

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: STRATEGIES USED BY AFRICAN AMERICAN  
 FATHERS TO PROTECT THEIR CHILDREN  
 FROM COMMUNITY VIOLENCE  
 Bethany L. Letiecq, Doctor of Philosophy, 1999

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The purposes of this study were to identify the strategies used by African American fathers to protect their Head Start children from community violence and to examine individual, familial, and community-level predictors of those strategies. There were two phases to the study. In Phase I, three focus groups were conducted with a total of 18 fathers and father-figures residing in targeted Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County, MD neighborhoods to qualitatively identify the protective strategies used by fathers. Content analysis of focus group data revealed twelve general strategies: 1) supervising children; 2) teaching neighborhood/household safety skills; 3) teaching about real-life violence and its consequences; 4) teaching how to fight back; 5) teaching alternatives to violence; 6) reducing exposure to media violence; 7) confronting troublemakers; 8) keeping to oneself; 9) using

prayer and positive thinking; 10) arming family for protection; 11) moving away from bad residential areas; and 12) engaging in community activism. During Phase I, this study also collaborated with an U.S. Department of Education study to develop a new measure, the “Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods Scale.”

During Phase II, 61 biological and social African American fathers of Head Start children were interviewed by trained African American male interviewers. Using the new quantitative measure developed in Phase I, fathers reported on their frequency of using various strategies to protect children from neighborhood dangers. Correlation matrices and factor analysis were used to refine the measure, producing five subscales of protective strategies. Regression analyses were conducted to examine the best predictors (e.g., psychological well-being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, social support, and child’s sex) of paternal strategies.

Fathers were found to employ five major protective strategies: supervise children and teach personal safety; teach home and neighborhood safety; reduce exposure to violent media; arm and protect family; and engage in community activism. Authoritative and permissive parenting practices, depression, and social support predicted use of supervision and teaching personal safety. Authoritative parenting, permissiveness, and depression also predicted father’s likelihood of teaching children home and neighborhood safety. Child’s sex was the only predictor of “reduce exposure to violent media,” with fathers of sons more likely to reduce

exposure. Depression and social support were the best predictors of father's likelihood of arming and protecting his family. Lastly, authoritative parenting practices and social support predicted father's engagement in community activism. Implications for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers are discussed.

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THEIR CHILDREN FROM COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

by

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## DEDICATION

To Head Start fathers and their children –

It is my hope that the information presented in this study is accurate and that my interpretations serve this group of fathers well.

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## Chapter I

### **Introduction**

A recent report from the National Academy of Science Head Start Research Roundtable (Beyond the Blueprint: Directions for Research on Head Start's Families, 1996) emphasized the need for Head Start to “pay specific attention to the effects of violent environments on Head Start and its families” (p. 7). The report stressed the toll that community and family violence is currently taking on Head Start families and staff. Head Start children and families are experiencing serious mental health consequences as a result of the combined impact of chronic poverty and violence (Phillips & Cabrera, 1996). Roundtable participants and other Head Start educators have identified important directions for research in this area, including assessing the extent of Head Start family exposure to community violence; determining the ways in which families currently cope with violence; and identifying the family functioning variables that predict more positive developmental and socioemotional outcomes for young children in violent neighborhoods (Phillips & Cabrera, 1996). Such information is critical to developing Head Start intervention strategies that will reduce the adverse outcomes associated with pervasive violence exposure.

Recent research has begun to investigate the role of mothers and teachers in helping children cope with violence in their communities. For example, in late 1996, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) funded a University of Maryland study to

examine how mothers and Head Start staff work to promote positive behavioral outcomes for African American preschoolers at risk for exposure to neighborhood violence (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996). However, there are no published existing studies that explore the strategies employed by fathers to socialize, protect, and support their children in violent environments.

Over the last decade, Head Start has shown growing interest in how fathers participate in young children's socialization and development. A 1987 national Head Start task force on parent involvement recommended the critical need for more research focusing on nonresidential fathers and other significant males involved with mothers of Head Start children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1987). Moreover, a 1989 Silver Ribbon Panel of the National Head Start Association recommended that Head Start develop strategies to strengthen the involvement of fathers in their programs (National Head Start Association, 1989). More recently, the Head Start Research Roundtable report called for more research on fathers and family members other than mothers (Phillips & Cabrera, 1996). Although Head Start has been advocating for increased fatherhood research for a decade, there continues to be a dearth of literature examining the involvement of fathers in Head Start or other early childhood programs (Levine, 1993).

Another shortcoming of the current literature on fatherhood and fathers within the Head Start program is the failure to examine the diverse population of fathers. Research investigating African American father involvement in the lives of young children is especially sparse (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1996; McAdoo, 1993).

Most of the existing literature on African American fathers tends to focus on fathering deficits or the negative side of fatherhood (e.g., father-absence, “dead-beat dads”), and does little to advance our understanding of how many African American fathers nurture, teach, and protect their preschool children (McAdoo, 1993).

To address the shortcomings in the current body of Head Start literature, this study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods to explore the roles played by African American fathers of Head Start children living in violent communities. More specifically, this study: 1) used qualitative methods to identify the strategies fathers used to protect children from neighborhood violence; 2) collaborated with a larger DOE study (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996) to develop a new measure of parenting in violent neighborhoods; 3) employed the new measure to quantitatively examine fathering strategies; 4) determined if the strategies used by fathers differed as a function of the sex of their child; and 5) examined the ability of individual, familial, and community variables (e.g., psychological well-being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, social support, and child’s sex) to predict fathers’ protective strategies.

## Chapter II

### **Review of Literature**

Community violence has become so widespread in the United States that it has been targeted as a major public health problem by the Healthy People 2000 Objectives (USDHHS/PHS, 1992). As a result of this national epidemic, growing numbers of families – especially families with limited incomes – are forced to rear their young children in neighborhoods plagued by violence, crime, and drug activity (Randolph, Koblinsky, & Roberts, 1996). These families fear the effects of chronic violence on their young children (Holland, Koblinsky, & Anderson, 1995; Phillips & Cabrera, 1996). Living in a violent environment not only leaves families vulnerable to direct exposure to violent events such as robberies, carjackings, and physical assaults, but also to indirect exposure such as witnessing a shooting or stabbing or knowing a victim (Hill, Hawkins, Raposo, & Carr, 1995; USDHHS/PHS, 1992).

