

Family Processes Within Three-Generation Households and Adolescent Mothers' Satisfaction With Father Involvement

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This investigation used a family systems perspective to examine how family dynamics within 3-generation households were associated with mothers' satisfaction with father involvement. The participants were low-income African American adolescent mothers ($n = 148$) and grandmothers recruited at delivery and followed over 6 months. The overall model explained 68% of the variance in satisfaction with father involvement. Fathers who were involved with caregiving activities had positive relationships with adolescent mothers and grandmothers. Grandmothers served as gatekeepers; when grandmothers reported positive relationships with the 2 young parents, adolescent mothers reported positive relationships with their male partners. Mothers who reported positive partner relationships also reported high parenting efficacy and satisfaction with father involvement. Efforts to increase paternal involvement should focus on role clarification for grandmothers and fathers and on parenting activities for mothers and fathers, regardless of their romantic relationship.

Rates of adolescent childbearing have decreased over the last decade as a result of public health and societal initiatives (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1999). Nevertheless, approximately 500,000 adolescents give birth annually, and many raise their children outside of wedlock (Martin, Hamilton, Ventura, Menacker, & Park, 2002). Nonmarital childbearing can be challenging to adolescent mothers and their children (Burton, 1990; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998). One of the biggest challenges is their low socioeconomic status and reliance on federal assistance programs, often for extended periods of time (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1999; Bane & Ellwood, 1986; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998). In 1996, policymakers passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) to revise the country's policy toward long-term welfare dependency. Each adolescent mother must live with a guardian (usually her mother) and continue her education to qualify for public assistance (e.g., Collins, Stevens, & Lane, 2000; Wilcox, Robbenolt, O'Keeffe, & Pyncheon, 1996). By having adolescent mothers and their children live in three-generation settings, policymakers sought to provide young mothers and

children with a stable and supportive family environment that would foster positive developmental outcomes.

The rate of adolescent parenthood among African Americans exceeds that among European Americans by approximately 2.43 (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1999). Most African American adolescent mothers are unmarried (Coley, 2001) and raise their children in maternal three-generation households (Pearson, Hunter, Cook, Ialongo, & Kellam, 1997). Fathers of children born to adolescent mothers are likely to be single and nonresidential, with a history of low socioeconomic status (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1999; Carlson & McLanahan, 2002; Rhein et al., 1997). Under PRWORA, fathers' roles are defined through their financial responsibility toward their children; limited attention is given to other aspects of fatherhood such as socialization and childcare. Such a narrow and limited focus of parental responsibility leaves many nonresidential fathers with few guidelines or options regarding their roles in their children's lives (Coley, 2001); this is a shortcoming that is also reflected in the empirical research on father involvement (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999).

Researchers on father involvement have focused primarily on fathers' financial contribution and their frequency of contact, but have paid limited attention to the quality and nature of their involvement with their children (Carlson & McLanahan, 2002; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Lamb, 1999). A comprehensive conceptualization of father involvement should address fathers' commitment and interest in the well-being of their children and include paternal behaviors that extend beyond the provision of financial support to include participation in caregiving and involvement in decision-making activities (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Gavin et al., 2002; Lamb, 2002; Tripp-Reimer & Wilson, 1991).

Although many fathers of infants born to adolescent mothers express a desire to be involved with their children,

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This research was supported by Grant MCJ-240301 from the Maternal and Child Health Research Program, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We thank the members of the Three Generation Project Team, the families who participated in the project, and the Lanata-Piazzon Collaboration.

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involvement varies and often decreases over time, particularly if the parents do not maintain a romantic relationship (Coley, 2001; Gavin et al., 2002; Leadbeater & Way, 2001; Lerman, 1993; Rhein et al., 1997). For many fathers, access to their children is determined by their ability to provide financially, their relationship with members of the three-generation household, and their personal life situations (Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002). Father involvement in child caregiving is often determined by mothers' perceptions of acceptable and adequate fathering behaviors (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999).

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the factors within urban low-income African American three-generation households that support or hinder adolescent mothers' satisfaction with father involvement. We consider both individual and family process constructs, including individual and family characteristics, relationships in three-generation households, and adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy.

Family and Individual Characteristics of Three-Generation Households

Many adolescent mothers and their families live in impoverished circumstances characterized by economic hardship, single parenthood, and low educational attainment (e.g., Coley, 2001; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998). Fathers who make few financial and caregiving contributions may not be well received in three-generation households (Gavin et al., 2002). Adolescent mothers' psychological functioning also influences the quality and nature of father involvement. Not only are rates of depression high among adolescent mothers (Cutrona, Hessling, Bacon, & Russell, 1998; O'Hara, Zekoski, Phillips, & Wright, 1990), but mothers with depressive symptoms report negative partner relationships (Black, Papas, Hussey, Dubowitz, & Kotch, 2002).

Relationships in Three-Generation Households

Struggles between adolescent mothers and grandmothers are common as young mothers attempt to establish their independence and individuality, as well as to define their interpersonal relationships with the fathers of their infants (Burton, 1990; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998). Whereas some grandmothers and adolescent mothers report supportive relationships (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987; Nath, Borkowski, Whitman, & Schellenbach, 1991; Voight, Hans, & Bernstein, 1996), others report conflictual relationships (Caldwell, Antonucci, & Jackson, 1998; Chase-Lansdale, Brooks-Gunn, & Zamsky, 1994; East & Felice, 1996; Nitz, 1995; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). Adolescent mothers' dependence on grandmothers for financial, caregiving, and emotional support often hinders their ability to make independent caregiving decisions without their mothers' input.

