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# Adolescent mother's reported global happiness as it relates to adolescent father involvement

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**Adolescent mother's reported global happiness as it relates to  
adolescent father involvement**

by

**Emily Edeker**

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
**MASTER OF SCIENCE**

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Program of Study Committee:  
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## CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

Adolescent parents are evermore becoming a significant part of American society. According to current research, America has the highest records of adolescent pregnancy (Kmietowicz, 2002) and national rates continue to grow (CDC, 2008). Teen mothers are classified as mothers who become pregnant between the ages of 10 and 20, with most births occurring to females between the ages of 15 and 19. A teen father is the mother's partner or former partner, who is the child's biological father. These births are most commonly unplanned and unwanted.

Teen parents are typically more disadvantaged and stressed than parents who have children in adulthood. Much of the struggle that teens deal with is a result of their environment and their developmental stage. Teen parents tend to be poor and in homes of below average living conditions and accommodations. They are often from single parent families, and achieve less academically than their non-parenting counterparts (Fergusson & Woodward, 2000). Emotionally they struggle with higher levels of depression and internalizing behavior (Hacker, Amare, Strunk, & Horst, 2000).

Teen mothers are at increased risk of child abuse and maltreatment due to greater levels of stress and depression. Additionally, their lack of experience with children and childrearing leaves them with a limited knowledge of child development and appropriate practices for their children (Hurlbut & McDonald, 1997). These mothers must also deal with stress that comes from being the sole provider of their children's financial, emotional, and physical needs and the often incapability to provide for those things. In this type of environment, children of teen parents are at risk for common behavior problems,

externalizing and internalizing behavior, lower academic achievement, and problems with socioemotional development.

It is evident that mothers are in need of social support to protect themselves and their children from these risk factors. Oftentimes, the mother's own family takes on the role of providing for and supporting the mother and her child (Unger & Cooley, 1992; Chen, Telleen, & Chen, 1995). Another source of support is the adolescent father. When fathers are involved, they significantly lessen the effect of maternal risk, and children display lower levels of internalizing and externalizing behavior, better academic achievement, and fewer problems with socioemotional development (Howard, Lefever, Borkowski, & Whitman, 2006). Father presence is beneficial in two different capacities. Fathers are first able to directly interact with their children and provide care for them and cultivate beneficial outcomes. Additionally, they are able to assist in stabilizing the home for the adolescent mother and child. Fathers who can provide some financial support and take on other childcare responsibilities may alleviate that pressure for teen mothers and help them to be more emotionally stable (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999).

The current study is based on these three main principles: adolescent mothers face a greater amount of stress and hardship as adult mothers (Rolfe, 2008), this stress results in poorer developmental outcomes for their children (King and Sobolewski, 2006), and that father involvement and support of children acts as a protective factor for children's development (Howard et al. 2006). Of these three foundational pieces, this study focuses on the presence of the child's father and the perceived level of overall happiness the mother has with her life. This study will consider current research in the area of adult and teen mothering, father involvement, teen father characteristics, and child outcomes. The purpose

of the study will be to examine the amount of father involvement and maternal satisfaction in the early stages of the child's life, with the ultimate goal of informing research and practice dealing with adolescent parents and their children.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Literature Review

Adolescent pregnancy is prevalent in U. S. society. From 1991 to 2005, the number of adolescent births in the U.S. was on a steady decrease. Births to mothers age 15-17 decreased by 45%, and births to mothers age 18-19 went down by 26%. In 2006 the trend came to an end, and there were more than 400,000 births to girls ages 10-19, which represents about a 3% increase in each group (CDC, 2009). Within those births there was a birth rate of 20 per every 1000 adolescents age 15-17 to have a child, and approximately 80 per every 1000 adolescent age 18-19 years (CDC, 2008).

These national statistics indicate that teen pregnancy is a significant part of society and is therefore something that needs to be better understood. Teen pregnancy not only affects the teen mother, but also her own parents, her family, the adolescent father and his family, and ultimately the child born to the teen parents. Teen parenting is a unique situation because teens have their own struggles and responsibilities that are based on their stage of life and that are not typically conducive to effective parenting. Aside from being parents, teens are involved in their education (Fergusson & Woodward, 2000), activities, friendships, and family life, which are all interrupted by a pregnancy. Families involved are oftentimes faced with decisions about who will raise the child, how the mother will continue with school, difficulties with finances, and helping teen mothers to adjust to the new responsibility and work that they must assume. Considering all of the individuals involved, and the substantial adolescent pregnancy rates, this is an imperative area of research.

One specific area of research to consider is the role that the adolescent father has in the life of his child and the life of the child's mother. The following includes a description of



the hardships and adjustments that research indicates are a part of being a mother; also included is a description of father involvement and the characteristics that influence whether or not fathers will be involved with their children. The research included in this paper gives direction for the current study to better understand teen father involvement and the affect it has on teen mothers.

### *Mother stressors*

*Adult mothers.* There are several studies that have documented the difficulties and hardships of mothering, and results indicate that *all* mothering comes with many hardships. Barclay, Everitt, Rogan, Schmied, & Wyllie (1997) examined what life was like for adult mothers right after the birth of their child, and then later when the child was older. Much of what they discovered was that women felt like they gave everything of themselves and felt drained emotionally and physically. Mothers reported going through a process of “realization” as they compared the reality of motherhood to their original expectations. Through this process of realization, they felt a certain amount of loss of themselves as their freedom and time were committed to their children.

Barclay et al. (1997) also reported that mothers felt alone because of lack of help from partners. Mothers were expected to continue with the same duties that they undertook before the child was born, including making dinner and tending the house. When those expectations were not met, mothers lost support from their partners. They were also left alone to care for the child when their partner’s work hours and outside responsibilities kept them from being home. This report of aloneness lays a foundation for the social support those mothers need.

*Teen mothers.* As Barclay et al. (1997) described, mothers face a good amount of adjustment and hardship as they transition into being a parent. Teen mothers have greater difficulties in their position because of social factors and their level of development. Teens who become parents tend to come from more disadvantaged social situations. They are oftentimes from single parent homes in which their own mother was an adolescent mother. They may be of lower socioeconomic status and from lower-quality living standards (Fergusson & Woodward, 2000; Stevens-Simon, Kelly & Cox, 1996). Additionally, future prospects for teen mothers may be lowered because of lower grades (Hacker, Amare, & Strunk, 2000), they may drop out of school more frequently than their non-parent counterparts, and score lower on measures of cognitive and academic ability (Fergusson & Woodward, 2000).

Adolescents become sexually active at a young age and are not typically seeking the best reasons for their sexual activity. They are sexually active most often between the ages of 15 and 18, and report having sex for reasons such as feeling accepted and loved, keeping a boyfriend, and becoming more popular, among others (Hacker, et al., 2000). Most teens are not sexually active for procreative reasons, and are therefore not typically intending to have a child with their partner. They are not in a long-lasting relationship where a pregnancy is often welcomed (Benson, 2004). Developmentally, teens have had limited life experience and are not prepared cognitively for an unexpected pregnancy (Hurlbut & McDonald, 1997). This developmental setback puts adolescent mothers at risk of feeling incompetent and not understanding how to properly care for their children. Their lack of understanding of children and development will lead them to have misconceived expectations for what their children are capable of doing and understanding. Coupled with this lack of understanding, teen

mothers are at risk of child abuse and maltreatment of their children. Adolescents often cannot handle the stress on their own, and they don't understand when harsh discipline is too much for their young child (Dukewich, Borkowski, & Whitman, 1996). This lack of understanding of mothering and of their child results in social and emotional setbacks for both the mother and child (Hurlbut & McDonald, 1997).