Researchers have suggested that both direct and indirect exposure to violence can have devastating effects on young children's growth and development (Holland et al., 1995). For example, children living in drug-infested, violent neighborhoods may develop aggressive, impulsive, self-protective behaviors that may interfere with their acquisition of such values as cooperation and empathy (Randolph et al., 1996). Pervasive violence exposure may also impair young children's development of security, autonomy, and self-esteem. Children may come to mistrust their parents and other significant adults (e.g., relatives/kin, teachers, police officers) because they may

perceive such adults as incapable of protecting them from harm (Randolph et al., 1996). Moreover, exposure to chronic violence may jeopardize preschool children's ability to learn and achieve in school (Gouvis, 1995). Children's preoccupation with violent events may distract them from the learning process and limit their ability to develop the direction and self-control needed for school success (Slaby, Roedell, Arezzo, & Hendrix, 1995). Exposure to serious violence may also increase the likelihood that these children will commit serious acts of violence in the future (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994; Lauritsen, Laub, & Sampson, 1992).

Community violence may not only directly impair children's functioning, mental health, and development, but may also hinder the ability of parents and teachers to protect children and help them deal with violence-related stressors and other negative life events (Cicchetti & Rizley, 1981). Although recent studies have begun to investigate the strategies mothers and teachers use to personally cope with community violence and to mediate the effects of violence on Head Start children, little is known about the strategies used by fathers. Research on fathers has long suggested that fathers play a significant role in the cognitive and socioemotional development of their preschool children (Lamb, 1976; Radin, 1981). Yet, there is a dearth of literature on how fathers of Head Start and other young children prepare their preschoolers to cope with community violence.

### **Prevalence and Effects of Community Violence Exposure**

Research examining community violence exposure among children has typically focused on school age and adolescent children (e.g., Martinez & Richters,

1993). However, recent studies have found that preschoolers are also experiencing or witnessing violent incidents in their neighborhoods. In one study of primarily low-income families interviewed at a Boston-based pediatric clinic, Taylor, Zuckerman, Harik, and Groves (1994) found that 10% of the children were reported by their mothers to have witnessed a shooting or stabbing by five years of age and nearly half of the children had heard gunshots. In another study conducted in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. area, Head Start mothers reported that their children had been directly threatened or been a victim of violence (including being bullied or chased by older children) an average of twice within the past year (Holland et al., 1995). More than two-thirds of the mothers also indicated that they had heard gunshots in their neighborhood during the same time period. The study further found that mothers are not the only adults who are aware of young children's violence exposure. Preschool teachers reported a rising incidence of children discussing guns, knives, and their fears of drug dealers (Koblinsky, Holland, & Anderson, 1995). Other educators have likewise observed preschoolers acting out shootings, robberies, and funerals in their classroom's dramatic play area ("Saving Youth from Violence," 1994; Wallach, 1993).

Researchers have also begun to examine the effects of violence exposure on children's behavior. Most of these studies are clinical and anecdotal in nature, but clearly suggest that children who witness violence may experience a variety of cognitive and behavioral problems. Symptoms associated with violence exposure include: aggressive acting out and poor impulse control (Bell, 1991; Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; Garbarino, 1993); regression and depression (e.g., Garbarino, Dubrow,

Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992; Martinez & Richters, 1993; Osofsky, Wewers, Hann, & Fick, 1993); exaggerated levels of fear and anxiety (e.g., Garbarino, et al., 1992; Pynoos et al., 1987); post traumatic stress disorder (Drell, Siegel, & Gaensbauer, 1993); denial and emotional numbing (e.g., Terr, 1989); grief and loss reactions (Garbarino et al., 1992; Pynoos et al., 1987); and impaired school performance, memory, and concentration (Gardner, 1971). Some researchers speculate that community violence may have an especially deleterious effect on preschoolers who are developing a sense of trust, security, and autonomy, while lacking the language and cognitive skills to discuss and cope with stressful life events (Holland et al., 1995; Taylor et al., 1994).

### **Importance of Families**

Parents are the most salient figures in the lives of most young children and therefore have the greatest potential to protect young children from the ill effects of community violence. Research in war-torn countries, for example, consistently identifies parents as the most important factor in protecting children from the emotional effects of exposure to violent events (Pynoos, 1993). However, parents living in violent communities are not immune to violence exposure, and may experience even greater levels of violence than their children (Lorion & Saltzman, 1993). Parents may not only become angry, frightened, and traumatized by exposure to violence, but may also experience depression, anxiety, denial, and reduced feelings of self-efficacy as a result of their inability to provide a safe environment for their families (e.g., Garbarino, Kostelny, & Dubrow, 1991; Lorion & Saltzman, 1993; Osofsky et al., 1993).

Despite living in violent neighborhoods, some parents exhibit coping and parenting behaviors that may buffer children from the impact of violence exposure. For example, in their study of 10 mothers of preschool children living in Chicago public housing, Garbarino et al. (1991) found that mothers reported using active behavioral coping strategies to deal with violence in their neighborhoods, such as keeping children physically close and restricting their play. Mothers also reported developing rules to keep their children safe, including keeping the lights off, not sitting by windows, not bothering anyone, staying together at all times, and going to specific locations in their houses (e.g., closets) when they hear gunfire.

Two other studies conducted in the Washington, D.C. area investigated how parents have attempted to protect their preschool and school-age children from community violence. Holland et al. (1995) found that the most common strategies employed by Head Start mothers in violent neighborhoods included restricting neighborhood contact, providing constant supervision, teaching practical household safety skills, developing a structured home environment, praying, and thinking positive thoughts. A second study of community violence (Hill et al., 1995) examined the coping strategies of African American mothers of children in the fourth through sixth grades. Findings revealed that mothers used coping strategies differentially as a function of their education, financial resources, and degree of violence within the community. Specifically, mothers with some college education who lived in lower violence areas preferred community activism as a coping strategy, whereas mothers with lower incomes and education living in high violence neighborhoods preferred

relying on prayer and using active safety practices (e.g., keeping an eye out for loiterers in the neighborhood, staying out of dangerous places). Mothers who had been personally victimized or who had witnessed severe community violence (e.g., homicides, physical assault) became more isolated, practicing active safety measures and refraining from trying to change the condition of violence in their communities.

Although researchers are beginning to systematically study the various coping strategies used by parents to keep their young children safe, the vast majority of existing research focuses exclusively on mothers. No published study of parenting in violent neighborhoods includes fathers. Research is greatly needed to determine how fathers protect their young children and help them survive the impact of life in violent environments. Studies are also needed to determine whether or not parents employ differential coping strategies as a function of the sex of their child (Randolph et al., 1996).

### **Research on Fathers**

The existing research on fathers' influence on child development has tended to focus on three major areas: sex-role development; psychological adjustment and social competence; and cognitive development. According to Levine (1993), early studies on the role of fathers in sex-role development conducted in the mid-1960s and 1970s presumed that the father's role in the family was to provide an appropriate sex-role model for his children. These studies found that warmth and nurturance from the father – rather than masculine traits – were associated with masculine preferences and behaviors in sons (e.g., Lamb, 1986; Mussen & Rutherford, 1963; Sears, Maccoby, &

Levin, 1957). Similarly, a close affectionate relationship with both parents, but especially with fathers, was associated with more “feminine” interests in daughters (Mussen & Rutherford, 1963). A generation later, when androgynous definitions of masculinity and femininity were considered more culturally desirable, father’s warmth and nurturance were associated with less traditionally sex-stereotyped perceptions of male and female roles among both sons and daughters (Levine, 1993; Radin & Sagi, 1982).