Some maternal grandmothers resist the involvement of fathers in their daughter's and grandchild's lives (Rhein et al., 1997). In some studies, supportive relationships between adolescent mothers and grandmothers reduce father involvement (Danzinger & Radin, 1990); however, other

studies suggest no such effect (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999). Given the central role that grandmothers play in three-generation households, grandmothers who view fathers in a positive light and have positive relationships with them may promote greater father involvement.

There is limited understanding of the factors that determine the quality of adolescent mothers' relationships with nonresidential fathers and how they shape the nature of father involvement. What is known is that fathers are more likely to be involved with their children if the young parents are able to sustain a close and trusting relationship (Carlson & McLanahan, 2002; Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Cutrona et al., 1998; Gavin et al., 2002). Hostile mother-father relationships are likely to discourage fathers from taking active caregiving roles (Furstenberg, 1995).

Adolescent Mother Parenting Efficacy

Parenting efficacy refers to the certainty and belief that a mother has about her ability to perform parenting tasks in a competent manner. Based on self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986, 1989), parenting efficacy is undermined under conditions of external (low partner support) and internal (symptoms of maternal depression) challenges (Teti & Gelfand, 1991). In many three-generation families, caregiving is assumed primarily by grandmothers who function both as grandparents and parents (Burton, 1996; Burton & Bengston, 1985). Grandmothers may inadvertently limit adolescent mothers' competencies as parents (Black & Nitz, 1996). Adolescent mothers who do not feel efficacious in their parenting abilities may feel threatened by fathers' involvement in child care and therefore may not invite fathers to participate, leading to low father involvement.

We examined how socioeconomic and psychological characteristics of adolescent mothers and interrelationships among adolescent mothers, grandmothers, and fathers are related to mothers' parenting efficacy and their satisfaction with father involvement over time. The proposed conceptual model is guided by a systems framework (Cox & Paley, 1997), which recognizes the family as including multiple subsystems (e.g., grandmother-adolescent mother, adolescent mother-father, and grandmother-baby's father) that influence one another. We propose that adolescent mothers' risk factors, depressive symptoms, and the importance adolescent mothers give to the role of fathers are associated with their satisfaction with father involvement. In addition, these factors are related to mother-grandmother relationships, grandmother-father relationships, adolescent mothers' relationships with fathers, their perceived efficacy as parents, and, ultimately, to their satisfaction with father involvement.

Method

Participants

The participants included adolescent mothers ($n = 181$) enrolled in a longitudinal investigation of parenting and adolescent development among low-income, African American families (see Black, Siegel, Abel, & Bentley, 2001). Because national policies require that eligibility for public services be restricted to adoles-

cent mothers who are in the guardianship of an adult (U.S. House of Representatives, 1996), we limited our sample to adolescent mothers who were living with their mothers (grandmother of the baby).

At the time of entry into the study, each adolescent mother was under 18 years of age, delivering her first child, and eligible for Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (with a family income under 185% of poverty level). In addition, she intended to be the primary caregiver and did not have any chronic illnesses that could interfere with parenting. Eligibility for infants included full-term birth (≥ 37 weeks), birth weight above 2,500 g, and no congenital problems or chronic illnesses.

Procedures

Adolescent mothers were recruited from three urban hospitals in Baltimore, Maryland from September 1997 through September 1999. All eligible mothers were approached shortly after delivery and given a brochure explaining the study. Those who expressed interest in enrolling were scheduled to receive a baseline evaluation conducted in their homes 2–4 weeks after delivery. Over 83% of the eligible mothers agreed to participate and completed the baseline evaluation. There were no differences in maternal age or education between those who completed the baseline evaluation and those who did not.

At the baseline evaluation, all adolescent mothers and grandmothers completed consent forms approved by the institutional review boards of the collaborating institutions. The baseline evaluation included questionnaires on family demographics, personal health and mental health, mother–grandmother relationships, mother–father relationships, access to services, and parenting efficacy. Mothers completed the questionnaires on a laptop computer. Questions were presented orally through headphones and visually on the screen. Mothers recorded the answers themselves using a mouse. Grandmothers completed questionnaires in a face-to-face interview with a research assistant.

The investigation included a randomized trial of an intervention designed to promote adolescent development and parenting skills. At the conclusion of the baseline evaluation, mothers were randomized into either an intervention or control group. For families in the intervention group, home visits were scheduled every other week until the infants were 12 months of age. We controlled for the effects of intervention on adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy and satisfaction with father involvement. Statistical examination of intervention effects on the three relationship constructs (adolescent mother–father, grandmother–adolescent mother, and adolescent mother–father), adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy, and satisfaction with father involvement indicated no significant effects of the intervention.

At 6 months, adolescent mothers reported on their parenting efficacy and their satisfaction with father involvement. Complete data were available from 148 mothers (82% of the initial sample). There were no differences in maternal age, maternal education, infant birth weight, or infant gender between those who did and those who did not complete the 6-month evaluation. All participants were compensated \$25 for each evaluation.

