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### Abstract

This study evaluates the implications of parenting education programs for high-risk fathers. Participants were young, underprivileged, minority, and unmarried fathers in urban Hartford. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted to identify participants' perceptions of the program, their roles as fathers, and motivations for change. Interviews were coded using a modified version of Prochaska's Theory of Change. Additionally, grounded theory was employed to identify major themes in the interviews regarding father involvement. A priori-like coding was used to capture the quality of relationships between the father, his co-parent, and his motivation for change. Consistent with literature, fathers that had more positive relationships with their co-parent tended to see their child more often, indicated that their relationship with their child got stronger, learned co-parenting as a skill through the program, and had a higher motivation for change. These results imply that co-parenting should continue to be a target of fathering education programs in order to increase fathers' time and involvement with their children.

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### **Introduction**

Parental involvement and engagement in a child's life is crucial to positive outcomes for families. Strong parent-child relationships, namely father-child relationships, lead to more positive cognitive outcomes, attachment, and feelings of competence in children (Newland, Chen & Coyl-Shepherd, 2013; Stahlschmidt, Threlfall, Seay, Lewis, & Kohl, 2013). Children that face inconsistent parenting patterns were shown to have an increased incidence of behavioral problems, which could evolve into criminality, antisocial behavior, and substance abuse (Fergusson, Horwood, & Ridder, 2005; Fletcher, Freeman, & Matthey, 2011).

In addition to the consistent research showing improvements for children as a result of parental engagement, research has also shown benefits for parents. Meaningful fatherhood engagement has been linked to increased feelings of generosity and sympathy, as well as a stronger sense of purpose in life (Holmes, Galovan, Yoshida, & Hawkins, 2010; Palkovitz, Copes, & Woolfolk, 2001). Improved parent-child interactions, often as a result of interventions including parenting education programs, have increased fathers' contributions to their communities, extended family communication, and competence as parents (Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006; Summers, Boller, & Raikes, 2004). Increased sense of competence in low-income fathers has been linked to decreased instances of delinquency, especially in teenage fathers (Landers, Mitchell, & Coates, 2014).

### **The Role of Fathers**

Research has shown that many traditional gender views exist, separating the roles of mothers and fathers (Summers et al., 2004). Fathers are often viewed as family breadwinners and

heads of households. They are viewed as workers and providers primarily, and parents secondarily (Andreasson & Johansson, 2016; Wall & Arnold, 2007). For male children in particular, fathers are often tasked with teaching masculinity and toughness (Andreasson & Johansson, 2016). For minority men in particular, engagement in parenting education programs is often unsuccessful because these interventions are often viewed as threats to their masculinity as well as their competence as fathers - both major components of their perceptions of fatherhood (Summers et al., 2004; Andreasson & Johansson, 2016). Fathers often also feel that they are supposed to be fun and connect with their children in enjoyable ways (Andreasson & Johansson, 2016). Successful programs must be designed to maintain a father's sense of autonomous decision making while encouraging him to utilize skills from the program's curriculum to connect with his children in a meaningful way (Summers et al., 2004).

Studies have found that the father-child relationship is different than the mother-child relationship, and that this unique relationship is crucial for successful child development (Stoltz, Barber, & Olson, 2005). Historically, intervention programs aimed at educating mothers have been evaluated at much greater lengths than any programs for fathers (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). Parenting programs that include fathers, as compared to those that exclude them, are linked to more positive outcomes, such as child pro-social behavior, more consistent parenting patterns, and more positive parental outlooks on child-rearing (Lundhal, Tollefson, Risser & Lovejoy, 2007).

Despite evidence suggesting the power of fathering interventions, low recruitment rates and high attrition rates are a persisting problem in fathering education programs (Koetering, Smith, Knowles, Latter, Elsey, McCann, Thompson & Sonuga-Barke, 2012; Stahlschmidt et al., 2013). In addition, there is virtually no literature on the ongoing engagement obstacles that

participant fathers face once involved in parenting education programs (Fitzgerald, Roy, Anderson, & Leteicq, 2012). This is particularly true for programs targeting the growing population of high-risk fathers (Fletcher, Freeman, & Matthey, 2011). The little literature that is available on efforts to engage fathers in parenting services is often limited to higher-income, white parents, while high-risk fathers are often completely overlooked (Gordon, Hunter, Woods, Tinney, Bostic, Malone, Kimbro, Greenlee, Fabish, Harris, & Smith, 2012).

### **Mothers as Gatekeepers to Paternal Involvement**

Research has shown that positive relationships between fathers and mothers are very influential to the quality of father-child relationships (Coley & Hernandez, 2006; Goldberg, Tan, Davis, & Easterbrooks, 2013). In many families, mothers are the gatekeepers for father-child interaction. Mothers can more often deem when, where, and how long fathers interact with their children (Goldberg et al., 2013). This is especially true for low-income, minority families. For young, minority fathers, in particular, a strong partner relationship, often characterized by somewhat high levels emotional closeness and low levels of conflict, are indicative of stronger father-child relationships (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). The importance of the partner relationship must be taken into consideration when developing parenting intervention programs. In order for a parenting intervention program for high-risk fathers to be successful, some of the curriculum should focus on developing relationships and open communication patterns with the child's mother (Goldberg et al., 2013).

### **High-Risk Fathers**

High-risk fathers, characterized by serial fatherhood, poor family relationships, and low levels of education, are members of a particularly vulnerable population that must be targeted by fathering education programs (Ngu & Florsheim, 2011). Most high-risk fathers are from

minority racial groups, are unmarried, underprivileged, and had their first child at a relatively young age (Threlfall, Seay, & Kohl, 2013). Parents that give birth to their first child at a young age are often plagued with additional obstacles. Young parents often face additional environmental stressors or disadvantages that lead to or may be the result of low levels of education coupled with poverty and financial insecurity (Smith, Gilmer, Salge, Dickerson, & Wilson, 2013). These high-risk fathers often have on-going cases within the juvenile justice system, social service intervention, and represent an increasingly large proportion of parents (Florsheim, Burrow-Sánchez, Minami, McArthur, Heavin, & Hudak, 2012).

Many high-risk fathers are simply unaware of the parenting education resources available to them. Those that are involved in fathering education programs may face obstacles such as lack of transportation and few, if any, incentives for continued participation (Stahlschmidt et al., 2013). High-risk fathers want their children to have better and more prosperous lives than they did, however they also recognize various structural obstacles, such as the prevalent cycle of poverty that prevents upward social mobility (Threlfall, Seay, & Kohl, 2013). Despite such obstacles, most of these fathers believe that they are responsible to provide for and educate their children (Olmstead, Futris, & Pasley, 2009; Threlfall et al., 2013).

