Joyce A. Arditti   *Virginia Tech*

Sonia Molloy   *Penn State York*

Sara Spiers   *Virginia Tech*

Elizabeth I. Johnson   *University of Tennessee*

Perceptions of Nonresident Father Involvement Among Low-Income Youth and Their Single Parents

Objective: *To examine sources of theoretical variation in youth and caregiver perceptions of nonresident father involvement.*

Background: *Relationship complexity and environmental factors can result in complicated trajectories of father involvement. We examined both caregiver and youth perceptions of nonresident father–child relationships among low-income, single-parent families that were often affected by paternal incarceration.*

Method: *The present study drew from a sample of families served by a Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) program in a metropolitan region of a Mid-Atlantic state. In-depth interviews with 27 caregivers and their 33 children were the basis of a qualitative analysis.*

Results: *Findings revealed 4 typologies of perceived father involvement: disengaged, sporadic, encouraged, and engaged. Description was thickest regarding the complexities paternal incarceration posed for nonresident fathers' relationships with children and caregivers' attempts to mediate between children and fathers.*

Conclusion: *Narratives about nonresident fathers were situated within complicated ecologies of environmental press such as incarceration, geographic separation, and relationship quality challenges that changed as families adapted to new realities and shifts in kin networks. Maternal mediation between children and their fathers was not a simple judgment and driven by real concerns about children's well-being in highly stigmatized environments or older youths' contact preferences.*

Implications: *Caregivers' concerns about children's fathers need to be understood as part of any programmatic efforts aimed at enhancing coparenting in nonresident-father families. Families with encouraged forms of nonresident-father involvement might be particularly receptive to intervention aimed at facilitating positive father–child relationships.*

Scholars have struggled to identify the mechanisms that drive children's relationships with their nonresident fathers (Brown & Manning, 2012). The lack of conceptual and empirical clarity regarding the experience of nonresidential fatherhood stems largely from the complexity of family arrangements associated with paternal nonresidence, the changing contours of nonresident status over time, and the

Department of Human Development, 311 Wallace Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061 (arditti@vt.edu).

failure of research to consider multiple relationships with the same father and complex kin networks (Roy & Smith, 2013). The purpose of the present study was to unpack variation in perceptions of nonresident father–child relationships among a sample of low-income, single-parent families, many of whom reported instances of current or previous paternal incarceration. Our aim in examining this purposeful group of study participants was to advance theory about forms of father involvement that transcended structural parameters of *father presence versus absence* and were sensitive to relationship quality among family members as well as the real lives of youth and their caregivers. We sought to include not only caregiver perceptions of children's fathers, but children's interpretations of fathering. Children's perspectives provided a window to gain insight regarding how they saw their fathers, their experiences with diverse forms of engagement, and their own agency with regard to encouraging or withdrawing from relationships with fathers. Our grand research question was as follows: *How do youth and their caregivers interpret experience with their nonresident fathers within contexts of economic disadvantage and (oftentimes) paternal incarceration?*

Using a modified analytic induction qualitative methodology informed by extant theory (Charmaz, 2006), we drew from interviews of children aged 7 to 16 years and their caregivers, who experienced complex family transitions and economic disadvantage. Our qualitative approach was consistent with calls for innovative research aimed at subjective perceptions of fatherhood that considers the quality rather than the quantity of engagement, particularly among low-income families with nonresidential fathers (Roy & Kwon, 2007). On the basis of a qualitative analysis of the narrative data, we were able to attend to family-level processes and changes that seemed to influence father involvement (Roy & Burton, 2007; Roy & Kwon, 2007).

CONCEPTUALIZING NONRESIDENTIAL FATHER INVOLVEMENT IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Despite advances in the scholarship on fathers, the role of active engagement is still used as a prominent assessment of father involvement (Castillo, Welch, & Sarver, 2013). Active engagement, defined as providing economic support, nurturance, and being available for children (Palkovitz, 2014), may unwittingly hamper an understanding of more nuanced and fluid forms of fathering. For example, relationships between youth and nonresident fathers have been categorized as "disengaged" per men's declining involvement over time with children as assessed by typical metrics of contact and father engagement in the family (Cheadle, Amato, & King, 2010). Yet disengagement on the surface may obscure a complex web of social arrangements and movement in and out of fathering roles (Roy & Smith, 2013) as well as maternal behaviors aimed at securing men's contributions in families (Roy & Burton, 2007). Low-income nonresident fathers in particular may offer "few objective indicators of parenting behavior," heightening the need to understand how "varied meaning" shapes fathering opportunities and experiences (Roy & Kwon, 2007, p. 235) as well as the ways in which low-income mothers ensure their children's well-being (Roy & Burton, 2007).

Multiple contextual factors are related to trajectories of father involvement, with economically disadvantaged fathers showing patterns of engagement that either do not fit more typical models of father involvement or reflect adaptations to environmental constraints. Primary among these fathering constraints for economically disadvantaged, and in particular African American, families is the experience of paternal incarceration (Brown & Manning, 2012; Roy & Smith, 2013). Critics argue that carceral confinement, via mass imprisonment policies and racist police strategies, is a central means of driving institutional racism by disenfranchising millions of African Americans and perpetuating a historical pattern of structural disadvantage that is defined by race (Alexander, 2010; Johnson, 2011; Staples, 2011). This racialized "caste system" (Alexander, 2010) has implications for families and has contributed to increases in single-mother households and Black fathers' nonresidence (Arditti, 2012; Edin, Nelson, & Paranal, 2004). It is estimated that up to 2.7 million children have a parent in prison or jail—the largest proportion of whom are Black, have incarcerated fathers, and are economically disadvantaged (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2015). Racial disparities in prison populations extend to the family; among children born in 1990, by 14 years of age one in four Black children had a father in prison compared with fewer than 1 in 25 White children (Wildeman, 2009). Incarceration

hinders one's fathering ability (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005) and poses unique challenges to family relationships due to the stigma connected to incarceration and the material hardship paternal incarceration may bring to families (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2015).

In addition to contextual constraints on father involvement, certain family processes influence the nature of fathering. The quality of coparenting relationships has been seen as especially important in terms of its influence on nonresidential father involvement (Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008) and specifically among families with an incarcerated father (Arditti et al., 2005; Roy & Dyson, 2005). Mothers in low-income families are pivotal in tailoring flexible fathering roles and involving nonresidential fathers, along with other men, to fulfill family needs and improve children's life chances (Roy & Burton, 2007).

Sensitizing Concepts: Environmental Press and Relationship Quality

Our qualitative approach utilizes sensitizing concepts informed by extant theory and the empirical literature on families and nonresident fathering. Sensitizing concepts are "interpretive devices" that serve "as a starting point" for qualitative analyses (Bowen, 2006, p. 2). Consistent with Charmaz's (2006) recommendations, we sought to connect our general understandings derived from theory and the empirical literature regarding the role of environmental contexts (such as low-income, racialized contexts of paternal incarceration) and family processes (such as the quality of the relationship between children's mothers and fathers) to participant narratives about nonresident fathers' involvement.

