally went over to her house, she didn't want to have too much to do with me . . . I told her, yes, I'm still angry about how she went against our decision, but I don't care how our relationship goes I'm still gonna be there for my daughter.

Denial

Of the seven young men who initially denied responsibility for the pregnancy, four said they had off-and-on relationships with the woman and three said they had known the woman only briefly before she announced that she was pregnant.

These young men all said they either knew or had reason to believe they were not the woman's only sexual partner. All but one confided that they had sexual relationships with more than one woman around the time of the pregnancy. Although they were aware they could cause a pregnancy, none could say whether their partners took any precautions. They neither liked condoms nor considered them an effective means of birth control.

Upon hearing news of the pregnancy, two of the young men said they quietly retreated from the relationship and assumed a lower profile in the neighborhood in hope that the woman would "forget about him" or find another man to "stick the baby on." The others engaged in heated arguments with the women over the issue of paternity before they withdrew, often with hostility.

All but one young man had some contact with the woman before the child was born or soon afterward. Typically, these interactions were emotional and the relationships stormy. For example, one young man finally accepted that the woman might be carrying his child. By the time he stepped forward to help, however, neither the woman nor her family wanted him involved:

> When she told me she was pregnant, it was like a hoax . . . She was runnin around with everybody. She was like I'm pregnant and it's from you, I'm like, shhh, yeah right [laughter] me and somebody else . . . So I was the only one that wouldn't accept the fact . . . My friend was tryin to talk to me . . . tryin to get me to accept the fact that it was mine. So like the months went on and when she was due to deliver, I started goin around and seein her . . . tryin to make her more comfortable and told her she could start comin by to see me and sit with me and talk, you know, so she'd be comfortable. And she was like, I don't want you around . . . I'll tell the child you're dead and all that. And that hurt me a lot . . . And then her mother added to it. She was like my daughter don't wanna see you, you don't need to be around . . . we'll handle it ourselves.

Soon afterward, the child was born, but he was not informed for two days. He was hurt and angry with the child's mother and grandmother for rejecting him, and at the same time, was overtaken with emotion for the baby:

> No one even told me I had a daughter until two days after she was born . . . and that she came from a C-section. I was hurt and angry at the same time . . . [But] I made it a point to go to the hospital every day. I wrote a card [to

> the baby's mother] sayin thank you for bringing my child into the world and I'll give her the love that I wasn't givin you because there won't be a chance for us to get back together, I know this, but thank you for giving me an opportunity to let me come down to see my baby. And then I'd go and sit in there while she's in the incubator . . . look at her and feed her and everything. I just, you know, loved my daughter so much . . . she went through so much to come into this world and I didn't wanna take nothing from her.

Another young man described his stormy relationship with the mother during the pregnancy and after the child was born:

> I was workin in another town at the time and just comin home on weekends and stuff. So one weekend I come home, and all of a sudden she tells me she's pregnant. I was shocked and just hollered it ain't my baby and stuff. And like after that, whenever I went over to her house, she would just slam the door in my face and that just made me think that it wasn't my baby for sure and she was scared to tell me. So I just like stopped goin around her.

When the child was born, this young man was not told. He took this as further evidence that the child was not his, despite the fact that other members of his family acknowledged the child as "their blood." His failure to acknowledge paternity drove a wedge between him and his own mother:

> Then, no one even told me I had a daughter until two weeks after she was born and that just proved it more that she wasn't my child . . . But then my mom and grandmom went to see the baby after she was born. They matched up baby pictures and all and said that it was definitely my child. But I kept on denying the baby for almost a year . . . I had to even stop goin around my own mother's house cuz she was sayin I was actin stupid . . . Embarrassin her and stuff . . . It wasn't until we were gettin ready to go for a blood test that I finally accepted that she was mine. It was then that I held her for the first time and really looked at her. She had a lot of qualities just like me and I just started getting into her from that day on.

None of these young men participated in the pregnancy or did much to prepare themselves--psychologically or financially--for the possibility of impending fatherhood. Several said they sometimes thought about what they would do if it turned out to be their child. These thoughts provoked so much anxiety, however, they tried to "get rid of them," sometimes through alcohol or drugs.

None talked to their parents about the pregnancy. Four said their mothers heard about it through the neighborhood grapevine or the young women themselves. When their mothers confronted them with the rumors, they denied responsibility. Despite their denials, their

mothers adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude. In two cases, however, the young men's mothers were swayed by evidence presented by the young pregnant women.

All of these young men eventually acknowledged their paternity and vowed to "be there for the child." Their relationships with the young women, however, were tenuous and the frequency and ease of contact was sporadic. Contact was more consistent for those whose mothers intervened on their behalf. One father's mother eventually became the *de facto* custodial guardian because the young mother was neglecting the child.

These fathers tended to be slow-starters in the program. Once they became comfortable, however, most (n=5) attended the fatherhood curriculum sessions regularly and three enrolled in education.

Summary

The young men in the ethnographic sample entered fatherhood with diverse life experiences, attitudes and relationships to the mothers of their children. Those who were in serious relationships and acknowledged paternity early tended to be more involved in the pregnancy. Their involvement in preparatory activities forged an attachment to the child while it was still in the womb and elicited positive responses from significant others--especially their partner and her parents. Those who had more tenuous attachments to the young women and had difficulties coming to terms with the pregnancy tended to withdraw from their partners and others, at least during the early stages of the pregnancy. Those who did attempt to define a role for themselves later in the pregnancy experienced frustration when their efforts were rebuked or discounted. The fathers' mothers, when involved, played an important role in establishing and maintaining the fathers' connection to the child--especially when relationships between the young parents were awkward or conflict-ridden.

FREQUENCY OF FATHER-CHILD CONTACT

At the time the fathers in the ethnographic and survey samples entered the program, the average age of their youngest child was 19 months. Nearly all the fathers in the survey, regardless of their initial responses to the pregnancy or their feelings for the mother, said they wanted to play an active role in the lives of their children.

An important objective of the pilot project was to help young fathers establish or sustain that contact. To assess the effects that the program had on father-child contact, we asked the fathers who participated in the baseline telephone survey how often they had seen their children in the month preceding the interview. The same question was asked in the follow-up survey. The results show that the majority of fathers who had contact with their children at baseline also had contact at follow-up, though there are significant differences in the frequency of their contact.

Table 5 presents data on the frequency of the fathers' contact with their children in the month preceding the baseline and follow-up telephone interviews. At both points, the majority of fathers reported that they had seen their children at least once, though the average number of weekly contacts fell from 4.5 at baseline to 3.8 at follow-up, approximately 12 months later.[14] At baseline, 57 percent of the fathers said they saw their child every day or almost every day, and another 24 percent said they saw their child at least once a week. At follow-up, the percentage of fathers who saw their child every day or almost every day dropped to 43 percent, and 26 percent saw their child at least once a week. The number who had no contact with their child increased from 7 percent at baseline to 16 percent at follow-up. Only one of the 11 fathers who reported no contact at baseline had contact in the month preceding the follow-up interview.

Notable differences were observed between the frequency of contact and two variables: the age of the child and the types of relationships the fathers had with the mothers of their children. The decrease in father-child contact at follow-up is associated with changes in their relationships with the child's mother in the direction of greater distance or discord. These findings are discussed in the following sections.

Age of Child

Other studies have found that contact between noncustodial parents and their children diminishes over time (Furstenberg and Harris, 1993; Lerman, 1993b). As shown in Table 6, our data are consistent with this finding. At the time of the follow-up survey, for example, 57 percent of the fathers' children were older than 24 months. On average, fathers whose children were in this older age group reported significantly fewer weekly contacts, 3.2 compared with 4.5 for children who were 24 months and younger.[15] A more important difference was the larger percentage of children in the older age group who had no contact with their fathers--21 percent, compared with 10 percent for children in the younger age group.

These differences appear to have little to do with the age or any other characteristic of the child. Rather, our data show that they are associated with the increased challenges that the fathers confront in maintaining cooperative relationships with the mothers of their children.[16]

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[14] These differences are statistically significant ($p \leq .001$).

[15] The difference in amount of contact between these two age groups is statistically significant ($p \leq .01$).

[16] When we include both age of the child and the father's relationship with the mother at follow-up to predict the amount of contact with the child at follow-up, whether the child is over or under 24 months has little relationship to the amount of contact. Rather the relationship appears to be the important mediator of contact.

Table 5

FREQUENCY OF FATHERS' CONTACT WITH CHILD AT BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP
(Survey Sample)

Frequency	Baseline	Follow-Up
Daily or Almost Daily	57%	43%
At Least Once a Week	24	26
Less Than Once a Week	11	14
Never	7	16
Average Number of Weekly Contacts	4.5	3.8
Sample Size	148	148

NOTE: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 6

FREQUENCY OF FATHERS' CONTACT BY AGE OF CHILD AT FOLLOW-UP
(Survey Sample)

Frequency	24 Months Old or Younger	More than 24 Months
Daily or Almost Daily	54%	34%
At Least Once a Week	29	25
Less Than Once a Week	6	20
Never	10	21
Average Number of Weekly Contacts	4.5	3.2
Sample Size	148	148

Type of Relationship

Table 7 presents the average number of father-child contacts by the type of relationship that the fathers said they had with the mother of their youngest child at the time of the baseline and follow-up surveys. As the table shows, fathers who said they were either married or in serious romantic relationships reported the highest rates of weekly contact at both data collection points, followed by those who described their relationships as off-and-on or child-centered. Those who said they had either no relationship with the mother of their children or a hostile relationship reported the lowest number of contacts.

A similar pattern was observed in the distribution of fathers who had no contact with their children in the month preceding each interview. For example, at follow-up, only one father who was involved in a serious romantic relationship with the mother said he had not seen his child within one month of the interview. However, about 18 percent (n=10) of those in off-and-on and child-centered relationships said they had not seen their child in the month preceding the follow-up interview. Thirty-six percent (n=13) of the fathers who described their relationship as either hostile or nonexistent reported no contact.

Differences in Relationships at Baseline and Follow-Up

Table 8 shows that 49 percent of the fathers reported they were in different types of relationships with the mothers of their children at baseline and follow-up. The lower average number of contacts at the time of the follow-up survey is associated with changes in their relationships in the direction of greater distance or discord.

Thirty-eight percent (n=14) of the fathers who were living with their children and partners at baseline, including five who were married, were living apart at the time of the follow-up survey. The percentage who reported that they were either married or in serious romantic relationships with the mothers of their children was smaller at follow-up (32%) than baseline (43%). Further, the percentage who said their relationships were hostile or nonexistent was greater at follow-up (24%) than baseline (19%).

FATHERS' SATISFACTION WITH FREQUENCY OF CONTACT

To further our understanding of influences on father-child contact, we asked the noncustodial fathers at follow-up whether they would like to see their children more often, less often or about the same. Thirty-three percent (n=35) of the fathers said they were satisfied with the amount of contact that they had with their child. Of the remaining two-thirds (n=73), all but one said they would like to see their child more often.

Next, we asked those who said they did not see their child as often as they would like to give the main reason they were not able to see their child more often. The largest number of fathers mentioned time constraints (28%), followed by problems in their relationship with the mother (21%) and geographic distance (18%). The following sections explore the circum-

Table 7

AVERAGE NUMBER OF WEEKLY CONTACTS WITH CHILD BY TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER AT BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP
(Survey Sample)

Relationship Type	Baseline		Follow-Up	
	Sample Size	*Frequency*	*Sample Size*	*Frequency*
Married/Serious	64	6.2	48	6.1
Off-and-On	21	4.2	15	4.3
Child-Centered	34	2.9	46	2.6
Hostile/No Relationship	28	2.7	36	2.1
Other	1	6.0	7	3.7

Table 8

TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER AT BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP
(Survey Sample)

Relationship Type	Baseline	Follow-Up
Married/Serious	43%	32%
Off-and-On	14	7
Child-Centered	23	31
Hostile/No Relationship	19	24
Other	1	5
Sample Size	148	148

NOTE: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

stances that the fathers said limited the frequency of contact they had with their child. The discussion is based on the ethnographic data. It is important to note differences in the patterns of responses between the survey and ethnographic samples. These are due to differences in the way these data were collected and analyzed. The survey data are based on the fathers' responses to a forced choice item asked at one point in time; the ethnographic data are based on responses to various open-ended questions at several points in time.

Time Constraints

Time constraints and schedule conflicts were mentioned by 55 percent (n=26) of the fathers in the ethnographic sample as reasons for not being able to see their children as often as they would like. For some, these were due more to the erratic nature of their work schedules than a lack of time. In many of the jobs the fathers held, employers scheduled work on an ad hoc basis. In any given week, a father might be told to go home one day because there was nothing for him to do. On another day, he might be told to work two shifts because another employee did not show up--making it difficult to plan their time and follow through on promises to their children or partners. For other fathers, the problem was a lack of time. This was especially true for fathers who were working, going to school and regularly participating in fatherhood development and other program activities. Ironically, many of the fathers said they saw their children less because of their involvement in the young fathers program.

According to our analysis of the ethnographic interviews, nearly three-quarters (n=15) of the fathers who mentioned time constraints as an obstacle were neither working full time nor in school before they entered the program. Of these fathers, four said they were the primary daytime caretakers of their children while the mothers attended school or participated in an employment and training program. The remaining 11 also said they saw their children every day or almost every day before they joined the program.[17] For the most part, these fathers enjoyed the time they spent with their children. At the same time, their lack of income was a hardship and occasionally a source of tension in their relationships with their children's mother or her relatives. One father's account is typical:

> Usually, like my routine was I'd get up, go out and look for a job in the morning . . . Then I would go over to my girl's house in the afternoon and see the baby, you know, play with her and stuff . . . Seein her smile always made me feel better cuz I was steady downed by the fact that I couldn't find any job and every day hearin about, "oh, we ain't hirin" or "we need someone that's got so many years of experience" or "too bad, you shoulda been here last month cuz

[17] This finding is supported by data from the telephone survey. At baseline, 68 percent of unemployed fathers saw their child every day or almost every day, compared with 39 percent of employed fathers. Seventeen percent of unemployed fathers and 28 percent of employed fathers saw their child less than once a week. The correlation between employment and frequency of contact is statistically significant ($r=.20$, $p \leq .05$).

> we was lookin for someone back then." It was really depressin for me to hear those same kind of speeches day in and day out, you know . . .
>
> Sometimes I'd stay overnight, you know . . . Me and my girl would put the baby to sleep, then sit around and watch TV or somethin like a family do . . . Basically, we was pretty happy . . . Sometimes when she [child's mother] get in one of her moods she'd holler about that I needed to get a job as soon as possible so I could buy her and the baby those things she wanted . . . And this would make me more downed because it wasn't like I wasn't tryin to get a job, you know . . . But most of the other time, it was like she was just happy that I was there for her, you know--not leavin her alone with the baby all day cuz babies is very tiring little people and it's easier with two people around than just one.

Within several months of joining the program, two-thirds (n=10) were regularly participating in the fathering classes <u>and</u> working, at least part time. Eight were also enrolled in education. Although they were happy to be employed and enthusiastic about the program, nearly all of them described their schedules as "hectic." For these fathers, the strains of unemployment were replaced by changes in the amount of time and energy they had to invest in their relationships with their children and their children's mothers. As one 19-year-old father described it:

> This program has done me a lot of good--it got me back in school, helped me get a job, they're teaching me how to be a better person . . . a better father . . . except now I don't have that much time to spend with the baby and my girl, you know . . . My life is definitely on the right track now and I thank God for that, but I feel like it's just out of control as far as how much I can handle at one time. Like I can't even remember the last time I sat down at my house. It's like every day I get up, go to work, come home, grab something to eat and then come out here to work on the computers or sit in the fathering classes. It's just like hi and bye to my baby and my baby's mom and she's startin to catch this attitude like I ain't there for her like I used to be, you know . . . The baby too cuz it's like she forgot who I am . . . It hurts my feelings a little because when I pick her up now she just wants to go to her mommy.

Another father, whose only communication with the mother was about the children, described the stress that the competing demands of work, child care and program participation generated:

> I was working so I could pay child support and . . . tryin to be real involved [in the program], but then it seemed like the more I came out here to better myself, the less time I had to spend with my kids . . . And after a while, it was like the pressure was comin from one end to the other, you know, it was like if I didn't have pressure comin from the job or child support, I had pressure over

> my kids or about tryin to find a way to get to the program, you know. So it was like a balance beam, and I had to sit myself in the middle and say, well, I can give so much of my time to the job and so much of my time to my kids and so much of my time to the program . . . Whenever possible, I try to double up--like sometimes I pick up my kids and bring them to my classes just so I can have that time with them plus better myself . . . It's very stressful [sigh], but it's the only way I'm gonna make a better life for me and my kids.

About half (n=14) of the fathers who mentioned time constraints, eventually reduced their level of involvement in program activities, more out of necessity than choice, they said:

> It just all got to be too much and something had to give. I couldn't leave my job, I couldn't ignore my baby's mom and believe me she was givin me those little signs like she was ready to get her another boyfriend cuz I wasn't payin enough attention to her and stuff . . . And I sure didn't wanna not see my son . . . So even though the program was really helping me out, I had to cut back on going out there . . . And for like the past five months now, I just been concentratin on going to work, coming home and goin over to spend time with the baby and the baby's mother, you know . . . I still keeps in touch with the program. I always be callin up [the case manager] to see what's goin on, what are the topics they be discussin, because I need all that information they's givin out about young fathers and stuff . . . And another reason [that I stay in touch with the case manager] is I know I gotta start goin back out to the program because the truth is I don't have any education or no good skills. I'm workin 40 or 50 hours a week . . . and all them hours is tiring and I'm barely making enough to buy the things the baby needs plus what I needs for my own survival . . . I gots to find a way to get back to the program, man.

Child's Mother Limits or Refuses Access

As the discussion of their responses to the pregnancy showed, the young men entered fatherhood with diverse attitudes toward and relationships with the mothers of their children. For many, the relationships were tenuous at best. Nevertheless, they were the foundation for those that evolved after their children were born. The ethnographic interviews, which investigated the conditions and regularity of contact with their children from birth onward, underscore the prevalence of the problems they encountered and their effects on the fathers' frequency and ease of contact with their children.