The difficulties of motherhood, as cited by Barclay et al. (1997), coupled with the factors specific to being a teen parent create a difficult situation (Rolfe, 2008). Teen moms face many daily hardships as they transition into motherhood. Not only are they dealing with social and individual hardships, but they also have to adjust to caring for their child. Teen mothers report that being a mother forces them to grow up and be responsible (Rolfe, 2008). In putting their child first they have to give up things they would typically do, as well as find work to support both of them. This process is a considerable learning experience for adolescents involved as they learn how to constantly care for their child and sacrifice much of the life they previously knew.

### *Social support*

Social support is an important protective factor for children and parents. Mothers obtain a great deal of support from the help of the networks in their lives. Not only are teen mothers dealing with typical mothering stressors such as lacking time, feeling drained and having constant responsibility, but they also face obstacles such as continuing on with school, pursuing goals, and pressure they may feel from friends. To help with these stressors, the teen mother's social network may offer a large source of resiliency (Unger & Cooley, 1992; Chen, et al. 1995). She may be able to continue to pursue her education and other goals, as well as learn from the examples around her for daily mothering tasks (Unger &

Cooley, 1992). Chen, et al. (1995) reported that the support from family members is unmatched in its influence on adolescent mothers, and even lowers mothers' reports of depression (Prodromidis, Abrams, Field, & Scafidi, 1994).

Support for teen mothers differs based on family characteristics. One of the most researched areas of teen mother support is the help that she receives from her own mother. Unger and Cooley (1992) conducted a study to examine the amount of contact teen mothers had with their own mothers. Using a subset of teen mothers and their children from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), Unger and Cooley measured how frequently, and when, the teen's mother and partner were with them. The results showed that teen mothers whose own mothers had a higher level of education were more likely themselves to attain a higher level of education and scored higher on measures of academic success.

This study using the NLSY exemplifies the practical ways that family support can assist teen mothers and their children. Grandmother's assistance with the child allowed teen mothers to continue with and finish high school. Families can offer this assistance by directly caring for the child as well as by giving assistance and direction for the teen to take care of the child on her own. Studies have shown that when teens received support from mothers, and when the teen-mother relationship was of high quality, teens felt more competent in parenting their child (Oberlander, Black & Starr, 2007). Since most teen mothers live with their families (Gibson-Davis, 2008) there are important support issues to be considered in research.

### *Father support*

Family involvement is a source of support for teen mothers, but another important factor to consider is involvement of the teen father in the life of the mother and the child. Evidence has shown that fathers are an important part of child development and in mother well being (Chen et al., 1995), but there are aspects of the fathers' lives that may hinder their involvement. Adolescent fathers are a unique group of non-resident fathers. A profile of an adolescent father shows that he is young, he is part of an unplanned pregnancy (Benson, 2004; Hacker, et al., 2000), he is not married to the child's mother, and not living with the mother and child. Research on adolescent and non-resident father involvement shows that there are both internal and external factors that influence father involvement. Internally, fathers determine some of their involvement in care and daily activities by their perception of the father role and how they see themselves fit into that role (Goodman, 2004). Externally, fathers are influenced by the relationship they have with the child's mother and whether the mother believes he is capable of assisting in parenting responsibilities (Fagan and Barnett, 2003; Herzog, Umaña-Taylor, Madden-Derdich, & Leonard, 2007; Knoester, Petts & Eggebeen, 2007; McBride, Brown, Bost, Shin, Vaughn, & Korth, 2005).

### *Non-Resident fathers*

Adolescent fathers are a type of non-resident father; therefore, it is acceptable to consider research that has been done on non-resident fathers. Fathers who do not live in the same home as their children are at a disadvantage with the amount of time they can spend with their children and the number of activities and routines they can take part in. It is easiest for the child's resident mother to oversee most care activities such as eating, getting ready for

school, and helping with homework because she is more available. With non-resident fathers, residency is the main underlying characteristic affecting their availability.

Not only are non-resident fathers at a disadvantage by living apart from their children, but they show signs of feeling unwelcomed and incapable of fathering. Fathers' perceptions of themselves in the fatherhood role is a significant aspect in the amount of care and interaction in which a father will take part. Fathers' beliefs begin to form at the time they learn about the pregnancy and these beliefs continue to develop throughout pregnancy, the birth, and beginning stages of the child's life (Goodman, 2004). Fathers who do not want the pregnancy, or are unmarried (Sobolewski and King, 2005), are significantly less warm and take part in fewer daily care activities than men that wanted the pregnancy (Bronte-Tinkew, Ryan, Carrano, & Moore, 2007).

There are two possible reasons for these findings. Non-resident and unmarried fathers may see themselves as being less capable, and therefore, report less involvement with their children (Flouri, 2007). In this scenario fathers remove themselves from the situation because they don't see themselves as being fit to be a father, or they don't want to be a father. A second reason for these findings is that non-resident fathers do not feel welcome in the parenting process. Mothers limit amounts of non-resident father contact with their children, and decide whether they believe fathers are capable. When mothers believe fathers are able to care for their children, they are more likely to allow fathers to take part in daily routines and care (Knoester, Petts & Eggebeen, 2007; McBride, Brown, Bost, Shin, Vaughn, & Korth, 2005, Fagan & Barnett, 2003). Mothers find ways to protect their children from what they believe is a father who is not ready or able to handle the father role, and block father-child interactions (Fagan and Barnett, 2003).

It is common for men to go through transitional periods during fatherhood (Goodman, 2004). As previously noted, men's perceptions begin during pregnancy and are largely affected by their desire to have a child at that time (Bronte-Tinkew, Ryan, Carrano, Moore, 2007). Goodman (2004) identified four stages that fathers experience early in their child's life. In these stages fathers begin by forming expectations for themselves and for the child. For a non-resident or unmarried father, early expectations may consist of little time and experiences with their child to avoid disappointment or conflict when the child arrives. The determination and expectations of the father have some impact on whether he becomes involved with his child or not.

#### *Adolescent Fathers*

*Characteristics.* Adolescent fathers are at an even greater disadvantage than adult non-resident fathers. Not only do they live apart from the mother and child and are part of an unplanned pregnancy, but they, like adolescent mothers, are unprepared for the tasks involved in being a parent because of their developmental stage. These young fathers are in a conflict because they are continuing their education while faced with the necessity of supporting a family. Their jobs are inconsistent, low paying, and offer few benefits for their families. In addition to this, their time to earn a living is shared with time in school (Larson, Hussey, Gilmore, & Gilchrist, 1996). Fathers' lack of education leads them to be less capable of providing for their children (Futris, Nielsen, & Olmstead, 2009).

Internally, adolescent fathers tend to experience a great deal of turmoil. A study by Thompson and Crase (2004) compared teen fathers with their non-father peers to discover differences psychologically. Teen fathers were found to have a lower self-esteem and reported less social support than their non-father peers. A related finding was that fathers

reported lower satisfaction with their life in general. With this internal conflict, adolescent fathers do not have the desire or the ambition to be involved with their children, especially if there is conflict in the father's relationship with the child's mother. Characteristics like these make fathering more difficult and less frequent.

Research has also shown that adolescent fathers are often involved with drugs and other illegal activities. In a study of adolescent father involvement, a large number of mothers reported that their child's father used drugs before and after the birth of their child. Mothers also reported that the father of their child had sold drugs at some point in time and that they had been involved in other illegal activities (Larson, et al., 1996). These issues raise the concern that many adolescent fathers may not be fit to be involved with their children if they are bringing about dangerous or illegal situations.