Environmental press is a concept derived from ecological theory that involves multiple contextual forces acting to shape behavior and development (Kemp, Langer, & Tompson, 2016). With regard to fathering, environmental press entails person–environment transactions involving cultural, economic, social, and household circumstances that occur over time and among multiple systemic levels (Lawton & Nahemow, 1973). Primary among these transactions are racist mass incarceration policies and policing strategies that remove Black fathers from their households and communities (Alexander, 2010; Staples, 2011). Moreover,

despite research and commentary documenting the racial biases that underpin the mass incarceration and policing of Black men, there is a lack of coherent theory and evidence that documents the independent effects these stressors may have on Black families and the nonresidential fathers attached to them, beyond Black men's absence due to confinement. For example, in addition to the ways in which incarceration alters paternal roles (and disproportionately so in Black families), independent forms of press related to living in overpoliced communities may also influence parenting (Akesson et al., 2012) and, by extension, the perceptions of nonincarcerated caregivers and youth. In sum, person–environment transactions were theorized to contribute to fathering behavior and influences, as well as child and maternal perceptions of fathers (Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, & Roggman, 2014). Extrapolating from ecological perspectives about fathering and family relationships (e.g., Cabrera et al., 2014), examples of environmental press might include the social location of the family (i.e., socioeconomic status, race, neighborhood), cultural understandings about what constitutes a good father, household transitions such as divorce or relocation, and the role of kin support.

The second sensitizing concept that informed the present study involved the relationship quality between caregivers and their children's fathers, and by extension, youth and their nonresident fathers. Both maternal and child influences have been theorized to be antecedents of fathers' involvement (Dunn, 2004). A facet of relationship quality that research identifies as particularly determinant of fathers' involvement is *maternal gatekeeping*, defined as conscious or unconscious actions that keep control of child-rearing with the mother and, in doing so, may restrict fathers' involvement (McBride et al., 2005). Although such gatekeeping has tended to be considered a means to deflect, exclude, or discourage father involvement (e.g., Allen & Hawkins, 1999), we recognize gatekeeping, particularly in conjunction with paternal incarceration, as a nuanced family process that could be characterized by mothers' ambivalence and maternal concerns about whether contact with fathers is in children's best interest (Arditti, 2012; Hoffmann, Byrd, & Kightlinger, 2010). Therefore, we chose to examine caregivers' narratives about how they may inhibit or facilitate fathers' involvement

with children broadly and distanced ourselves from mother-blaming discourse (Walker & McGraw, 2000) around fathers' involvement or the lack thereof.

METHOD

Participants and Procedures

The present study draws from a sample of families served by a Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) program in a metropolitan region of a Mid-Atlantic state. The study was independent of BBBS of America. The BBBS program in this metropolitan region served approximately 300 primarily low-income, African American, single-mother families. Approximately 20% of youth enrolled in the program report having an incarcerated parent (cite withheld to protect participant anonymity). This agency population was originally recruited to pilot certain family process and child adjustment measures and open-ended questions designed to explore the implications of parental incarceration on mothers and children. Similar to a sample recruitment strategy described by Arditti and Savla (2015), BBBS case managers provided information about the research study to caregivers (typically mothers) who had youth enrolled in the BBBS program to determine interest and request release of their contact information for research purposes. Information was provided via a mailed pamphlet to the majority of families served by this BBBS agency or a phone description during routine case management calls. BBBS staff members were not involved in implementing study procedures or data analysis.

Out of 67 total referrals made to us by the case managers, approximately 40% were enrolled in and completed the study, yielding interviews with a total of 27 caregivers and their children ($n = 33$). To enrich the data with children's voices, in instances of parental incarceration (typically children's fathers; only two families in the study were affected by maternal incarceration), we permitted sibling groups to participate in the study ($n = 6$ families). In four of these six families with sibling groups, caregivers reported that the siblings had different fathers. The inclusion of both caregivers and youth, as well as several sibling groups, served as a form of data triangulation, and we believe this enhanced the comprehensiveness of the study

(King & Horrocks, 2010). The first author or a trained graduate student interviewed caregivers and children separately in private offices at the BBBS agency during the summer of 2015.

A total of 33 youth participants (aged 7–16 years; $M = 11.5$ years) were interviewed regarding their relationship with their nonresident parent, and 27 primary caregivers (range: 30–65 years; $M = 40.0$ years)—87% of whom were biological mothers of children in the study—were interviewed as well. The majority of adult participants in the study identified as single or divorced (90%) and had a high school education with some additional educational training. One quarter of participants were college educated, and most caregivers and parents in the study were engaged in some form of paid employment. Eighteen (67%) of the adult participants self-identified as African American. Fifty-six percent of the caregivers reported household annual incomes below the 2015 poverty threshold of $24,200 per year (a rough estimate for the purposes of this study given the mean number of children reported by caregivers), 63% of caregivers reported receiving some form of public assistance, and about 40% received child support. Mothers and caregivers reported having a mean of about three children. Twenty of the 27 caregivers (74%) reported that the biological father of at least one of their children was or had been in jail or prison. In two of the four cases in which children were in nonparental care (under the care of a grandmother or other relative), caregivers reported both paternal and maternal incarceration. Mothers and caregivers who reported the parental incarceration of at least one child under their care had a statistically higher mean number of children than those families in the study without a history of parental incarceration ($n = 27$, $t = 2.4$, $p < .01$).

Interviews

We used separate semistructured interviews for mothers or caregivers and their children aimed at eliciting information-rich responses about children's relationships with their fathers, caregiver–child relationships, fathers' criminal justice involvement, family stress and support, and children's behavior and mental health adjustment. Interview development for the present study was informed by previous research completed by Arditti and Savla (2015) with a

similar group of caregivers and their children participating in the BBBS Program in the same Mid-Atlantic state. Caregiver interviews were approximately 90 to 120 minutes in duration and interviews with children were approximately 30 to 60 minutes in duration. Open-ended questions pertaining to children's contact with their fathers (within the context of incarceration and other forms of nonresidence), caregivers' relationships with children's fathers, relationship quality between children and fathers, and caregiver concerns about their children were an integral part of the interview and the basis for the present analysis. Exemplar open-ended questions from which data was drawn for this study in the caregiver interview included the following: "Tell me about your child's experience visiting his or her nonresident father?"; "What concerns you most about your child?"; "Please describe the best thing about your child?" (from the Child Behavior Checklist; Achenbach, 1991); and "Please comment on the quality of your relationship with your child's father." Exemplar open-ended questions from which data was drawn for this paper in the child interview were similar and included: "Tell me about your experience visiting/seeing target father?"; "Has it ever been difficult to be in a family like yours? If so, what has that been like for you?"; and "What is best about being in a family like yours?" Caregiver interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Youth interviews were not audio recorded to provide a reassuring and trusting environment for children. Youth replies to interview questions and detailed notes were recorded in writing by interviewers during and immediately after each interview; when implemented with fidelity, this process permits an accurate representation of responses (Opdenakker, 2006).

Analytic Strategy

Overview. Environmental press and family relationship quality served as sensitizing concepts around which codes were clustered and arranged in a matrix (a method known as the "framework method;" Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). The coding approach was systematic and flexible, permitted constant comparison through the review of data across a coding matrix, and was particularly suitable for having multiple members of the research team conduct coding across interviews (Gale et al., 2013).