Nearly all the fathers who participated in the life history interviews said that at one time or another, they either did not see their children or did not see them as often as they would have liked because of problems in their relationships with the mothers. Forty-two percent (n=19) of the fathers mentioned that they had been denied access to their children for periods ranging from one month to four or more years. For 12 fathers (27%), access to their children was primarily through their mothers or other relatives because their relationships

were so problematic. For many fathers, the difficulties that they have seeing their children are associated with financial disputes with the mothers of their children. (See Chapter V.)

Geographic Distance

Of the seven fathers in the ethnographic sample who said their children lived too far away to visit, all but one said that it was the mother who had moved, usually to a different state and usually at a time when there were strains in the parents' relationship. Several said they were not informed that the mother and child were moving. For example, one young man didn't know they had left until he went to the house and saw that everything was gone: "there weren't no curtains in the window . . . nothin." Five of these young men said they had not seen their children for a year or more, but they had thought about them often. Several said they send toys and money in hopes that they will get a phone call or pictures of their children in return. More often than not, however, the children's mothers do not respond. One young man's experience is typical:

> I don't get to see my son since he moved away, but I think about him every single day . . . For a year, I sent him boxes of books, toys that he could put together himself, plastic tool sets . . . So I was sending this stuff and she never wrote back. I'd say please send me pictures . . . I'd ask her to call and let me hear my son's voice . . . because he can talk now . . . He's gonna be three years old and I don't get no letters or nothin. I still buy stuff but don't send it . . . What's the sense of buyin all this stuff and sendin it, and I don't know if he's gettin it. I have no way to know if he's even still alive.

At one point, this young man left his job and drove over 1,500 miles to visit his son. When he got there, he had nowhere to stay and spent his entire savings on lodging:

> I drove all day and all night to get out there . . . I found out where she lived from a letter and I bought a map . . . [She let me see my son, but] she wouldn't let me stay at her house so I was staying in a hotel down the street . . . I was payin all my money just stayin in this hotel.

He returned home from this trip broke. He quickly found a minimum-wage job and began talking about his next trip to visit his son. Soon afterward, he was contacted by CSE. After two hearings, and two days off from work without pay to attend, an order was set that included a schedule of payments for arrearage owed in two states. Already living paycheck to paycheck to meet his own basic needs--rent, food and transportation to and from work--his hopes of seeing his son soon again were dashed. Like other fathers who do not have access to their children because they cannot afford the travel expenses or time off from jobs that do not offer paid vacations, he feared that the son he loved would become "just another bill" that he had to pay. He subsequently joined the young fathers program to delay the starting date for the order (though he was accruing arrearage and interest). He was actively involved in the fatherhood development component of the program. However, because he worked full

time at a regular job to "save up for the day when child support payments would begin," and took "off-the-books" jobs to support himself, he was not able to participate in education or training.

FATHERS' VIEWS OF FATHERHOOD DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Fatherhood development activities, which included P/PV's *Fatherhood Development Curriculum* and support groups were key elements of the pilot program.[18] Among the fathers' reasons for giving the program a try, these components were second only to their desire to get a good job. Throughout the pilot phase, the curriculum and support group sessions kept many young men attached to the program in spite of delays and frustrations associated with the employment and training components. Overall, 42 percent (n=64) of the fathers in the survey sample attended at least 70 percent of the fatherhood sessions while enrolled in the program.

The *Fatherhood Development Curriculum* served as a valuable resource or discussion guide for facilitators, whose presentations were often interspersed with material from other sources. Observations of group process, as well as feedback from the young men, indicate that the exercises were especially useful tools for kick-starting discussions about complicated topics--such as definitions of manhood, relationships with women, decision-making and values clarification. They created a shared framework for fathers to think and talk about the topic, and stimulated discussions of the relevance of topics or issues to their own life situations.

The majority of fathers who participated in the follow-up telephone survey reported that the curriculum sessions (92%), peer support groups (91%), and the relationships that they developed with staff (93%) and other young fathers (92%) were useful. Ninety-five percent said they would recommend the program to a friend.

At all sites, fathers who participated in the ethnographic study or focus group interviews said they liked the concept of getting together with other men to discuss the challenges they confront as young fathers and, for many, as members of an "endangered species"--young minority males coming of age in a time and place where, for example, incarceration or early death are more likely than high school graduation. For those who had either distanced or were trying to distance themselves from the negative influence of their peer groups after they became fathers, the groups afforded access to other young men who were going through a similar transition. For those who had not dissociated themselves from their peers, the groups offered a different perspective on their attitudes and behavior. Nearly all the fathers who attended the curriculum sessions and support groups regularly said they valued acceptance and membership in a group that was supportive, but at the same time challenged them to examine their attitudes and behaviors:

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[18] For a discussion of the curriculum and how it was implemented at each site, see Watson (1992).

> The leaders and the other fathers in the group, they some different kind of people that I ain't never run across before in my life. They challenged my bullshit, and after a while, they just flat out wouldn't accept it . . . It made me think about the way that I just keep making the same old mistakes over and over and using the same sorry excuses . . . The boys in my posse couldn't never do this . . . They couldn't call me on nothin cuz they be just doin the same things as me. I can't hardly believe it, but I'm seein some changes in myself . . . gettin my priorities straight.

Nearly three-quarters of the fathers in the ethnographic sample said the curriculum sessions and peer support groups helped them to better understand their problems, as young men as well as young fathers, and increased their awareness of alternative ways to solve their problems. One father's depiction of the sessions and how they helped him is typical:

> It's so helpful just to be able to go to the father classes and have somebody to talk to, not only about the problems you've had as a father, but the problems you have in normal day life. You know, like we discuss problems we have in our own lives. Like if somebody ain't got no job, feelin depressed . . . we come up with scenarios, you know. Like if you put yourself in that person's place, what would you do differently than what they be doin. And then now, what the big thing is that we comes to know more about some of the errors we did as we look back on them, and get a list of changes.

Another father said he gained insight into his own problems by listening to <u>himself</u> as he gave advice to others:

> There's no pressure on you and you can hear a lot more sides to your problems . . . But with yourself you can only hear one side, that's your side, because you agree with your side. And that's what I like about the program . . . cuz a lot of times I hear some of the things that these guys talk about that I'm going through. And I talk to them and I listen to what I told them and I'm actually telling myself.

In response to an open-ended question about the ways the program helped them, 46 percent of the fathers mentioned that it helped improve their parenting skills, 35 percent that it improved their relationships with their children, and 13 percent that it helped improve their relationships with the mothers of their children.

Concerning improvements in their parenting skills and relationships with their children, two-thirds of the fathers in the ethnographic sample mentioned that the sessions on discipline, child development and nutrition were especially helpful. As one father put it:

> There are a lot of situations in the parenting program helped open my eyes to different ways to discipline your child and ways for helpin them learn easier and stuff like that, you know, feedin em better and stuff.

The programs offered a range of special events or activities for the fathers and their children, including picnics, Halloween parties, and trips to museums, zoos and amusement parks. All fathers who participated in these activities said they and their children enjoyed them. On these trips, the ethnographers had an opportunity to observe interactions between the fathers and their children and among the fathers in relation to their children. Perhaps the most interesting observations were of fathers' comments to one another about their parenting skills. For example, one father observed another giving his three-year-old daughter directions for an activity. The child was not following the directions in the prescribed fashion, and the father was getting frustrated. The other father stepped over and suggested that the instructions were too complicated for the child and that the father might want to try giving the child one instruction at a time, telling her she did a good job and then giving her the next instruction. Nearly every father in the ethnographic sample mentioned that an important aspect of the curriculum sessions was the peer input and support the discussions generated:

> I got a better education about raising kids. And a lot of it is just not from the class and the book [curriculum] that we have to go over . . . A lot of it's from listening to other fathers talking too, you know. Maybe they did something with their kid this way and I did it this way and their way sounds better than the way I did mine and maybe I'll use it next time I do it.

Although only a small number of fathers in the follow-up survey mentioned that the program improved their relationships with the mothers of their children, the fathers in the ethnographic sample frequently mentioned how it was helping them cope with problematic relationships. For some, the program kept them from just giving up:

> I think bein in the fathers program helps me to just plain not give up, you know, because stuff isn't goin right like between the court or with the kid's mother . . . Just because they start gettin on you, that don't mean you should just give up.

Others said it provided them with an opportunity to step back and "analyze" the problem. In the early months of the program, the fathers complained a lot about the mothers and how they created and perpetuated the problems in their relationships. Over time, and in the context of a supportive group, some began to consider the problems from the mothers' perspective, gaining insight into their own behaviors:

> When you have a problem with your baby's mom and you ain't got no one else to talk to, you got the group. They like your second family . . . They got a outside point of view so it's in a way better than your family. Family has, you know, they got a kind of one-sided view, they probably look at it from your

> side all the time. But at the program, they friends so they got that negative eye so they ain't gonna look at it just from your point of view. They're gonna look at it from the other person's point of view . . . the baby's mom's view or whatever . . . And usually, they help come up with the best solution for your problem.

As described earlier, the fathers experienced many problems in their relationships with the mothers that kept them from seeing their children as often as they would like. From the fathers' perspective, the major challenge was establishing a stable non-romantic relationship with the mother that centered on the child. About half (n=22) of the fathers in the ethnographic sample said the program was helping them in this aspect of their relationship:

> The biggest thing I've learned is about communication with my baby's mother. Before I started up with this program I always told my baby's mom that I need to deal with the baby but I don't need to deal with her. And she would get all tripped out saying like if you don't deal with me, don't expect to see the baby . . . And [the case manager] told us, if you don't get along with the baby's mama no more, you gotta go over there and be polite . . . conversate with her and stuff even though deep inside you really hate that person . . . He taught us how we have to do that for your child . . . And that's what I've been doin, and so far it's good cuz now me and her is even comparin a little bit about discipline and like her diet and stuff.

The most common concern the fathers expressed about the program was the absence of a parallel parenting skills program for the mothers of their children. As they progressed in the program, they expressed growing concern over the effects inconsistent childrearing practices would have on their child's social and emotional development. Many fathers thought their children would grow up "confused" if there were one set of expectations at daddy's house and another set at mommy's. Also, they thought that their participation in the program made <u>their</u> expectations and approaches the correct ones--adding an additional source of tension in their relationships because the "mother did not want to listen" to the father's advice about how to raise the child. In the best interest of the child, they said, mothers should have the same exposure to the curriculum as the fathers, albeit in separate groups.

Program staff were available to help the fathers mediate problems in their relationships and often went "beyond the call of duty," since many of the more serious problems arose late at night. For some fathers, this level of intervention was sufficient. Many others, however, said they would prefer a more preventive approach, consisting of regularly scheduled meetings in which the case manager helps the fathers resolve problems in their relationships:

> We need to hurry up and get a young mothers' group going because they be tripping out and put us through all kinds of situations . . . We need to have it like how me and you [ethnographer] talkin . . . It just be like me, the case manager and the baby's mama, you know and we all just sit down and go over

ground rules and make out a list, you know, how much time I get to spend with the baby this week and, you know, things like that.

SUMMARY

The young men entered fatherhood and the programs with diverse life experiences, attitudes and relationships. Those who were in serious relationships and acknowledged paternity early tended to be more involved in the pregnancy. Those who had more tenuous attachments to the woman and had difficulties coming to terms with the pregnancy tended to withdraw from their partners and others, at least during the early stages of the pregnancy. Those who did attempt to define a role for themselves later in the pregnancy were frustrated when their efforts were rebuked or discounted. The young men's mothers, when involved, play an active role in establishing and maintaining the fathers' connection to the child--especially when the relationship between the young parents is awkward or conflict-ridden.

Most fathers reported that they had at least weekly contact with their child in the month preceding the baseline and follow-up surveys. However, the frequency of their contact was less at follow-up than baseline due to problems in their relationships with the mothers, time constraints and distance. Overall, they found the curriculum sessions and support groups useful.

IV. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

All through school, they tell you get good grades, graduate, go to college, get a good job . . . They never teach you about how to survive or how to deal with life if you don't get good grades or if you get put out of school before you get your diploma.

A central goal of the pilot project was to increase the employment and earnings potential of the fathers and improve their ability to support their children financially.

As discussed in Chapter II, the fathers entered the program with limited education and work histories, as well as other barriers to employment. The programs sought to bolster their employability and earnings potential by providing them with education, job-readiness, job training and job placement services. This chapter presents the outcomes of these provisions.

EDUCATION

All six sites offered a range of educational opportunities, including basic skills remediation, GED classes, and two- or four-year college. This section presents findings on projectwide education outcomes.[19]

Education Outcomes

Of the 155 fathers in the survey sample, 116 (75%) participated in some type of education while in the program. Of these fathers, the largest number (53%) enrolled in GED classes.[20] Forty-seven (41%) enrolled in basic skills classes, 15 (13%) in high school and another 15 (13%) in some other type of education program. In addition, 12 fathers (10%) enrolled in a junior or four-year college for periods ranging from two to eleven months, with an average enrollment of six months.

Fifty-nine (38%) fathers entered the program with either a high school diploma or GED. Of those without a diploma or its equivalent at intake, 82 percent (n=79) enrolled in some type of education program; 36 percent (n=35) obtained a high school diploma or GED while they were in the program or after they left--resulting in a 23 percent increase in the number of

[19] For a description of fathers' length of stay in the program and the number of services received, see Appendix E.

[20] Some fathers enrolled in multiple education programs. For example, many would start off in basic skills classes, then move into GED preparation.

diplomas and GEDs at follow-up.[21] In addition, 48 fathers reported in the follow-up survey that they were currently enrolled in some type of education program; 27 of these fathers had not yet received their diploma or GED.[22]

Why Fathers Leave Education

Ninety-three percent of the fathers who enrolled in education said the services they received were either very useful (72%) or somewhat useful (21%). Despite these generally favorable assessments--and the sizable number who enrolled in education--64 percent of the fathers who entered the program without a diploma or GED did not earn one.

Educators who worked with the young fathers reported that they left education for a variety of reasons. Some fathers, they said, became frustrated when they did not see improvement in their skills. Others lost their focus on educational attainment when confronted with difficulties in their day-to-day lives--including need for income, need for child care, and legal entanglements.

Program staff emphasized that the fathers' chronic need for income kept many from pursuing--or continuing--their education. Throughout most of the project, only one site (Fresno) was able to offer the fathers a relatively substantial stipend--up to $90 a week. According to the fathers in Fresno, these stipends enabled and encouraged them to pursue their education:

> I was looking for a job and I went to Manpower and one of the guys in there . . . saw that my girlfriend was pregnant and he said . . . hey man, there's this neat program and he was just telling me all about it. It kind of sounded too good to be true when he was telling me . . . they pay for your school, they give you money to go . . . you have books. You can pick whatever you want as a career and they pay for it . . . I was thinking . . . you just can't pass up something like that. And so . . . he told me to come back tomorrow and I was there. I wanted to do it.

At other sites, when stipends were available, they were usually too small to allow fathers to pursue their education full time and, for some, even part time. As with other young fathers who are among the working poor--particularly those struggling to form or maintain viable two-parent households--the fathers' needs for short-term survival foreclosed opportunities for increasing their lifetime earnings potential through education. One 21-year-old father who lived with his wife and two children summed up his dilemma:

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[21] Five of these fathers were not enrolled in education while in the program, but earned their GED after they left.

[22] At follow-up, 22 percent of the fathers were without a high school diploma or its equivalent and not enrolled in education, compared with 42 percent at intake.

> I can't go back to school right now because I ain't got the help that I need so I can get a part-time job and go to school, you know, because I got a family and stuff . . . bills and rent to pay . . . And the way it's goin right now, by the time I get in school, man, I might be 37 years old . . . I wanna further my education . . . [but] I gotta put all my life on hold so I can just make it, just barely make it takin care of my family.

The accounts of fathers in the ethnographic sample who enrolled in education classes suggest that participation and progress come in fits and starts. As was mentioned in Chapter III, 15 fathers said the constraints that involvement in program activities (work, education and fathering classes) placed on their time created or exacerbated strains in their relationships with their partners and/or children. Fourteen fathers coped with this by reducing the amount of time they spent in program activities, usually education. In addition to competing demands on their time, these fathers mentioned other reasons for leaving education--or moving in and out of it--including lack of confidence in their abilities, personal problems, and pressures from CSE.

Five fathers who had been out of school for five or more years before joining the program said they "quit" their basic skills or GED classes between one and three times. All of these fathers said they valued education and wanted to pass the high school equivalency exam, but lacked confidence in their learning skills and became frustrated or discouraged. With the help of program staff, they were struggling to "tough it out." As one father put it:

> I just try to do the work right . . . [and] forget about bein intimidated from it and just do it . . . But, I don't know, it's just hard . . . [and] sometimes, when you be trying and then you start to get frustrated, you know, then you just like say forget it . . . But I'm not givin up this time . . . I'm gonna go through with it this time because I need my GED . . . that piece of paper to prove that I did do something.

Another who stopped attending three times described his newfound strategy for coping with his frustration:

> It's just that I ain't been to school in so long . . . and they bring up stuff that I should know but I don't remember it and I get real mad, man, frustrated . . . So before I would just quit . . . I quit three times since I been with young fathers . . . But now I'm tryin a different strategy . . . Like yesterday, we was doin a practice test and I got real frustrated cuz everyone else was just in their seat writin and knew the answers and stuff and I'm just thinkin how . . . can they do it and I can't do it . . . I just walked out of the class and smoked a cigarette . . . and then I came back in.

Five other fathers said they left education for between one and three months due to personal problems (e.g., preexisting problems with alcohol or other substances; legal entanglements; depression, usually in association with unemployment; and loss of a child).

Finally, six fathers said they left education, or attended sporadically, due to their obligations to child support. Two said they were not capable of dividing their attention between two demanding tasks--work and education:

> One of my big obstacles right now is this child support thing. I mean, I know it has to be paid and I know that's the law and everything . . . I'm not sayin there's anything wrong with that . . . [But] at this point in my life right now, it's a problem because they want me to get a job and, you know, I'm tryin to go to school and accomplish something . . . and I've been out of this school thing so long, I need that extra time to study and do my homework . . . I'm not the type of person who can have a job and do school work at the same time . . . So I guess I'm not gonna get [education] because they're tellin me I gotta get a job.