Measures

Six constructs were assessed through the perspectives of the adolescent mothers (adolescent mothers' risk factors, adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms, importance of fathers' role, quality of adolescent mother–father relationships, adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy, and satisfaction with father involvement). Three constructs were assessed through the perspectives of the

grandmothers (family socioeconomic status, quality of grandmother–adolescent mother relationships, and quality of grandmother–father relationships).

Adolescent mothers' risk factors. Coley and Chase-Lansdale (1998) identified risk factors that characterize the lives of adolescent mothers, including substance use (cigarettes, alcohol use, marijuana, LSD, inhalants, heroin, cocaine, etc.), infraction with the law (shoplifting, arrest, or jail), engagement in antisocial behavior (gang membership, being in a fight, or hurting others), carrying a weapon, and school-related problems (failed, expelled, or dropped out of school). One fifth of adolescent mothers used drugs regularly, 18.2% had infractions with the law, 69.6% had engaged in antisocial behaviors, 34.5% carried a weapon, and more than two thirds had school-related problems (42% had failed a grade, 67% had been expelled from school at least once, and 5% had dropped out of school). The adolescent mother risk factor index indicated that 4.7% of adolescent mothers experienced no risk factors, 19.6% experienced one risk factor, 37.2% experienced two risk factors, 20.3% experienced three risk factors, 12.1% experienced four risk factors, and 6.1% experienced all five risk factors.

Adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms. Adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms were assessed through the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), a 21-item scale with excellent psychometric properties that has been widely used to assess depressive symptoms (cognitive, behavioral, affective, and somatic symptoms) among adolescents and adults (Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961). For each group of statements, each adolescent mother selected her response from four options (0 = *symptom not present*, 3 = *symptoms most severe*). Scores on the BDI range from 0 to 63. The internal consistency of the scale for the sample was acceptable, as measured by Cronbach's α (0.82). Fifty percent of adolescent mothers had scores greater than 9, the cutoff that has been used to define depressive symptoms among adolescent mothers (Field, Healy, Goldstein, & Guthertz, 1990; Field et al., 1991; Kaplan, Hong, & Weinhold, 1989; Panzarine, Slater, & Sharps, 1995).

Importance of fathers' role. Adolescent mothers' perception of the importance of the fathers' role was assessed through five items ("a baby belongs more to the mother than to the father"; "a child should spend time getting to know his/her father"; "if the father does not help pay for the things the baby needs, then the mother can stop the father from seeing the baby"; "if the father does not help pay for the things the baby needs, then the mother can make decisions about the baby without including the father"; "if the mother is involved with another man, then it is less important that the child spend time with his/her father"; Gavin, 2000). Adolescent mothers responded to these questions on a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*). Some items were reverse coded such that higher scores reflected greater importance of fathers' role. Internal consistency was acceptable, although low, Cronbach's α = 0.65.

Quality of adolescent mother–father relationships. Adolescent mothers reported on their relationships with the fathers of their babies through 11 questions (e.g., how often she and the baby's father considered breaking up, fought, felt that things were not going well, laughed together, or calmly discussed things) adapted from the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). Only those questions that were appropriate for noncohabiting couples and that provided an understanding of the overall quality of the relationship were included in the adapted version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Adolescent mothers responded to the questions on a 6-point scale (0 = *never*, 5 = *all the time*). The hostility items were reverse coded such that higher levels indicated low hostility. Factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction and oblimin rotation indicated two factors: support and low hostility. To obtain

an overall measure of the quality of adolescent mother–father relationships, we standardized and combined the constructs of support and low hostility. High scores represented more supportive and less hostile relationships between the adolescent mothers and fathers. The overall internal consistency was acceptable, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$.

Adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy. Adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy was assessed through 17 items (e.g., "Problems of taking care of my child are easy to solve," "I am doing a good job caring for my child," "Being a parent makes me tense and nervous") from the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978; Johnston & Mash, 1989). Each item was answered on a 6-point scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 6 = *strongly disagree*). Some items were reverse scored such that higher scores indicated greater parenting efficacy. The same items were asked of adolescent mothers at 6 months. The internal consistency of the parenting efficacy scale was acceptable, though low, with Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.67$ at 3 weeks and $\alpha = 0.73$ at 6 months. Adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy at 3 weeks and 6 months correlated at $r = .57$, $p < .01$, suggesting moderate stability of the assessments across the two time points.

Satisfaction with father involvement. We assessed satisfaction with father involvement by asking adolescent mothers about their satisfaction with the level of father involvement on four tasks (spending time with the baby, helping with child care tasks, paying for the baby's needs, and assisting in decisions about the baby's health care). Adolescent mothers responded to the questions on a 4-point scale (1 = *very unhappy*, 4 = *very happy*). Higher scores indicated more satisfaction. The same items were repeated at 6 months. The internal consistency of the scale at baseline and at 6 months was excellent, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$ and 0.91 , respectively. The correlation between the scales at the two time points was $r = .44$, $p < .01$, suggesting moderate stability of the assessments across two time points.

Family socioeconomic status. Family socioeconomic status was assessed through grandmothers' reports of whether the family received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, or food stamps. Sixty-eight percent of grandmothers reported receiving some form of financial aid.