We began with an inductive approach to identify broad themes in the data, in this case, environmental risks and buffers as well as the quality of relationships among family members, and then returned to the extant theory and literature to further explain these themes. Our next step involved going back to the data to check whether there was sufficient evidence for the proposed themes. Although sensitizing concepts informed coding, codes were flexible and expansive to accommodate contrasting or novel data.

Coding and interpretation. Coding and interpretation were based on caregivers and an aggregate document that represented youth interview responses, as recorded in handwritten notes taken by the interviewers. The transcription of youth responses was grouped by interview question for coding purposes. Multiple readings of both youth and caregiver transcriptions generated initial open codes in the first phase of data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Open codes included a focus on children's experiences with their fathers, contact patterns with fathers, incarceration, coparenting, and economic factors such as whether caregivers had sufficient economic resources. Readings of the data and weekly research team meetings occurred over a period of 9 months (August 2015–April 2016). Similar to procedures described in the framework method (Gale et al., 2013), after the research team coded narrative data from the first few families, we compared labels and agreed on a set of codes to flexibly apply to the interviews.

Codes were continually refined based on research team discussions as well as our frequent return to the data and case comparisons. We documented the coding phases of our analysis via an audit trail, which included a dedicated journal of notes regarding our coding decisions and an evolving framework matrix that contained multiple iterations of the coding scheme as it developed (x-axis) and the extent that codes mapped onto both youth and caregiver interviews (y-axis) for each family. Both the audit trail and the matrix helped us track our refinements and establish analytic trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This systematic constant comparative analysis helped us recognize patterns in the data and advance a midrange theoretical model (Charmaz, 2006; Gale et al., 2013). In addition to the use of a framework matrix, we triangulated qualitative information with metrics assessing frequency

and quality of contact with fathers (see Arditti & Savla, 2015, for description of items). Finally, basic member checks were also conducted by providing all participants (and BBBS staff) with a summary of the preliminary findings (Harper & Cole, 2012) in spring 2016. Participants and stakeholders had an opportunity at this time to provide feedback (although we did not individually contact study participants for this purpose).

FINDINGS

Sources of Variation in Perceptions of Nonresident Fathers' Involvement

Caregiver and youth reports of environmental press and relationship quality provided insight regarding the perceived nature of father involvement and served as the two underlying conceptual continua that were the basis of a typology of perceived nonresidential father involvement (advanced later in the findings). Before describing that typology, we go into depth describing the thematic content that was most salient with regard to how children and caregivers explained their relationships with nonresident fathers.

Environmental Press Influences

Caregivers and children revealed contextual variation that seemed to bear on how children's fathers were perceived; we labeled these sources of influence *environmental press*. Environmental press indicators included structural complexity in fathers, mothers, and children's lives (e.g., repartnering, whether children resided or remembered residing with fathers, moving, children in multiple households), challenging life circumstances (e.g., incarceration, illness, unemployment), and enabling interventions or relationships (e.g., court-ordered visits, prison programs, kin support). Chronic and persistent constraints seemed to connect with less perceived involvement of nonresident fathers as well as adaptive strategies on the part of family members to fill fathering roles.

Enabling environmental press involved contextual factors that seemed to facilitate fathers' involvement. For example, 9-year-old Robert's engaged relationship with his father seemed to get a jump-start from an enabling agency intervention. Robert indicated during the interview that he was very close to his father and visited him every week, and his mother Evy reported that Robert had recently been visiting his father more than in the past due to a court order. Although Evy indicated that she was "not happy with the care of the child while with Dad," Robert seemed to enjoy the consistent contact he was having with his father. Robert and Evy's family dynamics highlighted the complexity and fluid nature of father involvement. Before court intervention, Robert's involvement with his father could be characterized as inconsistent. The court order for visitation seemed to facilitate Robert's visits with his father.

Participant narratives provided thick description with regard to environmental press constraints and family adaptations that might stem from those constraints. Rhianna and her 16-year-old daughter Shandra's narratives demonstrate how fathers' repartnering and the addition of a new set of children may restrict father involvement. Shandra reported that her relationship with her father was "good enough" and that she talked to her father and received advice from him. However, Rhianna, Shandra's mother, reported that the stepmother is "not a nice parent" and believed Shandra's father needed to be more "proactive in his coparenting." This difficult relationship with the stepparent (as perceived by Rhianna) seemed to contribute to the sporadic involvement between Shandra and her father given that contact was punctuated by uncertainty and inconsistency. This uncertainty was illustrated in Rhianna's statement that Shandra's contact with her father "really dropped off after he had more children." Yet Shandra's close relationships with her godparents as well as her Big Sister, whom Rhianna described as "family to us all," seemed to fill in the gaps left by the uncertain and at times unsatisfying relationship between Shandra and her father.

Similar to Shandra's sporadic involvement with her father, it was not unusual for children with disengaged fathers to have alternative male role models in their lives, such as a stepfather or male kin, as well as close relationships with a Big Brother. For example, Ryan's father, who had passed away 5 years before the interview, left the relationship and never returned when he found out Dina was pregnant. He was briefly incarcerated for failure to pay child support when Ryan was a young boy, and Dina, a 45-year-old mother of two, explained that Ryan "never knew his father." She added that the first

time Ryan ever "laid eyes on his father was at his funeral. .. when he was 10 years of age. Ryan confirmed that his "father has never been around" and viewed his Big Brother, with whom he has been matched for 3 years, as his "father figure." In addition to Ryan's Big Brother, Dina commented on the positive influence of Ryan's father's family:

> On a plus side his father's family has been an influence on him. . . . It was just daddy that was the issue. Whenever there is family gatherings or something he [Ryan] goes down there. . . . But they [paternal kin] keep in touch via phones, texts, Facebook . . . so he constantly has contact with them in some form or the other.

An implicit assumption in thinking about environmental press is that individual behavior and competence becomes compatible with the demands of the environment (Garbarino, 1995; Lawton & Nahemow, 1973). Both Rhianna and Shandra's and Dina and Ryan's cases illustrate how families may respond to press and reach out for other relational opportunities.

Paternal incarceration as a complex form of press. Given that many participants in the study reported that fathers were or had been in prison or jail (often more than one time), a predominant environmental press theme in the interviews involved how paternal incarceration influenced children's relationships with fathers. Paternal incarceration was a constraining form of environmental press in some of the family cases, such as with Angela and her 10-year-old daughter Janie. Neither shared residence with Janie's father, who was briefly incarcerated when Janie was in preschool. Angela told us that Janie "knows where he's from, he lives out of state. .. and she knows what he looks like from just pictures." Incarceration in conjunction with geographic distance factored into disengaged father–child relationships.