The remaining four said their employers were not willing to adjust their work schedules so they could attend classes. One father who was required to work by order of CSE described how he sandwiched preparation for the GED exam in between temporary jobs:

> I go down there and work on my GED when I can . . . But child support started gettin strict . . . and they want you to get your GED and work and pay child support all at the same time . . . [So] every time I get a job, it don't last long because it be through temporary services . . . And then that just like gives me a chance to brush back up on my GED . . . But then when another job come along, I don't get to finish it . . . So that's why I ain't finished it yet.

JOB-READINESS

Job-readiness or preemployment classes were offered at four of the six pilot sites.[23] These classes provided instruction in job-seeking skills (e.g., how to complete applications, write resumes and conduct themselves in interviews) and job retention skills (e.g., punctuality, attendance and appearance). Across all sites, about half the fathers (n=79) enrolled in job-readiness classes and the majority (87%) of these fathers completed the course. At two sites, Cleveland and Fresno, virtually all fathers participated in job-readiness classes that lasted either eight (Cleveland) or three (Fresno) weeks.

Ninety-three percent of the fathers who participated in job-readiness classes said they found them very useful (64%) or somewhat useful (29%). Fathers reported that the classes im-

[23] Two sites did not offer formal classroom instruction in job-readiness. However, they did help fathers write resumes and prepare for interviews on an individual basis.

proved their interviewing skills and job-search strategies. These improvements, they said, helped them approach employers more confidently:

> What I saw for myself . . . it was more like [an] esteem type of thing, you know . . . [Before the classes] when you go out on your own and try to find a job, you put in the application, they take it and you leave . . . You don't speak to the boss, you don't go up there tellin em stuff like I'll work for a day, just try me out . . . Like [after the classes] I put down the job that I was fired from and I still got hired over some other guys. And it's just the way you handle yourself. Everybody want a good worker, no matter what his background is. If they think he doin the work and if they believe in you, they gonna hire you. They want somebody who's persistent.

Given the centrality of the employment objective in this project, employability skills were developed and reinforced at every available opportunity. For example, sites emphasized the importance of being on time and being prepared for all program activities, and reinforced fathers when they called in ahead of time if they were going to be late or were unable to attend a program function. Several sites required fathers to dress for the program as they would dress for a job, and helped those who could not afford clothing that was appropriate for interviews and jobs to get it. In Philadelphia, program activities were held in a high-rise office tower downtown to help the fathers feel they have a place in the central business district and to develop their comfort, skills and acumen in negotiating a professional work environment.

Employability development was also incorporated into other structured components of the program. For example, the fatherhood development curriculum included sessions on communication skills (e.g., active listening and body language), decision-making, conflict resolution, anger and stress management, coping with discrimination and public speaking. The attitudes, behaviors and interpersonal skills developed in these sessions were related to their success as job-seekers and workers, as well as fathers. Nearly three-quarters of the fathers in the ethnographic sample mentioned ways in which the fatherhood development curriculum contributed to their employability.

As a part of the leadership development component of the program, the sites also involved fathers in community education activities. Again, the fathers in the ethnographic sample who participated in these activities talked about how the experience and skills they gained expanded or enhanced their employability:

> The job-readiness workshops and the program helped me develop my skills job-wise . . . especially like my interaction skills because that was something that I really had to develop because I always been the type that really didn't want to talk to too many people. Because like my jobs that I had in the past, it was all like a leave me on my own job, just tell me what to do and then you just go about your business, because I didn't like supervision where somebody watch

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program staff in Fresno, some fathers left their training placements because they found the work too difficult, and others were dropped due to absenteeism. The types of training they received included accounting, air conditioning and refrigeration, auto mechanics, construction, culinary arts, emergency medical technician, graphic arts, maintenance mechanics and police cadet.

Although a sizable number of fathers were interested in pursuing vocational education courses, most sites were not able to place them. Some did not qualify for training because they did not have basic competencies in literacy and numeracy. For those whose basic competencies did meet or exceed entry requirements, the sites reported a limited number of training opportunities for young men in their communities and long waiting lists. One father's experience was typical:

> I really want training as a surgical technician . . . But it's a three-year waiting list . . . They said I can take some of the classes now, but I'd have to wait those years to take the lab work . . . So I was thinkin of trying something else . . . [But] I don't know what it would be . . . I gotta get some money together to pay for whatever it is anyway . . . [so] I don't really see it happening for me any time soon . . . I got no money.

Several fathers in the ethnographic sample who were frustrated by the long waiting lists for training in their preferred fields--for example, welding, construction, electricity or refrigeration--opted to enroll in whatever courses were immediately available, usually certification courses for nursing assistants or child care workers. These programs did not hold their attention, however, and most quit after attending one or two classes. Several others thought, usually sympathetically, that the staff were too busy to meet the needs of all the young men in the program and initiated independent searches. Typically, these independent efforts led fathers to proprietary schools that were of dubious quality and expensive:

> Well, see, the [case managers] and them is tryin so hard and there's so many of us that I guess they can't really, you know, do everything at once . . . But I was gettin restless so that's me, I'm checkin out training opportunities on my own, I mean besides what they're doin . . . But these places they want you to take out loans for their training and you gotta have good credit and I don't have any good credit . . . no credit, period . . . So I guess I'll just have to wait like the other guys in the program.

One expectant father enrolled in a private trade school to learn building maintenance because they "guaranteed" a job upon completion. He completed the course, but all he had to show for his efforts was a large debt:

> I joined the trade school for building maintenance . . . I went there for three months and completed the course . . . I felt good about that because that's the first thing I ever completed . . . really went all the way through with it even

> though it was hard because we had carpentry, electricity, plumbing and everything had to deal with math and I was like, man, this is hard . . . But I did and they gave me a certificate . . . But it was a waste of money . . . You know I got the loan bill at the end and it came to like $3,000, and they promised they was gonna find me a job, which they didn't, they didn't find me anything.

Finally, even when opportunities did become available in their preferred fields, some fathers were not able to take advantage of them. The majority of these fathers were in a double bind. They were working as unskilled laborers to support themselves and their children and, even then, their incomes did not pay all the bills that came due every month. If one of their children fell ill and required over-the-counter medicine, or the car they used to get back and forth to work needed repairs, they were in especially dire straits. These young men knew that without skills training they would never escape the ranks of the working poor--unless they resorted to illegal income-generating activities. When training opportunities arose, however, they were unable to take advantage of them because they were working and therefore not eligible for tuition and other supports through JTPA and other sources.

On-the-Job-Training

On-the-Job-Training (OJT) was offered at two sites, Fresno and Philadelphia.[24] Eleven fathers in the survey sample participated; however, only four of these fathers either completed OJT or were still actively involved in it at the end of the pilot.

To increase the likelihood that fathers would succeed in their OJT placements, the program staff in Philadelphia closely monitored the fathers' attendance and performance on the job by establishing two-way communication with employers and providing some fathers with "on-the-job mentors." Although the number who received these supports was small, those who did receive them said they were helpful and, in several instances, effectively thwarted their impulses to "just quit" or "stop showing up." For example, consider the following accounts of two fathers: Both had OJT placements that paid $9 or more an hour after a six-month probationary period, offered health care insurance and pension benefits, and provided opportunities for advancement. Both lived with their children and were happy to have placements that enhanced their incomes. Both liked the work and had the requisite skills to perform the technical aspects of their jobs and benefit from the additional training that was offered to them. However, they had problems with coworkers or supervisors that put them at risk of dismissal.

Like several others in our study, one father could not drop his child off at day care and arrive at work on time. His efforts to manage the situation on his own were unsatisfactory

[24] In Fresno, these placements were subsidized through JTPA. In Philadelphia these "on-the-job-training" positions were developed by program staff in conjunction with local employers and without assistance from JTPA.

and, before the case manager intervened, he was thinking seriously about quitting--if he was not fired first:

> Like when my baby started school, I was bein late for work in the morning. I had to be at work at 7:30 and the school didn't open until like 8:00. So one of the teachers told me she get there like a quarter of . . . which was good, but it still left me . . . close to 30 minutes late. So I didn't go to nobody at the job because I was like this is my kid, why should I have to go to them? I said, look, I'm doin my job. But my supervisor, she began to mix business and personal things together, you know. She was askin me who those females are that is callin, and it was like there was nothin but two females called. One girl that I had . . . pickin him up from school and babysittin him until I got home [from work] . . . The other was the teacher lettin me know she got some papers I gotta sign and stuff . . . And so by me bein late every other day [my supervisor] made a big issue of it . . . So [the case manager] found out about it because they was tellin him it affectin my job and such. And I was like, it can't be affectin my job because I'm gettin my work done and stuff . . . So [the case manager] talked to the boss and he said that what he do for employees that have a kid is extend their time . . . or let them work through lunch or something to make up the time they's late. So now I work til 5:00 . . . but [before the case manager stepped in] I was ready to tell them to forget about this job.

Another father in OJT described how his "on-the-job mentor" helped him deal with a problem he was having with a coworker:

> I have an on-the-job mentor . . . I only had one chat with him, you know, only felt that one time that, hey, I need somebody to talk to . . . [because] I can't deal with this person . . . See [the mentor] been around this person for a long time, so he was able to explain how this person is to me . . . I can't say he solved my problem, but he showed me a way to deal with it . . . [The mentor] just opened my eyes a little bit, you know, hey, this person is so and so and no matter what you say to him or do to him you're gonna have to . . . just do what he says . . . If it weren't for [the mentor] I probably would have got fired tryin to deal with this guy on my own.

The experiences of these two fathers illustrate the types of problems that many other fathers encountered in their OJT and other job placements, and the challenges programs faced in their efforts to help the young men secure and retain solid employment and training opportunities.

EMPLOYMENT

The time frame for this study was too short to assess the long-term effects of program participation on the employment and earnings of the fathers. The following sections present

findings on short-term employment outcomes, differences between fathers who were employed and unemployed at follow-up, and the fathers' satisfaction with job placement.

Short-Term Employment Outcomes

At the time of enrollment in the program, nearly one-quarter (n=36) of the fathers were working and only 17 percent of their jobs offered health benefits. The average hourly wage of these jobs was $5.19 (half made $5/hour or less), fathers worked an average of 27 hours per week and the average weekly pay was $150. (See Table 9.) The average weekly wage for the highest paying job the fathers held in the year before they enrolled in the program was $187, and 23 percent of the jobs offered health benefits. At intake, the most commonly cited reason for joining the program was the desire to get a good or better job.

While in the program, 111 fathers (72%) were employed at one time or other. In these jobs, half earned $5 an hour or more, and the average hourly wage of the highest paying job they obtained while in the program was $5.33. Seventy-nine percent of the fathers who were employed while they were in the program had one or two jobs, and 21 percent had between three and seven jobs. The time they spent employed in any single job was usually short, and most fathers experienced periods of unemployment. On average, the 111 fathers who obtained jobs were employed 8.2 months while enrolled in the program.[25]

On the follow-up survey, 54 percent (n=84) of the fathers reported that they were currently employed. Seven said they were working two jobs, and one said he held three jobs concurrently. About half (49%) of these fathers had been employed in their primary job for four months or less at follow-up. Of the employed fathers, half said they earned $5.50 an hour or more in their primary job, and the average hourly wage was $6.21. On average, they worked 40 hours per week, and 50 percent said their weekly pay was $220 or more. Their average weekly earnings were $250. Forty-seven percent of the fathers who were employed at the time of the follow-up survey reported that their employers provided either full or partial health insurance coverage.

The 71 fathers who had been employed in the year prior to program entry and were employed at the time of the follow-up survey reported significantly greater satisfaction with the health benefits, the type of work, and their opportunities to advance in their current job than in the most recent job they held before entering the program.[26] However, they were not more satisfied with their wages at follow-up.

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[25] On average, these fathers were employed for 53 percent of the months in which they were enrolled. When the 44 fathers who did not obtain jobs while in the program are included, the average number of months of employment is 5.9, and the average percentage of months employed while enrolled is 38 percent.

[26] These differences are statistically significant ($p \leq .05$).

Table 9

EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT INTAKE AND FOLLOW-UP
(Survey Sample)

Employment Status	Intake	Follow-Up
Employed	23%	54%
Jobs with Health Benefits	17%	47%
Average Weekly Hours	27	40
Average Hourly Wage	$5.19	$6.21
Average Weekly Pay	$150	$250
Sample Size	155	155

In summary, twice as many fathers were working at the time of the follow-up survey than were working at intake, though nearly half (46%) were not employed. Average weekly earnings were $100 higher than those of fathers who were employed at intake and $63 more than the highest paying job they held in the year before they joined the program. This is due more to an increase in the number of hours they worked than to wage increases. In addition, the number of jobs that offered fathers health insurance benefits increased 30 percent. Finally, fathers who were employed expressed greater satisfaction with their jobs at follow-up than at baseline, though they were not more satisfied with the pay.

Correlates of Employment Status at Follow-up

Despite an increase in the number of fathers who were employed at the time of the follow-up survey, 46 percent (n=71) were not employed. Given the exploratory nature of this study, our analysis of differences in the employment status and earnings of fathers at follow-up included a wide range of demographic and program variables.

The only significant finding was that fathers who enrolled in OJT were more likely to be employed at follow-up,[27] though their hourly wages were similar to those who were employed and had not participated in OJT. No differences were observed between either employment status or wages at follow-up and a host of demographic and program variables, including age, race, marital status, educational attainments, enrollment in education, and completion of job-readiness or classroom vocational training.

Forty-two percent (n=30) of the unemployed fathers were still enrolled in education, leaving 26 percent of the fathers neither employed nor in school at follow-up--compared with 57 percent at intake. Because the programs stressed the importance of education and its relationship to long-term improvements in earnings, fathers who were still enrolled in education represent a positive outcome. Again, there were no notable differences in the demographic characteristics or program involvements of fathers who were either employed or enrolled in school at follow-up and those who were not employed and not enrolled in education.[28]

Fathers' Views of Job Placement Services

The majority of fathers (71%) obtained jobs in-program through their own job search efforts, usually independent of program-based job search assistance.[29] Only 29 percent of the fa-

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[27] The relationship between enrollment in OJT and employment at follow-up is statistically significant ($r=.38$, $p \leq .01$).

[28] Our analysis of demographic variables included age, race, marital status, number of children, educational attainment and site. Program variables included enrollment in job-readiness or classroom vocational training, completion of job-readiness or classroom vocational training, and enrollment in OJT.

[29] Seventeen percent found their jobs through program-assisted job searches.

thers who obtained employment while in the program found their jobs through program referrals. The average hourly wage for jobs they found on their own ($5.33) was no different than that of fathers who got jobs through program referrals ($5.32), and slightly less than that of the highest paying job fathers held in the year prior to their enrollment in the program ($5.41).

Job placement was one of the greatest challenges for the programs and a major source of frustration for the fathers. Part of the problem was the lack of job developers. Cleveland, a site that employed several job developers to work with the young fathers, had the highest rate of program-assisted job placements (77%), 42 percent through referrals and 35 percent through job search assistance. Three sites employed part-time staff to do job development and two relied exclusively on program staff, who were already stretched by their involvement in other activities. At one time or other, nearly half the fathers in the ethnographic study complained that the sites were not helping them to find good jobs. Many attributed this to the lack of program resources invested in job development:

> [The program staff] got a lot of work to do, man, they need to hire somebody just for job placement. They need to hire a lot more people in that program if they expect for it to work . . . They need to spend money . . . [The program staff] work for hours, man, 12, 15, 16 hours, man, and that's ridiculous. Don't you think you'd get tired of it . . . wouldn't you, huh? They can't do it all, so I don't knock em, but still somebody need to talk to em . . . They need to hire more people if they expect this program to work. They short-handed big time.

Another father also thought that the program would be greatly improved if it hired specific staff to develop training and employment opportunities.[30] Fathers who are out of work, he said, "don't feel good about themselves":

> See, they should have better job placement . . . Like, whatever field you desire to get into they should help you. They need to hire like certain guys just to be into that field, you know . . . like go out there and find jobs or find schools to place the guys where they want to be. That right there would make the program better because once people workin they feel good about theyself . . . You not workin, you outta work, you feel depressed . . . you just don't feel right, man, you feel miserable.

About a quarter of the fathers (n=12) in the ethnographic sample said they became depressed or discouraged when, after several months in the program, they did not get a job. Many said that this was an important factor in their decision to withdraw from the program or reduce their level of effort:

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[30] Job developers worked with the fathers as well as other client groups served by the agency.

> I've been goin there for months now and I don't have a job yet. Sometimes I lose interest in the program . . . I'm not tryin to lose interest . . . If I had a job I wouldn't mind runnin down to the program.

For 12 fathers in the ethnographic sample, unemployment was a major stressor in their lives. When they were not able to find a job through the program, they adopted an "I don't care" attitude. One father who was not yet to that point, but saw it on the horizon, said the stress of unemployment is felt by adults and children alike:

> You get to a point where you just don't care, you know. And lately I ain't been to that point, but I know if I don't get somethin soon it's gonna come around again . . . It definitely will come around again . . .
>
> I mean the main thing to being a good parent is the money part . . . I get stressed out . . . a lot of people do, and then take it out on the kids cuz I ain't got a job, you know . . . One of the worst stresses in the world is not to have no money when you need it . . . when you wanna do right for your people, you know, your family and you know you can't.

At least 10 unemployed fathers in the ethnographic sample either returned or were thinking about returning to illegal means for generating income:

> I've been like really, really, really searching and trying, I've been trying to find any kind of job . . . I even called a job to work on a cruise ship, just a summer job, but they told me you have to pay a fee. I called employment agencies, I've been everywhere . . . I talked to friends and all that . . . to get tips on jobs and I go down there and it be like, shh, fill out applications we'll call you . . . And like it used to be I'd feel excited when they say they hirin . . . but everything I feel excited about just like tumbles down. So I'm like it must be it wasn't meant for me to, you know, work . . . maybe I'm one of them people that just have to live by selling drugs.

The sites also had problems finding jobs that paid more than $5 an hour, the median wage that fathers earned in jobs while in the program. About one-quarter of the fathers in the ethnographic sample said the programs raised their expectations at intake, and hence their reservation wages. When they were urged by program staff to accept jobs that did not pay a "family-wage," $8 to $10 an hour in their minds, they felt let down. Several said they passed up on jobs that paid less than this because they thought that they "deserved" more.