Quality of grandmother–adolescent mother relationships. Quality of the grandmother–adolescent mother relationships was assessed through the Network of Relationships Inventories (NRI): Enhancement of Worth, Conflict and Annoyance (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Grandmothers responded to 27 questions (e.g., "How much does your daughter approve of the things you do?" and "How much do you and your daughter get on each other's nerves?") on a 5-point response scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*). The hostility items were reverse coded such that higher levels indicated low hostility. Factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction and oblimin rotation indicated two factors, one indicating support and the other low hostility. The two scales were standardized and combined to get an overall measure of the quality of grandmother–adolescent mother relationships. High scores represented more supportive and less hostile relationships between grandmothers and adolescent daughters. Internal consistency of the overall scale was high, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$.

Quality of grandmother–father relationships. Quality of grandmother–father relationships was assessed through grandmothers' reports using questions adapted from the NRI (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Grandmothers responded to nine items (e.g., "How much does the baby's father treat you like you are admired and respected?" and "How much do you and the baby's father hassle or nag each other?") on a 5-point scale (0 = *never*, 4 = *always*). The hostility items were reverse coded such that higher levels indicated low hostility. Factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction and oblimin rotation indicated two

factors. The two scales (support and low hostility) were standardized and combined to provide a comprehensive measure of grandmother–father relationships. High scores represented supportive and less hostile relationships between grandmothers and fathers. The overall internal consistency was adequate, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$.

Results

Descriptive characteristics of adolescent mothers, fathers, and grandmothers at 3 weeks and 6 months are presented in Table 1. At the time of the baby's birth, most fathers were single and were on average 2 years older than adolescent mothers. Only half of the fathers were enrolled in school, compared with most of the adolescent mothers (97%). Sixty-five percent of adolescent mothers reported having a romantic relationship with the baby's father at the time of the baby's birth. Six months after the child's birth, 44% of the adolescent mothers were romantically involved with the baby's father, and 32% were romantically involved with another male partner. A majority of adolescent mothers continued to live in three-generation households 6 months after the birth of the child. At the time of the baby's birth, more than three fourths of the grandmothers were single, and more than half of them had been teen mothers themselves.

Father Involvement and Adolescent Mothers' Parenting Efficacy Over 6 Months

Mean comparisons between mothers' satisfaction with father involvement at 3 weeks ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.05$) and 6 months after the baby's birth ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.05$) indicated a significant decline, $t(147) = 2.89$, $p < .01$. Mean comparisons between adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy at 3 weeks ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.51$) and 6 months after the baby's birth ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.55$) indicated an increase in perceived parenting efficacy over time, $t(147) = 2.76$, $p < .01$.

Analysis Plan

We evaluated the overall model using AMOS 4.0 (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). Adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy and satisfaction with father involvement were measured at 3 weeks and 6 months (see Figure 1). We used a two-stage process to test the proposed conceptual model. In the first stage, we examined the associations among adolescent mothers' risk factors and depressive symptoms and importance of the fathers' role to satisfaction with father involvement. A finding of significance would suggest that these predisposing factors contribute to adolescent mothers' satisfaction with father involvement, regardless of the family dynamics in the three-generation environment. In the second stage, we introduced the quality of mother–grandmother, mother–father, and father–grandmother relationships, and adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy, as additional explanatory variables. A finding of significance would suggest that adolescent mothers' satisfaction with father involvement was associated with family dynamics in the three-generation household beyond the roles of adoles-

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Adolescent Mothers, Fathers, and Grandmothers at 3 Weeks and 6 Months After the Baby's Birth

Variable	M (SD)/%
Adolescent mother characteristics at child's birth	
Age at delivery	16.3 years (1.0)
Gender of child (male)	51%
Education	10.2 years (1.1)
Currently enrolled in school	97%
Arrested over last year	16%
Currently employed	8%
Baby's father current boyfriend or partner	65%
Father characteristics at child's birth (maternal report)	
Age at child's birth	18.6 years (2.7)
Education	11 years (1.5)
Currently enrolled in school	53%
Jailed during adolescent mother's pregnancy	16%
Currently in jail	5%
Currently employed	12%
Live with adolescent mother	6%
Maternal grandmother characteristics at child's birth	
Age at child's birth	38.7 years (4.8)
Grandmother a teen mother	52%
Education (less than high school)	34%
Other teen mothers in household	22%
Receive financial support (TANF)	68%
Marital status (single)	78%
Adolescent mother characteristics at 6 months	
Currently pregnant	4%
Baby's father current boyfriend or partner	44%
Regards baby's father as friend not as boyfriend or partner	27%
No relationship with baby's father except for issues around baby	16%
No contact with baby's father	13%
Currently involved with another male partner	32%
Currently employed	24%
Live with grandmother	92%

Note. Data were provided by 148 families.

cent mothers' risk factors, depressive symptoms, and their perceptions of the importance of father roles.

At each stage, after entering a completely saturated model, the nonsignificant paths were dropped, and the model was rerun to attain the best fitting model. The goodness-of-fit indexes, chi-square and degrees of freedom, goodness of fit (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) were obtained to assess the appropriateness of the conceptual model with the data. Critical ratio (CR) was used to evaluate the significance of the paths. A CR that exceeds 1.96 is considered significantly different from zero ($p \leq .05$; Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999).