High-risk fathers face challenges that other parents may not, such as feelings of isolation as a result of low socioeconomic status and inability to financially support their children (Fleck, Hudson, Abbott, & Reisbig, 2013). Poverty limits the ways that high-risk fathers can be involved with their children. Not only does poverty create feelings of inadequacy because fathers cannot financially support their children, but it also decreases the variety of activities that fathers can do with their children when they see them (Threlfall et al., 2013). For non-residential fathers, poverty can mean that they are unable to pay for transportation to see their children. High-risk

fathers must adapt to the limitations of poverty in order to have meaningful interactions with their children. Many fathers living in poverty must make themselves aware of free local activities, such as museums and parks, for affordable outings with their children (Threlfall et al., 2013).

### **Fathering Education Programs**

It is important for curriculum directors of parenting education programs to recognize the motivations specific to these fathers and work with community partners to make the program worthwhile to the participants (Stahlschmidt et al., 2013). Many high-risk fathers are often displeased with the perceived excessive interference in their family's lives by parenting education programs (Summers et al., 2004). Men, in general, are less likely to seek help for health or social problems and are thus less likely to view parenting education programs as helpful (Fletcher & St George, 2010). Indeed, many men view seeking help as admitting weakness (Summers et al., 2004; Yousaf, Popat & Hunter, 2015). Therefore, in order to engage fathers effectively, interventionists must be sensitive to negative attitudes and the stigma attached to seeking outside support. In order to reach and engage high-risk fathers, interventionists must create programs accompanied by comfortable, nonjudgmental, and responsive environments.

Research has shown that there are other program characteristics that set successful fathering programs apart from unsuccessful ones. Advertisements for the programs that included photos of the target population and utilized familiar language were more likely to generate participants, as they made participants feel safe and comfortable (Koetering et al., 2012; Stahlschmidt et al., 2013). Word-of-mouth advertising from other participants was also a very effective strategy for recruiting African American fathers for fathering education programs, as

fathers were more likely to trust members from a shared community rather than people that they felt disconnected with (Stahlschmidt et al., 2013).

### **Cultural Variation in Fathering Practices and Education**

Concepts of fatherhood vary amongst cultures. Approximately 24% of white children grow up without their biological father in residence, while over 40% of Latino and over 60% of African American children grow up without their biological father living in the home (Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). This is important because despite the recent increase in digital technology, making communication easier for non-residential fathers, they continue to be less involved in their children's lives than residential fathers (Hofferth, 2007).

Perhaps most importantly, successful fathering education programs are led by facilitators that are well trained and culturally competent (Koetering et al., 2012). In a study of African American fathers by Julion, Breitenstein, and Waddell (2012), findings showed that many African American fathers are drawn to parenting programs because they are motivated to make meaningful changes in their communities and desire social support from their fellow participants. The study found that targeting African American participants must be done in settings that they feel comfortable and frequent, such as barbershops, parks, and sporting events (Julion et al., 2012). Findings from focus groups of African American fathers in parenting education programs indicated that participants were most likely to connect with and trust staff members and recruiters that were of the same race, or seemed attuned to their cultural traditions and characteristics (Stahlschmidt et al., 2013).

Latino fathers may also possess a unique concept of their role as fathers. Latino families often identify fathers as economic providers more than families of other races, including white and African American (Haxton & Harknett, 2009). Kin networks are particularly important in

Latino families, as extended family connections and intergenerational contact are often very prominent (Garcia, 1993). For that reason, extended family support may be crucial for a high-risk Latino father's success. Latino families are more likely to get financial and other types of support from grandparents and relatives, than families of other races (Haxton & Harknett, 2009). In addition, Latino parents face a wider array of challenges, as they are more likely to have immigrated to the United States and thus may encounter language barriers and cultural differences (Haxton & Harknett, 2009).

In a study of both Latino and African American fathers, researchers saw more similarities than differences between the two populations. Participants of both ethnic and racial groups wanted to be involved in their children's lives and felt that being a father was a positive experience (Becerra, Thomas & Ong, 2001). In addition, fathers of both races were more likely to face economic adversity than white fathers, and must overcome that in order to have meaningful interactions with their children (Olmstead et al., 2009).

### **Current Study**

The current study evaluated a fathering education program in an urban New England community. The fathering education program was conducted by a community mental health organization called The Village for Families and Children. The program paired parenting education curriculum with other resources that may be helpful to participants, such as assistance in obtaining housing, job training, and financial planning. The curriculum, called Supporting Father Involvement (SFI), was centered on building relationships between fathers and the mothers of their children, as well as fostering positive communication strategies. It also highlighted the consequences of risky sexual behavior and aimed to reduce the incidence of subsequent unplanned pregnancies. The program facilitators provided case management

services, clinical services, and workshops surrounding the program curriculum. Half of the enrolled fathers engaged in the SFI curriculum, while the other half were engaged in 24/7 Dad curriculum. The program identified the SFI curriculum as the intervention group and the 24/7 Dad curriculum as the standard of care comparison group. The same facilitators in the same location taught both curricula.

Most participants in this fathering education program were either African American or Latino. For that reason, it was important to understand the participants' perceptions of the program's cultural competence as part of the evaluation. The study used a set of interview questions that was meant to evaluate cultural competence ("did you feel like the program understood the needs of dads like you", "how did the program facilitators create a sense of belonging and respect", "did the program meet your needs and expectations").

In addition, the current study was aimed at understanding the participants' learned parenting and communication skills ("did you learn useful parenting skills from the program," "did you learn useful communication skills from the program," "have you used those skills since the program has ended"). It also used a set of questions to explore participant's perceptions of their community support ("did you have people in the community that supported your participation in the program", "do you feel like your community supports you as a parent", "do you have people in your community today that you can talk to about parenting").

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

The data for this thesis are derived from a fathering program evaluation in Hartford, Connecticut. Most participants resided in the city or in surrounding areas. Hartford residents face sizable income disparities and a large proportion of the population (34.4%) live in poverty, as

compared to the national poverty average of 13.5% (US Census, 2015). Hartford also has a high crime rate and low rates of high school graduation, at only 47.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011; 2013). The individuals recruited for this program were males, aged 15-24, who fathered children with women under the age of 21. All participants who completed the fathering education program between 2012 and 2016 were eligible to participate in the study. Of the 273 people that participated in this fathering education program and were eligible to participate in this study, 28 fathers (10.26%) participated in this retrospective, qualitative evaluation. The Village provided 39 participants to interview and 28 of them were interviewed, indicating a 71.8%, higher than the average 50-70% for similar studies (Snow, Frey & Kern, 2002).

There was representation from all of the program's five yearly cohorts. Both the 2012 and 2013 cohorts had 6 participants each. Exactly half of the participants in this study were graduates of the 2014 program cohort. There were also 2 participants from the 2015 cohort. The participants' racial composition mirrors that of the greater Hartford area. 46.4% of the participants identified as black, while only 14.3% identified as white. Additionally, exactly 50% of the participants identified as Latino. Participants were aged 16-23 when they started the fathering education program. The average age at the start of the program was 19.7. Additionally, 14.3% of participants were 18 or younger at the time they were enrolled in the program (see Tables 1-3).