As will be discussed in Chapter V, fathers who had been in the child support system for six months or more and thought of the system in adversarial terms were less committed to work, both before they entered the program and afterward. For other fathers, particularly those who had formal child support obligations while they were in the program <u>and</u> were enrolled in education, the wages earned at jobs while they were in the program were satisfactory:

> Well, I got this job from a temporary service that a friend told me about . . . The pay ain't all that much, five and a quarter, but it's decent for me right now . . . See . . . I'm not really thinkin about the money right now, I'm thinking about the future, you know, I'm thinking with this job I can stay out of jail, I can keep child support off my back . . . See if I go to jail, then I won't have a chance to finish school . . . [or] do what I wanna do in the future . . . Because if I didn't look at my education as bein important, then the money would be important, and then I would be looking at it whereas child support is takin all my money, I don't wanna work, you know. So I look at it whereas they can have the little money because in the long run, it's gonna all come back to me through this education I'm gettin now.

SUMMARY

Twice as many fathers were working at the time of the follow-up survey than were working at intake, though nearly half were not employed. Average weekly earnings of fathers employed at follow-up were $100 higher than those of fathers who were employed at intake, and $63 more than the highest paying job held in the year before joining the program. In the absence of a valid comparison group, it is not possible to determine whether these gains are due to the program intervention or would have occurred naturally through maturation and additional work experience. There were no significant relationships between participation in specific components of the program and employment status or earnings, suggesting that concrete program effects--at this point in time--may be small. In any event, the outcomes must be characterized as modest. Forty-six percent of the fathers were not employed at follow-up, and 26 percent had no attachments to either the labor force or school. Although this does represent a decrease in the number who were neither employed nor in school at intake, many would consider the proportion too high.

A major concern of this project was to increase the fathers' employment and earnings potential so they could fulfill their legal obligations to provide support for their children. The next chapter addresses issues of child support, including the effects that involvement in the child support system has on the work commitment of some fathers.

V. CHILD SUPPORT

My girl don't need to take me to court so a judge could say I gotta kick up some cash for my child . . . There's no need for that because I'm doin it on my own. I don't understand why the system do that.

As a condition of their participation in the pilot, each of the six sites agreed to help young fathers take on their legal child support responsibilities. In the original design, sites were to require fathers who had not yet entered the child support system to commit to doing so before enrollment.

This design created two problems during the early months of implementation. First, it interfered with recruitment. Many young fathers who were otherwise eager to enter a program that offered employment assistance and male parenting classes were put off by this condition for participation, as well as by the implication that men who provided support through the formal system were better or more responsible fathers than those who did it on their own informally. Second, the lead agencies and their staff, who viewed themselves as service providers and client advocates, balked when faced with the reality of "turning young men over to Child Support Enforcement" (Watson, 1992). The two programs that were recruiting through the child support system effectively escaped the dilemma.[31] The others argued that the requirement was self-defeating, since few young fathers were willing to enroll in the program and, even if they did, there were no assurances that they would follow through on their commitment, short of coercion. After considerable debate, the requirement was recast as an important outcome that sites would achieve by providing the young men with accurate information about the child support system, motivating and encouraging them to "do the right thing," and helping them approach and negotiate the system when they were ready.

This resistance to CSE is neither new nor unique to this project. Since the 1950s, Congress has enacted a variety of measures to augment the AFDC program by requiring the collection of child support from noncustodial parents. Forty years later, the vexing problems of evasion and noncompliance continue to challenge policymakers and those responsible for enforcing the law.

Much remains to be explored about the informal support that noncustodial parents provide their children, as well as the basis for their resistance to the formal system. This chapter begins with an examination of the informal support that the young fathers provide their children. The second section of the chapter describes fathers' early experiences in, and

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[31] In the early phase of the project, the programs in Fresno and St. Petersburg were recruiting through CSE. For a description of recruitment strategies at each site and the programs' relationships with child support, see Watson (1992).

perceptions of, the child support system--some were satisfied with the process and outcomes and some described the process as adversarial and perceived the system, and their treatment in it, as unfair. The third and final section presents program outcomes, including the number of fathers who declared paternity or established support orders and changed their attitudes toward the system.

INFORMAL SUPPORT

The majority of fathers in the ethnographic sample expressed strong views about men who neither visited their children nor contributed to their material or financial support. These fathers, many said, need a powerful authority like CSE that will help them behave more responsibly and contribute to the support of their children.[32] Equally strong were their views that fathers like themselves, who attempt to maintain contact with their children and provide some level of voluntary support for them when they are able, do not need any such authority to intervene.

In this section, we explore the characteristics of the informal support that the fathers provide--including the form in which it is offered, the amount they provide and its regularity and duration, as well as some of the fathers' preferences and commonly held perceptions of the advantages of providing support informally rather than formally.

Form of Support

The majority of fathers in the ethnographic sample said they preferred to purchase items for their children rather than give the mothers cash. From a content analysis of the interview data, three major themes emerged that explain the significance of this preference for purchased items: (1) they are visible symbols of responsible fatherhood in the community, (2) they are tangible and gratifying, and (3) they give the fathers control over how the money is spent.

Visibility

As was already mentioned, the majority of fathers knew or knew of men who neither contributed to the support of nor visited their children. According to their accounts, these men command little respect in the community. Purchasing items and visibly carrying them over to the mother's house, they said, provides some assurance that "everyone" knows they are fulfilling their obligations to their children:

> Yup, when I buy the things myself and carry em over it's better because then . . . you know how neighbors be all nosy, into everybody's business and everything . . . Like they always be sayin this child's father don't do nothing for him and I only

[32] Many, however, held strong negative views of CSE and said that they would prefer intervention by a more benign authority.

> seen that child's father bring Pampers over to the house one time, you know . . . They be countin and sayin whether this man or that man deserve respect . . . on account of what they see from their porches and stuff . . . And like I don't want that kinda reputation to bounce offa me and my family. So I just buy the things my daughter needs and make sure at least somebody sees that I brought the baby somethin.

During the first two or three months, the babies were usually well outfitted with clothes the mothers received as shower gifts from friends and relatives. The major item that had to be purchased was Pampers, the most visible and universal symbol of responsible young fathers, and one that, since they are expensive and cannot be purchased with food stamps, drains the young mothers' budgets quickly.

Many fathers said the mother preferred them to buy items when the baby was very young because it spared them the trouble of running out to the store. When the children got to be three or four months old, however, the fathers said that shopping became a major social outing for the young mothers. Beyond providing an opportunity to escape the drudgery of child care, fathers said these outings provided a means for young mothers to show one another how much their baby's father "loved" them. For example:

> She used to appreciate when I did some shopping for her cuz like the baby really tired her out at first . . . But after like three or four months she wanted to go out shopping with other little mothers and buy things for the baby . . . And so then she changed over to sayin well now she just need me to give her money . . . So from what I see how young mothers act, they just like that chance to do somethin with their girlfriends and show off about how her child's father is still there for her . . . loves her cuz he be givin her this much money and this and that.

Most fathers, however, continued to purchase items for the children themselves. Pampers remained a symbol in good currency with the "nosy neighbors" and members of the older generation. Also, because the child had outgrown many of the clothes that were given as gifts around the time of birth, the fathers would occasionally buy little outfits, usually off-brand. These outfits were also effective symbols with the older generation, in fact many of them were purchased by or with their own mothers. From the perspective of the young mothers, however, the new symbols of "good fathers" or "good mates" were expensive name brand outfits and articles of clothing, such as little BK or Nike shoes. Many of the young fathers in our sample said the mothers' new demands for cash and extravagant consumer values created serious tensions in their relationships, usually beginning when the child was between three and five months old.

Tangibility

The fathers also mentioned that they liked seeing their children wearing clothes or playing with toys that they bought themselves. According to their accounts, this reinforces their desire to buy things for their children and increases their work effort:

> When the baby first came, I didn't have no job . . . no income, so I wasn't a good provider at first. But then when I got me a job and I started buyin things for the baby, like little outfits and stuff, and I seen the baby wearing them, well, that really got to me . . . I wanted to work even harder so that I could give her more.

Like a number of other fathers in the sample, when support was formalized his work effort declined because his contributions were no longer visible or tangible--to either himself or his daughter:

> But then when the government started taking all my money for so-called child support, I didn't have any change left over after paying my bills to buy anything for my child--and like it just made me feel like less of a father . . . My daughter don't know that I pay the government for her support . . . She gonna grow up thinkin I'm a deadbeat father because I don't buy her nothing . . . After I found out about how that child support worked . . . it just made me feel like not working harder because the government just takes that extra money for themselves . . . That system they got . . . don't make any sense to me.

Trust and Control

Trust and control over resources were major issues in the fathers' relationships with the mothers of their children. A majority of the fathers in our sample said whenever they gave cash to the mothers, they had no faith that the money would be spent on the children. Several fathers were able to give specific instances when this occurred. For many, however, it seemed to emanate from a more generalized attitude concerning the untrustworthiness of women outside their own kinship groups. In the words of one young man:

> If there's one thing I learned out of my experiences with women so far . . . is like the only ones you can trust is your grandmom and your mom . . . Them other women out there . . . they just crazy, man . . . They just look out for their own selves more than they look out for anybody . . . even their own childrens.

Fathers who continued to provide support after they had separated from the mothers of their children were least likely to provide assistance in the form of cash. One father who had separated from the mother of his child said this:

> I go get things myself. I mean I don't have no relationship with her . . . I don't know her like I used to and I ain't around her. We've been away from each other for like 11 months now. That's a long time to change on someone, you know. Like when we was together when I was gonna buy him clothes, she would get jealous sayin I'm gettin him too much but not gettin her anything. So like I don't trust her . . . She might like just take the money and get something for herself . . . And just for me to clear my conscience, I get his things myself.

Before support is formalized, AFDC is generally believed to be the mother's money and fathers attempt to exert little control over how it is spent. In the minds of many young men, however, AFDC becomes the father's money once a formal support order is set, since the bulk of their payments into the system are servicing this debt.[33] Many said they were angered by the system's unconditional support of women and its blind faith that the mothers would spend the money on goods and services for their children:

> Like when she get that child support check, the check says her name on it, and the child never even get that support money . . . She use it for her own use. And that's what really gets me man, women not doing what they s'posed to be doin with that money they get for the child . . . If it wasn't for the child and that check she wouldn't have no money . . . She'd have to go out to work or something.

Amount of Informal Support

To get some estimate of their informal contributions, we asked the fathers in the survey sample about the amount of material and financial support they provided their children in the month preceding the baseline and follow-up interviews.[34] Overall, the majority of fathers reported having provided some level of support to their children outside of the formal system. Consistent with our analysis of the ethnographic data, their provisions were mostly in the form of purchased goods and services.

Forty-nine percent of the fathers reported that they gave the mothers of their children cash support in the month preceding the baseline interview. (See Table 10.) At follow-up, fewer

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[33] Very few complained about how mothers spent AFDC money before orders were set, in part because they were not aware of the association between the welfare and child support systems. Also, a sizable number of fathers (35%) in the survey sample could not say for sure whether their children were receiving AFDC. Five fathers in the ethnographic sample said they did not know that their children were receiving money through AFDC before their child support hearing.

[34] These data are all self-reported and should be viewed cautiously. It is, of course, extremely difficult to collect and verify information on the amount of informal support that fathers and their families contribute. We attempted to do this with a small number of fathers in the ethnographic sample. However, it was not a part of our original design and the level of effort and resources it required proved too costly.

Table 10

AMOUNT OF INFORMAL SUPPORT REPORTED BY FATHERS DURING THE MONTH PRECEDING THE BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS
(Survey Sample)

Amount	Baseline	Follow-Up
Cash Support (n=140)		
$0	51%	61%
$1-50	29	15
$51 or More	20	24
Items Purchased (n=136)		
$0	7%	15%
$1-50	20	12
$51 or More	34	26
$101 or More	39	47

fathers (39%) reported that they provided cash support, and the number who said they contributed more than $50 in cash support was only slightly higher at follow-up (24%) than at baseline (20%).

At both points in time, a larger number of fathers reported that they purchased goods or services for their child, including food, toys, books, clothing, diapers, medicine and babysitting. At baseline, 93 percent of the fathers said they bought something for their child. Seventy-three percent said they spent more than $50 on these items, and 39 percent said they spent more than $100. At the time of the follow-up survey, a smaller number of fathers (85%) said they bought something for their child,[35] though they reported spending more money--47 percent said they spent more than $100.[36]

As one might expect, the fathers of children who received AFDC were more concerned with contributing to improvements in the standard of living of their children than with servicing a public assistance debt. Among their major complaints about the formal support system is that each month only $50 goes directly to the support of their children; the balance of their payment is used by the government to offset the cost of AFDC. If the figures reported are accurate estimates of their informal contributions to the material and financial well-being of their children, fathers of children on AFDC who do not have support orders may be able to contribute a substantial supplement to the AFDC grant, at least on an irregular basis. Once an order is set, however, they have few or no discretionary funds, since most of what remains goes toward transportation to and from work and other basic needs.

Sources for Child Support

The young men mentioned four main sources for the support they provided their children: (1) earnings from their own jobs, (2) members of their extended families, (3) crime (selling or running drugs, gambling, writing numbers and a variety of economic crimes ranging from petty theft to armed robbery), or (4) some combination of the three.

Full Support Through Own Earnings

The majority of fathers in the ethnographic sample said they did not want their children to grow up on welfare. Nine attempted to provide full support for their children after they were born. Eight of these fathers lived with their children and partners around the time of birth and were employed most of the time. Four sold drugs to either supplement their meager incomes or to tide them over during periods of unemployment. One father provided full and continuous support through the sale of drugs alone.

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[35] The fact that the reference month for the baseline survey for the first cohort included Christmas may account for some of the difference.

[36] At follow-up, 70 percent of the fathers who had no contact with their child did not buy them anything, compared with 5 percent of fathers who had contact.

Four of these nine fathers either were not able to sustain this level of support or could not earn enough to satisfy their partners over time. In all four cases, the relationship ended within eight months. One mother moved back with her parents, and the other three applied for public assistance grants. At least three of these fathers attributed dissolution of the relationship to their inability to provide sufficient income to their fledgling families:

> In a way, I feel like I blew it when she left . . . even though I don't know what I did. It just hurts me . . . Basically, I didn't have the income to support her and the baby . . . The time we were living together, I was more or less the only one working.

Three other fathers were able to provide full support and keep their relationships intact for as many as three years by working full time and selling drugs or stealing on an as-needed basis. Although each of these fathers said they would rather not engage in these activities, they could not support a household on their meager earnings. For example, one 21-year-old father who worked full time told us:

> [Whenever I steal] it's motivated by my children's needs of survival . . . It just gets to that point because you can't tell your landlord I'm tryin, or you can't tell a hungry child, I'm tryin, wait a few more days till daddy gets his check, then he'll buy some food . . . Even though I'm not justified for doin wrong because wrong is wrong, it's somethin that has to be done to survive . . . I ain't a showboat . . . That money doesn't go for me, it goes for my children . . . I try not to hurt, I don't hurt nobody, I ain't gonna say I try not to, I never hurt anyone, I never put my hands on anyone.

The partners of these fathers eventually applied for AFDC to supplement the fathers' earnings.

Only two fathers were able to provide full support for their children for a year or more without turning to either AFDC for the mothers or to crime. One couple split up when their child was almost two. According to the father, they broke up because he had to work a lot of overtime to make ends meet and was often too tired to socialize with his partner:

> One day I come home, and she told me the love wasn't there no more . . . the relationship was fading away . . . And I said how is it fading away . . . explain that to me . . . And she said like because I'm always working and when I'm not working I'm too tired and never wanna do nothin with her . . . take her out . . . [And] I said if I'm tired and don't feel like goin out, hey, there ain't nothin wrong with that . . . I'm a good provider . . . She said I was boring, so boring for her . . . But how I see it, that shouldn't really be no reason for a woman to leave a man and take the child, because it's a lotta mens out there, you know, that be tired and their women understand.

This father could not support two households on his income--one for himself and the other for the mother and child--and the mother applied for AFDC.

Own Earnings and Extended Family Support

Primary support for most of the children of the other fathers in the sample were met through public assistance grants (AFDC and food stamps), maternal grandparents, the income that the mothers earned through their own jobs, or some combination of the three.[36] Whatever these fathers or members of the fathers' families provided supplemented support from these other sources.

A few fathers provided support for their children without the help of other family members. The amount of their support was usually small and it was almost always sporadic, as were the fathers' incomes and work histories. Nevertheless, when they were working, they did buy things for their children, and occasionally gave the mothers some money. Although nearly every father said he would like to give his child more, many thought their contributions were substantial. A content analysis of this segment of the interviews revealed three main reasons for this perception: (1) although the amount is very small, they are spending between 25 and 40 percent of their net income on their children; (2) their reference group is other men in their neighborhoods, young and old, many of whom neither support nor visit their children; and (3) they are aware of the opportunity costs--the things that they could have bought or done for themselves but "sacrificed" for the baby.

Support provided by members of the fathers' extended families is either a supplement to or substitute for support provided by the fathers themselves.

INITIATION INTO THE CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEM

At the outset of the ethnographic fieldwork, 16 of the 47 young men in the sample had declared legal paternity for their children. The children of nearly all these young men were receiving AFDC and food stamps at the time paternity was declared. Also, most of the fathers were experiencing serious strains in their relationships with the mothers of their children. In several instances, events preceding or precipitating formalization of paternity and child support were violent or traumatic.

Despite these similarities, there were discernable differences in their early experiences with the child support system and their responses to it. Three of these fathers said they thought their children were better off before they entered the system, but did not express strong feelings. Six fathers described the process as adversarial and perceived the system, and their

[36] The children of three fathers were placed in foster care or shelters when they were very young, due to neglect or abuse (by the child's mother or her boyfriend). Most of their needs were provided for by the state, though the fathers or members of their families bought occasional gifts. Two of these fathers were eventually awarded custody.

treatment in it, as unfair. Seven thought they had been treated fairly and, overall, expressed satisfaction with the process and outcomes. The fathers in this group perceived the system as an agency for mediation of a problem.

The System as Adversary

Six of the 16 fathers who had declared paternity before entering the program described the child support system in adversarial terms. In nearly every case, their entry into the system was instigated by their partners, who either "turned them in" or filed a formal "complaint." Most had very little accurate information about the system in advance of their appearance before a hearing officer or judge. The majority of fathers who entered the program without formalization of their paternity and financial support held similar attitudes about the system.

