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UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO
Hahn School of Nursing and Health Science
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN NURSING

AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHER-CHILD REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
COMMUNICATION

by

Nnenna Ohaleté

A dissertation presented to the
FACULTY OF THE HAHN SCHOOL OF NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN NURSING

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Dissertation Committee

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ABSTRACT

African-American children have their sexual debut (first voluntary penile-vaginal penetration) earlier thus are at disproportionately greater risk for more sexual partners and sexually transmitted infections. Father-child reproductive health communication was found to influence the timing of sex in other children however, a dearth of studies in African-American fathers existed. In this qualitative study reproductive health communication was explored in tape-recorded interviews of 19 African-American fathers from the perspective of critical theory, with the use of critical ethnography as methodology. How the content and pattern of reproductive health communication influenced sexual debut, and how fathers' moral/ethical stances influenced reproductive health communication with their children, were the research questions. Most significant were findings that all but one father reported having these conversations, and most fathers believed these conversations could have influenced the timing of sex for their children. Fathers' espousing abstinence for both sons and daughters at least until the age of 18 were driven by fear of morbidity for HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, and subsequent effects in children's lives. Mothers of children not living with fathers contributed to difficulties encountered in having reproductive health communication with children. While adding to the much needed body of knowledge on African American fathers' reproductive health communication with their children, interviews with these fathers illuminated the need for reproductive health education so that age-appropriate communication in this regard could occur.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One of the most important lessons I learned in the process of completing this dissertation was that the African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” has wider application than is readily apparent. For me, real meaning of this proverb went beyond learning with peers during classroom struggles and extensive literature reviews, to the lives of African American fathers who not only shared concerns for their children’s future but lent their support for this work, and to many other members of my universal village that must dutifully be acknowledged. Without these people, it is unknown how completion of this project would have occurred.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Drawing on critical ethnography as methodology, and critical theory as the bedrock for this qualitative study, African American father-child reproductive health communication was explored. The African American male experience in the United States was first reviewed in order to contextually situate the singular focus of how these fathers broached the sensitive subject of reproductive health (any conversation or interaction whether verbal or non-verbal, direct or indirect, formal or informal, about reproductive or sexual health which included but was not exclusively related to sexuality, sexual health, and dating processes) with their children, if at all, and the influence of these conversations on their sexual debut (first penile-vaginal penetration). The importance of attending to social context in ethnography as emphasized in Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland and Lofland (2001 p. 5), and Carspecken (1996) was a point well taken. Therefore to better appreciate social inequities embedded in the African American male experience, and how he interpreted and navigated his world, socio-economic and experiential context pertinent to the research process formed important backdrops. These factors can influence communication African American fathers have with their children because level of education, income and marital stability for example, have been associated with the degree to which African American fathers are involved in their children's lives (Ahmenduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992; Bryan & Ajo, 1992).

Core links between critical theory and critical ethnography including commitment to social criticism and the empowerment of individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000)

complemented the researcher's ideologies. Because of the impossibility of disentangling the researcher from the research process it was important to bare certain factors that influenced her understanding of the African American male's experience in the United States. These were her connectedness with them as a result of belonging to the same racial background, her intuition, and political suasion, as these factors colored the lens through which essential aspects of this study were viewed, as well as its overall presentation which was consistent with Fine's treatment of researcher stances in Gitlin (1994).

She described three stances researchers can take: ventriloquist, voice, or activist. In the first two stances researchers operate behind a veil of pretension about maintaining neutrality while objectifying study participants, presenting them as separate and unconnected from the researcher, and reporting in text without revealing reasons for studying certain research questions or interpretations. As 'ventriloquist' the researcher remains essentially anonymous without identifying race, gender, class or stance. In the stance as 'voice' the researcher does a sophisticated ventriloquy, gathering rich text to tell a story but fails to interpret what is said *with* participants. Text then becomes a construction of the ethnographer's interpretation alone. The 'activist' stance is taken when the researcher, clearly positioned within the domain of a political question or stance, breaks silence about instances of domination and inequities. The authorship of text is done with a critical eye for *what is*, attends to local meanings, changes over time, and recognizes contextual contradictions. Assuming the activist stance, participants in this study were not objectified or viewed as 'other,' nor was there complicity with

imperialism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) due to the researcher's identification and alignment with participants, and tendency toward a benevolent outlook.

Initial Reflections

Interest in this study piqued after reviewing literature on African American adolescents' sexual debut. The realization then was that these fathers had been understudied in regard to reproductive health communication they had with their *adolescents*. Mean while, studies had shown reproductive health communication other fathers had with their children influenced the timing of sexual debut. Later, in the process of interviewing African American fathers about reproductive health communication they had with their adolescents for a class project, there was another important revelation. For most individuals the onset of sex occurred during or after adolescence defined as ages 10 to 19 (WHO, 2000) except in cases of forced sex. However, fathers in the sample reported they started having conversations on this subject with their *children* at ages younger than 10, and even as young as two and one half years old hence re-titling and re-focusing of this study. This early finding had useful implications, the first being a notation to value participants' perceptions as primary in understanding what should be researched. It will be seen more clearly in the literature review that a host of contextual variables can influence sexual debut, timing of reproductive health communication parents have with their children being one of them. Sexual debut became important because early participation in sex can expose children to a myriad of problems. To begin to relieve the breech in research this study addressed reproductive health communications African American fathers had with their children.

Significant reasons for lack of study in this area had to be considered. Reasonable assumptions were three-fold, primarily including presumed ambivalence on the part of African Americans to participate in research (Hatchett, Holmes, Duran, & Davis, 2000), father absenteeism from the home as a result of broken relationships with children's mothers, and greater numbers of African American fathers in never married status (Coley, 2001). Within the two latter assumptions lay the insinuation that absent-father or unmarried father status meant increased difficulty managing such a sensitive topic as reproductive health or sexual health communication. This, however, could not easily be reconciled because neither father absence nor presence in the home was clear or absolute indication of involvement between them and their children particularly in the face of studies finding otherwise (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Smith, Krohn, Chu & Best, 2005). As for the former, ways of gaining trust in African American communities to facilitate research will be more fully addressed later.

Regarding researcher effects, important in ethnography as in other research methods was the ability for critical introspection which called for the researcher to take note of the many sometimes insidious influences that can be brought to the research endeavor. What surfaced after perusal of the literature and planning entrée for this study was a degree of internalization of some stereotypical ideologies that could have resulted in researcher bias. Primarily, the concern revolved around the aforementioned preconception that African Americans' lack of trust because of past experiences caused them to defer participation in research studies. The result of unconsciously adopting attitudes of others was the ambivalent expectation of a greater degree of difficulty than would ordinarily be

encountered in engaging participants and keeping their interest in this study. The point was that while there was identification with this ethnic group of fathers, elements of pre-judgment in engaging African Americans in the research process had to be dispelled.

Socioeconomic Issues

There was consensus in various forms of communiqué namely professional literature, popular cultural media, and other media including television and news articles that African American males have been society's underclass, and are commonly referred to as a marginalized, disenfranchised, and under-represented group. A history of problematic family structures, spending more time incarcerated, lagging behind in terms of academic achievement, and subsequently having a lower overall financial standing contributed to this reputation since they obtained freedom from slavery. Even though slavery legally ended nearly 1.5 centuries ago, African Americans and African American males in particular have lived with an overarching experience of racism causing disparities that have incapacitated their ability to earn and to move ahead materially in this country. Staples (1971) noted that they have been affected by the vestiges of slavery, racism, and economic exploitation. While this was not an attempt to absolve them of responsibility to perform, silence about factors seriously compromising their performance allows for judgments to be made without comprehension or consideration of their life experience. A review of their socioeconomic history will assist in understanding this ethnic group.

African Americans made up less than 13% while White Americans made up about 75.1% of the 298,444,215 United States' population according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Data for the year 2002 showed the African American population was younger

than the White population with approximately 36% of African American males compared with 24% of White males under 18 years of age while 7% of African American males and 12% of White males were 65 and over, which left just over 50% with the potential for entering marital family arrangements. However, in this instance as in others to be discussed, the overview has been bleak as it pertained to family well being and that of African Americans as a whole.

Family Issues

In terms of marital status African American males were less likely to be married than White males with approximately 45% in never married status compared with 28% of White males. African American males also had about 3 times greater likelihood of being in separation status compared with White males. As well, American females had higher rates of never married status at 42% compared with 21% for White females, along with a greater likelihood of having separation status. Though nearly one-half (48%) of African American families were married-couple families, 43% of these families were maintained by women with no spouse present, while 9% were maintained by African American men with no spouse present. Comparatively, for White families 82% were married-couple families, 13% were maintained by White women without a spouse present, and 5% were maintained by White men without a spouse present. Fewer African American two parent households and more households headed by females resulted in less monetary income as these families had a tendency to earn less, causing increased risk of family instability for the children of those families. The U.S. Census Bureau (2003) also reported African American female headed households had incomes less than half that of African American

married couple families. To exacerbate these problems, African American males were more than twice more likely to marry a White female than an African American female was to marry to a White male, further limiting the number of African American males available for marital family relationships.

Incarceration

Compounding these disparities was that African American males were more likely to be incarcerated than other males. Although African Americans made up about 13% of the U.S. population, males between the ages of 20 and 39 made up about 25% of prison and jail populations, and those aged 25 to 29 comprised about 12%. Overall, rates of incarceration for African American males were about 7 times greater than those for White males in the same age groups. Massive inequities existed as nearly 83% more White than African Americans reached probationary status, and about 25% more White than African Americans were paroled (United States Department of Justice, 1998).

Education

Their educational attainment has been less than their White male counterparts. Approximately 21.5% of African American males had less than a high school education compared with 11.5% of White males, and approximately 16.4% African American males earned a Bachelor's degree or more compared with 31.7% White males. At the same time, African American females had about 1% greater rate of earning a Bachelor's degree than African American males.

It was noteworthy that African Americans of every educational attainment level earned significantly less money than White Americans of the same level, making a myth

of the thinking that substantial earning differences will occur with higher education as this has not yet proven true for African Americans. According to the 1997 Current Population Reports, African American males with less than a high school education earned approximately 20% less, and those with a high school education or with a Bachelor's degree and greater earned about 35% less than White males. They have consistently received less monetary compensation over the past four decades spanning the time since they were allowed to vote and this history dates as far back as data could have been reviewed in the U.S. Census Data.

Inequitable rates of participation in the labor force were also observed for African American males at 68.1% compared with White males whose participation was 73.4%. Consequently, the unemployment rate was twice that for African American males than for White males at 12% and 6% respectively. It followed that the poverty rate was higher for African Americans at 23% compared with 8% for White Americans.

Income and Wealth

Income, just about 5 years after African Americans gained voting rights in the 1970's, was about 50% greater for White Americans. During the 1980's and 1990's median family income was about 60% to 75% greater for White American males than African American males. According to the United States Census Bureau (2003) African Americans continued to frequent the lower income brackets and had more single female householders, a group historically shown to have lower incomes. Although increases were observed in their earnings, approximately 33% of African Americans compared with 57% of White Americans had yearly incomes of \$50,000 or more and the percentage

of White families earning \$75,000 or more was twice that of African American families, provoking thought about poverty and wealth for African Americans.

Wealth grows from net savings out of household income, appreciation of assets, and net financial transfers within families. In terms of family wealth for African Americans, the rate of growth of wealth and subsequent transfer of wealth was lower than non-African American families. As a result of a historical pattern of lower amounts of savings, appreciation, and net transfers a greater concentration of these families have been at the lower end of the income and wealth distributions. It was reported that the growth of African American wealth was about half that of all households between 1992 and 2001. Furthermore, the share of aggregate national household income and aggregate national wealth declined for African Americans. Continuation of this pattern means lower rates of secular growth will further limit the amount of wealth that can be transferred within these households, keeping them comparatively in greater poverty status (Havens & Schervish, 2005). Appreciation of African American's current socioeconomic status and the generalized mistrust they have must be measured against a historical backdrop of oppression manifesting in every day life including the research process.

Mistrust in Civilian Life

Even though slavery in North America ended in 1865 with the Civil War, Blacks were not appropriated the right to vote until 1965 which was only about 40 years ago. From emancipation to recent times undercurrents of mistrust and fear have continued. Regardless of the degree to which allegations of racially motivated mistreatment were

true, they attest to a deep rooted distrust and are the aftermath of discriminatory experiences.

In the 1960's and 1970's for example, some African Americans believed that birth control and abortion were integral elements of White genocide conspiracy against them (Weisbord, 1973). Some African Americans also believed they were intentionally infected with HIV/AIDS (Sengupta et. al., 2000) while others feared they could be used as "guinea pigs." One participant in Corbie-Smith, Thomas, Williams and Ayers (1999) stated "they always use our race as guinea pigs." For similar reasons many African Americans were reluctant to use needle exchange programs. In a more recent example, some African Americans responded with suspicion regarding management of the late summer 2005 Katrina hurricane that devastated New Orleans, a city largely populated with African Americans. Feelings were that poorly constructed levees followed by delayed and ineffective consideration to early warning of the hurricane's approach were motivated by racism (NewsMax December 12, 2005). Episodes such as the televised 1991 tape-recorded Rodney King beating crystallized the claim of inequitable treatment. African Americans speak freely amongst themselves of fears of police brutality using the term "driving while Black" or "DWB" to denote the high risk of being stopped by police regardless of committing any infractions particularly if one were a Black male, and worse yet if that Black male happened to be driving a high profile vehicle. Although a search of professional literature revealed a paucity of research in this regard, it has been addressed in the press. John Lamberth reported a study on the rates African Americans were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike in The Washington Post (August, 1998). He found

Blacks were stopped at rates greatly disproportionate to their numbers on the road and to their propensity to violate traffic laws. This article and others (Grabmeier, 2003; Lefevre, 1999; Williams, 2001) highlighted the phenomenon of DWB and racial profiling of Blacks.

In fact, the researcher's own experience bore testimony to the same in an occurrence in 1976 when she, her husband and newborn were on their way home one night after the baby's christening ceremony. They were stopped by a police officer who refusing to give a reason for stopping them, insisted at gun point that the driver, a Black male, get out of the car. After obtaining his driver's license, car registration, and frisking his body they insisted the mother and newborn get out of the car despite the mother's explanation based on her cultural ideology, that the newborn should not be exposed to the night air and cold weather. Once she exited the car, baby in arms, the car search began but was quickly curtailed when the officer received a call and took his leave still without explanation. What was left behind was first hand experience by a young mother and wife, of helplessly witnessing an African American male's experience. Recognition of the vulnerability of Blacks in this country, not to mention unsettling feelings of fear and mistrust, served as reinforcement that racism in America existed for Blacks.

Mistrust in Research

More context for the Black experience dates back to their arrival in the U.S in the early 1600's as slaves. Tracing forward from slavery days that ended somewhere around June 19th 1865 (the date African Americans considered Black slaves to have been freed), African Americans lacked the power to refuse to participate in research because they

were considered chattel (Thomas, 1950, p. 170) and found themselves subjects of medical experiments because physicians needed their bodies (Humphrey, 1973). In her observations of regard for human rights Harriet Martineau (1838a) wrote, "...the bodies of colored people exclusively are taken for dissection because the Whites do not like it and the Blacks cannot resist." Blacks did not have freedom of choice in terms of treating themselves for illness, but were forced to submit to treatments decided by White masters (Savitt, 1978, p. 148). Additionally, they were used as living subjects for demonstrations of operative techniques and even lacked the power to protect their dead so much so that they became convenient samples for dissections (Gamble, 1997; Savitt, 1978, p. 284). Distrust regarding the practice of research was further fueled by the 1970's Federal and State government's mandatory sickle cell testing of Blacks only, obscuring the fact that the disease was not limited to this group as other ethnic groups can either carry the trait or have the disease. Mandatory testing without known curative treatment seemed a futile exercise for those involved. This aside, stigmatization by carrier status meant potential denial of health and life insurance, and hindered employment opportunities including acceptance into the U.S. Air Force ipso facto (Markel, H. National Genome Research Institute, n.d.).

Revisiting Tuskegee

Many cite the Tuskegee Syphilis Study conducted under the auspices of the United States government as the reason African Americans are distrustful of the research process, but in fact they suffered many atrocities of racism in the United States before as well as after this episode, giving them cause to perceive Whites, the ruling class, as a

credible threat. African American's distrust has causal, not coincidental connections.

Turning to the theory of causation for clarification of the phenomenon of racism in the African American experience, it was explained that based on past experiences there was reason for thinking that events in reality may be connected together, and that antecedent factors immediately causally relevant can be isolated (Addison, Burton, & Torrance, 1984). Pervasive distrust by African Americans, not only of the research process, has been the consequence of their experience of racial inequality and racism in a purportedly democratic egalitarian society (Leach, 2002).

Gamble (1997, p. 3) noted that the mistrust predated public revelations about the Tuskegee study...and that the narrowness of viewing the Tuskegee study as the singular reason behind African American's distrust places emphasis on a single historical event to explain deeply entrenched and complex attitudes within the Black community. The Tuskegee Syphilis Study stands out because it was one act of deception exposed in the Washington Star in 1972, which subsequently became the prime illustration of racism against African Americans in research. Even the National Medical Association and its journal maintained silence for the duration of this ethically irresponsible study. In The Final Report of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study Legacy Committee-May 20, 1996 it was reported the New York Times referred to the study as the longest non-therapeutic experiment on human beings. Gamble (1997) characterized the Study as a metaphor for symbolizing racism in medicine, misconduct in human research, arrogance of physicians, and government abuse of Black people. In the CDC article, The Tuskegee Timeline (2005), it was referred to as ethically unjustified. President Clinton, in a forced apology

coming on May 16th 1997, 25 years after the 40 year Study ended and at the insistence of The Tuskegee Syphilis Legacy Committee called the study “deeply, profoundly, morally wrong,” and “clearly racist.”

In this government study 623 poor African American male sharecroppers in Macon County Alabama, according to H. Brody in *Faces of Tuskegee*, (399 with latent infection, 201 control subjects, and 23 unaccounted for) not just 399 (Gamble, 1997; Final Report of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, 1996) as portrayed in some literature, were duped into participating as experimental subjects by Medical Doctors and the United States government. The Study was conducted from 1932-1972 by physicians of the United States Public Health Service. It was designed to document the natural history of syphilis in a homogenous sample of African American although this disease was not confined to African American males alone. The sample was retained through deceiving these African American males into participating in the research study without their consent, without disclosure of the enormity of sacrifice they would be for this study, and without disclosure that they would not receive reasonable medical treatment for the disease while in the study. Furthermore, the men had no understanding of how participating in this study not only placed them at risk, but their mates and unborn children as well.

Racism, Deceptions, and the Apology

In the Final Report of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study Legacy Committee it was stated that these men were told they *were being treated* for “bad blood,” a term used by African Americans to refer to a condition encompassing a variety of disease processes. Penicillin was purposefully withheld from these men even though it was routinely used as treatment

for syphilis. These so called “government patients” as they were called, were however, through the skillful use of language further deceived into submitting to spinal taps as “special free treatment.” In defense of egregious deceit against these African American men, Dr Clark, a senior Public Health Service officer intuited that those Negroes were very ignorant and easily influenced by things that would be of minor significance in a more intelligent group. To demonstrate prevailing complicity amongst physicians in this study, Vonderlehr MD was congratulated by a peer for his flair for framing letters to Negroes. Spinal taps were intentionally misrepresented as “special free treatment” to encourage males suffering the scourges of syphilis to submit to painful and invasive examinations, the results of which served the aims of the study but did nothing to help these men. Based on these happenings it was clear that deceptions in relation to this study alone ran deep over the 40 years it was conducted, as the true aims were concealed due to fear that full disclosure would lead to non-cooperation of African American subjects (Brody, H, Faces of Tuskegee). In relationship to this study, CDC director David Satcher was quoted in St. Petersburg Times (July 21, 1996) declaring that African Americans have well-documented foundations for distrust. He stated “a mistake was made.” “It’s a terrible error.” “It’s going to hurt-hurt in research and hurt in treatment.” “Every *little* mistake like that seeds the concerns of people.” President Clinton in his apology stated, “hundreds of men were betrayed along with their wives and children, along with the community in Macon County, Alabama, the city of Tuskegee...the United States government did something that was wrong, deeply, profoundly, morally wrong; it was an outrage to our commitment to integrity and equality for all our citizens...they were lied to

by their government...our government is supposed to protect the rights of its *citizens*...their rights were trampled upon.” Arguably, African Americans did not have full regard as *citizens* because they did not have the right to vote until 1965, almost three and one half decades after the forty year long study began. This along with the history of slavery and racism fit as reasonable cause for the kinds of mistreatment meted out to them.

Deception and Complicity

Another act of deceit was likely upon the unsuspecting Nurse Rivers who it seemed believed her contacts and interactions with these men were in their best interest. In a piece of writing said to be done by Ms. Rivers she mentioned “becoming attached to them,” and that the “ties are stronger than simply those of patient and nurse” (H. Brody, n.d.). It would not be far fetched to conclude that feelings of this nature were incongruent with the kinds of ignoble trickery that was the backbone of this study, one endorsed by the United States government. It seems that she, a Black nurse, a perceived insider, was used to develop and maintain a meaningful rapport with these African American men in order that they continued participation in the study. In the article discussing non-medical aspects of the study in which Ms. Rivers was first author with Drs. Schuman, Simpson and Olansky, the facts that she lived near these men all of her life, was familiar with their ideas and customs, provided transportation to the hospital for these men, that they had confidence in her, and that they were followed through the years by the same nurse were relayed as necessary for the survival of this study. Moreover, it was her task not only to

convince these men that painful examinations i.e. spinal taps were beneficial, but to bridge the language barrier between them and the medical doctors.

In *Faces of Tuskegee* by H. Brody (n.d.), an African American medical doctor Fred Gray was said to have remarked that ...as a Black woman in the South in the 1930's working under the direction of White male doctors, she could not realistically be expected to object or to alter any aspect of the study, begging certain questions. Was she, the Black nurse, in the first place truthfully informed about the reasons she was kept for the duration of the study or about the study aims, and that a major requirement of this study was to follow these men without treating their syphilitic condition until they died (CDC, May 2005)? Furthermore, did she understand once they died autopsies were to be performed necessitating on going contact or a means of knowing when death occurred so their cadavers could be handed over to medical doctors. Did she clearly understand that her main purpose was to be the link between these non-consenting syphilitic study participants and the medical doctors conducting this study such that they were followed till death? Considering the political climate of that era, arguments suggesting otherwise would essentially be naïve.

For the maelstrom of racially based inequities cast upon African Americans no apologies were forthcoming save for then President Clinton's forced apology. However discussions about Blacks' mistrust of the research process continued without much reflection on the true causes or regard for human rights, but with the greatest load misappropriated to the Tuskegee study alone. The legacy of Blacks' distrust has therefore

continued, not in the shadow of the Tuskegee study, but in light of centuries of already evident impious wrongs in research and in civilian life.

Human Rights in Research

Deceptions continued even in the face of recognizing human rights in research after infamous transgressions were performed by Nazi doctors in Germany on concentration camp prisoners during the Second World War (Yankauer, 1998). The 1947 Nuremberg code, an International statement on ethics of research involving human subjects, was adopted to ensure voluntary consent more than one decade after this 40-year study began. It became the prototype for subsequent codes intended to assure that research involving human subjects would be carried out in an ethical manner. Following this code was the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki developed by the World Medical Association to provide recommendations for Medical Doctors in biomedical research involving human subjects. It stated that considerations for the well-being of human subjects should take precedence over the interests of science and society. Also explicitly stated in this document was the importance of protecting vulnerable populations, respect for human beings, and the duty of the physician to promote and safeguard the health of the people. This notwithstanding, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study continued for nearly one more decade, and as aforementioned there were reasons pre and postdating it, causing deep and abiding mistrust by African Americans of the research process. Later, in 1974 Congress passed the National Research Act to protect subjects in human experimentation by mandating institutional review board approval of all federally funded research involving human subjects. In 1979 the Commission issued the Belmont Report summarizing basic

principles that is, respect for persons, beneficence and justice, and provided guidelines underlying ethical issues in the conduct of research on human subjects. Yet, as recently as 1996 another disclosure exemplifying unethical acts and racism in research surfaced. In 1989 a study under the auspices of the CDC, and co-sponsored by Kaiser Permanente and the Los Angeles County Health Department, tested whether an experimental vaccine could be used to immunize children too young for the standard Moraten vaccine. Though aware of incomplete consent forms, the CDC approved the study anyway. Enrolled in this study were approximately 1,500 mostly Black and Latino six and nine month old infants, 900 of whom received the unlicensed, experimental Edmonston-Zagreb measles vaccine unapproved by the Food and Drug Administration, without parental consent and without disclosure of the vaccine's association with increased death rates in Africa (St. Petersburg Times, 1996).

Contemporary Research Strategies

Advances in research have been made since the Tuskegee Study resulting in identification of ethical principles for research (respect, beneficence and justice) in the 1979 Belmont Report, and women and minorities were included as a result of the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993. In spite of these advances research on African American communities continued to be fraught with problems because glitches in research methods affect meaningfulness of findings, and the impetus for research on African Americans reflect a lack of regard. Referring to research on African American males, it was stated that they were often compared with White subjects therefore we know little about how they defined themselves within or beyond conventional notions of masculinity and

manhood (Hunter & Davis, 1994; McAdoo, 1993). These fathers do not fill, nor do they represent traditional White family roles therefore what is normative for White families may not be so for Black families (Coley, 2001). The inappropriateness of generalizing and applying research findings from a homogeneous White study sample to racially and ethnically diverse populations was noted (Corbie-Smith, et al. 1999), and the use of small samples for reasons of difficulty and expense (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999) meant significant relationships or differences could not be detected (Danziger & Radin, 1990).

Attention to who and what “our” research is for, its strengths and silences (Carspecken (1996, p. xi) can broaden research practices, making it germane to communities. In the current mode of sharing ploys to gain entrée into these communities researchers receive rewards when articles are accepted in peer-reviewed publications and curriculum vitas are enhanced. These come after studying ways of entering communities of interest or after research experiences expose more effective techniques. “State of the art” methods have therefore been shared so that other researchers could effectively secure samples. Using identical ethnicities to represent the research team so that trust can easily be established, and rapport easily built has been a successful, time honored strategy described by many (Corbie-Smith, 1999; Duran & Davis, 2000; Hatchett, Holmes; Picot et. al., 2002; Swanson & Ward, 1995). The employ of minority health professionals such as nurses has been successful because they have often been the most effective recruitment coordinators with many different populations. Another common strategy observed was to enlist community members, and frontline members known to the community to assist with recruitment or to be part of the research team. All of these methods, successfully

used in the Tuskegee study with engagement of Ms. Rivers the Black nurse who was kept for the duration of the study, parallel what has been proposed as best practice today. Specific areas where Blacks are known to congregate such as churches, barbershops, beauty shops, and coin laundries have been targeted for access to samples in order to forward research agendas. Radio, television and newspapers serving Black communities have been included as targets for recruitment as well. Other strategies included social marketing whereby individuals' cultures, traditions, beliefs, practices and lifestyle were incorporated into promotional materials. The elderly and caregivers were not left out as ways to find them have been advanced too.

Considering the ethical principles, approaches to researching Black communities seem flawed because autonomy cited as a feature of respect in the 1979 Belmont Report is not attended to when these communities are only viewed as mines of rich, interesting data, thus blunting potential mutuality of benefits. Closer identification with communities is likely to result in better understanding of members' needs but as Denzin & Lincoln (2000, p. 41) stated, "how is it possible to understand the other when the other's values are not your own?" Even so, the problem goes back to fewer African Americans receiving higher education, causing them to be ill-prepared to undertake research roles in those communities.

These critiques were offered with clear understanding of the importance of including minorities in research. The main problem however, was that researchers often times did not elicit issues of priority in these communities therefore potentially leaving in their

trails feelings of being viewed or studied by “others,” and decreasing any inclination to participate in research.

African American Fathers and Research

African American fathers have become the antithesis for responsible fathering in professional literature. Disparaging characterization as “absent fathers,” “invisible men” and “uninvolved fathers” common in professional literature occurred without taking socioeconomic, historical and cultural contexts into account. These attributes defied what was described by Doherty, Kouneski & Erickson (1998) regardless of their added perspective that children should reside with both parents, to Levine & Pitt’s delineation of responsible fatherhood. Without taking socioeconomic, historical or cultural contexts into account, Levine and Pitt’s position was that before men became fathers they should be financially and emotionally ready, they should establish legal paternity, share from pregnancy onwards the emotional and physical care of the child, and participate with the mother in continued financial support of the child. Despite socioeconomic and historical handicaps, and cultural contexts some studies showed African American fathers’ were involved with their children even when they did not live in the same home. Others showed presence in the home was not a predictor of father involvement (Danziger & Radin, 1990). Yet others found unmarried fathers lived close to their children, saw them frequently, and had higher frequency of support payments (Doherty, Kouneski & Erickson, 1998). In studying these fathers, reports of mothers or children were often used without qualitatively or quantitatively exploring fathers’ perspectives (Coley, 2001; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999), therefore leaving them voiceless. It was suggested that

functional aspects of African American fathers should be explored (Robinson, Bailey & Smith, 1985), and that the importance of understanding their concerns should not be dismissed (Strom et al., 2000). It was in this mode that this study was conducted.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to explore African American father-child reproductive health communication. Two major research questions were addressed: How did the content and pattern of African American father-child reproductive health communication influence sexual debut? How did fathers' moral/ethical stances influence reproductive health communication with their children? Critical ethnography was utilized as the methodology for this study because patterns of inequity and socio-cultural factors that can be difficult to research using conventional methodologies were considered. A critical theoretical approach was used because it allows issues of power, social injustice, oppression and domination to be addressed. This study may reveal previously unexplored factors impacting reproductive health communication as told in these fathers' voices.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Father-Child Communication and Sexual Debut

Fewer studies have evaluated fathers' influence in their adolescents' reproductive health compared with mothers' influence, and even less studies on African American fathers reproductive health communication with their adolescents could be found. However, studies evaluating fathers did find them influential in their adolescents' reproductive health outcomes. In a study that examined the effect of timing of first parental discussion of sexual intercourse, Clawson and Reese-Weber (2003) reported that earlier discussions with fathers resulted in later adolescent sex. This study included 214 adolescents (101 males, 113 females; 82.2% White, 9.3% AA, 5.6% Hispanic, and 1.9% Asian American) aged 19 to 21. Fischer's (1987) Weighted Topics Measure of Family Sexual Communication Scale (WTMFSC), ($\alpha=0.91$ and 0.88 for discussion with father and mother respectively) measured amount of parent-adolescent sexual communication. The items on this scale were pregnancy, fertilization, intercourse, menstruation, sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, abortion, prostitution, and homosexuality. Subjects were asked to indicate on a scale of 1-5, the extent to which discussions about these subjects occurred with mothers and fathers. Timing of parent-adolescent sexual discussion was measured by adding one open-ended question about the age at which parents first discussed sex with them. Discussions that occurred before first adolescent sex were considered "on-time," and discussions after first adolescent sex were considered "off-time." Questions evaluating sexual risk-taking were taken from the

Center for Disease Control sexual risk-taking portion of the 1996 National College Health Risk Behavior Survey (1998). Some questions required “yes or no” responses; others provided a choice of answers regarding contraceptive use. Parental discussion of sexual topics occurred at age 13.4 with fathers and 13.11 with mothers. On-time discussions were reported by 36.9% of fathers and 57.9% mothers however the amount of communication with either parent was associated with on-time discussions about sexual topics. Adolescents who reported more sexual communication with mothers were likely to report the same with their fathers. In this study, adolescents reporting greater amounts of sexual health communication with both fathers and mothers had sex at an earlier age, more partners, and were more likely to have been pregnant or to have gotten someone pregnant. One probable reason for this finding may have been that parent-adolescent conflict regarding sexual behaviors resulted in more frequent discussions. A confounding result which leads one to question the content of, as well as the adolescents’ understanding of parent-adolescent discussions was that adolescents reporting on-time discussions with fathers and mothers had sex later, fewer partners, used more methods of birth control, but were more likely to have been pregnant or to have gotten someone pregnant. Also of note in this study was that data gathering methods of rating the extent to which communication occurred on a 1-5 scale did not allow for exploration of the raw content of parent-child discussions on the subject. Here again, what was discussed about pregnancy, fertilization, intercourse etc. and the circumstances under which these discussions took place remain unknown. Qualitative exploration of these factors could

help clarify gaps in the adolescent's reproductive health knowledge base, thus at least providing indications of areas needing parental intervention.