This study did not evaluate the effect of treatment group but focused, instead, on the experiences of all participants. It is important to note, though, that the Supporting Father Involvement (SFI) curriculum, was delivered to 22 out of the 28 fathers interviewed (approximately 78%, see Table 4). This curriculum focused on increasing father involvement, healthy child development, and preventing child abuse in low-income families (Cowan, 2015).

The SFI curriculum involved 15 two-hour sessions of parent education, 60-minute biweekly case management services, up to 20 hours of behavioral health intervention over 6 months, and 27 total hours of job and employment training. In total, the SFI curriculum included a minimum of 85 contact hours and 4-6 months of program engagement. The 24/7 Dad curriculum served 6 out of the 28 fathers interviewed (approximately 21%). This program included 15 two-hour parenting education sessions that focus on father self-care, relationship building and maintenance, self-awareness, and basic parenting skills (National Fatherhood Initiative; Lewin-Bizan, 2015). It also included problem-focused case management services as needed, not regularly. Overall, the 24/7 Dad curriculum included 3-4 months of engagement with a minimum of 30 contact hours, per participant. Fathers in both conditions received access to referred services, however the control group (24/7 Dad) could only access additional services via referrals, rather than as part of the program curriculum.

### **Procedure**

The Village staff reached out to participants of the program to recruit for this study. Participants ( $n = 28$ ) were given gift certificates as incentives for their participation in the study. Interviews each lasted approximately 20 minutes and were conducted at an office of The Village for Families and Children.

Participants answered a set of semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix A). The questions were designed to address major program goals. The program aimed to improve participants' involvement in their child's lives, as well as communication patterns and thus the questions included, "did you learn useful communication skills?," "do you continue to use those skills?," and "do you have people in your community today that you can talk to about parenting?" One of the most relevant goals of the program was to increase father-child

involvement and so interview questions included, “how has your relationship with your child changed since the program?” Additional questions were designed to understand the more practical aspects of the program, such the convenience of the location and time of day for the program activities.

## **Measures**

**Motivation for change.** An a priori coding system (see Appendix B) was developed to identify which of the five stages of behavior change the interviewees were in, including pre-contemplation, contemplation, action, maintenance, and relapse. Labels 1-5 were given to each of Prochaska’s five stages of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). Fathers were characterized as in the pre-contemplation stage if they indicated no plans to change in the future or were potentially unaware of the consequences of their current actions (“I do not want to be more involved in my kids’ lives”). Those in the contemplation stage were aware of the benefits of making positive changes, had not done so yet, but may intend to soon (“I want to be more involved in my kids’ lives but I don’t have the time”). Those in the action stage were currently making observable changes to their lives in order improve their relationship with their children (“I’m trying my best to be there for my kids”). Fathers in the maintenance stage were characterized by successful changes already made and clear efforts to prevent relapse into previous negative behaviors (“The fathering meetings are helping me be in my kids’ lives and it keeps getting better”). The final potential stage was relapse, characterized by having made changes, but old negative behaviors have returned (“It was too hard to keep up being a dad”).

At least two members of the research team listened to and coded each interview for motivation for change. Inter-rater reliability was high, as the raters were found in exact agreement in 85% of coded instances.

**Grounded theory.** Interviews were also coded using grounded theory, based on the participants' experiences in the parenting education program and as a high-risk father. A set of common themes was established and developed into a codebook (see Appendix C) before interviews were coded. Each interview question in the codebook included the three themes that interviewees touched on most frequently, as well as two other themes that were mentioned somewhat frequently. 27 interviews were coded using this grounded theory scheme, as one was unable to be coded this way due to technical difficulties with recording equipment. Some responses highlighted more than one theme, and thus many responses were coded for two or more themes.

**Relationship with child's mother and paternal involvement.** For the purposes of this paper, closer consideration of common themes regarding relationship quality or co-parenting was given to the following questions: "thinking back to when you were in the program, did you have people in your community who supported your participation in the program?", "Did you learn useful parenting skills from the program?", "Do you have people in your community today that you can talk to about parenting?", "Did you learn useful communication skills from the program?", and "how has your relationship with your child changed since the program?" Although there were no specific interview questions regarding participants' relationships with their children's mothers, after listening to the interviews notes were made about fathers' last interaction with his child and how often he interacts with his child in order to better understand his level of paternal involvement. For this reason, notes were also taken regarding the father's relationship with his child's mother and whether or not he still has contact with her.

Participants' overall relationships with their children's mothers were coded with a 4-point Likert scale (good, decent, strained, or dysfunctional) based on an a priori interest (see Appendix

C). For the purposes of this paper, good relationships were operationalized as having positive communication, low levels of conflict, some enjoyment, and positive co-parenting (“now me and her are like best friends... I can call her when I’m upset and tell her stuff and we can hang out”). Decent relationships were characterized by improved communication patterns, some conflict, and somewhat effective co-parenting (“more communication”, “it was great and helpful, before that I had no relationship with my baby’s mom”). Strained relationships were characterized as having little or somewhat negative communication patterns, moderate conflict and hostility, as well as difficulties co-parenting (“here and there... it’s out of the blue moon, it’s up and down... I wanna say great but...”). Finally, dysfunctional relationships were operationalized as having high levels of conflict and hostility, negative or no communication patterns, and as being a hindrance to co-parenting (“she’s not level, she’s just crazy and I can’t deal with that”).

### **Analysis**

Demographic information was collected using records provided by The Village. Using that data, frequency tables were run on SPSS to gather statistics regarding participant age, race, and cohort year. Frequency tables were also created on SPSS to identify the percentage of participants that mentioned particular themes, as listed in the codebook (see Appendix B). Cross-tabulations were used to capture the co-occurrence of interview themes and participant characteristics.

## **Results**

### **Motivation For Change**

Exactly 3 fathers (10.7%) were in the contemplation stage, 7 fathers (25.0%) were in the action stage, and 18 fathers (64.3%) were in the maintenance stage. No fathers were in either the pre-contemplation or relapse stages at the time of the interview.

**Grounded Theory**

For the open-ended question that asked participants, “did you have people in your community who supported your participation in the program,” (see Appendix B), 22 fathers (78.6%) responded that they felt that there was people in their community supported their participation. Exactly 10 (37.0%) fathers indicated that their family supported them, while 7 fathers (25.9%) mentioned that their mothers specifically supported their participation in the program. Additionally, 9 participants (33.3%) indicated that their child’s mother supported their participation. 6 fathers (22.2%) indicated that program facilitators supported their participation, while 4 (14.8%) indicated that nobody supported their participation.

For the question that asked participants, “Did you learn useful parenting skills from the program,” (see Appendix B) 24 fathers (85.7%) indicated that they learned useful parenting skills from the program. 5 fathers (18.5%) learned new and different ways to do things, 4 fathers (14.8%) learned patience, and 7 fathers (25.9%) indicated that they learned co-parenting skills. Additionally, 2 fathers (7.4%) mentioned that they learned from other participants and 4 fathers (14.8%) indicated that they did not learn any parenting skills from the program.