Although paternal incarceration itself is predominantly conceptualized in the literature as a constraint to vital relationships between children and their fathers, at times youth and caregivers in the study found ways to stay connected despite this difficult form of press. For example, Tandice and Jenna's family provides a case example of how environmental press, and incarceration specifically, may intersect with changing contact patterns and a sporadic form of father involvement. Tandice was 15 years of age and reported

never living with her dad, although her mother, Lisa, stated that her father had resided with them until Tandice was about 6 years of age. Lisa described her own relationship with the father as "nonexistent," but she took the children to see their father in jail about once or twice a month when Tandice was younger. Tandice told us she enjoyed visiting him while he was in jail; she described the visits as "fun and games" and reported consistent telephone and letter contact during his incarceration. Tandice did not know the reason for his confinement but explained during the interview that he was "much nicer when he was in jail. .. he is mean now." Upon his release from prison, her father lived with them for a while and then left, moving about an hour away from them. Lisa (also mother to 13-year-old Jenna, discussed later in the article), acknowledged the relationship between her children and their father was "great while he was incarcerated" but deteriorated once he was released from jail and the visitation structure was no longer there. Perhaps one of the most interesting nuances of the girls' sporadic involvement with their father was that incarceration was a context that resulted in *more* contact with him, which in this case seemed to be associated with relatively good father–child relationships.

In addition to regular contact during men's confinement, the presence of other family members (such as paternal grandmothers) can be an enabling environmental influence that fosters a relationship between children and their incarcerated fathers. For example, 10-year-old Shawna had never lived with her dad, who unbeknownst to Shawna was in prison for murder. According to her mother, Belle, he had been "in and out of jail all his life." Shawna said that her grandmother would take her to see her father when she visited them in a nearby state, and that she would talk with him "three or four times a month." During the caregiver interview, Belle said that she did not allow prison visits, and she did not mention (perhaps she did not know) that Shawna visited her father when visiting her paternal grandmother.

Sometimes formal corrections programs served to enable father–child relationships and encourage father involvement. For example, April reported a good long-distance relationship with her 13-year-old son's father who was previously incarcerated for 8 years. April noted that a family reunion program that the prison sponsored kept her son connected to his father during

that time. The family reunion program permitted Michael to stay with his father for 3 days at a time, three times a year, in an apartment-like setting that was monitored by prison staff. April tried to keep her relationship with Michael's father good "just for his [i.e., Michael's] sake." At the time of the interview, Michael's father had been released from prison and was living in New York City, far from Michael's home with his mother. However, Michael reported visiting his father during Christmas break from school and occasionally talking to him on the telephone, although a consistent pattern of engagement had not yet emerged.

Relationship Quality Processes

As described previously, relationship quality was a sensitizing concept that guided analysis. We were particularly interested in caregiver reports about the nature of their relationships with children's fathers, as well as children's reports of relationship quality. Description regarding relationship quality processes was thickest in terms of caregivers' attempts to negotiate between children and fathers, protect children from contact, or help children understand their fathers. We conceptualized caregivers' relationship work in these areas as *mediation* rather than *gatekeeping*, given the pejorative connotation associated with the latter term.

Caregiver mediation. Eight caregivers discussed content pertaining to caregiver mediation, which, particularly in conjunction with paternal incarceration, could contribute to or perpetuate disengagement between children and fathers. Narratives from the interviews helped contextualize mediation so that it could be understood as an effort to protect children from potential trauma and discomfort rather than simply as a means of unjustifiable interference to deter fathers' involvement. A grandmother who was responsible for the care of her son's stepdaughter explained her mediation with respect to why the child under her care did not visit her incarcerated stepson:

> I don't think personally that children should visit. I took her [stepgrandchild] once when he [stepson] was in the city jail, but he got transferred after 2 years . . . we went up for that visit, and that was it because I feel like when you're visiting often [it's] like . . . you're just doing time with the inmate.

"Doing time" with the inmate is illustrative of secondary prisonization—that is, the family's institutional exposure to the deprivations that the incarcerated are subjected to, such as controlled movement and concentrated surveillance (Comfort, 2008). For example, Shirley was a mother of three children, including 13-year-old fraternal twins, Kevin and Felicia, who were each matched with a Big Brother and Big Sister, respectively. The twins' father, Tony, had been in prison most of his life and had recently passed away. Shirley said that the twins had only seen Tony two or three times. The disengaged relationship largely stemmed from Tony's repeated incarcerations and Shirley's effort to shield the children from the prison environment—particularly when Tony was moved to a maximum-security correctional facility. The following excerpt from Shirley's interview revealed her discomfort with prison visits and concern about the children:

> So for them to have to pat [the twins] down . . . . I was like WOAH! . . . It affected me because . . . I did this to them. . . . And it affected them because they [didn't] wanna go back to see him; . . . they said "Momma, we don't like being there."

Shirley's caregiver mediation must be considered *in context*, particularly in terms of the realities of bringing children to a "supermax" corrections facility. However, gatekeeping frameworks may inadvertently overemphasize how caregivers limit children's contact with fathers. Several caregivers described enabling aspects of their relationships with children's fathers. For example, incarceration can serve as a turning point and give rise to engaged fathering via the mother's positive mediation. Ten-year-old Lucy's father had been briefly incarcerated for failure to pay child support, but post-incarceration Lucy's mother, Meryl, described her own relationship with him as "excellent" and his involvement over the past year, including child support payments, as consistent. Lucy reported feeling close to her father, saw him frequently, and talked or texted him daily. She described sleepovers at his big blue house as "a lot of fun" and liked playing with her half-siblings.

Similarly, 15-year-old Janet's father had been incarcerated for 6 years and had 4 more years remaining on his sentence at the time of the interview. Janet had a good relationship with her father before he was incarcerated; she reported

that their relationship was still good at the time of the interview and that she did not feel negatively affected by his incarceration. Janet's mother, Gayle, reported that the relationship between Janet and her father has been consistently maintained through weekly telephone calls and twice-monthly visits. Gayle also rated her own relationship with Janet's father as good and wanted to "make sure the child's relationship [with her father] is maintained." The good relationship between Janet's father and mother seemed to play an important role in keeping Janet engaged with her father. However, although Janet reported not feeling stigmatized because of her father's incarceration, she felt that there was "a lot of missed opportunity because her father can't physically be present with her outside of prison."

Indeed, it seemed that relationships with incarcerated fathers could be consistent and engaged despite environmental press barriers posed by imprisonment and geographic distance if mothers or caregivers were willing to facilitate it. Sandra was a divorced mother of four who discussed her son Max's relationship with his father. At the time of the interview, 10-year-old Max's father, Henry, who had been incarcerated more than once, had been incarcerated for 3 years for his most recent conviction. Max's engagement with Henry hinged on Sandra's willingness to take her son to the prison for visits and facilitate the relationship. Although Sandra believed her ex-husband still wanted a relationship with her, she tried to keep the focus on Max. She reported very consistent telephone and letter contact, and took Max to the prison for visits several times a year. She described good relationships among her, Henry, and Max and appreciated the guidance that Henry offered: "He talks about discipline [during prison visits] and reinforces the kids acting well with me." Max seemed to enjoy his time with his father and the continued contact with him, although he shared with us: "Sometimes it's hard that we all don't live in the same house."

In sum, *context* was critically important in thinking about how relationship quality among family members, and caregiver mediation in particular, influenced perceptions of father involvement. Our participants discussed environmental (supermax facility), historical (previous positive interactions with fathers), and personal (belief that mother should facilitate involvement for children's sake) influences that

factored into mediation behaviors and support for the nonresident fathers in children's lives.

Typologies of Father Involvement

Environmental press and relationship quality processes seemed to distinguish how families perceived fathers' involvement. These processes are conceptualized on two separate continua of variation that served as the basis for four nonresident father involvement typologies that emerged in these data: disengaged, sporadic, encouraged, and engaged.