Other research on social competence and cognitive development has likewise found that a nurturant paternal style is associated with greater social competence and cognitive development in sons. However, paternal nurturance has not been found to be as directly related to social and cognitive competence in daughters. For example, one study found that demanding and challenging fathers raised the most independent, socially competent daughters (Baumrind, 1978). Other studies of preschool daughters’ cognitive functioning have found that a father’s high expectations of his preschool daughter’s future academic achievement are related to daughter’s competence in mathematics (Epstein & Radin, 1975; Radin, 1981). Unfortunately, as noted by Levine (1993), the majority of the extant literature on father involvement is limited because few studies have focused specifically on the involvement of low-income fathers, the group who are most likely to have preschool children in Head Start. Additionally, few researchers have focused on father involvement among African Americans, even though African American children comprise approximately 40% of the Head Start population (Levine, 1993).

One factor that may contribute to the lack of research on Head Start fathers is their low level of involvement in many parent education programs. In one of the few studies to focus specifically on father involvement in Head Start, Gary, Beatty, and Weaver (1987) surveyed 118 fathers and 227 mothers (the majority African American) at a Head Start program in Washington, D.C.. Nearly three-fourths of the fathers reported that they participated in Head Start activities only a few times a year or not at all. Despite fathers' relatively low participation rates, the researchers reported an overwhelmingly high consensus about the desirability of getting fathers more involved in Head Start. When asked about the importance of father involvement, the majority of fathers (97%), mothers (98%), and staff (100%) felt that father involvement was either "important" or "very important."

### **Research on African American Fathers**

Despite heightened interest in paternal influences on child development and involvement in child care over the last thirty years, research on the roles that African American fathers play in socializing, supporting, and protecting their young children is sparse (McAdoo, 1988; Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1990). Existing studies generally have compared African American fathers with men from other racial/ethnic groups (Fagan, 1996; Stier & Tienda, 1993). However, without a cohesive body of literature devoted to the noncomparative study of African American fathers, stereotypes abound. Whitehead (1997) maintains that "mainstream educational, research, and media institutions have consistently depicted black men as 'irresponsible' in matters of the family" (p. 423). Fagan (1996) also notes that the African American

father is often seen as “uninterested and uninvolved” in the care and socialization of his children (p. 8).

The few existing studies of African American fathers, however, do not support these stereotypes. For example, in the late 1970s, Ericksen, Yancey, and Ericksen (1979) reported that middle-class African American fathers were more involved in household tasks and childcare than their white counterparts. McAdoo (1979) also reported that the predominant mode of interaction between middle-class African American fathers and their preschool sons and daughters involved nurturance. More recently, McAdoo (1988) found that middle class African American husbands and wives share equally in making decisions about child rearing practices. A descriptive study of fathers’ roles in African American families also reported that the majority of men saw child care as a responsibility of both parents and that most men considered diapering, feeding, bathing, and dressing children as activities to be shared by both parents (Hyde & Texidor, 1988).

Other researchers, who have defined fatherhood more broadly, have also noted the prevalence of African American surrogate or “social” fathers involved in the lives of young African American children (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1996). Social fathers can include stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers, mothers’ boyfriends, and other significant males who play a role in the lives of children. These social fathers are often involved with children who may lack daily contact with their biological fathers. Such “fictive” fathers have historically played an important role in African American

families, reflecting a culture with strong traditions of role flexibility and concern for children (Billingsley, 1968; Doherty et al., 1996; Hill, 1993).

Other recent research also finds that fathers or father-figures who are not officially living in the household may be “unofficially available” to their children (Levine, 1993). For example, in a study of 14 Head Start programs located throughout the U.S., Levine and his colleagues found that a man was present – whether a father, boyfriend, or other male relative – in approximately 60% of Head Start families (Levine, Murphy, & Wilson, 1992). Similar statistics were also found for approximately 100 District of Columbia families participating in the first year of a U.S. Department of Education project, “The Role of Family and School in Promoting Positive Developmental Outcomes for Young Children in Violent Neighborhoods” (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996). In this group of mothers, 30% reported that their Head Start child’s biological father resided in the same household, and 57% reported that the father saw or talked to his child every day or several times a week. Both Levine’s research (Levine et al., 1992) and the preliminary findings of the U.S. Department of Education study suggest that a majority of fathers – biological and social – are involved in the lives of Head Start children.

Clearly there is a need for additional research on the ways in which African American fathers, and particularly those of low socioeconomic status, contribute to the care and socialization of their young children. Ahmeduzzaman and Roopnarine (1992) maintain that future investigation of African American fathering is critical: 1) to identify within-culture variations in father-child relationships among African

Americans; and 2) to provide culture-specific information on father-child relationships among African Americans in order to inform educators and policymakers about factors that may influence the socialization of young African American children. This information is needed for the successful development and implementation of violence prevention/intervention programs designed to help parents and schools mediate the effects of community violence on preschool children. Such research may also play an important role in the development of programs and policies that reward fathers' positive and active participation in children's care and development.

### **Conceptual Framework for the Study of African American Fathers**

According to Hill (1993), the study of African American families has traditionally been grounded in a "conventional" approach, where African American families were examined in a superficial, unbalanced, pathological, and atheoretical manner. Such an approach has several fundamental limitations. First, the conventional perspective reflects a superficial treatment of African American families, where such families are not considered to be important enough to warrant in-depth empirical research. For example, Hill (1993) cites the results of a content analysis of the special issue of *Family Relations* (October, 1980) entitled "Family, Stress, Coping, and Adaptation" where no articles reported African American families in their samples and only a few included African American families in their discussion.

Second, the conventional perspective uncritically accepts the assumptions of the "deficit model," which attributes most problems of African American families to internal pathologies or inadequacies rather than to external factors or social-political-

historical considerations. Daniel P. Moynihan's 1965 report, "The Negro Family: A Case for National Action," (in Rainwater and Yancey, 1967), is perhaps the best example of a contemporary work utilizing the deficit perspective. In the report, Moynihan depicted low-income African American families as "a tangle of pathology" because of disproportionately high rates of single-parent families, poverty, unemployment, welfare reciprocity, and crime. Although some external factors, such as racism and economic recession, were recognized to have contributed to the pathologies of African American families, the Moynihan Report concluded that the internal matriarchal structure of African American families was the root cause of the problems in the African American community (Hill, 1993).

Yet a third limitation of the conventional perspective is that it fails to incorporate new theoretical approaches and research findings that challenge the basic tenets of the deficit model and capture the totality and diversity of African American family life. According to Hill (1993), unbalanced, unsystematic, ad hoc research often leads to arbitrary, negative, internally-oriented explanations of African American families that are not empirically substantiated. Such atheoretical research can impede the development of viable policies, programs, services, and coping strategies that successfully strengthen African American family functioning.