As in Clawson and Reese-Weber (2003), the age at which parents began reproductive health communications with their adolescents was important in this qualitative study by Walsh, Parker and Cushing (1999). Researchers explored experiences of 31-43 year old fathers' talks with their six year old sons about sexuality in Australia. Open-ended interviews asked two basic questions, with additional prompts to garner more information in interviews lasting up to 74 minutes.

1. How did you learn about sexuality as a child as you were growing up? Tell me anything you can remember about this.
2. How have you communicated with your own son about sexuality? Tell me anything you can recall about this.

Data were analyzed according to Fairclough's (1989) textually oriented discourse analysis which involved description, interpretation, and explanation of the data. The findings were that:

1. Sexuality education was an important duty of parenting.
2. Providing sexuality education depends on a close parent-child bond.
3. Providing sexuality education is a difficult and dangerous process.
4. Providing sexuality education may threaten the child's innocence.
5. The child should be allowed to control sexuality education through asking questions.
6. Parents should rely on experts to direct this process.

7. Use of correct language for sexual body parts and behaviors is inappropriate for young children.

Clawson-Weber-Reese's (2003) findings indicated not only that early communication of parental sexual ideals with their children could shape their thinking thus influencing sexual behavior, but also that fathers' reproductive health communication with their children did make a difference. These two studies however begged the questions, how early should parent-adolescent reproductive health discussions start and what content should be discussed? In response to the lack of research on African American father-child reproductive health communication and the observed phenomenon of earlier adolescent sex along with more STIs/HIV, unwanted pregnancies and adolescent parenthood in African American adolescents, answering these questions in that population could relieve the breach in research.

A search of CINAHL, PsycINFO, and OVID for studies addressing African American father-adolescent reproductive health communication resulted in two studies. In one study by DiClemente et. al. (2001) not included here because of the focus, parent-adolescent communication with sexually active adolescents about negotiating safer sex was discussed but the researchers did not broach the subject of reproductive health communication in delaying sexual debut. The second study by Dittus, Jaccard, and Gordon (1997) explored the relationship between AA father disapproval of premarital sex, in home and not in the home status of the father, and the initiation of sexual intercourse for their 14-17 year old adolescents (male=376, female=375). Data were gathered through interviews and questionnaires completed by the adolescents. Primary

father figures were identified as biological fathers (67%), stepfathers (23%), and grandfathers, uncles, brothers, or mothers' partners (10%). Adolescents living with married parents constituted 38% of the sample while 4% lived with unmarried parents. Five questions evaluating the extent to which these adolescents perceived their father as being opposed to premarital sex e.g. "my father would disapprove of my having sex at this time in my life" were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ($\alpha=0.77$). A comparable set of questions were asked of mothers using a similar scale ($\alpha=0.75$). Whether the adolescent had ever had sexual intercourse was dichotomously measured after asking the questions e.g. "I have had sexual intercourse one or more times," "I have never had sexual intercourse, but I have been sexually intimate with one or more guys," and "I have never been sexually intimate with a guy." The findings were that 57.7% of the adolescents had engaged in sexual intercourse. A significant finding was that 52% of adolescents having a father figure had engaged in sexual intercourse whereas 66% of adolescents who engaged in sexual intercourse did not have a father figure. Only 11.5% of adolescents living with a father in the home had sexual intercourse compared with 56% of adolescents who had sexual intercourse and did not have a father in the home, indicating that father presence in the home influenced the onset of adolescent sex. Another significant finding was that perceived parental disapproval of premarital sex was greater for adolescents with fathers in the home. Yet another significant finding was that higher parental disapproval of premarital sex was associated with lower incidences of sexual intercourse for the adolescents. The final significant finding was when both parents strongly disagreed about premarital sex only 11% of the adolescents engaged in

sex, however when there was weak parental agreement up to 80% of adolescents engaged in sex. No interactions were noted between live-in father status and age or gender of the adolescent. These studies indicated that African American father-adolescent communication influenced sexual activity. This factor coupled with the scarcity of research on African American father-child reproductive health communication underscored the need for qualitative research data to clarify what parental ideals and unique verbiage African American fathers use in communication with their adolescents about reproductive health.

Parent-Child Relationship, Family Structure, and Sexual Debut

Several studies have shown a relationship between parent-child communication, cultural norms, and timing of sexual debut. In order to study these variables, some researchers conducted secondary analyses on data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (ADD Health Study, 1995). This was a one year mixed methods study conducted in two waves, Wave 1 (W1), and Wave 2, (W2) from 1994 to 1995, in a nationally representative final sample of 12,105 seventh through twelfth grade students recruited from 133 U.S high schools. Approximately 55.9% were females; 74.3% were White, 11.7% Hispanic/Latino, 9.3% Black, and 4.7% from other backgrounds. The ADD Health Study evaluated health behaviors (e.g. substance abuse, diet, physical disability, and sexual behavior), and in addition an attempt was made to identify the social context of such behavior through examination of individual, peer, family, school, and community characteristics.

Data were collected on all adolescents who completed a 90-minute survey, and had a resident mother who completed the W1 survey. Students completed initial questionnaires in school and in-home surveys at W1. Most adolescents were interviewed in their homes by female interviewers, and computer-aided self-interviewing was used for sensitive areas such as sexual questions. One year later these adolescents completed a second in-home survey. Mothers for 95% of the adolescents participating in the study completed an in-home interview at W1 only (Calhoun & Friel, 2001; McNeely, Shew, Beuhring, Seiving, Miller & Blum, 2002; Seiving, McNeely, & Blum, 2000). Invaluable data from the ADD Health Study was used in secondary analyses discussed below to evaluate the effects of several variables on adolescent sexual debut by many researchers.

Using data from the ADD Health Study, relationships between family context, family structure, mother-child relationships, sexual communication, and adolescent sexual debut was examined by Calhoun and Friel (2001), Hutchinson (2002), McNeely et al. (2002), Sieving et al., (2000), and Wu and Thomson (2001). Overwhelmingly the results pointed to effects of parental communication on the timing of sexual debut. Specifically, adolescents' perception of mothers' disapproval of sex was found to delay sexual debut. The following studies elucidate these findings.

In order to examine the effect of family structure, family context, and mother-child relationship on timing of adolescent sexual activity, Calhoun and Friel (2001) used data on 6,261 girls and 6,106 boys between 11 and 18 years of age from W1 in the ADD Health Study, as well as data from each adolescent's mother. To shed light on these dynamics, two sets of variables were examined. The type of family (e.g. two-parent,

single-parent, cohabitating, step, lesbian families), and quality of mother-child relationship (e.g. level of interaction, mother's attitudes, and discussion of sexuality) were analyzed.

The quality of relationship was measured on a Likert scale and by asking the mother's relationship satisfaction with her adolescent. Level of interaction and maternal attitudes were also measured on a Likert scale, and with two questions regarding the mother's approval of adolescent sex, and frequency of discussion of sex with the adolescent. Time to sexual debut was predicted with COX proportional hazards method, family type was predicted with Cox regression analyses, and number of partners for sexually active adolescents was analyzed with linear regression models.

Several important findings were reported. Adolescent girls had sex by 14.9 years with an average of three partners and those from single-parent families had a 50% greater risk of sexual debut, with Black girls having the greatest risk. Adolescent boys had sex by 14.3 years with an average of more than four partners. Adolescents from cohabiting and lesbian families showed no difference in the timing of sexual debut. Close family relationships, particularly mother-child relationships where communication was the pivotal feature and maternal attitudes toward adolescent sex, along with other factors such as religiosity and high GPA were identified as protective for the timing of female sexual debut. Adolescents who had sexually debuted as well as those who had not were included in this study, facilitating the evaluation of maternal influence on timing of sexual debut for both; however, the study did not describe results of this specific effect. Nonetheless, the finding that maternal values communicated in close mother-adolescent

relationships delayed sexual debut indicated that communication functions as a vehicle for transmission of values and beliefs in regard to sexual activity.

Another study evaluating the effect of family structure on age at sexual debut reported findings that enlighten current research on dissimilar effects of these variables in Black and White adolescents. Wu and Thomson (2001) conducted secondary analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979-1987) using retrospective parent histories of 18 year-old adolescents' (n = 2,401 White, 1,257 Black) exposure to a mother-only and absent biological father families.

Proportional hazard model analyses were performed to test the effects of prolonged exposure to a single-mother family, prolonged absence of a biological father, parental presence during adolescence, and family turbulence. An important finding was an increased risk of early sexual debut when living in a single-parent home regardless of ethnicity. Other findings were:

For White adolescents:

1. The mother's age at first birth and the mother's education were negatively associated with the daughter's sexual debut.
2. A five-year increase in the mother's age at first birth was associated with a 14% lower risk of sexual initiation.
3. A positive and significant association was observed between the number of family changes and rates of sexual debut.

For Black adolescents:

1. Mother's age at first birth was not significant for sexual debut, but the mother's education was significant.
2. Higher rates of sexual debut were observed in those residing in non-intact families compared with those raised with biological parents.
3. The highest risk of sexual debut was in father-only families.
4. High rates were also noticed for those residing with a mother and step-father.

These differing findings for sexual debut between races not only indicated the importance of studying cultural groups and the context of sexual debut, but also highlighted the need for interventions specific to various groups to delay sexual debut.

The influence of parent-child relationships on sexual debut was investigated using the ADD Health Study by Sieving et al. (2000) in 3,322 mother-adolescent dyads when the adolescents were in eighth through 11th grades and had not sexually debuted. Perceived maternal disapproval of sex, and mothers' stated disapproval of sex were each based on a two-item survey ($r = 0.70$ and 0.58 respectively). Mother-child connectedness was measured with a five-item scale ($\alpha = 0.84$) and mother-child discussion about sex was measured with a six-item scale ($\alpha = 0.89$). In addition, four items asked the frequency of mother-child discussion about the negative consequences of adolescent sex ($r = 0.29$) and maternal religiosity was measured with a three-item scale ($\alpha = 0.85$). Data analysis involved stratification of the students by grade groups. COX proportional hazards models were used to evaluate the time to sexual debut and multivariate logistic regression was used to identify correlates of perceived maternal disapproval. The findings

in this study revealed that only 27% of mothers discussed sex with older adolescents, and 25% of mothers discussed sex and its negative consequences with younger adolescents. Although some adolescents underestimated strong maternal disapproval of sex, their perceptions of strong maternal disapproval of sex were directly associated with high levels of mother-child connectedness, both factors having a delaying effect on sexual debut.

Similar reports of the effect of communication on delaying sexual debut within the context of parent-child relationships were reiterated in McNeely et al. (2002). These researchers also analyzed the ADD Health Study W1 core in home sample to evaluate maternal influences on sexual debut in 2006 mother-daughter dyads. Since the focus of this study was on early sexual debut, only data of randomly selected 14- and 15-year-old adolescents who had not debuted sexually were included, with 75% of the sample being White. Questions selected for analyses addressed:

1. time to sexual debut measured in monthly intervals with decision rules to impute data for inconsistent reporting
2. frequency of discussion about sex, and birth control measured by two items on a five-point Likert scale ($r = 0.70$)
3. recommendation of a specific method of birth control measured with a single question
4. maternal disapproval of adolescent sex based on responses to two questions ($r = 0.58$)
5. parent-child discussion about sex measured on a five-item scale ($\alpha = 0.89$)

6. mothers' religiosity measured with three questions ($\alpha = 0.85$).

Adolescents' progression on sexual trajectory was measured dichotomously with yes/no answers. After stratification by gender, COX proportional hazards models were used to test the association between maternal characteristics, socio-demographic characteristics, and the timing of sexual debut. The findings were that mothers consistently opposed adolescent sex, most reported being religious, and most spoke with at least one parent of their adolescents' friends within the last month. Although more uncomfortable discussing sex with daughters, mothers discussed it more frequently with them, but were less likely to recommend a specific form of birth control to daughters than sons. Sexual debut was delayed in daughters whose mothers strongly disapproved of adolescent sex, and who reported satisfactory mother-daughter relationships.

In line with the communication effect on sexual debut, Hutchinson (2002) evaluated sexual communication, selected sexual risk behaviors and outcomes in 118 females between 19 and 21 years of age. Forty Black and 50 White dyads were interviewed initially, followed by 28 Hispanic-Latina dyads a year later. Parent-adolescent sexual communication was assessed via telephone interviews for the Black and White dyads. The PTSCR-III scale ($\alpha = 0.92$ and 0.95 for mothers and fathers respectively) was used to assess parent-adolescent sexual communication about specific sexual risk-related topics when the subject was an early teen. Parent-adolescent communication was measured by a single question that asked how well the adolescent and the mother/father shared ideas or talked about things that really mattered during those early teen years. For the Hispanic sample, queried one year later, the same scale that was translated and back

translated improved cultural relevance during assessment and evaluation. This study reported that the quality of parent-adolescent general communication was the single greatest predictor of parent-adolescent sexual communication. Of interest was the finding that early sexual communication was associated with later onset of sex indicating that early interventions might be useful in delaying sexual debut. Also reported was that more Black adolescents than Hispanic-Latinas or Whites had parents who discussed sexual topics with them before their sexual debut. These findings must be interpreted with caution because participants were asked to recall activities that occurred five or more years earlier and the data collection process was different for the first study of Black and White adolescents, than for the following Hispanic-Latina sample.

Although fathers were included in the ADD Health Study data, none of the studies using that data evaluated the fathers' influence in adolescents' sexual debut. This information could have been useful in enlightening current research of fathers' effect on adolescents' sexual debut, as well as the total parental effect on sexual debut. Calhoun and Friel (2001), and Hutchinson (2000) included adolescents who had sexually debuted as well as those who had not. However, both depended upon participant recall for data. Once again communication was a significant means of imparting information and most of these studies found parent-adolescent communication was the prime factor in delaying sexual debut.

Parenting, Peer Relationships, Socio-Cultural Norms, and Sexual Debut

Parenting was another variable evaluated in respect to adolescent sexual debut. In order to examine the effects of preadolescent parenting strategies on the timing of

adolescent dating, and sexual debut, Longmore, Manning and Giordano (2001) performed secondary analyses on data obtained in the National Survey of Families and Households (NFSH) 1987-1988 and 1992-1994. In the original study mixed method open-ended face-to-face interviews were conducted with randomly selected parents of adolescents in 1987-1988. Four years later, in 1992-1994, a telephone interview was conducted separately with each child and parent interviewed 1987-1988.

The sample of 752 adolescents were older than 13 years of age, comprised 54% girls; 78% were White, 10% Black, and 8% Hispanic. Coercive control was measured by averaging parents' responses to Likert-scaled questions about frequency of spanking, yelling, and arguing with their preadolescent ($\alpha = 0.51$) while parental monitoring of the child's behavior was measured by averaging responses to three sets of questions on a scale of 1 to 3 with a higher score indicating higher monitoring ($\alpha = 0.63$). COX proportional hazard regression was used to analyze effects of parenting strategies with time at sexual debut.

The researchers reported that early parental monitoring in preadolescence was a critical component in delaying sexual debut. Coercive parenting was significantly and positively associated with earlier sexual debut, while supportive parenting and parental monitoring during preadolescence were associated with later sexual debut. Consistent with Calhoun and Friel (2001) and Wu and Thomson (2001), adolescents from biological two-parent families had significantly lower risk of adolescent sexual debut than those from single parent families. The value of this study was that it evaluated parenting during preadolescence, and the effect of these parenting strategies on sexual debut four years

later. However, concerns may be raised about the legitimacy of obtaining thorough data regarding sexual debut from adolescents via telephone interviews.

Links between risky parental behavior and adolescent sexual activity was evaluated by Wilder and Watt (2002) who utilized data from W1 of the aforementioned ADD Health Study. Adolescents who reported their sexual debut occurred before eight years of age were excluded from the study because of the possibility of sexual abuse, but the number of such cases was not reported. Also excluded were 44 adolescents who had their first sexual experience outside of the U.S. for the reason that it may have occurred within a different cultural context.

Data for the remaining sample were analyzed with regression models. Indicators of risky parental behaviors included smoking, drinking and seat belt non-use. Smoking was assessed by a question requiring a yes/no response. Drinkers were those who had five or more drinks on one occasion in the last month, and seat belt non-users were those who reported using seat belts sporadically. For adolescents, delinquency was assessed by *yes* responses to questions (e.g. in the past 12 months, how often did you steal something worth \$50.00 or more?). Their sexual behavior was measured with questions asking whether the adolescent had engaged in sex, and if they had sex before age 15.

Significantly more adolescents reporting adolescent sex had mothers who demonstrated risky behaviors while high levels of parental supervision discouraged adolescent sex as well as other delinquent activity. This study did not differentiate findings for sexual debut according to gender, so the significance of these findings for girls' and boys' sexual debut was uncertain. Nonetheless, these two studies brought the

effect of other variables such as parenting style on adolescent sexual debut to the forefront.

Socio-cultural influences on adolescent sexual debut was evaluated by Upchurch et al. (2001) through secondary analyses of interview data in a subset of 497 Hispanic-Latino adolescent (75% Mexican) 14- to 15-year-olds divided evenly between boys and girls from a longitudinal study conducted in Los Angeles (Aneshensel & Sucoff, 1992-1994; 1994-1995). Scales by Upchurch et al. (1999) measured parental socio-emotional support, parental control, and neighborhood social disorder ($\alpha = 0.75-0.94$). Acculturation was operationalized through distinction of English or Hispanic language at interview. COX regression model was used to estimate the risk of sexual debut.

For these adolescents moderate levels of socio-emotional support and over-control were reported. Twenty percent of girls and more than 30% of boys reported having sex between 14 and 15 years of age; however, the risk of sexual debut was greater for those living in low density neighborhoods and 2.6 times greater for girls who were acculturated. Boys who were acculturated also had a higher risk of sexual debut during adolescence. Adolescents living with both biological parents and in families where both generations were foreign-born had less risk.

While elucidating another dimension of influence on adolescent sexual debut, these findings pointed to the effect of social and cultural exchange on sexual debut. It also reiterated the effect of family structure on adolescent sexual debut.

Whether sexual norms and attitudes expressed during early adolescence by minority youth from economically disadvantaged urban areas affected the timing of sexual debut

was evaluated by O'Donnell et al. (2001). Toward this end data from the Reach for Health survey, of 849 Black and Latino seventh grade adolescents (52% girls, 80% Black, 19.5% Hispanic-Latino) were utilized. Data were collected at four points (fall seventh grade, spring seventh grade, spring eighth grade, and spring 10th grade). One question assessed first report of sexual intercourse at each of the four points, with a five-item scale measuring the timing of sexual debut. Four scales assessed sexual norms and attitudes ($r = 0.11-0.34$, $p = <0.001$). An ANOVA was used to examine the influence of norms and attitudes on timing of sexual debut.

By the seventh grade eight percent of girls had sexually debuted and 55.4 % had sex by the 10th grade, with Black adolescents having increased risk of early onset sexual debut. By seventh grade as many as 30.7% of boys had sexually debuted. Thirty-one percent of Black girls versus eight percent of Latinas had sex by eighth grade, and more Black adolescents than Latinas agreed that peers were having sex or were ready to have sex. Adolescents reporting the greatest peer involvement in sex were most likely to report sexual initiation at each of the time points. However, higher sexual responsibility scores were related to later sexual debut. Seventh graders who expressed positive statements about peer norms, expectancies, responsibilities and attitudes of refusal to have sex were more likely to delay sexual debut, again highlighting the importance of early interventions during preadolescence to delay sexual debut, as well as the effect of peer sexual activity on adolescent sexual debut.

Conflicting findings were observed regarding the influence of sisters' and girl friends' sexual activity and child-bearing status on adolescent girls' sexual debut. East and Felice

(1993) and Nahom et al. (2001) found adolescent girls' intention to have sex, and non-virgin status were related to having many sexually active girlfriends and sisters.

Conversely, Kornreich, Hearn, Rodriguez and O'Sullivan (2003) reported that girls with older siblings of either sex were less likely to sexually debut in adolescence.

East and Felice (1993) studied the effect of sisters' and girlfriends' sexual and childbearing behavior on early adolescent girls' sexual outcomes in 455 students 11 to 15 years of age from suburban high schools. Thirty percent were Hispanic, 29% Black, 16% White, and 10% Asian girls of lower socioeconomic status. Questionnaires evaluating girlfriends' and sisters' sexual and childbearing status, and the subjects' intentions to have sex were self-administered to groups of four to five students in the presence of two adult women in private rooms at school, then coded and analyzed.

Adolescents' sexual attitudes were assessed with the Revised Sexual Permissiveness Scale (Sprecher, McKinney, Walsh, & Anderson, 1988). Reliability coefficients were not reported, however, the researchers explained the validity of the scale was supported by theoretically predicted associations between increased acceptances of premarital sexual activity at increasingly committed relationship stages. Intentions to debut sexually were evaluated with questions drawn from Olsen, Weed, Daly, and Jensen (1992) with an alpha of 0.74. Mothers completed a short questionnaire about basic demographic data at their homes that was correlated with back ground characteristics of the adolescents (e.g. age, socioeconomic status, and number of siblings. ANCOVA, MANCOVA, and hierarchical regression analyses were used to evaluate the association of sisters' and girlfriends' sexual and childbearing status with adolescent girls' sexual debut.

Several significant findings pointing to the effect of peer influence on sexual socialization were reported:

1. Having experienced sexual debut was significantly associated with Black race.
2. Black race also was significantly correlated with having sexually active girlfriends, sexually active sisters, and an adolescent child-bearing sister.
3. The intention to debut sexually was related to having sexually active girl friends and sisters.
4. Age was significantly correlated with intentions to debut sexually, with having sexually active sisters, and sexually active older girlfriends.

Sibling influence on sexual socialization of early adolescent girls was assessed by Kornreich et al. (2003) in interviews of 180 adolescent girls 12 to 14 years of age from an impoverished community, and recruited from recreational sites around New York City. Girls of Latina-Dominican heritage comprised 61% of the sample; 33% were Black; and 3% were White. Scales used were: O'Sullivan and Meyer-Bahlburg's (2002) sexual concept ($\alpha = 0.91$); Sexual Agency Scale ($\alpha = 0.70$); Sexual Self-Esteem Scale ($\alpha = 0.58$); Parenting Attitudes ($\alpha = 0.86$); Abstinence Attitudes ($\alpha = 0.80$); and Psychosexual Developmental Interview-Child Version for Sexual Risk Behavior (Meyer-Bahlberg, Dugan & Ehrhardt, 1998) α not stated, however the researchers explained the scale had excellent reliability in a pilot study. The association between sex of older sibling, and sexual cognition were evaluated with MANOVA, while ANOVA was utilized to examine adolescent girls' age at sexual debut.

Contrary to East and Felice (1993), and Nahom et al. (2001) discussed below, these researchers found having neither an older male nor female sibling was related to earlier sexual debut. Rather, girls with older siblings were less motivated to have sex during adolescence compared with girls without older siblings. Because of the predominance of the Latina-Dominican heritage generalizability would essentially be to younger adolescent Latina-Dominicans.

Of interest was the indication of cultural perspectives on valuing virginity, which may have been a primary factor in delaying sexual debut in this population. However, validity and reliability of the scale measuring sexual risk behavior may be in question because it was only tested in a single pilot study with unstated sample size. This study could have been useful in providing data on the effect of sibling sexual activity on sexual debut in impoverished Latina-Dominican communities, but no conclusions could have been drawn because this phenomenon was not evaluated.

Peer influences and individual characteristics related to adolescent sexual behavior were evaluated by Nahom et al. (2001) in 2,973 students utilizing data from a seven-year longitudinal cohort study by The Children's Health Awareness Project (CHAP). The researchers relied on data collected and analyzed during ninth through 12th grades for the sample of 51% girls, 47% of whom were White, 24% Black, 20% Asian, and 9% described as *other*. Six items from questionnaires developed through focus groups (n = 23) required yes/no answers assessing gender, sexual experience, intentions and pressure to engage in sex, and prevalence of sex among peers, were read to groups of 10 to 15 students. Descriptive statistics were utilized to examine rates of sexual intercourse by

grade and ANOVA was used to compare students who had engaged in sex with those who had not, girls to boys, and interactions between sexual experience and gender within grades.

The researchers reported boys were more likely to intend to have sex than girls. It was also reported that 14% of girls and 23% of boys had their sexual debut by the eighth grade and 44% girls and 40% boys by the 10th grade. Adolescents experienced significant pressure by peers to engage in sex, and those who had experienced their sexual debut felt significantly more pressure than those who had not. Similar to the findings in East and Felice (1993), sexually active adolescents perceived more of their friends to have engaged in sex.

Because this study utilized a large diverse sample the findings have greater generalizability and negated the limitation effect of the interview environment. However, this study did not make full use of the longitudinal-cohort design therefore questions as to how the variables varied over time could not be answered.

Analysis of these studies from a critical ethnographic perspective revealed the influence of social-cultural interactions on behavior. Here again, Black adolescents emerged as a group at most risk for adolescent sexual debut. Peers influenced transition to sex in acculturated adolescents (Upchurch et al. 2001), while maintaining cultural norms had the effect of decreasing participation in adolescent sex (Kornreich et al. 2003). The effect of socialization on sexual debut was further demonstrated in the findings that showed relationships between parental modeling and sexual debut in adolescents (Wilder & Watt, 2002). However, parental monitoring of preadolescents and holding them

accountable for sexual behavior were two variables that appeared to delay the timing of sexual debut (Longmore et al., 2001 & O'Donnell et al., 2001). These findings have relevance to the development of interventions that address social, cultural, peer, and parental interventions to delay the timing of sexual debut particularly in Black adolescents, in order to prevent the short and long term consequences that result from adolescent sex.

Developmental Factors and Sexual Debut

The previous studies showed the influence of socio-cultural factors on the timing of sexual debut for adolescents. Additional factors including physical development and self-esteem have been found to affect this timing. According to Doswell (1998) early pubertal development in African American girls may increase the risk of early onset adolescent sexual activity. Nonetheless sexual debut occurred for most during adolescence (Teitler, 2002; WHO, 2000), but for Black adolescents this milestone was reached even earlier as already indicated. Meschke, Zweig, Barber, and Eccles (2000) reported that by age eight 48% of Black girls versus 14.7% of White girls had begun pubertal development. Menarche began at age 11 in 27.9% of Black girls compared with 13.4% White girls, and at age 12 in 62.1% Black girls compared with 35.2% White girls (Herman-Giddens, Slora, Wasserman, Bourdony, Bhapkar, Koch, & Hasemeier, 1997; Rieder & Coupey, 1999).

Associations between earlier menarche and earlier sexual debut were explained by hormonal influences occurring in adolescence. Halpern, Udry, and Suchindran (1997) reported that higher testosterone levels were significantly related to increased pubertal

development and girls with higher testosterone levels had earlier sexual debuts. The same was true for boys in the sense that boys with higher testosterone levels had sex earlier (Halpern, Udry, Campbell, & Suchindran, 1993).

Another factor affecting transition to sex for adolescent girls was weight and BMI. Kaplowitz, Slora, Wasserman, Pedlow, and Herman-Giddens (2001) reported that early maturing girls were more overweight than later maturing girls, and African American adolescent girls had larger BMIs. In their study girls with higher BMI scores were also more physically developed.

Earlier onset of puberty and subsequent adolescent sex increased girls' risk for STI's, HIV/AIDS, and other reproductive tract infections because ectopy normally present in the immature cervix made them more susceptible to these diseases (Noble, 1996). Girls as well as boys with STI's can be asymptomatic which makes diagnosis difficult, and can lead to unknowingly infecting others, complications of infertility, and peri-natal morbidity (Noble, 1996; WHO Fact Sheet, 1997). In girls pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) may occur as a result of untreated gonorrhea, chlamydia and other STIs, while boys may experience epididymitis.

The reports of earlier maturation, hence earlier sexual debut and the experience of more negative consequences of adolescent sex in Black adolescents signified a dire need for interventions in this group. As one considers the relationship between socio-cultural influences and sexual debut, given the aforementioned risks associated with adolescent sex, it becomes imperative that interventions are developed to delay their participation in

sex. However, this cannot be done without exploring various factors influencing the early onset of sex, including fathers-child communication.

Self-esteem was another factor implicated in the timing of adolescents' sexual debut though dissimilar results were reported in the following two studies. In order to examine the role of self-esteem in predicting sexual debut, Spencer et al. (2002) conducted a longitudinal study over a two-year period using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

The sample of 290 seventh and ninth grade adolescent students (57% girls, 84% White, 16% Black) who had not sexually debuted, attended two junior high schools located in a working-class neighborhood where urban students were bussed into the district. They completed self-administered RSES's ($\alpha = 0.78$) once during a mandatory class each of the two years of the study. ANCOVA was used to describe the effects for gender and coital status while logistic regression was used to analyze self-esteem separately for boys and for girls. Self-esteem scores were dichotomized using a median split.

The findings were that 40% of boys and 31% of the girls had sex by the ninth grade. Girls with high self-esteem were three times more likely to refrain from adolescent sex while boys with high self-esteem were 2.4 times more likely to have sex. The effect of self-esteem on sexual debut was not described according to race/ethnicity therefore the question as to whether high or low self-esteem was more related to sexual debut for either Black or White adolescents was unanswered. Moreover, inclusion of those who had debuted sexually may have shown an effect for self-esteem and pubertal maturation on

timing of sexual debut. Differences also may have been observed between the working class neighborhood adolescents and the urban adolescents who were bussed into the district but the study did not clarify this possibility.

Relationships between self-esteem, sexual behavior, and intended sexual behavior was evaluated by Young, Denny, and Spear (1999) in 1,659 senior high school students grades 7 through 12 from 14 school districts in rural Arkansas. The sample included 52% females; 80% White; 17% Black; and 1% were Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. Kelly's short version of the Hare Self-Esteem Scale was used to assess self-esteem. Reliabilities for the sample were: home = 0.60; peer = 0.77; and school = 0.73. Sexuality was evaluated with selected items from Kirby's (1984) National Evaluation of Sexuality education programs, but reliability coefficients were not provided. Behavior questions addressed whether students participated in sexual intercourse within the past 30 days and their intent to have sex, and logistic and multiple regressions were used to describe the data.

Researchers found that higher home and school self-esteem were significantly related to a reduced likelihood or intention to participate in sexual intercourse. Conversely, higher peer self-esteem was significantly related to an increased likelihood of participation in sexual activity and intent to participate, indicating the influence of peers on sexual debut. However, the report of increased sexual debut in those with high peer self-esteem was contrary to other studies that reported later sexual debut for adolescents with high self-esteem (Spencer et al. 2002), a finding that could have been attributed to the use of different scales measuring self-esteem. The inclusion of both junior high

school and high school students may also have biased the results because these adolescents are different developmentally. Additionally, the large sample size utilized in this study may have contributed to these findings.

Brown et al. (1998) examined changes in self-esteem and feelings of competence with physical appearance over approximately five years in 1213 Black and 1166 White adolescent girls between ages nine and fourteen. The correlation between adolescent sexual activity and self-esteem was not made for the two groups in this study. However, its value was in addressing the differing changes in self-esteem in two different racial groups. These findings highlighted the importance of studying racial/ethnic groups because of dissimilar influences of social and contextual factors on behavior.

The researchers used data from a longitudinal study the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Growth and Health Study (NGHS). Self-esteem and related feelings of competence were measured with the Self-Perception Profile for Children by Hartner (1982). Physical appearance ($\alpha=0.66-0.80$ in Black girls; $0.79-0.87$ in White girls) and social acceptance ($\alpha=0.63-0.71$ in Black girls; $0.76-0.82$ in White girls) and global self-worth ($\alpha=0.66-0.75$ in Black girls; $0.72-0.82$ in White girls). Body size was measured by trained, certified NGHS collectors at baseline and annually; sexual maturation was measured with Tanner pubic hair staging (1962), and Garn-Faulkner areolar maturation staging (1992). Demographic variables measured included the NGHS girls' race, age, and household income. Comparisons were made according to race for each variable. Unadjusted means, percentiles, and standard deviations were used to compare continuous variables, and percentages were used to compare categorical

measures. Longitudinal regression models and Liang & Zeger's (1986) generalized estimating equations (GEE) were used to investigate longitudinal trends with age among the girls for global self-worth, physical appearance, and social acceptance scores.

Consistent with Kalpowitz et al. (2001) mentioned earlier, this study reported earlier sexual maturation along with a higher degree of adiposity in Black adolescent girls than White adolescent girls. Black adolescent girls also came from more low-income households, a factor related to earlier onset adolescent sex. Correlations for self-worth, physical appearance and social acceptance were moderate for Black and White girls. The lowest correlations occurred at age nine and fourteen possibly indicating responses to biological and social stressors, however White adolescent girls' self-worth and social acceptance scored decreased with age. For all three areas the trends with age were different in Black and White adolescents, diverging and becoming more positive in Black adolescent girls.