Social Context of Attitude Formation

In the minds of most fathers who described the system as adversarial, women have the power to control the flow of information to the authorities about the fathers of their children. Women, they said, use this power to control the behavior of fathers and leverage resources for themselves. One young father who was not yet in the system described this dynamic in his relationship:

> She steady pressin on me how she got all these rights . . . how mothers got all these rights and fathers ain't got no rights . . . So every time she want somethin from me she just throw that up in my face . . . Like if I don't do this or I don't do that she gonna tell child support, and then they gonna make me give her all my money . . . well, at least about half. And like it scares me. It scares me a LOT because she's finally figurin out I ain't got no good feelings for her . . . I just go around there cuz I wants to see my child, not her. So I see she's makin her little moves now. I think she's ready to seek her little revenge on me.

According to these fathers, surrendering their autonomy to the women and the system through formalization of child support is something that can, and should, be avoided through the skillful management of their "dealings" with the mothers of their children. One element of good management is to contribute voluntarily to the support of their children whenever they are able. A second element is to maintain at least the pretense of a cordial relationship with the mothers of their children. Those whose partners turn them in, they said, are chastised by peers for their poor management of their relationships:

> My friends, they just be telling me how it was and all that . . . And then they started tellin me like they seen the signs like I was lettin things get outta hand . . . Like I just stopped dealing with her and she be goin around tellin all her little girlfriends what she gonna do to me . . . And they [friends] told me well just go talk nice to her . . . [and] pretend like we gettin back together and stuff,

> you know, so she don't turn me in . . . I can see now they was really tryin to help me . . . So like nobody except me was too surprised when she went to court on me . . . When she did that, my friends let me know I messed up bad.

The fathers in this group described how their relationships with the mothers of their children went from bad to worse in the months or weeks before they were served their papers. In nearly every case, the young men had been forewarned--usually by the women themselves. About half thought that their partners were "just telling another one of their lies" and tried to regain control in their relationships. When the papers eventually arrived, however, they felt betrayed and angry. The other half consciously stayed away from the mothers and their children during this period because they were afraid that they would be provoked to "serve" (hit) her:

> One day I seen her up by my cousin's house and she says, "did you get anything in the mail today?" And I says no and . . . like that's when she told me . . . She just like threw it at me like that. And it was like a death sentence to me and I ain't even done nothing wrong, you know . . . A death sentence and all that anger and aggression just flared up . . . I stopped goin around to see the baby cuz I was ready to serve her royally.

As described in the next section, nearly all the fathers in this group expressed anger toward the mothers of their children as well as the "system."

Misconceptions About and Anger at the System

Nearly all of these fathers or members of their families had contributed some level of support to their children at one time or other. And nearly all expected to get some leniency or credit for having provided informal support. However, none understood the relationship between the child support and welfare systems in advance of their appearance before a hearing officer or judge.

A popular misconception among young fathers whose children receive AFDC is that if they have receipts to show that they had voluntarily contributed to their children's care, the mothers cannot claim back child support:

> It's good to be prepared . . . You never know when a woman gonna just trip out on you . . . turn you in for child support. Like when she came up pregnant, you know, my friend told me to keep receipts for everything . . . just in case somethin like that come up . . . So like whenever I buy my son somethin, I keep receipts that show the prices what I've been spendin on him . . . If I don't keep receipts . . . she can say I don't give him nothin and then they could lock me up behind bars . . . or say I gotta give her back pay.

A few, upon the advice of their buddies, did arrive at their hearings with a shoebox of receipts in tow--tangible evidence to prove that they had in fact been acting as responsible fathers. What they and the others learned, however, is that their debt to their children was not a personal one. Rather, it was a public assistance debt:

> It's like real intimidatin, man. My daughter, she's like only three years old, and they told me I owe her like, man, it was a lot, I don't know it was in the grands . . . $2,000 or somethin like that . . . $2,000 that she ain't even gonna see cuz, I don't know, it's like taxes for her or something. And where am I gonna get that kind of cash from? That's what I wanna know. How they expect me to come up with that amount of money just like that? And it ain't fair cuz like during those three years me and my family did for her . . . And my child's mom sat there and lied that I didn't help out her and the baby . . . And when it was my turn, and I wanted to tell about how she lyin cuz like whenever I got a job I would buy food, bags of Pampers, outfits . . . anything . . . And all what my mom done put out . . . But the man just say, "Quiet, son. We don't wanna hear about that. We just want you to answer these questions we got here on our paper." He just be like all calm and everything and I was like, man . . . I just wanted to pop him . . . Pop everyone in that whole place . . . Tear up their #%$@ papers first, then pop em. And I ain't no kind of violent person like that . . . but that just shows how much hate they brung out in me. I hated them . . . I hated my baby's mom. They was all like making it look like I'm bad . . . like I'm some low-life father that ain't never did nothing for his child.

Most of these fathers said no one at the child support office was interested in hearing their side of the story. Several said they were angry because the hearing officers sided with the mothers, and the mothers "lied" or did nothing to credit them with at least trying to be a responsible father. In addition, much of the anger and frustration these young men expressed was directed toward "the system." In their opinion, the system intrudes into the private lives of minority and poor men and fosters lazy and dependent behaviors in women:

> Excuse the expression, but I don't need no white man tellin me I have to take care of my child. Cuz I consider that I was already doin that . . . I don't need the man to tell me I gotta pay this particular amount every week so my . . . ex-girlfriend . . . can just sit up on welfare that they give to women and which makes them lazy . . . [and] . . . not wanna go out and do things for theyselves. The facts of the matter is that they just payin women to have babies so that the government can take all the father's money. You know how it is, man. The system just wants to keep our people down, and from what I see, they's doin a pretty good job so far.

Others also objected to the intrusiveness of the system. However, they were more concerned with where the money they paid into child support was going. As one young man explained,

he would be willing to pay more if he thought his money was contributing to a higher standard of living for his child. Unfortunately, he said, the money is supporting the opulent lifestyles of the very people who control the system:

> Don't get me wrong . . . I ain't complainin that I gotta support my daughter cuz I've been doin that all along on my own, you know . . . without nobody like structurin it, gettin into my business, and all that like they tryin to do now . . . My little girl--she everything to me, man, I ain't never wanna cheat her out of a better life . . . But those child support people is just like Robin Hoods except they got the story all wrong to suit to their advantage . . . They're robbin from the poor and givin to the rich. There's no way that money they expect me to pay is goin for the support of my little girl . . . There's no way it's gonna like boost up her lifestyle, you know. If it's somethin like she could go to a better school when she get older or her mom can move to a better neighborhood like where there aren't people out selling drugs on every corner day and night . . . somethin like that, then fine, no problem, I might even like try to kick in double what they're sayin. But I just see that my money's gonna go to like the mayor . . . [and] people like that, yeah, all those big shots so they can have like limousine rides whenever they feel like it and other crooked shit like that . . . To tell you the truth, sometimes I just think about goin out and stealin my money back from those rich people and givin it to my daughter . . . Yup, I'd give every last penny of it to her . . . Straight-up, man. I know two wrongs don't make a right but it just make me so angry . . . So hateful.

Anger Toward the Mother

There were many complications in their relationships around the time that they were summoned for child support,[37] but for most, the main issues concerned money and access to their children. More specifically, mothers were attempting to garner increasing amounts of one resource that, up till then, fathers had exercised some control over, money, by upping the ransom for access to a resource that they controlled, children. One young man's description of events is typical:

> I was workin at the time, and like most times when I got paid, I'd throw her some cash and she'd let me see the baby without too much song and dance . . . I was gettin about $300 a week cuz this guy was payin me under the table, and I'd give her like $65 a week . . . well, not every week, some weeks I'd miss . . . but for a few months she wasn't really pressurin me about it. But then all of a sudden she be like steady pressurin me . . . She wanted me to give

[37] For example, in four out of the six cases, one or both had taken up residence with a new partner. As one might expect, the most conflict-ridden relationships were those in which the mother had a new boyfriend. In five cases, the father had experienced a recent change in income: three had recently lost their jobs and two had recently secured employment that was stable and paid more than the minimum wage.

> her $75, and I felt like she was like tryin to take control over me, you know, moneywise . . . And she using my baby against me, you know . . . sayin like if I don't give her $75 I can't see my child, stuff like that . . . So one night she came down to my house and started pressurin me again. And like she caught me on one of my drinkin nights, and I just up and hit her . . . She got a restraining order for me to stay away from her and the baby . . . HER baby, like all of a sudden it was HER baby, you know what I mean. And then the next thing you know, she turned me into the child support court.

If there was any consolation for formalization of support, it was their belief that they would be assured access to their children without having to go through what this father described as a "song and dance." What they did not understand was that only their obligations to pay were formalized, not their rights to see their children. Nearly all of the fathers in this group cut off contact with their children after the proceedings. Most said that they stopped seeing their children because, once again, the mothers made it so difficult. For example, one father whose partner "turned him in" for child support several months after he joined the program told us:

> [Since the child was born] whenever I was working, I took her money for the baby and she never mentioned to me that she had went on AFDC too . . . [When she turned me in for child support] it really made me mad with her . . . I stopped going around. I stopped seeing the baby for a while . . . But it wasn't hurting her, you know, it was just hurting me because I wanted to see the baby but I didn't want to go around there just to get back at her for doing that . . . When I confronted her she didn't seem to care about me having to pay anything back. She still calls me up, well the baby needs some money for medicine or whatever . . . I say what are you doing with the money you're getting from AFDC, don't you think I have to pay that money back and she just don't care. Yeah, I miss seeing my baby, but like I said . . . I don't miss seeing her that much because of her mom--it's such a hassle going to see her, put it like that.

From their accounts, most fathers who described the child support system in adversarial terms had a difficult time emotionally separating from the mothers of their children. They also had a difficult time sorting out their anger with the mother from their feelings for the child:

> I shouldn't of hit her, but then again I don't care no more because I feel she deserve it because she shouldn't of did what she did . . . kick me to the curb for another person and throw me on child support. That dude she with now ain't doin nothin but sellin drugs . . . but okay, cool, cool, that's who she want, cool, I can't control that. I'll just go on my ways but now since I'm on my ways I'm doin a lot of things and I don't go over and see my daughter that much. [My child's mother] get mad and all that and say I ain't no good . . . I

> ain't no good father to my daughter and all this. Well I can't help that . . . If I got things planned I can't babysit my daughter . . . Because I know the only reason she doin it is because she wanna go out and do her little thing. I know my daughter probably wanna be with me but it's like this . . . She don't wanna be with me, she wanna be with both of us together . . . You know I did everything for her when we was together. Whenever I had money and she wanted me to buy something for my daughter, I'd buy it. No problem. I'd always sacrifice because maybe I wanted somethin for me too back then . . . But now she gettin that child support check, and I told her if I ever get any little money in my pocket, my stuff comin first from now on.

Reduced Level of Work Effort

In addition to exacerbating problems in their relationships with the mothers and negatively affecting the frequency of contact they had with their children, most fathers in this group reduced their levels of work effort after the orders were set. The few that were employed at the time left their jobs or were fired soon afterward. If they were unemployed, they did not aggressively pursue work--even when they were in the program. As one unemployed father who had been in the system for several years and was twice jailed for noncompliance put it:

> A job ain't gonna get me nowhere really . . . Because the last job I had, child support took mostly all of my money . . . My children didn't see none of it . . . just like $50 or something and there sure wasn't enough left over for me to support myself . . . So I just got that attitude that it ain't worth it.

Another father, the only one in this group who maintained an intact relationship with the mother of his children, had dreamed that through hard work, he and his partner would be able to escape welfare one day. The strategy he described is common among young fathers in our sample who are struggling to form two-parent households and achieve self-sufficiency:

> I [always] thought if I worked real hard, I could make it, I could get ahead and be a sole provider for my kids . . . See, she was getting AFDC then, and I always had it in my head that with her AFDC and my check from the job, we could save enough to say bye to that whole welfare bullshit, you know . . . get married, buy a little rundown house and fix it up real nice. Shhh, I was working overtime every chance I could get . . . brown-nosin the boss and everything . . . I was really determined . . . In fact, I can say I never seen that much motivation come out of me before.

His plans were shattered when he was summoned to court and a support order was put in place. In the months that followed, his performance on the job plummeted and eventually he was fired:

> But when child support got me and they started taking practically all of my check and we only getting like $50 added on to our welfare . . . you know, her check . . . it was like this cloud came over my mentality . . . It hit me . . . I knew then and there, I'll never be able to get out of that big hole they just threw me in . . . They didn't even give me a chance to tell them about my plans . . . The plans I had to save the government money because I was workin to get two more childrens in this world offa their welfare shit . . . Now, they're practically forcing us to keep taking their money . . . The whole situation just downed me . . . And like I just started . . . missing work, late for work, you name it. Finally, my boss . . . just got fed up because he told me that I just ain't the same person he hired . . . and I might as well just never come back because he only needs dependable people working for him.

After he was fired, he was angry at the system, not his boss. For two months, he did nothing to find another job and nearly lost his family:

> And so for about two months, I was miserable . . . I hated the government for what they were doing to me and my family and I started gettin some of that self-hatred, you know, like forget it . . . my life is over . . . So then . . . my girl said she takin the children and movin back with her moms . . . She said she paid the rent out of her check and if I don't pay it the next month, then I might as well just like consider myself homeless . . . She was cryin . . . sayin like she don't understand how a person could go from good to evil like I did . . . But she threw in those words . . . that she still love me and if I can find a way to change back that she still wanted to live, you know, together . . . like a family. So like she really just forced me to make a decision . . . She gave me that choice.

Several weeks later, he found a part-time job at a neighborhood grocery store so that he could satisfy his obligations to child support. He fulfilled the minimum requirements of the job, surrendered his role as provider to the state and invested most of his energies into activities with his children:

> A few days later, I started looking for a job--just something lightweight to keep child support off my back . . . It took about two weeks, every day walking around and filling out applications . . . Then I got a job moving boxes from here to there at the grocery store . . . stocking up the shelves and stuff like that. The pay ain't that good, but I don't care . . . I ain't gonna stretch myself too far for the government. Nope. Not for no government welfare. And . . . all that time I used to spend bustin my behind at the job . . . tryin to get ahead and stuff . . . I [now] apply to being a good father to my childrens. Like, how it is now I'm poor dollarwise . . . but like timewise, I'm a rich man . . . and I spend almost all of it doing little fatherly things with my kids. I'm satisfied . . . yup, satisfied.

Several other fathers also reduced their work effort, but only in the formal sector of the labor market. Like the father just described, they sought a "penny-ante straight job" to satisfy their obligations to child support. Unlike this father, however, they increased their effort in alternative income-generating activities--doing odd jobs, working for employers who do not report wages, selling drugs, gambling or stealing. The attitude and rationale of one young man who pursued this strategy is representative:

> It don't seem like it make any difference whether I get a good job or not . . . the government just be so greedy. It seems like the government is just forcing me to hustle because that's the only way I can take care of my needs plus the needs of my child . . . Whatever I hustle is mines . . . The government can't tell me how to spend it because they don't even know about it.

The System as Mediator

Seven fathers, including three who were custodial parents, expressed satisfaction with the child support system and their treatment in it. Like the fathers who described the system as adversarial, their relationships with the mothers of their children were not good. Unlike those fathers, however, the majority who saw the system as a means for mediating a problem played an active role in either initiating the proceedings or defining the issues they wanted addressed:

> Like our relationship was no good . . . it was rotten. And see in a situation like that, the mother has so many rights and so many people on her side that if you don't have no kind of custody and she get mad at you, BAM, you can't see your son. I mean she can even bring your son up against you, saying your daddy ain't this, your daddy ain't that. Then when your son come see you, he gonna put his head down . . . he ain't gonna run to you. So like I got everything made formal. Formally, my son have everything in my name, he's totally mine, I made sure of that. I wanted to make sure that he was a junior, I wanted to make sure that I'd be acknowledged as the father. I wanted to make sure it was down on paper that I could get him on the weekends. I feel like if something is mine, I want to own it and I want to make sure that it's known that it is mine . . . So yeah, I made sure of that.

Initially, these fathers had little information about the system or how to negotiate it. Nearly all of them, however, had the support and assistance of an adult member of their extended families.[38] One young man, for example, explained how the grandparents on both sides of the family hammered out an informal visitation agreement. When this did not resolve disputes over the child, however, they submitted their proposal to the court for approval and enforcement:

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[38] In two of the three custody cases, the fathers were minors and the court rulings were based on their parents' presence and testimony in court, the condition and size of their homes, and financial status.

> We had to go down to the Family Court Commission to get joint custody because before that we was always arguin and hoggin him . . . Before that, it was like a verbal thing, and we wasn't givin him up when we s'posed to . . . The grandparents is really the ones to sit down and plan the monthly visits . . . Then we took it to the Family Commission ourselves. And now it's up in paper so whenever one of us break that, the Court have the right to call her and tell her she gots to give him up.

In five of the seven other cases, the family member knew someone who either worked at the family court or could put them in touch with someone that did. These contacts advised them of their options and explained the procedures, including the sluggishness of the system and the sort of obstacles they might encounter.

In every case, the actions taken by the fathers in this group (or their families) were driven by their commitment to the child and desire for visitation agreements that the mothers of their children (or her relatives) could not undermine or manipulate. For example:

> For me to be formally down by law as his father, I see it only as an advantage. I don't have to put up with all the hassles with her. She ain't over my rights to spend time with my child because the court's taken over that role.

Occasionally, they said, the mothers do attempt to get extra money when they go over to pick up their children. However, the fathers' option to say no and still get their children is protected by the formal agreements for support and visitation:

> Last Friday, when I went to pick my son up, his mother met me at the door saying she got a letter from the court saying that she's not gonna get any money this month because I didn't make my payments last month. So when I asked her for the letter so that I could take it and call the courts to find out what's going on, or take it to my job to find out who's holding on to it, she couldn't produce the letter . . . She was trying to get over on me in case I forgot about how the system worked. She didn't put up any fuss after I asked to see the letter.

Their accounts also suggest that formal support orders and visitation agreements ease or neutralize tension in the young parents' interactions with one another. Compared with fathers who did not have formal visitation agreements and who viewed the system as adversarial, these fathers reported more cooperation in their relationships over time.