Following a holistic framework advanced by W.E.B. Du Bois (1898) a century ago, Hill (1993) and others (e.g., Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992; Billingsley, 1968; McAdoo, 1993) recognized the critical need for researchers to view African American family functioning as dependent upon various societal forces, social policies,

and individual, familial, and community level factors, as well as the complex interactions among these variables. Such a holistic approach to studying African American families is consistent with a growing scholarly movement to define fathering in terms of a “generative” model rather than a deficit model (Allen & Connors, 1997; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997; McAdoo, 1993). For too long, Hawkins and Dollahite (1997) argue, the existence of a deficit paradigm in fatherhood research has contributed to a diminishing culture of fatherhood, where fathers are portrayed as inept, emotionally challenged, and incapable of adapting to sociohistorical change. Blankenhorn's (1995) *Fatherless America* is an example of a scholarly effort utilizing the deficit approach to understand fatherhood, where Blankenhorn discusses “the shrinking American father” and “the rise of volitional fatherlessness.” Contrary to the deficit model, the “generative fathering” perspective redefines fathering as “a complex and emergent process that accentuates men’s personal growth vis-a-vis the child’s well-being” (Marsiglio & Day, 1997, p. 6). The generative fathering perspective recognizes that the dynamic father-child relationship is reciprocal in nature and is affected by individual, familial, and community influences.

A conceptual framework that is particularly relevant to the generative study of African American fathers is the cultural ecology model (Ogbu, 1981). The cultural ecology model stresses the need to examine patterns of socialization and parenting competencies based on cultural contexts that are central to the attitudes, skills, and values of parents within a specific culture or subculture (Ogbu, 1983). Therefore, an ecological approach to studying African American fathers requires an understanding of

how the African American culture directly affects the ways in which African American men view their family experiences, what actions they take as fathers and family members, and even when they decide to initiate these actions (Allen & Connor, 1997). The ecological approach recognizes that African American men operate as members of larger kin networks and communities and that the functioning of these larger systems influences men's ability to nurture and provide for their families (Allen & Connor, 1997). According to McAdoo (1993), this focus on individual and familial experiences within a cultural context provides a more balanced picture of roles and functioning in African American family life. Furthermore, it contributes to an “ecology of human development” (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) that may help to describe, explain, and predict the parenting practices that African American fathers use to socialize, teach, and protect their young children.

### **Individual, Familial, and Community Variables**

This study examined five individual, familial, and community-level variables that may be related to the strategies fathers use to keep their Head Start children safe from community violence. These five independent variables include: 1) psychological well-being; 2) history of violence exposure; 3) parenting practices; 4) social support; and 5) sex of the child.

#### *Psychological Well-Being*

Father's psychological well-being is one variable that may affect the nature of paternal involvement in helping young children prepare for and deal with violence exposure. Research on depression has shown that maternal depression may have

adverse consequences for children, depleting the energy mothers have to nurture their children's cognitive and psychological functioning (Taylor et al., 1994). Several studies have also determined that depressed mothers, as compared to nondepressed mothers, have a greater risk of having young children with aggressive behavior problems (Downey & Coyne, 1990; Zahn-Waxler, Iannotti, Cummings, & Denham, 1990). Currently there is little information about the psychological health of low-income fathers with young children. However, one can speculate that Head Start fathers who are experiencing depression may have fewer emotional resources for active involvement in helping children cope with community violence.

#### *History of Violence Exposure*

History of violence exposure is another variable that may influence the manner in which fathers help their children cope with community violence. Some violence theories suggest that through a process of direct imitation, individuals who are victimized by violence in childhood or later life may adopt aggression as a coping strategy (e.g., Widom, 1989). Such a strategy may, in turn, be transmitted to children who model parental behavior or who are directly taught to use physical aggression as a protective technique in violent neighborhoods. Fathers who have a history of being victimized by violence and who themselves use physical aggression as a strategy for conflict resolution may be more likely to encourage children's use of aggressive behavior in peer conflict situations than fathers with little history of violence exposure or use. Researchers investigating the role of history of violence exposure have recently noted two problems with previous studies in this area, including the failure to study at-

risk groups and the failure to disentangle the effects of experiencing, witnessing, and initiating violent behavior (Langinrichsen-Rohling & Neidig, 1995). Therefore, investigators exploring the relationship between aggression histories and selected parenting outcomes are encouraged to assess direct victimization, witnessing of violence, and personal engagement in aggressive/violent behavior.

### *Parenting Practices*

Parenting attitudes and practices also seem likely to affect the ways in which fathers equip their young children to deal with community violence. Baumrind (1967) identified three parenting typologies related to child behavior. Authoritative parenting practices include the expression of warmth, nurturance, and positive feelings toward the behavior of the child. Authoritative parents tend to value open communication, explain the reasons for rules, and invite their child to discuss her/his feelings. Reasoning, democratic decision-making, consistent discipline, and high maturity demands are hallmarks of this type of parenting (Baumrind, 1967). Researchers have found authoritative parenting styles to be related to children's competence, self-reliance, and compliance (Baumrind, 1971; Power & Chapieski, 1986). One can speculate that fathers who adopt authoritative parenting practices may make greater efforts to establish and explain rules for personal, home, and neighborhood safety than fathers who use other parenting practices.

Another dimension of the father-child relationship is authoritarian parenting. Authoritarian parenting involves the use of control, rule-making without any discussion with the child, coercive tactics, and physical punishment. Authoritarian parents often

discourage the independence of the child and utilize harsh discipline and physical punishment (Baumrind, 1971). Such rigid, coercive, power-assertive methods of control have been associated with child aggression and other adjustment problems, whereas flexible, inductive methods have been related to child competence and self-reliance (Baumrind, 1971; Power and Chapiesski, 1986). One can speculate that authoritarian fathers may restrict their children's exposure to the neighborhood in order to have greater control over their children and protect them from community violence. Moreover, these fathers may be more likely to encourage children's use of power-assertive techniques to resolve conflicts.

The third typology, permissive parenting, is characterized by parents who are nonpunishing, lack follow-through with discipline for the child, and allow for a wide variety of behaviors and self-expression. Permissive parents often fail to set limits and boundaries for their child and offer little guidance (Baumrind, 1971). These parents tend to make few demands for responsibility and allow their children to regulate their own behavior. Researchers of child development have found that permissive parenting is likely to produce children who are impulsive, aggressive, disliked by peers, and lacking in the ability to take responsibility and act independently (Baumrind, 1971; Holmbeck, 1994). One can speculate that permissive fathers of children living in violent contexts may make fewer attempts to teach their children personal, household, and neighborhood safety strategies and may be less likely to restrict children's neighborhood activity than parents who adopt other parenting styles.