For the question that asked, “Did you learn useful communication skills from the program,” (see Appendix B) 24 fathers (85.7%) reported that they did learn useful communication skills from the program. 7 fathers (25.9%) indicated that they communicate more effectively for co-parenting. 7 fathers (25.9%) specifically mentioned learning to use using different words to express themselves. 7 fathers (25.9%) indicated anger management training and finding ways to communicate more effectively when angry or under stress. Additionally, 4 fathers (14.8%) learned to speak more openly and 2 fathers (7.4%) indicated that they did not learn useful communication skills.

A later question asked fathers, “how has your relationship with your child changed since the program,” 13 fathers (48.1%) responded that after the program, their relationship with their child got stronger. Additionally, 4 fathers (14.8%) specifically mentioned that they care more now about their child than before the program. Five fathers (18.5%) reported that their relationship with their child did not change, as it has always been good. 3 fathers (11.1%) reported that they do not see their child (see Appendix B, Table 8).

### **Relationship With Child’s Mother and Paternal Involvement**

To understand the frequency with which fathers interact with their children, their last contact was categorized into one of the following categories: daily contact, weekly contact, or monthly contact. Additionally, some fathers were characterized as having their last contact with their child over a month ago or over 6 months ago. 17 fathers (60.7%) specifically mentioned that they see their children daily or live with them. 4 fathers (14.3%) indicated that they see their children on a weekly basis, 1 father (3.6%) sees his child at least monthly and 2 fathers (7.1%) have not seen their children in over a month. Finally, 1 father (3.6%) responded that he has not seen his child in over 6 months. 3 fathers (10.7%) did not indicate the last time that they saw their children.

To capture a father’s relationship with his child’s mother, notes indicated whether or not the participant has maintained contact with her. 22 fathers (78.6%) indicated that they still remain in some form of contact with their children’s mothers, while only 6 (21.4%) responded that they do not speak with their children’s mothers. 25 fathers (89.3%) shared both whether or not they have contact with their children’s mothers and the last time they interacted with their child. 16 (84.2%) of the 19 fathers that indicated that they are in contact with their children’s

mothers see their children on a daily basis, while only 1 father did not communicate with his child's mother but sees his child on a daily basis (see Table 5).

Of the 27 interviews coded, 8 fathers (29.6%) had good relationships with their children's mothers (see Table 6). Exactly 10 (37%) of fathers showed decent relationships with the mothers of their children. That means a large majority (66.7%) of fathers reported having either a good or decent relationship with their children's mothers. 5 participants (18.5%) had strained relationships and 4 (14.8%) had dysfunctional relationships with their children's mothers. Additionally, 7 fathers (25.9%) indicated that they were in romantic relationships with their co-parent and of those, 3 (11.1% of total) indicated that they were married to the mothers of their children.

Cross-tabulations of timing of fathers' last interaction with their child and relationship quality with the child's mother showed that of the 25 fathers that reported still seeing their child, those with good relationships with their co-parent saw their child more often (see Table 7). Of the 16 fathers that see their children daily, 7 had good relationships, 7 had decent relationships, 2 had strained relationships, and 0 had dysfunctional relationships with their children's mothers. Of the 4 fathers that see their children on a weekly basis, 1 had a decent relationship and 3 had dysfunctional relationships with their children's mothers. The one father that sees his child at least monthly had a strained relationship with his co-parent. Of the 2 fathers whose last interaction was over one month ago, 1 had a strained and 1 had a dysfunctional relationship with their co-parent. Lastly, the one father that has not seen his child in over 6 months had a strained relationship with his co-parent. The 3 fathers that did not indicate their last interaction with their child all had decent relationships with their child's mother. Notably, no fathers with good

relationships with their co-parent saw their child less than daily and no father characterized as having a decent relationship with his child's mother saw his child less than weekly.

Five fathers indicated that their relationship with their child has always been good and did not change due to their participation in the program (see Table 8). Of those 5 fathers, 3 have good relationships and 2 have decent relationships with their children's mothers. None had either a strained or dysfunctional relationship with his co-parent. Additionally, 3 fathers (11.1%) indicated that they do not see their child. Of those 3 fathers, 2 had strained relationship with their co-parent and 1 had a dysfunctional relationship. No fathers with good or decent relationships with their co-parent reported not seeing their child.

Exactly 7 (25.9%) fathers indicated that they learned co-parenting as a communication skill and 7 (25.9%) indicated that they learned co-parenting as a parenting skill (see Tables 9-10). Of the 7 that learned co-parenting as a useful parenting skill, 3 had good relationships, 2 had decent relationships, and 2 had strained relationships with their children's mothers. Additionally, of the 7 fathers that learned co-parenting as a communication skill, 4 had good relationships, 2 had decent relationships, and 1 had a strained relationship with their child's mother. Notably no fathers that had a dysfunctional relationship with his child's mother indicated that he learned co-parenting as either a communication or parenting skill. Finally, exactly 9 fathers indicated that their co-parent supported their participation in the fathering education program. Of the 9 fathers that responded this way, 2 had good relationships, 5 had decent, 0 had strained, and 2 had dysfunctional relationships with their children's mothers.

Finally, to better understand the relationship between a father's motivation for increased father involvement and the co-parent relationship, a cross-tabulation was run to find the number of fathers in each stage of change, as well as their relationship statuses (see Table 11). Of the 3

fathers in the contemplation stage, 1 had a decent relationship, 1 had a strained relationship, and 1 had a dysfunctional relationship with the mother of his child. Notably, no fathers with good relationships with their child were in the pre-contemplation, contemplation, or relapse stages of behavior change. Of the 7 fathers with good relationships with their co-parent, most (6, 85.5%) were in the maintenance stage, while just 1 (14.3%) was in the action stage. Additionally, of the 11 fathers with decent relationships with the mothers of their children, only 1 (9%) was in the contemplation stage, while 3 (27.3%) were in action, and 7 (63.6%) were in maintenance. Of the 18 fathers that were identified as in the maintenance stage, 6 (33.3%) were in good relationships, 7 (38.9%) were in decent relationships, 3 (16.7%) were in strained relationships, and only 2 (11.1%) were in dysfunctional relationships with their co-parent.

### **Discussion**

Results from this study provide indirect evidence that a father's relationship with his child's mother is associated with increased contact with the child, as more positive co-parent relationships were correlated with fathers spending more time with their children (Goldberg et al., 2013). It also aligns with the small amount of available literature that focuses on high-risk fathers in particular, as those fathers that indicated more positive relationships – characterized by low levels of conflict and more emotional closeness - tended to indicate that their relationship with their children got stronger or was always very strong (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). Additionally, these results are consistent with research suggesting those with more positive co-parenting skills have stronger relationships with their children (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). In this sample, fathers that had more positive relationships with their children's mothers generally saw their children more often and were more engaged with them (see Tables 7-8).

Information from this sample indicates that positive co-parent relationships may lead mothers to give fathers the opportunity to increase their paternal involvement. In line with the idea that mothers can act as gatekeepers to paternal involvement, such opportunities may include allowing nonresidential fathers to spend more time with their children. In order to increase fathers' involvement with their children, programs should focus on the co-parent relationship and maintaining civility between parents. Fathers learning co-parenting skills may be linked with more positive co-parenting relationships, which is linked to paternal involvement.