We conducted the tests for mediation on the basis of the criteria presented by Baron and Kenny (1986). The guidelines were that (a) a significant relationship should exist between the independent variables (adolescent mothers' risk factors, adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms, and importance of the fathers' roles) and the dependent variable (satisfaction with father involvement); (b) a significant relationship should exist between the mediating constructs (quality of grandmother-adolescent mother, grandmother-father, and adolescent mother-father relationships, and adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy) and the dependent variable (satisfaction with father involvement); (c) a signif-

icant relationship should exist between the independent and mediating variables; and (d) a significant drop should occur in the association between independent variables and the dependent variable after the mediating variables are entered. Significance tests of the indirect pathways were examined using guidelines recommended by Sobel (1982).

Family socioeconomic status and intervention status were included as control variables. The overall model explained 95% of the variance in adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy and 68% of the variance in satisfaction with father involvement. The model indicated a good fit, $\chi^2(26, N = 148) = 35.383, ns$, GFI = .95, AGFI = .90, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .05. The first stage explained only 22% of the variance in satisfaction with father involvement, highlighting the importance of including family dynamics.

Satisfaction With Father Involvement Over 6 Months

Direct effects model. We found two direct effects. First, adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms at delivery were negatively associated with satisfaction with father involvement over time ($\beta = -.23, CR = -2.331$). In other words, mothers who reported depressive symptoms shortly after delivery were less satisfied with father involvement over time. Second, when adolescent mothers perceived a signif-

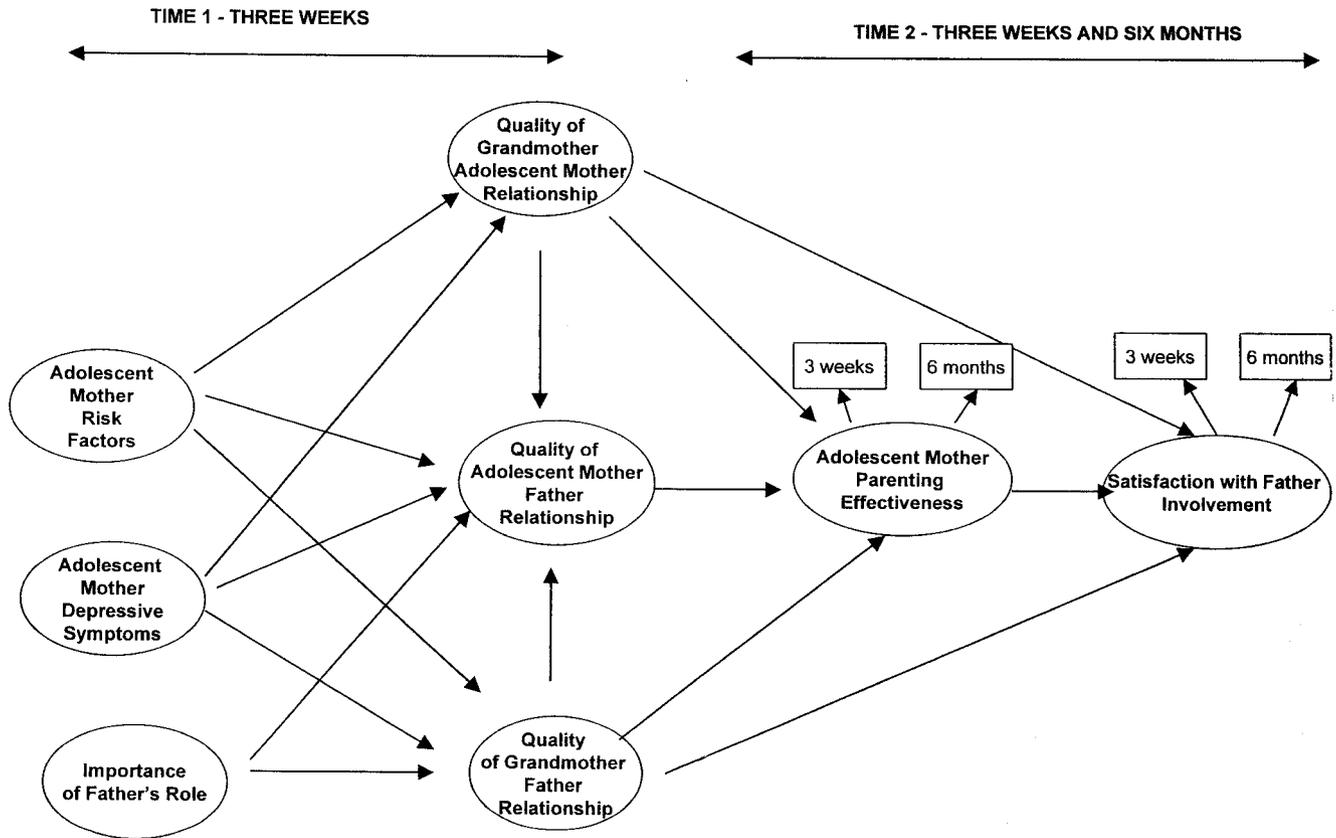


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model of adolescent mother parenting effectiveness and satisfaction with father involvement.

icant role for fathers, they were also more likely to report satisfaction with father involvement over time ($\beta = .37$, $CR = 3.594$).

Mediating role of adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy. We found three pathways from (a) adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms, (b) quality of adolescent mother–father relationships, and (c) quality of grandmother–father relationships to satisfaction with father involvement over time through adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy (see Figure 2).