Several studies have suggested that restrictive, aloof, rejecting parenting may be associated with child aggression and antisocial behavior, whereas nurturant, authoritative parenting may have a protective influence against the development of children's antisocial behavior (e.g., Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). Patterson and his colleagues have developed a model of children's antisocial behavior development based on social learning principles (Yoshikawa, 1994). According to this model, parents of aggressive and antisocial children first reinforce common low-level aversive behaviors, such as teasing, tantrums, and noncompliance. Children move on to more coercive interchanges with family members and peers as they learn or are taught to respond to aversive acts with aggressive counterattacks. These children come to view the world through a violent perspective, expecting others to react with anger and physical force and seeing hostile intent where it does not exist. This perspective contributes to unprovoked attacks on other children, resulting in a cycle of aggression and violence.

Patterson's theory is supported by structural equation analysis, which finds that parenting and family interaction variables account for 30-40% of the variance in children's antisocial behavior (Patterson, 1986). Thus, parents who reinforce verbal and physical aggression as a means of dealing with conflict situations may contribute to the development of children's antisocial behavior. Knowledge of the strategies fathers are using to help children cope with violence is important in developing parent education programs that will help children establish self control and constructive protective behaviors. Such interventions may also help to develop consistency in the

strategies that Head Start parents and teachers use to help children cope with aggressive or violent behavior.

### *Social Support*

Another variable that may affect fathers' anti-violence strategies is the social support they receive from family, friends, co-workers, church members, and other groups. Social support has been defined as emotional, instrumental, material, or informational assistance offered by members of a person's informal or formal (community agency, institution) networks (Dunst & Trivette, 1990). Support from extended networks has been found to bolster self-esteem (Taylor et al., 1990), enhance parent-child relationships (Crnic, Greenberg, Ragozin, Robinson, & Basman, 1983), and strengthen one's ability to deal with social problems (Sarason, Sarason, & Shearin, 1986). Thus, one can speculate that fathers who experience a high level of social support may be more proactive in developing and teaching individual, familial, and community safety procedures than fathers who lack such support. Fathers with limited social support may feel that the major way they can keep children safe in a violent neighborhood is to confine children to their home and/or severely restrict their outdoor play. Moreover, fathers may be less likely to engage in community activism (e.g., neighborhood watch patrols, neighborhood clean-up activities) to reduce pervasive neighborhood violence without perceiving considerable support from their family members, friends, neighbors, schools, churches, community organizations, and local law enforcement.

### *Sex of Child*

Finally, researchers exploring parental strategies for teaching children how to deal with violence exposure should also consider the sex of the target child. Previous studies involving mainly white children suggest that parents of preschoolers are more likely to use physical or power-assertive styles of punishment with sons than with daughters, which may encourage sons to adopt the same tactics (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Smetana, 1988). Fathers are less likely to interpret fighting as aggressive behavior in their sons, so they may ignore it more than they do with daughters (Perry, Perry, & Weiss, 1989). Finally, fathers generally have more rigid ideas about gender roles than mothers and enforce them more strongly with young children (Wood, 1994). Such factors suggest that fathers may employ differential strategies in teaching preschool sons and daughters how to cope with violence. However, given the paucity of sex-role socialization literature involving African American fathers, there is a critical need for additional research examining the parenting practices of African American fathers with young sons and daughters.

## Research Questions

The current study appears to be the first investigation of the strategies African American low-income fathers use to help their children cope with community violence. As a result of the lack of previous empirical research in this area, it is difficult to hypothesize about the nature of paternal strategies or how various individual, familial, and community-level variables affect use of those strategies. Thus, no experimental hypotheses were developed for this study. However, the following research questions guided this research effort:

1. What are the various strategies African American fathers use to protect their Head Start children from community violence?
2. Do these strategies vary as a function of sex of the target child?
3. Do these strategies vary as a function of fathers' psychological well-being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, and amount of social support?

There were two phases to this study. During the first phase, focus group methodology was used to identify the strategies African American fathers use to protect their children from community violence. During this phase, the principal investigator also collaborated with the co-investigators of a larger Department of Education study conducted by Suzanne Randolph, Ph.D. and Sally Koblinsky, Ph.D. to develop a new quantitative measure of parenting in violent neighborhoods. This new measure was employed during the second phase of the study to examine father's protective strategies and to determine if those strategies differed as a function of the sex

of their preschool child. The second phase also examined individual, familial, and community variables (i.e., psychological well-being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, social support, and child's sex) that predicted fathers' protective strategies.

## Chapter III

### Phase I – Methods and Results

#### *Background and Overview of the Study*

The current study was funded by an ACYF/DHHS Head Start Research Scholars grant (No. 90YF0042) and the National Council on Family Relations Ruth Jewson Dissertation Award. This study collaborated with and was guided by a larger U.S. Department of Education (DOE) study at the University of Maryland, “The Role of Family and School in Promoting Positive Developmental Outcomes for Young Children in Violent Neighborhoods” (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996). Both studies worked in partnership with the United Planning Organization (UPO) and District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), two Head Start grantees in the District of Columbia, and Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS), a Head Start grantee in Maryland. The current study was also supported by the Significant Male Task Force and the Positive Men’s Coalition, two community-based groups sponsored by Head Start to increase the involvement and visibility of significant males in Washington, D.C. and Prince George’s County, Maryland Head Start programs, respectively.

There were two phases to the current study. During the first phase, study approval was sought and granted by the University of Maryland’s Internal Review Board (see Appendix A) and by the UPO, DCPS, and PGCPS Head Start Parent Policy Councils. A community advisory committee made up of Head Start fathers, Head Start staff, community leaders, and experts in the study of African American families and community violence then reviewed the design of the study and discussed pertinent

issues to be discussed at upcoming focus groups. These focus groups (three in total, N = 18) were conducted in the Spring of 1998 to explore the many strategies African American Head Start fathers use to help their children cope with community violence. Content analysis results of the focus group data were then used in a collaborative effort with the DOE study (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996) to develop a new measure, Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods Scale (PVNS). During Phase I, other measures of individual, familial, and community functioning were also identified, approved by the advisory committee, and incorporated into an interview questionnaire.

During the second phase of the study, the measures selected for the questionnaire (including the PVNS) were pilot-tested with 20 African American Head Start fathers and father-figures to assess measurement reliability, validity, and cultural sensitivity for use with the target population. After analyses of these preliminary data revealed the strong psychometric properties of the instruments, the questionnaire was administered to an additional 41 African American fathers and father-figures of Head Start children. Because no changes were made to the piloted questionnaire, the pilot sample (N = 20) was included in the final study to maximize sample size.

Following is a more detailed description of the methods and results sections for Phase I of the study. Chapter IV presents the methods and results sections of the second phase of the study.