Most importantly, the data in this section showed Black adolescents at increased risk for earlier onset of sexual activity as a result of earlier physical development.

Furthermore, the risks of adolescent sex were evident in the greater prevalence of STI's in African Americans, fortifying the argument for further research and interventions to delay adolescent sex in this population. Although relationships between self-esteem and adolescent sexual debut were apparent in all but the last of these studies the effects for Black adolescents were not clarified therefore conclusions regarding self-esteem and sexual debut in Black adolescents cannot be made from this data. The significance of

adolescents' perspectives on sexual activity must be taken into account therefore the following studies address their thoughts.

Adolescents' Thoughts and Sexual Debut

In a qualitative study of 14 sexually abstinent African American girls, Haglund (2003) described sexual abstinence from the adolescents' perspective. Participants aged 15-18 (12 claiming virgin status, nine claiming abstinence, and five claiming to not be sexually active) were recruited from an adolescent primary care clinic, a school-based health center, and an abstinence education program in which adolescents taught seventh-grade students about abstinence. Inclusion of this last group may have skewed the results of this study because of the value these adolescent may have applied to abstinence.

All adolescents considered themselves African American but one who described herself as African-Jamaican. Purposive sampling assured that participants were of diverse age, income, and family composition. Recruitment ended after the 14th participant because of data saturation. Family demographics (age, occupation, marital status, family composition, and annual family income) obtained from parents and guardians were used to compare participants' stories across demographic characteristics and as a reference to further understand each life history. Data were audio-taped and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. However, the researcher listened to tapes in order to screen for errors, salient features of the conversation, to gain an overall impression of each participant, and to remove unique identifiers. Narrative analysis then proceeded, participant by participant. Narratives were condensed into paraphrases with a modified six-step procedure by Polanyi (1989). A hierarchical coding structure was used in which

an abstract, general term identified domains (abstinence, activities, community, definition of abstinence, family, peers, problem behavior, religiosity, school, self, and sexuality) within the data. Once the coding process was complete, the coded data were examined to identify common and unique themes to describe participants' experiences. Potential researcher bias was overtly examined through personal reflection, consultation with experts in research involving adolescents and African American persons, and member checks.

The findings in this study also reflected the influence of social-cultural influences on behavior. For these girls, beliefs about sexual behavior and abstinence were based on what they had heard others say and credibility of information was based on perceived authority or experience i.e. information from friends, older siblings, mothers, pastor. Adolescents listened to advice from friends who were a main source of information on sexual activity, but also scrutinized this information if it was not consistent with their personal experiences. For most adolescents in this study the meaning of sex centered on penile-vaginal penetration. Most adolescents however, believed that anal intercourse meant having sex, and having that kind of sex meant no longer being abstinent. Other sexual acts including oral-genital contact, kissing, and touching genitals or other body parts were not considered as sex and adolescents participating in these acts considered themselves "kinda" abstinent. Abstinence did not mean never having participated in sexual activities for some, but if a non-virginal adolescent refrained from sexual activity for a year that would be considered abstinence. The period of abstinence needed to be long and uninterrupted in order to be considered as abstinence. Other words used to

describe abstinent status after having debuted sexually were *secondary abstinence*, *born-again virgin*, *pre-virgin*, and *just not sexually active*. Activities leading to sexual intercourse included kissing, intimate contact such as touching and taking one's clothes off. Other elements including how one felt about the individual, and "raging hormones" in both boys and girls, were viewed as contributing factors in reducing the adolescent's ability to resist the sex act.

These adolescents unanimously believed that abstinence was a choice to be made despite pressures to participate; and to participate in sex or not remained a question requiring thought time and again. They also believed that once a person had sexual intercourse resisting urges to continue having sex would be difficult.

An important consideration would be adolescents thought on STI/HIV, pregnancy, or abortions which were prevalent in African American adolescents however this area was not questioned in this study. Boys' understanding of abstinence and the consequences of adolescent sex would be a useful sequel to this study.

In Fay and Yanoff (2000) the results of the 1999 Pennsylvania Coalition to Prevent Teen Pregnancy were presented. This conference was designed to gather detailed information on 120 adolescents (60% female; adolescents' ages not described) from 17 counties and 45 different school districts about what was going on in their sexual lives and to elicit their ideas about how adults could enhance the sexual health of youths. The study was a qualitative one employing interviews producing thick data on these adolescents' thoughts in aggregate and not according to gender, race/ethnicity therefore conclusions could not be made in that respect. The importance of what these adolescents

had to say can provide directions for future interventions in several areas including education for parents.

Facilitators for the study included teachers, social workers, ministers, a rabbi, physicians, administrators, college professors, and sexuality educators. Adolescents were divided into nine mixed-gender discussion groups with at least one male and one female facilitator after choosing their topic of discussion (talking to parents about sex, communicating in male-female relationships, the decision to abstain, contraceptive decision-making, high-risk sexual behavior, body image, media images of sexuality, sexuality orientation, sexual decision-making). Later, a second discussion group was held on a second topic of the adolescents' choice.

On the topic of talking to parents about sex, most adolescents said it was easier to talk to friends than parents because parents and other adults had problems talking to young people about sex. "Young people are preached at rather than talked to by adults," "...I don't talk to her. She talks to me." "If you talk to your parents about it, they'll think you're doing it." "Parents don't want to think about their kids as having sex."

Suggestions from adolescents as to how parents could approach the subject included good dialogue with parents without fear of judgment or punishment though some felt that was not possible. Others thought this would work if parents made the first move and remained open-minded, and accepting. Further suggestions from the adolescents were, "you should just listen to what your kids have to say and not lecture and tell them what to do;" "parents must take the first step, kids won't go away;" "you've got to talk to them from the time they're real little;" "parents need to be more understanding. Kids are afraid

to bring it up;" "don't have just one talk when kids are little. Many talks. That builds respect;" "don't force your will on them. If you do, they will rebel;" "kids want to be able to ask any question and get the answer –the truth- not beating around the bush."

Adolescents reporting good communication with their parents stated, "my mom's great. We can talk about anything ... so I usually do what she thinks is best because I trust her and don't want to disappoint her;" I talk to my father a lot because we have that kind of open relationship. I can talk to him about anything;" "right now I have my mother's respect. I want to keep that;" "My mom is pretty cool. Instead of scolding me she talks to me."

Some adolescents saw the school as having a responsibility to fill the role of 'someone to talk to' either by providing comprehensive, non-judgmental sex education or through being a resource to parents. Some adolescents' comments were "we had sex ed in 11th grade for three days only;" "we didn't have a menstruation talk;" "sex ed is too little too late;" "start sex ed early and repeat it every year."

Adolescents did not share the same definition of abstinence. Some thought it meant any kind of sexual activity except penile-vaginal penetration while others presented a variety of explanations.

Reasons for abstaining included religious or moral beliefs, and interference with attaining future goals. Abstinence was facilitated if one were part of a group supporting that choice, along with knowing oneself and one's values, self-control, self-esteem, good role models, positive peer pressure, and supportive parents. Without much agreement factors advanced for the adolescents to choose abstinence were emphasis on the

emotional risk of sex, and more attention to the positive aspects of waiting. There was general agreement that adolescents should have the facts then the choice to abstain would be theirs. Factors that increased the level of risk included low self-esteem, depression, feelings of emotional vulnerability, or the desire to get even with a partner after a break-up.

Things that concerned them the most about the consequences of sexual activity included STIs/HIV, and pregnancy. Also mentioned were the fear of losing a friend, damage to reputation and the emotional consequences of a sexual relationship. Among recommendations to reduce the occurrence of high risk behavior better education, evaluating one's values, and avoiding risky situations were included.

In order to better understand the context of reproductive health in adolescent males' lives, Marcell, Raine and Eyre (2003) conducted a qualitative study involving focus groups, free-listings, and group interviews. Participants were 32 adolescent boys from two high schools in San Francisco, whose mean age was 15.5 years (25% Hispanic, 50% Black, 6% Asian or Pacific Islander, 16% of mixed race).

A series of short group interviews were initially held with 25 males to identify research domains, topics and terminology for use in the focus group discussions. After exploring open-ended questions about life choices and sexuality, the identified domains were masculinity, life responsibilities and life priorities.

This study revealed that for these adolescent boys, education not health was the highest priority. They stated for example, "one of the top things right now in my life is school...because a lot of people don't realize the harder you work now in school, the

easier your life will be when you get older...cause you will have a good job...attend a good college, and everything will be right for you.” STIs, HIV, AIDS, and injuries were the health concerns, but HIV was the biggest fear, however there was limited knowledge about STI symptomology. For example, some adolescents thought herpes could be transmitted by drinking from the container of an infected person. Taking care of themselves included attending to good hygiene, eating right, going to school and studying. Staying aware of their surroundings and “trusting no one” were ways to take care of themselves on the streets. Family and education were influences that led them to be responsible. In terms of masculinity, “being a man” meant possessing male genitalia and being able to physically defend one-self. Some male experiences included having to “step up” in absent father homes and being pressured by girls to have sex. As stated by one adolescent “girls, especially, always want to have sex...so if this is what a girl wants, I need to prepare myself.” Adolescents felt it was important to learn how to “pleasure a girl, and to get sexual experience.” However, the most frequent response regarding how a male would prove his manhood was to have sex and to have a girlfriend. Fighting for some was a means of getting a girl’s attention. Adolescents pressured each other to have sex by name calling, and bragging about having had sex. In general the adolescents disagreed on whether males their age thought of the consequences of having sex, but agreed that it was going to happen before attaining adulthood.

The use of qualitative methodologies in these studies very effectively elicited adolescents’ thoughts about reproductive health. In the adolescents’ words these studies pointed out the adolescents’ concerns, knowledge and the social influences of peers and

parents including fathers on their transition to sex, thus providing useful information for areas of interventions to delay adolescent sex.

In summary this literature review examined the effects of several variables including father's influence, parenting, peers, culture, physical development, self-esteem, and adolescents' thoughts on the timing of sexual debut. Sexual debut was impacted by several socio-cultural factors with communication functioning as the common denominator to impart sexual values. Father-adolescent communication influenced the timing of adolescent sexual activity, and parental sexual values for their adolescents effectively communicated in supportive relationships delayed sexual debut. Family structure influenced sexual debut, with increased adolescent sexual activity observed in adolescents from single-parent families. Cultural mores were influential in delaying sexual activity in adolescents whose parents were foreign-born, while acculturation into the American way of life resulted in increased participation in adolescent sex, highlighting the effects of social and cultural exchange on sexual debut. However, different socialization processes and value systems explained peers' differing influences on the timing of sexual debut amongst cultures. Early physical development was strongly associated with adolescent sex particularly in African American adolescent girls. African American adolescents also experienced most of the other risk factors including early exposure to sexually active peers, and lived in single-parent families, cumulative factors which placed them at greatest risk for the negative consequences of adolescent sex. Self-esteem influenced the timing of sexual debut but the studies in this literature review reported findings in aggregate without distinguishing amongst ethnicities. Finally,

adolescents' thoughts on sexual activity were influenced by several socialization factors including communication with fathers. Intuitively one would have expected to see results of researchers' interest in African American fathers' influence in their children's reproductive health piqued by:

1. The plethora of studies showing these youths at greatest risk for earlier adolescent sex due to earlier physical development, earlier and more exposure to sexually active peers, and belonging to more single-parent families;
2. The highest rates of negative consequences (STIs/HIV, unwanted pregnancies, abortions) that compromise reproductive health observed in African American children;
3. Studies showing that fathers do make a difference in their childrens' reproductive health thus affecting the timing of sexual debut;
4. Studies showing differing effects of socialization within cultures on sexual debut pointing to the importance of studying specific ethnic groups;
5. The paucity of research on African American fathers' reproductive health communication with their children;
6. Healthy People 2010's objective and WHO's (2003) mandate to delay sexual debut;
7. Findings on African American fathers' reproductive health communication with their adolescents could help to break the trend of early adolescent sex thus reducing STI's/HIV, unwanted pregnancies, and abortions prevalent in African American children.

These empirical data strongly support the need for researching African American father-child reproductive health communication and should serve to alert researchers that more study and subsequent interventions are needed in this at risk adolescent population. Studies showing that other fathers' reproductive health communication with their adolescents influenced their sexual debut indicated fathers' importance in this domain. These same studies though needed in African American fathers have not been done. Findings may indicate the need for education of fathers to improve reproductive health communication with their adolescents. Intervening in this manner may help to break the trend of early participation in sex for African American children. On the other hand, findings may show effective ways African American fathers communicated with their children that delayed adolescent sexual debut. Finding ways of facilitating this kind of communication in other African American fathers may help delay adolescent sex for their adolescents, thus decreasing the rates of STIs/HIV, adolescent pregnancies and abortions in this ethnic group. Furthermore, a deep understanding of the needs of African American fathers in terms of reproductive health communication with their children could help reduce the negative consequences of adolescent sex in these children and could establish a knowledge base for future research.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore African American father-child reproductive health communication. A qualitative method of inquiry was used to discover how these communications occurred, using tape-recorded interviews. Data were analyzed under the guide of Miles and Huberman (1994) who noted that qualitative studies are often theory driven. In this study, critical ethnography facilitated exploration of the subject of focus in this study that was conducted from a critical theoretical angle because of the good fit with researcher ideologies, subject explored, ethnic background of participants, and contexts influencing behaviors within that ethnic group.

Critical Theoretical Perspective

A variety of theoretical perspectives have been used in professional literature to help us understand how we view ourselves and others in the world. Critical theory is a philosophical perspective that was borne out of concern for the proletariat (working class) at a time in Germany when revolutionary movements occurred because of the injustices these people suffered. Korsch and Lukacs, European activists involved in worker council movements in their respective countries were some of the earliest activists in the theoretical reconstruction of Marxism along Hegelian lines. This resulted in the formation of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt Germany in 1923, which was moved to Columbia University in 1934 after being forced into exile by the Nazis, and was returned to Germany in 1950. First generation director Max Horkheimer, followed by second generation critical theorists Adorno, Marcuse, Benjamin, Fromm and Habermas, were probably the most widely known critical thinkers having contributed to the reconstruction

of Marxist theory. Critical theorists were in opposition to Comte's positivistic view that the only legitimate claim to knowledge was the scientific method, that is, only what could be empirically determined should be applied to the study of human action (Sabia & Wallulis, 1983). With a primarily emancipatory interest, critical theorists espoused the freedom for societies to be rational which meant being free to interpret life experiences subjectively as well as objectively. In response to problems of power, social injustice, oppression and domination in societies, proponents of critical theory favored freedom and responsibility to be rational thinkers in order that autonomy and respect could be achieved. Critical theory is applicable in explorative studies of cultural communities and marginalized groups. The sample for this study consisted of African American males whose ethnic group experienced untold forms of racism and injustices in this country as will be discussed. Critical theory is therefore appropriate for studying African American fathers and the reproductive health communication they had with their children because it will help us understand these fathers' experience within the context of an oppressive society.

Critical Ethnography as Methodology

Critical ethnography was the methodology employed in this study. It is a style of analysis and discourse embedded within conventional ethnography which refers to the tradition of cultural description and analysis that displays meanings by interpreting meanings and relies on the core rules of ethnographic methods (Thomas, 1993).

Critical ethnography is a means of examining fundamental problems of social existence that are met with daily, particularly in cultural groups and in those whose experience is

that of oppression and domination. On one level it is conventional ethnography with a political purpose, and on another it allows for scrutiny of otherwise hidden agendas, power relations, and modes of stereotypical conjecture (Thomas, 1993). Self-constructed stories or truths about particular phenomena are the way people understand their lives, and these truths can be exposed through verbal discourses. Critical ethnography was therefore used to facilitate the exploration of patterns in people's truths told through stories borne out of socio-economic and cultural influences.

Disciplinary influences on critical ethnography included anthropology, history, philosophy, and education. Though never solely defined as a property of the discipline of anthropology, ethnography was heavily influenced by anthropology's focus on the marginalized. This focus occurred as a result of Western expansion and an interest in describing the cultures of marginalized people before their extinction. Early ethnographers attempted to solve problems of ethnocentricity leading anthropologists to emphasize unique features within cultures and to defend cultural differences rather than similarities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). More than studying the obviously oppressed or socially marginalized, critical ethnographers use their work to aid emancipatory goals or to negate repressive influences that lead to unnecessary social domination (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). Toward this end the critical ethnographic researcher functions as an instrument of research seeking to learn from the participant though ideally both researcher and participant construct meaning from data in an effort to see how varying political, social and economic forces influences impact conflict, struggle and power in relationship to the focal area under study. Thus the goal of critical ethnography is to come

to an inter-subjective (researcher-participant) understanding of participant's stories such that these influences can be revealed.

As instrument, the researcher is part of the research process and is not a tabula rasa, but brings life knowledge to the data collection and interpretation processes. With a keen awareness of the importance of reflexivity, the researcher seeks to closely represent the participant's voice in text. Research questions driven by the initial area of concern along with further questions arising from inter-subjective understanding directs the research process. In line with this theoretical perspective African American fathers' truths about reproductive health communication with their children were explored through conversations. As the methodological basis for this study critical ethnography allowed the researcher to examine how social factors including oppression, power and conflict influenced culturally based communication patterns between fathers and their children. Carspecken's (1996) value orientations for critical ethnography described in Noblitt, Flores and Murillo (2004) legitimated the impetus for this study. It identified that research was to be used in cultural and social criticisms, that researchers should be opposed to inequality in all forms, that research should be used to reveal oppression and to challenge it, and that all forms of oppression should be studied. Because critical ethnography facilitated a deeper understanding of social phenomena it was appropriate for the study of reproductive health communications African American fathers have with their adolescents, antecedent to their sexual debut.

African American males undoubtedly have been an oppressed group starting with the experience of years of slavery in the United States of America followed by a peculiarly

problematic aftermath of oppression arguably into the 21st century. Though studies of fathers became a popular area of study decades ago, and in the face of the 1993 NIH Revitalization Act most recently amended in 2001 mandating inclusion of women and minorities, and of Miranda (1966) which called for inclusion of minorities as research participants, samples of African American fathers in research studies have generally been small. Whether under-inclusion of African Americans and the paucity of research addressing African American father-child reproductive health communication are signs of racism in research may be debatable. However, the assertion that racism has been present in research was echoed in the Reverby's (1999) and Hatchett, Holmes, Duran, and Davis' (2000) treatment of the Tuskegee Study, the 1967 Moynihan Report (Staples, 1971) and *The Bell Curve*. The lack of study of African American father-child reproductive health communication inadvertently bears testimony to stereotypical assumptions that African American fathers were absent from the home in which their children lived therefore studying reproductive health communication they had with their children would yield no useful data, or that they were not likely to participate in the research process. However findings in some studies did not support reasons for the lack of study in this population. Researchers have reported that African American fathers participated in their children's lives even if they were absent from the home (Coley & Chase-Linsdale, 1999). Hatchett et al. (2000) found that exclusion of African Americans in research occurred because they were not approached, and not necessarily because they declined participation for any of the aforementioned reasons.

In line with Thomas's (1993) explanation that critical ethnography carries a political purpose, the critical ethnographer can empower the oppressed subject by giving more authority to their voice, thereby using knowledge to invoke social consciousness and social change. The utility of critical ethnography in this study was in the potential for expanding the knowledge base of how African American fathers broached the sensitive subject of reproductive health with their children given their ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic influences. As methodology, it is appropriate for studying African American fathers, an oppressed and socially marginalized cultural group thus giving these fathers a voice in this regard. The hope was that this data would begin to relieve the breach in research, provide implications for further research, and guides for reproductive health care interventions including education for both African American fathers and adolescents to delay the onset of adolescent sex thus reducing African American adolescent reproductive health morbidity. The ultimate goal, however, was for attainment of what Lather called catalytic validity as described in Denzin (1997, p. 10) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 297), whereby empowerment and emancipation of those studied were achieved such that through greater understanding they were moved to transform their own worlds.

Data Analysis

Sampling

For this study sample requirements were met if one identified as an African American father with adolescent children because the research questions involved that particular group. Participants were recruited through purposive (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27)

sampling whereby fathers with essential characteristics for this study were sought. In order to find the sample the researcher went to places where African American males were expected to congregate such as community activities, and religious or spiritual centers. Additionally, conceptually driven sequential sampling occurred when the researcher asked some fathers for referrals to explore whether similar findings were present for others meeting the study criteria. The study was explained to fathers meeting the study criteria though they may have had older or younger children, and were included if they agreed to participate. The informed consent process was continuous as fathers were informed that they had the right to discontinue the interview at any time. A concern for confidentiality was relieved once it was explained that identities would not be revealed at any point but that the data would be used in aggregate to understand how reproductive health communication occurred for their cohort. That concern could have been related to concern for legal circumstances because some fathers had experienced past legal difficulties, however fathers without that history had the same concern.

Instrumentation

A single researcher of the same ethnicity was the primary information gathering instrument in this study in which semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded to collect data after defining the research questions. Belonging to the ethnic group could have been interpreted as bias causing, but in this study it facilitated the interview process. Little note taking was done in the presence of interviewees because that activity seemed to interfere with the flow of the interviews. However, memos were made after each interview.

Validity and reliability of the researcher as instrument rested in familiarity with the phenomenon under study, its context, and good investigative skills.

Analysis

Data for this ethnographic study exploring the social phenomenon of African American father-child reproductive health communication were analyzed according to Miles and Huberman (1994) and were reported descriptively. All data were collected and analyzed by the researcher to avoid inaccuracies of interpretations by computer software incapable of detecting ethnic variations in language. Data were gathered through tape-recorded semi-structured interviews of responses to broad questions formulated before the interview, and used as a guide. Note taking during interviews did not occur to avoid interference with conversations and to improve participant comfort. However, memoing occurred immediately after interviews, or when the researcher had thoughts that would affect the interview process. Memoing was also used to plan what data should be gathered and how that should be done in subsequent interviews.

After each interview taped interviews were transcribed word for word by a paid transcriptionist, and included all audible sounds. Each transcribed interview was reviewed by the researcher who listened to the taped interviews while reading the transcription. Because of this practice, inconsistencies in transcription were noted, prompting the researcher to release the transcriptionist. These tape-recorded interviews were re-transcribed by the researcher. Subsequent interviews were transcribed by another transcriptionist, and though less frequent, inconsistencies were also noted. Upon receipt of each transcription interview analysis proceeded as codes were developed and applied

to chunks of data because meanings lay in extensive verbalizations as participant fathers attempted to discharge their stories. Data were then grouped into categories from which conclusions were drawn. Categories were reviewed and labels changed as necessary, and sometimes collapsing more than one category into one was necessary. Patterns or themes emerged throughout the process of analysis and conclusions based on these were drawn.

Reliability

Reliability according to Miles and Huberman (1994) involved carrying out research procedures consistently across researchers and methods, and ensuring that reasonable care had been taken in carrying them out. This study utilizing critical ethnography was conducted by a single researcher who made her position clear to each participant prior to interviews in which the same format of semi-structured tape-recorded interviews was used. Meaningfulness of major findings was enhanced when parallelisms were found across fathers' socio-economic status or outliers were identified.

Internal validity

Valid knowledge can be acquired from truthful accounts transmitted through communication. Carspecken (1996) described three categories of critical epistemology from which diverse truths could be acquired and differentiated namely subjective ontology, objective ontology and normative-evaluative ontology. The subjective ontological category pertained to existing states of minds to which only the participant had access. Within that category were truth claims about how the participant felt, or what the participant thought. The objective ontological category contained observable truths whereby existing objects and events were noticed by others whereas the normative-

evaluative category gave credence to rightness, goodness or appropriateness of truth claims. It was upon this ideology of how truths can be displayed that validity claims for this study were based. To further preserve truthfulness of accounts, participants were assured confidentiality that their identities would not be revealed, that they could be comfortable in discussing the subject matter without feeling judged and should not be fearful of having any consequence as a result of discussing anything relating to it. Information retrieved in these interviews was less likely to be contrived because similar findings in the ample sample size utilized in this study increased the validity of accounts. Participants understood that no losses were to be experienced therefore truths were unlikely to be modified during the interview process. Fathers welcomed the opportunity to discuss their experiences which they shared in an unabridged manner. Additionally, the researcher believed that belonging to the same ethnic group increased participants' willingness to give accurate information, enhancing the reliability of the study. *External Validity*

External validity considers whether findings in a study fit or can be generalized or transferred to other contexts. The use of an ample sample size increased meaningfulness of some findings, and the potential for transferability to African American fathers. A potential limiting effect could have resulted when fathers referred each other to the study reducing diversity in sampling.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Fathers' profiles

F001

Age: 44

Job: Physician Assistant

Marital status: Divorced

Family composition: Lived apart from 12 year old son and 10 year old daughter from prior marriage

Legal issues: None reported

F002

Age: 45

Job: Stay at home father; traded stocks and bonds, bought and sold real estate

Marital status: Married

Family composition: Lived with 15 year old daughter and 13 year old son from a prior marriage, and two non-biological sons 14 and 11 years old from the current marriage

Legal issues: None reported

F003

Age: 37

Job: Manager at a local food company

Marital status: Married

Family composition: 18 year old daughter and 16 year old son from a previous marriage; four year old daughter and one year old son from current marriage

Legal issues: None reported

F004

Age: 41

Job: Owned an automobile repair business

Marital status: Married

Family composition: Lived with his wife's 26 and 23 year old sons from a prior relationship, his 20 year old son from a prior relationship, and their 19, 13, and 10 year old sons, and 16, 9 and 7 year old daughters.

Legal issues: None reported

F005

Age: 38

Job: Driver for mentally disabled and airport shuttle driver

Marital status: Single parent

Family composition: Lived with his mother, 16 and 15 year old sons and 10 year old daughter from three mothers

Legal issues: felon

F006

Age: 40

Job: Worked for a computer company

Marital status: Married

Family composition: Lived with a 20 year old non-biological daughter since she was nine months old, and his 18 year old daughter and 15 year old son from the current marriage

Legal issues: None reported

F007

Age: 55

Job: Independent contractor with a food delivery company

Marital status: Married

Family composition: Lived with 16 year old daughter and 14 year old son

Legal issues: None reported

F008

Age: 43

Job: Teacher

Marital status: Divorced single father

Family composition: Father of daughters 27, 25, 21, 15, and 10, lived with the three youngest

Legal issues: None reported

F009

Age: 38

Job: Night crew manager at a supermarket

Marital status: Married

Family composition: Lived with 13 year old daughter and a set of six year old twin sons

Legal issues: None reported

F010

Age: 41

Job: Handyman

Marital status: Divorced

Family composition: Had 24 year old daughter who lived independent of him, and a 17 year old son who lived with his mother. All children were from different mothers. He lived with his eight year old son from a current common law wife.

Legal issues: Spent time in jail and prison

F011

Age: 48

Job: Child support services

Marital status: Married

Family composition: Lived with 10 and 12 year old sons from current wife; had a 28 year old daughter fathered in adolescence

Legal issues: None reported

F012

Age: 38

Job: Animal technician

Marital status: Never married

Family composition: Lived with 16 year old daughter and common law wife

Legal issues: Spent time in jail

F013

Age: 38

Job: Car sales person

Marital status: Divorced

Family composition: Lived alone: fathered 12 and 15 year old sons by two mothers

Legal issues: none reported

F014

Age: 49

Job: Engineer

Marital status: Married

Family composition: Lived with 13 and 15 year old sons from current marriage; had 27 year old daughter by prior relationship who lived independent of father

Legal issues: None reported

F015

Age: 45

Job: Owner and president of a real estate company

Marital status: Married to second wife

Family composition: Lived with 18 year old daughter, 20 year old son from previous marriage, and wife's 20 year old son from a prior marriage

Legal issues: None reported

F016

Age: 43

Job: Laid off from \$100,000 yearly sales engineer job; currently does data entry at a major university at \$30,000 yearly

Marital status: Separated

Family composition: Lived apart from 17 year old son and 14 year old daughter

Legal issues: None reported

F017

Age: 43

Job: Laid off financial consultant

Marital status: Divorced

Family composition: Lived alone: Had daughters 14 and 16 years old living with their mother

Legal problems: none reported

F018

Age: 45

Job: Insurance sales person

Marital status: Married

Family composition: Lived with 15 year old non-biological son and eight year old daughter from current marriage

Legal issues: None reported

F019

Age: 42

Job: Computer technician for Los Angeles school

Marital status: Divorced

Family composition: Lived apart from 15 year old daughter

Legal issues: None reported

Fathers' characteristics

Participants were biological African American fathers who had adolescent children between the ages of 10 and 19 (WHO, 2003). Some fathers had children beyond these ages and at times used experiences they had with those children (as old as age 28) to respond to some questions. Some had children younger than 10 years of age as well. The 19 fathers in the sample were mostly aged 38 to 45, the oldest being 48, 49 and 55, and all lived in urban Los Angeles. All but one reported having a background of spirituality. Three of the nine unmarried fathers disclosed during interviews that they had spent time in jail or were felons. Ten fathers reported growing up in two-parent homes while nine grew up in female-headed homes. One of the nine was initially raised with his mother then was sent to live with his grandmother at about age nine. Of fathers from two-parent homes, five had both parents who had reproductive health discussions with them; one reported his father had this discussion with him. Four of these fathers had parents who had no reproductive health discussions with them; two of these four had an adult with whom they could have these conversations.

Nine of the 19 fathers were raised in single female headed homes. Of the nine fathers, six reported their parents had reproductive health communications with them; only one of these six had both parents engage them in these conversations while fathers of the other

five held these conversations. Of the three having had neither parent engaging them in these discussions, only one had an adult with whom he felt comfortable having these conversations.

All fathers but one reported having some degree of reproductive health communications with their children. Nine of the nineteen fathers discussed their expectation of abstinence from sex until marriage. Six fathers from single parent homes and five parents from two-parent homes expected abstinence from their children. Most other fathers expected their children to wait until they were adults 18 to 19 years of age.

About half of the fathers reported being raised in lower socio-economic homes while the others reported coming from middle class homes. One father had a Master's degree, four had a Bachelor's degree, five had some college education, eight had a high school education and one had not completed high school. One father, the owner and president of a real estate company, reported earnings of \$720,000 for the past year, and another earned \$130,000 yearly. One laid-off for about one year father reported past earnings of about \$100,000, and two reported earning about \$80,000 and \$78,000 respectively per year. Other fathers' yearly incomes ranged from \$20,000 to \$65,000. However, for most fathers in two-parent homes, incomes averaged \$50,000 but were bolstered by wives' earnings when wives worked. Separated and unmarried fathers living with the child's mother had the lowest earnings at an average of \$27,000 per year.

Ten fathers were in marital relationships and lived in homes with their wives and children. Two single fathers lived with their children, and two fathers lived with their children and the children's mother in common law relationships. One father lived

separate from his child. Four fathers were divorced from the mother of their children. Fathers had a minimum of one child and a maximum of nine children, the median being about 3 children. All married fathers had African American wives except for one married to a White woman and one married to a non-African American woman of mixed heritage.

Study Description

Fathers were recruited through referrals such that one father referred another who met the study requirements. Fathers were also recruited at community activities and churches where African American men would be present. Living in the same home was not a condition for participation in the study because often times African American fathers did not live in the same homes as their children. Additionally, interviewing fathers who lived in the home as well as fathers who did not allowed for understanding of how reproductive health communication occurred for both groups. A total of 19 fathers were finally interviewed after four fathers who agreed to be interviewed were not able to keep their appointments, were unreachable by telephone and therefore were naturally eliminated.

Interviews were conducted in the researcher's office or in participants' homes. On one occasion it was necessary to interview a single-father felon in his bedroom because that was most convenient for him. The researcher arrived for this interview with her husband who established a rapport with the participant, then waited in a parked car in front of the participant's home. The researcher's husband transported some other participants to the place of interview when they did not have a convenient means of transportation, and on one occasion due to a father's suspended driving privileges.

The researcher described the study, the informed consent process and the approximate length of interviews. Request to tape-record interviews was done before interviewing, the amount of remunerations was clarified and questions were invited and answered. Having discussions about reproductive health necessitated explaining what that meant. It was explained to be any conversation or interaction whether verbal or non-verbal, direct or indirect, formal or informal, about reproductive or sexual health which included but was not exclusively related to sexuality, sexual health, and dating processes. Additionally, the questions that were being asked for this study were explained. Three fathers' main concern was that they did not want to be matched with the information they gave at any time. Once confidentiality was assured and questions were answered, participants granted permission to be interviewed and for the conversations to be tape-recorded. Interviews proceeded as fathers answered questions to the best of their abilities.

