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Predictors of Paternal Involvement Among Nonresidential, Black Fathers From Low-Income Neighborhoods

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This study examined the factors associated with higher levels of paternal involvement among nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods. Participants were 110 fathers of children up to the age of 10. Participants completed psychometrically sound measures of social support, religiosity, family-of-origin father closeness, coparenting relationship quality, psychological well-being, conviction history since the birth of the child, and paternal involvement. A simultaneous multiple regression indicated that better psychological well-being and coparenting relationship quality and lower conviction rates since the birth of the child were associated significantly with higher levels of paternal involvement when controlling for sociodemographic variables. Results of a mediational analysis revealed that coparenting relationship quality mediated the relationship of both psychological well-being and paternal involvement and conviction history since the birth of the child and paternal involvement. Results of a hierarchical regression showed that social support moderated the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement when controlling for statistically relevant sociodemographic variables. This study provided evidence that several father and coparental factors were related to high levels of paternal involvement and illustrated the importance of examining disadvantaged fathers' strengths as targets for future interventions. Psychologists, social workers, program directors, and other individuals working with nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods should educate their clients on the factors associated with higher levels of paternal involvement as well as provide necessary resources to facilitate father involvement with children.

Keywords: fathers, African American, coparenting, psychological well-being

Fatherhood and men's masculinity are interrelated constructs that are associated with child outcomes (Pleck, 2010). Masculinity orientation has been found to influence fathers' parenting behaviors among nonresidential Black fathers (Caldwell, Antonakos, Tsuchiya, Assari, & De Loney, 2012). Further, fathers from low-income neighborhoods are particularly negatively influenced by more traditional masculine beliefs of fathering behavior as they experience challenges in achieving the traditional provider role of fathers, leading to lower levels of involvement with children (Coley & Hernandez, 2006; McAdoo, 1993). Given that much of the available research on father involvement has been conducted on middle-class, residential, White families (Hernandez & Coley, 2007), it is important to conduct research on father involvement on diverse samples (Pleck, 2010).

Father involvement is the most commonly investigated construct in fatherhood research (Pleck, 2010). Researchers have broadly defined father involvement as engagement (interacting with the child directly), accessibility (being available for the child, but not interacting directly with the child), and responsibility (monitoring and providing for the child; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, &

Levine, 1985). The literature on father involvement among Black fathers has been steadily increasing over the last two decades, with a large focus on nonresidential fathers from low-income communities (Connor & White, 2011). Black children who grow up with nonresidential fathers who are uninvolved are at increased risk for numerous negative outcomes including involvement in criminal activity and substance abuse, dropping out of school, and having poorer academic performance (DeBell, 2008), becoming a parent at a young age (Ellis et al., 2003), and having impaired gender role development and interpersonal relationships (Mandara, Murray, & Joyner, 2005). Conversely, children who grow up with nonresidential fathers who are positively involved demonstrate lower levels of delinquency (Pan & Farrell, 2006), sexual-risk taking (Peterson, 2007), and alcohol and substance abuse (Caldwell, Sellers, Bernat, & Zimmerman, 2004), as well as higher levels of self-esteem (Cooper, 2009), academic success (Caldwell et al., 2004), cognitive development (Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, London, & Cabrera, 2002), and better overall psychological well-being (Dubowitz et al., 2001).

More than 70% of Black children in the United States are born to unwed parents (Hamilton, Martin, & Ventura, 2010). This rate is disproportionately higher than any other racial group and more than twice as high as for White children. Nearly two thirds of children born to unwed mothers will live apart from their biological fathers by the time the children are 5 years old (Carlson & McLanahan, 2010), and it is estimated that at least 80% of Black children will spend some part of their childhood in a father-absent home (Haskins, 2009). Unwed, noncohabitating fathers are at an

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increased risk for low levels of father involvement with their children (Cabrera et al., 2004; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). Relatedly, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods disproportionately represent nonresidential parents (i.e., parents not living in the same household as their children); thus, they are at higher risk to demonstrate low levels of involvement with their children (Coley, 2001). King, Harris, and Heard (2004) found that lower socioeconomic status, coupled with the decreased likelihood of Black fathers to marry, was associated with lower levels of paternal involvement among this population.

Contrary to the widespread belief that nonresidential fathers from low-income neighborhoods are “deadbeat,” uninvolved fathers, current research suggests that this subset of fathers are more involved with their children than previously thought (Cabrera et al., 2004; Smith, Krohn, Chu, & Best, 2005; Tamis-LeMonda & McFadden, 2010). For example, findings from the national Early Head Start (EHS) study, which included White, Black, and Latino fathers, indicated that 61% of the infants and toddlers in EHS had nonresidential fathers who had seen the child within the last 3 months (Cabrera et al., 2004). In a review of the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being study (FFCWB), which includes nonresidential Black, White, and Latino fathers that primarily consists of Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods, Carlson and McLanahan (2010) found that the majority of fathers are involved with their children during the early stages of their children’s lives. Specifically, 87% of fathers of 1-year-old children had seen their children since their birth and 63% reported seeing their children multiple times a month. Additionally, 63% of fathers of 5-year-old children reported contact with their children since they were three, and 43% reported seeing their children multiple times a month. It is also widely accepted in the literature that nonresidential, Black fathers maintain more frequent contact with their children compared to White and Latino nonresidential fathers (Cabrera, Ryan, Mitchell, Shannon, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2008; Carlson & McLanahan, 2010; Lerman & Sorenson, 2000; Manning, Stewart, & Smock, 2003; Walker, Reid, & Logan, 2010). Although significant variation exists in the extent to which nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods have contact with their children (Furstenberg & Weiss, 2000; Lerman & Sorenson, 2000), recent research provides evidence that a sizable proportion of nonresidential fathers are involved in the early stages of their children’s lives (Carlson & McLanahan, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson (1998) developed a conceptual framework of influences on responsible fathering, which forms the basis of our methodology. Doherty et al. (1998) proposed that fathers’ levels of involvement with their children are influenced by several variables including father factors (e.g., psychological well-being, family of origin, residential and employment status), mother factors (e.g., attitude toward, expectations of, and support for the father), contextual factors (e.g., race or ethnicity, resources or challenges, cultural expectations, and social support), child factors (e.g., age, sex, temperament, developmental status, and meanings/beliefs about father involvement), and the coparental relationship (e.g., marital status, cooperation, mutual support, custodial arrangement). The factors included in this ecological framework are additive and interactive. The father–child

relationship is influenced by the coparental relationship, factors in the other parent, and contextual factors more so than the mother–child relationship (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson 1998). The present study considers the influence of various father (i.e., family-of-origin father closeness, psychological well-being), contextual (i.e., social support), and coparental (i.e., coparenting relationship quality) factors on fathers’ involvement with their children. In addition to investigating factors included in the model, we also examined the relationship between father involvement and two father factors currently not included in the model: religiosity and conviction history since the birth of the child. We placed a large emphasis on father factors because fathers are primarily responsible for their levels of contact with their children (Walker & McGraw, 2000).