*Support and involvement.* Mothers report fathers as being involved and supportive throughout the pregnancy, but these reports decrease after the child is born. When fathers are involved after the child is born, they provide support by helping to make decisions for the child, participating in daily care activities for the child, and helping to provide physical items like clothes, care items, and money. As time went on, mothers' expectations lessened for this type of paternal support (Larson, et al., 1996).

The most common indicator of father involvement is the mother-father relationship. When they are in a romantic relationship, fathers are more likely to be involved with their children. Alternatively, when the mother and father are not in a relationship, father involvement and co-parenting significantly drop off. After the relationship has ended, mothers report feeling less satisfied with the father's involvement and do not want him to be present anymore (Herzog, Umaña-Taylor, Madden-Derdich, & Leonard, 2007). Perhaps



mothers do not want the conflict of a past boyfriend in their lives, or they are protecting their children from a dangerous situation. Regardless of the explanation of why fathers are not as present, the overall finding is that they are not as involved or welcome when they are no longer in a relationship with the child's mother.

### *Child outcomes*

Children of teen mothers are at greater risk for problems developmentally, academically, and socioemotionally. Single-handedly providing care to children elicits a great deal of stress for teen mothers which can lead to emotional instability in the home. Adolescent mothers lack family and peer support (Cruse, Hockaday, & McCarville, 2007), and need an additional source of support to help with co-parenting decisions and provisions for their child. Fathers offer both direct and indirect benefits for their children. Direct benefits occur through direct father-child interactions and include advantages like improved behavior, lower levels of externalizing and internalizing behavior in youth, and better academic performance (Howard, Lefever, Borkowski, & Whitman, 2006). Alternatively, indirect benefits include lowering stress for mothers and financial provisions, which act as a stabilizer for the child's home and elicits many similar positive outcomes. Both direct and indirect benefits are important to consider in studies of father involvement.

*Direct effects.* Fathers' involvement has an impact on children's academic and social and emotional development. For example, adolescents do better academically when their fathers are more involved than when fathers are not involved (King & Sobolewski, 2006). Similarly, children excel linguistically and academically with more frequent father presence. In a study with blended families and preschool children, children with a father present scored higher on measures of language development than children in a mother-only home (Black,

Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999). Alternatively, in single-family homes, which were the comparison group in this study, mothers were solely responsible for their children and for providing for their families and may have experienced less time to work with children (Foster & Kalil, 2007). In these instances fathers are another source of help for the child, and therefore may help raise children's scores on measures of intelligence and academic performance.

Commonly cited direct effects of father involvement for children are better behavioral outcomes. Children with involved fathers display less internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Carlson, 2006) and more pro-social behaviors (Flouri, 2007). King and Sobolewski (2006) conducted a study with adolescents and their parents to determine how the two relationships affect their wellbeing. The researchers included individual factors of the adolescents like levels of self-efficacy, frequency of acting out in school, externalizing behavior, and internalizing behavior. Adolescents benefitted most when they had a relationship with both parents, but when the relationship was poor with their mother, adolescents who reported only having a relationship with their father had better scores on measures of internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and showed lower frequencies of acting out in school.

A similar study by Howard et al. (2006) examined the effect father involvement had on children's outcomes when mothers scored high on measures of maternal risk. Researchers considered children's externalizing and internalizing behavior as well as academic achievement, and socioemotional adjustment as measured by classroom behavior. Results indicated that fathers were an positive intervening force for children with mothers scoring high on maternal risk. These children displayed less externalizing behavior, and lower levels of internalizing behavior, and boys benefitted the most academically.

*Indirect effects.* Indirect effects are a result of the contributions the father makes to the child's environment. These become necessary in adolescent parent homes because they are at greater risk for abuse and maltreatment (Dukewich, et al., 1996), they are typically poor (Benson, 2004), and mothers deal with depression and stress (Knoche, Givens, & Sheridan, 2007; McLoyd, Toyokawa, & Kaplan, 2008). Mothers who face a good deal of conflict between work and home (McLoyd, Toyakowa, & Kaplan, 2008) and struggle to provide basic care items for their children are at risk for poor mental health and depression (Mistry, Stevens, Sareen, De Vogli, & Halfo, 2007). In this type of environment, children display higher levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors (McLoyd, et al., 2008), and lower scores on measures of overall development (Knoche, Givens, & Sheridan, 2007). Conversely, fathers can offer both financial and emotional assistance to alleviate these pressures and create a more stable environment.

When fathers are able to complete their education and maintain stable employment, they are able to provide daily care items for their families (Futris, et al., 2009). It can be difficult for teen fathers to contribute these necessities because of their typically unstable employment and low wages (Larson, et al., 1996) because they have little to offer. Despite this, having a portion, or all of their financial burdens taken care of by the father will create a more stable and child-centered home (Black, et al., 1999).

Aside from material forms of support, fathers offer emotional support to mothers. Fathers are most likely to contribute stress relieving resources like, time, financial support, and responsibility for children when they are in a relationship (Herzog, et al., 2007), and mothers benefit from this romantic relationship status. Alternatively, the emotional support can come from having a second person to handle the responsibility of being a parent.

Howard, et al. (2006) clearly shows that a father's supportive role can intervene between at risk mothers and child outcomes. Children in this study with greater father involvement were less likely to display internalizing and externalizing behaviors, had better academic scores, and better socioemotional development.

These factors are compelling, especially because they can be a foundation for intervention with adolescent parents. When researchers and practitioners can understand teen moms and dads and their children more completely, they will be able to make informed decisions about intervention. The current study examines factors involved with adolescent mother well being; specifically, the amount of father involvement. It is expected that mothers who are in a romantic relationship will report higher levels of father involvement. Additionally, when fathers are reported as being involved more frequently, it is expected that mothers will report higher levels of life satisfaction.

#### *Data Collection Methods*

Most studies that have examined similar topics such as maternal stress, caring for children, and father involvement, have used a broad scope of data collection instruments. Many of the most common instruments require participants to respond on their lives in the context of the last month or year or to give a general representation. For instance, in a study by Mistry et al. (2007), researchers used a Mental Health Inventory, which included self-report items on maternal depressive and anxiety symptoms. The measure asked mothers to respond to items about how often in the last month they had been calm, nervous, anxious, peaceful, or able to cheer up on a likert-type scale. Using this type of measure forces participants to recall a great deal of information from a large time span and may result in misinformation.

Another study required participants to give a general representation of their lives. In this study, researchers examined whether teen moms or their mothers were more active in caring for the child. They used a measure in which both the teen mother and grandmother reported on what activities they took part in, responding to whether they typically make meals for the child, they typically care for the child, and other necessary issues to examine who does the most for the child (Oberlander, et al., 2007). With this type of measure, participants may over- or underestimate the amount of their involvement.

In many studies of father involvement, mothers are asked to respond about the amount of time that fathers typically spend with their children, what things they do together, and the amount of influence they have on decisions with their children. Some studies use a rating scale to indicate the amount of involvement or decision-making typical of the father. If children are old enough, they are often asked to recall over a certain amount of time how frequently they have seen or talked to their fathers (Aquilino, 2006). For instance, children may be asked how many times in the last month they have seen or talked to their father. In other studies mothers may be asked to identify if there is a father or father figure in the child's life (Jayakody & Kalil, 2002). While mothers will be able to identify this, the item does not uncover whether that person actually engages in the child's life on a daily basis.

In the current study, researchers used the Parent-Child Activities (PCA) Interview. The PCA interview asks participants respond about the previous 24 hours with their child on a wide variety of topics. For issues dealing with maternal stressors and support, there are questions that ask about trouble that the mother/child has experienced in the last 24 hours, as well as if they needed help and if they were able to get the help that they needed. The PCA has questions about what things the mother has done with the child. For instance, there are

questions as specific as whether the mother has given her child a bath, where the bath was given, and if the child enjoyed the time. This measure was created to get an accurate and detailed perspective of the daily routines of the mothers and children involved.