Much of the data were seated in elaborate responses to other questions making direct questioning sometimes unnecessary. Fathers' responses were in the form of stories with examples from their own lives, and were complex due to cultural variations in expression, and to the personal nature of the subject matter. Tortuous and deep felt experiences together with perceiving the interview process as a platform to talk about their experiences resulted in substantive descriptions. In order to provide these fathers a voice, to diminish the risk of losing meanings in what they had to say by chopping their data into small bits and pieces to present a story by the researcher, their thoughts were presented in the least adulterated form. The interview process also facilitated a much needed understanding of these fathers' endeavors and consternations as they navigated

fatherhood activities with special focus on reproductive health communications with their children. The subject under consideration caused fathers to reflect upon their fathering behaviors which sometimes triggered emotional responses as they reflected upon their experiences as children, and their own fathering behaviors which may or may not have been exemplary.

In order to properly contextualize reproductive health communication these fathers had with their children, it was necessary to gain some understanding of their backgrounds, that is, whether they came from single or two-parent homes and how they learned about reproductive health. These factors could have influenced values they developed about reproductive health and how they broached these conversations with their children. Fathers F001 to F019 offered thick descriptions. Results of this study were organized around encompassing themes that emerged from interviews. This exploration begins with seeking to understand how fathers learned about reproductive health because this experience could have had some bearing on subsequent communications they had with their children in this respect.

How Fathers Learned

The question fathers were asked was to describe how they learned about reproductive health.

F008: "My father had 'the talk' with me but by the time he had the talk I already knew where babies came from...I could go to my father with questions. My mother would be too embarrassed to talk about that. She was comfortable with it as I got older. Once I was

16 and older that's when she was more comfortable...the talks she had with my sisters I do not know."

F001: "When I was about seven my brother and some of his friends actually pulled a train on a girl in our bedroom and I watched them. They took turns having sex with this girl. I never let myself actually have sex until I was 17. As I was growing up, I saw how loose a lot of girls were and I had an idea of, you know, some of the sexually transmitted diseases that were going around. I didn't really want to catch anything, so I was trying to avoid getting myself involved in something that I might regret later, ending up catching something that I wouldn't be able to get rid of. I used to read a lot about the human body and infections, things like that as part of my science reading. So, I think I was probably a little more aware of some of the things that could happen than a lot of my friends were. And that probably contributed to my waiting as long as I did because a lot of my friends started sooner. A lot of them were having sex from about age nine and up. My dad did talk to me actually. He talked to me about it when I was 12 or 13. He basically started out asking me you know, if I knew the differences between boys and girls and the bodies and you know if I knew where babies came from and how they were made and just tried to explain it in general terms. You know, how the penis and vagina and the man you know, if he loves his woman and then the baby being conceived that way. And then proceeded to say how that's something that only married people should do. That was my dad's job. My mother I am sure she talked to my sister about it, but growing up my mother and father, they maintained their pretty distinct roles that old-school parents used to maintain.

You know, father, mother, husband, wife, and so they did the traditional jobs that was expected. And you know, old school, only the man talked to the boys.”

F007: “It was mentioned to me throughout my childhood by my mom and my dad, and a lot of it was learned from friends, peer group children...but not until I reached the age where she felt that I understood what it was really all about, so I would say around the age of maybe 12, 13, did she actually sit down and begin to talk about reproduction and the importance of it or repercussions of it as well. It was ongoing until the point until I realized I know what it’s all about. At that point, I didn’t need to involve her in my responsibilities as far as sex education or sexuality or anything like that. Same thing with my dad. My dad had a major input on talking about sexuality, because one of his main concerns was that he didn’t want us as children to have kids out of wedlock, and so he explained to us what conceiving kids was all about, that type of thing, and why you shouldn’t do it, and things like that. Oh, I felt very comfortable going to anyone as far as my family is concerned, anyone in my family.”

F014: “It was mostly how to avoid becoming a father more so than how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases. I seem to remember more the concern about don’t start having children, that sort of thing. I think it would usually be on the tail of someone else having a problem. So you know, one of my classmates getting pregnant or someone we know that’s out of wedlock getting pregnant.”

F012: “Now, I could talk to my parents about it, they would be willing to answer my questions but I didn’t feel comfortable. They never really sat me down and had a

conversation about it. I just remember them asking me, are you having sex and I said no and that was it.”

F019 reported on how he learned from his father. “He was a serious bachelor. There’s pictures of women with no clothes on, you know. Artistically taken or whatever, you know. Oh, and he had playboy, Penthouse magazines. I would sneak up there and look at them, I didn’t even have to sneak, and I could just look at them. He was very liberal. I remember him telling me, you know, put on a rubber and you’re not going to lose any feeling, things like that. I guess I learned some things about women, about the nature of them. Or the nature of women around L.A. Friends, magazines and porno flicks.” Asked at what age he began having sex he reported, “15, 14” and had about thirty-five partners.

F005: “I was practically just starting at age 13 with my older two brothers’ father. He was telling me everything and he was showing me about, you know, older women and letting me go into the direction of trying it out and everything with older women back at that time...my mother’s ex-boyfriend, my two oldest brothers’ father would sit down sometimes and have a talk with me and my older brother...and then he was telling me, you know, have I ever done this with a female and what I would do, the basics...one Friday night he said well, I have a female down. Let’s come over here so you guys can, you know, learn. My oldest brother was about 17 already and I’m basically 13 and still shy when it comes to women. And he took me in a room and was talking to me...he made a phone call to the older woman and she came over and stuff and she talked to me. We’re gonna play a game and stuff. I’m gonna teach you this.”

F017: “Well we asked your mom if we could sleep in the bed with you and she said it was okay because you wouldn’t do anything anyway.” And I said what?...I think they might have been concerned that I was gay or something cause it was almost like she was pushing us and that’s why she let those girls stay in my bed. It’s like, you know....he (his father) wanted me to uh, have as much fun as I could...he would tell me if I was doing something with the little girls I was with, you know, if she was pretty and he would tell me like, that he was a stud, basically. So he just communicated that the way it was, like the way real men were.”

F003: “If you had a question about reproductive health would you have gone to your father? No. I don’t think so, cuz he, he would encourage me to go out and do it more. Well, once I was walking with two girls which were friends of mine’s, and by this time my father had stopped working and he started drinking and stuff. So, when he seen me walking with the two girls, he told me to ‘go.’ He said, ‘Go. Get both of them.’ So I just said wow, he didn’t even know if this was friends or anything. I just shined him on and kept going.”

F013: “I learnt basically in the streets. Well, it was my dad, a little bit, had something to do with it too. Because he was back in those days, you know how it was, it was kind of freaky back then. Him and my uncle, they had beautiful women, and they would bring them.... and my dad’s wife, she was pretty open spirited to where, you know, she would walk around naked and stuff like that. And they had photo albums laying around with my uncle and different women in the bed, my father and other uncle, my dad, my step-mom, and another woman or something like that. And, you know, I catch them in the act

sometimes, or something like that...I decided to wait until I was like 19, 18, 19. I could talk to my friends more than my parents. I would never go to my parents and say, you know, nothing... nothing about sex. Nothing was said to me about it, nothing from my parents. Everything came from my friends. That's the honest truth. Nothing came from my mother."

F018 reported neither parent had reproductive health conversations with him, "He (his father) is not the type of person that would talk about personal things. Yeah, I was in the 8th grade and um, the mother of this young lady claim that I had got her pregnant and so she came to our house and so my mother addressed the issue with her and then after that, she addressed the issue with me and how kids would affect your life at 13. You know, if she was to have the baby what would that do to you. She was talking about, the effects....she talked mainly about the effects of having a kid, what having a kid would do, you know, to her, to me, at that age."

F016: Having had no reproductive health communication from his parents he stated, "I don't know how they expected me to figure it out."

F004: "No one really ever sat down and talked to me about sex. If I thought I had a question probably I would be too embarrassed to ask. So I'd feel like I didn't have no one. Not because I didn't have no one, because I did, but I would probably be too embarrassed to ask a sex question. You know, you find out from hangin' out with your buddies at night if someone had gotten some sex or didn't get none or, you know, it was just kind of commonplace. Sex wasn't really a big issue when I was growing up. It was different then. You know, it just came when it was time for it to come. I wasn't looking

for sex and sex wasn't lookin' for me. You know, your parents, church, because see, the way I grew up sex was wrong, you know. Oh, no. You don't have sex until you're married. That's the way I grew up. That's the rules. That's the way I came up. So, that's why I never even considered, really, the fundamentals about sex until way late. I compare myself to kids today. That's what I'm doin' right now. See, sex to me began like, uh, 19, 18 whereas kids today, it's different and they're 12 and 13. So to me I feel like that's late. I would say I got that from my dad."

F015: "My parents never discussed sex with me. I had to kind of find out for myself how everything kind of worked and so forth and so on. It was like a taboo thing in our house to discuss things like that. I guess it was the Pussycat theatre in Hollywood, about 17 years old. I lied to some girl to have sex with her so that was my first experience with sex. From there I kind of fumbled through it, video, pornography. My mother didn't know how to talk to us. You know, we're boys. You have to remember that most of the time my dad was gone so I never had that male bonding, so as I grew up I watched television or things like that to try to understand what sex is about and so on and know about protection and things like that."

F011: "There was still nothing discussed regarding, you know, I don't want you out you might do such and such, you know. Nothing like that till basically it might have been too late. I do have a daughter 28 years old, which I was about 19-1/2, I was in school. And, that's when that happened. At that point, 19-1/2 years old, you know, it was rather tardy, it was too late. Well as a kid like that basically I mean you would talk to your friends regarding sex and stuff like that. So, everything was trial and error during those years. It

wasn't anything really discussed...films or something like that or even magazines, articles, Playboy you see what I mean, stuff like that. Even sometimes I used to read Gentlemen's Quarterly." Referring to an uncle he reported, "He was a pretty astute type of man. I would have to say a very liberal thinking individual, very intelligent man, a people person. And it was very easy to communicate with him. And if that type of topic would come up, I could speak to him. He was really close to me because I lived with him and we could talk like that."

F010: "Honestly, experimentation actually. My daughter was born when I was between the age of 15 and 16...I went out experimenting and I got caught up a few times, sexually transmitted disease, so over the years I just learned you can go one way or the other, and if you take the wrong route...As far as sex nobody really told me anything. I just went out and when I had a girlfriend, if I was allowed to, which I lost my virginity around somewhere between 13 and 14. And I was lucky in the beginning, I didn't start catching venereal diseases until my late teens, early 20s and that's when I was just running wild with it. We were so rebellious that he couldn't really talk to us about nothing like that. Not even my grandfather. Nobody came up and tried to even talk to us about it because I remember I caught a transmitted disease, but I was basically trying to cure myself. My father say, 'why you taking those pills?' It was penicillin. I finally confessed to him that I got something. Go down to the clinic and get that shot and you will be okay... I had my father's friend I could talk to. If I tell him something he didn't go back and tell my father. He kept it just between me and him and he was very real. If I was wrong, he would tell me I was wrong. If I was right, he'd say, yeah you are doing right."

F006: "I learned about it from my uncles... as a matter of fact when I was 14 my father had this lady in the house, she was a prostitute."

F009: "Probably it wasn't my mom, more so probably like my uncle, friends. I kind of grasped it as I grew. No one sat me down and explained to me how, what was sex, and how it was done and why it was done. That structure wasn't done with me. I just kind of learned as I grew up. There was no person I could say I would ask and I would be comfortable with, knowing they would give me a solid answer, especially a male."

F002: "When I was 13 my father, he had a friend that owned a gas station. And that gas station was in like pretty much the hood in Boston. As a result of being there for the most part, the projects around Boston you know, you hear about a lot of things there and that's what I call informal learning. Um, a lot of things being said," referring to sexually oriented discussions. "As I got a little older, 14 or so, I discovered around the house there was this book and you probably heard about it, 'Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex But Was Afraid to Ask'...as a matter of fact, most of the experiences I had through that were largely negative you see because my brother, he had got someone pregnant. Now, that's the kind of thing that well, if you look at it and just see, when I look I'm not about to repeat this...So, basically, after seeing what they talked to him about, what he had to go through and the responsibilities that he had to assume very, very quickly because at that time he was 17. Still had college in the future at that time but that all stopped."

Conclusion

Of 19 fathers interviewed five reported either their father or mother had reproductive health communications with them as early as age 12 to 13. All of these men reported that their fathers had the responsibility of having these conversations with them. Some reported mothers were uncomfortable in this role, however one father reported his mother had a conversation with him at age 13 after receiving a report that he may have impregnated someone. The main impetus for having these conversations was to avoid early fatherhood and sexually transmitted infections. Eight fathers reported neither parent had this conversation in any form with them. However, they learned from uncles, mother's boyfriends, other adults, peers, experimentation, and the media including movies, books, magazines, and experimentation. Five fathers were introduced by parents and other adults through promiscuity such as prostitution, and exposure to mothers' indecent sexual acts. One father reported his mother tested his sexual preference by providing an environment conducive to sexual interactions with females. One father reported being too embarrassed, one felt too uncomfortable, and one avoided these conversations because his father encouraged sexual activity for which he was not ready. Fathers had their sexual debut as early as age 13.

Values and Morals

Fathers were asked to discuss morals and values related to reproductive health that they wanted to pass on to their children. Values were explained as lessons of importance and behaviors that were right in terms of reproductive health. The purpose of this question was to increase insight into the influence of African American fathers' values and morals on reproductive health communications with their children.

Hopes

F001: "As far as I guess having sex, it is probably a little different because I realize that kids and young men, as when my mom explained to me about not having sex, that was not on my mind. I was like, if I want to, I was going to. So, I have to understand that kids have their own identity and their beliefs, and they are going to make their own decision, and I just hope that he makes the correct decisions. So I had to I guess look at that, at how my mom explained things to me. And try to take what she explained to me and use it and change it a little bit because I have to deal realistically. To tell him no, no, no and not explain anything to him would be the wrong thing to do. I think nowadays, because kids are very strong-headed. They decide to do something, they are going to do it. If you give them the tools to work with, information, I am hoping that things will work out well."

F006: "My hope is for my kids to have a healthy sexual life. Not a demoralizing one. You can almost tell because all three of them, they are kind of like shy (reserved and not likely to have had their sexual debut) and I don't want to place them in that situation...if my daughter came to me with that question now I could answer her. I could put it in a way to where you know what, how do you feel about seeing women on TV do that? Do you think that makes them a woman, or do you think that it demoralizes them? Would you agree with that concept of what she is doing? Do you think it is right? I think that would be my question to ask them to be able to help answer that question because to me as far as you have morals, would you do that or would you have a healthy sexual relationship with your husband? I am not going to say boyfriend, I would say husband. I don't want them placing themselves in a situation to where their boyfriends try to exploit them into

something they don't want to do... I look at my daughter now (referring to his 20 year old non-biological daughter) and I asked how do you feel being sexually active now? What do you see yourself as? It was kind of hard because I guess she wasn't ready for me to ask her that question. Do you still see yourself as a moral person or do you see yourself as a person who understands more about sex? And compared to when you didn't have sex what do you see yourself as now. It is kind of like as a matter of fact and she didn't answer the question. She kind of like held her head down and that is just what I wanted to see."

I: "What did it mean to you when she held her head down?"

F006: "It kind of demeans her," meaning that she felt demeaned or degraded by having had sex.

F017: "Well you know, I've given a very healthy outlook about sexual intimacy and let them know that um, really, when it's all said and done that the person that you care about and love when you get to a certain sexual intimacy where it really, that is the greatest feeling to ever have on this earth. When you are complete and have connected with one individual that is the greatest high that you could have... This is what I tell my girls. I tell them look, you have to pick guys that have the same gene type. I tell them genes mean a lot. You see how your dad is tall and you know a stud, you have good genes. I said, you see how you guys are, you look like me, and you have a good structure and your minds. I said you have to get the guy of the group of guys that's like the leader, you know, just like your dad, he guy that's the smart one."

Conclusion

A healthy sexual outlook, the ability to make informed decisions regarding sexual activity, choosing partners based on physical beauty and intelligence, and considering sexual activity within the confines of marital relationships were hopes these fathers had for their children although ultimately children would decide when to begin having sex. Avoiding promiscuous or frivolous sexual activity and exercising morality were ideals fathers hoped children would exercise. Modification of parental teaching to suit their children's needs and examples from the media were used to crystallize fathers' ideals in communication with their children.

Real men

F013: "I tell them don't disrespect women, don't use them as a play toy...not like a piece of meat. You never hear me talking about how I knocked that down, (boastfully saying he had sex with a person), you want someone who is going to love you...wouldn't you be scared that you caught some disease, a condom is not 100% fool proof...I want my sons to be real men. I want them to stand out in the crowd."

F017: Speaking of aspirations for adults and children with emphasis on the roles of Black males along generational lines he stated, "And for men to be strong and be leaders of the household as well. And for females and the males to relay those kids to see the positive male role models that there is in the family. And the rules that put us in the evolving mind state of having a generation come up where males aren't displaying roles correctly, you know."

Conclusion

The importance of transmitting the value of respect for females, meaningful relationships, and avoidance of frivolous sexual activity to avoid diseases were noted. As well, trepidation about the future of African American families and male roles within those families were reflected in their comments.

Religion

F007: Speaking of important values in children's lives he commented, "Spiritual, Christian values would be very, very pertinent in us as parents and them as children, being able to attach to that whatever little form or little way they can do it. Their little minds, they can only absorb so much, and from what they absorb they can only attach to that. So, the Christian spiritual importance as far as values are concerned, and then based on that knowledge that they have, because knowledge is wealth, is that they are able to discern and think on their own. I don't care what age they are at, because you are always maturing and you are always growing, continuing to grow, but you want to make sure you are doing the right things as you grow. And so those values as far as Christianity, spiritual values, the line of communication being always accessible and being strengthened..."

F016: "My catholic upbringing had a large impact of my view about sexuality and um, so and then it needs to be in perspective because there's a history of where a lot of those practices came from..."

F005: "I am a religious person, and I try to be conscious of what I say and do and examples that I set in front of him. Things that he sees me do, trying to be a role model for him."

F013 "Good home training, talking to children. I believe that children should wait and they should make the right decisions in their life as far as ...be more responsible about sex because right now we live in times that we don't have that much time. Life span of people living today you know, you don't live as long as you used to so you have to make the best of the time that you have as a people.

I. "You mean Black people?"

F013: "As a people, yeah as a people. Right now there are so many obstacles out here...you got the AIDS virus and things like that so you have to make decisions that's going to stand for your life and stay away from things that's going to hurt. I said, it is like one bad decision that you make as far as sex can take your life away so just be careful what you do...put God first and then use those good values that you learned from the bible and your parents and hopefully you can make it through life. That is what I installed in my kids, I was like if you out here having sex promiscuously, then you will be judged."

F018: "You know, religion is the core of what I do with my family and my business and everything else..."

Conclusion

All but one father reported having a spiritual or religious foundation that influenced values and morals regarding aspects of their lives and the reproductive health

communication they had with their children. Spirituality or religiosity was directly or indirectly referenced during the course of the interviews. Fathers used this basis to role model for their children, to discuss responsible sexual behavior, to impart moral values related to sexual behavior including sexual decision making to avoid diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and to instill fear of retribution. Concern about the effect of AIDS/HIV was in regard to the lifespan of African Americans.

Respect and honesty

F014: “And, I think respecting the female is really a part of respecting themselves and their relationship with that person. So, I think it is a small world, what you do or they do is just going to come back to you in some way.”

F013: “I want them to respect women first off. I want them to respect their mothers even though the situations (referring to contentious relationships) may occur in between, but knowing they are still your mom and that you should protect her.”

F018: “One is a respect, which we talk clearly about. And I think the problem we have nowadays is the, uh, my son listens to rap music just like probably every other kid and as much as I like rap music, as a parent I’m like, what is this guy? What is he saying? How does that affect a kid? Respect for the young ladies and if you’re going to do whatever you’re going to do, question why you’re doing it.... You know, I’m not going to come out and deviate from my values. For a kid that’s developing core values, what does that say for them? How much influence does that information have on them because I’ve had someone call from school and say my son called someone a ‘b....’ or whatever it is and I had to sit him down and say, where are you getting that from? You don’t get it at home!”

F008: To respond to morals and values he transmitted to his children he made reference to teachings from his parents that he passed on to his children. "Sex is not bad...it is not necessarily a sinful thing. There is such a thing as being nasty and some things are to be kept private...sex itself between people who are old enough to know what they are doing in and of itself is not a bad thing. I did not grow up with a great sense of shame...my father being very open, extremely open about masturbation and how to use condoms and all that sort of thing...my mother did not hesitate at all when one of the teachers called to say I was picking on some girls, I was in the seventh grade...she said, you cannot be rubbing on girls buttocks. She had no problem being open like that. We learned sex is healthy, sex doesn't make you are a bad person as long as you are not using and abusing people, that sort of thing. You don't force yourself on people, you don't use people.

F001: "Um well they basically taught me the same thing. You know, uh, respect women, respect their decisions, um, respect people in general. And not to lie to people about things. That was a big one with my dad. He'd always tell me, you know, you don't lie to people. Nobody likes a liar, you know. Nobody respects a liar. So, that really stuck with me, too. And so I try to impress that upon my children, you know, not to lie but to always be honest with people, especially when it comes to feelings. Because when you lie to people and you end up hurting feelings with lies, that can cause some pretty negative repercussions."

F015: "And, well I guess she was a virgin but he had sex with her and he told me he loved this girl, but he was telling all of his friends how he had sex with her so I took him aside and I said you should call her right now to tell her what you have been doing. He

goes why? Because you are treating her like a whore, you might as well tell her she's a whore. And he's like, what do you mean? I go, I heard you telling your buddies that you had sex with her and you're telling me that you like her and you think this is the woman that you want to marry, but you have no sexual self esteem that you're telling all of your buddies that you're banging her. You treat a whore like that! When you go and meet some woman at a club and you do it and you tell your friends, if you're going to make a relationship with this girl, you can't be disrespecting her like that. So, he went and told her. I didn't have to call. He went and told her, but I appreciate him being a man to do that. "I didn't want him to go through that. I was just threatening him to let him know how disrespectful, I go, I'll talk to you about any girls that I've done. But you never hear me talk about my wife because that's my space. That's my special woman and I don't want people to know what's going on so I brought that up to him. He has one girl he has been with for two years. He won't cheat even though he's had lots of opportunities, so he's really into the loyal thing. You know, he's going to make a life with this woman. He's really in love with her and I try to, as a parent break it up."

F005: "Yeah. They have to respect that person. I mean, because if you're in a relationship, it takes two. So, you have to really hear what they're about and they have to hear what you're about. So, it can't be really one side. I have always explained to my son, never to hit a woman, or girl in his case. That naturally men are more, I guess, strength-wise powerful than women. And, he has to learn that there has to be a respect level for women. I guess the biggest thing I have always taught him is to never hit a girl, because he could potentially hurt her more so than hitting a guy. Definitely to respect women, yes

because, it's so common and easy for men to disrespect women. It is becoming more common nowadays. It is my personal opinion that women tend to be more verbal and able to push men's buttons, so I really need him to think about what he says, and I guess the actions taken towards women. I can't really say in general that we have had a big conversation as far as respecting women, but in general, yes, we have talked about, you know, being more strength-wise powerful and putting hands on women, things of that nature. It is so important that he doesn't do it, because it is just not the right thing to do, because that is not going to fix the situation. And, it's a very ugly scene when, once you get older, and kids see what you do."

F001: "I've always tried to teach my son since he was really little to respect women. Um, you know, to never hit girls, to you know, never talk badly to them or treat them badly. Um, because I do believe that relationships themselves are the foundation of any type of subsequent intimate relationship. And if you don't have a good relationship, it doesn't matter whether the sex feels good or not. It's all gonna fall apart. So, I myself believe in, you know, very firmly in respect for women and I also believe in being respected by women. So, respect on both sides."

Conclusion

Respect was a value several fathers felt was important in male-female relationships, and one they felt males should have for females in general. Males' high sexual self esteem was a feature that mitigated against bragging about sexual encounters according to one father. Mutual respect between males and females and avoidance of misleading others were important aspects to impart to children. Disrespect was aligned with physical

aggression as women were considered the weaker sex. Demeaning features in Rap music was believed to have a negative influence on children in terms of respect. Fathers also believed males should understand females' behavior and not resort to physical violence which was considered disrespectful. Exposing children to these acts was considered an objectionable behavior. Fathers often times referenced their parents' teachings as the basis from which they taught values to their children.

Communication

F018: "...because how does the educational level affect the communication with the children. It might be with the more educated you are, the more you may communicate with them because education opens the mind up a little bit."

F007: "The most important is the line of communication. Having the line of communication, being able to discuss anything about that value is important, that you keep that line of communication open...where they feel comfortable and the trust you. They know that you are there for them."

F005: "If there's one side of it that will not work. So the more that you just communicate and you talk about things, it's, the better it will be."

F001: "Just open communication, uh, honesty about feelings, you know, honesty about intentions. You know, a lot of people lie and say whatever they think is gonna get the person in bed. Uh, I don't believe in that, never have. And even when I was a teenager I never, never acted that way...I think a lot of that probably did come from my parents. Uh, they did try to put some very good ethics and morals in me and I think they did a pretty good job."

Conclusion

Most fathers learned the importance of communication from their parents and it was considered a feature that engendered trust between them and their children. Having open lines of communication was important because it was the basis from which they could have reproductive health communication with their children. For one father, the belief was that being more educated was a quality that improved communication.

Clothes

F004: The importance of clothing and limit setting was discussed by this father. “So, I have used the same rules to raise my kids. It’s like, let me give you an example. These kids walk around today with their pants half across their butt and their drawers hanging out. Their white t-shirts hanging out. They look nasty. It looks degrading, disrespectful. It’s nasty and it’s just, it’s scruffy. It’s filthy. Now, if that were me back then, my dad would say, ‘Boy is there something wrong with you? You look like a clown. Pull your pants up.’ Cuz, see what he would do, I would have to, see, at all times I had to respect the woman at all times. Because what you’re doing, you’re sending an image. You are showing that this is okay and that this is accepted. And you got one clown and then another clown. And the next thing you know you got a whole bunch of clowns doin’ the same thing. And what that’s doing is destroying the morals. It’s destroying the values, the dignity, and the respect of these young men. Destroying it because no one is telling them, hey, pull your pants up. Hey, turn the radio down. Hey, take your hat off when you go into church, go into a house. A man can’t wear a hat in my house. I don’t wear a hat in my own house. When I come home, I take my hat off. My friends come over, they take

their hat off. But I've got my sons, if they come in the house with their hats on, I say you know, don't wear your hat in my house ever. When you leave out the door, you can put it on. But these are certain rules that I had to follow and they stuck with me. And I didn't understand it then, but now that I'm older and see what can happen if you don't have rules to follow. I see what it turns out and that's why I'm on it. My kids, my boys are not allowed to wear white t-shirts at all unless they are under their shirts.

I: "What is the significance of white t-shirts?"

F004: "It is gang-related. It's totally gang-related. Period. Directly. People say it's not. I know that it is. It's a direct indication of thug and gang relations. I don't have to tell them to tuck their shirt in no more. I don't have to tell them nothing. I don't have to get on them no more. I am very proud of them. Of course they don't look like that at all times, but I am very proud of them. And when I seen them and compare 'em with the same kids that they grew up that lives on my street, it's a total difference. And that's what I'm teaching them. And they end up seeing it later. They always come back and say, like I've sent them on a lot of job interviews just to see if they could get a job. You see, they got a job. I said, 'You got a job somewhere? What did you have on?' I say, 'Did you have your pants on right?' They said, 'Yeah.' So, I said, 'What did you think?' He said, 'I got a job.' I said, 'Explain to me some other guys there that couldn't get a job.' 'Oh, they had their t-shirts on.' I said, 'Did they get a job?' 'No.' See, what you're showing you're showing values. You're showing that you have a sense of respect. You're showing you got dignity and pride about yourself. You're not just sludging in, looking for somebody to

give you a job because they feel sorry for you. You're selling yourself. You're standing up tall. You're strong."

This fathers' discussion on clothes was important because of the underlying implications. Studies have shown that peer influence can increase risk taking behaviors that can include early participation in sex (Guiao, Blakemore & Wise, 2004). Wearing certain clothing can be related to gang activity as one father pointed out. Avoiding that style of clothing meant avoiding certain behaviors including early participation in sexual activities, drugs and smoking. The significance of clothing to subcultures and the effect of not dressing in line with what was recognized as normal could have had the added effect of further separating African American children from main stream society. Setting limits by parents was the solution offered by this father.

Homosexuality

F014: "I'm not going to, I would never encourage homosexuality. Um, if it turned out that that was their desire I couldn't support that philosophy; however, I wouldn't turn my back on them. I'd still love and care for them."

F011: "I am heterosexual. Moralistically, I do not have anything against a person who is homosexual but my morals and my values say that act is not the correct way things should be. And those things I truly believe so I guess I would never make it in politics because I am very frank and can be very curt about something like that. I would definitely make it a point that anyone would understand that the individual, I don't dislike the individual. I dislike the act that they want to do. So that's the one moral thing as far as values are concerned."

Exposing his children to explicit sexual acts revealed this father's liberal morals and values because of how he allowed reproductive health education to occur for his children

F015: "We (he and his children aged 18 to 20) were at a friend's house for New Years Eve, he threw a big party. We're there. 12:00 pm these men were going to God *expletive* town. My son was there. My other son was there and my daughter was there. That's the first time they all came to me in like the same and I go, honey, just relax you know, just because it's not a guy and a girl, don't put judgment on them. Don't look at them different. Just, you know, you learn something today. You saw a different part of life and this is truly what life is about. These men were like, I'm telling you, like boy, biting into each other's nipples. Throwing their tongues down each others throats and squeezing butts, so you can imagine what a man and a woman does, these two men were doing. It was all around. Women doing women and so it was the first time we all experienced..."

F004: In his discussion this father identified links between vulgarity in cartoons and sexual tendency. "But my daughter told my wife (about her female friend being gay). And told my wife not to tell me because I think my daughter would think that I'm gonna get her if I found out she was gay or doing anything to do with it. My daughter don't want me to think that she had anything to do with it, so she didn't want me to know. And I like that. So when I see that then that lets me know that what I'm doing is right at home...she said it's been on the whole time I'm there. I said, really. So okay my kids are sitting over here at this lady's house and everything and all the kids are sitting over here. They've been allowed to watch vulgar cartoons. I asked the mom about it, which is my friend that I grew up with. I said, 'You let your kids watch it?' 'Oh, hell, yes,' she said.

'It's just a cartoon.' I said to my wife, 'they're cussin'. 'Oh, well, they're funny.' That's okay. I stopped my kids from going down there. Stopped them. My kids can't go there no more. With a daughter in the house she thinks it's okay to watch foul, degrading, vicious cartoons. That's not the place for my kids. Now, it's three years later. The daughter is gay. See, when you stand for nothing, you'll fall for anything. The daughter is gay. The brother of the daughter which was also one of my son's friends, right now, he is 19. Same years. 18, same similar age. He is gang banging. He's with a gang. This is the same house a few years ago they allowed the kids to sit and watch...foul cartoons. All that plays a part in developing. The child mostly becomes what they think of themselves. All of that. Your friends that visit. Your family that visits. I have family barred from my house. Family, because if you don't have the same interests that I have, which is to protect my child's innocence, then if you don't share that interest with me, I cannot allow you to be around. And that's what I do."

Conclusion

Homosexuality was not endorsed however fathers would continue to love their children regardless of sexual preference. Two fathers addressed the importance of exposure and protecting children's innocence. One father felt that exposing his children to sexual behavior was a way to increase their tolerance and understanding of homosexuality while the other felt his children could have been negatively affected by what he categorized as vulgarity.

Leading by Example

F007: "I believe that a man and woman should only be married once, until death do us part. I understand that there are a lot of things that can influence that not happening, but I do believe that. I know my values are to work to maintain and make sure that this relationship holds together and stays together. So things built around that, values built around that has something that has a lot to do with sexual influences and things like that as far as raising kids, setting a good example for them. So, I think that is a very important value."