Adolescent mothers' reports of depressive symptoms were associated with their reports of low parenting efficacy over time ($\beta = -.18$, $CR = -2.178$). Adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy was associated with satisfaction with father involvement over time ($\beta = .83$, $CR = 4.543$). The direct relationship between adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms and satisfaction with father involvement became nonsignificant after the intervening variables were introduced into the model; this suggested a mediated relationship. Sobel's (1982) test indicated that the indirect effects were significant, $t(146) = 2.03$, $p < .05$. In other words, adolescent mothers with depressive symptoms reported low efficacy as parents; in turn, low parenting efficacy was associated with low satisfaction with father involvement.

Adolescent mothers who reported a positive relationship with fathers perceived themselves as efficacious parents

($\beta = .83$, $CR = 4.677$). Efficacious parents reported being satisfied with father involvement over time ($\beta = .83$, $CR = 4.543$). The Sobel's test was significant, $t(146) = 3.16$, $p < .05$, establishing the pathway between quality of adolescent mother–father relationships to satisfaction with father involvement through adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy.

The quality of grandmother–father relationships was associated with adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy over time ($\beta = .27$, $CR = 2.968$), and parenting efficacy was associated with satisfaction with father involvement over time ($\beta = .83$, $CR = 4.543$). The Sobel's test was significant, $t(146) = 2.63$, $p < .05$, establishing the pathway between quality of grandmother–father relationships to satisfaction with father involvement through adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy.

Mediating roles of quality of grandmother–adolescent mother relationships. Two pathways were found through the quality of grandmother–adolescent mother relationships to satisfaction with father involvement over time. They included pathways from (a) adolescent mothers' depression and (b) adolescent mothers' risk factors.

There was a direct association between adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms and quality of grandmother–adolescent mother relationships ($\beta = -.17$, $CR = -2.091$) and between quality of grandmother–adolescent mother re-

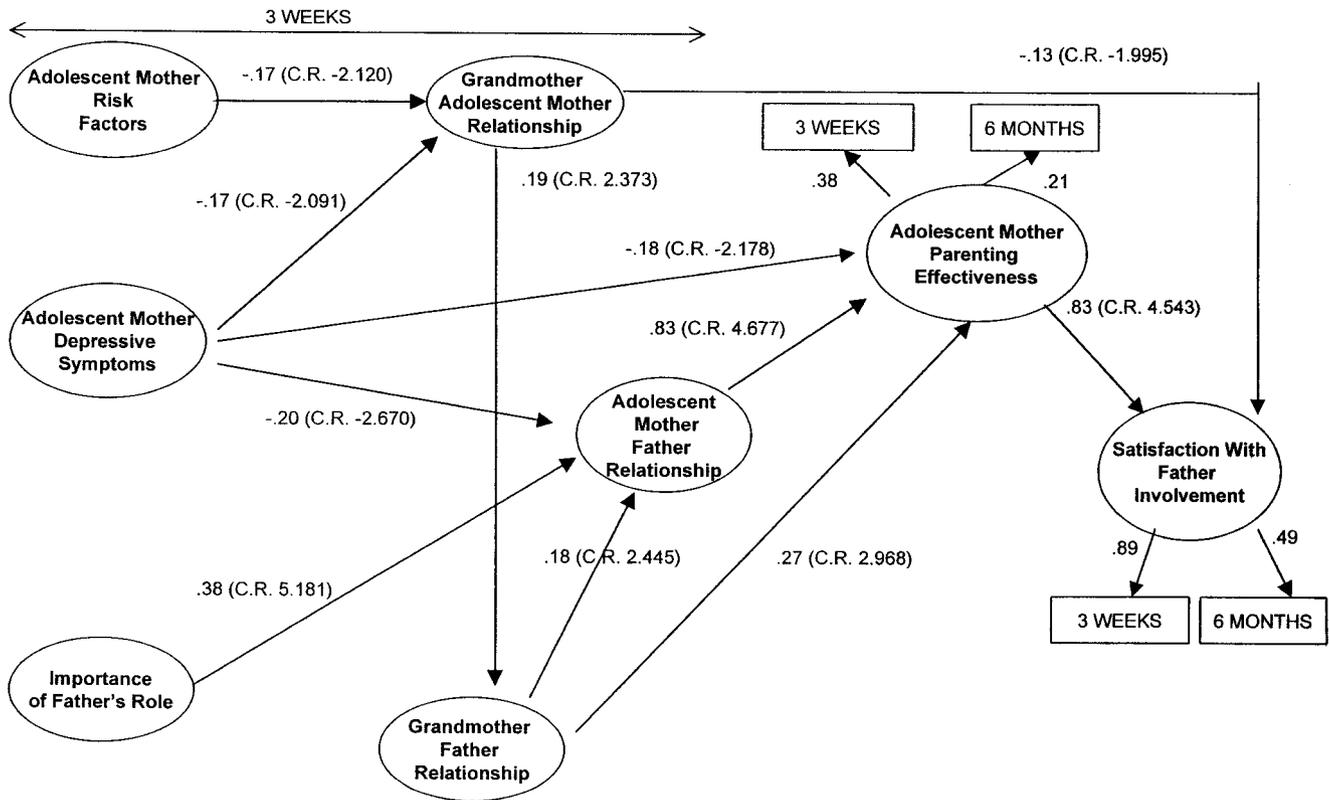


Figure 2. Model of adolescent mother parenting effectiveness and satisfaction with father involvement. CR = critical ratio. $\chi^2(26, N = 148) = 35.38, ns$; confirmatory factor index = .95; goodness-of-fit index = .97; adjusted goodness-of-fit index = .90; root mean square approximation of error = .05.

relationships and satisfaction with father involvement ($\beta = -.13$, CR = -1.995). The direct relationship between adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms and satisfaction with father involvement became nonsignificant after the intervening variables were introduced into the model. However, the Sobel's test indicated that the indirect effects were nonsignificant, $t(146) = 1.38, ns$, indicating that the indirect pathways were not significantly different from each other.