## **Methods – Phase I**

### *Sample*

A total of 18 African American fathers participated in three focus groups. Ten participants were the biological fathers of at least one child currently enrolled in Head Start. The remaining eight participants fell into the “social father” category: three were stepfathers, two were uncles, and two were grandfathers of an enrolled Head Start child. One social father did not have a familial connection to any child enrolled in Head Start, but actively volunteered in the Head Start classroom in his neighborhood and saw himself as a role model in the community. Eleven fathers resided in the same home as the child, and seven lived either in the same neighborhood or close by. Fathers’ ages ranged from 24 to 47.

Two of the focus groups took place in southeast Washington, D.C.. The Washington, D.C. area has experienced increasing levels of violence (Advocates for Children and Youth, 1995). In comparison to the 50 states, the District of Columbia has had the highest juvenile crime rates in the nation since 1985 for children ages 10 to 17 years, the highest teen violent death rate since 1988, and the highest child death rate due to homicide since 1990 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1995). The third focus group was conducted in Prince George’s County, Maryland, which borders the District of Columbia and has also experienced growing rates of community violence (Advocates for Children and Youth, 1995). Between 1985-1988 and 1989-1992, the number of child deaths due to homicide increased 16% and the homicide rate for teens increased 65% (Advocates for Children and Youth, 1995). In 1992, Prince George’s County had

the fourth highest death rate due to homicide, suicide, and violent deaths of all counties in the state (Advocates for Children and Youth, 1995). Such statistics illustrate the growing rate of community violence in many Washington, D.C. and bordering Maryland neighborhoods, and suggest that a substantial number of families with preschoolers regularly confront such violence.

### *Measures*

Following the suggestions of Krueger (1994), this study used a focus group guide. This guide was adapted from the guide used with mothers in the larger DOE study (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996). The entire guide is presented in Appendix B. This guide was used as a script to facilitate the discussion of a series of issues, including neighborhood safety, protecting children from neighborhood violence, coping with neighborhood danger, and improving neighborhood safety.

### *Procedure*

A Head Start center from each of the three grantee organizations (e.g., UPO, DCPS, PGCPs) was selected for participation in the focus group phase of the study. Two of the focus group sessions were held in Washington, D.C. and the third was held in Prince George's County, Maryland. Fathers with children currently enrolled in Head Start and other significant males involved in center activities were identified and recruited by teachers and staff from the three Head Start centers. Once the focus group sessions were scheduled, the teachers/staff telephoned interested fathers and invited them to participate.

All three focus groups were co-facilitated by the principal investigator, a white female, and a Head Start grandfather, an African American male, who also served as President of the DCPS Head Start Parent Policy Council at the time of the study. The co-facilitator was introduced to the principal investigator by the President of the Significant Male Task Force during the initial advisory committee meeting. The co-facilitator was trained by the principal investigator to guide the focus group sessions and was also instrumental in post-focus group debriefings used to discuss and clarify focus group content.

Two African American male undergraduate students from the University of Maryland also played key roles during the focus group sessions. Both students were trained to record verbatim fathers' responses to focus group questions and also assisted with the administration of the consent to participate forms (See Appendix C). Once fathers were introduced to the study and agreed to participate, the session began. Each focus group took place at the fathers' Head Start center. Sessions lasted approximately two hours and were audio taped. Participants of the focus group sessions received a stipend of \$25 for their time and effort.

The audio tape recordings were transcribed by a research assistant. The transcriptions were checked against the student recorders' notes to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions and to clarify any confusing dialogue (e.g., when multiple fathers spoke at once). The transcriptions were then content analyzed to identify strategies used by fathers to protect their children from community violence.

The themes or strategies were analyzed independently by two raters. One rater, a white female, was the co-principal investigator of the larger DOE study (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996) and highly experienced in content analysis methodology. The other rater was an African American male undergraduate student participating in a summer research scholars program at the University of Maryland. As part of his research training, this rater reviewed existing qualitative studies of parenting in violent neighborhoods (e.g., Holland, 1996) and read relevant literature on qualitative coding techniques. Using the focus group transcripts, the raters first identified all possible strategies used by fathers to protect their children from neighborhood violence. Following the recommendations of Tesch (1990) and Baynard (1995), content themes or identified strategies were as specific as possible and the descriptive adequacy was constantly checked against new information. Throughout the analyses, room was left for the creation of new strategies based on data that were unique. Once the general themes were identified, the raters copied each response volunteered by fathers in focus group discussion of protective strategies onto an index card. The two raters sorted the cards into general thematic categories without jeopardizing the uniqueness of any one strategy. Interrater reliability was determined by calculating the percentage of times the raters were in agreement with the placement of a paternal response into a broader thematic category. Overall, the raters reached 92% agreement. When there was disagreement, the raters discussed the paternal response and came to agreement as to which category it best fit.

## Results – Phase I

### Focus Group Themes

Content analysis of the father focus groups identified a total of 12 strategies used by fathers to protect children from community violence. The strategies include: 1) supervising children; 2) teaching neighborhood and household safety skills; 3) teaching about real-life violence and its consequences; 4) teaching how to fight back; 5) teaching alternatives to violence; 6) reducing exposure to media violence; 7) confronting parents/children causing trouble; 8) keeping to oneself/doing nothing; 9) using prayer and positive thinking; 10) arming family for protection; 11) moving away from bad residential areas; and 12) engaging in community activism.

Following are focus group quotes that exemplify each of the categories of protective parenting practices.

#### 1. Supervise Children

Throughout the focus group meetings, many fathers spoke about the importance of supervising their children at all times. Fathers commented on the importance of watching their children everywhere – in the home, on the front steps, in the yard, and on the playground. These fathers always wanted to know where their children were just in case something “went down in the neighborhood” and they needed to “grab their kids up quick.” For example, one father said,

I always believe that they need to be supervised all the time. Regardless. I mean, if you let them go outside then you should be sittin' out there. Right there with them.

Another father stated,

I get frustrated...Kids are outside at 11-12 o'clock at night and [parents] leave their kids outside unattended...I never let my child play outside after dark.

Yet another father remarked,

Look, these kids are our future. We have to protect them at all times. I make sure I'm always present with these kids...

## **2. Teach Neighborhood and Household Safety Skills**

Besides child supervision, many fathers also mentioned the importance of teaching their children how to be safe at home and in the neighborhood. When discussing household safety, many fathers noted teaching their children to stay away from the stove or other dangerous appliances, to dial 911 in an emergency, and to avoid opening the front door for anyone. Several fathers also discussed teaching their children to stay away from windows, especially at night. As one father remarked,

I would say [my biggest fear for my child's safety is] getting hit by a stray bullet or something. You know, being somewhere, maybe the wrong place at the wrong time...You let your kid sit in the window, you let them play around the window. I got a fear that they're gonna get hit...and I live on the third floor! And it's crazy, man, we don't even let the kids play in the house. If something happens to that kid, you're going to say damn I wish it wouldn't have happened like that. [But] it happens, everyday.