In terms of father involvement, many measures ask mothers to report if the father is present and to estimate how much time he spends with his child(ren). The PCA specifically asks if the father is in the child's life, and whether or not he has been present with the child in the span of the last 24 hours. The PCA is able to get an accurate response on the true amount of father-child interaction.

In addition to the accurate daily representation of father involvement and mother-child activities, this interview was conducted via cell phone calls. There were four main advantages to this method. The first was that each of the mothers could be reached at any time and any place. They did not have to be at home to receive a phone call because they were calling on provided cell phones. The second advantage was that researchers had control of the phones' activation and maintenance, and mothers were not excluded for not having a home phone. Researchers also saw it as a benefit that the phones would be helpful for the mothers if they had trouble or needed help, they would be able to use their cell phones to contact help. Finally, the fourth benefit was that researchers were not forced to make several home visits for the interviews, and this would be more cost effective than travelling over time (Lefever, Howard, Lanzi, Borkowski, Atwater, Guest, & Hughes, 2008).

#### *Guiding research questions*

1. Is mother's global rating of happiness related to the percentage of times the biological father was identified as present and the average amount of time the child has spent with the father in the last 24 hours?

It is hypothesized that mothers will feel a greater sense of global happiness with greater father involvement.

2. Does biological fathers' averaged time spent with child in the last 24 hours differ based on whether the mother is a teen mother, adult low education, or adult high education?

It is hypothesized that teen fathers will not be as involved with their children as adult fathers.

3. Is mothers' romantic relationship status with the child's father related to the average amount of time the child spent with the father in the last 24 hours?

Fathers who are in a relationship with the mother are hypothesized to be more involved with their children across all groups of mothers.

4. If mothers' romantic relationship is related to the average amount of time the child spends with the biological father in the last 24 hours, how is mothers' satisfaction with her relationship with a significant other related to the average amount of time the child spent with father in the last 24 hours?

It is hypothesized that when mothers are more satisfied in their relationship with the baby's father, the father will be more involved with the child.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND PROCEDURE

### Method

#### *Participants*

Data for this study were obtained from a 3-year longitudinal study that included 684 first time mothers and their infant children. Over the course of the study, two participants were dropped from analysis because of a lack of data leaving the total number of participants at 682. Participants for the original study and data collection were taken from the urban areas of: Birmingham, Alabama; South Bend, Indiana; Washington DC, and both Kansas City, KS and Kansas City, MO. Mother's were randomly selected from local clinics and contacted to participate in the study. Adolescent mothers and low education adult mothers were recruited from the same clinic, but participation by high education adult mothers from these clinics was low. Researchers randomly selected other mother's from additional primary care facilities in order to recruit high education adult mothers. The original multi-site study was designed to identify early markers for child neglect among high-risk mothers. In order to examine differences in adolescent mothering, 396 adolescent mothers (from age 15 to 18 years) and 286 adult mothers (22 years or older) were recruited from medical and educational centers in the area. Adolescent mothers younger than age 15 were not included in the sample because of unique circumstances that coexist with such young pregnancy, although some prenatal interviews occurred before they turned 15. Mothers from 19-21 were not included in the sample because they are in a transitional stage between adolescence and adulthood that would not allow for a clean comparison between groups.

Adult mothers were categorized into two groups, high education and low education. Low education mothers were women who had a high school education or less, and high



education mothers had achieved an education beyond high school. Of the adult mothers, 162 comprised the adult-low education group, and there were 124 mothers in the adult-high education group. Adult mothers served as a comparison groups to the adolescent mother data. See Table 1 for maternal age at birth and at time of the prenatal interview, and Table 2 for mother and father demographic information.

An innovative methodology using cellular phones was used (Lefever, et al., 2008) to gather data about the everyday events of the mothers and their children. The Parent-Child Activities (PCA) interview was conducted via cell phone in conjunction with home-based interviews and observations in order to test the reliability and validity of the PCA. While the Lefever, et al. (2008) study examined the psychometric properties of the PCA, the current study will examine the parenting data that was collected in relation to father involvement.

Table 1.

Maternal age at prenatal interview and birth.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Prenatal	14.72	36.02	21.13	5.06
Birth	14.68	36.28	21.23	5.06

Table 2.

Mother and father demographic information.

	Frequency	Percent
Mother		
Education		
Adolescent	396	57.9
Low Education	162	23.7
High Education	124	18.1
Ethnicity		
Black	440	64.3
White	128	18.7
Latina	93	13.6
Multiracial-	17	2.5
Multiethnic		
American Indian	3	.4
Asian	1	.2
Father		
Ethnicity		
Black	441	64.5
White	111	16.2
Latino	95	13.9
Multiracial-	24	3.5
Multiethnic		
Asian	1	.1

### *Design and Procedure*

The PCA cellular phone interviews were conducted when children were 4, 8, and 18 months. At each time point mothers were called and administered the PCA several times (standard protocol was every other day over two weeks). The PCA was administered to mothers an average of 2.7 times at four months, 2.61 times at eight months, and 2.5 times at 18 months. At each time mothers were given the same questions to obtain a more accurate reflection of their typical lives. Mothers therefore may have two or three responses to one question, which exemplifies a unique difference with the PCA data.

### *Measures*

*Parent-Child Activities Interview.* The Parent-Child Activities Interview (PCA) is a semi-structured interview that covers a range of daily parenting activities in the preceding 24 hours. The PCA is not an instrument in which the mother generalizes about her and her child's life, rather the mother reports actual events that have happened that day. The interview includes information reported by the mother about people directly involved with the child over the past 24 hours, including the mother, the father, and any "other support" person/people. Another portion of the PCA focuses on the types of daily activities, such as bathing and diapering that the mother has engaged in, as well as the child's behavior and trouble with the child experienced between mother and child in the last 24 hours. Finally, the third section of the PCA is about the mother's satisfaction and happiness with her life at present. Overall, during each phone call, the PCA pieces together the mother's life as it relates to her child and other sources of support in the last 24 hours. For this study, the focus is on items dealing with the child's father, the amount of time he spends with the child, and the amount of satisfaction and happiness that the mother perceives in her own life. In a study

of reliability, the PCA was compared with two other parenting measures and was found to be a sensitive and valid measure for parenting. In addition to being an innovative form of data collection, the PCA had an overall Cronbach's alpha of .85 (Lefever, et al., 2008).

Since mothers could have multiple phone calls at each wave of data collection, the data from each phone call was aggregated. For instance, a mother indicated during phone call number one that her child's father was present for four hours, then in phone call number two he was there for two hours, and at time three he was there for six hours. These three responses, four hours, two hours, and six hours were averaged to yield an overall average time of four hours. This same process was done for all scale/rating responses within the data. Other scale/rating variables included, the mother's overall rating of the day (1 = very difficult, 5 = very good), mother's rating of how well she believes things have gone with her child in the last 24 hours (1 = very unhappy, 5 = very happy), and mother's global perception of how happy she is with the way things are going in her life (1 = very unhappy, 5 = very happy). For this study, when these variables are reported they are an average of mother's responses based on the last 24 hours in the mother's and child's lives.