Figure 1 summarizes the typologies as well as how each type corresponded to the environmental press and relationship quality continua. These types embodied complex patterns of father–child relationships that were not always straightforward given certain challenges and changes in the lives of study participants. Families were categorized based on where they seemed to fall on environmental press and relationship quality criteria per the continua illustrated in Figure 1. Although not every family fit a categorization perfectly, our interpretation reflected the extent to which caregivers and their children's words and attitudes about nonresident fathers mapped onto a predominant form of father involvement at the time of the interview. It is worth noting that paternal incarceration scenarios characterized families across all four involvement types. We provide a brief description of each form of perceived involvement, including defining features and case exemplars.

Disengaged. The most common typology of perceived father involvement among caregivers and children in this study was *disengaged*. Families characterized by disengagement reported little to no telephone or letter contact with fathers and, with the exception of one family, no in-person contact with fathers either. Disengagement was characterized by a great deal of restrictive environmental press, or constraints to father involvement, as well as consistently poor relationship quality, as reported by caregivers and children. Examples of common forms of restrictive environmental press characterizing families in the disengaged group included geographic barriers to contact as well as deeper levels of poverty. Eight of the 11 caregivers in this category reported either never residing with target fathers or that the fathers left when the children were infants. Accordingly,

FIGURE 1. PERCEIVED FORMS OF FATHER INVOLVEMENT.
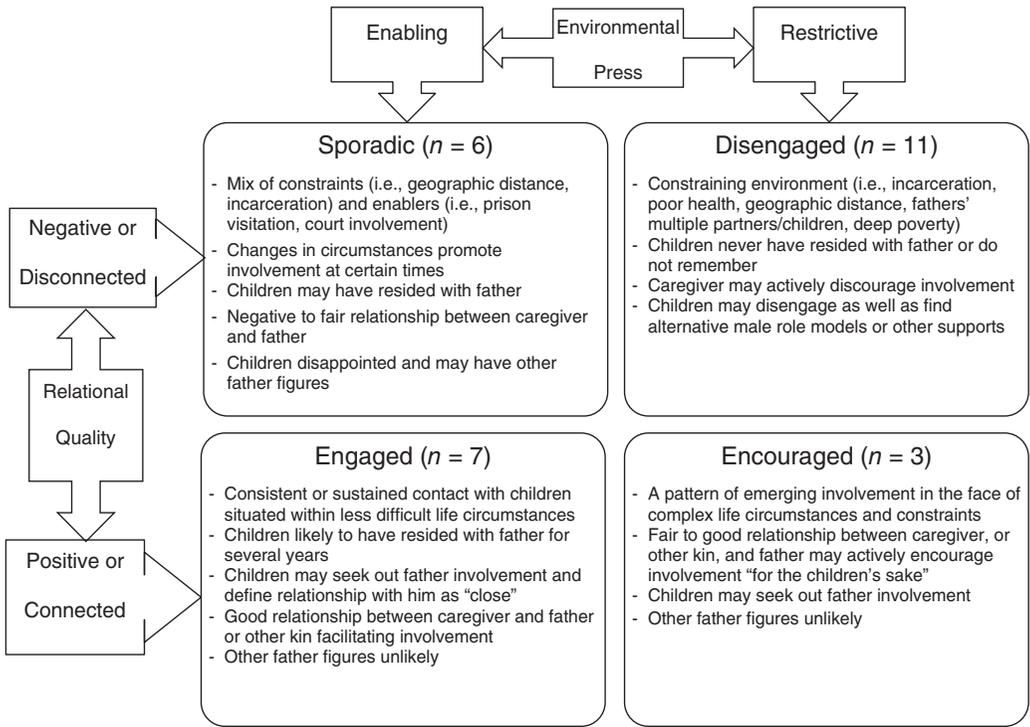
most youth in this category reported never residing with their fathers or could not remember living with them.

Nonetheless, several children reported missing the fathers they never knew. For example, 10-year-old Janie's relationship with her father was primarily disengaged. On rare occasions, Janie would hear from him by telephone or Facebook, but otherwise he was not in contact. Yet Janie yearned for her father despite the lack of a relationship. Angela (Janie's mother) made a comment that encapsulated this paradox: "Janie sometimes gets sad when she sees her friends with their dads." Angela said that the rare times Janie had spoken to her father on the telephone, "she'll say she misses him." Janie confirmed in her interview that she rarely talked with her dad and had received only one letter from him. Despite the lack of contact, she told the interviewer: "I wish I could see him."

Jerome and DeeDee's family also illustrated the dynamics of disengagement. Jerome, a 10-year-old, was a baby when his parents divorced. Jerome's mother gauged her relationship with Jerome's father at the time of

study participation as "terrible" and characterized him as a "deadbeat dad." Neither she nor Jerome knew where the father lived; when asked, Jerome thought he was "a couple of hours away." Jerome's mother had "nothing to tell" her child about his father and was unsure how to respond to his continued requests to see him. Jerome did not remember his father and reported feeling "different and alone" at times. He explained, "I just wish I had a dad to have fun with."

Poor relationship quality and mistrust between family members and fathers seemed to come up in the narratives of caregivers and children who reported a predominantly disengaged pattern of father involvement. As one mother whose daughter's relationship with her father fit this classification explained, "She really doesn't care about him because he lied to her so many times.. ... She's one of them kids where if you lie to her one time it's hard for her to get your trust back."

Some youth whose relationships with fathers were disengaged expressed sadness or seemed to miss them despite never having an ongoing relationship, but others seemed to adjust or resign

themselves to this scenario. Comments from caregivers such as "she has become very used to her lack of a father" or "he was angry for a while but now it's 'out of sight, out of mind'" illustrated caregiver perceptions of children's detachment.

Sporadic. Sporadic forms of father–child relationships typically involved a more balanced mix of both restrictive and enabling environmental press than occurred in disengaged relationships. For example, three of the six families that fit this form reportedly received child support from fathers, and five of the six families resided with fathers during children's lives. Similar to the disengaged group, relationship quality with fathers was reported as mostly negative, although there were instances of fair relationships between fathers and caregivers. Similar to disengaged dads, fathers in this category were sometimes characterized negatively and described as "deadbeats" or "phone dads." However, unlike disengaged fathers who were consistently absent, sporadic fathers went through a cycle in which they would disappear, reemerge at some later point in children's lives, then disappear again. This pattern seemed to create a great deal of tension and negativity between caregivers and fathers, and disappointment and low expectations among youth. For example, 15-year-old Tandice characterized her relationship with her father as having "ups and downs," and she had not seen him for months. She told us: "I don't care about him anymore.. .. I'm done trying with him." Similar to children with disengaged dads, the youth of sporadic fathers revealed ambiguous loss and mixed feelings. For example, 13-year-old Jenna coped with her father's sporadic involvement by mourning him and imagining what they might do together. She explained: "I can't experience what it's like to have a father. .. to have fun, get to do things, have ice cream, go in the woods." Jenna found some consolation spending time with her stepfather but nonetheless mourned the loss of what she imagined could have been with her father.