Father Factors

Multiple studies using primarily White samples have found a positive relationship between religiosity and levels of paternal involvement in the fatherhood literature (Bartkowski & Xu, 2000; Bollinger & Palkovitz, 2003; King, 2003; Roggman, Boyce, Cook, & Cook, 2002; Wilcox, 2002). Specifically, fathers (marital and nonmarital) who engage in more frequent religious activities and are church members have been found to demonstrate higher levels of parental supervision, emotional support, and better parent–child relationship quality (Bartkowski & Xu, 2000), and responsibility, engagement, and accessibility to children (Bollinger & Palkovitz, 2003). Researchers have rarely explored the association between religiosity and father involvement among Black fathers. To the best of our knowledge, no study has examined the association between religiosity and levels of paternal involvement among Black fathers, yet it is a topic worthy of exploration given the salience of religiosity as a protective factor in the Black community (Utsey, Bolden, Lanier, & Williams, 2007).

The intergenerational influence of father involvement has been demonstrated in predominantly Black samples from low-income neighborhoods. Empirical studies show that Black fathers who had limited contact with their fathers also had lower levels of paternal involvement with their children (Coley & Hernandez, 2006; Furstenberg & Weiss, 2000). Qualitative analyses of nonresidential, Black fathers found that low levels of father involvement persisted across generations despite the fathers’ motivations to be involved in their children’s lives (Roy, 2006). Research on predominantly White samples found that fathers’ perceived closeness with their fathers (i.e., family-of-origin father closeness) was related to fathers’ closeness with their children (Beaton & Doherty, 2007). The association between fathers’ closeness with their fathers and levels of paternal involvement with their children should be explored with a Black sample.

There is a growing literature to support the association between fathers’ depressive symptoms and levels of paternal involvement among Black fathers (Anderson, Kohler, & Letiecq, 2005; Bronte-Tinkew, Moore, Matthews, & Carrano, 2007; Davis, Caldwell, Clark, & Davis, 2009; Howard Caldwell, Bell, Brooks, Ward, & Jennings, 2011). Researchers have found that nonresidential, Black fathers with higher depressive symptoms, compared with those with lower depressive symptoms, had less contact, closeness, monitoring, and higher conflict with their sons (Davis et al., 2009; Howard Caldwell et al., 2011). Likewise, resident, predominantly

Black fathers from low-income backgrounds with higher depressive symptoms had less engagement with their children (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007). Although several studies have demonstrated an inverse association between depressive symptoms and levels of paternal involvement, the association between fathers' psychological well-being, and levels of paternal involvement has yet to be explored fully in nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods.

Researchers have commonly investigated involvement in illegal activities and incarceration rates as risk factors associated with fathers' low levels or lack of involvement among Black men (Coley & Hernandez, 2006; Ryan, Kalil, & Ziol-Guest, 2008; Swisher & Waller, 2008; Waller & Swisher, 2006). Nonresidential Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods often attribute lack of involvement with their children to incarceration (Nelson, Clampet-Lundquist, & Edin, 2002). Using a predominantly Black sample from low-income neighborhoods, Swisher and Waller (2008) found that incarceration since the birth of the child was strongly associated with lower levels of paternal involvement. Given the established relationship between incarceration rates and lower levels of paternal involvement, involvement with the criminal justice system, namely convictions, since the birth of the child is an important area to explore among this population.

Contextual Factors

Findings from data-rich qualitative studies have suggested that social support from family, friends, and partners is essential for sustained paternal involvement among unmarried, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods (Dallas, 2004; Davies et al., 2004; Hayes, Jones, Silverstein, & Auerbach, 2010; Roy & Dyson, 2010; Summers, Boller, & Raikes, 2004). Furthermore, previous studies have found that social support serves as a buffer against negative affect and paternal caregiving activities for predominantly Black and Latino fathers of infants (Fagan, Bernd, & Whiteman, 2007). Parenting-specific social support warrants further empirical exploration in samples of nonresidential Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods.

Coparental Factors

Numerous studies have found that better coparenting relationship quality was related to increased levels of paternal involvement among nonresidential, predominantly Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods (Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Coley & Hernandez, 2006; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007; Ryan et al., 2008). For example, Ryan, Kalil, and Ziol-Guest (2008) found that fathers with better coparental relationships maintained consistently higher levels of involvement (i.e., engagement, accessibility, responsibility, and in-kind support) with their children from age one to age three. Conversely, interparental conflict is associated with lower levels of paternal involvement (Nelson et al., 2002; Ryan et al., 2008). In fact, Coley and Hernandez (2006) found that interparental conflict mediated the relationship between psychological distress and paternal involvement (i.e., cognitive stimulation, emotional support, parenting competence, and instrumental involvement). Furthermore, paternal depression and anxiety may alter fathers' perceptions of coparental support, and thus, have an indirect effect on lower levels of father involvement

(Isacco, Garfield, & Rogers, 2010). Thus, coparental factors are important to explore in relation to fathers' involvement with their children.

Control Variables

Well-documented risk factors for low levels of paternal involvement include younger age of the father (Castillo, Welch, & Sarver, 2011; Lerman & Sorenson, 2000), being of low socioeconomic status and educational attainment level (King et al., 2004), and being unemployed (Coley, 2001). Additionally, nonresidential fathers' involvement with their children dramatically decreases over the life span of the child (Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007; Lerman & Sorenson, 2000) and has been associated negatively with fathers' increased number of biological children (Carlson & McLanahan, 2010). Studies have also found that nonresidential fathers are more involved with sons as compared to daughters (King et al., 2004; Mitchell, Booth, & King, 2009). Because these variables have been associated with paternal involvement, they were controlled statistically in the current study.