Additionally, in line with the existing literature, fathers valued the program's creation of a community and sense of belonging while allowing them some freedom and autonomous decision-making (Summers et al., 2004). Throughout the grounded theory process, these themes as well as those related to the program facilitators kept emerging. Many participants found that the helping, genuine, and kind facilitators helped them engage with the program and taught them new things ("They were really caring, very friendly, really helpful...they like care about you as a person"). The facilitators often did this by empowering participants to make their own decisions, not by explicitly telling them what to do ("Always let us speak openly. Have our voices heard... let us give our opinions before they gave us options").

Finally, consistent with literature surrounding cultural variations in fatherhood, this largely non-white sample showed the importance of kin network support and cultural competence in fathering education programs (Haxton & Harknett, 2009; Garcia, 1993; Koetering et al., 2012). As indicated in Tables 1-2, 47% of participants identified as black and 50% identified as Latino. Although this study did not tease out response differences based on race, generalizations can be made based on the entire sample. Many fathers responded that their family, namely their mothers, supported their continued participation in the program ("My

mother supported me and liked I was in the program; she saw a change,” “a lot of my family was glad I was at least doing something to better myself”). Although they did not use the term, many participants indicated that the facilitators cultural competence lead to their ability to make the program a safe and comfortable space for participants (“understanding coming up in Hartford and being a young father”).

### **Limitations**

The program was run from 2010-2015 and interviews were conducted in 2016. That means that some participants were interviewed up-to 6 years after program completion and may have forgotten details that were asked about during the interviews. There also may have been social desirability bias in these results, meaning that the participants may have attempted to answer the interview questions in ways they believed would be viewed more favorably by others, rather than honestly.

There was also the possibility of self-selection bias, both in the participants that agreed to be interviewed and in the program participants in general. We reached out to a number of program participants (40) yet not all of them were interviewed. Those that chose to be interviewed may have had particularly good or bad experiences and thus wanted to share those. Program participants in general were often referred to the fathering program from a variety of sources (family, friends, guidance counselors, court recommendation etc.) that may have given them support or motivated behavior change. It is possible that the enrolled participants were mostly those that were getting pressure from other outside sources to change their behavior, while other high-risk fathers may not have had those additional sources of support. Those with such support may have been more inclined to participate in the current study, however the inverse may also be true. Fathers that faced more negative and hostile pressure from outside

sources (DCF case workers, parole, probation, etc.) may have been less inclined to discuss their experiences regarding program in the current study.

Staff turnover at The Village and outdated contact information for participants also made it difficult to reach out and recruit for the interviews. The main contact from The Village exited the project in the middle of the interview process. The Village provided 39 participant names and 28 were interviewed for the study – a 71.8% completion rate, which is higher than the typical 50-70% for similar studies (Snow, Frey, & Kern, 2002). Additionally, some professional turbulence was faced with a competing research center that delayed the start of this project, limiting length of time and opportunities for interviewing participants.

### **Implications**

The findings from this study imply that in order to increase fathers' engagement with their children, communication and parenting skills may be valuable topics in parenting education. Additionally, this may be especially true for high-risk fathers. These skills are often used as means to teach more effective co-parenting. By gaining these skills and increasing a father's motivation for positive behavior change, as the indirect evidence from this study suggests, programs may be able to inspire the participants to be more involved, and often more satisfied with their relationship with their children. Moreover, from the information gathered from this sample, it is recommended that programs targeting high-risk fathers should continue to consider the impact of a father's relationship quality with his child's mother.

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## Tables

Table 1

*Demographics by Cohort Year, Race, and Intervention Condition*

Cohort	Race	24/7 Dad	SFI	Total
2012	White	0	1	1
	Black	1	2	3
	Hispanic	0	1	1
	Unspecified	0	1	1
	Other	0	0	0
2013	White	0	0	0
	Black	0	3	3
	Hispanic	0	0	0
	Unspecified	0	2	2
	Other	0	1	1
2014	White	3	0	3
	Black	0	6	6
	Hispanic	0	0	0
	Unspecified	2	3	5
	Other	0	0	0
2015	White	0	0	0
	Black	0	1	1
	Hispanic	0	0	0
	Unspecified	0	0	0
	Other	0	1	1
Total	White	3	1	4 (14.2%)
	Black	1	12	13 (46.4%)
	Hispanic	0	1	1 (4.6%)
	Unspecified	2	6	8 (28.6%)
	Other	0	2	2 (7.1%)
Total (100%)		6 (21.4%)	22 (78.6%)	28 (100%)



Table 2

*Ethnic Frequency by Condition*

	24/7 Dad	SFI	Total (%)
Latino	4	10	14 (50.0%)
Not Latino	1	10	11 (39.3%)
Unspecified	1	2	3 (10.7%)
Total	6	22	28 (100.0%)

Table 3

*Participant Age at Start of Program*

Age	Frequency	%	Cumulative Percent
16	1	3.6	3.6
17	3	10.7	14.3
18	3	10.7	25.0
19	4	14.3	39.3
20	9	32.1	71.4
21	4	14.3	85.7
22	2	7.1	92.9
23	2	7.1	100.0

Table 4

*Program Component Differences Between SFI and 24/7 Dad*

Program Component	SFI (Intervention Condition)	24/7 Dad (Control Condition)
Parenting Education	15 two-hour sessions	15 two-hour session
Case Management	1 hour biweekly	Problem-focused, as-needed
Behavioral Health	Up to 20 hours over 6 months	None
Job & Employment Training	27 hours total	None
Total Length of Engagement	4-6 months	3-4 months
Minimum Contact Hours	85	35

Table 5

*Cross-tabulation of Last Contact With Child and Communication With Child's Mother*

Last Contact With Child	Contact With Child's Mother		Total
	No	Yes	
Daily	1	16	17
Weekly	3	1	4
Monthly	0	1	1
Over 1 month	1	1	2
Over 6 months	1	0	1
Total	6	22	28

Table 6

*Participants' Co-Parent Relationship Quality*

	Frequency	%	Cumulative Percent
Good	8	29.6	29.6
Decent	10	37.0	66.7
Strained	5	18.5	82.5
Dysfunctional	4	14.8	100.0

Table 7

*Cross-tabulation of Co-parent Relationship Quality and Last Contact With Child*

Relationship Quality	Last Contact With Child					
	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Over 1 Month	Over 6 Months	Not Indicated
Good	7	0	0	0	0	0
Decent	7	1	0	0	0	3
Strained	2	0	1	1	1	0
Dysfunctional	0	3	0	1	0	0
Total	16	4	1	2	1	3

Table 8

*Cross-tabulation of Co-parent Relationship Quality and How Relationship With Child Changed*

Relationship Quality	How has your relationship with your child changed since the program?			
	Relationship Got Stronger	I Care More Now	Always Been Good	I Don't See My Kids
Good	3	1	3	0
Decent	6	2	2	0
Strained	2	1	0	2
Dysfunctional	2	0	0	1
Total	13	4	5	3