For the three fathers who got custody of their children, concerns over money did not deter them from doing what they thought was in the best interest of their children. None of these fathers sought assistance from the mothers or public sources. Similarly, among the noncustodial fathers in this group, child support obligations were secondary to their concerns for the well-being of their children:

> As far as financial support . . . I can take care of that as long as she do her part as a mother . . . Take care of him the right way, give him moral values and bring him up right in between the times that he's out of my custody--that's the main part I'm concerned about.

Compared with those who described the system in adversarial terms, the fathers in this group tended to have more continuous involvements in either school or the labor market. Most, but not all, had at least one parent who was currently employed. Two of the fathers, one custodial and one noncustodial, provided full support through their own earnings. Two others were in school and three were laid off from their jobs at the time that their orders were set. In these five cases, members of the extended family offered to help the father meet his financial support obligations while he completed his education or looked for work.

FORMAL SUPPORT: PROGRAM OUTCOMES

As the preceding discussion shows, the majority of fathers entered the program with limited knowledge about child support laws, negative attitudes toward the system and resistance to involvement in it. This section presents the outcomes of program participation on the number of paternity declarations and support orders, as well as the fathers' knowledge of child support laws and attitudes toward the child support system.

Paternity Declaration and Support Order Outcomes

Thirty-one fathers in the survey sample declared legal paternity for their child while they were in the program or afterward.[39] The number who had support orders increased by eight, from 44 at baseline to 52 at follow-up. Although there was little change in the number of fathers with support orders, those who did have orders were more likely to pay them at follow-up.

At the time of the baseline interview, only three fathers said they had made a payment in the month preceding the interview. At follow-up, 22 fathers said they had made a payment in the past month. This increase is modest, however, since 42 percent of employed fathers with support orders said they had not paid. The amount of the orders was between $5[40] and $120 per week; 90 percent of the orders were for $75 or less, and 50 percent were for $35 or less.

These findings should be interpreted cautiously. Without a comparison group, it is difficult to know whether program participation had an effect on the number of fathers who declared

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[39] Fifty-nine fathers declared paternity prior to enrollment, and 63 never declared. Two others declared paternity, but dates are not available.

[40] At two sites, Fresno and Racine, some fathers with support orders made token payments while they were enrolled in education and training programs.

paternity. Also, CSE is slow to process cases, and it is not known how many of the fathers who have yet to declare paternity are in the queue. However, interviews with program staff suggest that their initial reluctance to "turn guys over to child support," combined with the difficulties that they encountered finding good, stable employment opportunities for the fathers, persisted throughout the period of this study. Similarly, it is not known whether the slight increase in the number of support orders, and the sizable percentage of employed fathers with support orders who did not pay in the month preceding the follow-up interview, are due to the sluggishness of the system or to the reluctance of program staff to encourage the young men with jobs to report positive changes in their employment status to CSE.

Knowledge Outcomes

Child support laws and procedures are complex. Beyond the negative ad campaigns that portray deadbeat dads as wanted criminals, practically nothing has been done to educate the public about the law, including its rationale, requirements and procedures. To help the sites in their efforts to educate the fathers about their legal responsibilities and rights, P/PV developed a special curriculum session that was delivered periodically at every site. Sites also invited CSE staff and volunteer attorneys to participate in these sessions and further inform the fathers about local interpretations of the law and the specific procedures they must follow, for example, to report changes in their income or employment status and establish formal visitation agreements.

As a result of these education sessions, the fathers' knowledge of child support laws increased significantly.[41] At baseline, fathers answered an average of 6.5 questions correctly (from a set of 12). At follow-up, fathers answered an average of 7.9 questions correctly.[42] Only 22 percent of fathers answered at least eight of the 12 questions correctly at baseline, whereas 69 percent correctly answered eight or more of the questions at follow-up.

In addition to increasing their own knowledge about child support, 12 of the fathers in the ethnographic sample said the program also gave them an opportunity to educate CSE about young fathers. For example, following a curriculum session that included two representatives from the local CSE, one father said:

> It was a real good session . . . They [CSE] got a chance to tell us what they're all about and they got to learn more about where we're comin from . . . Like the other young father told em, they gotta learn that we ain't all bad fathers . . . Some of us is really tryin . . . But how it looks from our side, child support is going after the wrong guys . . . There's so many out there that ain't even tryin, and they don't even bother goin after them . . . [That's] wrong.

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[41] The curriculum sample included 67 fathers who completed questionnaires immediately preceding enrollment and following completion of the sessions.

[42] This change is statistically significant ($p \leq .0001$).

Attitudinal Outcomes

As the first two sections of this chapter indicate, the majority of fathers viewed the child support system in adversarial terms when they entered the young fathers program. An important question is whether increased knowledge and other program supports affected these attitudes. Evidence from the follow-up survey and the ethnography suggest that there were some positive changes in the fathers' attitudes toward the system as a result of their participation in the program. However, most fathers continued to express concerns and resistance to the system. The following sections describe changes in the fathers' attitudes as well as their ongoing concerns about the system.

Attitude Changes

In the follow-up survey, we asked the fathers who said they had established paternity while in the program an open-ended question about their reasons for doing so. Eight percent of these fathers said they declared paternity because the court mandated it. A larger percentage said they declared paternity because it was the right thing to do (29%), they wanted to (27%), it was their responsibility (16%), and the program encouraged it (12%).

Analysis of the ethnographic interviews shows the greatest in-program attitude changes among those fathers who declared paternity while they were in the program or had yet to declare paternity. Four of the five fathers who had been in the system for six months or more before entering the program and who described the system and their experiences in it in adversarial terms showed little change in their attitudes or the amount of effort they were willing to exert in order to comply with the law.

Twelve fathers said they felt "more relaxed about" or "comfortable with" the child support system because the young fathers program was providing them with the structure and motivation they needed to further their education and increase their employability and earning potential:

> Before, like I always said I wasn't gonna cooperate with child support . . . But now as long as I still get the opportunity like [this program for young fathers] and they give me an opportunity to finish my education . . . then I'll cooperate. That's why I like this program so much, you know, that's why I'm out here every day just about and doin what I'm supposed to do . . . The education is gonna pay me back in the long run . . . It'll help me get a job to keep the man off my back, and still have money left over to support my needs.

Further, nearly all the fathers in this group who were referred to the program through child support <u>and</u> had been in the system less than six months said their attitudes changed when someone at CSE took them aside and told them about the young fathers program. The fact that someone at CSE seemed to understand their need for education and employment assistance was taken as evidence that the system was not all bad:

> I always had this real bad attitude about child support cuz you can just say it isn't a popular program where I come from . . . cuz usually what they [CSE] do is give mens two bad choices . . . get some penny-ante job . . . or go to jail . . . That's the two choices they gives you . . . So you could just say that I was surprised when I went to the hearing . . . and this lady told me about how they got this program now for young fathers that helps you get your education . . . and like they get you a job . . . a decent income . . . so you's situated to pay child support . . . [And] ever since . . . I been thinkin maybe child support is a little bit on the side of young fathers, you know.

With the help of their case managers, two other fathers learned that the child support system is willing to accommodate itself to their special needs. These two fathers described how anxious they were before their hearings because they did not have sufficient skills to read and comprehend "all the papers" they were expected to sign. For example, one father told the case manager that he was not going to attend his hearing because he was so anxious about the forms. Through the efforts of the case manager and the cooperation of the hearing officer, the young man's first encounter with the system was positive:

> The [case manager] set it up at the court real nice so they explained everything to me . . . Why they put this warrant out . . . What I done did. They explained everything. They read everything to me out loud and ask me do I understand this . . . am I with them. If I ain't with them, they reread it and explained it to me . . . They've been very nice to me.

Finally, seven of the fathers said the information from the curriculum session and the opportunity to commiserate with other fathers' helped them accept the inevitability of their fate:

> Now that I have that information about it [the law] . . . I realize that I'll have to see what that's all about . . . just like the other guys in the program.

Concerns

It is difficult to convince young fathers that their children will benefit from formalization of paternity and support payments. The benefits most frequently cited--social security, medical insurance, pensions, inheritances and sense of identity--are not very compelling, in part because they do not understand what many of them are or how they might one day reach their children. The programs did explain these benefits to the fathers and, as one might expect, all said they would like their children to have them. However, our interview data suggest that they are not persuasive reasons, especially when they are taught at a time when the fathers are questioning whether they will ever secure employment that is stable and offers these benefits. Also, it is difficult to convince those who still have contact with their child, and/or provide support whenever they are able, that their children will grow up feeling more confident in their identity if their father's contributions to the household come guised in the form of a welfare check.

What is compelling to them, however, is knowledge about the rights that fathers can gain through the formal system, especially their rights to visitation. In the survey sample, 25 percent of the fathers said they were dissatisfied with their children's living arrangement and many said they had either tried to get either custody or visitation rights, but were discouraged by the cost of legal fees. Indeed, whenever attorneys were invited to the curriculum sessions to talk to the young men about their rights and responsibilities under the law, the fathers had the most questions about visitation. The following excerpt summarizes the frustrations many have with the way the system treats fathers:

> Attorney: There are no bastardy laws any more. All children are assumed to have two parents and all fathers have an innate right to visit their child or seek custody of their child. Establishing paternity is the first step and the easiest one . . . Getting access to the child is a whole other ball game, though men do have the right to see their child . . . To enforce those rights, noncustodial parents must go before a judge in court. It's very difficult, almost impossible in fact, to get your rights enforced without a lawyer.
>
> Father: It's not fair! Fathers got to go through all the hassles while the mother just sit there with everything taken care of for free. Why bother with paternity if you can't see your child? I don't know anybody who could afford no lawyer. It just ain't fair . . . The government just wants to keep us men away from our childrens. Don't we have a right that says we can get free legal representation?
>
> Attorney: People don't have a vested right to medical or legal services in this country. You may need legal or medical services, but if you can't pay for them you're out of luck.

Six fathers in the ethnographic sample said they were not "taking these injustices sitting down." Through the program, they were using every available opportunity to educate the public about young fathers and to advocate for change in the laws:

> Not too many times do a young person get to voice their opinion about the way they're bein treated . . . So when [the case manager] asks me do I wanna go talk to . . . a committee of people who invest their money and things for young people . . . or child support people . . . I say yeah because you know I get to voice my opinion . . . not only the situation about bein a young father but the way young fathers are treated and how society does young fathers. You know, they say a young father's bad, that he doesn't take care of his children . . . They categorize all of us together, they don't separate none of us. Because it's some of us take care of our children and some who don't, and there's the ones who don't but are tryin . . . and they just bunch us all together and say we don't. Like the child support gets hard on everybody and like only the mother has rights and stuff like that . . . But that's not how it should be . . . All this shit happens and the mother says you can't see your child . . . or like a girl can

> give up your baby for adoption because you have no say . . . It shouldn't be like that because both of you had somethin to do with that baby comin in.

SUMMARY

The majority of fathers reported that they contributed to the support of their children informally. Overall, their preference was to purchase goods and services for their children directly, rather than give the mothers cash or pay through CSE. The fathers mentioned three advantages to direct provision of support: it is a visible symbol of responsible fatherhood, which is respected in the community; it gives them control over how their money is spent; and it is tangible and gratifying.

There was a small increase in the number of fathers who declared paternity while they were in the program, though few new support orders were set. Among those with support orders at follow-up, a larger percentage reported that they made a payment--though the number employed at follow-up who did not make a payment was high (42%).

In general, fathers are resistant to CSE--perceiving few or no advantages and many disadvantages or disincentives. A major disadvantage is that it deprives them of an important aspect of fathering--direct provision of support. Disincentives include lack of connection between fulfillment of their legal financial obligations and rights to visitation; also, for those whose child receives AFDC, it deprives the child of needed income because the state retains all but $50 to offset the cost of AFDC. Some responded to these disincentives with reduced work commitment and/or increased efforts to generate income that is not reported, and therefore not accessible to CSE.

Fathers who viewed the system more favorably used the system to mediate a problem. These young men played a more active role in initiating paternity determination and support orders, usually because they wanted to have a formal visitation agreement. In nearly every case, these fathers had a family member who helped them negotiate the system.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The unwed fathers in the P/PV pilot are young, poor and want to do right by their children. But by background and achievements, their prospects for doing so are not good. We know this from statistics that describe low labor force participation rates and earnings for young men--especially minorities and those who left school before graduation. The fathers also know this, through lifelong observations of older men in their families and neighborhoods whose backgrounds and achievements are similar to their own. They know this, too, from their own experiences--looking for work and finding none, accepting jobs that pay the minimum wage or less, or trading one dead-end job for another--growing older, but gaining no new skills or advantages. These young men want to improve their prospects so they can do right by their children. That's why they joined the Young Unwed Fathers Program.

As this report documents, the road to economic self-sufficiency is arduous for these fathers, and even the most helpful program intervention is not likely to be sufficient, nor sufficiently capitalized on. Since the study was not designed to measure impacts, we cannot say or even speculate on whether the pilot programs were effective or cost-efficient. But this ethnographic report does present compelling evidence that the nation's major social policies do not promote effective programming for these young men, and do not act to support or sustain the fathers' desire to do the right thing by their children.

The evidence reveals some of the ways in which the policies that define our child support enforcement, employment and training, and public assistance systems are out of touch with the real-life circumstances of young fathers, and with one another. It also suggests ways in which these policies could be changed to better reflect and address the circumstances that make it so difficult for low-income, young fathers to achieve economic self-sufficiency, and discourage them from fulfilling their personal and legal obligations to their dependent children.

The public has a vested interest in the fathers' employment, as well as their earnings and how they spend them. The children of these young men are at risk of spending at least some portion of their lives in poverty. The mothers of their children are at risk of long-term dependence on AFDC and other forms of public assistance. The ultimate success of the Family Support Act of 1988, which articulates our current strategy for helping young and impoverished families assume personal responsibility for the support and welfare of their children, depends on the economic self-sufficiency of both parents, as well as their cooperation with the requirements of the child support system.

Clearly, determining paternity for children born out of wedlock is in the best interests of the children and of society. For the child, determination of paternity assures them lifelong access to their fathers' income, health benefits and other assets. For society, paternity determination is a necessary first step in the process of establishing child support orders.

The fathers would also like their children to have future access to benefits, such as Social Security and pension funds.

Despite these potential long-term benefits, there are too many disincentives associated with legal paternity under the current system. The effects of these disincentives are felt immediately and are cause for evading the legal system. One disincentive is that paternity declaration is usually followed very quickly by an order for support. If children receive AFDC, they receive only $50 of the father's payment, no matter how large or small; the balance of the payment is used to offset the costs of AFDC. In the fathers' eyes, their earnings are feeding the system, not their children. If they evade the system, the child has access to the full amount the father is able to contribute. For themselves and their children, who both live in the margin of poverty, this is a rational economic decision.

For these and other reasons, many young fathers evade the system for as long as they can. However, when they get "caught," they are confronted with a sizable public assistance debt (which does not credit their prior voluntary support contributions), as well as the support order.

If fathers are unemployed when the order is set, which many of them are, they are given a certain amount of time to find a job. With few skills and little work experience, the jobs they find are usually unchallenging and low-paying. The motivation to remain in the job is low--especially once fathers see how small their checks are. After taxes and child support, little remains for their own sustenance and they are no longer able to buy such things for their children as diapers or a ticket to the zoo--tangible exchanges and activities that kept them connected with their child, made them feel like a father. Some persist, doing the best they can. Some reduce their level of work effort, since there seem to be so few rewards. Others lose their motivation to work altogether or seek alternative sources of income--legal or illegal.

Over the years, young unwed fathers have themselves been avoided by public officials responsible for determining paternity and collecting child support from noncustodial parents. In large part, this has been due to the financial incentive structure of the law, which encouraged the system to pursue the most cost-effective cases--older, once-married men who are steadily employed. Pursuing young unwed fathers was considered less cost-effective because paternity would have to be determined before an order was set, and even with an order, the administrative costs associated with enforcing orders would far exceed the revenue they generated. Nevertheless, the Family Support Act mandates that these officials aggressively pursue all noncustodial parents, including young unwed fathers, and includes incentives for pursuing cases that require paternity determination. Still, given the backlog of cases that require attention, including many noncustodial parents who are well-off, paternity determination for children born to young unwed parents has not become a priority.

It is clear, however, that early determination of paternity is in the best interest of the child. It is also in the best interest of society--melding the fathers' legal obligations with their

personal desires to do the right thing when they are at their strongest, and reducing future costs associated with identifying and locating absent parents. With some changes, early determination of paternity could also serve the interests of young fathers and families, or at least dilute the disincentives.

Hospitals are the most likely locations for informing young and unwed fathers of their obligations and rights under the law, and for starting the process of paternity determination early. A small but growing body of evidence suggests that many young fathers are present at the birth of their child or see them at the hospital soon afterward--including some who have little or no commitment to the child's mother. In addition, the majority of fathers in our study reported that they were named as the father on the child's birth certificate. Most thought this constituted legal declaration of paternity, suggesting a willingness to comply with this aspect of the law. However, this may also reflect inadequate knowledge about the association of paternity declaration with formal child support obligations. If this is the case, it is possible that as the financial obligations that follow from legal declarations of paternity become more widely known--through public service announcements, media coverage of the role of males in the welfare reform debate, and informal family and neighborhood networks--efforts to establish paternity around the time of birth may inadvertently deter young and unwed fathers from visiting the mother and newborn baby at the hospital. After all, early paternity determination, in itself, primarily addresses a concern of the child support enforcement system--not of the fathers.

Measures that link early declarations of paternity with referrals to education and employment-directed services--instead of immediate financial obligations--may address a pivotal concern of young and unwed fathers who have not completed high school, are unemployed, or have limited earnings potential. Many expressed high aspirations for themselves and their children around the time of birth. Over time, the aspirations they held for their children usually remained high, but those they held for themselves--securing steady employment so they could provide adequately for their newborn child--were frustrated by their lack of credentials, skills, experience and connections to job opportunities. Those who were referred to the Young Unwed Fathers Program by CSE at the time of paternity determination, and before support orders were set, tended to be active participants in the program and to have more favorable views of CSE.