Items for the current study also include yes/no responses. The variables that included yes/no responses were whether or not the father or father figure was identified as being actively involved in the child's life, and if the child spent time with the father or father figure in the previous 24 hours. The yes/no responses cannot be averaged because they are not scale data. In order to combine across phone calls these variables were aggregated into new variables that reflect a percentage of the time across calls that mothers responded yes to the question. An example of this would be when at time 1 a mother responded yes, her child spent time with his/her father in the last 24 hours, at time two she responded no, and at time

three she responded yes. In this instance the aggregated score would be 66%. All yes/no responses in the PCA are averaged percentages.

*Interview.* In addition to the PCA, face-to-face interviews were conducted when children were 4, 8, and 18-months of age. These interviews included demographic information and a few items that were used corroborate and supplement the PCA. Variables used from this interview in the current study are the age and education of mothers, ethnicity of mothers and fathers, and relationship status information about the mother (“Are you still (married to/living with/in touch with/not talking to) your baby’s biological father?” “Are you in a relationship with a significant other?” and “How satisfied are you with your relationship?”) There was no need to average or aggregate any of these variables as they were a one-time response.

#### *Analyses*

To address the first question of the current study is mother’s global rating of happiness related to the percentage of times the father was identified as present and the average amount of time the child has spent with the father in the last 24 hours, correlations were run between the dependent variable (mother’s global rating of happiness) and the independent variables: the percentage of times fathers were identified as being actively involved, and the amount of time children spent with fathers.

To answer the second question, does fathers averaged time spent with child in the last 24 hours differ based on whether the mother is a teen mother, adult low education, or adult high education, ANOVAs were run between the three mom groups (adolescent mothers, low education adult mothers, and high education adult mothers) and the average amount of time that fathers spent with children. ANOVAs were run for the third question, is mother’s

romantic relationship status related to the average amount of time the child spends with father or father figure in the last 24 hours. These analyses examined the type of relationship that the mother was in and the amount of time the father has spent with the child in the last 24 hours. Finally, for the fourth question, how is mother's satisfaction with her relationship with the child's father related to the average amount of time the child spent with their father in the last 24 hours, correlations were run between mother's reported satisfaction with her relationship and the average amount of time the biological father spent with the child in the last 24 hours.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Results

From the PCA interview, correlations were conducted for percentage of times fathers were indicated as being a part of the child's life, percentage of times they were present in the previous 24 hours, average amount of time spent in the previous 24 hours, mother's global rating of happiness, mother's relationship status, and satisfaction with her romantic relationship. Correlations at 4, 8, and 18 months can be found in table 3.

Table 3.

Correlations for dependent and independent variables at 4, 8, and 18 months

	1. % of times bio- father was identified in child's life			2. % of times bio- father was identified in previous 24 hours			3. Average number of hours child spent with bio-father in last 24 hours			4. Mother's global rating of happiness			5. Mother's rating of satisfaction with relationship			6. Mother's relationship status		
	4	8	18	4	8	18	4	8	18	4	8	18	4	8	18	4	8	18
1.	1.00	1.00	1.00	.40**	.28**	.38**	.03	.14*	.12	.07	.12*	.07	.03	.33	.25**	.27**	.06	-.15
2.				1.00	1.00	1.00	.35**	.42*	.32**	.14**	.07	.09	.02	.38**	.26**	.31**	.00	.17
3.							1.00	1.00	1.00	.15**	.00	.11	.12	.21**	.26*	.29**	.02	.03
4.										1.00	1.00	1.00	.21**	.16**	.08	.05	.16*	.33*
5.													1.00	1.00	1.00	.12	.00	-.06

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



Table 4.

Correlations between maternal satisfaction and father involvement variables at 4, 8, and 18 months based on mother group.

	% of times bio-father was identified in the child's life	% of times bio-father was identified in previous 24 hours	Average number of hours child spent with bio-father in last 24 hours
Adolescent mother satisfaction			
4 mos.	.109	.050	.108
8 mos.	.071	.016	.032
18 mos.	.029	.105	.070
Adult low-ed mother satisfaction			
4 mos.	-.023	.242*	.216
8 mos.	.250*	.174	.011
18 mos.	.223	.274*	.163
Adult high-ed mother satisfaction			
4 mos.	.048	.282**	.149
8 mos.	.063	-.032	-.197
18 mos.	-.018	-.104	.168

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### *Mother Satisfaction with Life and Father Involvement*

*4 months.* The percentage of time fathers were identified as being present with the child in the last 24 hours was positively correlated with mother's global rating of happiness with the way things were going in her life. Additionally, the average amount of time fathers spent with children in the last 24 hours was positively related to mother's global rating of happiness. That is, mothers were more likely to rate themselves as highly satisfied when the amount of time fathers spent with their children in the last 24 hours was greater.

*8 months.* At 8 months there was a positive correlation between the percentage of time fathers were identified as being a part of the child's life and mother's rating of global happiness with the way things are going in her life. When mothers reported more frequently that fathers were a part of their child's life, they tended to give a higher rating of happiness with the way things were going in their life. There were no significant correlations between the percentage of time fathers were identified in the previous 24 hours and mother's global rating of happiness, nor was there significance between average amount of time fathers spent with children and mother's global rating of happiness.

*18 months.* There were no significant correlations between the father involvement variables and mother's global rating of happiness with the way things are going.

### *Variation by Mother Group*

*4 months.* At 4 months separate correlations were run to examine the relationship between maternal satisfaction and father involvement variables for each of the mother groups (See Table 4). There were no significant correlations at 4 months for adolescent mothers. Ratings of maternal global happiness for low education mothers and high education mothers were positively correlated with the percentage of times fathers were identified in the previous

24 hours, indicating adult mother's reported higher ratings of satisfaction when fathers were identified as present in the previous 24 hours.

A one way analysis of variance test was run in order to examine the differences between three mother groups (teen, adult low education, & adult high education mothers) and the difference that may exist in percentage of times fathers were identified in the child's life, the percentage of times they were identified in the last 24 hours, and the average amount of time that fathers spent with children in the last 24 hours (See Appendix for a table of descriptive statistics based on type of mother). Results indicate that there was a significant difference between groups in the percentage of times that fathers were identified in the child's life,  $F(2, 445) = 3.75, p = .02$ , and in the percentage of times fathers were identified as being present in the last 24 hours,  $F(2, 411) = 11.90, p < .001$ . There was not a significant relationship between groups in the average amount of time that fathers spent with their children in the last 24 hours. A Tukey test revealed a significant difference on the percentage of times fathers were identified in the child's life between the adult high education group ( $M = 94.32, SD = 21.55$ ) and the adolescent mom group ( $M = 83.73, SD = 34.33$ ). There was a significant difference in the percentage of time fathers were identified as being present in the last 24 hours between the adult high education mother group ( $M = 80.15, SD = 36.40$ ) and the teen mom group ( $M = 56.09, SD = 41.05$ ). Adult mom low education did not significantly differ from either group in any of the dependent variables.

*8 months.* Separate correlations for mother groups at 8 months indicate no significant relationships in adolescent and adult-high education mother's global rating of happiness and father involvement variables (See Table 4). However, low education mother's global rating of happiness was positively related to the percentage of times biological fathers were

identified as being a part of the child's life. Adult low education mothers who more frequently reported fathers as present in general reported higher levels of satisfaction.