Present Study

The present study examined predictors of involvement among nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods. Based on the literature suggesting that several factors are related to levels of paternal involvement, we expected that higher levels of religiosity (Bartkowski & Xu, 2000; Bollinger & Palkovitz, 2003), family-of-origin father closeness (Beaton & Doherty, 2007; Coley & Hernandez, 2006), psychological well-being (Anderson et al., 2005; Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2009; Howard Caldwell et al., 2011), social support (Dallas, 2004; Roy & Dyson, 2010), and coparenting relationship quality (Carlson et al., 2008; Coley & Hernandez, 2006; Ryan et al., 2008) would be associated positively with paternal involvement. Conversely, we expected that conviction history would be associated negatively with paternal involvement (Nelson et al., 2002; Ryan et al., 2008; Waller & Swisher, 2006). Given the literature indicating that psychological functioning and involvement in criminal activities are indirectly related to paternal involvement through coparenting relationship quality (Coley & Hernandez, 2006), we expected that coparenting relationship quality would mediate the relationship of both psychological well-being and paternal involvement and conviction history and paternal involvement. We also expected social support to moderate the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement based on previous research that found that social support buffered the relationship between parenting stress and paternal involvement for fathers of infants (Fagan et al., 2007).

Method

Participants

Participants included 110 nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods recruited from the community of a Southeastern urban area. Eligibility for participation in this study included self-identifying as Black or African American, being at least 18 years old, being a nonresidential father of at least one child up to age 10, and being characterized as living in a low-income

neighborhood using census tract data. Socioeconomic status (SES) was also used as a proxy for low-income status (Hollingshead, 1975). The sample was primarily comprised of young adult fathers with preschool-aged focal children, who were predominantly male. The majority of fathers were employed and had at least a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma. The fathers' SES did not exceed that of a skilled craftsman, clerical, or sales worker. Most fathers had two or three biological children with one or two women. The majority of fathers lived apart from their fathers during childhood. See Table 1 for the sample's sociodemographic characteristics.

Recruitment

An a priori power analysis, conducted with alpha set at .05 for a medium effect size, showed that at least 91 participants would be needed to obtain a desired power of .80 for a simultaneous multiple regression with six predictor variables (Cohen, 1992). To avoid the bias toward recruiting fathers through their children's mothers, fathers were recruited directly. Recruitment methods included flyers posted in low-income areas throughout the city, a newspaper ad posted in a local Black-owned newspaper, and through snowball techniques with community contacts (i.e., church leaders, managers of low-income housing developments, barbershop owners, directors of agencies serving low-income populations, directors of local parks, and directors of local fatherhood programs). Of the 195 men solicited for participation in the study, 139 men returned a survey, yielding a 71.3% completion rate. Data from 29 fathers were excluded due to either not meeting selection criteria ($n = 28$) or returning a blank survey ($n = 1$). In total, 110 surveys were used in the analyses of the present study. Participants entered a drawing to win raffled prizes including gift cards, vouchers to

local restaurants and entertainment venues, and tickets to sporting events as remuneration for participating in the study.

Measures

Covariates. Participants were asked the following sociodemographic questions regarding themselves and their children: *Age?* (continuous item), *Are you employed?* (0 = no, 1 = yes), *If yes, what kind of work do you do?* (1 = farm laborers/menial service workers/unemployed, 3 = machine operators and semi-skilled workers), *Number of biological children?* (continuous item), *Which of the following best describes your education level?* (1 = less than 7th grade, 7 = graduate professional training), *How old is the child?* (continuous item), *Is the child a boy or girl?* (1 = boy, 2 = girl). Participants' SES was calculated by multiplying fathers' scores on educational attainment and occupation. SES scores ranged from 1 (*unskilled laborers, menial service workers*) to 3 (*skilled craftsmen, clerical, sales workers*).

Religiosity. The Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) is a 20-item questionnaire that researchers commonly use to assess participants' relationships with a higher power. The scale measures three distinct dimensions: overall Spiritual Well-Being (SWB), Religious Well-Being (RWB), and Existential Well-Being (EWB). We used the RWB scale for the current study. For all 10 items, participants rated their agreement with the statement on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Scale creators negatively worded approximately half of the items in order to reduce response bias. We calculated the total RWB score by taking the mean response of all 10 items. Higher scores indicated higher levels of religiosity, and the total score ranged from 1–6. Examples of positively and negatively worded items, respectively, are: *I have a personally*

Table 1
Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> %	<i>SD</i>	Range
Age	102	30.27	7.45	19–25
Number of biological children	110	2.50	1.85	1–10
Number of biological children's mothers	107	1.68	1.00	1–7
Focal child's age	104	3.59	3.01	0–10
Focal child's sex	98			
Male		59.2		
Female		40.8		
Employment status	110			
Employed		54.5		
Unemployed		45.5		
Educational attainment	110			
Ninth grade or below		4.5		
Partial high school (tenth or eleventh grade)		23.6		
High school graduate		39.1		
Partial college/specialized training		25.5		
Bachelor's degree		6.4		
Graduate degree		0.9		
Socioeconomic status	110			
Unskilled laborers or menial service workers		47.3		
Machine operators or semiskilled workers		35.5		
Skilled craftsmen, clerical, or sales workers		17.2		
Lived with biological father in childhood	109			
Yes		30.3		
No		69.7		

meaningful relationship with God, and I don't get much personal strength and support from God. In a review of seven studies that utilized the measure, Bufford, Paloutzian, and Ellison (1991) reported that internal consistency reliabilities for RWB were sound ($\alpha = .82-.94$). Researchers have used this measure in community-based studies with Black samples (e.g., Walker, Utsey, Bolden, & Williams, 2005). The RWB demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability for the current sample ($\alpha = .85$).

Family-of-origin father closeness. The Nurturant Fathering Scale (NFS; Finley & Schwartz, 2004) is a 9-item measure that researchers developed for adolescents and adults to retrospectively assess the affective childhood relationship quality with their fathers. The scale is appropriate for the assessment of both residential and nonresidential parents. A sample item is, *When you needed your father's support, was he there for you?* Participants were instructed to rate the items on a 5-point Likert scale, with different response choices for each item. The total scale score was calculated by taking the mean response of the items. The total score could range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating greater levels of childhood closeness with one's father. The measure was created using an ethnically diverse college sample, including Latino/Latina, White, Black, and Asian undergraduate students and has demonstrated sound internal consistency reliabilities ($\alpha = .90$) in previous studies (Finley & Schwartz, 2004). To our knowledge, this measure has not been used in a community sample of predominately Black men from low-income neighborhoods. In the current study, the NFS demonstrated high internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .96$).