Table 9

*Cross-tabulation of Co-parenting Relationship Quality and Co-parenting Skills Learned*

Relationship Quality	Learned Co-Parenting as a Parenting Skill	Learned Co-Parenting as a Communication Skill
Good	3	4
Decent	2	2
Strained	2	1
Dysfunctional	0	0
Total	7	7

Table 10

*Cross-tabulation of Co-parenting Relationship Quality and Co-parent Supporting*

Relationship Quality	Co-parent Supported Participation in Program
Good	2
Decent	5
Strained	0
Dysfunctional	2
Total	9

Table 11

*Cross-tabulation for Motivation for Change and Relationship With Child's Mother*

Relationship Quality	Motivation for Change Level				
	Pre- contemplation	Contemplation	Action	Maintenance	Relapse
Good	0	0	1	6	0
Decent	0	1	3	7	0
Strained	0	1	1	3	0
Dysfunctional	0	1	1	2	0
Total	0	3	6	18	0

## Appendix A

<b>Participant Background:</b>					
Client ID: _____			Today's Date: _____		
Dates of participation: _____		Cohort:      Y1    Y2    Y3    Y4    Y5			
Y6					
Date of Birth: _____		OR		Current Age: _____	
Race:      ___ Hispanic or Latino		___ Not Hispanic or Latino			
Ethnicity:      ___ American Indian/Alaska Native		___ Asian      ___			
White		___ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander		___ Black/African	
American					
Circle one: Referred Participation in Fatherhood program    Voluntary Participation in Fatherhood program					
Still engaged at VFC for other services?    Y    N			Spanish preferred?    Y    N		
Initial Contact for Interview made on date: _____				By: _____	
Client preferences for scheduling the interview (list phone number/contact details):					
_____					
_____					
_____					
_____					

<At the interview appointment, use the following interview structure. Spaces are provided for notes, but remember interviews are recorded so the research team can be detailed in their coding at a later time>

Thank you for making time to talk with me today. Our goal is to understand how you feel about your participation in the Village for Families and Children Fatherhood programs. The interview is designed to take about 25 minutes, and at the end of the interview we will give you a \$50 Walmart gift card in thanks for your time. Do you have 25 minutes to talk now?    Y    /    N  
<If no, reschedule. If yes, proceed:>

Great. Please answer each question honestly, and let me know if I need to repeat or rephrase any of the questions. There are no right answers to any of these questions -- we are only interested in your opinions so we can learn about what The Village did well or could improve on in their programs for dads.

---

***First, just some basic questions about the program overall:***

Did you feel the program activities were helpful?    Y    /    N    If so, can you pick one thing that was the best part of the program for you?

Did the program meet your needs/expectations?    Y    /    N    If so, what were the things that you liked about the program?

Can you describe one thing that you learned from the program that has stuck with you?

How did the facilitators create a sense of belonging and respect?

Did you feel like the program understood the needs of dads like you? Y / N Why or Why not?

Thinking back to when you were in the program, did you have people in your community who supported your participation in the program? Y / N If so, please describe:

***Next, I'd like to ask you some questions about the Parenting and Communication parts of the program:***

Did you learn useful parenting skills from the program? Y / N If so, can you describe one?

Do you feel like your community supports you as a parent? Y / N Please explain:

How has your relationship with your child changed since the program?

Do you have people in your community today that you can talk to about parenting? Y / N If so, please describe:

Did you learn useful communication skills from the program? Y / N If so, can you describe one?

Have you used these skills since the program ended?

***Now I have just a few questions about the pregnancy prevention part of the program:***

Do you think the program was effective in teaching you how to prevent teen pregnancy? Y / N

Can you describe one thing you learned about preventing teen pregnancy from the program?

If you could design a new program for preventing teen pregnancy, what would you recommend the new program include?

***We're almost done! Our last few questions are about areas we could improve on:***

Were you able to get to the program's location easily? Y / N

Did the time of day for program activities work for your schedule, or did the program overlap with your work/school schedule?

Did you feel like there were parts of the program that didn't apply to you? Y / N If yes, can you describe one?

Can you describe one thing you wanted to change most about the program?

Appendix B

**FatherWorks Program Full Codebook**

Beth S. Russell

Jason Meier

Paige Forcier

(4/26/2017)

## Prochaska &amp; DiClemente Model of Change Fatherhood Program Guide, Jason Meier 2016

<b><u>Pre-contemplation</u></b>	<b><u>Contemplation</u></b>	<b><u>Action</u></b>	<b><u>Maintenance</u></b>	<b><u>Relapse</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Does not plan to take action in the near future</li> <li>-Potentially uninformed or under-informed about consequences of behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Intends to change soon</li> <li>-Aware of the benefits of change, as well as the consequences of inaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Is currently making changes in their life to improve circumstances</li> <li>-Actions are observable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Modifications to behavior have been made</li> <li>-Working to prevent relapse into old habits and behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Changes had been made, but old habits and behaviors have returned</li> <li>-May or may not be hopeful for change</li> </ul>
<p>“I’ve never really thought about how me not being there with my kids affects them”</p> <p>“What good could my presence in my kids’ lives do?”</p> <p>“I do not want to be more involved with my kids”</p> <p>“I don’t really know my kids well and they don’t know me – it doesn’t matter if I am involved in their lives”</p> <p>“This program can’t help me, it doesn’t matter that I’m their dad”</p>	<p>“I want to change and become more involved in the lives of my children, but I just don’t know what to do yet and there is so much working against me, like their mothers”</p> <p>“I need some help in changing, I’m not ready just yet but this fatherhood training program is helping me get prepared to be a dad”</p> <p>“I’m trying to be more involved in this program, but I am just not sure if I have the time to make all these changes”</p>	<p>“I’m doing everything I can to be a better dad for my kids”</p> <p>“I am putting my kids ahead of spending time with other people”</p> <p>“I’m making time for my kids now”</p> <p>“I look forward to every fatherhood training program meeting because it helps me learn how to be a better dad”</p> <p>“I’m present at my kids events”</p> <p>“I’m trying harder”</p>	<p>“I am continuing to come to fathering meetings because they continue to help me improve”</p> <p>“My child and I have been closer since I changed my way, and I will do what I can to keep this alive”</p> <p>“Since I changed I find that I am better at maintaining the skills I learned”</p> <p>“Being a dad is hard, but a great experience. I do not want to stop being a good dad to my kids”</p>	<p>“It was too hard to keep up being a dad. I didn’t have the time and too many people were against me”</p> <p>“I’m down on my luck right now. Being a dad wasn’t working for me”</p> <p>“I couldn’t do it”</p> <p>“I didn’t want to keep going to meetings”</p> <p>“Maybe one day I’ll try again, but not now”</p> <p>“My kids didn’t want to be with me, their mothers didn’t want me around, I can’t be a good dad”</p>

Question 1 – Did you feel the program activities were helpful? Y/N If so, can you pick one thing that was the best part of the program for you?