A one way ANOVA at 8 months indicated that there were significant differences between all father involvement variables, percentage of times fathers were reported as being present in the child's life  $F(2, 380) = 3.21, p = .04$ , percentage of times fathers were identified as present in the last 24 hours  $F(2, 334) = 10.74, p < .001$ , and average amount of time spent with the child in the previous 24 hours  $F(2, 239) = 3.23, p = .04$ . Further analysis revealed that all significant differences were between adult high education and teen mother groups. Mothers in the adult high education group identified fathers as being present a greater percentage of time ( $M = 90.34, SD = 29.22$ ) than teen moms ( $M = 79.15, SD = 38.98$ ). Adult high education mothers also had a significantly greater percentage in fathers identified in the previous 24 hours ( $M = 77.47, SD = 39.27$ ) than teen moms ( $M = 51.69, SD = 44.00$ ) and adult high education mothers were higher in average amount of time that fathers spent in the last 24 hours with their children ( $M = 12.15, SD = 6.61$ ) than teen mothers ( $M = 9.47, SD = 7.44$ ). Post hoc analysis revealed no significant differences in the adult mother low education group.

*18 months.* At 18 months, separate correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between maternal satisfaction and father involvement variables for each of the mother groups (See Table 4). There were no significant correlations at 18 months for adolescent mothers or for adult high education mothers. Ratings of maternal global happiness for adult low education mothers was positively related to the percentage of times fathers were identified in the previous 24 hours.

A one-way ANOVA at 18 months revealed that there were significant differences between mother groups on the percentage of times fathers were identified as present in the child's life  $F(2, 321) = 4.81, p = .01$ , and between the percentage of times fathers were identified as present with the child in the last 24 hours  $F(2, 256) = 5.81, p = .003$ . Post hoc analysis revealed significant differences between the adult high education group ( $M = 88.16, SD = 32.52$ ) and the teen mom group ( $M = 70.62, SD = 44.00$ ) on the percentage of times that fathers were identified as present in the child's life. Similarly, the percentage of time that fathers were identified as present in the last 24 hours was significantly different between the mother high education group ( $M = 75.98, SD = 40.56$ ) and the teen mother group ( $M = 53.94, SD = 44.18$ ). Analyses did not reveal any differences between the adult low education group and other groups.

#### *Relationship Status and Satisfaction*

*4 months.* There was a positive relationship between mothers' relationship status and fathers being identified as being involved in the child's life. Similarly, there is a relationship between mothers being in a romantic relationship and the percentage of time that fathers were identified as present in the last 24 hours, as well as the average amount of time that fathers spent with children in the last 24 hours. Fathers tended to be present more frequently in the last 24 hours when mothers were in a romantic relationship and fathers spent more time with children when they were in a romantic relationship.

To determine if there was a difference between relationship groups in the father involvement variables, independent samples t-tests were performed. Based on mother's response to the type of relationship she was in (1 = married to child's father; 6 = no relationship), mothers were divided into a relationship group and a no-relationship group.

The relationship group consisted of mothers who were married to or in a romantic relationship with the child's father. The no-relationship group included mothers who were not in a romantic relationship with the child's father.

Independent samples t-tests revealed that there is a significant difference between the relationship group and the no-relationship group on all father involvement variables.

Statistics from t-tests are listed in table 6. Mothers in the relationship group more frequently identified fathers as being a part of their child's life ( $M = 98.07$ ,  $SD = 11.16$ ) than mothers in the no-relationship group ( $M = 67.28$ ,  $SD = 44.10$ ). There was also a significant difference between relationship groups on the percentage of time fathers were identified as being present in the last 24 hours, and in the average amount of time spent with the child in the last 24 hours. Mothers in the relationship group were more likely to identify the father as present in the last 24 hours ( $M = 81.9$ ,  $SD = 32.06$ ) compared with the no-relationship group ( $M = 31.70$ ,  $SD = 35.12$ ). Mothers in the relationship group indicated an average of more time spent with the child in the last 24 hours ( $M = 10.78$ ,  $SD = 6.67$ ) than the no-relationship group ( $M = 5.64$ ,  $SD = 6.72$ ).

Table 5.

Frequencies of mother's relationship status with biological father at 4, 8, and 18 months.

	Relationship Group		No Relationship Group	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
4	285	41.7	187	27.3
8	230	33.6	182	26.6
18	96	14.0	101	14.8

Table 6.

Independent samples t-test comparison of mother relationship status and father involvement variables at 4 months.

Father involvement variables	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Percentage of times mothers identified biological father as a part of the child's life.	8.76	176.78	.000
Percentage of times mothers identified biological fathers as present in the previous 24 hours	13.72	249.02	.000
Average number of hours biological fathers spent with children in previous 24 hours	5.75	299	.000

8 months. Mothers being in a romantic relationship was positively related with all three father involvement variables. There was a positive relationship between the mother's romantic relationship, the percentage of time that fathers were identified in general as being involved with their children, the percentage of time fathers were identified as being present in the last 24 hours, and the average amount of time that fathers spent with their children in the last 24 hours. Mothers who reported themselves as being in a romantic relationship tended to indicate that their child's biological father was present, that they were specifically present in the last 24 hours, and that the father spent more time on average with their child in the last 24 hours. An independent samples t-test indicated that mothers in the relationship group indicated a greater percentage of overall father involvement ( $M = 97.03$ ,  $SD = 15.19$ )

than mothers in the no relationship group ( $M = 62.75$ ,  $SD = 47.25$ ). There is also a significant difference between the groups in the percentage of times that mothers indicated fathers were present in the last 24 hours. Mothers in the relationship group had a greater percentage ( $M = 82.78$ ,  $SD = 31.56$ ) than mothers in the no-relationship group ( $M = 24.17$ ,  $SD = 36.15$ ). Finally, mothers in the relationship group reported a greater average amount of time that fathers spent with their child in the last 24 hours ( $M = 11.56$ ,  $SD = 6.79$ ) compared with the no-relationship group ( $M = 6.93$ ,  $SD = 7.86$ ). T-statistics for 8 months are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

Independent samples t-test comparison of mother relationship status and father involvement variables at 8 months.

Father involvement variables	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Percentage of times mothers identified biological father as a part of the child's life.	8.64	176.50	.000
Percentage of times mothers identified biological fathers as present in the previous 24 hours	14.25	204.68	.000
Average number of hours biological fathers spent with children in previous 24 hours	3.85	218	.000

*18 months.* Correlations revealed that when mothers were in a romantic relationship, they were more likely to identify the child's father, to identify the father as being present in



the last 24 hours, and to report more time spent by the father with his children in the last 24 hours. Mother's satisfaction with her romantic relationship was only correlated with mother's global rating of happiness with the way things were going in her life. When mother's satisfaction with life was higher, satisfaction with her romantic relationship was also higher.

Independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference between the two relationship groups at 18 months among the three father involvement variables. Mothers in the relationship group indicated a greater percentage of overall father involvement ( $M = 98.81$ ,  $SD = 10.91$ ) than mothers in the no relationship group ( $M = 61.20$ ,  $SD = 47.47$ ). There is also a significant difference between the percentage of times mothers indicated the father was present in the previous 24 hours. Mothers in the relationship group had a higher percentage ( $M = 80.12$ ,  $SD = 33.78$ ) than the no relationship group ( $M = 31.92$ ,  $SD = 39.06$ ). The average time that fathers were present in the last 24 hours was greater for mothers in the relationship group ( $M = 11.46$ ,  $SD = 6.50$ ) compared to those in the no-relationship group ( $M = 7.12$ ,  $SD = 6.87$ ). Relationship satisfaction did not have a significant affect on any of the father involvement variables at any of the time points. See Table 8 for independent samples t-tests at 18 months.

Table 8.

Independent samples t-test comparison of mother relationship status and father involvement variables at 8 months.