Psychological well-being. The General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12; Goldberg & Williams, 1988) is a 12-item measure that is used widely to assess psychological functioning across three domains: depression, anxiety, and somatic symptoms. Participants rated the accuracy of the statements using a 4-point Likert scale (0 to 3) with different response choices for each item. The mean of the item responses was used to calculate the total score for the scale. The total score could range from 0 to 3, with higher scores reflecting better psychological well-being. Sample items include, *Have you recently lost much sleep over worry?* and *Have you recently been able to enjoy your day-to-day activities?* The scores on the measure have demonstrated sound psychometric properties including internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .85$), test-retest reliability (.73), and split half reliability (.83; Goldberg & Williams, 1988). Researchers have utilized the GHQ-28 with Black community-based samples (Afuwape et al., 2010), although the GHQ-12 has not been used with Black men from low-income neighborhoods to our knowledge. The GHQ-12 demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability with the current sample ($\alpha = .87$).

Conviction history. Conviction history since the birth of the child was measured by a single question on a continuous scale, created by the research team: *Since the birth of the child, how many times have you been convicted of a crime?* Raw responses ranged from 0 to 7 and were positively skewed (i.e., 3.76). To improve the normalcy of the distribution, responses were collapsed so that 0 = *no convictions*, 1 = *one conviction*, and 2 = *multiple convictions*.

Social support. The Support for Involvement with the Child (SIWTC) is a 12-item questionnaire developed by the research team for this study to assess the perceived level of support fathers

received from multiple domains toward being an involved father. This questionnaire was created due to the lack of scales available for measuring this specific construct and was adapted from Fagan, Bernd, and Whiteman's (2007) parent support items. Participants were asked to rate the following questions on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *very unsupportive*, 4 = *very supportive*): *How supportive is/are your (1. mother, 2. father, 3. other relatives, 4. friends, 5. spiritual leaders, 6. child's mother, 7. child's mother's mother, 8. child's mother's father, 9. current partner, 10. current partner's mother, 11. current partner's father, 12. community) of your involvement with the child?* There was also the option to rate the item as *not applicable* (coded as missing data). The mean of the item responses was used to calculate the total score for the scale, and ranged from 1 to 4. The SIWTC demonstrated sound internal consistency reliability for this sample ($\alpha = .89$).

Coparenting relationship quality. The Parenting Alliance Measure (PAM; Abidin & Konold, 1999) is a 20-item measure used to assess the perceived working alliance between parental figures of children. The measure was created to be appropriate for nonmarital parents. Sample items include, *My child's other parent makes my job of being a parent easier* and *When there is a problem with our child, we work out a good solution together.* Participants were asked to rate each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The total score was calculated by using the mean of the item responses and ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating a higher quality coparenting relationship. The measure was developed using an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse community sample, including White, Black, Latino, and Asian fathers, and has high internal consistency reliability (i.e., $\alpha = .96$) for fathers' reports (Abidin & Konold, 1999). To our knowledge, the measure has not been used with a sample of predominantly Black men from low-income neighborhoods. The PAM demonstrated high internal consistency reliability for the current sample ($\alpha = .95$).

Father involvement. The Relationship with the Child questionnaire (Father Involvement; Coley & Morris, 2002) was used to assess paternal involvement. This measure is consistent with Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine's (1985) conceptualization of paternal involvement. The total scale score measures three aspects of father involvement: responsibility, accessibility, and engagement. Coley and Morris (2002) developed this measure of father involvement by drawing questions from previous studies (Cabrera et al., 2004; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). They developed the measure to be appropriate for both residential and nonresidential fathers. To assess responsibility, fathers were asked the following items: (1) *How much responsibility do you take for raising the child?* and (2) *How much does your help with financial and material support of the child help the child's mother?* Both questions were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *none*, 4 = *a lot*) with higher scores indicating greater paternal responsibility. To measure accessibility, fathers were asked the following items: (3) *How often do you see or visit with the child?* and (4) *How often does the child see or visit with your family?* Questions 3 and 4 were rated on a 9-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 9 = *every day*). Higher scores on both scales indicate greater paternal accessibility. To measure engagement, fathers were asked the following items: (5) *How many hours per week do you take care of the child?* and (6) *How much does your involvement make things easier for the child's mother or make her a better parent?* Question 5 was an

open-ended continuous item, and Question 6 was rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *none*, 4 = *a lot*). Higher scores reflect greater paternal engagement with the child. We collapsed the responses for Items 3 through 5 to 4-point Likert scales (1 = *none*, 4 = *a lot*) to maintain consistency with previous studies that used this measure (Coley & Morris, 2002; Hernandez & Coley, 2007). Participants responded to Items 3 and 4 on a 9-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *every couple of years*, 3 = *once a year*, 4 = *twice a year*, 5 = *every few months*, 6 = *once a month or more*, 7 = *once a week or more*, 8 = *almost every day*, and 9 = *every day*). Items 3 and 4 were recoded (1 = *never*, 2 through 4 = *a little*, 5 and 6 = *some*, and 7 through 9 = *a lot*). The response range for Item 5 was 0 hours to 168 hours. Item 5 was collapsed so that 1 = 0 hours, 2 = .46–9 hours, 3 = 10–20 hours, and 4 = 21–168 hours. A composite of father involvement was used in this study with higher scores indicating greater levels of paternal involvement. Hernandez and Coley (2007) validated the measure on an ethnically diverse sample from low-income neighborhoods that included predominantly Latino and Black fathers as well as White fathers and reported high internal consistencies for the composite scale ($\alpha = .82$). The measure demonstrated adequate internal consistency with the current sample ($\alpha = .80$).

Procedure

Consistent with the methodological approach of previous studies on Black fathers (Letiecq, 2007), Black male research assistants were used in the recruitment of, and survey administration to, Black male participants. Prior research suggests that Black participants experience a sense of racial comfort when same-race researchers are present, which facilitates the establishment of trust and ultimately willingness to participate in the study (Huang & Coker, 2010). The research team approached fathers for participation at agencies geared toward providing aid to individuals from low-income neighborhoods, churches, barbershops, outdoor parks, community events, established fatherhood programs, and housing developments in low-income neighborhoods. Researchers screened potential participants for inclusion criteria. Fathers who met criteria were asked to complete a survey about fatherhood and researchers read the informed consent to interested individuals. Upon receiving informed consent from the participants, researchers administered the survey packet. Participants were instructed to complete the survey in reference to their youngest child, age 10 or younger, with whom they did not live on a full-time basis. Participants completed the survey in approximately 15 minutes, on average. This study was conducted in accordance with the university's institutional review board and APA ethical guidelines.