F005: "I think that they see the life that I live, and it's not a life that they should be ashamed of. They, the first two knew the life that I used to live. They knew some of it, but not all, not everything. But they know what I live now and what I stand for now. They know I don't do nothing wrong or I wouldn't do nothing wrong. I wouldn't tell them nothing wrong. And that'd be a big impact because they see me and they know what it is that I do, what I don't do. And if I'm going around saying that I'm doing something and I'm not doing it, they're looking at me...so they could think but why should I listen to him when he's not doing what he's saying, what he's talking about. Now, whatever it is that they might decide to do, at least they can say, well, I didn't see it in a double standard. It will be their decision only. That's what I've strove for...It makes a big difference because what you say and do in front of your kids is going to play a big part in what they say and do in their lives. Even though they will be influenced by kids I am sure that if it's coming from their parents, if they respect their parents, they understand where the parents are coming from, then they will tend to think about what

they say and do. They are going to make mistakes; that's to be expected. But as long as it is not a big mistake, you know, you have an opportunity to go back and maybe not change things, but correct the situation. So I think it plays a big part because like I say, respect and versus fear I think plays a big part as far as my values go. I want my son, my kids to respect what I say and do, not be afraid. Understand what I am saying, why I am saying it, and outcome potentially can come from what I am saying one way or another."

F004: "My values influence them because they see it repeated," meaning that his children behave according to behaviors he models for them. Giving an example of how children learn by example, parental responsibilities, and how potentially negative outcomes occur he stated, "And they flew. It's like the little pigeons. I set them up with bigger pigeons. It probably takes three weeks, but now the little ones are flying too, because they've seen the bigger ones fly. When they see it and are around it, the same thing. They start to do it. That's what happens in the same manner, I believe, on the streets. Kids are allowed to do what they want to do, dress the way they want to dress. There are no rules. And you see the other ones comin' up, younger, they follow 'em." Whether I say it or somebody else says it kids are gonna follow what they're exposed to. A child has no boundaries. A child knows nothing. A child comes here with nothing. They have to learn to eat, sleep, drink, they have to learn everything. Then, we as adults are responsible for that. And they only get to the place to where they just start to understand at about 19. Some are a little slower, some a little faster. You know, and we as adults, we've got to the place to where we're like, ah, they can do what they want to do at 12, at 13. That's just what happens. And um, that's sad because for the most part, society today, that's the most ridiculous, that's a sad

thing that ever happened. There's, these kids don't go to school for school. And their parents send them to school for babysitters. I see that everywhere. And it's really bad in the Black community. I only say that because I have seen them. I haven't been to the White community..."

F019: "And so, you know. I'm honest with my daughter. She knows I...she's known I've dealt with more than one woman. Um, I mean I even took her one time on a date and I had more than one woman with me on the date and she was like, "dad, you're dating more than one woman". I told her, 'hey, I'm not lying to either one of them.' She was like, 'hey, you're right. You're not lying to either one of them.'

These fathers believed that parents were responsible for modeling appropriate behaviors, controlling exposures children received, and being honest with them. Teaching should be from the basis of respect and not of fear. Mistakes in judgment could be lessened despite peer and other influences if children had parental teachings to reference.

Fears

F018: "Okay, there are two things. One is, what is my son going to be thinking and I haven't got to my daughter, but she's going to follow suit. She doesn't have any choice. What he's thinking and how he's going to receive what I'm saying and how will I be able to instill some of my core values and belief in him."

F015: Concerns about females wanting pregnancy, the potential for his son to impregnate someone, and how he would handle these issues were the focus of this discussion. "But honey you told me to drop out of college so I can take care of you and the only thing I can get is my \$10 an hour job. That's what I see a lot especially in the African American

community. These women will get pregnant. They will do all types of things and my son...if he got a girl pregnant, I will take care....I will go to jail! She is going to get an abortion! Or friends will take care of her. Because I am dead serious, you're not having any kids at a young age until you're able to take care of them. And I think he believed me. He called me one day and goes Dad, I used a condom and it broke and I don't know if she is pregnant. You know, it's been like a week or something like that. He's flipping out because I was dead serious. This was not something I was not joking about. For the most part, he's listened to me and how I've tried to raise him..."

F015: In terms of concerns about his daughter he reported, "And I know for a fact that my daughter will have sexual partners, there's not a doubt in my darned mind before she gets married that she's going to get run over (be coaxed into loveless sexual acts).

There's not a doubt in my mind. But, how many times does she get run over. Is it going to be one time or is it going to be 50 times? I guarantee it won't be 50 because she knows....she knows that she is someone special and she knows that she has to work for herself. She can't depend on someone to take care of her."

F001: The experience of contracting a sexually transmitted was something he wanted his children to avoid. "Basically, I will try to strike the fear into them by telling them all of the nasty things that some people do get and that some of the things can even kill them, and that that moment of passion is not worth giving up your life for. So, it'll be the old strike fear into their hearts tactic...I'd probably say something that would just maybe stress the importance of precautions with sex. You know, I would definitely stress, because you know I myself had made a mistake of not wearing a helmet (condom) before

and ended up you know, getting' chlamydia and had to be treated for that. And you know that's not a good thing. That makes you start thinking about all the other things that you coulda got..."

F016 had concerns for his son and daughter and used the following techniques to help them avoid early participation in sex. "Um, or trying to scare him or put fear in him or talk.....I don't know."

F016: "I kept my daughter in sports because...in sports you're less likely to have childhood...there's teenage pregnancy so, uh, that was one of my motivations...not worrying about some boy."

F013: Referencing his sexual activity that resulted in early fatherhood and the risks of adolescent sex this father discussed wanting to be exemplary for his son. "I can't say that nothing was a mistake because I love my sons even though I never thought my sons would be and doing certain things that they are doing. But I love them but I tell them, don't make the same mistake I did, you know. Because after that it (sexual activity) was non-stop, you know...whatever, however, (referring to indiscriminate sexual behavior) because that's the way it was back then. I was like irresponsible in certain situations. But you learn from your mistakes. And this is why I try to tell them now. And it is hard because here I am. I did all this and I see it's coming back in a full circle and I am trying to stop it. But it is like I am being hypocritical because I did it. But I have to because I have to say to my son, this is more dangerous now than then because there was no AIDS virus back then, not that we know of. In South Africa or whatever, but not here. We didn't know anything about no AIDS or anything like that. So it was like gonorrhea or

something, get your shot and that's it. So, I am telling him now it is more detrimental to you. You can't just do it. I don't know if they are taking it as, okay, he's telling me that but he did it this way, so how could he just tell me this? How could he tell me not to but he did everything? So hopefully somewhere down the line they heed, they listen and won't do it." He was concerned whether his son viewed his values and morals as hypocritical because he was sexually active at an early age and had children at an early age. Additionally his son was privy to his mother having sexual relationships with different men while his father was telling him to "wait, don't do it, it is not all about sex." However, he stated, "I am trying to put forth a positive image for my son."

F005: "I don't want my daughter to end up pregnant you know with this kid, that kid, on welfare and all that, I want her to be educated. Don't start young and try to have a kid (cause an accidental teenage pregnancy) now." He went on to explain, "You know the whole act where you got a part of someone else's body going inside you is a whole lot different than putting a part of your body somewhere else. It's psychologically, it's got to be completely different. I saw that completely and totally when I got three kids, or two kids very, very young taking care of you know, like a whole a life change just because of that. Well, I became extremely sensitive about things like that and so now, understanding what women go through, being accosted by someone, even if it doesn't end in rape, just by the mere fact someone is violating my space and I don't want them there. And if I can't do anything about it and it could happen that way, that whole thought process. And so with that in mind, I just want them to avoid the things that, that created a lot of anxiety for me. If I could do that for them, then I will have succeeded as a father in this

endeavor...I believe there is a God but, I use that to say that you will stand in front of your creator and would you be clean? Would you know that everything that you done and everything that you did was not bad but was done with the best intentions, you know? That's what I installed in my kids...I mean, I use that as something to help me along with the raising of my kids to say, this can happen. Make your life the best life that you can have, you know. Take your time. Make right decisions. But still the truth remains you got outside influences that destroy all of that..."

F012: "I try to tell her, because you know, they not your friends. Because a lot of female friends would be around us, they thought we was friends but we wasn't. We was just trying to get you know, get her to make her think she belongs with us, make her think she cool. Eventually, she will go to the room with us. So that is what I been trying to tell her. Because you are at a party, that don't mean everything there is your friend. If you know the person giving the party, that don't mean he your friend. You're a female. If one of his home boys want to have sex with you he will do it because they got ecstasy out there now. What he do... the person you know set you up and you won't even know it. And she like, 'no, he won't.' I say, 'don't tell me, girl, I've been there. He will set you up and you be in the room, and everybody be doing what they want to you, because you don't know.' You don't know what they be thinking, you will never know what a guy's thinking. Till you tell me what a guy's thinking, I bet you don't. You will never know what a guy is thinking. Because, there is trickery out there."

F015: Using the example of his 20 year old son's girlfriend's behavior he explained expectations for his daughter. "She is a woman who wants to be subservient to a man.

She doesn't want to....she has no real ambition to make something for herself other than someone taking care of her. I think in my world as a parent, I think I failed somewhere by, you can see it, he can see it, but he still wants to be with this woman and that's frightening in my books. But her parents are stupid. And she is the exact girl that I didn't want my daughter to become."

F015: "Every *expletive* rap video is mama *expletive*, and because they don't have any positive influence or any self esteem they fall into the same trap of having promiscuous sex because that's what they see and they don't know any better because they can't pick up a book and get out of their environment. They're stuck in this environment...second thing is, you should teach them how to read and write in school. A child who's engaged in education and know other things other than the hoops (basketball) and they can put their mind into a book and know that there's Paris over there and they have hope. These Black kids don't have any hope. Their parents are on welfare. Everybody is on welfare. Unless you go to the Midwest and South, it's different, it's White people, but for the most part these kids have no hope, none whatsoever. Their parents can't leave and so in turn, they can't leave. So the only thing they see is television. So what I suggest parents do and Bill Cosby hit it right on the head and everybody calls him a racist. You need to buy these kids a book. Hooked on phonics before you buy them a pair of \$200 tennis shoes. You need to teach them that there is more to life than watching MTV and being in hip-hop and you know...respect your...there's so many things I'd like to say, but that's the biggest teaching in mind is to tell them there is something out there because I am Black man who I think I am extremely successful and I learned how to read and write. I pushed

myself and people who were, we don't let Black people in here. There is a colored person already here, you know, blah blah. I mean, I've heard every no in the world but as I try to tell my kids, for every 'no' there is a 'yes.'

F005: Getting into trouble, going to jail, prison and stuff and all that. And I always said once I turned 21 if I had a kid I'm not going back no more with no problems and stuff. I gotta teach my kids so they don't have to go through it."

Several concerns were identified by these fathers. Making good decisions was ultimately an individual responsibility. Fathers worried about how to communicate values and morals about reproductive health, the effect of outside influences on children's behavior, whether children would avoid early sexual debut, and about the perception of hypocrisy when giving advise to delay sex in order to avoid the same experiences. Fears for daughters included trading education for love, the experience of loveless sexual acts likely due to self-esteem problems, being raped or tricked into sexual acts, and needing to be in a relationship. Concerns about avoiding sexually transmitted infections with condom use and avoiding early unwanted pregnancies were present for sons and daughters alike. Fathers also stated serious concern for the state of affairs for generations of African Americans in terms of the inability to move away from undesirable environments, obtaining education, and about mother-headed homes.

Education

F007: "See, you have to inform them so they can make...I don't care at what age, you can be 8 years old, you can be 16, you can be 20, you can be 30, but the decision that you make is one where, it is a right or a wrong one or is there a better or a worse one. Having

that established in their minds at a very, very, very, very early age where the decisions that they make are hopefully good decisions. And, they based those decisions on what the learning experiences, say their mom and their dad has been. Or, if they have to get it from the media. Whichever way has more weight to it. But here again, I always try to instill and I think my wife does too, the importance of, hey, it all starts at home. You can come here, because what you hear out there may not be the truth. Or it may be misinformation. But, if you have the education to know that my dad told me this, or let me go back and ask dad or ask mom, then you can say well, now let me make my decision, which way do I want to go with it. So, those kinds of values and foundations we try to instill. And, I think we have done a fairly good job of that.”

F007: “I think education is a real important value. I utilize that in my experience, and I am hoping that they will utilize it in theirs. That is a value I stressed on them, the importance of education. We can tell them all that we want and know that they have to understand and realize the difference and benefit of it themselves. So, education is definitely one. They have always been spiritually filled as far as the direction we give them as to what is right and wrong when it comes to abstinence, having a sexual relationship, the diseases that could be the cost of having a relationship once you make that decision. So, it is those types of education and spiritual awareness, I expound upon that to them as my parents did to me.”

F013: “Stick with your education I try to tell them. But, at least graduate from high school. Get your diploma so you can at least try to go out here...because everybody don’t make it to college and school is not for everybody but at least get your high school

diploma, because that's just greatly needed in life. You don't want nothing (intimate relationships, pregnancies) to happen if you don't have that."

F005: "I want her to be educated. You know, she's gonna have to be educated in life before that. So that after you finish school, you know what you're gonna do. Don't start young and try to have a kid now."

Conclusions

Fathers felt education was an important value for their sons and daughters. It was spoken of in terms of reproductive health education and formal education and they used education received from their parents to teach their own children. Important factors regarding education were that parents should establish a foundation by starting reproductive health education early with their children. Children should rely on parents to inform them in this regard, and should benefit from parental experiences. They should use this information to make rational decisions because they may receive wrong information from peers and others. Also, children should wait until their formal education was complete before beginning intimate relationships and having children.

Parental Responsibilities

F015: "The sad thing is all these kids have the same thing in common. Their parents told them the way they were going to get to where they needed to go is with basketball, football, and baseball. They forgot to tell them they need to learn how to read and write. There are more athletes that are 'Michael Jordan' sitting at home or in prison because they couldn't get to college and make the leap to the NBA because they couldn't read or

write. You need to teach them that there is more to life than watching MTV and hip hop, you know.”

F007: “Those people that just have a father or just a mother to try to stay together and to make it work for the well being of the child so that they can go out and their offspring can have something to fall back on rather than falling back on divorces, falling back on hurt, falling back on sadness, falling back on madness. Rather than fall back on that, fall back on the point that there is an opportunity for a mother and a father to work together to strengthen their children so that their children’s children will be strengthened. It is important as a people that we do that. Now a good proportion of families are either in most cases, mostly always with the mother, but the father isn’t always at fault. There are a lot of single parent families. A lot, too many. So there needs to be a picture painted of Black men and Black women being together, holding it together so they can produce these offspring that will be the future of the world in a positive not a negative way, you know. My mom is here and my dad is there so you got two different ways of being brought up.”

F004: “And kids today are losing it and it’s unfair to them and they don’t have no structure. These young men, they don’t have no structure....And just know, my wife’s sister just now started to come back around because I barred her from my house. Because if she don’t give me what I need what it is, is basically she thinks she can come to my house and run my house. She can’t do that. Okay. One of the reasons why my 23-year-old is not at home is because he ran away one time and he went to go live with her and she allowed him to do everything he wanted to do, all the kinds of ways he wanted to do

it okay, and it darned near ruined his life. It darned near ruined his life. But I guess he finally picked up and he moved on. He lives out of state now and I hear that he's doing good. He is working two jobs and he is seeing some young lady. I did not hear that he is on drugs or on the street or in jail and that's good. None of my kids are in jail, none of them. Yet they are old enough, a lot are old enough to be in jail. None of them are and, uh I say all that to say this. The things that you allow your kids to be exposed to is gonna make or break them in the future. And I know this. I know. When I was growing up, I couldn't hang around my dad's friends. I remember my dad right now telling me, go find yourself some kids to play with. Get out of here with me and my friends. Today I feel that way with my sons today. My 18, my 19, and my 20-year-old. My buddies come over. Because they'll have a little drink and some of my buddies may roll up some, a little weed or whatever they do. I don't smoke weed but I do have a, I do drink. I do have drinks but I don't smoke drugs. So if they're doing whatever they're doing, see, if my kids really know them, they want the company and they want to get a laugh and communicate socially with them. So I might let them sit for a little while. I gotta tell them, you know, you guys gotta go. You know these are my partners... I don't even allow my friends to smoke weed at my house, at all. That's not happening. They can roll it. If they want to smoke it, I tell them hop the gate. Go do it over there. And when you finish, come back over. Go do what you're doing over there and then come back over. You hop the gate. I don't want my kids to see it, smell it, not even think it."

F006: "I have to address my kids, because they are not doormats. They are people who are nothing to the community and to this world. They didn't ask to be here. I look at

them as precious gift for what God says they are to me, let alone to Him. My kids are most precious to me. I think that is what sustain me. What they say when they look at a things that's has been wrong, they will say like, you know what I need to go to talk to God because I need to ask God's forgiveness. I don't question that, because that is the time they need, because if I had passed away this day, I would want them to know that there is a foundation given to them, in that they have a higher source that they can go to and talk. They understand that morals, understanding, discernment, and wisdom is a great part of how we get along in this world."

F006: "I base a lot of my communication on the fact that I have a lot of communication with own father. I base that on the fact that, the one thing they know about me, I go out and research things myself before I can come back and give you a good answer or try to answer it because I feel that that is important. If you are unaware of something you should go and get knowledge for it. Even if you, at least you can say I made the effort, I went and found out something and I want to share it with you. I can say if I was just like the type of person, it is nothing to it no, I have to be able to tell them, because I am helping them to be prepared for when the day comes and it is my time to go and my wife's time to go, they will know. Who will they look up to? The only person who they will have to look up is the foundation from which we have set them on, and that is God, himself. So I want to be able to leave a legacy behind for them to know that their Daddy placed a legacy based on a foundation of wisdom. If I had to do something different than that, I think I have bring to me all the wisdom into my own heart, because based on compared to where I was before, I didn't have that. My own father, he wasn't there

giving me advice. My mother did the best she could as far as she could, but I want to do the best that I can do with my own kids and let them know that Daddy loved them and Daddy will always love them, and that they know if they needed somebody, who is going to be there for them. Even when I am not there anymore, you still have somebody you can talk to, because He was also my Father.

F014: “If I was going to have a child I wanted to be a father to the child. So, I didn’t want to just have a child with anyone. So, if that’s a value, I guess I was...My father would tell me when he was a child that he didn’t know his father very well and that as a child growing up for him it was always difficult because he had to go to work earlier to try help feed everyone in the household. There were days where he might go to school and not have had breakfast. There was no food in the house. He would come from school and he would be hungry, and there is no food in the house. And that was a real problem and it affected him growing up. And that when he became an adult he always, it was sort of very important to him to make certain that his children had a father. So, he painted that picture very well in my mind, and I understood that. So I saw the value in a child having a father because I liked having my father around. So, I understood the importance, in a child’s mind from my own experience of wanting to be around my dad. So that was if you will, a value to me, in that I wanted to make certain that any children I had have an opportunity to be around me.”

F005: This father described negative repercussions he experienced as a result of not having a father’s guidance and the change he experienced in his life. He hoped strictness would help his children avoid the same experiences. “And um you know, I would go

around, you know, with a bunch of guys, like I say just trying to blend in and robbing, stealing, stuff like that. And uh you know joyriding, stealing cars with friends, just trying to blend in, so I can try to make a little bit of a name for myself. And I ended up joining into a gang once and when I joined into a gang uh, one of, uh, they couldn't get me so they tried to retaliate on my, my younger brother, younger than me. So that time passed right there that made me stop and get away because like I said, when I tried to make myself known, I stopped. I didn't want to try to get, you know, everybody's attention or focusing on me for who I am as to what I've done. You know, to make, to create myself out there in the world and stuff. Meaning what I could of done and who's gotta be looking for me in, in the future. Yeah. Yeah. I gotta just...sobbing... I still, really not having that father figure in my life, you know. You know, sometimes it kinda still gets to me sometimes. I had to create myself from being a total different person from who I was when I was younger. As far as being strict, you know. It's really not me but I have to do it in order to send a message to my kids. So, if I don't do that, they'll figure, you know, our dad is a softy. You know, so I don't even really like them to cry, really."

These fathers spoke spontaneously about parenting responsibilities, naming several points of interest. These included valuing fatherhood, valuing their children, wanting to be a good reliable father, and having an understanding of children's need for parents based on their childhood experience of lacking a father's guidance. Improving the reputation of Black families as ones that existed mainly as single parent homes, and the effect of two-parent homes compared with single-parent homes on children was emphasized. Providing a religious foundation for children, structure, controlling

influences children were exposed to were important strategies to employ. Also of importance was ensuring children had developed critical thinking skills in order to make good judgments. Focus on sport instead of education, and improving the next generation of African Americans were responsibilities for parents as well. Having children who had not been incarcerated was considered a measure of success.

Involvement

Asking participants to “describe your communication with your children” or to “describe your relationship with your children” yielded the more inclusive theme of ‘involvement’ therefore factors related to ‘communication’ and ‘relationship’ were subsumed under this heading. The importance of this theme was that it presaged reproductive health communications these fathers had with their children. Father involvement encompassed the range of interactions a parent could have with a child including physical care, emotional care, relationships, and responsibility for their welfare. These factors could have influenced children’s receptivity to fathers’ communication, and subsequent comfort and predisposition in engaging children in conversations about reproductive health.

F004: “He tried the, uh, stuff. He was in a lot of trouble because (therefore) he came to live with me when he was 16. His mom couldn’t deal with him any more, so he came to live with me. I said, ‘just pack your stuff and send it right now, today.’ He was a failure student all the way around. Fails, in trouble, pants down (sagging: practice of wearing pants such that the pant waist is at or below the buttock), doing everything...He is in college now. At the beginning of next year he is going to a historical black college. He

has graduated from high school. He has taken an administration test at a local college, and right now, he is taking, um, he goes to school every night. He works every day, and he's not in trouble. He's not in trouble with the police. He is not in trouble. He is not in trouble with Mom. His mother's real proud of him."

F006: "I am very verbal. I don't hold nothing in. I just let it out right there and then that way they know that I am not hiding from words. I am not going to sugar coat it. I tell it like it is...I would always listen to my kids. I grew up also in the time and era to where kids should be seen but not heard. Like I said, I want to be different from my father. We have family meeting time where we all get together. I will call them in the room and we all sit down and talk. If there is a problem there is a solution. I have to go back to my job. My job requires me to be able to have solutions. So I kind of like took that back home. What can we do to make this better? If there is something going on in your life what do you need from us to help make it a little bit better... I need some time and space...I will go like, when you say time and space what do you mean by time and space?...I want to be able to be independent and I will come back and say, based on your independence, she was 18 at the time and she had this influence of girls where, no, go back to 16, 17. We had difficult years with her during the time when she was getting ready to graduate. We kept trying to tell her based on some of the experiences we had as far as school wise, we had to struggle. She struggled through 11th grade and then 12th grade. She graduated but she struggled through it. The thing about it, she was trying to find herself. I tell you, from 17 on up to 18, 19, it was pretty hard because she had got into friends that were smoking marijuana and stuff like that. She got into that crowd. During my years I avoided that.

That is something I was fighting for my kids to stay away from. I realized there was going to be kids out there who would influence other kids but I never thought mine would be one of them based on what we would always tell them. But my daughter said something that scared me I guess from that point on. She said, you know I am the type of girl who is going to have to go out and experience that in order to see. She is 20 years old now and the things that happened those years, it was tough. She came home one night and she had smoked some marijuana and she didn't look like herself. That hurt me when I saw her. I took her into the bathroom and I showed her and I said, look how you look. You are a beautiful Black woman. Look into this mirror and see how you look now. And I said, who are you? And she said her name. And I said, did we raise you to be this way, and she said no...I told her you have to make a choice. Get away from this life and clean your life up. Those streets are going to make you into something that you are not. I said, is that what you want?" He recounted his own experience as a young man when his mother made him consider whether he wished to leave the home or stay, how he made the correct decision to stay at home, and his hope for his daughter to make the decision to stay at home, because this would have been in her best interest. The daughter decided to leave, but he welcomed her back home. "She came back home. I hold all this to God through prayer and we let her know we love her."

F013 had concerns about the influence on his son of his mother's instability and exposure to "the streets." He wanted to raise his children in a different manner than how he was raised, and made himself an exemplar for his children by maintaining a stable lifestyle. Nonetheless, it became necessary for him to intervene by changing his son's environment

to stave off drugs, violence, and other undesirable influences. “The 12 year old lives with his mom. She is really not stable. Her husband is in jail. She just had two kids while he was in jail. Okay, so it’s, I am fighting to save my youngest son’s life, and I am actually fighting to save my oldest son’s life because basically, it’s the streets. The streets are destroying, almost destroying their lives if it wasn’t for me, my two son’s lives...” He stopped verbalizing the thought here but the meaning transmitted was that one could only imagine how much worse their lives would have been were it not for his involvement. “We have more or less a friendship other than being father and son. I was pretty much whooped upon and beat up on because that was the thing when I was growing up. You know, the switches and things that normal kids don’t get whooped with. So, it kind of made my mind to where when I have kids I am not going to do that. I am going to try to teach them consequences and repercussions. I am giving them good training...I take him and drop him off at school because it is an opportunity to stand up and be a father...I get up every morning, I take him, my god son, I practically raised him too, and the kid down the street and the young lady right here across the street, a little Hispanic youngster across the street. Every morning I get up and I drop all of them right there in school. And in the school I go up there to find out what is going on, why I am not being communicated with about tardies and grades...the kids, they sit on the walls and stuff, and they have monkey bites on their neck.” Concerning efforts to manage problems with his 15 year old child he explained, “right now I had to ship him to Texas because he got involved in hanging with certain guys and smoking weed and so I had to save my own son’s life by sending him off to Texas...he was influenced by a lot of youngsters on the

street, and his pants got a little lower, you know, sagging” referring to the practice of males wearing their pants such that the pant waist is at or below the buttock instead of at the hip. “Like the little thugs out there wearing the long white t-shirts (can signify gang involvement) and stuff like that. So I thought it would be best for him to go stay with his auntie for a while in Texas and see what could happen out there, see if he could make a change in his life. I just try to stay focused on my future with my kids and try to build a foundation for them. I started off with cars and I am going to try to get into real estate and just get into something where I can make some nice money so there will be some stability in their lives... There is stability in my life. I am faithful when I have a girlfriend. My last girlfriend I just had, we were together for 12 years or more. I believe in staying with that one person, and not messing up and cheating and all that, because I want to show my kids how to be real men.”

F010: At age 15 he fathered his first child with a 21 year old. He gave an example of a moment that changed how he related with his daughter who was 24 years old at the time of the interview, her mother and two younger children. “I almost hit my daughter with my fist like a grown man when she was seven years old. I calmed myself and at that point I told myself I would never lay my hand on her again and I never did. At that time it went to her mother...that’s who the anger was really toward.” In explanation of what he referred to as his ‘violent side’ he reported, “I seen John Wayne knock the hell out of a woman on TV so I thought it was ok to knock a woman upside the head when you think her mouth is going too much.” For employment purposes he lived in Las Vegas from time to time, commuting on weekends to see his children. “My main focus was trying to

get close to my son so that he would know who I was and to get close with them. I always came back just to check on them to make sure to see them. I came down every weekend for a year and a half.” This was prefaced by explaining that at some points he was in and out of his children’s lives because “at the time I was on drugs, I was on cocaine in the 80’s and I got incarcerated in 1990.”

F002: “We have split custody so they live half the time with us and half the time with their father who lives 15 minutes away. But they go back to the mom from time to time. See, it is only supervised visitation. Uh, it is usually a few weeks out of the summer. I found out my ex-wife had problems among which were bipolar, psychotic disorders and personality behavior disorders so as a result the judge has given me custody, strict sole custody from the time that my son was three and my daughter was seven. I took them for three years before I got married again.” Regarding their relationship and his involvement he reported, “the relationship actually is pretty good. Not as close as my own natural children, but well enough that they call me dad. And uh, I’ve been around long enough to place myself in their lives as such that I’m a pretty good influence in their lives as well. I don’t hold back anything in terms of how I treat them. I found that was like very essential when I first got here. And so it is pretty amiable. I treat everyone the same. And uh, the respect they show me is what I would expect from my own kids.”

F011 focused his discussion on involvement with the oldest child where he felt problems existed. He felt having children early as he did was ill advised and offered the following. “It was absolutely, absolutely irresponsible and not understanding that this life here had to be taken care of just as much because she didn’t ask to be here. Yes, I made visits, I

was there for birthdays, I did everything like that. But, it wasn't consistent and it wasn't how it should have been. I should have been there more. I would try to get her, I would do the school thing and that's what got me out of school, working. I had her a lot of the time when she was growing up, and then she moved in with my mom and my dad for a period of time during her last year of high school."

F004, "They can come to me with anything though they don't always. Like my two older ones, they don't really come to me with anything. They, uh, I find that they go around me and avoid me for certain things that I could, um, address for them directly. And I've thought about that a few times. I've tried. I wonder why they do that, and then go to my friends and ask questions. And when I think about it I was the same way with my dad. My daughters, our communication seems to be a little better than for my daughters than my sons. They communicate more openly, my daughters do than my sons." In terms of his responsibility as a father he stated, "I have a job and my job is that everybody that is under my jurisdiction, I have to make sure that when the end comes I can answer to what they're doing. I can answer."

F009 "My communication with them is pretty good. I question it sometimes because it appears that my son is more comfortable talking to my wife. If he has a problem he would address it with her before he would address it with me, so I believe our communication could be better. I guess I feel that maybe young men are a little closer to their moms. I think he may be a little timid or shy. I guess a manly figure tends to kind of intimidate a young man sometimes. And I believe that is maybe part of the reason why maybe he is a little more comfortable initiating conversations with my wife about certain

things he is concerned about. Definitely, I am sure there is room for improvement. I try to explain in talks, you know, versus talking towards him, just explain things, and I think that it is very important to explain. You know, not just this is right and that's it."

F012: "Me and my daughter have a good relationship...As she was growing up I was always around. And she was my only child so I would always you know...I got affection for her. I always hug her and she understands. Since she was about one, that's the only thing I can think. I try to make it better for me and my daughter, because me and my parents, I got a hug from my father one time, I was like 18 years old. I try not to be like my father, the way he done to me. I try to hug her everyday, so I try to make the next generation better. I remember my father hugging me when I stayed out all night...they were worried about me. I didn't know how to react. So, I hug my daughter all the time. So, I say let's go. If I am going to the store I want her to go with me, and if she don't go with me I try to figure out what she like. I basically, you could say, spoil her, you know, I just do little stuff. I want to know who she is talking to on the phone and she will tell me." This father had spent time incarcerated.

F001 described communication with his children as "very good" explaining, "I try to get them to understand that they could talk to me about anything they feel they need help with. I try to make them feel like even if it's something that they did that's wrong I'll still help them so I try to keep the lines of communication open as well as possible with them. It's been that way with my son pretty much the whole time," meaning before and after separating from the family. He explained that his ex-wife interfered with the communication between himself and his children however, changes had occurred ... "in

the past, I would say, two or three years that has changed a lot. My daughter has, I think, finally gotten old enough to realize that a lot of the stuff her mother told her was crap, and you know, I'm not the kind of person she tried to portray me as, and she sees me for who I really am. So now her love is finally coming out towards me and she is talking more to me, much more openly with me about things. Um, we have a much better relationship now than we did prior to that. I would say my communication is good. I think it can always be better and I'm always trying to figure out ways to make it better because I think back to how poor my communication was with my parents when I was their age, and I think they thought communication was fine, but it wasn't. In regard to the frequency of time spent with them he reported, "I have them every other weekend and I see them regularly though, because I go up to their school two or three times a week to see them after school, um, and to also talk to the teachers, maintaining contact with their teachers. So even though I only have them with me in my custody every other weekend, I still see them um much more often than that. And I also have custody of them for half of the summer."

F005 had three children by three different women. He was a felon who by his own estimations had mended his ways and had become an upstanding citizen and father with his children's well being as his priority. According to his explanation, his mother's live-in status and her agreement to help care for the children helped him get custody of them. His daughter's mother visited her on weekends and when she was otherwise available. The other two mothers were uninvolved in the children's lives. A promise he shared and one he felt he kept was to be a good father to his children once he had them. His first

child's birth motivated him to change his lifestyle and as he promised himself, he assumed responsibility in all aspects of his children's lives. He tearfully described the effects of not having a father in his life, the personal traumas and transformations he experienced, wanting to provide a better experience for his children, to keep them out of trouble, and the prospect of them growing up and leaving home. "Inside it still gets to me because I feel like I'm both mommy and daddy sometimes, you know. And my oldest son, he knows me and I used to be real strict. Pretty soon he will be graduating and you know, it's like losing your baby all over again you know. And then the other ones grow up. You know, it is hard to see that. I'm like if you feel you want to leave here you know, most times when I tell him I kinda like, I turn my head 'cause I don't want them to see me start crying." He stated, "I don't drink, I don't smoke, and I don't party or stay out all night. The only time I stay all night is if I'm going to play dominoes and my friends are playing spades or something, but I do check in and keep calling to see what's going on. When I'm out there playing and stuff like that I like to keep talking to them to let them know I'm still around no matter what and I still keep my rules in effect. I'm just hoping after you know, all this with my kids, if something happens to me in life you know (at 38 years of age, having residual fear of repercussions from past illegal involvement) and they ever have kids in the future or whatever, that a part of me will always be a part of them and try to teach their kids you know, about life you know. And keep them out of trouble. Like it was so hard on my son but he realizes every day that if he did not have a father he would be just like I was back in the day, you know. I still want to go back and finish school so my son, cause I tell my son all the time. I didn't finish school and I

wished that I had, but as I tried to explain to him that, you know, you're me all over again. Like I said, even though he was a mistake some good came out of it. He saved my life, he helped me. They always tell me something good about what he's done. He's proud that he's a teacher's aide. That was a surprise he wanted to tell me. That's my boy you know, if it wasn't for him I'd still be incarcerated."