Father involvement variables	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Percentage of times mothers identified biological father as a part of the child's life.	7.43	102.69	.000
Percentage of times mothers identified biological fathers as present in the previous 24 hours	7.85	140	.000
Average number of hours biological fathers spent with children in previous 24 hours	2.85	98	.005

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine adolescent father involvement as a source of support for teen mothers, and how father involvement varies based on mother groups and relationship status. The first research question included father involvement and mother's rating of global happiness with her life. Results indicate that father involvement is related to mother's global rating of happiness. At 4 months, all father involvement variables were related to mother's global rating of happiness, but at 8 months mother's global rating of happiness was only related to the percentage of time fathers were identified as being involved in general. Meaning, when mothers identified the father as being a general presence in their lives, not when she identified him as present in the previous 24 hours, it was related to mother's life satisfaction. At 18 months, all variables ceased to be related to mother's rating of global happiness.

In the early stages of a child's life, there are many new responsibilities and stressors related to caring for an infant. At these time points, mothers may have higher appreciation for the help fathers offer, resulting in the higher levels of life satisfaction, and at later points such as at 18 months, they are more into a rhythm with their children and need less help. Mothers who reported that the child's father was not present in the previous 24 hours are left to deal with more stress on their own and felt less satisfied with the way things are going. Perhaps they want things to change, they want more help, and therefore report lower satisfaction with the way things are going. There is a curious difference at 8 months in the middle of the early and late stages, because mother's global rating of happiness is not related to father presence in the previous 24 hours. It is only related to her report of his general presence. Over time

father involvement begins to wane (Larson, et al., 1996), and mothers may be going through a stage at 8 months in which they believe fathers are involved and will remain involved. They then report satisfaction with their life as they see some form of support from fathers.

These results must be considered in terms of how these questions were asked of the mother. The father involvement variables are in the context of the previous 24 hours in the lives of the mothers. When mothers were given the interview, they were recalling the amount of time fathers were present, and the average amount of time that he spent with them in that day. The relationship between mother satisfaction and father involvement at 4 months may reflect the mother receiving an amount of social interaction that is beneficial for her overall happiness. When fathers are present in the previous 24 hours, mothers may feel like fathers are an integral part of their lives and mothers may want that social interaction to remain consistent.

The second research question examined whether father involvement varied by adolescent mother, adult mother low education, and adult mother high education. The significant differences were found in father involvement variables only between adolescent mothers and adult mothers in the high education group at all 3 time points. Mothers in the high education group were significantly more likely to report fathers as being present, father presence in the previous 24 hours, and that fathers were present a greater average amount of time in the previous 24 hours.

The final two research questions, is mothers' romantic relationship status with the child's father related to the average amount of time the child spent with the father in the last 24 hours? And if mothers' romantic relationship is related to the average amount of time the child spends with the biological father in the last 24 hours, how is mothers' satisfaction with

her relationship with a significant other related to the average amount of time the child spent with father in the last 24 hours, examine relationship aspects and levels of father involvement. Mothers who were in a relationship with the child's father reported much higher levels of father involvement than those who were not in a relationship. These findings are consistent with other research that indicates relationship status is a major factor in father involvement (Herzog, et al. 2007). Based on this data and the relationship research it would be expected that when mothers are more satisfied with their relationships, they will report higher levels of father involvement. This was not the case in this study. There was no relationship between mother's satisfaction with the relationship and father involvement variables.

This relationship data explains some of the difference in mother groups. Adult mothers are more often married to the child's father and would therefore report higher father involvement. Adult fathers who are married would typically be resident fathers and not have many of the disadvantages that non-resident fathers have. When fathers are non-resident, they are not as able to have frequent contact with their children simply due to their residency, and take less time in daily care activities for children (Bronte-Tinkew, et al, 2007).

Mother's satisfaction may also be related to her relationship status and father involvement. When mothers report higher father involvement and higher levels of life satisfaction, some of their life satisfaction may come from the relationship that they are in with the child's father. Not only does he offer support for their child, but he is also a supportive element in the mother's life because of their relationship. She may perceive things as they are and be pleased with the fact that they are together and have a potential future together. Oftentimes in adolescent relationships, mothers report that they expect to marry

their child's father despite the fact that over time mother-father relationships break up and father involvement drops off (Larson, et al., 1996). With these break-ups, mothers may find less of their satisfaction in father involvement and relationship status.

Adolescent fathers are often involved with delinquent activities like drug use and drug sale (Larson, et al., 1996), which is a cause for mothers to limit father involvement. Mothers take on a barrier or "gatekeeper" role to protect children from their fathers or from their dangerous activities (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). At the 18-month time point mothers may be blocking fathers from being involved with their children if fathers are still involved with delinquent activities. With time mothers may begin to feel a sense of competence and self efficacy in their mother role and do not feel like they need help from the child's father, and they desire it less when it is not there.

### *Limitations*

There are several limitations to consider in the context of these results. The first limitation of this study is that only one measure of maternal wellbeing was considered - mother's responses to a measure on the satisfaction with the way things are going in her life. Research has shown that there are many other factors that are a part of maternal wellbeing, such as depression and risk for child abuse among others. The current study only considers a small aspect of maternal wellbeing and must be interpreted in this way. Additionally, there are many other factors that can play into this measure of maternal well being aside from father involvement. These results do not consider maternal education within the adolescent mother group, other forms of social support they have, or socioeconomic status. These results are significant in that they only explain when fathers are involved in the previous 24 hours and maternal satisfaction with a mother's life as reported that day.

No inferences can be made about child outcomes from this study as all measures concentrated on father involvement and maternal variables. There were no child outcome measures considered in the context of this study. Implications about child outcomes can only be discussed based on previous research on this topic. This study gives direction for future research that can include adolescent father involvement variables and child outcomes.

### *Implications*

Adolescent mothers are dealing with a great deal of stress and new responsibilities at the birth of their child (Rolfe, 2008). They deal with risk of depression (Hacker, et al., 2000; Knoche et al., 2007) and child maltreatment (Lefever, et al., 2008) and are therefore in need of additional social support and intervention. The current study gives direction for intervention that will benefit adolescent mothers, fathers, and their children.

Research has shown that interventions working with adolescent mothers and grandparents are beneficial for family relations, maternal competence, and child well being (McDonald, Conrad, Fairtlough, Fletcher, Green, Moore, & Lepps, 2008). Results from the current study indicate that practitioners should also consider the adolescent mother's relationship with the father of the child. Father involvement has been shown to be related to mother's overall rating of her life, which is a measure of maternal wellbeing. Father involvement is also beneficial for child outcomes. As Howard et al. (2006) indicated in research considering father involvement and child outcomes, fathers have the potential to fill a stabilizing role and children show better internalizing and externalizing behaviors, better academic achievement, and better socioemotional development. Intervention needs to work with the couple as a unit, instead of individually. Research on intervention types compared individual intervention for the adolescent father, and couple intervention. While individual

intervention benefitted the father, couple intervention was consistent with long-term benefits. Fathers were more likely to take part in their children's lives and with care activities. Additionally, couples reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, Pruett, & Wong, 2009). Although the current study did not report any relationship with mother's relationship satisfaction and father involvement, relationship satisfaction may encourage a longer relationship between the mother and father. If intervention measures can make progress in improving both the quality of the parent relationship, as well as the length of the parent relationship, the child's home will become more stable with a consistent mother-father partnership. Perhaps with this improvement, child outcomes can benefit for better academic performance, improved behavior, and better socioemotional development, as were indicated by Howard et al. (2006).

Intervention could also begin to take on a more holistic approach in working with adolescent parents. Adolescent mothers report less communication with their fathers and mothers (Corcoran, 2001) although they would like to have more open communication with them (Young, Pistella, & Bonati, 1999). Work can be done to include the adolescent father in these interventions to better the communication and relationship between all parties involved. This type of intervention would be beneficial in creating a cohesive unit of support for the young family.