Data Analysis

A criterion was set that 70% of the items on each scale had to be completed in order for the participant's responses to be included in the analyses. Listwise deletion was used to correct for missing data in all analyses. A simultaneous multiple regression was used to examine whether father, contextual, and coparental factors predicted paternal involvement. Hayes's (2009) bootstrap mediational analysis was implemented to test whether coparenting relationship quality mediated the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement and conviction history and pater-

nal involvement. Bootstrapping was used due to the method's increased statistical power to detect indirect effects, decreased Type I error rates, and its lack of requirement for a normal sampling distribution of the indirect effect (Hayes, 2009; Williams & MacKinnon, 2008). The bootstrap mediational analysis resampled the data 5,000 times, with replacement, and calculated 95% confidence intervals (percentile rank) for indirect effects. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test whether social support moderated the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement. Simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) was used to test whether the conditional regression lines, which use values of one standard deviation above and below the mean of the moderator, significantly differed from zero. Given the prior research on father's age, employment status, SES, number of children, and the target child's age and gender influencing fathers' levels of involvement with their children (Doherty et al., 1998), these variables were statistically controlled in all multivariate analyses.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Study variables. On average, fathers reported high levels of religiosity and poor childhood relationships with their fathers. They reported fairly high levels of psychological well-being and low rates of convictions since the birth of the child. Fathers reported high levels of support from multiple individuals to be involved with the focal child and moderately high levels of coparenting relationship quality. Finally, fathers reported fairly high levels of involvement with their children. Most of the measures had slight to moderate levels of skewness and excess kurtosis. Psychological well-being and paternal involvement were highly negatively skewed and number of convictions since the birth of the child was highly positively skewed. There were no outliers identified in the dataset using the standard of z-scores ± 3.0 or more. See Table 2 for descriptive properties of the study variables.

Covariates. The relationship between each covariate and the study variables were examined (see Table 3 for a table of the correlations). None of the covariates were correlated significantly with paternal involvement as measured by the RWTC. Specifically, age of father, employment status, SES, number of children, child gender, and age of child were not significantly related to father involvement. It is noteworthy that employment status was correlated significantly with psychological well-being, $r(110) = .22$, $p = .023$, SES was correlated significantly with both religiosity, $r(108) = .28$, $p = .018$, and psychological well-being, $r(110) = .19$, $p = .043$, and number of children was significantly related to social support $r(109) = -.31$, $p < .001$.

Primary Analyses

The first hypothesis stated that religiosity, family-of-origin father closeness, psychological well-being, convictions since the birth of the child, social support, and coparenting relationship quality would be related to paternal involvement. A correlation matrix of the independent and outcome variables is displayed in Table 4. Psychological well-being, $r(109) = .31$, $p = .001$, social support, $r(108) = .21$, $p = .028$, and coparenting relationship

Table 2
Descriptive Properties of the Study Variables

Measure	n	M	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
				Potential	Actual		
Religiosity	108	4.97	0.90	1.00–6.00	2.89–6.00	–0.57	–0.92
Family-of-origin father closeness	110	2.58	1.29	1.00–5.00	1.00–5.00	0.26	–1.37
Psychological well-being	110	2.14	0.55	0.00–3.00	0.00–3.00	–1.11	1.73
Conviction history	104	0.53	1.25	0.00–2.00	0.00–2.00	1.46	1.06
Social support	109	3.16	0.65	1.00–4.00	1.00–4.00	–0.81	0.85
Coparenting relationship quality	106	3.74	0.83	1.00–5.00	1.00–5.00	–0.77	0.65
Paternal involvement	109	3.20	0.69	1.00–4.00	1.00–4.00	–1.29	1.58

quality, $r(105) = .38, p < .001$, were associated positively with levels of father involvement, whereas conviction history, $r(104) = -.26, p = .009$, was associated negatively with father involvement. A simultaneous multiple regression revealed that the model was significant (see Table 5 for the regression summary). Psychological well-being, conviction history, and coparenting relationship quality were significantly related to paternal involvement when controlling for the other study variables, whereas religiosity, family-of-origin father closeness, and social support were not. Because not all of the predictors remained significantly related to paternal involvement in the multivariate analysis, the first hypothesis was only partially supported.

The second hypothesis stated that coparenting relationship quality would mediate the relationship between psychological well-being and father involvement. The mediational model was significant. Psychological well-being demonstrated a total effect point estimate of .41 ($SE = .13$) and direct effect point estimate of .24 ($SE = .14$) on paternal involvement, yielding a total indirect effect through coparenting relationship quality point estimate of .17; $SE = .07, 95\% CI [0.03, 0.33]$. That is, coparenting relationship quality significantly mediated the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement. To test this association further, we also conducted a mediational analysis to examine whether psychological well-being mediated the relationship between coparenting relationship quality and paternal involvement. Coparenting relationship quality demonstrated a total effect point estimate of .36 ($SE = .09$) and direct effect point estimate of .30 ($SE = .09$) on paternal involvement, yielding a total indirect effect through psychological well-being point estimate of .07; $SE = .05, 95\% CI [-0.02, 0.17]$. That is, psychological well-being did not significantly mediate the relationship between coparenting relationship

quality and paternal involvement. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

The third hypothesis stated that coparenting relationship quality would mediate the relationship between conviction history and father involvement. The mediational model was significant. Conviction history demonstrated a total effect point estimate of $-.43 (SE = .13)$ and direct effect point estimate of $-.29 (SE = .12)$ on paternal involvement, resulting in a total indirect effect through coparenting relationship quality point estimate of $-.14; SE = .06, 95\% CI [-0.26, -0.04]$. In other words, coparenting relationship quality significantly mediated the relationship between conviction history and paternal involvement. To explore this association further, we conducted a mediational analysis to examine whether conviction history mediated the relationship between coparenting relationship quality and paternal involvement. Coparenting relationship quality demonstrated a total effect point estimate of .48 ($SE = .09$) and direct effect point estimate of .42 ($SE = .09$) on paternal involvement, yielding a total indirect effect through conviction history point estimate of .06; $SE = .04, 95\% CI [-0.01, 0.16]$. Therefore, conviction history did not significantly mediate the relationship between coparenting relationship quality and paternal involvement, and Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to test the fourth hypothesis that social support would moderate the relationship between psychological well-being and levels of paternal involvement (see Table 6 for a summary of the hierarchical multiple regression). The control variables were entered in the first block of the analysis, social support and psychological well-being were entered in the second block of the analysis, and the interaction term (social support * psychological well-being) was entered in the third block. The model without the interaction term included accounted