F015 For this father, involvement in his children's lives meant treating his children in a way his father did not treat him. This included positive reinforcement through verbalizations and displays of affection, teaching consequences, and teaching ethnic pride. "Tell them they are special every day of the month. I've never told my son you are a piece of expletive, you're not worth anything, and when they messed up I hugged them and when they did wrong it was always positive criticism, and when I was disappointed I let them know. I have never told my kids ever in their life that they were no good, they were dumb. Any of the negative things that parents tell their kids today has never happened between me and my kids. It's always positive. My dad used negative criticism. You're stupid. You're dumb. You're never going to make anything out of yourself. You're just a piece of *expletive*. That's what I heard from my dad all my life." How he taught consequences was told in a story about his son where he emphasized that he wanted his son to understand he was a grown man, and recognize that he will suffer consequences for decisions he made. For this father, helping his children to successfully live as African Americans was done through discussion and exposure. "I worked hard to show them the world as to how things are. I've taken them to West Virginia and Louisville where Whites can barely speak two words, you know, and show them that the

word *nigger* applies to a lot of people. And there are White people on welfare. There are White people who can't speak English or read a book...so he would have a greater worth of who he was...he's seen these people that are in the streets begging for money who can't feed themselves and have incest with their daughters. So what I've tried to do with my African American children is to expose them to things and tell them that they are worth something, and don't let anyone tell them anything different period."

F016 reported his relationship with his children was "pretty good because every relationship can be better, but I am pretty happy with the relationship I have with my children. I talk to them about everything. I figure you have experiences to use as good memories, and you can build on those good memories later." At great length he discussed difficulties both of his male and female children had coping with being African American in primarily White schools. Having experienced the same problem in college, he was able to share it with his children, adding that it was better for them to get past this now than for them to experience this in later years for the first time. He described being concerned about his children's education, the assistance he gave them, including plans for academic tutoring, and his support of their participation in extra curricular activities such as music lessons. As a result of being laid off his earnings decreased from \$100.00 to \$30.00 yearly. This financial change impacted his marriage, and more recently, he felt handicapped because he could not do as much for his children as he would have preferred.

F007 reported communication with his children was, "...very good, I think that if they wanted advice from me or I needed to give advice to them, it's readily accessible to them.

I am readily available for them. I don't hold back when it comes to sharing whatever wealth of knowledge that I have experienced. I am comfortable with it."

F008 attributed successful fathering to his preference for open communication, allowing his children freedom to make their own decisions, to approach him with questions, supporting them in their successes and being present for them when they were challenged.

F018: "I think the communication is very good. Communication is a two-way street. He tries to be a closed book, you know, pulling things out of him is very, very tough. He's not one to be open about where he's going and how he's doing. As a little boy you could just pull it out and talk, talk, talk, and now I have to dig. I really have to work on communicating with him."

F014 "Getting married is a very long commitment, but having children, it makes that relationship actually bigger than maybe the marriage. In a sense that you made a commitment to your wife but you never made a commitment necessarily to the public about your children. You made that to yourself, to your children. And that lasts usually your entire lifetime. I know from my experience it has lasted the many years that I have been a father to my children so I presume that commitment will never go away. It is not something you can divorce yourself from or separate your self from. You are always going to be their father and you always have some obligation or responsibility to them. So I try to make sure they understand that. And I try to also tell them about by father's story. And I try to be there for them and they will need to try to be there for their children because their children will need them."

F017: Speaking of communication with his children he responded, "It's good, very good."

F019: "My relationship with my daughter is very good."

F003: "When I was in the home with them we had good communication."

F015: Discussing difficulties and lessons learned this father offered the following. "When my daughter was four I left. Five years after I left I got her back into my household. I've always had custody of my son. What happened was, I made a lot of money and lost it, just stupid things so we lost our house and at that time I was cheating on my wife, doing a lot of crazy things. Neither of us could afford to take both kids so we split them which I don't suggest to do ever again, if I had to go back to do it again I would do it totally different." In the following dialogue some understanding of the stepfather's disdain for the child's natural father, difficulty relating with the stepson and the eventual change in the stepfather-stepchild relationship can be had. On the brink of tears he disclosed, "I think one of the problems was that he is not my biological child and it was very difficult for me to be in a relationship with him. His father has never been involved in his life. His father is the worst man I probably ever met in my life. He is a horrible person, he wouldn't pay child support. He's never bought the kid anything and it's my money that put this kid through private lessons, my money that's done all of this and he would still call his father, Father. And that hurt my feelings because here this man really never done anything for this kid ever, ever. I've taken him everywhere with us. I didn't have a lot of interaction with him. It was like, we got a big house and that was his part over there and this was my part over here and these are my kids. It wasn't until recently within the last

24 months that he came to me and it's really funny. He goes, you know, and my wife said something, she goes, he is just like you, so I'm like no. Yeah, he came to me and he was crying and he is not an emotional young man at all. He said, may I call you my father? You are the only man I ever respected in my life. And I'm like, whoa, I can get this chip off my shoulder. Here's this *expletive* father. I'm supposed to love this kid and here I am being a dick...you could feel the tension in the house. And here he's telling me, I try to do everything the way you would do it. He studies, he's smart, he wants to take over my business. He wants to do all these things and even though I was a strong male role model to him, we didn't have that bond that I had with my children. So, he was left in limbo because he didn't have a father. He had a sperm donor and here I am supposed to be his father and only gave him 70% of my love."

The data indicated, fathers wanted to be better fathers than their own fathers were and used life experiences to guide their fathering endeavors. Although most felt communication with their children was good, some thought it necessary to continue working toward better communication. Commitment to fatherhood and generational transfer of valuing effective fatherhood was noted by others. Essential dynamics in successful fathering included providing information, remaining approachable while supporting successes and challenges, and allowing children the freedom to make decisions. Showing affection, reinforcing self worth, pride in academic success, being available, and avoidance of splitting up children between parents were important as well. Other areas of importance included instilling ethnic pride through sharing experiences and exposure to real life experiences. One father's concern about his mortality at the

relatively young age of 38 signified awareness of potential retaliation from past affiliations. Equal treatment for biological and non-biological children was noted to be an important factor for two fathers who reported less closeness with non-biological children. Saving their children from ravages of “the streets” were preoccupations for fathers seeking to avoid children’s participation in gang activity, sex and drugs. This concern was more apparent for those whose children had been involved with drug use. One father dealt with this problem by removing his child from the offending environment and sending him to live with a relative. Mother’s instability was a problem some fathers reported as having a negative effect on their children’s lives. Father involvement with drugs and spending time incarcerated affected the quality of relationship one father had with his children. He had changed his violent tendencies with his child and the child’s mother, wanted his children to recognize him as their father and was seeking closeness with them. Two fathers who had spent time incarcerated had recast their lives and did not report problematic relationships with their children.

Barriers

As fathers discussed involvement with children they did and did not live with, mother’s interference in this process emerged as a prime factor in the degree of involvement between children and fathers. Fathers were therefore asked to discuss barriers to reproductive health communication they had with their children.

F008: “Well, the only barrier I could possibly think of is just my availability based on work. Whether I am actually available to sit and talk, because I have got to get through this stack of papers or something like this. I can see work as a barrier just because of the

time it takes. Beyond that I am not sure. I mean, they really have always seemed to be very comfortable approaching myself and their mother. Even so much to be playful and teasing on their end, and knowing that we are not going to get upset with them about that and more or less play along. They would tease us saying, 'Oh, Mom and Daddy, you are doing it,' that sort of thing. Or now they will tease us about does she have a boyfriend, do I have a girlfriend, that sort of thing. So, I cannot think of any particular barrier other than what their comfort level may be on a certain day or how much they are being teenagers and don't want to talk and stuff like that."

F011: "Maybe during that period of time I wasn't really able to convey my thoughts or maybe her being a female, I wasn't able to really speak to her the way I think I should speak to her during that period of time of my life. I think all that goes into play in any conversations with her during that time. And a lot of times I didn't know how to approach her because of my relationship with her had not been as close as I would have wanted it to be. So I didn't want to just tell her, you know. I might have been coming to her like a friend you know that type of way. Even though in some cases I am daddy and you are going to do as I say. I would get her into that type of situation. But, that may have been a barrier because I really didn't know how to speak to her."

F001: "But unfortunately for several years my daughter did not communicate well with me because their mother drove a wedge between me and her. She tried to do it with my son and me but it didn't work because he and I had already bonded closely before the divorce. But my daughter and I didn't get a chance to bond closely that way before the divorce. So she was more effective at driving a wedge between us for years." Speaking of

his relationship with his children's mother he stated, "Well unfortunately I think it definitely could impact, um, especially my discussions with my daughter simply because I think she still puts a lot more stock in what her mother has to say to her about a lot of things. Um, but that's not going to stop me from still pushing and trying to educate her the way I know she needs to be, but I think that may make it a little more difficult and more challenging. I don't think it will be problem with my son, but I think it may pose some extra challenges with my daughter...well, probably the biggest barrier, um, is that for quite a while, and I think even in relatively recent times the kids' mother has tried to convince them that I cheated on her when we were together and that that was the cause of the divorce. And I mean, it's an untruth but it's something that she's tried to drill into their heads over the years. And unfortunately, that can have an effect on I think, their degree of confidence in what I may say about sexual behavior if they actually believe that. And I'm prayin' that it doesn't, but if there would be an obstacle that I could see, it probably would be that...the only other obstacle that I could potentially see might be information that they hear from their friends or teenage cousins and stuff like that. You know, about sex and then all that kind of stuff. Um, unfortunately you know children have a tendency to, to put a lot of stock in the opinions of people who are older but closer to them in age. And I could potentially see that as possibly being an obstacle."

F010: "Yeah, well, it was more the battle was I couldn't control anything as far as my daughter goes. I couldn't have the say-so over anything. Anything that I did say, she came right behind me and erased it, bottom line. So I still don't know right now today what my daughter may have held on to as far as what I have talked to her about. Just like

I taught my daughter how to drive, I had a talk with her about sex and very, very close, where I know she holds on to certain things. I don't think I am the big demon or monster she used to think I was, because I was always taller and she had to look up, so I think I was always a monster to her for awhile. In her teen years she start saying 'I don't have a daddy, my daddy's dead' because she was mad at me for whatever reason. I wasn't sure. As she entered 18, 19, she retract the story, and Daddy is still alive. And that is why she came to me to have this conversation about why men try to get women pregnant all the time. Basically what I told her was at her age, which was 16, 17, 18, when guys, it is just my theory, when they try to get a girl pregnant at that age it is their way of trying to hold on to you. And if they have a baby by you, you are stuck with them until that baby is 18. So that means a window of opportunity for them to still kind of creep in and creep out and creep in and creep out over the years, until you get tired of them. So when I told her that that is when she is like, 'I am not going to play any of these games.' And she started being I believe, a little more careful with her sexual activities...She and I have a big gap in our relationship due to her mother. She manipulated me for years. She used to tell my daughter things that were false; it was a lot of mischievous conversations."

F013: This father described obstacles presented by the inadequate mother of his 12 year old son he wanted to live with him. "But you know, you go through so much with the mothers, because it is like you don't have 100% control over the situation because of joint custody...and my youngest son, I have to deal with a woman that's really not stable in her mind nor her finances. And she is moving from place to place. My son is not getting the proper education because she is maybe staying here for like six months, six

months in Vegas, over here in a different place and six months over there. She is dating this different guy while her husband is in jail. My kids are seeing different things they shouldn't see. She is not teaching him the best values...he don't like what she's doing around him, he tells me she was upstairs and she had some guy up there she said was her friend. He heard her. He went up there and saw her in the act. She hollered at him, cussed him out whatever, told him she was a grown woman. He is seeing all this...it is cold (unfair) because she can go to the courts and put on a show and act like she is so perfect, and because she is the mom she gets full custody. We discuss it and every time we come to terms she says, your son needs a father. Then I get him, I spend time with him and after we have bonded and everything she will just flip the script and say, I prayed to God and He tells me that it is not a good idea."

F017: "Her mom had a block on our relationship for years so there wasn't much of a relationship until recently. Her mom's concern is for me to have no control over what's going on with my daughters. She didn't encourage them to call me, as a matter of fact the opposite is what she did."

F003: "When I left out of the home she tells the kids I don't care about them, that I don't love them and all these other stories. She tells them everything, some stuff that they don't even need to hear. She puts them in the middle of everything. So when I need to talk with her she will have the kids say it for her. But I go back and say, well, put your mom on the phone. I need to speak to your mom. And the majority of times she don't want to speak with me or don't want to hear nothing I have to say. So she'll say, 'tell it to the kids' and I just say 'no' because I'm not gonna put them in the middle of this." He described

situations where the mother made promises for child visits with him she did not keep causing disappointment for him and one of his children. He explained, “that’s been one of the biggest issues, that she’d tell them stuff about me and I’d tell them that you guys shouldn’t be in the middle of it. And that’s why I just don’t say nothing. Sometimes I just want to you know, keep the peace and I know you guys don’t want to be in that tug of war, so I just leave it at that.” He further explained, “The mother is mad because the father is not there no more. So for her suffering I guess she wants everyone to hate the dad. My relationship with my other two kids is good. My other two kids respect her. And my ex-wife doesn’t want them to communicate with her or to say anything to her. Like last June, my daughter wanted me and my wife to come and see her, but my ex-wife didn’t want my current wife to come. So to keep the peace my wife stayed at home and I went. Right now my current wife is welcoming my son to stay after school at our house, to stay here and go to school here. I think when there’s a divorce in a family with kids one of the parents is always trying to push their kids against that other parent. I don’t know why but that’s how it is.”

F014: “My ex-wife probably gave a negative image to my daughter which kept the interaction between me and my daughter to a minimum. Her thinking was, if I can’t have you I can put the screws to you. The only way I can get to you is by taking away something that means something to you...I was wanting and trying to see my daughter. I was asking okay, I want to see report cards, I want to be involved in her school activities. I want to see her at least once a month, have her spend a weekend with me, those kinds of things. It just didn’t happen.”

Fathers' spontaneous responses revealed the trauma of mothers' interference in relationships they wanted to maintain with their children.

F013: "And I am like, why do you keep playing with me like this? It is hurting me and it is hurting my son because I am trying to establish a relationship and be the father, not just financially, but be in his life.

F017: "It was causing emotional turmoil in my life so I had to learn to almost detach from the situation a bit and just know that when my daughters got older I could communicate with them. There was no way I would have any headway in that situation. The more I tried to fix the situation the more my emotions were involved and I felt like a madman at the same time."

F010: "After being released from incarceration without a warm reception by his daughter he explained, "A lot of lies were floating around about me to her or around her. I felt that her mother should have controlled what was said to her or around her..."

F007: "Well I would say really not, I would say no but if I am looking at trying to project what barriers that might be, there might be some barriers when it comes to understanding various acts of sexuality...if it is a little bit above his head and a little too far ahead of him I will not bring something up to him if I don't feel he is there at that level."

More fathers not living in the same home as their children experienced a lack of control in the involvement they had with their children, and therefore in having reproductive health communication with their children because of mothers' interference. This interference occurred as a result of retaliation from mothers, instability in mothers' homes such as frequent relocations, children being moved back and forth between

parents, mothers informing children that fathers did not love them, conveying unfavorable information about fathers, mother's use of children as pawns in parental relationships, mothers' discouraging father-child communications and relationships, and mothers' lack of support for fathers' communications. Father-child reproductive health communications were also impeded when the father lost credibility with the child as a result of the mother's influence. Other hindrances included father availability for these conversations, the child's comfort level, the father's ability to convey his thoughts, the child's gender, and closeness between father and child living in the same home. Early father-child bonding deflected mother interference. Fathers reported feeling hurt and emotional turmoil. Responses to mothers' interference were to detach emotionally, to keep the peace, to avoid including children in contentious parental relationships, and to wait until children aged to have improved communications which facilitated reproductive health communications. The following are descriptions of the current status between fathers and their children.

F017 reported the relationship with his older daughter was "transforming," meaning that it had evolved to a level such that they were having more effective communication despite the mother's attempt to thwart it. "My older daughter was like, okay, okay, maybe I'm trippin' maybe my dad is okay, whereas the youngest one is going through her own drama right now. I didn't know she hadn't been going to school, and of course her mom told me nothing about it. She had been kind of acting funny last year anyway. When I went to her graduation from Junior High I talked to her for a few minutes, after that she ran to go away with her friends; she wouldn't even stand still with me for a few minutes.

I told her just stay still with me for a minute. I want to be in your presence for a minute. I was like what's going on, let's take a picture. I was going to take her shopping, to dinner like I did with her older sister. Then when Christmas time came I went to pick them up she didn't come to the door. She didn't want to come with us and once before when I went to pick up my oldest daughter she didn't come with us. She was like going through her teenage adolescent stuff and had some scarring so she's not showing up for her own family holidays either. She has deeper issues than whatever issues are between a father and daughter."

F010: "After spending time incarcerated he reported, "My daughter started rebelling when I got home...my daughter is my heart and soul even though we don't have a close relationship as I feel we should, but we have an unspoken relationship, and right now she is starting to make attempts for us to have a better relationship."

F003 maintained a relationship with his children while avoiding interference from the mother by communicating with them via mobile telephones.

F011 "We are not as close as my family is and she is resentful of that. I paid for child support at the time. I guess I did the best I could at that time and that's all I can say about that. I can't pull back anything that I have done in the past, but I understand right now that because I did do what I did that there is an imbalance in my relationship with me and my daughter. And she doesn't like my wife even though they met each other when she was probably eight years old even though her mother is not the best mom in the world nor the best person in the world."

Conclusion

Emotional scarring and harboring resentment in children resulted in unsatisfactory father-child communication although relationships improved as children gained an appreciation for fathers. Communications improved when children became older, and became available to their fathers by telephone.

How reproductive health communication occurred

Fathers' comfort

Fathers were asked one question meant to elicit their level of comfort in communicating with their children i.e. "talk about your comfort in having reproductive health communications with your children" or "how comfortable are you in having reproductive health communications with your children?"

F018: "I would be uncomfortable talking about that with my daughter, but I wouldn't not talk to her about it. It would keep you talking to her. You have this conversation and it may be uncomfortable, but you got to do it."

F014: "Yes, we encourage that environment."

F001: "I can talk to anybody (meaning his children) about anything. I don't care what their age is. I've always been that way."

I: "So at this point do you think that she would be comfortable talking to you about sexual issues, that if there was a question, or for just a conversation, that she would come to you?"

F001: "Yes."

F012: “Yes. She don’t hold nothing back. I won’t be uncomfortable talking to her about I it.”

F008: “Though I might blush to talk about it, I would still do it...”

F015: “She listens to me when it comes to men. We talk about it all the time.”

F003: “I’m very comfortable. If I have to talk with them, I’d talk to them about it...and I’d just tell them, hey, this is what I feel. This is what I think. And like the 18-year-old, I know you’re 18 and you can do what you want, but this is my opinion.”

F016: “...I haven’t really felt comfortable with directly talking to my daughter about it.”

F002: Discussing his comfort in talking with his children about reproductive health he reported, “You know, at first it wasn’t. At first, I’m bringing this up, and oh my goodness. I mean by the mere fact that me bringing this up might actually open up a Pandora’s box as far as now you’ve brought this up so why don’t we go ahead and get started. That’s why I rehearsed it over and over again in my mind.”

F004: Reported being comfortable talking with is sons but, “I don’t talk about sexual things with my daughters at all. That’s my wife’s job. My job is the boys”

I: It sounds like you feel comfortable talking to either your daughter or your son about reproductive health. Would you say that is true.”

F005: This father’s goal was to have better communication with his children than his father had with him. He reported that he was comfortable having these conversations with his children. “I do (feel comfortable) because like I say, I really with my father, I didn’t get a chance to do all that. Me growing up you know, I had a background that was terrible.”

F006: Speaking of his discomfort with speaking about reproductive health with his children he reported, “I think me as far as being a father, that was one word I was kind of scared of. Sit down and discussing with them about when it came to that issue. Yes I was kind of like scared.”

F007: “I feel I can talk to my son and my daughter at any given time about anything. I am not reluctant to share that with them. However what I want my son and what I do instill in my kids is that I can’t read their minds. But once they share that, I am a conversationalist. I am a person that does have a little wisdom, been around a little bit longer than they have and been through a little bit more than they have. And I want to share that with them. But I have no problem at all in discussing anything with either one of my children.”

F009 demonstrated comfort in having these conversations with his son after he and his wife decided it was time. “The first conversation was kind of basic. I didn’t want to put too much on him at one time. So throughout the last three years we have had conversations, yes and it kind of got more specific.”

F010: “I was real uncomfortable because it is my daughter...but once I got into it I started feeling more comfortable because it is like I know how to talk to her.”

I: So it seems like you are both comfortable talking to your children about this subject.

F011: “We are. We are. My wife wants me to do the in detail deep stuff like that with my eldest. But you know as we speak right now it is perfectly healthy and natural for both of us I think.”

F013 demonstrated comfort in discussing this subject with his 12 year old son after realizing he had been exposed to sexual acts between his mother and boyfriend. “I said that even though you see those types of things you are young and that really doesn’t have anything to do with you. But when you get old enough to understand what was going on you will understand that people look for love in different ways and different places...I have never hid anything from him. I let him know that that’s what people do and this is life and this is what God put us here for”

F017 did not live with his children and their mother discouraged interaction between them. Having reproductive health conversations with his daughters were therefore difficult. He reported, “...because of my situation you know, I was just trying to focus on just being in conversation because if I approached her like that it would make a whole recourse or something.”

F019: This liberal father reported feeling free to talk about sex with his daughter. “I mean, there wasn’t anything we steered away from...she’s become aware at 12, 13 whatever, she started to become very much aware of things even though she is very conservative.”

Conclusion

All fathers reported having reproductive health communications with their children except one. Most fathers reported being comfortable having these conversations with their children. Fathers who were uncomfortable felt this way more so with their daughters, but still had these conversations. The exception was for two fathers who believed it was the mother’s job to hold these conversations. One of these fathers

reported he would participate in conversations with his daughter if the mother requested it. Fathers had these conversations alone with their children or both parents participated in these conversations with their children.

Content of Reproductive Health Communication

F005: At age eight and one half this father reported, “Well at first what I would ask him and stuff, I was like, I would get a book and I would let him see it. I’m like this is what you are gonna have to see and learn. Well I was going, here is a book right here. You have this lady right here and you have this man and I was asking what do you think they are about to start doing right now. And then he look at me and tell me...this kinda hurt my feelings a little bit too. And he was, sometimes he visit with his mom and he said well they’re about to get on top of each other and start humpin’ around. This is what I seen with my mom and her boyfriend. And I was going to call his mom but I said, nah, this is between me and him. And then he was like, ‘Daddy I don’t want to talk about this yet.’ I mean I can still hear every word that he said. ‘I don’t want to talk about this just yet because I’m still small.’”

F004: “There’s a lot of ways it can come up you know there’s a lot of stuff that you see on television that’s sexual...it’s everywhere so you can’t get rid of it. I’ll go crazy trying to get rid of it because it is everywhere. So I roll with it...everything is funny to them so I take that and I use that to roll with it with them.”

F002: “It always comes up in some form. Perhaps it will come up with a billboard we pass or maybe my daughter may talk about one of her friends that might have rough time with a boyfriend or something of that nature, somebody almost had a nervous breakdown

from things that happened, a pregnancy that someone went about, they might ask me about AIDS...that kind of thing. They initiate a lot of it, everything that that I've said. Now the things I initiate may be about the movies. I ask them what they feel about it. I found out a long time ago that it's quite a forum for discussion."

F016: "They may have come up with a conversation where we were actually talking about something, or something was going on in the news or something, things like that, but not a sit down conversation you know."

F015 reported having on going reproductive health with his three teenaged children.

F008 reported these conversations were "much more sort of casual part of the everyday course of things in a way not to make a really huge deal of it"

F012: "Every time we get in the car we have a conversation like that one. When you see somebody walking around the street my daughter would be like she shouldn't be wearing that," speaking of revealing clothing...I talk to her about HIV, AIDS, gonorrhea, everything."

F001: This father reported feeling comfortable about talking with his children on this subject. "Early on age 5 and 4 I taught both my children the importance of proper hygiene and cleanliness of the reproductive organs and the external genitalia." More recently he started conversations about menstruation with his daughter.

F018: "I tried to talk to her about who she likes, of course I didn't get very far with that and then we talked about kissing. But there were a few friends of hers that kiss boys behind the building and I'm like ok, so um how about you, 'oh no' Dad. I said, you can

tell me pretty much whatever you want to tell me because one time she didn't want to tell me who she likes."

F014: "Yes we have had some talks... Well I think it kind of goes in stages. We talk you know, because there are certain things they are going to hear when they start school, especially when they are no longer in your protective environment where you are controlling what they see on television or you are controlling what they hear on the radio before they go off to school before they are old enough to go off to school. And the first few years, pre-school and elementary school, you know that those environments can be pretty protective. So, I think it really begins as they start to hear what they tell you about what goes on in school and you start seeing, and start to hear and understand things that are in this environment that me as a parent start to say ok we need to make sure they have some understanding of what they are seeing or hearing. And so it is really very elementary of course. So let's say 6, 7, you are starting to have some type of engagement and the idea that babies come from the mother and that mother has a husband who is the father. And of course try to paint a picture similar to what they learned in school. And of course there's none of the details behind it...you speak to them freely so that they can continue to feel that they can speak freely, and also try to make certain that even as now they are becoming young adults and are teenagers that we are their friends hopefully."

F006: This father had difficulty thinking of how he had this discussion with his daughter. After saying he didn't think he had those conversations with her he responded, "I take that back. There was one time we did sit down and talk about it. She got angry at one of her friends, she asked me a question about me and her mom, how did it first feel when me

and her mom, it was kind of like embarrassing trying to tell your daughter something because that's your mom. But I put it in a way to where I didn't touch bases like going in depth with. I put it to where you may experience your first time."

F007: My conversation with him basically is just that as you get older you are going to become more and more attracted to women. One time he was telling me he didn't like girls, now he is beginning to like girls...you know there are things on television, there are things in books, there's things on videos and he is naturally a curious person. So that conversation, we have had. That is going to happen."

F009: "My wife was very concerned that nowadays kids are learning about sex a lot earlier and it is important that we explain to him our position and our knowledge and what is important and what sex actually is. So it made a lot of sense to me because kids now are talking about sex in school and we didn't want him to get the wrong impression or the wrong idea of what sex was. Because a 10 year old doesn't know what sex is other than to hear from older kids and things of that nature. We wanted to let him know exactly what was involved and what was sex about. Me and my son had a conversation down in his room one day when my wife and the kids were away so he could be comfortable. No one was listening."

F010: "The first talk was maybe when she was 9 because at that time I knew how fast things was going. I kept it very plain at that time. I had a second talk with her when she was 11 and I got a little bit more gruesome with her.

I. What do you mean 'gruesome'?

F010: "I told her exactly how it was going to feel, the whole nine yards. You lose your virginity, it is going to hurt. Unfortunately it is because you experimenting too early."

F011: "We are all at home in the evenings. It is down time. Sometimes my wife may ask a question about what do you think about that girl out there, do you think sh's pretty on a television program or something like that. We are trying to see where he is coming from in his own development so we are kind of picking him, you know. That might spark some conversation. In most instances it has been my wife's sexual health issues that spark conversation."

F013: "Maybe watching a movie or something like that. Or you run into situations like once I had some buddies and my cousin, we were lifting weights...and my son has worked out with us...and you know when men get together they are talking. So I don't know if this is bad to say but they were talking about their experiences with women and how they do this and what they do and everything...and I told my son, I say, listen to them and that is exactly what I don't want you to do."

F019: "She told me once about kids at her junior high school that were sexually active and that I wouldn't believe some of the stuff that goes on there, not at the school but you know with some kids." Discussions with his daughter about this subject also happened around television shows i.e. Jerry Springer and exposure to his dating practices.

Conclusion

The prime reason for these discussions was to impart foundational knowledge so that children would have a sound basis of reference compared to what they learned from peers and other means. Teaching occurred formally at times when a father or both parents sat

with their children to have this discussion. More frequently it occurred informally or casually upon initiation by children or their father. Methods used to have these conversations included cues from children. This occurred when observing sexuality on television, bill boards, or in behaviors by others such as wearing revealing clothes. One father used humor instigated by children about sexual situations to discuss the subject. Other prompts for these discussions occurred when children began discussions about pregnant peers, peers' problems with boyfriends. Fathers also used books, children's experiences of observing mothers' sexual behaviors, or adult conversations to enhance reproductive health communication their children. One father's technique was to determine his children's knowledge base and supplement it with necessary information. For two fathers these conversations were conducted in stages to match the children's development.

Liberal Versus Strict

The following fathers described ideals for their children that fit liberal or strict groups. F017: "My kids were in wedlock you know, so everything has to stem from that, you know. I don't believe in having multiple kids (meaning children with different mothers). ...Like the circle that believe in having kids out of wedlock, I don't like that either. I'm pretty sexually liberal, you know, so, um, I don't believe that you have to wait until you get married to have sex. I think that people should have fun with their sexuality and shouldn't be inhibited. It should be healthy meaning no physical pain or using sex as a temptation to control people, you know, unhealthy... I tell my daughter never sleep with more than one guy out of the same set or friends of a group of people. Always be very

discreet with her sexual activity, that you always have to be aware of societal norms and societal type rules and how people can perceive your actions, you know, and um, act accordingly. There is a time and a place for everything... You know, it's just the way that people are. You know, different drives, whatever, you know. And as long as people are respectful of one another and don't get into any behavior that is unhealthy, you know...and basically, as long as you always feel that the person you are with respects you fully, you know, uh, sex is a beautiful thing, you can be playful in sex, you can role play, do whatever you want to do, whatever. You don't need to have any restraints or type of rules or anything necessarily."

F014: "Being responsible, being respectful, being honorable, I think those are the things I get from the Bible more so and I try to employ. And, that is what I teach... how you go about experiencing or living your sexual life is every individual's choice...again, I hope for reproductive purposes, my children are not homosexuals because that is not a form of reproduction. However, it is a part of nature, and so..."

F008: "That you don't hurt people. You don't play with people's.... That makes you a bad person. You know, purposefully hurting people, using people, mistreating people. So in terms of their sexuality that's something. It is their's for them to treasure, but they need to learn to be responsible with it, with themselves, and not use it to hurt people, tease people, get favors, whatever. But ultimately they have to live with themselves. Other than that I don't know, I don't know if permissive is the right word. Very modern. I really don't know. We are not old fashioned or traditional that is for sure. What we taught them, what I tried to instill in them is you are responsible for your own choices. If you are

going to choose to behave in a certain way, if you are going to choose to be sexually active, then you need to take responsibility for that activity. So, make sure you have condoms, make sure you are getting regular check-ups, be prepared to deal with a pregnancy. These are the consequences of that behavior if that is what you choose. Those kinds of conversations. Again, we want them to be independent individuals. I am not a traditionalist in that sense. I see myself being more like my father in terms of the openness. And the shame that I did learn from my mother, I don't want them to get. So making a point not to talk about or use language like dirty and nasty and that type of thing. They are learning from their mother to be comfortable with their bodies. She was quite comfortable walking around nude, and comfortable with the human body, with their body. I would not walk around nude in front of them. In that way I am traditional. On the other hand I walk around in my underwear, boxer shorts. Beyond that I think we have done okay in the confidence that they are making right choices because we have treated them like they are capable of making those choices."