Fathers also talked about teaching their children how to be safe in the neighborhood.

For example, one father commented about his experiences preparing his children for confrontations with drug dealers who often approach children of all ages to buy drugs.

He stated,

And these kids that hang back there, you know, the drug dealers, have offered my children drugs. You know, and my kids know better because I sit with them and teach them just about everyday...That's why we, as adults, have to be on the alert and make sure we teach our children accordingly because the strongest influence in a child's life comes from the home. That's where it starts. If we don't teach them in the homes once they step outside the homes they're susceptible to anything.

### **3. Teach about Real-Life Violence and its Consequences**

Other concerned fathers talked about the importance of teaching children about the real-life violence that exists in the neighborhood. Fathers described the dangers of guns and the painful consequences of shootings for victims and their families. As one father commented,

But why hide violence? Teach it in this preschool right here. Have a TV. Teach them that that's a role...you can't hide it. When you hide it and so forth and when they get out there and see it, it's going to be a shock to them. But if you start teaching it to them now and so forth, explain it to them, they'll be ready. Okay, I'm not going to sit up here and lie. Me and my son will sit down [to watch a movie with violent content]...He'll say dad who's the good one and who's the bad one. That's how I teach him. We'll sit down there and we'll watch a movie and so forth because I'm not going to hide the violent part because it's out here.

Other fathers also used personal experiences to emphasize their own and their children's vulnerability to violence. As one father shared,

I got shot between the bus stop and the payphone. And my son was like, 'Daddy, why did you get that bullet hole in your back?' I said, 'I got shot.' You know, and guns ain't nothing to play with...So that's why I say you have to be careful where you are, where you going, and, uh, you just have to be careful.

#### **4. Teach How to Fight Back**

Besides teaching about the realities of neighborhood violence, some fathers also mentioned the need to teach their children how to fight back so that other children won't think they're "weak" or "scared." One father said,

I don't want nobody to be hittin' on [my daughter]... I tell her, 'you stand up for your rights, you hit them back.'

Some fathers also felt that Head Start teachers should be supporting parents' efforts by teaching preschoolers self defense tactics in the classroom.

#### **5. Teach Alternatives to Violence**

Many fathers also talked about the importance of teaching children peaceful alternatives to resolving conflicts, like walking away from a dispute or seeking out an adult for help. One father, concerned about his daughter's aggressive behavior, stated,

Her first instinct is pow – to pop somebody. I talked to her about that and she's going to have to stop or one day, you know, you going to cause somebody to get hurt...you or that person that you hit. And then, you know, it's hard to talk cause you know we have three boys and she's a girl... You know, I'm trying to work on her attitude.

#### **6. Reduce Exposure to Violent Media**

Although some fathers discussed using media as a teaching tool to educate about violence in the community, others felt it important to reduce their child's exposure to violent television shows and video games. One focus group participant said,

To be honest with you, I monitor the TV. I try not to let 'em watch that...I try to monitor the TV very much. Some programs that I even like to see right, I got two or three TVs in my house. I go up to my

room and watch it. I won't let them come in and see it – the shooting and stuff like that.

Another father who also attempted to monitor his child's exposure to violent TV programming acknowledged that this strategy is not always easy to carry out because of the amount of violent content on TV. He said,

And you know, even though I monitor what he watches on TV, when a commercial or anything comes on and it happens to be about violence or something, it's like you lose.

### **7. Confront Parents and Children Causing Trouble**

Yet another strategy discussed by fathers was confronting parents and older teenagers hanging out in the neighborhood causing trouble. As one focus group participant stated,

Now, I got on the basketball court with my team [of young children] and I said, 'Look, when I come over here with my teams, ain't no weed going to be smoked, ain't no cussing going to be going on.' I said, 'we come to run ball.' And they give you respect if you give them respect, too. I mean...it's a tone of voice, it wouldn't have been like, 'Well, gee guys, you know, I have some kids here and they want to play some basketball.' You see the situation and you carry yourself accordingly.

### **8. Keep to Oneself/Do Nothing**

Although some fathers mentioned confrontation as a strategy for protecting their children from exposure to drugs and community violence, other fathers felt very strongly that confrontive strategies were too dangerous. Many talked about feeling paralyzed by community dangers and advocated keeping to oneself as a protective strategy. For example, one father said,

I don't get involved. It's not like it used to be. I go out there and say something and you know...I could wind up shot...you understand what I'm saying? I go into my house, now, and I make sure the kids are okay. I get all the kids in one room and I'm not going out there

because the simple fact is that if he has a gun, I don't have one...Now, if I go out there and say the wrong thing, even if I just go out there to make sure everybody's all right, you know, the first thing they're gonna say? 'Well, what you doing out here' – looking to see who I am or something like that. The next day, I'm gonna be going home and be dead or something like that.

## **9. Use Prayer and Positive Thinking**

On a positive note, one father said that his community had made some good strides to address violence and protect young children. He revealed his use of prayer and positive thinking about the violence problem, stating, “I just pray that it continues to get better.” Many fathers also talked about the importance of faith and religiosity in their lives, even if they did not articulate specific use of prayer or positive thinking to protect their children.

## **10. Arm Family for Protection**

During the focus groups, many fathers discussed their frustration and ambivalence about how best to protect their families. Many did not feel comfortable “packing a weapon” or having a gun in the house, especially with young children around. However, some fathers mentioned that owning a gun made them feel safer and better able to protect their children and family if something “bad was going down in the neighborhood.” One father stated,

I'm gonna be honest with you all, okay. I got a gun in my house. But, uh, I don't know. I guess it's like an up and down kinda thing. Sometimes, you know, the atmosphere around here is really relaxed. Other times, you know, you can just feel it – the tension. Something is gettin' ready to kick off.

Another father even described a situation where he chased some older kids causing trouble out of his backyard with a shotgun.

### **11. Move Away from Bad Residential Areas**

In order to deal with community violence, several fathers mentioned trying to move their families out of the neighborhood. One father talked about growing up in a violent neighborhood and emphasized that he did not want his children to relive his experiences. He stated,

I know I definitely do not want my kids to go through what I went through, you know...Let me tell you how it is. My mom's still living where we grew up. This is twenty-five years. I had to get [my kids] away from there.

### **12. Engage in Community Activism**

And finally, other fathers reported that they did not want to move away from their neighborhoods or that moving was not an option for them. Moving away would often mean leaving their family networks, their friends, and other conveniences (like access to public transportation and being close to work). Instead, these fathers discussed a need to become active in their communities and to take their neighborhoods back from the drug dealers. One particularly active father stated,

If I make a difference from 8 in the morning to 5 in the evening and he makes his from 5 in the evening...We as a community have made a difference. I can't be here 24-7, but if we as a community do what we are supposed to do, maybe we can make that difference.