Table 3
Intercorrelations for Control Variables and Study Variables

	Age of father	Employment status	Socioeconomic status	No. of children	Sex of child	Age of child
Religiosity	.03	.09	.28*	.03	–.11	.15
Family-of-origin father closeness	.06	–.11	–.03	–.02	–.15	–.06
Psychological well-being	.03	.22*	.19*	.01	–.02	.03
Conviction history	–.02	–.03	–.01	.07	.01	.16
Social support	–.09	.06	.05	–.31***	–.07	–.11
Coparenting relationship quality	–.15	.15	.02	–.09	–.16	–.14
Paternal involvement	–.12	.16	.05	.05	–.08	–.08

Note. Control variables are listed in the columns and study variables are listed in the rows.
* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 4
Summary of Intercorrelations for Study Variables

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Religiosity	—						
2. Family-of-origin father closeness	.12	—					
3. Psychological well-being	.15	.08	—				
4. Conviction history	.26**	-.06	-.02	—			
5. Social support	.16	.25**	.22*	-.18	—		
6. Coparenting relationship quality	.19	.11	.34***	-.20*	.35***	—	
7. Paternal involvement	-.11	.03	.31**	-.26**	.21*	.38***	—

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

for 20% of the variance in paternal involvement, $F(8, 80) = 2.42$, $p = .021$. The model with the interaction term explained 23% of the variance in paternal involvement, $F(9, 79) = 2.61$, $p = .011$. The increase in variance explained approached significance, $F_{change}(1, 79) = 3.51$, $p = .065$; however, the interaction term was not significant, $t(88) = -1.87$, $p = .065$.

Due to the reduced power of the moderation analysis by the inclusion of all six covariates in the model, we then tested the moderation including only the covariates that were significantly related to psychological well-being, social support, or paternal involvement (see Table 7 for a summary of the hierarchical multiple regression). The control variables (employment status, SES, and number of children) were entered into the first block of the analysis, social support and psychological well-being were entered in the second block of the analysis, and the interaction term (social support * psychological well-being) was entered in the third block. The model without the interaction term included accounted for 16% of the variance in paternal involvement, $F(5, 102) = 3.73$, $p = .004$. The model with the interaction term included accounted for 20% of the variance in paternal involvement, $F(6, 101) = 4.12$,

$p = .001$. The increase in variance explained was significant, $F_{change}(1, 101) = 5.28$, $p = .024$, $\Delta R^2 = .04$. The interaction term was also significant, $t(107) = -2.30$, $p = .024$. The negative interaction indicates that the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement decreases as levels of social support increase from zero to one.

Simple slope analysis was then conducted to test whether the conditional regression lines significantly differed from zero. The interaction was plotted at low ($-1 SD$), mean ($0 SD$), and high ($+1 SD$) levels of social support (see Figure 1 for a visual display of the interaction). The regression line plotted at a standard deviation below the mean significantly differed from zero, $t(108) = 3.60$, $p < .001$. That is, when social support is low, psychological well-being is related positively to paternal involvement. The regression line plotted at a standard deviation above the mean was not significantly different from zero, $t(108) = .49$, $p = .624$. That is, when social support is high, psychological well-being is not related significantly to paternal involvement. Because social support was not a significant moderator for the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement when controlling father and child factors, Hypothesis 3 was only partially supported.

Table 5
Predictors of Paternal Involvement

Variable	Self-reported paternal involvement		
	Model 1 <i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	Model 2 95% CI
Constant	3.136***	2.03**	[0.62, 3.43]
Age of father	0.00	-0.02	[-0.04, 0.01]
Employment status	0.51*	0.16	[-0.20, 0.52]
Socioeconomic status	-0.16	-0.04	[-0.28, 0.20]
No. of children	0.01	0.09*	[0.00, 0.17]
Age of child	-0.01	0.04	[-0.01, 0.09]
Sex of child	-0.05	0.02	[-0.26, 0.29]
Religiosity		-0.10	[-0.27, 0.06]
Family-of-origin father closeness		0.01	[-0.10, 0.11]
Psychological well-being		0.34*	[0.07, 0.61]
Conviction history		-0.38***	[-0.62, -0.13]
Social support		0.06	[-0.21, 0.33]
Coparenting relationship quality		0.26*	[0.04, 0.47]
R^2	.09		
F	1.22		
ΔR^2			
ΔF			

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The current study investigated the relationships among father, coparental, and contextual factors and levels of paternal involve-

Table 6
Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Social Support Moderating the Relationship Between Psychological Well-Being and Paternal Involvement With all Study Control Variables

Predictor	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	.09	
Control variables ^a		
Step 2	.11**	
Social support		.14
Psychological well-being		.27*
Step 3	.03	
Social support X Psychological well-being		-.20
Total R^2	.23	
N	88	

^a Control variables included age, employment status, SES, number of biological children, age of child, and sex of child.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 7
Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Social Support Moderating the Relationship Between Psychological Well-Being and Paternal Involvement With Statistically Relevant Study Control Variables

Predictor	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	.05	
Control variables ^a		
Step 2	.11**	
Social support		.17
Psychological well-being		.27**
Step 3	.04*	
Social support X Psychological well-being		-.21*
Total R ²	.23	
N	88	

^a Control variables included employment status, SES, and number of biological children.
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

ment, guided by influences of the Doherty et al. (1998) responsible fathering conceptual framework. The current findings suggested that several of the proposed factors, including psychological well-being, convictions since the birth of the child, social support, and coparenting relationship quality, are associated significantly with levels of paternal involvement. Further, we found that psychological well-being, convictions since the birth of the child, and coparenting relationship quality maintained significant associations with paternal involvement when controlling for the other study variables. Examination of interrelationships between the factors revealed that coparenting relationship quality mediated the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement as well as conviction history and paternal involvement. Additionally, social support moderated the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement when controlling for father factors significantly associated with the predictor variables. These findings largely support the use of the Doherty et al.'s (1998) model for determining involvement levels of nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods with their children, as well as suggest the need for further exploration for the inclusion and exclusion of certain factors in the model that may make it more culturally relevant to the current population under study.

The first hypothesis examined whether religiosity, family-of-origin father closeness, psychological well-being, conviction history since the birth of the child, social support, and coparenting relationship quality would be associated with paternal involvement. Consistent with previous literature on father involvement among Black men, better psychological well-being (Anderson et al., 2005; Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2009; Howard Caldwell et al., 2011), lower conviction rates since the birth of the child (Nelson et al., 2002; Ryan et al., 2008; Waller & Swisher, 2006) increased social support (Dallas, 2004; Roy & Dyson, 2010), and better coparenting relationship quality (Carlson et al., 2008; Coley & Hernandez, 2006; Ryan et al., 2008), were associated with higher levels of paternal involvement. Our findings support the inclusion of psychological well-being, social support, and coparenting relationship quality in the Doherty et al. (1998)

model. In addition, our findings and the previous literature suggest that conviction history since the birth of the child may prove to be a valuable addition to the influences of the responsible fathering framework developed by Doherty et al. (1998). The addition to the model may be particularly salient for nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods given that Black men are at greater odds than other racial/ethnic groups to be convicted of a crime (Kramer & Ulmer, 2009).