In addition to its incentive value for early declarations of paternity, there are at least three other compelling reasons for pursuing this policy course. First, it presents a rational sequence for increasing the earnings or earning potential of young unwed parents--fathers and mothers. By the time young mothers are required to participate in the JOBS program (when their youngest child turns three), the fathers would have completed their education and training, and secured more promising employment; thus, they would be in a position to contribute to the support of the child. Second, in light of the tension that financial difficulties pose in their relationships, early intervention with fathers may contribute to improved relationships between young parents and perhaps an increase in family formation. Finally, if the fathers of children who are on AFDC are given reduced support orders while in educa-

tion and training, they will not fall so overwhelmingly into arrears. This policy, combined with their partners' participation in JOBS, may lessen the amount of time that the fathers' contributions to the support of their children pass through the public agency.

This policy course requires establishment of effective employment and training programs for both disadvantaged young men and women, something we currently lack. The most recent randomized study of JTPA-funded programs showed no impacts on the earnings of out-of-school youth, male and female, who had access to a range of education and employment-directed services (Bloom et al., 1993). Unfortunately this impact study cannot tell us why these programs did not work or what changes might enhance their effectiveness.

Nor are there data on the impact of employment and training programs specifically on young men who are fathers. However, through the P/PV pilot project, we identified some of the current limitations of JTPA-funded programs: they provide insufficient opportunities for classroom vocational training and on-the-job training, and inadequate in-program financial support, which forced some fathers to leave or forsake education or training to take jobs. In addition, the current JTPA eligibility criteria are based on household income and thus disqualify young men who need education and employment-directed services, but live with relatives or friends who are not eligible. To rectify this situation, eligibility for young men who have declared legal paternity might be based on an assessment of their own income or earning potential and/or the resources in the household where their child resides (and their money goes).

This course also requires effective employment and training policies and programs for the young mothers, which are currently under development through JOBS. Since this is the first broad-coverage welfare-to-work program to include a focus on young mothers, we have no basis for estimating the likely effectiveness of the youth component of JOBS. However, since JOBS provides young mothers with in-program and transitional supports (e.g., child care and transportation), it is already ahead of employment and training programs for young fathers.

Clearly, there is a need to rethink public efforts on behalf of dependent and impoverished young families. These efforts--which include public assistance, child support enforcement, and employment and training policies and programs--require coordination at the national level, and cooperation between the various agencies and actors at the local level. If they are to be effective, they must also be more realistic and integrated. The real-life conditions that bring a young person within the scope of these policies are not distinct and unrelated. Integrating the policies so that they reflect real life would reduce some of the contradictory and demotivating rules that now prevail in each policy system, and thus contribute to lifting more young families from poverty and into stable, self-sufficient mainstream lives. This is the goal of each of these policy areas--a goal that none has achieved separately.

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APPENDIX A

SUMMARY: *YOUNG UNWED FATHERS PILOT PROJECT: INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT*

Public/Private Ventures' Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project is an attempt to focus the attention of policymakers, the employment and training field, and the public on disadvantaged young men who become fathers at an early age, by testing strategies for increasing their capacity to form families and care for their children as providers and parents.

The project is supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The Ford Foundation, Levi Strauss Foundation, Kaiser Family Foundation, Scott Paper Company Foundation, AT&T Foundation, the United States Department of Labor and the United States Department of Agriculture's Division of Food and Nutrition Services.

As of February 1992, six sites had completed 10 to 12 months of the project's initial 30-month pilot phase. The sites are: Cleveland Works in Cleveland, Ohio; Goodwill Industries in Racine, Wisconsin; the Fresno Private Industry Council (PIC) in Fresno, California; the Pinellas County PIC in St. Petersburg, Florida; Friends of the Family and the Department of Social Services in Annapolis, Maryland; and the Philadelphia Children's Network in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

THE CONTEXT

The economic, personal and social position of millions of young men from poor families in America--primarily in its cities--has only recently become a prominent part of the nation's social policy debate. The lack of connection between these young men and the labor market is increasingly seen to be near the heart of at least three large issues of current concern:

- Children born out of wedlock now constitute the majority of children receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC); and it is estimated that more than 40 percent of never-married women who enter the AFDC system by age 25 with a child less than three years old will spend 10 years or more on welfare.

- While teenage pregnancy and childbearing rates are going down, the United States still has the highest rates among developed Western countries and the rates for unmarried teenagers continue to rise (up from 68,000 births in 1960 to 348,000 in 1989).

- The percentage of families headed by women has grown, from 21 percent to 31 percent of all families between 1970 and 1988, and fewer than half the nine million women with children who maintain single-parent households report getting support from the fathers. Never-married teen mothers are among the groups that are least likely to receive child support and most likely to be poor.

To date, most of the policy response to adolescent childbearing, and its relationship to poverty and welfare dependency, has focused on the mothers and babies, ignoring the fathers of the children. These young men have generally not been eligible for income support programs, especially with the reductions in state General Assistance rolls over the past several years. Few public employment and training programs have been designed specifically to attract and serve them.

Increasingly, advocacy groups like the Children's Defense Fund and social scientists like William Julius Wilson, who have studied the relationship between economic conditions and family formation, have hypothesized that growing joblessness--and other trends related to incarceration and mortality--particularly among black men, has played a key role in increasing the incidence of single-parent families by reducing the pool of "marriageable men." Over the past decade, the earnings of black males between the ages of 20 and 24 fell by more than half as structural changes in the economy increased their joblessness; one in four of these young men (more in inner cities) are in jail, on probation or parole; and their mortality rates are high compared to those of other groups. Nevertheless there has been no significant public policy response.

THE PILOT PROJECT

Given the limited experience that programs have had with young fathers, and the field's limited knowledge about the type of services that would engage and benefit them, P/PV determined that a test of various local service delivery approaches was needed to provide comparative information for policymakers and the field. Therefore, participating sites were given broad flexibility in designing programs. However, based on the knowledge available about programming for high-risk young men, and the issues we wanted to explore about this population, we hypothesized that programs would be most likely to produce benefits for young unwed fathers if they incorporate the following five principles:

1. Use of the JTPA system to provide young fathers with training services that would lead to good jobs. We define good jobs as those that provide benefits and opportunities for advancement and have the potential for enabling fathers to support themselves and their children.

2. The delivery of education services designed to improve the earning capacity of young fathers.

3. The delivery of "fatherhood development" activities that encourage parental values, capabilities and behavior in young men, including a *Fatherhood Development Curriculum* developed by P/PV, "leadership" activities, and work with fathers to establish paternity and pay formal child support.

4. The provision of counseling and other ongoing support designed to help fathers achieve employment, parenting and personal goals.

5. The establishment of an 18-month connection with fathers so that services and support continue after job placement.

The six sites vary in their service delivery mechanisms, resource levels, geographic locations and models for implementing the project requirements. In keeping with our desire to test local systems' response to serving young fathers, P/PV provided a small seed grant of $55,000 to each site: $50,000 to support project operations and $5,000 to stimulate fatherhood development activity. The pilot phase will determine which models and/or program elements appear to produce the best outcomes for this population, and whether an impact analysis of any one model would be useful.

This interim report documents the sites' early experiences with recruitment, retention, service delivery and establishment of linkages with employment/training and child support enforcement agencies; presents a profile of the 228 young fathers who had enrolled by the end of February 1992; and explores issues raised by the sites' early experiences.

EARLY FINDINGS

- **The recruitment experience thus far confirms that attracting and enrolling young fathers, even in programs specifically designed for them, is difficult and resource-intensive, at least in the initial operating period.**

The first challenge to the project was attracting a group of young men who traditionally have little connection with education, employment and training agencies. Each pilot site was required to enroll 50 young unwed fathers.

Each site relied primarily on one of three strategies: mandatory referrals from the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) agency (Racine), voluntary referrals from CSE (Fresno and St. Petersburg), and community outreach (Cleveland, Philadelphia and Annapolis). The program effort and resources required by the six sites to attract even modest numbers were initially significant and daunting. By the end of the first year of operation, only one site had reached the enrollment goal.

Over time, young fathers did enroll and referral agencies did refer--in increasing numbers as the programs became better known. But even increasing success did not provide strong evidence that enrollment would ever be a low-cost function or that large numbers could ever be easily enrolled. There are indications, however, that the recruitment of young fathers is facilitated when the agency or its staff has already established "credibility" with the population; and/or the agency's ability to generate good jobs is well known; and/or its collaboration with the CSE and employment training (JTPA) agencies has been lengthy and proven mutually useful.

Nearly half (46.3%) of the enrollees were referred to the sites by other institutions: 26.9 percent by their local child support office; another 9.3 percent by other agencies, juvenile

court or a probation officer; and another 10.1 percent by a teacher, counselor or social worker. Close to one-quarter (22.5%) of the fathers cited personal contacts as the source of information--either another father (10.6%), friend or relative (11.9%). Program staff and flyers also played an important role in attracting fathers (22%). Less significant across the six sites was the role of media; only 7 percent said they heard about the project from newspapers or television. Very few fathers (2.2%) said they learned about the project from their girlfriends.

Many fathers responded to the project's fatherhood focus. Close to 40 percent indicated that they enrolled to improve their relationships with their children, and nearly half said they wanted to improve their parenting skills. Staff credit the fatherhood focus for the project's initial retention rate of 81 percent across the six sites.

- **The demographic characteristics of the project sample corroborate findings from the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Force Behavior of Youth, which found that young men who are African American, have educational deficiencies and come from poor economic circumstances are disproportionately represented among those who become fathers at an early age.**

Close to three-quarters of the young men in the study sample are African American. More than half (52.8%) report that they live in households with annual incomes below $10,000; the average household size is four; 61.5 percent of the households are on welfare; and half receive food stamps.

Forty-three percent of the sample has less than an 11th-grade education; 24 percent had earned a high school diploma and 11 percent a GED at the time of program entry. The fathers reported very sparse labor market experiences: the majority (77%) were unemployed on program entry, and those who were employed expressed dissatisfaction with pay, benefits and opportunities for advancement. As evidence of their distance from the employment and training system, 84 percent reported that they had not been involved in a training program in the past three years, though 23 percent were at entry in an education program or still in high school. More than half (58%) said they had male family members or friends in their 20s and 30s who were neither in school or working.

- **The living arrangements of a significant portion of the project sample are indicative of fragile economic circumstances and uncertain job prospects, but also point to their connection to their families. Their living arrangements also vary significantly by race.**

More than half (55%) of the young men reported that they lived in households with at least one of their parents or other relatives. Twenty-eight percent lived in households with at least one of their children, and 23 percent lived with their girlfriend and child(ren). White fathers were less likely (44%) to live with parents than African-American or Latino fathers (56% and 54% respectively). Also, more Latino fathers (44%) reported living in a household

with one or more of their children, compared with 25 percent of African-American fathers and 28 percent of white fathers.

- **The information reported by the fathers does not support the view that young fathers are responsible for multiple births; that their relationships with their children's mothers are casual; and that they are "absent" from the lives of their children.**

Among the fathers in the sample, 63 percent reported having only one child; 82 percent reported that they had children by only one mother. Although only 3 percent of fathers reported that they were married to the mother of their child at the time she became pregnant, half (50%) said they had been in a "serious romance" with the mother and nearly one-third (30%) said this relationship was current. Only 1 percent said they had not been in a relationship with the mother at all; 3 percent reported they knew the mother "only a little."

When asked about contact with their children, a large majority of respondents (75%) reported visiting their child in the hospital when he or she was born; 85 percent said they were listed on the child's birth certificate. As mentioned earlier, 23 percent indicated that they lived in the same household with their child and their child's mother, and 26 percent reported living in the same household with their child.

Additional data were collected on fathers' involvement with their children and some of their attitudes about fatherhood. Of those who do not live with their children, 39 percent responded that in the past month they had seen their children "almost every day"; 70 percent said they had seen them at least once a week. Even more revealing of the role that many of these fathers play in the lives of their children are their activities when they are together. More than 50 percent said they took their child to the doctor; and large percentages reported bathing (46%), feeding (81%), dressing (73%) and playing with (87%) their child.

- **The young fathers in the sample reported spending significant amounts of money on their children, often over and above formal child support payments.**

The fathers were asked about the kind and amount of financial support they provide for their children. Thirty percent reported having child support orders; the average order reported was $118 a month. Seventy-one percent of these fathers said they were behind in their child support payments.

Not including formal child support payments, fathers reported paying directly for food, clothing, diapers and medicine. Also, 49 percent of the fathers indicated that they gave additional money each month to the mother or person caring for their child.

Although these data are all self-reported, and should therefore be viewed cautiously, the findings are significant in that fathers with and without child support orders, and in spite of

their own poor economic circumstances, indicate a willingness to provide support to their children.

If the reported figures are even close to accurate, it appears that fathers whose children are receiving AFDC (49 percent in this sample) and who do not have child support orders, may be able to provide a substantial supplement to the AFDC grant, at least on an irregular basis. However, by declaring paternity and taking on formal child support obligations, as this project encourages such fathers to do, they become open to legal liability if they fall behind on their payments. They also may reduce the income of the household in which their children live because the "pass through" of the total child support payment collected from the father is only $50 a month, substantially less than the fathers in our project report providing for their children's care. One of the many challenges this population presents to the project and to public policy generally is how to convince economically insecure young fathers to establish paternity and pay legal child support when they may already be providing what they can "off the books," even on an irregular basis.

- **The most established and experienced site operators with strong access to the local public employment/training agency have done the best overall job so far of delivering employment and training services to young fathers. But even in these cases, the services offered have been constrained by public agency rules that work against the long-term goals of financial self-sufficiency for fathers and their families.**

The sites were required to use the federal employment and training system (programs funded by the Job Training Partnership Act) to provide fathers with training and good jobs. Only the most established program operators (in Cleveland, Racine and Fresno) with experience working with high-risk populations and strong ties to the JTPA system have been able to package services for this population. But even they have not been able to provide large numbers of young fathers with promising jobs or skills training.

Limitations in the usefulness of JTPA-funded programs for these young men include local eligibility criteria or practices that screen out many needy fathers, the lack of viable skills training options (including on-the-job training) for these men, and the lack of in-program financial support that forces fathers to take jobs before they improve their job-related skills.

Limitations also result from the common CSE agency practice of pressing even those young fathers enrolled in programs to "pay up" on their child support arrears. This often causes the young men to leave programs and take jobs too soon, in order to avoid accumulating large debts to the state or, in some jurisdictions, face jail for noncompliance.

Whether passage of the 1992 JTPA amendments will strengthen services for young fathers or facilitate the participation of organizations with access to young fathers remains to be seen, as does the usefulness for this population of the Family Support Act's Job Opportunities and

Basic Skills (JOBS) program--something that is being tested in the Parents' Fair Share Demonstration.

In sum, the young men who have enrolled in P/PV's Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project are, for the most part, doing too poorly economically to support their children on a regular basis, but provide sporadic support and are eager for better jobs and for contact with their children. In attempting to respond, the six sites' early experience shows that access to public employment/training (JTPA) resources is critical. Current regulations and practice in both JTPA and Child Support Enforcement agencies, and the limited coordination between the young fathers' programs and the public agencies, and between public agencies like CSE and JTPA, present serious barriers to both enrollment and service delivery.

As the project's pilot phase continues through August 1993, particular research emphasis will be on assessing the effects of the fatherhood focus on both retention and outcomes for the young men, identifying specific barriers to enrollment and interagency coordination issues that can be resolved, measuring the sites' ability to help participants move toward permanent employment, and understanding better both the strengths and problems of the young men themselves.

APPENDIX B

PROFILE OF THE SITES

Cleveland Works is a comprehensive social service agency that has provided a wide variety of employment and training and support services to AFDC parents and their children since 1986. Its Beat the Streets program was developed for this project. Recruitment is primarily through community outreach. All services are provided on site. The service delivery system is highly structured, with strong emphases on early placement in jobs that offer benefits and job retention. Beat the Streets offers 8 to 16 weeks of educational classes, which include public speaking, parenting and legal aid, and preemployment training, followed by job placement. The fatherhood curriculum is presented in the first eight weeks to groups that include both fathers and young men who are not fathers. The major strengths of Cleveland Works are solid relationships with employers in the community, a tradition of client advocacy and an in-house legal department that offers free legal services.

Goodwill Industries of Racine, Wisconsin is a multiservice organization with a history of preparing people with multiple barriers to employment for work and independent living. Goodwill has been under contract with Racine's Child Support Enforcement agency since January 1990 to operate a court-ordered program for noncustodial parents of all ages who are behind in their child support payments and are either unemployed or underemployed. Although many of the young fathers in Goodwill's program are there by court order, they have the option to participate in either the young fathers program or a less intensive job assistance program. Basic skills remediation and GED preparation services are offered on site, in conjunction with Gateway Technical College. Preemployment training and job placement services are also provided on site. The fatherhood development curriculum is delivered once a week to two cohorts. This site also offers workshops in nutrition and consumer wisdom. Goodwill started a companion group for the mothers of the young fathers' children.

The Fresno Private Industry Council (FPIC) has a contract with the Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission (FCEOC), an experienced youth-serving organization, to operate the Parenting Opportunities Program (POP). The original plan was to recruit solely through the local child support agency, but was expanded to include referrals from other FCEOC programs and general community outreach. Also, because funding was through the PIC's youth category, which allocated 40 percent of its budget to POP, the program originally targeted fathers who were between the ages of 16 and 21. The upper age limit was later raised to 25 to facilitate recruitment. The PIC prefers to serve fathers who declared legal paternity before enrolling in the program, though a few exceptions were made. Regardless of paternity status, participation in the program is voluntary. All services are provided through JTPA. Participants receive a stipend of up to $90 a week, based on the number of hours they participate in program activities. POP is also highly structured. A three-week upfront job-readiness class is provided on site. Basic education and GED preparation services are provided through the Fresno Unified School District at the Center for Independent

Education. Two case managers, one male and one female, facilitate the fatherhood curriculum. The Fresno program emphasizes development of specific occupational skills. The PIC provides access to a wide variety of employment training programs, and is the only program that is utilizing JTPA OJT slots. Also, the program offers fathers health services through Kaiser Permanente.