Finally, interventions need to be provided for adolescent fathers. Understandably, the focus of intervention is on the teen mother and her child because they are the two most involved in the situation. Future research must also include adolescent fathers. These young fathers are young and lack experience with children, have yet to finish their education, and have difficulty finding well paying jobs to support their family. With increased direction and



teaching they can be a supportive factor in their child's life. Adolescent fathers need direction and information about ways that they can be involved with their children, and begin to feel more competent in their role.

#### *Future research*

Future research can extend the findings of this study and include more maternal factors of wellbeing. Maternal depression and stress are related to more externalizing and internalizing behaviors (McLoyd, et al. 2008), and lower academic achievement in children (Knoche, et al., 2007). Additional research could include measures of maternal stress and depression to examine their relatedness to adolescent father involvement. This would allow researchers to look at in-depth factors in maternal wellbeing and ways that adolescent fathers may be able to help with those factors. A great deal of research relies on mother's perception of father involvement as it relates to her perception of support and wellbeing. Future research should include direct measures of father involvement and how that level associates with maternal wellbeing and risk.

In addition to this type of future research dealing with more measures of maternal well-being, research should continue to consider the effects fathers have on their children. The Howard et al. (2006) study was influential in that it included father involvement and its indirect effect on child outcomes. Little research has been done to determine the outcomes of adolescent father involvement and how children benefit from that interaction and support. A significant body of research deals with the effect of adult fathers, and although related, adolescent fathers are a unique population that needs specific research on the types of interaction they take part in, parent readiness, and quality of father-child interaction. This type of research would be especially beneficial for intervention in providing information

about how and why adolescent fathers are involved and what attributes they have that are beneficial for children.

Research also has shown that a new partner in a romantic relationship with the mother can take on a role much like a father in the life of the child (Coley, 2003; Jayakody & Kalil, 2002). This is oftentimes referred to as social fathering, or as a father figure in the child's life and is a man who takes on the father role. The father figure may include a mother's partner or a family member, but are most commonly the mother's romantic partner (Coley, 2003; Jayakody & Kalil, 2002). They are most involved when the biological fathers live away from the child, but can also be an inhibiting factor in biological father involvement. Father figures also play a beneficial role in that the presence of social fathers may alleviate mothers' stress and help diffuse responsibilities that she may typically care for by herself. A father figure may act similarly as a biological father would to alleviate stressful situations for mothers and stabilize the home for the child. These factors have been seen in studies where the presence of a social father was beneficial for children's school readiness and success (Black, et al., 1999; Jayakody & Kalil, 2002). Additional research could continue with this in adolescent parenting to find whether father figures are influential for adolescent mothers. It would be beneficial to consider the mother's relationship, as father figures are typically in a romantic relationship with the mother, and whether his presence offers positive outcomes for the mother and child.

Future research must also consider factors that limit father contact and what differences there are based on father characteristics. Such differences would include circumstances like race and job situations that in adult father research have been shown to be a factor. Work is a definite factor in keeping fathers from being involved with their children

especially, when fathers are the sole provider for their family. With adolescent fathers, this would be an interesting point of research as their employment is oftentimes unreliable, low paying, and provides few benefits (Larson, et al., 1996). For adolescent fathers, in addition to work demands, researchers may also consider educational demands that may keep fathers from being involved with their children.

Research by Thompson and Crase (2004) indicates that there are positive outcomes for fathers who are involved with their children. They report that fathers learn how to be responsible for their children and enjoy spending time with them. Adolescent fathers are reported as having lower self esteem, depression, lower life satisfaction (Thompson & Crase, 2004), and are less expected to complete higher levels of education (Thornberry, Smith, & Howard, 1997). Future research could concentrate on the benefits fathers receive from having a child. Perhaps a child gives fathers a sense of purpose and that they have something to live for and strive to achieve a higher level of life.

To conclude, support systems for adolescent mothers are lacking overall. This is a population of young women that need support more than most because they have a young child whose outcomes depend on it. Future research and intervention must take heed in these studies to determine the optimal future course for these young mothers and their children. Adolescent father involvement has become more of a focus as of late in this field of research, but is still oftentimes forgotten. This study has shown the importance of adolescent father involvement and has given a glimpse into possible implications, intervention, and future research that can benefit each individual that is involved in these situations.

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## APPENDIX

*Descriptive statistics in last 24 hours by momtype at 4, 8, and 18 months.*

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Teen mother's at 4 months	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<hr/>						
Percent of biological fathers identified	253				83.73%	34.33%
Percent of children who spent time with biological father in last 24 hours	230				56.09%	41.05%
Average # of hours child spent with biological father in last 24 hours	168	24.00	.00	24.00	8.68	7.10
Mother's overall happiness with the way things are going	254	3.33	1.67	5.00	4.24	.74
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Teen Mothers at 8 Months	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
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Percent of biological fathers identified	215				79.15%	38.98%
Percent of children who spent time with biological father in last 24 hours	182				51.69%	44.00%
Average hours child spent with biological father in last 24 hours	118	24.00	.00	24.00	9.47	7.44
Mother's overall happiness with the way things are going	214	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.15	.86
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Teen Mothers at 18 Months	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Percent of biological fathers identified	175				70.76%	44.00%
Percent of children who spent time with biological father in last 24 hours	131				53.94%	44.18%
Average hours child spent with biological father in last 24 hours	85	24.00	.00	24.00	10.19	7.45
Mother's overall happiness with the way things are going	174	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.25	.81
Adult mothers, low education, at 4 Months	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Percent of biological fathers identified	104				84.30%	35.59%
Percent of children who spent time with biological father in last 24 hours	95				66.75%	41.08%
Average hours child spent with biological father in last 24 hours	78	24.00	.00	24.00	8.98	7.29
Mother's overall happiness with the way things are going	104	3.00	2.00	5.00	4.30	.73
Adult mothers, low education, at 8 Months	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Percent of biological fathers identified	80				85.42%	35.12%
Percent of children who spent time with biological father in last 24 hours	74				64.41%	41.50%
Average hours child spent with biological father in last 24 hours	56	23.58	.42	24.00	9.76	7.20
Mother's overall happiness with the way things are going	80	3.33	1.67	5.00	4.22	.83

Adult mothers, low education, at 18 Months	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Percent of biological fathers identified	73				77.51%	41.36%
Percent of children who spent time with biological father in last 24 hours	60				64.17%	45.50%
Average hours child spent with biological father in last 24 hours	42	23.50	.50	24.00	11.44	7.23
Mother's overall happiness with the way things are going	71	2.33	2.67	5.00	4.26	.70
Adult mothers, high education, at 4 months	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Percent of biological fathers identified	91				94.32%	21.55%
Percent of children who spent time with biological father in last 24 hours	89				80.15%	36.40%
Average hours child spent with biological father in last 24 hours	76	24.00	.00	24.00	10.81	6.27
Mother's overall happiness with the way things are going	91	3.00	2.00	5.00	4.35	.64
Adult mothers, high education, at 8 Months	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Percent of biological fathers identified	88				90.34%	29.22%
Percent of children who spent time with biological father in last 24 hours	81				77.47%	39.27%
Average hours child spent with biological father in last 24 hours	68	24.00	.00	24.00	12.15	6.61
Mother's overall happiness with the way things are going	88	2.00	3.00	5.00	4.38	.56

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Adult mothers, high education, at 18 Months	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Percent of biological fathers identified	76				88.16%	32.53%
Percent of children who spent time with biological father in last 24 hours	68				75.98%	40.56%
Average hours child spent with biological father in last 24 hours	55	23.00	1.00	24.00	12.12	5.54
Mother's overall happiness with the way things are going	76	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.33	.75

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