Not all of the proposed factors were associated with paternal involvement. We examined whether religiosity would make a valuable addition to the Doherty et al. (1998) model, given the salience of religiosity as a protective factor among Black men from low-income neighborhoods (Utsey et al., 2007). However, contrary to previous findings on general father involvement (Bollinger & Palkovitz, 2003; King, 2003), religiosity was not associated with levels of paternal involvement in the current sample. Given that no fathers were low on religiosity in this sample (i.e., no fathers scored a 1 or 2 on the religiosity measure), it is possible that use of a more nuanced measure of religiosity would result in finding a significant relationship between religiosity and paternal involvement. Because Black men were not included in the development of the SWBS measure (Utsey, Lee, Bolden, & Lanier, 2005), it is likely that religiosity measures developed to be culturally relevant for Black men may be more sensitive to differentiating those with higher and lower levels of religiosity.

Within-group ethnic variation is an important factor to consider in examining religiosity among Black men. Although Black Americans and Black Caribbeans report similarly high levels of religiosity, their involvement in certain aspects of religiosity varies in degree by ethnicity (Chatters, Taylor, Bullard, & Jackson, 2009; Taylor, Chatters, & Joe, 2011). Further, Black Caribbeans who were born in the U.S. reported lower levels of religiosity compared to Black Caribbeans who immigrated to the U.S. (Taylor et al., 2011), highlighting the importance of considering immigration status when examining the relationship between religiosity and paternal involvement among Black men. Ethnicity and immigration status are clearly relevant factors to consider in the development of a culturally sensitive measure of religiosity for Black men

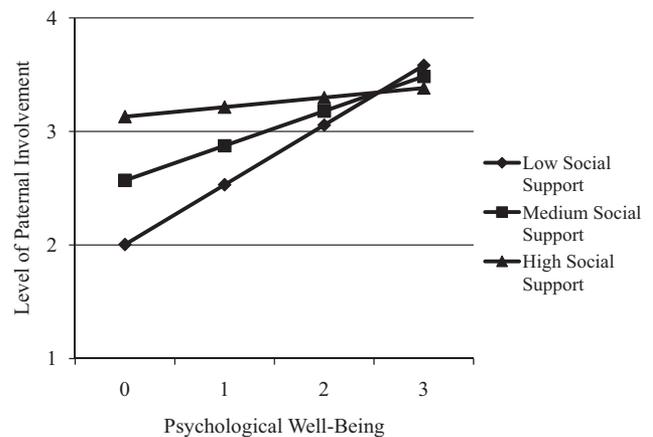


Figure 1. Illustration depicting social support moderating the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement controlling for employment status, SES, and number of biological children.

to aid in further examining whether religiosity is associated with paternal involvement among this sample is warranted.

Family-of-origin father closeness was also not associated with levels of paternal involvement in this study. This finding is inconsistent with both the compensating hypothesis, which suggests that fathers compensate for poor family-of-origin relationships by forming close relationships with their children, and the modeling hypothesis, which suggests that fathers model the relationship they had with their fathers with their children (Floyd & Morman, 2000). Although the majority of nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods who grew up in father-absent homes report being motivated to be involved in their children's lives as a direct response to having received limited involvement from their fathers (Nelson et al., 2002), many fathers do not consistently achieve higher levels of involvement with their children (Roy, 2006).

It is possible that motivation to be involved with the child, resulting from poor childhood relationships with fathers, is insufficient when fathers experience additional risk factors such as lack of resources and support or the knowledge of how to negotiate difficult coparental relationships in order to remain involved in their children's lives (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). Perhaps, fathers who have witnessed nonresidential fathers maintaining a relationship with their children may be better able to "compensate" successfully for their lack of family-of-origin father closeness. As fathers who experience poor childhood relationships with their fathers either model this negative parenting behavior in their families or are motivated to be consistently and positively involved with their children, it is important to identify the factors that influence prosocial parenting such as better coparental relationships or presence of a childhood father figure. Further research should continue to empirically examine the relationship between family-of-origin father closeness and paternal involvement among this population as well as test whether the presence of an involved nonresidential father or better coparental relationship quality moderates the relationship between poor family-of-origin father closeness and paternal involvement.

Of the factors that were significantly associated with paternal involvement among this sample, psychological well-being, coparenting relationship quality, and conviction history since the birth of the child accounted for the greatest variance in paternal involvement when controlling for the other study variables. These findings confirm previous research (Anderson et al., 2005; Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007; Carlson et al., 2008; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007; Ryan et al., 2008; Waller & Swisher, 2008).

There is a growing body of research demonstrating the association between psychological well-being and paternal involvement, although previous studies have focused primarily on low levels of depressive symptoms (Anderson et al., 2005; Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2009; Howard Caldwell et al., 2011). The current finding extends previous research to include a broader measurement of psychological functioning. Fathers experiencing depressive, anxiety, or somatic symptoms are at risk for low levels of paternal involvement.

A burgeoning area of research has also found that nonresidential fathers with incarcerations since the birth of the child are less involved with their children (Ryan et al., 2008; Swisher & Waller, 2008; Waller & Swisher, 2006). Our current findings extend this body of literature by investigating conviction histories of fathers versus dichotomously asking whether the father has spent time in

an adult correctional facility. Convictions may incite distrust in the mother and thus, decrease paternal involvement levels, particularly among nonresidential fathers (Nelson et al., 2002).

Myriad studies have shown that coparenting relationship quality is associated with higher levels of paternal involvement among samples of predominantly Black nonresidential fathers from low-income neighborhoods (Carlson et al., 2008; Fagan & Palkovitz, 2007; Ryan et al., 2008). The current study used an independent sample and found support that the coparental relationship is a highly important factor related to paternal involvement levels given mothers' role as gatekeepers to children (Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowski, 2008). These findings suggest that fatherhood programs and policies geared toward improving fathers' levels of psychological well-being, conviction rates, and coparental relationships may contribute to increased levels of paternal involvement among this population.