Nine-year-old Jake's family exemplified sporadic involvement with Jake's incarcerated father, illustrating the interplay of environmental press and relationship quality as it relates to the typologies of father involvement. Jake's great-grandmother, Dorothy, who was his legal caregiver, sadly explained that Jake's father had been "in and out of his life since day one" and described their relationship as sporadic. Jake reported that he had not seen his dad, who was confined in a state prison in South Carolina, for 2 years, but saw him a lot when his family lived near the facility (they had since moved to Virginia). Jake described his relationship with his father as "distant," although he still reported talking with him by telephone and receiving letters from him "sometimes, but not a lot."

Encouraged. Three families in the study were categorized as having *encouraged* relationships with fathers. These father–child relationships were also characterized by environmental press (e.g., all three families reported histories of paternal incarceration) with some enabling environmental features such as prison programs and kin support. All encouraged families had contact with fathers in some form (at the very least, telephone contact). What mainly set encouraged forms of father involvement apart from disengaged and sporadic forms was a more positive relationship between the caregiver and the father, or more positive feelings about fathers on the part of youth. In cases where the caregiver–father relationship was not so good, other family members (such as paternal grandmothers or the children themselves) were available to foster a relationship between children and fathers. Encouraged fathers were distinct from disengaged fathers in that although there may have been a history of noninvolvement, there were signs that fathers made efforts to know their children even in the face of difficult life circumstances, or that mothers, other family members, or children themselves tried to "bring him in" to the inner realm of the family.

For example, 11-year-old Kristen desired a strong relationship with her father. She made the effort and called or texted him every day. Kristen told the interviewer that her visits with her dad, although quite infrequent, were fun and reported that he "buys me clothes for Christmas." Although Kristen was happy with her relationship with her father, her mother Janetta reported that it was Kristen who pushed for the relationship. Janetta stated that "he makes no effort" and Kristen had only seen her father two times a year even though he lived only 10 miles away. In this case, Kristen was the source of encouragement for a relationship with her dad. She pushed to talk to him and appeared to be the driving force behind their contact. Interestingly, none of the

encouraged families reported the presence of other father figures in their children's lives.

Engaged. Approximately seven families in the study had fairly consistent, relatively positive, and *engaged* relationships with fathers. These youth reported enjoying spending time and talking with their fathers. Engagement could emerge in unexpected circumstances (such as during fathers' incarceration, which characterized five of the seven families in this category), but in any case demonstrated sustainability throughout children's lives. Families in the engaged category had less environmental press than other families and, along with encouraged families, were the least likely to be on public assistance (suggesting higher levels of financial self-sufficiency).

Similar to encouraged families, engaged families were unlikely to report the presence of other father figures (one of the seven families did). With the exception of one family, children in the engaged category had resided with their fathers for at least several years during their childhood. For example, 12-year-old Cindy had an engaged relationship with her father and lived with her mother and father until she was 6 years old. Thereafter, her parents separated and subsequently divorced, but Cindy felt close to her dad and lived in close proximity to him (4 miles); she saw him consistently every Thursday and for overnight visits every other weekend. In between visits, she and her father texted "a lot." Her mother, Laura, reported receiving child support and experiencing few problems associated with visitation, although she had concerns about Cindy's "clingy behavior" when she returned home after visits. Laura told us that Cindy "likes seeing her dad" and rated the relationship as "excellent" but stated that "there are issues with the stepmother." Cindy's case provides an example of the complex nature of nonresident involvement and the importance of considering the nuances of both environmental press and relationship quality.

Discussion

Our father involvement typologies provide a framework to situate the complexities and fluid nature of family relationships with nonresident fathers. Our conceptualization is consistent with research on low-income fathering that highlights shifts in family composition, kin networks,

and the passing of men "in and out of core positions" in children's lives (Roy & Smith, 2013, p. 330). Children's perspectives, included in the present study, provide a window to gain insight regarding how they see their fathers, their experiences with diverse forms of involvement, and their own agency with regard to encouraging or withdrawing from relationships with fathers. Results from our analysis extend fatherhood scholarship that considers complex family processes and fluid changes throughout the life course (Roy & Smith 2013). For example, Roy (2014) argued that the fracturing of the fathering role through life events such as multiple-partner parenting creates a complexity that affects fathers' involvement with their children. Our findings support this notion and highlight how caregivers' and children's narratives about nonresident fathers are situated within complicated ecologies of environmental press such as incarceration, geographic separation, and relationship quality challenges that change as families adapt to new realities and shifts in kin networks. The father involvement typologies advanced here are centered around family relationship quality and environmental stressors and supports that shaped our participants' narratives about father engagement (Cowan et al., 2009). Our findings also demonstrate how children's perceptions and actions contribute to patterns of nonresident father involvement (Allgood, Beckert, & Peterson, 2012; Dunn, 2004).

A Fragile Balance

Previous research has shown that multiple factors can constrain or facilitate fathers' involvement. Palkovitz's (2014) theoretical view of understanding fathering through the lens of "provisional balances" seems applicable here given the dynamic nature of ecological systems. This dynamism was particularly evident in sporadic and encouraged forms of fathering, which seemed to be characterized by reports of men moving in and out of children's lives. Our typology highlights the fragile balance of "resources and investments" (Palkovitz, 2014, p. 262) perceived by family members with respect to children's fathers by articulating specific environmental and relational fluctuations that seem to connect with perceptions of nonresident fathers' involvement. Incarceration is one of those factors that appeared to contribute to perceived fluctuations in father involvement,

albeit not always in expected ways (i.e., as a barrier to involvement). For example, father involvement may be facilitated through prison programs, steady contact, or through a change in attitudes regarding fathering (Edin et al., 2004). Conversely, paternal incarceration can strain relationships with children's caregivers and contribute to complications that arise when mothers enlist new social fathers in children's lives (Braman, 2004; Roy & Dyson, 2005).

These complications can continue after fathers are released from confinement when previously incarcerated men try to reestablish ties with children that they may not know well, and are additionally challenged by typical barriers to reentry such as finding sustainable housing and employment (Travis, 2005). Although several families in the study reported decreases in father involvement as a function of fathers' time in prison, many families found ways to adapt to paternal incarceration and stay connected in the face of an extreme environmental constraint. Several youth and caregivers described sustained and positive patterns of father involvement within the context of paternal incarceration, specifically through kin-supported prison visits, special programs, routine telephone calls, and letter-writing with children. Sustaining contact with families during imprisonment has multiple implications beyond the scope of this study; however, it is worth noting that research suggests that maintaining and developing father–child bonds contributes to desistance from crime and helps reentrants adjust to life outside of prison (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris, & Fisher, 2005). For families that have continued ties with children's fathers during incarceration, renegotiating a fathering role during reentry tends to be more successful (Edin et al., 2001).