F019: "She doesn't have to fit into a paradigm of mom and me and you know I'm not forcing her or I'm not laying down any moral rigidity or judgmental paradigm about her sexuality. It's uh, she's got to discover where she's at within.....she's got to learn to be authentic and uh, recognize qualities and levels of connectivity with people just beyond surface or physiological impulses. She's got to learn what works. Surface stuff that might work for a night, but it's not going to work over time. She's got to learn you know through her own exploration what qualities in guys that she's going to be comfortable and compatible with and that she's going to find that it's going to be more than just a sexual

relationship, but a social and spiritual and stuff like that, so....She's got to learn through her own exploration how to holistically interact with guys. Not just sexually, socially, but a holistic interaction because that's what's going to happen with the energy...I mean, she's got to grow on a lot of levels. ..people don't even know themselves completely because society has tricked them into conventions and laws and scripts that they've been handed so, a lot of time they are just following a script and consciously this stuff is just supposed to go on the script, but it doesn't. Now, you have to figure out what's what...well, she's going to have to explore. Not just figure it out. It's not....when you say figure it out, I mean, you know, you can figure out how this computer works, it works a certain way. There's no manual on me or you or her. So she's got to explore herself and then she's got to explore who she's with and allow them to explore themselves and within that create a more authentic communication and the mobility to allow them space to be who they are. My personal philosophical perspective is that you're a being on many levels. You're not just a being physiologically but a human being economically, socially and theologically, spiritually and psychologically and there's all these layers of you that you have to explore and learn. All these layers are happening simultaneously. They're not shut off. The switch is not shut off on them while you deal with this other layer. They're still going and they're still interacting so, she's got to learn, you know. She's got to learn about all these layers you know...when you mix energy with a being and you connect with them you don't have to know everything. I'm not going to put that kind of restriction on her, you know, you're going to have to learn as you do it. I'm not going to be able to explain to her everything and then say; okay; now it's safe that you know. Now

you can go ahead and No, you have to learn as you do it, but you know, I have never imposed any rigidity on her moralistically, judgmental or constrictive type of perspective or paradigm and uh, she feels comfortable even when she gets in hot spots. I mean, not that....she's just starting to date."

F002: "So like I said, when I got remarried, the Scripture cleaned the house out completely. I mean anything that had even a shred of anything to do with sexual relations, sex, was gone. That made it easy, by the way. Okay, so no TV. So, when I talked to my daughter, it was then sort of fresh. She is hearing it then from me. And, uh, and there is a difference. There is a difference in that I feel that males, because I was out there at one time, kind of control how that works. And it's very rare, at least I found out it was very, very rare, uh, at least back then that girls initiated the whole idea of it. They were kinda pushed into it or egged into it or a suggestion made up by the males first. And no matter what I see on TV and/or videos it's still largely the same. Because of that I think I let her know that this is what packages this will be come in. You are going to be approached by certain people that feel that, uh, you are a target. They feel that you ultimately might be open to this when it counts. So as a result I am very strict with dress. I am very strict with where you go and who you hang out with. By keeping in control of these things, or at least on the surface, at least making an attempt, there's a lot of things you can eliminate before they happen. So, I tell her about guys that are interested and there's gonna be two types. There is going to be the type that wants to know you for the person you are, and then there is going to be the vast majority of the second type that wants to know you from the neck down..."

F005: “Well, me, I’m strict. I stay on ‘em. As far as being strict, You know. It’s really not me but I have to do it in order to send a message to my kids. So if I don’t do that they’ll figure you know our dad is a softy.” Speaking of his daughter he reported, “She’s very easy to get influenced. Because on her mother’s side of the family, you know, that’s, there’s a lot of craziness that goes on that she tells me especially about one of her cousins getting pregnant and stuff. And they talk all the time and ask her for advice. And I’m like, why’d you bring all this over here? Why are they even talking to you about this? I don’t want my daughter to end up pregnant, you know, with this kid, that kid, on welfare and all that.”

Conclusion

Liberal ideals about reproductive health were noted in three fathers. One father taught his children that childbearing was expected to occur in marital relationships, and having children by multiple mothers was a practice that was not encouraged. Abstinence was considered unnecessary but sex should be discreet and uninhibited. Sexual behaviors should occur responsibly within societal norms with concern for partners and homosexuality was the individual’s choice. Daughters were warned of males having a primary interest in sex. Teachings on sexuality for one father were based on biblical knowledge and included respectful and honorable behaviors. He believed children should exercise responsibility for choices and consequences. This father also espoused independence while avoiding the element of shame within sexual behaviors. Another father’s expectation for his daughter when she began to participate in sex was for her to experience freedom for mutual self discovery with her partner and learn the holistic

nature of sexual involvement. Strictness was enforced by two fathers. For one of them it was grounded in religiosity. It entailed control of how children obtained sexual information, dress, media exposure, and exposure to already sexually active peers. Using his experience to impart information on what to expect from other males was one father's way of approaching reproductive health communication with his children. For some fathers ideals came from their parents.

Love and Fidelity

F006: "As long as you have an individual who is willing to stay there and stand with you and to know that to love them and that sex is a beautiful thing within the family, within the two individuals, when I say the family, I am talking about the husband and wife."

F012: "I try to tell them don't be having intercourse with each and every guy. If you are going to have intercourse, have it with your husband, your boyfriend, one person. See I teach her, a woman has sex with more than one person, they going to look like they is a whore. And you don't want that. Hood rat they call them in the ghetto. You don't want to be called that... There is no telling what you might have in ten years from now. You could have HIV, AIDS, anything long term. You don't think of that at that time. Because the person look like they're healthy don't mean they are healthy. And then you having sex with this person and that person, you might be accepting a gift or giving something."

F015: "I don't expect him to go out and have sex with 100 women but I think that he should go out with other women just to experience other personalities and to see how people are, other ways of doing things and here he is getting ready to go to college having the emotional baggage."

F005: "...what we're showing and what we are instilling in them is really moral principle and it's what God wants. God don't want you to go out there and have sex unless you're really married. And with her just seeing our life, seeing our lives and following our lives then I don't think I have, we have too much of a problem."

F013: This father retold a story that he shared with his son of his experience in order to teach him about love, relationships, what can happen and the importance of exercising caution in choosing a mate. "I just want them to experience the real things in life. I want them to experience real love. I want them to find somebody, to know that there is someone out there that is special for you, but you have to find them first. Just don't jump here and have a baby, jump here...you know, that is why I only have two. See, I feel like this and I always tell them like this. I tell my son it is not like I am saying that you were a mistake, but I'm married. I'm sad. I am in my mom's house in between. I am looking at these four walls because I don't even have a house now. I am just in my bedroom. I am looking at these four walls and I am sad, so I have to try to bring my life back up. I ride with my friends, I try to be happy. My friends show me another woman and say that's our type, why don't you get out of this rut and go and talk to her and maybe, you know, it might be Miss Right for you and I say why not. So I talk to her, she seem like a real nice person. We started dating and everything. And, the next thing you know one thing led to another and then I start seeing these little certain traits that come out of her that I saw that she was kind of, you know, but it was too late. She told me she was pregnant. I explained to her I said I already have one son. I am fresh out of a marriage you know, I really don't need this right now, I don't need it. I said, I am really not doing as good as I want to be. I

apologize for the situation but I will take care of it (pay for an abortion), I will give you the money and everything, and she was like 'no,' I don't want to do this. And that is what I told my son to show him what could happen. And I am his father but we're installing good values that he is going to take on for the rest of his life. And this is why I am showing him what to look for out here so he won't have to go through that. So he know it will be true love and that he will be with this person for the rest of his life instead of just saying 'oh, I am going to conquer this one this week, I am going to conquer this one this week, and this one right here, I am going to juggle around these, you know...'

Conclusion

Important ideals some fathers had for their children were that sex should occur only in married relationships. Religiosity formed the basis for one father holding this belief. Factors having a deleterious effect on females' reputations included having too many partners and the risk of HIV/AIDS was considered a warning in favor of cautionary sexual practices. Exercising good judgment in choosing a mate was a very important ideal one father underscored for his son to avoid undesirable relationships. On the other hand freedom to explore oneself sexually in terms of experiencing relationships with different people was valued by one father.

Father Knows Best

Fathers had ideas of how children should conduct their lives, based on their own experiences that were evident in the following statements.

F012: "You know that's what I told her, God said you gotta wait until you get married. Have to be married before you have sex. I told her that a long time ago, I always tell her

that. Right now I tell her that. And she tell me, well you weren't married to my momma. I tell her I was a sinner but I don't want you to be like me. I want you to be better than me."

F014: Speaking on the importance of youths not focusing on sexual impulses this father reported, "...So the girls, talking from a perspective of a boy, is a distraction to that. The girls are going to be there, the parties are going to be there. All of those good times are going to be there once you have finished. So don't be in a big rush to get to that. That's what we have tried to encourage them. And then again with me taking more of the back seat with the limits or the censoring I let my wife lead that. I think exposure to a lot of things, especially early on, it's been very limited. So they have lived a relatively sheltered life. Now they are starting to see a little bit more and that's okay. We don't let them watch a lot of R-rated movies. If you can get them early started on the right track, there is a good chance you can keep them on that track as they get older and to minimize that need. Now, maybe it's just our sons as individuals but my daughter's been seemingly the same sort of way... so maybe again care that early on, maybe that lack of exposure is what is guiding them. Or, maybe it is just the individuals themselves. I don't know. Maybe if we had a different child from birth, just would be more experimental, more curious, and seek to find those types of things. I don't know. I just feel blessed that we haven't had a lot of problems with that, and I hope it continues."

F011: "As far as my own personal sexual history or sexual health is concerned, if I could do it over again I wouldn't have done what I did. So moving forward as a husband and a father right now, I want my children to benefit from my mistakes. Therefore I am going

to give them all the information I possibly can. Based on society with all the STDs that we have out here right now, I want my sons to be healthy. I want my daughter to be healthy. I don't want them out there. It is just too much right now for anybody to be out there like it used to be back in the 70s. You know, people were coming from the doctors and saying, ah good all I have is herpes. You know. In other words I am going to live. So you see what I mean? So I want to give it to them straight. I want them to know the real hard core facts about sex and their own personal sexual health. There is no way I am going to let my two little men go out there unprepared and let somebody tell them about, oh, this is okay, you can do this, da, da, da, I am not going to do to that. I am not going to leave anything to chance, because those are the last two heirs to my name, and I need them."

F015: "And because I learned from the streets I wanted to make sure that my kids never had to go through some of the things I had to go through, embarrassment, uh, not being selfish. I don't know the word I'm trying to find. And, I didn't want my daughter to be a bad girl. I didn't want her to be the girl that everyone talked about in the boy's bathroom. I wanted her to be something special and I honestly to this day still regret the 100s of women that I've gone through and...I did a lot of degrading things and what I found in each and every one of these girls who allowed a man that they didn't even know to do the things that I was able to do, they had low self esteem... it was truly, truly amazing how you can just tell that they're, you know..."

F013: "I know everybody has mistakes. And, everybody goes through certain situations in their life being juvenile and then they get the knowledge and then they change because

I am one of those people but I just wasn't promiscuous and all that. I want him to know that life is not easy. Don't always expect the best out of life, but try to get the best out of life, you know...and next thing you know we broke up. She put me on child support, just like that, you know, just like that. I told her I didn't need this, and, she did it. And, I said I was going to be stand-up man, stay there, help her out, and everything. And, she did it anyway. So, I just tell them little things like that so they can know what to watch out for. And, why I tell them these things, so they know not to get involved with it unless it's really real."

Conclusion

Whether children participated in sex was either the result of parental guidance or a predisposition to participate in that activity according to one father. Some fathers believed that children should be taught early so they could be grounded in their parents' ideals of abstinence. They were expected to wait until marriage to begin sexual activity, and exposure to sexual content should be limited. One father's report of valuing his children's life was related to the grave consequence of contracting AIDS/HIV. Children should allow themselves to benefit from fathers' mistakes and knowledge in order to avoid sexually transmitted infections. Daughters should avoid sexual activity to maintain a good reputation. Having good self esteem was considered a trait responsible for avoiding participation in loveless sex.

Sons Versus Daughters

Fathers reported several differences to reproductive health communications for their sons and daughters.

F015: "A girl that sleeps with you on the first date is a bad girl. A girl who, in my mind, you know, any girl that sleeps with more than 10 guys I think is a whore. It's just how I look at it because how it is I used to tell my daughter is, how can you respect a woman who is giving herself to anyone and everyone. How is that possible? Because she's telling you that she loves you, but she loved the other 15 or 18 or 30 guys. It just happened they were smarter than you and didn't marry her. I mean, it's messed up that....that's a bad girl. That's what I consider a bad girl. But I also told my daughter and my sons that one of my mistakes was, you want to know, you got to know, and I tell my daughter the first guy that ask you how many partners you had whether it was 1 or 10 or 150, none of your business! My life starts today with you and if he pushes it you need to pack your bags today and go home. Because even though I think of a good girl and bad girl in that light, I know the pain that will be afflicted on her for telling that. And if she goes 5, he's always going to doubt her. He's always going to think it's 20. He says 20, now she definitely a whore. But the 5 has got him like thinking and I tell that to my boys, don't ever ask a woman how many sexual partners she had. I said, it's none of your business and it's just a sign of insecurity on your part so that's what a good girl means to me I think my son is a good boy. I think my other son was, he's a bad boy. I think the last 8 months he has grown up a lot because of his new relationship with this young woman. Uh, but I think that my son and I would be considered bad, but we're bad like bad boy cool (able to charm females with whom they were not interested in having long term relationships) you know what I mean. It's like macho cool, but girls are always, you know, you don't

want to be with a woman who had too many partners. That's my definition of a good girl and bad girl and that's just sick, I know it is though, so."

F017: "Women will trap you and they can really make you like puppets if you're really just screwing everything and if you're just really that way. Your sex drive controls you where you give them power over you and it would be very uh, a very rough thing for you so you need to be very smart and not just you know, uh, give in to sexual desires because all that glitters is not gold, you know...I tell them to always protect themselves because there is always a woman who wants to get pregnant. They may not tell you that. It's like an instinctive thing with women and you can just get caught up, you know. So, you know, go ahead and have sex, but you got to protect yourself, you can't be stupid. You can't be stupid because it will cost you. It will cost you too bad! Uh, it's going to cost you financially. Just take it from me. Really, just believe it so maybe you can just bypass that pitfall. You know what I mean? And wait until you're mature enough and you might get the right woman and everything's cool. And so, for my son, more caution because you don't want to pick women like that because the prettiest women aren't the ones that are, you know. So, see don't get strayed, see! My son, I don't want him going out that way. Don't pick the prettiest girl! That's not the one that you want. You want the one that's really a thinker, sits back, you know. The girl that sits back you know, and she'll let you be in charge and you know she may be smarter than you and when your friends aren't around she'll pull you aside and try to tell you something that makes sense. You obviously don't want the prettiest ones. Her head is probably out of whack, everybody

tells her how pretty she was. And maybe how her identity lies and that may not be the one you can trust, because she knows she could get more response...”

F018: “There might be a difference now because of his age. I don’t think it’s because of the gender. I just think that there are things that’s a priority for my son right now... With the exception of me feeling more comfortable about talking to my son about it because of my experience as a male...it’s just not having experience of a woman...but I will talk to her from a male’s point of view, you know what I’ve seen from guys at this age, you know, how I acted. I would definitely talk to her about it because I want her to know. I want to give her a good understanding of the other side of things, which she is liable to not get a chance to get so, you know.”

F004: “Well, this is the thing I do with that. I don’t talk about sexual things with my daughters at all. That’s my wife’s job. That, her job is the girls. My job is the boys. Now, if there is a situation where my wife has a problem with sexual talking with my daughters, she’ll bring it to me. And if she feels like this problem needs to be addressed by both of us, it will be. And, and, there was a situation like that at one time where me and my wife had to address my daughter about sexual things because my daughter’s friend, Jennifer in the next street, she’s gay now. But she’s my daughter’s friend. So, my daughter’s under the same scrutiny that my boys are but basically coming from my wife.”

F019: “...her mother kind of had that kind of, uh, guidance kind of role. Guide kind of role...I might ask her to have that certain conversation with my daughter to you know....it’s just a vantage point that a woman has talking to a girl.”

F008: “Yes, I think it does. I think, if they were sons, I would be a little more comfortable, because when I have had to have these kind of open talks with young men that I have worked with of the same age, that shyness is gone. So I do think just part of it is they are girls. Demonstrating some of that behavior I learned growing, that boys and girls are different and sort of stay separate about those private places and private areas unless you are in love.”

F001: “Well, what I have discussed with them is just more preliminary info which really is not gender-specific so much. But when I get into more detailed discussions with them there will be some definite differences in how I approach them. Um, also because, you know my daughter you know being a girl she just has a more mature mind about things than my son even though she is a year younger. You know, like they say, girls they’re supposedly 10 years ahead of boys in maturity, well, that’s starts pretty young. So you know just the way I see her sometimes, you know, look at a boy and she and her girlfriends are, you know, together at school you know, or they’ll you know, look at a boy and you know whisper something and laugh. You know, I know that her mind is already thinking a bit about boys. So my discussion with her is definitely gonna progress I think a little quicker into a higher level for her, especially because she is probably gonna actually hit puberty this year. Um, because her mother actually hit puberty at age 10. So she’ll probably hit puberty by the time she is 11. Um, so it’s gonna be critical that I impart that knowledge to her and get her head where it needs to be so that she doesn’t do something stupid and make a mistake that’s gonna alter her life...I don’t think it’s so much the gender difference as it is the maturity difference, where their heads are at.”

F003: “Because a boy, I feel you can be hard and just say raw with but a girl you have to be a little sensitive with that subject. But it seem like a boy can take more and understand more than, than the girl...I will basically tell them the same thing, but I might say it a little different with my son. But it will be the same thing. It just might be a little, not raw but.... but a little different tone.”

F016: “Um, and the fact that she is the opposite sex, maybe it’s because that I think I’m coming from the perspective of a male as opposed to female, um, so maybe she is sensing some of that and shutdown because of that because I do have some concerns, you know, about that. Not that I feel like I can’t talk to her about it, but it’s just you know, respected on coming from a father who’s like, you know, watch those boys kind of thing, you know...when it gets down to it and we get into the conversation and it got too involved, ...and she would be like Dad, you don’t have to worry about it now. But um, you know, that’s the difference and maybe she feels because I don’t ask her direct questions, you know....oh, did I tell you that I don’t really talk to her directly as I do my son. I tried to twice and both of the times it was like she really clammed up. And so I figured she doesn’t feel right...because my wife talks to her about it so much that it’s like...”

F011: “Absolutely because it is just real. I mean, she’s a woman, and these are going to be men. And, I want to instill in my sons that they have to be responsible. I will tell any woman right now that I am raising husbands for your daughters. And, I want them to be capable, I want them to be intelligent, and I want them to be spiritual. And the conversation is definitely going to be different. I am going to tell them they are just going to have to fight the flesh, period. You have to fight that flesh. Well, the flesh is what

moves you, just what drives you. I mean, why do you want to have sex? It is a thing that is innate in everybody, but it is a fleshy thing. So that's something that you have to get over and cool the flesh down because everybody is going to get hot at one point in time in their lives, or more than that. Especially as far as teenagers are concerned they are going to be on fire. I mean hormones and everything going every which way. So it is going to be more than one conversation. I already know that."

F011: "So, you are going to be telling our sons to abstain.

I: "I am telling her the same thing. But as men, they are going to be probably going to be, well, heck, I can't say they will be the aggressor because these days women are almost just as aggressive as some men. So maybe my conversation is not going to be much different. But one thing I am going to say is, don't do it. Respect yourself. You don't have to. It is not something that you have to do. You can save yourself for the person that you are going to be with for the rest of your life.

F011: Asked about whether there was a difference in parental roles in discussing reproductive health he responded, "Yes, she does. To answer your question, she does feel that it is my role to talk to them because they are sons. Now, I don't know if it might be a little old fashioned or something of that nature but it is okay with me. But today's society it is okay for a female too. Yes I am going to talk to them. But you know what, I am going to include my wife in that too. So they can see it from both perspectives, from a woman's perspective and a man's perspective. And that is just going to make them so much more ready and prepared later on in life because we are so liberal. Well if I want to say liberal, but we are so open. I am not going to hold anything back from them."

F012: "You know what it will be different because I just see me now, if it was my son I don't have to worry about him getting pregnant. I would say, if you are going to have sex wear a condom."

F012: "...Man, back in the days yeah, I know, that's what I'm trying to teach her, what guys were doing, because I know what I was doing. I buy you a hamburger for every day of the week, try to get to know you. I'm trying to tell her all this. If I had a son, I can't lie and say I would teach him just like I talk to her about it, because he's different. I would be like, wear a condom. I would probably tell him don't have sex right now, but if you do wear a condom. There would be some difference. I don't know why, it just will be. I would talk to him seriously about it because once you have sex it is like an addiction you are going to want to constantly keep having sex until you have a mature mind and say no. Once you have it, you are going to want it always. If I found out that he had it, I would sit down and talk to him and say don't bring no babies into the world that you can't take care of. It will be hard, but try not to do it. If you do it, wear a condom. Protect yourself. You have HIV out there, AIDS, and everything else. I would try to encourage him like that. But I wouldn't be hurt as much as if it were my daughter. With my daughter I would be hurt. I would be really hurt. But my son, I wouldn't be that hurt. I know it seems like a double standard...they don't call guys nothing, they call them players, studs..."

F014: "...I think as they were growing up, especially prior to the age of 16, I don't see where I would have had much difference in my approach. The thing that comes in the back of my mind is how would I have approached my daughter or talked with my daughter on experimentation or learning about sexuality with her versus with the boys.

And, I mean, again thinking of it from the ideal situation, you always want your girls to have the least amount of experimentation and the boys to be as knowledgeable as possible.”

Conclusion

Fathers reported differences in reproductive health communication for sons and daughters. Male and female roles in this regard meant fathers had these conversations with sons and mothers had them with daughters. Some fathers believed mothers should have this discussion with daughters because they were uncomfortable conducting these conversations and because daughters would benefit more from a female’s perspective. Other fathers believed they would better be able to inform daughters about male sexual behavior and tricks they use to encourage girl’s participation in sex. If a father were to have this conversation with a daughter, the mother should be present to afford greater benefit from both perspectives. More rapid maturity in girls meant these conversations should occur earlier and the depth of these conversations should progress faster. Conversations in this regard should be less direct and more sensitive with their daughters. Daughters should have the least amount of experimentation, avoid having many sexual partners and disclosure of the number of partners they had because of potentially damaging effects on their reputation. Difference in communication with sons and daughters was not due to gender for two fathers. Abstaining was taught to sons and daughters.

Some fathers felt talking to sons was their role, were more comfortable talking to sons in this regard, felt that sons should be more knowledgeable, and that they could be blunt

and direct with sons but not daughters. Sons should not inquire about the numbers of partners female had. They should be alert to females wanting pregnancies, and becoming pregnant intentionally, and should be especially careful because of financial repercussions when these relationships end. Some were less concerned about sons than daughters because sons cannot be impregnated. Sons should be responsible for their sexual behavior, use caution with pretty females, and chose smart females.

Abstinence

Fathers were asked ‘do you think the reproductive health communications you had with your children delayed the onset of sex.’ A variation of this question was asked depending on the flow of the conversation to elicit a response to the question. Direct questioning was unnecessary when responses to these questions were spontaneous.

F008: Speaking of his openness, the children’s mother’s openness, and their liberal attitude he responded, “Whether that encouraged her or discouraged her or had any kind of influence on when she chose to have sex I don’t know. I really have no idea. If I had to guess either way, my guess would be that her mother’s comfort and openness about sex and my comfort and openness about sex made them not feel shame like they were somehow bad people or anything like that. I am certain that we were able to get through to them that this is not what makes a person a ‘bad’ person. There are much worse things that one can do. So I am pretty certain that they did not grow up feeling shamed or anything like that about sexual feelings. If that makes somebody more willing to experiment earlier, it makes sense that it could...I think that the girls all have, to the best of my knowledge, fairly healthy attitudes about sex, and that they are in fact not sleeping

around. So, I am happy with the way they have turned out so far. I do have a great deal of confidence in the choices that their mother makes in her conversations with them, and making sure they know how to take care for themselves and those sorts of things. So, not in that area I think we are doing the right thing...everybody has sexual feelings. It is better for the kids to be informed about those feelings than confused or shamed about those feelings. If that meant that they started having sex earlier than whatever the magic age is, I don't think that is the worse possible thing, as long as they have the information they need to not come home ill or pregnant before they want to...with the oldest one, I really in some ways tried to delay her activity, mainly just by telling her that you do not have to give yourself away, or be careful of these guys that say they love you, they may only want one thing, not what you think they want. Now, I don't think that the delaying lasted very long because I am pretty sure by the time she was 14 she had already had sex. The 21 year old, I am pretty sure not until she was in her 17th year, that senior year of high school, maybe 18, I am not sure. It was probably 17, 18."

F017 reported being sexually liberal. Based on that ideal he was asked, "Do you think sex during adolescence is ok?" He responded, "I am not even thinking with any fear concerning that because to do that would set myself up for some big time anxiety and uh, I don't need it and I can't control any of that. You know, I cannot be with those girls 24/7 and um, you know, the odds of them getting to 21 or something, without having sex is so low. "At what age do you think it is ok?" "I think it's okay about 15 or 16. I'm sure my girls have about 2 years I'm hoping. I hope at least they can wait until they're 18, you know."

F018: "I don't see how it's possible because he's with us like almost 24/7. But you never know...of course abstinence is what I'd like you to do but if you're going to make other choices there are ways out so you don't get STDs or get somebody pregnant so, you know..."

F007: "I think one of the most important things for me, as I reflect back on the early stages of learning or becoming aware of it, was my mother and my father were both spiritual people, Christian people. We were brought up in a Christian, spiritual environment. So with that in mind, that really implanted in me as a person the importance of abstinence...I'm hoping they can at least wait until they're 18."

F012: "It is not so much rushing into sex. Like I tell my daughter, there are popular girls and there are slutty girls. If you want to be popular you might have to be slutty. Don't want to be popular, you just want to be a person they say hi to because when I was coming up, girls who was popular was always the sluttiest. And I try to insert that into her, don't be easy, you always keep your, save it. I wish I would have saved... because it take your mind to a whole other level, because they go to.... Once you start having sex, that's where your mind start going when you're young. You have to be very mature to start having sex because if you're not your mind won't be focused on what you really want to do in life. Like me, I was just thinking about sex, sex. I wasn't even thinking about going to school. And that is what I try to tell her. Wait, wait till you get everything, graduate from college, get your job, then you can start on that...when you have sex at a young age, that is basically what you are doing, jumping ahead of yourself. You got a long way to go before you try to rush into anything. That is what I try to tell her. Now she

has a boyfriend. I like, take your time, don't do everything because he is not going to be the last. There are going to be many others so just wait. She talk to a guy, but you know, I met him. So, you know, he's a square dude. Like he was raised up in a nice home. He not in no gang or nothing, he just like a square, like, he ride skateboard. He like he just want to have fun, as in going to the movies, riding skate board. So, she talk to him, and he's okay. When they go out, they always have a chaperone. So, it is fine with me. I really just want her to try to go as long as possible...that's what I will be trying to insert in her. Wait until you get married."

F011 "If I go back to religion again as far as pre-marital sex is concerned, I respect what that holy book says regarding pre-marital sex. And just based on what it says, and the example that I gave you regarding my own experience and the things I went through because I did have pre-marital sex, some of the problems it caused me in my early manhood years regarding just that act, and just the seed that was planted. And, that little girl that came from that seed outside of marriage. So, I don't want my sons nor do I want my daughter to do what I did, or to have a baby outside of marriage...I am going to be teaching my sons it is okay to be a virgin until you are married. You don't have to succumb under peer pressure because your boys (your male friends) are out there doing their thing (being sexually active). You don't have to do that. And I had an epiphany some time ago. I said, wow, what if I was a virgin and my wife that I married was virgin, and then on our wedding night we came together. Now, that bond is not going to be easily broken. That will not be easily broken by any means. And I get chills thinking about it because the whole thing is that you just came together with this one person. She

just came to you and you guys bond together and now this is solid as a rock. It beat fireworks, dynamite, explosions, atom bombs, you know, everything, just everything. You know what I mean? So I never experience..... well yes, I did, but it wasn't with my wife. You see what I mean? So, the whole thing is that if you experience something like that with the person that you are going to marry or that you are marrying that bond is not going to be easily broken." Speaking of his communication with his daughter he reported, "I said, it is just not something that you should do. I said you need to respect yourself. I told her that these little boys right now, they are not going to be here when you are out of high school. I said, they only want to do what they want to do at this point in time. I said, you be in charge, because you are in charge. All you have to do is say, no. Abstain. I am telling him the same thing. But as men they are going to be probably going to be, well, heck, I can't say they will be the aggressor, because these days, women are almost just as aggressive as some men. So maybe my conversation is not going to be much different. But, one thing I am going to say is, don't do it. Respect yourself. You don't have to. It is not something that you have to do. You can save yourself for the person that you are going to be with for the rest of your life. These conversations, especially the upcoming conversations as they mature and get older, will have a greater impact as far as their sexual health and them way-laying having sex until later, hopefully, until they get married."

F015: "...I would love for her to be a good girl all her life and give her husband something special, but I told her, I go honey I want you to experience life whatever that means. I don't want you to grow up being a prude thinking that sex is bad and you're

going to be this and do that. Your sexual life is your business...my daughter is a good girl. She is not involved in sex. She's had two guys kiss her and she's just a good girl and I taught her from a very young age to respect herself."

F001: "Not expecting his children to abstain from sex until marriage this father reported, "I believe that ideally it would be best if people waited until they were married to have sex. Um, but unfortunately, being a realist, I know most people don't, um, including myself. I didn't wait until I was married. My son's head is nowhere near the whole boy-girl thing, but my daughter, even though she is younger, her head is already there in terms of just some preliminary, you know, interest or liking of a boy, things like that. She's already reaching a stage where she could potentially end up in a situation that I don't want her in. My son, he's nowhere near there. He's, he is not like me. You know, his head hasn't progressed like that. Um, you know, maybe it's because they've lived a rather sheltered life. You know they didn't grow in up streets the way I did, fortunately. Um, so they didn't have a lot of the same exposures that I had at such young ages. Um, so that I think that's helped to kind of maintain my son's innocence, if you will, when it comes to his thought patterns you know, regarding the opposite sex. You know, right now he's just still into video games and you know sports, and you know, playing with his friends. And, but by the same token I'm not so naïve as to think that that's necessarily gonna stay that way very much longer. And that's why I will be talking to him more even though he is not showing any kinda interest that way. I still need to start his educational period now to make sure that when he does reach that level, he's already very aware of a lot of things and then it'll just be a matter of refreshing that from time to time and

keeping it in the front of his mind. Uh, like I said before, to try and, and prevent his hormones from overtaking.”

F005: “Sure. Well, the Scripture teaches abstinence. It teaches sex only in marriage. That in marriage, it is a wonderful, wonderful thing because it enhances and brings a couple closer together. Outside of marriage, actually and through experience, about all it brings is trouble and upset people and diseases and consequences, unwanted pregnancies. I mean, it just keeps on going.”

F004: “...I can’t say that they are waiting to have it or not. I know that what I expressed to them, I know that it causes them to have that thought in the back of their head that, you know, I better make sure this is the right thing, they’re not just gonna jump on the whole sex idea. I know the 20-year-old is. Um, the 19, not sure yet. Not sure, but I will know once it happens. Yeah, I’ll know. I monitor them very closely.

I: “Do you feel that the communications that you’ve had with your children or even your own beliefs, do you feel that that has influenced the timing of sex for your children?

F004: “Yes, my own beliefs, see, I know that my boys will pretty much follow the things that I do. I’ve seen them. So, since they’re following me and I know that they are following me, the things that I do...”

F010: “About whether his son was sexually active he responded that his son was more fearful of him therefore was very unlikely to impregnate someone. His statement did not mean that his son should be abstinent. “No, to be honest, no. I think for my oldest son, I believe he is more afraid of me going upside his head for not taking care of his responsibility of being a father versus anything else...my baby boy, that is where I am at

right now. I am taking a whole different route (being a more responsible father with the youngest than he was with the two older children). He is so mature at such a young age. He is seeing a lot of things, he is experiencing a lot of bad things already where he seen death from a little girl, his playmate, to his granny, versus he is seeing sex with the animals. He's accumulated a lot of knowledge at an early age that I am trying to keep him focused more on school versus going towards sex. I told him about two months when I found out the girl liked him that don't be in a rush to have sex. There is going to be a lot of girls after him just because of his hair. And they are not going to know exactly what he is. They are going to think he is half Black, half Hispanic, when he is nowhere near that. He is going to have girls who are just going to try to have babies just because of his complexion. He is like, I am not thinking about no kids Dad, I am just a kid myself. So he keeps me on tract and I am trying to keep him focused on just being a boy, period."