Themes:

1. Group discussion with other fathers

- “Working with the guys here really set me up on a good path...we had a group discussion...it was helpful to hear how the other guys were affected” (001)
- “We all talked it (our issues) out, it was helpful” (010)
- “When we sat together and talked about our views on the fatherhood program and what trials and tribulations we went through” (018)

2. General parenting advice

- “Techniques to do to help you like diaper changing...” (003)
- “The program really taught me and taught everybody in the program that really paid attention is how to treat your kids” (006)
- “How to be responsible, how to organize yourself, how to organize yourself to be a better father”(015)

3. Communication skills

- “The lessons like being there for somebody, talking about issues, just discussion about each other lives...”(005)
- “...how to communicate your baby moms, and how to experience with your kids, how to take them out, how to talk to them” (006)
- “We talked about how to appropriately disagree with your child’s mother” (012)

4. Job assistance

- “I got into a job through this program” (002),

5. Transportation assistance

- “It was very motivating how they would pick you up and bring you where you need to go” (004)
- “They helped with transportation” (005)

Question 2 - Did the program meet your needs/expectations? Y/N If so, what were the things that you liked about the program?

Themes:

1. Being a part of a supportive group
  - “Just coming together, having each other around, talking... each other’s company.” (005)
  - “They didn’t let me give up, there were plenty of times I wanted to give up...they had my back” (009)
  - “Just to talk things out as a group was good” (021)
2. Job assistance
  - “They helped me build a resume” (002)
3. Facilitators care about participants
  - “They were really caring, very friendly, really helpful...They like care about you as a person” (002)
  - “They would help me with my daughter” (009)
4. Communication skills being taught
5. No, I knew a lot of what was taught
  - “I felt like some things I already knew” (012)
  - “I already knew what [the program] was and how to treat a younger community” (013)

Question 3 - Can you describe one thing that you learned from the program that has stuck with you?

Themes:

1. How to be a parent
  - “They helped me be a better father” (022)
  - “I still fight for my son” (013)
  - “(in response to question) How to be a good dad.” (017)
2. Emotional intelligence
  - “They gave me tips on how to keep cool and control my anger” (010)
  - “If I get mad, I know how to deal with it” (006).
3. How to adapt to situations
  - “Working together, teamwork (with the mother)” (012)
  - “How to handle different things when they come at you” (002)
4. How to keep a job
  - “Trying to keep a job... that’s what they helped me to do” (005)
  - “Another thing that helped me was the resume writing class” (010)
5. Planning/Time Management
  - “The sense of planning really helped me” (001)
  - “How to go about things to make things easier for me” (004)
  - “I prioritize my time right and everything will fall into place” (015)
6. Misc.
  - “I didn’t have a father. The males in the program taught me how to be a man” (29)

## Question 4 - How did the facilitators create a sense of belonging and respect?

Themes:

1. Open discussions

- “Always let us speak openly. Have our voices heard... let us give our opinions before they gave us options” (001)
- “We all had the chance to speak about how we felt” (006)
- “They’re open.... They want you to be yourself” (009)

2. Facilitators willing to help

- “They always tell you that if you ever need anything, just let them know” (003)
- “They made it clear you could do come to her if you need anything, like advice” (927)

3. Friendly atmosphere

- “They always ask how my day is going” (003)
- “It was welcoming. The environment was happy, friendly, laughter” (927)
- “They were great. Very polite and they liked my company. I had a great time with them” (002)

4. Food

- “We would come and they would offer dinner or food” (010),
- “They treat us good, brought us meals” (017)

5. Other participants

- “They kept a circle close-knit through communication” (008)
- “The other guys were all cool” (015)

6. Misc. Facilitators sharing experiences

- “By talking to us and telling us their stories so we can understand where they’re coming from” (005)
- “They have kids of their own so they could give us their own advice” (927)

Question 5 - Did you feel like the program understood the needs of dads like you?

Themes:

1. Understood our perspectives

- “They knew where we were coming from. Understand our point of view” (003)
- “Understanding coming up in Hartford and being a young father” (005)
- “They may not know what we’ve been though, but they get to know us and understand us better” (006)

2. Other group members’ stories

- “Listening to other stories and hearing what other people are going through” (004)
- “Made friends and was comfortable enough to call them [other dads] for favors” (927)

3. Helpful/supportive facilitators

- “They’re there. Not one court date went by that they didn’t come. They’re always there for me” (002)
- “They try to help you step by step and show you that you can turn a negative into a positive” (009)

4. Relatable topics

- “All the topics were relatable” (010)
- “Some of the issues I had, they helped me out with” (012)

5. Practical assistance

- “They helped me with steps towards getting my driver’s license. Getting my own apartment. I can be independent.” (015)
- “Took me out of trouble and found me a job in the hospital” (017)

6. Misc.

- Program could’ve used help meeting the needs of other fathers in the group (818)

Question 6 - Thinking back to when you were in the program, did you have people in your community who supported your participation in the program?

Themes:

1. Family

- “A lot of my family was glad I was at least doing something to better myself” (001)
- “A couple of family members in the program with me... it brought everyone together” (009)
- “My girlfriend [not child’s mother]” (017)

2. My mother

- “My mom did. She’s ask about it and made sure I was going” (003)
- “My mother supported me and liked I was in the program. She saw a change” (004).

3. Child’s mother

- “My son’s mother... I took her. I took both my kids’ mothers to program” (027)
- “My children’s mom. She came with me a few times’ (010)

4. Program facilitators

- “Spoke with Angel who understood and helped me” (005)
- “The only people that encouraged me were Keith and Linda” (006)
- “They don’t give up on you” (009)

5. Nobody

- “Nobody told me what to do. They were negative and told me I wouldn’t make it” (006)
- “Outside of this program was only criticism” (927)
- “At that point the community didn’t know about the program” (008)

6. Misc.

- Social worker/guidance counselor (819)

Question 7 - Did you learn useful parenting skills from the program?

Themes:

1. Facilitators showed new/different ways to do things
  - “Showing me different was to do the things I already knew how to do” (001)
  - “Went through different routines and acts and videos to show you different ways” (004)
2. Patience
  - “It takes a lot of patience when you have a young child” (004)
  - “Patience with everything” (027)
3. Co-parenting
  - “Co-parenting and how not to argue. It was about relationships and focused on the couple too” (927)
  - “They had time where you can bring in the child’s mother” (009)
4. Skills learned from other participants
  - “You’ll listen to stories and get ideas” (008)
  - “Learned from other guys’ scenarios” (629)
5. No
  - “Stuff I already knew” (013)
  - “No” (014)
6. Misc.
  - Change diapers (003, 016)
  - Car seat (010)

Question 8 - Do you feel like your community supports you as a parent?