There was no direct relationship between adolescent mothers' risk factors and satisfaction with father involvement (direct effects model). However, there was a relationship between adolescent mothers' risk factors and quality of grandmother-adolescent mother relationships ($\beta = -.17$, CR = -2.120). Higher quality grandmother-adolescent mother relationships were associated with less satisfaction with father involvement over time ($\beta = -.13$, CR = -1.995). Sobel's test indicated that the indirect effects were nonsignificant, $t(146) = 1.38, p > .10$, indicating that the indirect pathways were not significantly different from each other.

Discussion

We examined how family processes within three-generation households were associated with adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy and their satisfaction with father

involvement over time. We examined the proposed interrelationships using multiple informants and a broad conceptualization of father involvement. Findings indicated that family dynamics within three-generation households were associated with adolescent mothers' satisfaction with paternal involvement over time, mainly through impacting adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy. Adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy hinged on their relationships with fathers, the importance they gave to the role of fathers, quality of grandmother-father relationships, and adolescent mothers' depressive symptoms.

Support is a critical component within adolescent parenting families (Spieker, Larson, Lewis, Keller, & Gilchrist, 1999). Young mothers were likely to feel more efficacious in their role as parents if they experienced support from those in their proximal environment. Our findings support previous reports that mothers who feel efficacious about their parenting roles have partners who are involved in their children's lives (Cervera, 1991; Thompson & Peebles-Wilkins, 1992). One possible explanation for the central role of parenting efficacy is that adolescent mothers who feel confident as parents may be more welcoming to fathers. Efficacious mothers may look for ways to encourage fathers to connect with their infants, thus paving the way for healthy father-infant relations. Findings also suggest that adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy was dependent on

their view of fathers. When adolescent mothers endorsed fathers and reported positive relationships with them, they felt more efficacious as parents over time. As adolescent mothers become older and attempt to establish their independence, increased father involvement may signify a step toward new family formation.

Fathers who were in conflictual and unsupportive relationships with grandmothers were less likely to be involved with their children over time than were fathers who had positive relationships with grandmothers. Grandmothers' relationships with fathers add a unique dimension that has often been disregarded in previous investigations. Although the protective and supportive role of grandmothers has been recognized by federal legislation (Collins et al., 2000), there has been limited attention paid to the relationship between grandmothers and fathers. Three-generation households can be difficult for nonresidential fathers to access, particularly when their ability to make financial contributions is limited (Coley, 2001).

Positive relationships between grandmothers and fathers were associated with affectionate and supportive relationships between adolescent mothers and their partners and with greater maternal parenting efficacy. Mothers who felt positive about their parenting efficacy were likely to be more satisfied with father involvement. This relationship illustrates the influential role that grandmothers play in the relationships between adolescent mothers and their partners. Thus, in three-generation families, fathers who want to maintain positive relationships with their partners would be well advised to develop positive relationships with grandmothers, probably before the birth of their infants.

Because most young mothers in this sample continued to live in three-generation households 6 months after delivery, many may have had to justify the role of fathers to their mothers. Grandmothers may be more likely to endorse fathers who show their involvement through financial contributions, emotional support, and shared caregiving (Gavin et al., 2002). Many of the qualities that grandmothers find positive in fathers may be difficult for young fathers to attain. Grandmothers often look to fathers to assume a provider role by supplying mothers and infants with financial and material resources (Burton, 1990; Gavin et al., 2002). Yet, with limited education, involvement in illegal activities, and few economic opportunities, many fathers of infants born to adolescent mothers may have difficulty meeting those expectations.

Grandmother–father relationships should be interpreted in the context of our finding that positive relationships between adolescent mothers and grandmothers are associated with less satisfaction with father involvement. One possible explanation is that when mothers and grandmothers have positive relationships, there is little room for fathers. These findings are consistent with Lamb's (2002) observations that among nonresidential fathers, many of the paternal functions are taken over by extended family members, leaving little room for fathers. It is also possible that grandmothers may view fathers as competitors of their daughters' and grandchildren's affections and may discourage father involvement.

The high rate of depressive symptoms reported by ado-

lescent mothers shortly after delivery (50%) suggests that many mothers were suffering from postpartum depression, consistent with findings from other investigations of adolescent mothers (e.g., Gotlib & Hooley, 1988; Troutman & Cutrona, 1990). Although the symptoms of postpartum depression are likely to abate over time, our findings suggest that the neonatal period is a critical time for the formation of relationships that shape the early parenting environment of adolescent parents. The quality of the early mother–father relationships is strongly associated with the early parenting environment and satisfaction with father involvement over time. In other words, among adolescent mothers with depressive symptoms, it is not the depressive symptoms per se that may drive fathers away but rather the association among depressive symptoms, relationships between the new parents, and adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy. For instance, mothers who are not burdened by depressive symptoms reported positive, less hostile relationships with their babies' fathers, greater parenting efficacy, and greater satisfaction with father involvement. Although initial findings suggested that adolescent mothers with symptoms of depression were often dissatisfied with father involvement, the link between maternal depressive symptoms and satisfaction with father involvement may be better explained through a series of interpersonal relationships (adolescent mother–grandmother and adolescent mother–father relationships).