F013: "Well, responsibly, I think maybe 18. I waited until I was like 18, 19 myself, out of high school. It was hard, because I knew it would take me away from what I wanted to accomplish. I was playing sports and everything. So, I tell him the same thing... I think that the people in the streets have more powerful influence on them. The streets, the music that they listen to, and some of the videos that they watch because it glorifies what they are doing as far as the sex and the booty and the breasts and the beauty. It makes these youngsters want to go out here and do it. So the values that the parents are putting in there and saying don't do this, you have this that makes them want to explore the situation. You know, and they want to see, they want to dabble and it is hard because you try to keep it away from them, but it is all over. It is on the billboards, it is on every t.v.

station whether it is regular tv, pay-per-view, Showtime, whatever. It is out there so the only thing you can do is just say this is the way it is but I hope that you don't do it...I didn't know about the sex or I didn't know the weed or I didn't know about anything of that nature. And then I took him home to his mom's house and his mom made me promise not to whoop him, but just sit down and let's talk about it. She said, 'so tell your daddy, are you having sex?' 'Yes.' 'How many times have you had it?' 'Ah, ah, three, four times.'

I: How old was he when he started?

F013: "You know what, I didn't even ask because I was so shocked at the situation.

I: At the time, how old was he?

F013: "He was 15. And I am like, 'You had sex?' And he just be quiet. So I sat back and she says, "So, how long you been smoking weed?" Two years. I said, I think this is exaggeration, you know. I think that everything was basically exaggeration. But who's to say. You know, he said it, maybe it is true. So, I am like, I am hot, I am heated, I am ready to take off on him, whatever. And the mom is like no, you promised. I just say, 'Why? Why didn't you come to me and talk to me?' 'I don't know.' 'Well, who introduced this to you?' 'My friends.' 'So you gang banging, too?' 'Yeah.' I say, 'I was telling you to stay away from them guys. Don't involve yourself with these guys. Leave this stuff alone. Don't do this.' 'I am in too deep.' That's when I said, 'Oh my God, you never in too deep because I am your father and I can handle anything that you can bring to me. If these guys try to tell you, I mean you gotta gang bang or whatever, I'll come and I'll stand there and I'll talk to these guys. If it don't work, I'll go up to the school. If it

don't work, I'll go to the parents. As far as that, we go to the police or whatever. So instead of that, I just said, you know what, I am going to send you out there with your auntie."

F003: "I want to say yes. I want to say yes because what we're showing and what we are instilling in them is really moral principle, and it's what God wants. God don't want you to go out there and have sex unless you're really married. And with her just seeing our life, seeing our lives and following our lives, then I don't think I have, we have too much of a problem...with the first set I think I would have talked to them earlier about it because I feel that it could have helped out a little more back then."

F016: This father's son had his sexual debut by age 16 and he thought his daughter may be gay so he was not concerned about her abstinence. "I kept them so busy. He was going through basketball. So, school to sax to basketball. My daughter was school to piano, and it was always basketball, but anyways and then they got their homework so..."

F014: "I believe that sex is something once you get started with it, it's not something that you can turn on and off. I am not going to encourage them to have sex at this age or at the age of 16 or 17. I am not going to say, hey, you know, you really should not be doing that. But I am not going to suggest abstinence either because every person is different in my understanding. So, if you have a person who has a drive towards sex, some type of desire to know or experiment at the age of 17 or 18, then I wouldn't see it being abnormal or something I should try to stop. But if he doesn't have the drive, if he is not trying to pursue it at that age, then I am not going to say there is something wrong him either. I

would encourage delaying as long as possible, and it is primarily because once you turn it on, once that is in your brain, it is not something that you can ever forget.”

F019: Of the belief that his daughter was not sexually active he reported, “No, hardly. She’s, as a matter of fact her first guy, he’s going to have a hard time. She’s going to be one of those one’s where he is going to be like trying for a long time, it’s not gonna be easy to get her to bed, unless you a guy that really knows what he’s doing.”

F002: “Quote, unquote, Yes they are all virgins right now. Since as we all know nothing should surprise anybody, anyone who has kids knows that, but I’d say yeah.”

F006: Conversations this father had with his daughter delayed participation in sex. The father believed she was virginal at age 19. He reported, “No, I am sure of that. She will tell you in a minute.” However, his 18 and 20 year old children had started participating in sex.

F009: “Absolutely, because I think my son has respect for me and the things I say.”

Conclusions

Firstly, the assumption that these fathers had reproductive health communications with their children was validated. Most fathers preferred abstinence but did not expect it from their children, however they hoped children would at least wait until age 18. Of the nineteen fathers interviewed 10 taught abstinence and felt their teaching was adhered to by their children. Although he taught abstinence, one father felt it would be an unrealistic expectation because most have their debut by age 21. Four of nine fathers’ teaching of abstinence was from a religious basis. Reasons other fathers taught abstinence were to avoid a bad reputation for daughters, and out of concern that once this activity started it

would be difficult to curtail. Three fathers used their experiences to explain the importance of delaying sexual activity until adulthood. Two fathers wanted their children to wait until age 18 to participate in sex but felt peer influence, music, and videos were great and could cause children to participate earlier than he would prefer. Two fathers were uncertain whether children should be abstinent. These fathers felt children should have information to make decisions to participate or not, and to avoid diseases and pregnancies. Five fathers did not teach abstinence to daughters. Reasons for this stance were, fathers' not wanting the daughter to be a prude but expecting her to maintain self respect when she began participating in sex, not wanting to suggest or discourage participation in sex, and believing the daughter would not easily participate in sex.

Summary of Findings

Understanding Reproductive Health Communication

Upon approaching fathers about participation in this study most believed they did not have much to offer this research study because they did not think they had communicated with their children about reproductive health to any significant degree. The reason for this was their interpretation of 'reproductive health' communication. Once they were engaged in conversation during the interview process and with explanations to improve clarity, they gained an appreciation of the wide span the subject covered and how they may have had these conversations with their children. Additionally, bringing the subject to their awareness in the interview process increased their consciousness of the importance of having reproductive health conversations with children. Although all but one father believed he had these conversations with his children discussions with him revealed he

did have these conversations with his children though not to any significant depth as was the case for other fathers.

Value Transmission

Most fathers learned about reproductive health through promiscuous means as they observed their mothers' overt sexual behaviors, were encouraged to participate in sex with prostitutes by relatives such as uncles and other adults, used various aspects of media such as pornographic movies, literature, and learned through experimentation. It was significant that most of these fathers did not continue this pattern with their children therefore intergenerational transfer of teaching children through pornography or other forms of promiscuity were not the mode most observed. Unlike their experience of learning about this subject, most fathers used non-promiscuous means to have this communication with their children.

Fathers' Reproductive Health Communication

The most significant finding was that these African American fathers whether living with their children or not, recognized the importance of having reproductive health communication with their children and most did have these conversations with them. Fathers who did not live with their children experienced most difficulty maintaining communications and relationships with their children therefore having these conversations became more difficult for them.

Another significant finding was that fathers wanted abstinence for both sons and daughters though they did not expect it because of the belief that most had their sexual debut by 21 years of age. However, most fathers hoped their children would wait at least

until 18 years of age. Most fathers believed the reproductive health communications they had with their children should delay the onset of sex but had difficulty knowing whether this was true for their children or whether their children had already participated in sex.

Values and Morals

Fathers were forthcoming in response to the question of how their values and morals influenced reproductive health communications with their children. Often times their morals, values and the content of communications with their children in this regard were from the basis of valued teachings from their own parents. Values fathers had for themselves related to responsibilities of a father. These included valuing fatherhood, valuing children, wanting to be a good reliable father, and understanding children's needs for a father. Fathers, however, were concerned about communicating morals and values about reproductive health with their children and the effect of outside influences on their sexual debut. Respect for females in particular, whereby physical abuse or demeaning verbalizations did not occur, was a stated value they tried to impart to their children. Children's avoidance of certain clothing was important because it signified affiliations with gang activity and drugs, and early participation in sex. Though homosexuality was not endorsed, fathers stated they would not shun their children if that was their orientation.

Influences on Reproductive Health Communication

Religious or spiritual beliefs were often times the foundation for reproductive health communications these fathers had with their children. It was from that perspective that they modeled expected behaviors. Maintaining open lines of communication with

children engendered trust and facilitated reproductive health communications. Fathers believed in being honest with children and believed it was important for them to be responsible for controlling exposures they experienced. Errors in judgment were thought to be lessened despite peer and other influences particularly when children had early parental teachings to rely on.

Fathers' Perspectives

Reproductive health communication fathers had with their children was dependent on father-child involvement. Fathers were committed to fatherhood whether they lived in the home with their children or not, and made efforts to maintain connections with them. Involvement meant remaining present, approachable and affectionate, being supportive, and reinforcing self worth. Equal treatment for biological and non-biological children, and avoiding separation of children when parents ended their relationship were important factors that affected fathers' involvement. They were concerned about saving children from 'the streets' in order to avert participation in gang activity, drug use and participation in sex. They were also concerned that children may perceive hypocrisy when they communicated the importance of delaying adolescent sex but what they did in their own lives was contrary. Instilling ethnic pride was believed to improve children's ability to be successful in their lives. On a broader level, the reputation and future of African American families was a concern for fathers as well.

Barriers

Barriers to fathers' involvement with their children included mothers' interference and instability. Fathers experienced emotional discomfort as a result of mothers' interference

with communications they wanted to have with their children and dealt with this by remaining detached or waiting until children became old enough to reach out to them.

As already indicated, fathers not living in the same home with their children had increased difficulty remaining involved with them. This could have made a difference in the reproductive health communication they had with their children, prompting questions about their comfort in having these communications. Although most fathers reported being comfortable having these communications, discomfort was present more so with daughters than with sons. Another factor influencing father-child involvement was fathers' engagement with drugs and being incarcerated which affected subsequent communications and relationships.

Pattern of Reproductive Health Communication

Discussions on how these conversations occurred revealed that the prime reason for these communications was to give children foundational information so they could have a sound basis from which to decide whether to participate in sex or not, and when to do so. Fathers had liberal or strict attitudes to convey their ideals about the subject matter that was often times grounded in religiosity. Most of these communications happened casually when fathers received cues from children or when opportunities such as a peer's pregnancy were presented. Some fathers believed mothers should have these conversations with daughters so they could have a female's point of view, or that children would benefit from both parents' perspectives. Fathers had approached these conversations differently with sons and daughters. Sons were approached more directly whereas a more indirect and sensitive approach was to be used with daughters. Earlier

conversations with daughters were necessary because they matured earlier, and they were also expected to have fewer partners to save their reputation.

The results of this study should help to avert stereotyping African American fathers as intentionally uninvolved in their children's lives while exonerating mothers who impede father-child communications and relationships. Fathers' efforts to be involved with their children were demonstrated by their endeavor to have reproductive health communications with their children. However, fathers not living with their children encountered greater difficulties as their efforts were thwarted by the children's mothers. Major motivations for these communications were to avoid morbidity and unwanted pregnancies. Concerns regarding interference with their children's future by negative consequences of having sex early and carelessly were also present as was concern for African Americans' shortened life spans and deferring education by starting sexual participation too early.

CHAPTER V

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined reproductive health communications African American fathers had with their children. Qualitative analysis of tape-recorded interviews revealed themes in response to the semi-structured questions that directed this research. Because of the ethnographic nature of the study, cultural variations in expression, the sensitive subject matter these fathers were asked to discuss, and the struggles relating to their roles as fathers, responses were frequently indirect and in the form of stories and examples as they went to great lengths to explain their thinking. Understanding and interpretation was therefore dependent upon the researcher's intuitiveness about implied meanings and on being present to the flow of discussions. The overarching question was how African American fathers had reproductive health communications with their children. The first research question addressed values and morals influencing reproductive health communications African American fathers had with their children. The second question addressed the content and pattern of African American father-daughter and father-son reproductive health communication and the influence of that communication on the adolescent's sexual debut. In this chapter, major themes emerging from data generated by each research question will be discussed. Finally, attention will be given to limitations and implications for this study.

Research Question #1

Fathers in this study were aware and concerned about problems that could arise if their children participated in sex and to the best of their abilities made efforts to delay this

activity for their children through communication. This finding was contrary to the perception that African American fathers were absent, non-participative, uncaring parents who did not have relationships that allowed for reproductive health communications with their children. Consistent with Baldwin, Baranoski, and Madelon's (1990), the degree of fathers' involvement made a difference in father-child reproductive health communication. Values regarding morality were reflected in fathers' denouncement of serial partners and serial parenthood which was opposite to reports that African American fathers valued this life style (Aronson, Whitehead & Saber, 2003). Significantly, reproductive health communications with children was driven by fears of morbidities attached to AIDS/HIV.

In spite of the fact that many fathers were introduced to reproductive or sexual content by promiscuous means, most having such an experience did not use it as a platform from which to have these communications with their children. As a result, generational transfer of this moral value did not occur. Schonpflug (2001) clarified the concept of intergenerational transfer of values by explaining that while it can lead to cultural continuity it only occurs when adults intentionally teach the younger generation. Values can therefore be transmitted as a result of parental choice as in the case where fathers did not teach children in the same manner they learned about reproductive health. Intergenerational transfer of values can also occur when children imitate adults, justifying fathers' concern for children's perception of hypocrisy in their teaching leading to repeat of fathers' behavior.

Religiosity or spirituality formed the strong hold for many fathers seeking to be upstanding including those who had attained higher levels of education. Most fathers recognized that it was a stabilizing factor for them including those who had once lost their way and were trying to be exemplary for their children. They used religiosity and spiritual beliefs to chart their lives and expected their children to take note of this and to follow the example they set. Conclusively, these fathers attached value to the construct of religiosity and its influence on idealized behavior which was consistent with other findings of African Americans' use of religion as a guide, a coping mechanism, for hope and for interpretation of experience (Franklin & Mizell, 1995; Newlin, Knafl, & Melkus, 2002).

Maintaining relationships and open lines of communication was a challenge for fathers not living in the same home with their children, not because of a lack of desire by most fathers but because mothers disrupted father-child relationships by transmitting unfavorable information to children, saying fathers did not love them, disallowing visits and preventing fathers from communicating with their children. Fathers' concern about maintaining open lines of communication because it was a necessary component that facilitated communication resonated in findings that relationships between parents and children influenced communication about sex, and more responsible sexuality was observed in adolescents who could talk to parents about the subject (Fisher, 2001).

It was noteworthy that two fathers living with non-biological children recognized that there was less closeness, and therefore less effective communication with these children. This was consistent with Baxter, Braithwaite, Bryant and Wagner (2004) and Dunn,

O'Connor and Levy's (2002) report of differences in step-child and step-parent communications where parents were not granted legitimacy in the parent role, and biological relatedness affected closeness within step-families.

Fathers' modeling of expected behaviors along with children's receptivity, may have been effective in the short or long term if close father-child relationships were present as found in Andrews, Hops, and Duncan, 1997, and explained by social learning theory. However, some fathers' concern that children's perception of hypocrisy in their teachings they did not fully practice were valid because acceptance of modeled behaviors can be affected by social context (Walker, 1981). While verbal conversations complemented fathers' modeling behaviors, it was uncertain how additive or interactive effects of these activities affected children's participation in sex.

Valuing honesty meant having direct reproductive health communication with explanations of the negative consequences of participation in sex as well as a description of the act. However, it was realized that two major differences were present for these men. One was in their level of comfort in having these communications with sons versus daughters and the other was in a perceived difference in role function for mothers versus fathers. Even though they had these communications with their daughters, the underlying belief was that it was primarily the mothers' role. In consonance with the literature reviewed, further gender differences existed in reproductive health communications and expectations these fathers had for their sons and daughters. Earlier timing of this communication for daughters occurred because fathers believed they matured earlier, therefore, the risk of having sex voluntarily or involuntarily was a concern.

Communications were indirect and sensitive with daughters but more direct and unabridged with sons. Additionally, fathers preferred that daughters exercised greater caution and reservation regarding participation in sex while they had less concern if sons became sexually experienced.

Fathers participating in this study were mainly high school educated. Two outliers, one father who held a master's degree and another with some college education, considered themselves liberal and transmitted this value to their children. Though preferring that their children delayed participation in sex, they were of the opinion that they should be provided information because ultimately they would be responsible for making this decision. Both of these fathers were confident that their children would participate in sex safely and responsibly however it was uncertain whether these fathers' educational level was related to their stance. It is also uncertain how reproductive health communication with their parents and their life experiences influenced reproductive health communications with their children. However, it is possible that their level of education had an effect on their choices of partners therefore they had better relationships and were not as wary of poor outcomes in relationships as other fathers in this study. In regard to liberal value transmission influencing participation in sex, reports of less participation by adolescent girls of traditional families (Moore, Peterson, Furstenburg, 1986), and children's perceptions of parental sexual liberality correlating with children's liberalism (Shelley, 1981), underlined that transmission of parental values influenced children's behavior.

Concerns that cannot be ignored included issues indirectly related to the subject of reproductive health and more closely related to what could be considered problems with generational sustainability, social capital and the effect of ecological factors on the children's futures. Fathers with as little as a high school education worried about the state of affairs, particularly for African American males in terms of lower educational achievements, the effect of excessive focus on sports to the exclusion of academics, problems of large numbers of unmarried fathers and single-mother headed homes, and the continued cumulative negative effect on the future of African American families. These fathers wanted better outcomes for their children and were making efforts toward this end, however their abilities to guide and assist children in the academic arena may not have been as effective as if they had a higher education. Jodl, Michael, Malanchuk, Eccles & Sameroff (2001) reported that parent's values predicted youth's educational values. Debatably, the potential for these fathers' children to attain higher education was likely low compared to fathers who had a higher educational status and greater savvy in navigating the educational system despite their insights, efforts and values, validating concerns of generational sustainability.

Beside fathers' educational status and abilities, other environmental factors such as the neighborhoods in which their children lived, schools attended and peer exposure could have impacted educational achievement. Few fathers living in depressed areas considered moving away. In a study of Mexican American students, Evans and Anderson (1973) found that even though these students came from homes where education was stressed and parents gave encouragement to do well in school, children still had depressed

achievements. Students' achievements were related to school experiences associated with the culture of poverty and specifically to low concepts of ability. Also supporting the above argument was the finding that parental educational and socioeconomic status, were influencing factors on children's academic achievement (Lueptow, 1975).

Instilling ethnic pride and a sense of self worth were concerns for fathers who addressed these issues with their children from the basis of their own experiences. One father discussed the struggle not to lose his own Black identity during his college years and was working with his son whom he felt was experiencing the same, except that it was occurring earlier for his son during his high school years. Another father had this conversation with his children as he tried to show them poverty and ignorance in the White race. Ethnic identity and ethnic pride can have significant impacts on various areas of children's lives including their self esteem, academic achievements and reproductive health. The added challenge was in confronting expectations from their own culture as well as that of majority cultures in a society that frequently devalues them and their families. It was reported in Wong, Eccles & Sameroff (2003), that ethnic discrimination posed risks across a wide range of functioning and had substantial bearing on psychological development and threatened self-esteem and academic motivation, while support from parents increased self-esteem and positive sexual self concepts (Murray, Brody, Gene & McNair, 2005). Strong ethnic identification was related to ethnic pride (Rotheram-Borus, 1990), however their findings of no difference in self esteem for children belonging to varied ethnic groups was contrary to other reports (Doswell, Millnor, Thompson, & Braxter, 1998).

Question 2

The second question addressed how the content and pattern of fathers' reproductive health communications influenced children's sexual debut. These conversations were initiated by children or fathers and at times were conducted in a more formal fashion by both parents. However, many of these communications occurred between the father and child without the mothers' presence. They happened, for example, when events on television or information points on the radio or billboards had sexual or reproductive health content, when a peer had boyfriend or pregnancy problems, when a child was interested in dating or when a parent became aware of a child's sexual activity.

In terms of the content of these communications, many fathers encouraged abstinence until marriage though they did not fully expect it. They cautioned children against indiscriminate sexual activity, preferring that they waited until at least 18 years of age to have sex. An important concern was to avoid compromising their mortality by contracting AIDS/HIV. Children were also cautioned against having sex in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies, and to avoid early motherhood and fatherhood because of the potential disruption of their academic education this could cause. Careful choice of partners to avoid problematic relationships was advised.

While many fathers equally encouraged abstinence and avoidance of parenthood for sons and daughters, differences in the content of communications in this regard existed because fathers recognized that experiences and outcomes for either gender were different. Additionally, differences in the level of comfort in having reproductive health communications with daughters was directly related to fathers' perceptions of the

fathering role which meant to them that this subject was outside the arena of what they should be addressing with sons versus daughters. These dichotomies supported findings of difference in communications and expectations according to role expectations and gender (Strom et al., 2000). The emphasis to daughters was that having sex could taint their reputation, that they could become pregnant and that they should exercise caution in social situations to reduce the risk of rape or being coerced into participation in sex. The content of these fathers' communication represented concerns not only from personal experiences but from increased occurrences within their immediate environments. Although homosexuality in their children was not endorsed fathers would love them nonetheless, if that was their preference.

In regard to the patterns of reproductive health communications fathers had with their children, these communications were started when they were as young as two and one half years of age, indicating awareness of the importance of beginning this communication early. Communications occurred at varied frequencies for these fathers depending on the level of comfort of the father and child with the subject, and fathers living with children had more frequent communications but not necessarily more comfort. Concerns about the significance of clothing prompted conversations because fathers believed that clothing could signify participation in gang activity which could be related to participation in sex (Schalet, Hunt, & Joe-Laidler, 2003).

The service this study provided was to give African American fathers a medium to voice their struggles, concerns, and endeavors where reproductive or sexual health communications with their children were concerned. Stereotyping African American

fathers has caused them to be viewed unflatteringly by the American public. However, interviews with these men revealed deep awareness and concern for social problems related to their children's reproductive health, and the far reaching consequences that can occur if their children participated in sex indiscriminately and at early ages.

Limitations

Method

Ethnography adds a cultural dimension to the research process by identifying patterns and meanings. However, employing interviews as a method of data collection could be considered disadvantageous because researcher questioning could cause participants to feel they are being put on the spot, potentially causing them to respond as they think they should instead of disclosing real truths. Data for this study were obtained from semi-structured open ended interviews under the direction of a single researcher with whom participants had similar ethnic identity. This was effective because it was conducive to free discussion of the sensitive subject that was the focus of the study. Furthermore it worked well because it caused ease in understanding ethnic variations in communication with these fathers.

Homogeneity

Homogeneity was present in this study in the sense that all fathers identified as African Americans living in Los Angeles, all had children between the ages of 10 and 19, and most did not have parents who had reproductive health communications with them. However, these fathers were raised under varying socioeconomic circumstances. At the time of the interviews they had attained varying educational and socioeconomic levels,

and had varied marital situations and experiences. Fathers and referred acquaintances referred to be interviewed were of similar socioeconomic levels, but had different religious affiliations and ways of conceptualizing the role of religion in their lives. Similar to other fathers, those recruited from churches or spiritual centers used religion as a basis of communication with their children. Overall, within group similarities existed for most fathers who used religion as a basis from which to impart values about reproductive health. Given the aspects of differences in this sample of fathers several similarities in values beside those steeped in religion emerged, giving meaning to the consonance observed in the results of this study.

Researcher Bias

Potential for researcher bias was a plausible concern because this researcher clearly identified as an advocate for the ethnic group under study. This could have influenced the choice of what data was reported which in turn could have affected conclusions drawn. These problems were avoided by an earnest interest in representing these fathers' thoughts accurately. Researchers may assume understanding the meanings of some statements and may not request explanation for fear of being perceived as an outsider. Therefore the tendency to assume meanings of certain verbal expressions was avoided through clarifications with participants as interviews progressed when unfamiliarity with certain colloquialisms occurred.

Researcher as the Instrument

A perceived limitation could have been the female gender of the researcher. This did not seem to be the case as most fathers welcomed the interview process with reverence

for the academic commitment. Similar ethnic identity caused ease of entrée and communication while reducing gender effects. It also reduced other potentially confounding effects on the accuracy of data because the researcher was not viewed as a spy, voyeur, or pest (Miles & Huberman, 1999 p. 265).

Reliability and Validity

Validity refers to truth or correctness of findings (Davies, 1999). Truth is also subjective and multiple truths can exist simultaneously (Morse, Swanson & Kuzel, 2001 p. 269). This being given, collecting data through self reports could have altered validity in this research study. If fathers were inclined to give reports that represented reproductive health communications they had with their children more favorably than had actually occurred, then data collection through interviewing could have been a limitation. In order to increase truthfulness a rapport of trust and a comfortable working relationship was developed during initial telephone conversations and upon first meetings for the interviews. Fathers were encouraged to feel free to speak their truths, told that truthful reports could make the interview data more useful to researchers and in helping other fathers, and that they were not being judged. Early establishment of a rapport increased their comfort, freedom to voice their thoughts and feelings, and the tendency toward truthfulness, increasing meaningfulness of the data. For example, some fathers asked permission before using certain language in the presence of a lady, when expression of their thoughts meant that expletives would be used, before speaking of sexually based information, or avoided using offensive language though it was reinforced that they could

use whatever language they were comfortable using in order to clearly communicate meaning.

Reliability cannot be assured by repeating a qualitative study (Davies, 1999), however, in this study efforts toward this end meant accurately interpreting the data. Therefore the use of qualitative software was avoided because of the potential that it may not have detected meanings and variations in ethnic expression. Reliability was also ensured by getting to know fathers through initial conversations on telephones or in person. During interviews cross checking of data for consistency amongst fathers' reports increased reliability. Returning to the topic, asking the same question later and seeking clarification was done whenever necessary with an explanation of the importance of accurate understanding and interpretation of meaning in the data. As a result thick rich data unlike what may have been retrieved from a survey, questionnaire or through obtaining data by a researcher perceived as an outsider, were obtained. That these fathers valued being interviewed for this study and capitalized on the opportunity to speak candidly of their experiences, produced data that should deepen the knowledge base on them.

Research and Clinical Implications

This study addressed the sensitive and important issue of reproductive health communication from African American fathers' perspectives. Several factors were revealed including difficulties they had maintaining communications and relationships with their children, particularly mothers' participation in averting it, and how that impeded reproductive health communication. How fathers learned, the morals and values

they developed and transmitted, the content and pattern of fathers' reproductive health communication and this influence on children's sexual debut from fathers' perspective were addressed. Based on the themes and that emerged from exploring these issues and the gaps in research, the following implications were discerned.

Research Implications

Two sets of findings that could be considered contrary to what fathers generally reported were observed. The first was the report of liberal values by two fathers. In line with these values they were open in their style of communication, gave reproductive health information to their children, supported them, and allowed them the freedom to make their own decisions about participating in sex. Further study to explore how parental liberal values along with openness of reproductive health communication influenced African American children's motivation to participate in sex could produce meaningful results.

The second finding was that one father exposed his children to sexually oriented homosexual acts, explaining to them that that behavior was common for people so inclined while another took his daughter on a date with two women. Both fathers also reported a history of open reproductive health communications with their children, but followed those exposures with conversations while acknowledging their children's perspective. The common factor between these two fathers was their educational levels. To add another dynamic, some fathers who believed their children should delay participation in sex in order to avoid unsatisfactory relationships also had a history of unsatisfactory relationships, unlike the two referred to here. It is therefore possible that

these fathers' personal relationship histories and their educational status influenced value systems they formed, as well as how they approached reproductive health communication with their children. Studying how fathers' open communication, educational level and personal relationship histories related to values transmitted to their children about reproductive health could improve understanding of this phenomenon. Furthermore, whether fathers' discomfort in having these communications produce a reciprocal or other effect ought to be clarified with further study because of the difficulties reported in having these communications with their daughters.

Fathers in this study were between the ages of 38 to 45, the oldest being 55 years of age. Studies on role strain caused for younger fathers by mothers and those of middle adult ages not living with their children and desiring to maintain communications and relationships may also be warranted because of the differences in coping abilities at varying periods of adulthood.

Studies of fathers' transmission of religious values and its effects on sexual debut could also yield meaningful results. Fathers used religion as a basis for reproductive health discussions in this study, and according to Werner-Wilson (1998) religious participation was the most important predictor of sexual attitudes due to the development of value systems encouraging responsible sexual activity. However children's valuing of religiosity in this study was not known because they were not interviewed. Data regarding how the content and pattern of reproductive health communication influenced children's sexual debut included fathers' opinions only. Although some fathers responded affirmatively that they believed these communications would delay sexual debut,

comparing children's opinions with fathers' perception could have increased the meaningfulness of this aspect of the data. Finally, appropriateness for timing of reproductive health communication with children was raised in Clawson and Reese-Weber (2003). Fathers reported having reproductive health education with children when they were as young as two and one half years old. Therefore further research is warranted to clarify the congruence and appropriateness of African American fathers' reproductive health communication with children's developmental age.

Clinical Implications

Fathers in this study had reproductive health communications with their children however difficulties they encountered signified their need for empowerment to improve these communications through education specifically tailored for their needs. Their experience of having more problems conducting these communications with daughters than with sons implied that parenting education could assist them by providing information and refining techniques to increase their comfort in having these communications with their daughters because fathers' adeptness could prove invaluable in decreasing the negative consequences of early participation in sex. In a study exploring the difference parenting education made, researchers reported improved parental self perception after parenting classes (Cowen, 2001; Harrison, 1997; Pehrson & Robinson, 1990), and parents began to view themselves as behaving closer to their idea of the ideal parent.

Participants in this study who had been incarcerated encountered difficulties having reproductive health communication with their children, again indicating the importance

of parent training specific to their situation. Problems fathers with non-biological children had indicated the need for parenting skills given the blended composition of many African American families. Educational programs should provide empowering strategies to help fathers deal effectively with children they do not live with, as well as strategies to relate with these children's mothers so that children could benefit from relationships and communications with their fathers. Although findings in this study indicated they had reproductive health communication with their children, whether the content of these discussions was age appropriate was not determined in this study. Finally, interventions designed to benefit African American fathers should be done with consideration to their cultural needs and unique experiential perspectives. The indications however, are that clinical and research implications addressing reproductive health issues for this ethnic group applied across disciplines.

Summarily, studies have shown that African American fathers behave similar to other fathers, were not completely absent from their children's lives and had relationships even with children with whom they did not live (McAdoo, 1993). This study contributed to understanding difficulties African American fathers experienced in effort to have reproductive health communications with their children. Because African American children suffered most negative consequences of participation in sex exploring various influences on their sexual behavior was worthwhile because this data could help delay the onset of sex for them thus improving their reproductive morbidity. An important value of this study was in increasing awareness of oppressive effects affecting reproductive health

communication these fathers wanted to have with their children in their voices which have rarely been heard (Coley, 2001).

Final Reflections

This study was in fulfillment of an educational degree but it held more importance than just that to the researcher. After gaining acceptance of the dissertation proposal and receiving IRB approval the immediate task was to find the sample. Ambivalence about the success of finding African American father participants because others suggested the possibility of difficulties in recruiting the sample was the prevailing emotion. However, that was dispelled when participant fathers were agreeable, and referred others because of their interest. There was slight concern about maintaining the integrity of the researcher-participant relationship or having to omit one father from the study because of a hint of flirtatious behavior. His behavior was not entertained, quelled, and did not seem to interfere with the interview process. Another cause for concern was interviewing one father in his bedroom because that was the only private place in his home and he could not meet elsewhere due to child care issues. After taking precautionary measures for safety, interviewing him turned out to be a great learning experience and caused me to have a greater appreciation for the potential for people to change their lives. He was a felon who at the time of the interview had sole custody of his children and based on that interview had revamped his life. He provided care for his children but was unable to move out of a neighborhood that was not desirable for the rearing healthy children, and caused him concern for his own safety. Yet, he was bent on doing his best given his circumstances.

What increased the ease of the interview process was fathers' willingness to participate, their interest in the subject, and support for my success in this academic endeavor. They were proud of me and I felt supported by these men given the short time I knew them. Those factors along with the stark reality that insufficient numbers of African Americans were educationally equipped to conduct research within their ethnic group increased my perseverance throughout the data gathering stage, but more so through the final analysis stages.

Given the findings in literature reviewed for this study it was most surprising that these fathers indeed recognized the importance of having reproductive health communications with their children, wanted to have improved communications with them even if they did not live in the same home, and the frequency that mothers' interference thwarted communications between these fathers and their children. The emotional discomfort they felt as a result of not having the privilege of these communications and relationships bore testimony to their desires. All in all, these men were human beings functioning in a society that had not been very kind to them. Nonetheless, it was heartening to understand some of their difficulties. If findings in this study were used to facilitate corrective action in research and clinical areas to benefit this ethnic group then the goals for this study would have been met.

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