Themes:

1. Interested in my child

- “They will always ask me how my son is doing” (002)
- “Everybody asks how I’m doing and wants to see pictures. They’re excited” (003)
- “Everybody knows I’m a family guy” (009)

2. Community wants to see me succeed

- “They saw me come from nothing and become something” (004)
- “They want to see you come up in a positive way. They want you to progress” (005)

3. Family

- “Both families would reach out” (012)
- “My parents” (013)

4. Criticism

- “We get looks from older people in public. You just brush it off” (001)
- “They don’t want to see me do good” (006)
- “Put negative thoughts in my head and made me not want to be a dad” (927)

5. Misc.

- “Banners of fathers with their sons and daughters” (013)
- “Child support.... My DCF workers” (013)

Question 9 - How has your relationship with your child changed since the program?

Themes:

1. Relationship got stronger

- “A whole lot more compassion” (001)
- “Relationship got ten times better... Made me better as a whole” (004)
- “Closer, better” (005)

2. I care more now

- “I didn’t care at the time, but he’s my son at the end of the day” (006)
- “I didn’t care to be a father, but after the program I did” (927)

3. Always been good

- “It’s still good” (003)
- “It’s always just been good” (008)

4. I don’t see my child

- “Saw him only twice this year” (013)
- “I don’t see my kids” (016)

Question 10 - Do you have people in your community today that you can talk to about parenting?

Themes:

1. Program facilitators

- “If I don’t call Linda or Keith, then I’ll keep it to myself” (006)
- “I called Keith to help me at court fight for joint custody” (927)

2. Family members and friends

- “Family members teach me good things” (005)
- “When your child makes friends, you make friends” (008)

3. Nobody

- “No” (002)
- “Not really” (003)
- “I can, but choose not to” (006)

4. Other participants

- “Friend of mine I met through the program. We still have contact” (017)

5. Other new fathers (non-participants)

- “Two guys from high school... saying that they are going to be fathers soon” (001)
- “I take it to the streets... especially upcoming fathers” (629)

Question 11 - Did you learn useful communication skills from the program?

Themes:

1. Co-parenting

- “Able to co-parent” (004)
- “How to communicate with my girlfriend. She came to the meetings because we had a lot of problems” (022)
- “With the mother of my child, yes” (629)

2. Different choice of words

- “Different choice of words to use.” (004)
- “Before I didn’t care about how I speak to people” (006)
- “Not speak all ghetto” (017)

3. Anger management

- “Brush things off and let them go” (004)
- “Don’t get angry at simple things. Just try to be a calm, cool, collected person” (005)
- “Now I try to work with my anger” (006)
- “Take time and cool off [in arguments]” (010)

4. Speak openly

- “I speak more openly about it now. Before I was reserved with the idea of talking about my personal life” (001)
- “Sometimes you gotta overcome the nervousness” (002)
- “Always say what’s on your mind” (003)

5. No

6. Misc.

- For job interviews (819)

Question 12 - Have you used these skills since the program ended?

Themes:

1. Yes

- “Communicate whatever issues you’re having” (003)
- “Yeah – I really benefitted from being here” (008)

2. Somewhat

- “Some, but not that much” (005)

3. No skills (017)

Question 13 - Do you think the program was effective in teaching you how to prevent teen pregnancy? Y/N Can you describe one thing you learned about preventing teen pregnancy from the program?

Themes:

1. Use condoms
  - “Use a condom” (002)
  - “They told us to use condoms” (017)
2. Make sure she is on birth control
  - “Make sure she is on birth control” (001)
  - “Birth control for the baby mom” (006)
3. Do not try to rush into sex
  - “Don’t think about negative things on the first date” (005)
  - “It’s not important to be out there sleeping around” (028)
4. Talk with your partner before having sex
  - “Talk to your partner” (013)
  - “We waited a year to have this (in reference to baby in room)” (023)
5. Abstinence
  - “Abstinence.” (003)

Question 14 - If you could design a new program for preventing teen pregnancy, what would you recommend the new program include?

Themes:

1. Teach responsibility of being a parent
  - “People coming in to share an example of what they went through” (012)
  - “Talking about taking home a fake baby...explaining how hard it is and the risk you are taking. Like, the risk of pregnancy and like just know what you are getting into in depth” (003)
2. Open Discussion
  - “More open forums” (001)
  - “We’ll speak about everything we can speak about” (006)
3. Give out condoms
  - “Give out condoms” (009)
  - “Handing out condoms” (010)
4. Education about different forms of birth control
  - “Tell people more about different types of birth control out there” (004)
  - “More like females part, they should give out female condoms too” (017)
5. Wait to have sex
  - “Know each other before you do anything” (005)

Question 15 - Were you able to get to the program's location easily? Y/N Did the time of day for program activities work for your schedule, or did the program overlap with your work/school schedule?

Themes:

1. The times were convenient
  - "Of course." (001)
  - "Yes" (003)
2. The location was convenient
  - "It worked" (005)
  - "Oh yeah" (003)
3. No, it overlapped with work
  - "It overlapped with work" (021)
4. No, I lived too far away
  - "I'm from West Hartford, I had to take the bus." (017)

Question 16 - Did you feel like there were parts of the program that didn't apply to you? Y/N If yes, can you describe one?

Themes:

1. No, the program was designed well for me
  - "No, I needed to hear everything that was said" (009)
  - "Everything applied to me" (017)
2. Some parts were more intense than I needed
  - "I feel I was further than most people in here" (004)
  - "I thought myself bored at one point" (012)
3. Yes, dealing with trouble at home didn't apply
  - "They talked about trouble at home and dangerous neighborhoods" (003)
4. Yes, I didn't need safe sex education
  - "90% of the safe sex portion (didn't apply)" (019)

Question 17 - Can you describe one thing you wanted to change most about the program?

Themes:

1. Wouldn't change anything
  - "No, not really. Nothing to change" (006)
  - "I didn't want to change nothing, everything was great" (017)
2. Length of sessions + program- want longer sessions and more sessions
  - "The only thing I would change is how long is" (002)
  - "The program would benefit more if it was longer – the whole program" (012)
3. Better advertising for the program
  - "They walked right passed and didn't know" (004)
  - "People don't know" (009)
4. Size of group
  - "1 on 1 sessions" (010)
  - "Larger group" (009)
5. More availability of sessions
  - "More times, like days of the week" (003)
6. Safety tips for new parents
  - "Learning about the car seat safety would have been useful"(019)
7. More locations around the state offered
  - "I am from New Britain, activities were in Hartford or East Hartford."(28)

## Appendix C

## Co-Parent Relationship Quality Coding Scheme

<u>Good</u>	<u>Decent</u>	<u>Strained</u>	<u>Dysfunctional</u>
Positive communication, some enjoyment, low conflict, positive co-parenting	Improved communication, some conflict, some emotional closeness, effective co-parenting	Little or somewhat negative communication, moderate conflict and hostility, difficult co-parenting	High levels of conflict and hostility, negative or no communication, hindrance to co-parenting
“Now me and her are like best friends... I can call her when I’m upset and tell her stuff and we can hang out”	“We talk about things now. Before I had no communication with my baby’s mother”	“Here and there... it’s out of the blue moon, it’s up and down... I wanna say great, but...”	“She’s not level, she’s just crazy and I can’t deal with that”