As hypothesized, coparenting relationship quality mediated the relationship between both psychological well-being and paternal involvement and conviction history and paternal involvement. This finding supports previous research, which found that interparental conflict mediated the relationship between psychological distress and paternal involvement and involvement in illegal activities and paternal involvement among predominantly Black and Latino nonresidential fathers from low-income neighborhoods (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). These findings provide further evidence of the essentiality of good coparenting relationship quality to the sustained involvement of nonresidential fathers with children. Better mental health and lower rates of convictions in the current study were related to better coparenting relationship quality which was in turn related to increased father involvement. It is important to note that neither psychological functioning nor conviction history mediated the relationship between coparenting relationship quality and paternal involvement. Specifying coparenting relationship quality as a central mediator in the Doherty et al. (1998) model may enhance the model as well as make it more culturally relevant for nonresidential fathers, among whom this factor is most imperative for continued involvement with the child (Nelson et al., 2002).

Contrary to our hypothesis, social support did not moderate the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement when controlling for all father and child sociodemographic factors. The lack of significance was most likely due to lack of power given that only 88 participants were included in the model. Alternatively, the nonvalidated social support measure used in this study may have contributed to the nonsignificant interaction when control variables were included. However, social support was a significant moderator when only the covariates that were associated significantly with the predictors were included in the model. The finding that social support buffered the relationship between psychological well-being and paternal involvement is consistent with previous research that found that social support moderated the relationship between fathers' stress and level of paternal caregiving among adolescent fathers of infants (Fagan et al., 2007). The current study found that psychological well-being was associated significantly with increased paternal involvement among fathers with lower, but not higher, levels of social support when controlling for fathers' employment status, SES, and number of biological children. Thus, social support may serve as a buffer for fathers with poorer levels of psychological well-being. As high

levels of psychological stress and low levels of social support are risk factors for paternal involvement (Spector, 2006), it is within reason that higher levels of social support could lessen the effects of increased psychological distress. This finding extends the current knowledge on how determinants of responsible fathering can interact to influence levels of paternal involvement and has important theoretical implications for Doherty et al.'s (1998) model. Future research should further disentangle the complex relationships between determinants of responsible fathering.

Practical Implications

Findings of the current study added substantive information to the literature on the determinants of paternal involvement among nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods, which have important implications for potentially strengthening father-child relationships within Black families and thus, improving children's health and well-being (DeBell, 2008; Dubowitz et al., 2001). Previously, researchers have focused on the factors that discourage fathers from being involved in their children's lives, especially when studying minority fathers (Hamer, 2001). The current line of research took a strengths-based approach to illuminate the variables that sustain paternal involvement despite the adversity of being from low-income neighborhoods and of nonresidential and minority status.

Individuals working with this population may benefit from targeting the mutable factors related to paternal involvement highlighted in this study. Specifically, the development and evaluation of interventions to test the effectiveness of targeting mental health, criminal involvement, and the coparental relationship contemporaneously is warranted. Policies that contribute to creating contentious relationships among nonresidential fathers and their coparents (e.g., requiring mothers to cooperate with child support enforcement in order to be eligible for government benefits) may be counterproductive to fathers' involvement levels with their children. Alternatively, programs that combine coparenting skills training with mental health and crime reduction programs may be particularly effective in increasing father involvement among nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income backgrounds (Ooms, 2002). However, future research evaluating the effects of such programs on fathers' involvement levels and children's mental health are needed (Cabrera, 2010). Psychologists, social workers, program directors, and other individuals working with this population may benefit from educating their clients on the factors associated with increased paternal involvement as well as providing the necessary resources to aid fathers' improvements in identified areas of weakness.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the numerous strengths in the present study, several limitations must be noted. Foremost, measuring levels of paternal involvement was based solely on the fathers' reports, which is prone to overestimation (Coley & Morris, 2002; Wical & Doherty, 2005). However, as previous studies on paternal involvement have frequently used maternal or child reports of father involvement (Carlson et al., 2008; Ryan et al., 2008), we consider it a strength of this study that fathers' reports of their paternal involvement were included. Additionally, Hernandez and Coley (2007) found

that fathers' reports of their paternal involvement are reliable in studies involving simple surveys assessing the construct. Future studies should use multi-informant reports on father involvement (i.e., mother, father, and child when applicable) to triangulate information and address response bias.

Other methodological limitations of the study are related to its monomethod design and assessment of key study constructs. The present study relied solely on self-reported data. Studies that use a monomethod design tend to have inflated statistical associations due to common method variance. To address this methodological limitation, future studies should employ other methods of measurement, such as observations or interviews in addition to self-reports. Additionally, a new, unvalidated measure of parenting-specific social support was developed for the purposes of this study. Validation of the measure in the present study was precluded given our modest sample size. Future studies should further test and develop this measure given the lack of measures assessing this important construct (Doherty et al., 1998). The validation of such a measure would benefit the field of family research. Further, there was limited variability in our conviction variable as the majority of participants had zero convictions since the birth of their children and few participants had more than one conviction. The current study also did not assess whether participants' were convicted of felony or misdemeanor crimes nor was information regarding their sentencing gathered. Future studies would enhance this area of research by assessing type of crime committed and sentence received.

Concerning generalizability, the fathers in the current study were largely native-born African Americans and from a particular region of the United States. Fathering patterns may be different for fathers who immigrated to the United States or belong to different ethnic groups (Tamis-LeMonda, Kahana-Kalman, & Yoshikawa, 2009). Additionally, ethnicity and immigration status influence certain factors associated with paternal involvement among Black men (Taylor et al., 2011). Given the complexity of within-group ethnic variation on fathering behaviors and factors related to fathering, the moderating influence of ethnicity and immigration status should be further explored in future studies on paternal involvement.

Lastly, because there was no manipulation in this study, researchers cannot conclude causal or directional effects. Future studies should utilize longitudinal methodologies to more fully elucidate the nature of relationships, and provide directional evidence for, the association between the factors in this study and levels of father involvement.

Conclusion

Although the current study had several limitations, it extends the extant knowledge of the strengths of nonresidential, Black fathers from low-income neighborhoods. This study provided evidence that several factors are related to higher levels of paternal involvement among this population, specifically better psychological well-being, lower conviction rates, more parenting-specific support from influential individuals, and higher quality coparenting relationships. The present study also illustrated the importance of examining the strengths of disadvantaged fathers in order to gather information on key areas to incorporate potentially into future interventions. This study was valuable in that it explored several

father, contextual, and coparental factors among a disproportionately vulnerable group of fathers who are at the greatest risk of low levels of paternal involvement which has been associated with poor outcomes for children. Future studies should continue to examine the factors as well as the interrelationships among factors that are associated with high levels of paternal involvement among this population.

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