The relationship quality of nonresident fathers and children's primary caregivers seemed to underpin narratives about men's involvement with children, pointing to the need to attend sensitively to caregiver mediation processes and complicated cocaregiving relationships between children's mothers, fathers, and perhaps other kin. As evidenced by our case exemplars, multiple complexities were associated with the fathers and the caregivers we interviewed in that coparenting was not neatly defined, particularly in families with kin who stepped in to facilitate contact (in one case, apparently without the mother's knowledge). Although research has highlighted the importance of the

coparenting relationship in terms of how it might facilitate engagement among nonresident fathers (Carlson et al., 2008), the scope of how coparenting is defined should be broadened to consider other members in children's lives who provide care. Our findings provide theoretical validity to previous qualitative research on low-income mothers who "recruit" nonresident fathers into children's lives. Despite mothers' frustrations about men's sporadic involvement, these "women did not 'give up' on fathers" but encouraged any fathering efforts (Roy & Burton, 2007, p. 36) or actively recruited other father figures. More congenial relationships between caregivers and fathers encouraged fathering, as would be expected, but it is noteworthy that positive relationship quality between children and their fathers also seemed to matter. For example, children who desired relationships with their fathers took actions (e.g., texting or calling), independent of caregivers, to encourage contact.

Our findings confirm that maternal mediation relative to nonresidential father involvement may not be a simple judgment given complex family relationships and subtle family processes (Roy & Burton, 2007). We use the term *mediation* to sidestep traditional definitions of gatekeeping in favor of promoting a more nuanced understanding of the processes caregivers use when navigating relationships between children and nonresidential fathers. Mediation often included recruiting other social fathers, kin caregivers, and adult volunteers (i.e., meaningful, long-lasting relationships between children and Big Brothers or Big Sisters) as well as real concerns on the part of caregivers about children's welfare in challenging environmental contexts. Caregivers in our study discussed worries about children visiting fathers in stigmatized environments such as prisons, expressed concerns that children were not being cared for properly during time with nonresident fathers, and sometimes felt that children needed to be protected from disappointment if fathers did not have a history of following through on plans in a consistent fashion.

Moreover, given that our study participants were predominantly African American, a Black feminist sensibility regarding motherhood holds promise for understanding caregivers' varied roles as mediators for children and their biological fathers, along with other men in the family constellation. For example, Collins (2005) argued that resilient woman-centered family

networks are fundamental to Black motherhood and that the centrality of Black mothers does not necessarily equate with the absence of husbands and fathers. Although caring for children as well as other community members can be a source of power for Black mothers, mothers' empowerment is not predicated on men's powerlessness (Collins, 2005). Traditional notions of maternal gatekeeping imply men's powerlessness and suggest fathering roles that are unimportant or ill defined, perpetuating stereotypes of Black parents that do not fit the lived experiences of African American families. Mothers should not be blamed for fathers' disengagement, and an overemphasis on maternal gatekeeping not only perpetuates gendered mother-blaming scenarios (Walker & McGraw, 2000) but also racializes messages about single motherhood that suggest Black women's (and, by extension, their children's) welfare will be improved by simply restoring absent men to the family (Roberts, 1993).

Limitations and Future Directions

Our goal with this study was to contribute to the conceptualization of fluid nonresidential fathering in single-caregiver families. However, our findings should be viewed with caution for a number of reasons. First, our study is based on a sample of families who were enrolled in a human services program aimed at helping youth. Therefore, it is unknown whether the results would apply to single caregiver families who are not receiving youth mentoring services. Second, our study is limited by the fact that fathers' voices are not included. Additionally, the interpretability of our study may be somewhat challenged by the oversampling of children who were affected by incarceration. It may be that differences among youth experiencing paternal incarceration are muted given the limited options for engagement, and if that is the case, then our typologies may not reflect the full range of relationships children have with nonresident fathers.

The present study responds to calls regarding the need to contextualize fatherhood and refine theory (e.g., Johannson, 2011; Marsiglio & Roy, 2013). However, future research that more fully examines the within-group nuances and between-group distinctions of the fathering typologies advanced here is warranted. Given the fluid nature of nonresident father–child relationships and caregivers' family lives, it would

be worthwhile to conduct mixed methods longitudinal research that captures how our typology of fathering forms hold steady or change over children's lives (e.g., Plano-Clark, Anderson, Wertz, Zhou, & Schumacher, 2014).

Although our qualitative, cross-sectional approach is not suitable for making causal inferences or studying families over time, the findings are transferable with regard to the investigation of single caregiver families and theoretical development pertaining to family relationships with nonresident fathers (Morris & Bunjun, 2007). To that end, the present study has implications for conceptual, programmatic, and clinical interventions with families.

Implications

Variation on conceptual axes of environmental press and relationship quality reveal four typologies of nonresident father involvement that have two broad implications for practitioners. First, our findings suggest that the concerns underlying caregiver's mediating behavior need to be sensitively understood as part of any programmatic efforts aimed at enhancing coparenting in nonresident father families. Mothers or other kin caregivers may encourage involvement for the children's sake, or they may deter it if they believe contact with father is not in children's best interest (or, in the case of older children, out of respect for children's wishes not to be involved with their father). With awareness of complicated relationship quality factors such as children's preferences concerning contact and caregiver mediation behaviors, practitioners can work with families to negotiate these behaviors, consider scenarios in which caregiver mediation is appropriate, and improve communication among family members. We join with other scholars who have examined complicated nonresident father scenarios (e.g., Fagan & Kaufmann, 2015; Roy & Smith, 2013) in recommending research and programmatic interventions with families that broadly assess coparenting relationships across multiple coparents and domains of functioning. For example, true to the life course framework outlined by Roy and Smith (2013), interventions should consider the roles of both nonresident fathers and father figures (e.g., kin or role models such as Big Brothers who act as father-like mentors to children). In conjunction with enacting their mediating role, mothers or caregivers invite

and encourage these individuals to be a part of their children's lives, and in doing so, the men become an integral part of children's fathering network—a network that is particularly nuanced and fluid for many lower-income families.

Second, our findings suggest that families with *encouraged* forms of nonresident father involvement might be particularly receptive to intervention in terms of facilitating positive relationships between previously disengaged fathers and their children. Receptivity to intervention, as well as creating flexible new visions for how nonresident fathers might be engaged, are foundational to facilitating family relationships characterized by environmental press and complex histories such as those participating in our study. Although absent from our study, the fathering literature highlights the importance of including men in research and services, and the receptiveness that was characteristic of fathers in our *encouraged* families suggests an opportunity to further engage those fathers in their children's lives. Family life educators and clinicians are well positioned to facilitate and reinforce efforts among family members seeking more meaningful relationships with nonresident fathers, and doing so could help to resolve experiences of ambiguous loss for children and enhance family well-being (Boss, 2004).

References

Achenbach, T. (1991). *Manual for the child behavior checklist/4-18 and 1991 profile*. Burlington: Department of Psychiatry, University of Vermont.

Akesson, B., Smyth, J., Mandell, D., Doan, T., Donia, K., & Hoven, C. (2012). Paternal involvement with the criminal justice system and the effects on their children: A collaborative model for researching vulnerable families. *Social Work and Public Health*, *27*, 148–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2012.629898

Alexander, M. (2010). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of color blindness*. New York, NY: New Press.

Allen, S. M., & Hawkins, A. J. (1999). Maternal gatekeeping: Mothers' beliefs and behaviors that inhibit greater father involvement in family work. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *61*, 199–212. https://doi.org/10.2307/353894

Allgood, S., Beckert, T., & Peterson, C. (2012). The role of father involvement in the perceived psychological well-being of young adult daughters: A retrospective study. *North American Journal of Psychology*, *14*, 95–110.