The Pinellas County Private Industry Council operates the JumpStart program in St. Petersburg, Florida. The original plan was to recruit fathers solely through the local child support enforcement agency. As in Fresno, the child support agency could not identify a sufficient number of young fathers and the recruitment strategy was modified to secure referrals through a network of community agencies, including public schools, churches, juvenile justice programs, social service agencies and vocational schools. The fatherhood curriculum is delivered at the PIC on a twice-weekly basis. The curriculum is supplemented with a number of speakers and videos designed to reinforce key curriculum concepts. As in Racine, young fathers participate in a series of nutrition classes. Halfway through the pilot, the program opened an educational center on site to serve its clients. Skills training is available through local vocational schools, though waiting lists tend to be long. Preemployment classes and job placement services are offered at the PIC. Late in the pilot, a lawyer was secured to advise the fathers on issues of paternity, visitation and custody.

Philadelphia Children's Network (PCN) is a nonprofit organization established in January 1990. Its primary mission is to improve the life chances of children and families in a specific community--West Philadelphia. The Responsive Fathers Program is a part of this overall effort. Fathers are recruited through a network of community agencies, including schools, hospitals, teen pregnancy programs and churches. Peer support groups and the fatherhood curriculum are offered weekly on site. GED preparatory and college-level classes are available through the Community College of Philadelphia. Fathers have access to a limited range of JTPA-funded training programs through the local PIC. Major job placements have been through employers developed by PCN staff. Two local employers provide a limited number of good jobs for participants and provide non-JTPA OJT. Also, the PCN program provides "on-the-job mentors" for several fathers. A team of lawyers provide pro-bono legal assistance.

Friends of the Family, a statewide family support organization in Baltimore, operates the program for young fathers in Annapolis, Maryland through a contractual agreement with Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services. Young fathers are largely recruited through community outreach efforts in three housing developments. Case management services and the fatherhood curriculum are offered on site. Unlike all other sites, the curriculum is delivered by professional men from the community, not the case manager. Turnover among these men created periodic disruptions in group process. Education services, consisting of basic skills remediation and GED preparation, are also offered in an on-site learning center run by Anne Arundel Community College. The Anne Arundel County Office of Manpower provides access to JTPA-funded skills training and job-readiness, life skills and job-search services.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE SELECTION AND REPRESENTATIVENESS

This report is based on two samples of fathers: (1) those who participated in the baseline and follow-up telephone surveys, and (2) those who participated in the ethnographic study. These samples are described below.

Survey Sample

A total of 459 young men were enrolled at the six Young Unwed Father's Pilot Project sites over the course of 22 months. We conducted baseline telephone surveys with two cohorts of fathers. The survey was designed by P/PV research staff and conducted by the Social Science Research Center at California State University, Fullerton. The first baseline survey was administered to 166 fathers in January and February 1992.[1] A second baseline survey was administered in Fall 1992 to an additional 62 fathers who had enrolled in the project from September to December 1992.[2]

The first cohort of fathers participated in a follow-up survey one year after the baseline survey; the second cohort was followed up in the summer of 1993. Although we tried to contact all 228 fathers who had participated in the two baseline surveys, we were successful in reaching only 155, or 68 percent of the sample.[3]

The 155 fathers who participated in the baseline and follow-up surveys are not a random sample of the 459 fathers who participated in the project. Overall, our data show that those who responded to both surveys were more active in the program and had higher in-program achievement levels than those who did not.[4]

Significant differences in participation rates between the survey sample (n=155) and the other enrollees (n=304) were found on curriculum attendance rates, participation in job-readiness classes and classroom vocational training, but not on enrollment in education or

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[1] By the end of February 1992, a total of 206 fathers had enrolled in the program. Hence, the response rate to the baseline survey was 81 percent. Of the 40 fathers who did not participate, 35 could not be located (in many cases their phones had been disconnected or changed to an unlisted number, or they had moved and left no new telephone number or address) and five either could not be reached at home or declined to participate.

[2] The response rate for the second baseline survey was 86 percent; 10 additional fathers enrolled in Fall 1992 but could not be contacted. No fathers refused to participate.

[3] Sixty-eight fathers could not be contacted because they were in jail, had moved, their phones were disconnected or they were never at home. Five refused to participate in the follow-up survey.

[4] All reported differences are statistically significant ($p \leq .05$).

OJT. The average attendance rate in fatherhood curriculum sessions was 62 percent for the survey sample and 50 percent for the rest of the fathers. Thirty-eight percent of nonsurveyed fathers enrolled in job-readiness classes, compared with 51 percent of the survey sample. Fifteen percent of the survey sample and 7 percent of other fathers enrolled in classroom vocational training. At intake, those in the survey sample were less likely than other fathers to say they anticipated problems that would make their participation in the program difficult.

Similar differences were found on most indicators of in-program achievement: the completion rate for job-readiness classes was 87 percent for the survey sample and 66 percent for all other fathers; 72 percent of the survey sample were employed at some time during their participation in the program, compared with 53 percent of nonsurveyed fathers. Ten percent of the fathers who did not participate in the survey obtained their GED or high school diploma during their stay in the program, while 18 percent of the survey sample earned a GED or diploma in program. There were no significant differences in completion rates for classroom vocational training.[5]

As shown in Table C-1, the survey sample also differed from other enrollees with respect to race; the proportions of white and Hispanic fathers were higher and proportions of black fathers was lower.

In addition, the fathers in the survey sample had slightly more education at intake (completing an average of 10.9 years of schooling) than the rest of the enrollees (who completed an average of 10.6 years) and they were more likely to have been employed in the year preceding program enrollment, though they were not more likely to be employed at intake.

However, the survey sample did not differ significantly from the rest of the population on other demographic variables, including age, marital status, number of children, whether they lived with their youngest child or not, household income or size, receipt of public assistance (including food stamps), or possession of a high school diploma or GED.

Fathers in the survey sample were likely to have learned about the program from an advertisement (e.g., fliers, newspaper ads, television announcements), while the others were more likely to have heard about the program from a personal contact--such as a teacher, girlfriend, another young father, a friend or a relative.

These differences indicate that while the survey sample did not differ from the rest of the population on many characteristics, they did appear to have a higher level of motivation--and perhaps fewer barriers to program participation--than other enrollees.

The survey sample, however, is hardly a homogeneous group--considerable diversity is found within the sample, with respect to the age of the fathers, their relationships with their child-

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[5] However, the number who enrolled in vocational training is very small (23 fathers in the survey sample and 21 other fathers).

Table C-1

RACE OF SURVEY SAMPLE AND
OTHER FATHERS IN PROJECT

Race	Survey Sample	Other Fathers
Black	68%	82%
White	12	6
Hispanic	16	8
Other	4	4
Sample Size	155	298[a]

[a] The race of race six fathers could not be determined from available information.

ren and the mothers of their children, their participation in the program and the outcomes of their participation.

Ethnographic Sample

The ethnographic data are drawn from a series of life history interviews with 47 fathers--approximately half of all those who enrolled in three of the six sites between March 1991 and February 1992. Twenty-five of these fathers participated in both the baseline and follow-up surveys, 10 participated in the baseline alone and 12 participated in neither survey.

Ethnographers were employed at three of the six project sites (Philadelphia, Racine and St. Petersburg). These sites were selected because they represented the range of lead agencies participating in the project (a community-managing agency, a CBO and a PIC), and qualified ethnographers were available in the area. The ethnographers routinely observed and interacted with all fathers who participated in the fatherhood development curriculum sessions and peer support groups, the major activities at each site. They used these gatherings to explain the ethnographic study to all participants and recruit them to participate in the life history interviews. All fathers had an opportunity to participate in the interviews during the first six months of the study. Over time, our sampling strategy became more purposive in order to round out the sample, since we wanted to have sufficient numbers of fathers who had, for example, declared paternity, participated in education and left the program early. Recruitment to the study was slow at first, but as the fathers became comfortable with the ethnographers, there were few problems. Scheduling was difficult, especially with fathers who were only marginally attached to the programs. Many of these interviews were conducted late in the evening or on weekends.

Since we wanted to learn about the fathers' lives as they evolved over time by conducting a series of life history interviews, finding fathers who were not actively involved in the programs posed some problems. We have incomplete interview data on 10 fathers; they are not included in the report sample.

APPENDIX D

COST ANALYSIS

In order to estimate the cost of an ongoing program for young fathers, cost data were collected at three of the six sites: Racine, Fresno and Cleveland. These sites were selected because they met the criterion of offering several concrete program components to participants, including case management, job-readiness classes, education classes, job placement services and delivery of the fatherhood curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

Cost data were gathered for a three-month period, January through March 1992. At the beginning of January, Cleveland and Racine had each been in operation for 10 months; Fresno had been operating for eight months.

The proposed budgets for the young fathers programs did not include in-kind donations of staff time and space from other divisions of the lead organizations or from external organizations. Relying on program budgets for a final determination of program costs, therefore, underestimates the total cost of operating the programs.

The data were gathered from accounting records and from interviews with all staff members who spent any amount of time providing services to the young fathers. Staff members whose time was not exclusively budgeted to the young fathers program were asked to estimate the amount of time they had spent with the fathers from January through March. As staff were not required to maintain detailed records accounting for time spent on individual projects, a retrospective accounting was the only possible means for determining the cost of in-house, in-kind donations of staff time. The cost of additional in-kind contributions, such as office space, telephone and photocopying from other in-house programs was prorated for the percentage of total staff time spent working with the young fathers.

Participants at all three sites entered and exited the program on a rolling basis. Within a given site, the number of fathers served varied from month to month as some dropped out of the program and others enrolled. The intensity of service delivery for a given father also varied with length of stay. Fathers typically receive the greatest intensity of services during the first few months they are enrolled. Since the fathers enrolled during any given three-month period did not all receive identical services, and not all fathers were enrolled for the entire period during which the cost data were collected, a cost-per-slot per month was calculated, rather than a cost-per-father per month. The cost-per-slot is an <u>average</u> cost of serving a father in a one-month period. In actuality, the cost will be higher for fathers just entering the program and receiving more intensive services in the initial phase, and less for those enrolled for several months who may be receiving only limited case management.

Fresno was something of an exception to this rule because it enrolled fathers in vocational skills programs after the initial phase, which can be quite costly.

MAJOR COSTS

Table D-1 presents the cost of the three programs for the three-month period, January through March 1992. The out-of-pocket expenses represent costs incurred by the lead organization, whether or not they were actually billed to the young fathers project. Donations of time by staff members allocated to other programs are included here. The amounts donated represent costs covered by organizations other than the lead organization, as well as other in-kind contributions, such as tutoring by volunteers. The cost-per-slot per month is presented in Table D-2.

Based on the three-month data collected, the estimated cost of operating a young fathers program for one year is $177,604 in Racine, $176,324 in Fresno, and $151,520 in Cleveland. The greater expenditures in Racine and Fresno reflect the larger number of fathers served. Cleveland's annual cost per slot of $5,040, however, is 3 percent higher than Fresno's ($4,896), and 18 percent higher than Racine's ($4,130).

At all three sites, the greatest single expense was staff compensation--salaries and benefits. Excluding the salaries and benefits of the legal staff, 48 percent of the expenditures in Racine and Fresno, and 41 percent of the expenditures in Cleveland were for staff salaries. Rent, supplies, transportation and administrative costs represented 26 percent of the budget in Cleveland, 17 percent in Fresno and 21 percent in Racine. Cleveland's legal department with a staff of five attorneys, a paralegal and a legal secretary consumed 20 percent of the budget. In contrast, Racine's legal assistance amounted to 9 percent of its budget, and Fresno's legal assistance was only 2 percent of its total costs. Fresno outspent the other sites in its payments to fathers, with stipends, bus passes and awards consuming 21 percent of the budget, while Racine and Cleveland spent 14 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Fresno also allocated more resources to skills training and OJT, with 7 percent of its budget going to this purpose. In contrast, Cleveland used no money for skills training and Racine used only 3 percent of its budget to provide work experience for participants.

One in-kind cost excluded from this study was health care. Although all three programs offered some sort of health plan, the number of fathers who utilized health services in any site during the period of the cost study was very small. In Racine, the fathers were provided with referrals to physicians whose fees were half the regular rate. Only one father used this service. In Cleveland, where fathers were eligible to receive low-price health care at an on-site clinic, only four clients without health insurance used the clinic. In Fresno, all eligible fathers (those not on an AFDC grant) were able to receive health coverage from the Health Maintenance Organization of Kaiser Permanente. The insurance cost of $150 per month for a father with one child would be too great for any program to offer, except where it might be procured as a donation, as was the case in Fresno. As the cost of health care was negligible in Racine and Cleveland due to underutilization, and quite high in Fresno because the fathers

Table D-1

PROGRAM COSTS, JANUARY THROUGH MARCH 1992

Site	Out of Pocket Cost	Donated Cost	Total Cost	Average Number of Slots
Racine	$35,800	$8,601	$44,401	43
Fresno	41,270	2,811	44,081	36
Cleveland	36,045	1,835	37,880	30
Average	$37,705	$4,416	$42,121	36

Table D-2

MONTHLY PROGRAM COSTS PER SLOT

Site	Out of Pocket Cost/Slot	Donated Cost/Slot	Total Cost/Slot
Racine	$278	$66	$344
Fresno	382	26	408
Cleveland	400	20	420
Average	$346	$41	$386

are offered a health insurance plan--regardless of their actual use of services--the cost of health care was omitted from the estimate of total program costs to paint a more accurate picture of costs.

STAFFING ISSUES

Three of the pilot sites concurrently operated similar programs for other disadvantaged populations. These sites brought to the project not only experience in coordinating case management with employment and training activities, but additional resources in the form of time donated to the program by personnel who, though primarily working with other populations, were able to spend some time working with the fathers. This is particularly true for Cleveland; Beat the Streets serves young men whether they are fathers or not. The overall cost of operating Beat the Streets was prorated for the percentage of participants who were fathers.

The differences between in-house and brokered programs is apparent in the amount of in-house staff working on a project. Cleveland's program is completely in house, with five staff members dedicated exclusively to serving the Beat the Streets program (in which 29 percent are fathers). An additional 21 staff members spend anywhere from 2 percent to 20 percent of their time with the young fathers. Most services in Racine are offered in house, with one full-time case manager and nine other staff members spending between 1 and 65 percent of their time on the program. Educational classes are brokered in Goodwill, though the Learning Center, staffed by Gateway College instructors, is located on site. Fresno, in contrast, has two full-time case managers, with five other staff members spending a rather limited amount of time on the project. Fresno uses subcontractors for education and skills training and is the only site that places a significant number of fathers in skills training.

These organizations were able to hold down costs by assigning additional clients to existing staff members. A new organization that did not already have on staff such persons as job developers and paralegals would incur a greater expense in starting a new program in which such persons had to be hired and paid exclusively from the young fathers' budget. Time-sharing of staff between programs makes the operation of a multicomponent program for young fathers economically feasible.

APPENDIX E

LENGTH OF STAY AND SERVICES RECEIVED

The sites were asked to provide fathers with a range of services for a period of 18 months. However, there was considerable variation in both the amount of service received and the length of enrollment.

Length of Stay

Because only 41 percent of enrolled fathers had been terminated from the program by May 1993 (when we last collected monthly log data from the sites), it is difficult to calculate a length of stay for all participants. At best, we can note the length of stay for terminated fathers and a minimum length of stay for those who were still enrolled when we stopped collecting monthly program data in May 1993.[1] Table E-1 shows the percentage of fathers by length of stay for those who were terminated and still active in the program in May.

The large percentage of fathers enrolled for more than one year (51 percent of terminated fathers and at least 68 percent of nonterminated fathers) represents a noteworthy achievement for the pilot programs. Programs that serve youth often encounter difficulty keeping participants enrolled--and offering services--over such long periods of time. This difficulty stems both from problems encountered in providing sufficient incentives for youth to continue their enrollment and the significant cost of providing services for both long-term enrollees and new participants.

Five of the six sites continuously enrolled new participants throughout the pilot and simultaneously tried to retain all enrollees in the program for at least 18 months.[2] Most of the sites were successful in accomplishing both tasks, though staff were stretched by the demands of recruitment as well as working with recent and long-term enrollees.

The majority of fathers (71%) were active in at least one program component (including employment) for at least 75 percent of the months in which they were enrolled. Seventy percent of those who were enrolled in the program for 15 months or more were actively involved even after 15 months--indicating that the program was still providing services and maintaining contact with fathers over a protracted period of time.

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[1] Difficulties in determining length of stay are compounded by the lack of consistent criteria for termination across the sites. Level of participation would fluctuate during fathers' tenure in the program; some sites were more likely to terminate a father when he did not attend program functions for a few months, while other sites would keep the father officially enrolled in the hope that he would return.

[2] Philadelphia was the exception. This site decided to focus on working with the same group of fathers once they reached (and indeed, exceeded) the goal of 50 participants.

Table E-1

LENGTH OF STAY IN THE PROGRAM

Number of Months	When Terminated	Active in Program as of May 1993
Less than 3 months	10%	0%
3-6	16	1
7-9	14	30
10-12	10	0
13-15	13	1
16-18	24	16
More than 18	14	51
Sample Size	63	92

NOTE: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Services Received

Of the 155 fathers in our sample, only 15 (all at the Fresno site) were enrolled in all three of the program components directly related to improving educational skills and enhancing employability--that is, education classes, job-readiness and job training. While education services were available at all six sites, job-readiness classes and job training/OJT were both available at two sites, job-readiness alone at two, and job training/OJT alone at two. Sixty-three fathers were enrolled in two components: one-third (n=51) were enrolled in education and job-readiness classes; eight were enrolled in education and job training/OJT; and four were enrolled in job-readiness and job training. Slightly more than one-third (n=55) were enrolled in only one component: 42 in education alone, nine in job-readiness alone, and four in job training/OJT alone. Twenty-two fathers did not receive any education, preemployment or training services, though they did participate in the fatherhood curriculum sessions.[3]

Participation rates in the curriculum sessions were calculated by dividing the number of sessions fathers actually attended by the number of sessions they were scheduled to attend. The scheduling of the fatherhood curriculum sessions differed dramatically by site. While some sites offered the sessions in conjunction with job-readiness classes for a specific period of time, other sites offered weekly sessions for a period of months as a way to keep fathers connected with the program. Overall, attendance in the curriculum sessions was high. Thirteen percent of the fathers attended all the sessions scheduled, and 42 percent attended at least 70 percent of the sessions. Only 11 percent attended fewer than 30 percent of the sessions.

[3] Although the sessions were called fatherhood curriculum sessions, the conversations often diverged from the curriculum itself and became, more broadly, fatherhood support groups.