Structural resources (family socioeconomic status) played a limited role in determining adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy and satisfaction with father involvement in three-generation families. Adolescent mothers who reported multiple risk factors had less supportive and more hostile relationships with grandmothers than adolescent mothers with fewer risk factors. However, risk factors were not directly related to either adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy or their satisfaction with father involvement, probably because of the relative strength of the family dynamics.

Methodological Limitations

There are several methodological limitations that should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, because of the sole dependence on self-reports, our data may reflect inaccuracies based on the respondents' ability and willingness to report information about themselves and their relationships. We attempted to minimize this potential problem by including information gathered from both adolescent mothers and grandmothers.

Second, most of the data in this investigation were gathered shortly after birth and are primarily cross-sectional. Only the constructs of adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy and satisfaction with father involvement were assessed at two time points. Although the path analytic model suggests causality in the mechanism of influence, the relationships among the constructs are primarily associational, and causality cannot be established.

Third, the data are limited to samples of low-income, African American, adolescent mothers and grandmothers living in three-generation families. Although we attempted to reduce the possibility of bias by recruiting adolescent

mothers following delivery in three urban hospitals rather than relying on samples recruited from schools or referral sources, the findings should be replicated with other samples.

Fourth, this investigation does not include the voices of fathers. Investigators who rely exclusively on maternal reports of father involvement are often criticized for not including fathers' perspectives (Coley, 2001). However, relying on fathers' perspectives may also introduce biases. Over the first several years of parenting, many young, unwed fathers drift away from their children (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Lerman, 1993), leaving a pool of involved fathers to respond to questions on father involvement. Investigators have found few differences in responses when both mothers and fathers reported on fathers' antisocial behavior or involvement (Caspi et al., 2001; Gavin et al., 2002), suggesting that mothers are accurate reporters of fathers' behavior. Mothers whose partners (or former partners) participate in research evaluations are more likely to report high levels of father involvement across multiple indexes, compared with mothers whose partners do not participate (Gavin et al., 2002). Relying exclusively on fathers to report on their involvement would exclude information on fathers who are no longer involved or willing to participate in research.

Finally, the proposed conceptual model of satisfaction with father involvement should be replicated with a larger sample. The participants-to-variable ratio in this path model met the minimum criterion (Bentler & Chou, 1987) but should be replicated with larger sample sizes to ascertain the fit and representativeness of the model.

Implications for Application and Public Policy

This investigation illustrates the importance of adopting a family systems perspective in working with adolescent parents and their families. Grandmothers play pivotal roles in the lives of adolescent mothers. When grandmothers have conflictual and unsupportive relationships with fathers or regard them in a negative light, fathers may distance themselves from adolescent mothers and their children. Therefore, grandmothers should be included in early parenting intervention programs designed for young parents. Healthy grandmother-father relationships may help fathers become contributing members of the family, gaining skills that may help them remain involved with their children and partners over time.

Although stable financial support is critical to the well-being of infants and their families, fathers also make important contributions through support, childcare, and socialization (Black et al., 1999; Jarrett et al., 2002). Thus, strategies to promote positive relationships between adolescent mothers and fathers should also aim at promoting fathers' parenting skills.

Father involvement is directly linked to adolescent mothers' parenting efficacy; this suggests either that mothers who feel confident in their parenting skills invite fathers to be involved or that when fathers are involved, mothers feel more confident and secure in their roles as parents. Regardless of the direction of effect, having both parents effec-

tively involved in child-rearing creates a healthy environment for children. Both parents should be involved in skill-oriented parent education programs that will help them fulfill their roles as providers, caregivers, and nurturers of their children.

Findings from this investigation demonstrate the complexities that characterize relationships in three-generation families of adolescent mothers. First, the relatively high rates of depressive symptoms among adolescent mothers suggest that health care providers should provide screening and, possibly, treatment for postpartum depression. Second, maternal grandmothers play a significant role in influencing adolescent mothers' satisfaction with father involvement. Fathers who have positive relationships with maternal grandmothers tend to be involved in their children's lives and have positive relationships with their partners. Third, our finding that adolescent mothers' satisfaction with father involvement decreases over time is consistent with findings from other investigations. Fathers tend to decrease their involvement over time as they drift away from their children's mothers and become involved in other relationships (Leadbeater & Way, 2001). Fourth, when adolescent mothers and fathers have positive relationships with each other, mothers are more likely to feel efficacious as parents and be satisfied with father involvement. Children benefit from relationships with both parents, even if their parents are no longer romantically involved. Therefore, young parents who are not in an ongoing relationship may benefit from counseling that helps them separate their relationship with their child from their relationship with each other. Our understanding of the support of and barriers to father involvement should be expanded to include the role of fathers' individual, family, and contextual environments from a family systems perspective. Use of longitudinal data and a broad conceptualization of the role of fathers can advance our understanding of the role of fathers in the lives of adolescent mothers and children.

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Received September 23, 2002

Revision received December 1, 2002

Accepted April 8, 2003 ■

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