Arditti, J. (2012). *Parental incarceration and the family: Psychological and social effects of imprisonment on children, parents, and caregivers*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Arditti, J., & Savla, J. (2015). Parental incarceration and child trauma symptoms in single caregiver homes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *24*, 551–561. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-031-9867-2

Arditti, J., Smock, S., & Parkman, T. (2005). "It's been hard to be a father": A qualitative exploration of incarcerated fatherhood. *Fathering*, *3*, 267–283. https://doi.org/10.3149/fth.0303.267

Bahr, S. J., Armstrong, A., Gibbs, B., Harris, P., & Fisher, J. (2005). The reentry process: How paroles adjust to release from prison. *Fathering*, *3*, 243–265. https://doi.org/10.3149/fth.0303.243

Bowen, G. (2006). Grounded theory and sensitizing concepts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *5*, 12–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500304

Boss, P. (2004). Ambiguous loss. In F. Walsh & M. McGoldrick (Eds.), *Living beyond loss* (pp. 237–246). New York, NY: Norton.

Braman, D. (2004). *Doing time on the outside: Incarceration and family life in urban America*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Brown, S., & Manning, W. (2012). *Fathers and fathering in contemporary contexts:* Executive report. Conference sponsored by the National Center for Family & Marriage Research, National Institutes of Health Campus, Bethesda MD. Retrieved from https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/.../Fathers%20and%20Fathering/brochure.pdf

Cabrera, N., Fitzgerald, H., Bradley, R., & Roggman, L. (2014). The ecology of father–child relationships: An expanded model. *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, *6*, 336–354. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12054

Carlson, M., McLanahan, S., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2008). Coparenting and nonresident fathers' involvement with young children after a nonmarital birth. *Demography*, *45*, 461–488. https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.0.0007

Castillo, J., Welch, G., & Sarver, C. (2013). The relationship between disadvantaged fathers' employment stability, workplace flexibility, and involvement with their infant children. *Journal of Social Service Research*, *39*, 380–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2013.775089

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cheadle, J., Amato, P., & King, V. (2010). Patterns of nonresident father contact. *Demography, 47*, 205–225. https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.0.0084

Collins, P. (2005). Black women and motherhood. In S. Hardy & C. Wiedmer (Eds.), *Motherhood and space: Configurations of the maternal through*

politics, home, and the body (pp. 149–159). New York, NY: Palgrave.

Comfort, M. (2008). *Doing time together: Love and family in the shadow of prison*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Cowan, P., Cowan, C., Pruett, M., Pruett, K., Wong, J., & LaRossa, R. (2009). Promoting fathers' engagement with children: Preventive interventions for low-income families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *71*, 663–679. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00625.x

Dunn, J. (2004). Annotation: Children's relationship with their nonresident father. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *45*, 659–671. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.20004.00261.x

Edin, K., Nelson, T., & Paranal, R. (2004). Fatherhood and incarceration as potential turning points in the criminal careers of unskilled men. In M. Patillo, D. Weiman, & B. Western (Eds.), *Imprisoning America: The social effects of mass incarceration* (pp. 46–75). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Fagan, J., & Kaufman, R. (2015). Co-parenting relationships among low-income, unmarried parents: Perspectives of fathers in fatherhood programs. *Family Court Review*, *53*, 304–316. https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12152

Gale, N., Heath, G., Cameron, E., Rashid, S., & Redwood, S. (2013). Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *13*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-13-117

Garbarino, J. (1995). *Raising children in a socially toxic environment*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Harper, M., & Cole, P. (2012). Member checking: Can benefits be gained similar to group therapy? *The Qualitative Report*, *17*, 510–517.

Hoffmann, H., Byrd, A., & Kightlinger, A. (2010). Prison programs and services for incarcerated parents and their underage children: Results from a national survey of correctional facilities. *The Prison Journal*, *90*, 397–416. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885510382087

Johansson, T. (2011). The conundrum of fatherhood—theoretical explorations. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, *36*, 227–242. doi:132.174.254.159

Johnson, D. (2011). Mass incarceration: A contemporary mechanism of racialization in the United States. *Gonzaga Law Review*, *47*, 301–318.

Kemp, G., Langer, D., & Tompson, M. (2016). Childhood mental health: An ecological analysis of the effects of neighborhood characteristics. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *44*, 962–979. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21821

King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lawton, M., & Nahemow, L. (1973). Ecology and the aging process. In C. Eisdorfer & M. P. Lawton (Eds.), *Psychology of adult development and aging* (pp. 619–674). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Marsiglio, W., & Roy, K. (2013). Fathers' nurturance of children over the life course. In G. Peterson & K. Bush (Eds.) *Handbook of marriage and the family* (pp. 353–376). New York, NY: Springer.

McBride, B., Brown, G., Bost, K., Shin, N., Vaughn, B., & Korth, B. (2005). Paternal identity, maternal gatekeeping, and father involvement. *Family Relations*, *54*, 360–372. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2005.00323.x

Morris, M., & Bunjun, B. (2007). *Using intersectional feminist frameworks in research: A resource for embracing the complexities of women's lives in the stages of research*. Ottawa, Canada: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women.

Opdenakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *7(4)*, Art. 11. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-7.4.175

Palkovitz, R. (2014). *Involved fathering and men's adult development: Provisional balances*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Plano-Clark, V., Anderson, N., Wertz, J., Zhou, Y., Schumacher, K. (2014). Conceptualizing longitudinal mixed methods designs: A methodological review of the health sciences research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *9*, 297–319. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689814543563

Roberts, D. (1993). Racism and patriarchy in the meaning of motherhood. *Journal of Gender and the Law*, *1*, 1–38.

Roy, K. (2014). Fathering from the long view: Framing personal and social change through life course theory. *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, *6*, 319–335. https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12050

Roy, K., & Burton, L. (2007) Mothering through recruitment: Kinscription of non-residential fathers and father figures in low-income families. *Family Relations*, *56*, 24–39. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2007.00437.x

Roy, K., & Dyson, O. (2005). Gatekeeping in context: Babymama drama and the involvement of incarcerated fathers. *Fathering*, *3*, 289–310. https://doi.org/10.3149/fth.0303.289

Roy, K., & Kwon, Y. (2007). Qualitative insights and methodological challenges: Next steps in research on low-income fathering. *Applied Developmental Science*, *11*, 234–238. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888690701762142

Roy, K., & Smith, J. (2013). Nonresident fathers, kin, and intergenerational parenting. In N. J. Cabrera & C. S. Tamis-LeMonda (Eds.), *Handbook*

of father involvement: Multidisciplinary perspectives (2nd ed., pp. 320–337). New York, NY: Routledge.

Staples, R. (2011). White power, Black crime, and racial politics. *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research*, *41*, 31–41. https://doi.org/10.5816/blackscholar.41.4.0031

Travis, J. (2005). *But they all come back: Facing the challenges of prisoner reentry*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Walker, A., & McGraw, L. (2000). Who is responsible for responsible fathering? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *62*, 563–569. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00563.x

Wakefield, S., & Wildeman, C. (2015). *Children of the prison boom: Mass incarceration and the future of American inequality*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Wildeman, C. (2009). Parental imprisonment, the prison boom, and the concentration of childhood disadvantage. *Demography*, *46*, 265–280. https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.0.0052