### **Construction of the Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods Scale (PVNS)**

Construction of the “Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods Scale” was a collaborative effort. Findings from this study’s focus groups were merged with focus group findings from Head Start mothers who participated in the DOE study (Koblinsky, Roberts, Letiecq, & Randolph, 1998). Drawing from both sets of data and two previous studies involving mothers of children in violent neighborhoods (Holland et al., 1995; Hill et al., 1995), the investigators generated scale items that fit into the twelve categories listed above. The initial scale comprised 54 items describing parenting strategies. Parents were to indicate their frequency of using each strategy on a scale using the following options: never (0), once in a while (1), about half the time (2), very often (3), and always (4). Table 1 presents the items of the PVNS scale organized within conceptual strategies.

Table 1

Initial PVNS Items by Conceptual Strategy Used to Protect Head Start Children  
from Community Violence

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PVNS Items by Conceptual Strategy

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Supervise children

3. I allow my preschool child to walk alone in the neighborhood.<sup>R</sup>
9. I keep my preschool child inside when not in school to avoid community violence.
10. I tell my child to stay with a friend whenever s/he is outside.
13. I permit my child to play at playgrounds only when directly supervised by me or another adult.
25. I keep my child busy with TV and video games so s/he won't want to go outside.

Teach neighborhood and household safety skills

1. I talk to my child about safe routes for walking in the neighborhood.
7. I tell my child to avoid drug dealers or troublemakers in the neighborhood.
11. I keep my child away from windows, especially at night.
19. I tell my child to avoid eye contact with other children.
23. I teach my child specific things to do when s/he hears gunshots, such as laying on the floor or going to a certain place in our home.
30. I allow my preschool child to answer the front door when I'm not in the front room.<sup>R</sup>
46. I teach my preschool child how to dial 911.

Teach about real-life violence and its consequences

4. I prepare my child to handle violence by reading books or telling stories about how to settle conflict peacefully.
18. I teach my child about the real-life pain that comes from violence such as bleeding or dying when you get shot.
20. I prepare my child to handle violence by having her/him watch violent movies or shows like "Cops."
41. I talk to my child about the violence that happens in the neighborhood.

Teach how to fight back

14. I tell my child that you have to fight back when others hit you so they won't think you're weak.
24. I tell my preschool child to fight back in order to be safe.
40. I tell my preschool child it's okay to hit another child if the other child hits her/him first.
43. I teach my preschool child how to fight so s/he can protect her/himself.

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<sup>R</sup> Reversed item.

Table 1. Continued

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PVNS Items by Conceptual Strategy

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Teach alternatives to violence

- 5. I teach my preschool child to forgive and forget when another child picks on her/him.
- 12. I teach my child to tell the teacher if another child picks on her/him.
- 16. I point out some of the good things in our neighborhood to my preschool child.
- 21. I teach my child to tell me if another child picks on her/him.
- 27. I teach my child to walk away if another child hits her/him.
- 33. I teach my preschool child about the strengths and values of African American families and communities.
- 39. I teach my child to respond with calm, firm words when another child picks on her/him.

Reduce exposure to violent media

- 42. I limit my preschool child's TV viewing time to 1-2 hours a day.
- 49. I allow my preschool child to watch TV or movies that have violent scenes.<sup>R</sup>
- 51. I keep my preschool child from playing video games that have a lot of violence.

Confront parents/children causing trouble

- 15. I try to correct older children in the neighborhood who are causing trouble.
- 45. I let dealers and other troublemakers know they should leave my child(ren) alone.
- 47. I threaten parents whose children pick on my child.

Keep to oneself/do nothing

- 2. I stay to myself to protect my family from neighborhood violence.
- 26. I don't report neighborhood violence because I don't want to get my family involved.
- 34. I don't report neighborhood violence because I'm afraid the troublemakers might come after my family.

Use prayer and positive thinking

- 8. I think positive thoughts about my preschool child's safety.
- 22. I pray for my preschool child's safety when s/he is out of the house.
- 53. I pray that God will protect my child from violence.

Arm family for protection

- 29. I keep something ready to use as a weapon, like a baseball bat, in case someone breaks into my home.
- 31. I keep a gun in the house to protect my children and my family.
- 44. I carry a weapon, like mace or a knife, in case I need to protect myself or my child.

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<sup>R</sup> Reversed item.

Table 1. Continued

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PVNS Items by Conceptual Strategy

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Move away from bad residential areas

- 32. I take my child to parks, restaurants, malls, or other activities to get her/him away from the neighborhood.
- 38. I save my money to move my family to a safer neighborhood.
- 48. I send my preschool child away to friends/relatives on weekends or specific times of the year to be safer.

Engage in community activism

- 6. I help clean up our neighborhood (trash, graffiti, needles) to improve children's safety.
- 17. I keep an eye out for people who don't belong in the neighborhood.
- 28. I talk to other parents about ways we can keep our children safe.
- 35. I talk to people at a neighborhood church about ways to improve children's safety.
- 36. I ask community groups or businesses to do things that will make children safer.
- 37. I call the police when I hear gunshots.
- 50. I participate in neighborhood watch or other groups that try to reduce neighborhood violence.
- 52. I call the police when I see a fight/violent incident in the neighborhood.
- 54. I take turns with other parents doing things that keep preschool children safe, like watching them at the playground.

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<sup>R</sup> Reversed item.

## Chapter IV

### **Phase II – Methods and Results**

#### *Sample*

For Phase II, a total of 61 African American biological and social fathers (including stepfathers, mothers' boyfriends, uncles, grandfathers, and other significant males) involved in the lives of Head Start children (ages 3 to 5 years) participated in the study. All fathers resided in the Washington, D.C. or Prince George's County, Maryland areas initially targeted by the Department of Education study noted earlier (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996). The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in the "Results" section below.

#### *Measures*

The independent variables investigated as predictors of father's protective strategies in Phase II were father's psychological well-being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, social support, and child's sex. These variables were assessed with the following measures, which were selected for their strong psychometric characteristics and sensitivity to family structure and racial/cultural diversity. The measures of psychological well-being, violence exposure, and social support have been successfully used in previous studies of African-American Head Start mothers in the Washington, D. C. area (Holland, 1996; Letiecq, Anderson, & Koblinsky, 1996; Letiecq, Anderson, & Koblinsky, 1998; Randolph, et al., 1996). All measures were reviewed by the project's community advisory committee who provided input about the relevance and acceptability of measures for the target population. Pilot

testing further established instrument reliability and validity for use with low-income African American fathers.

### **Psychological Well-Being**

Father's psychological well-being was measured using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977; see Appendix D). The scale is a short, 20-item, self-report measure specifically constructed to study depressive symptomatology in the general population. Among the symptoms addressed in the scale are depressed mood, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, psychomotor retardation, loss of appetite, and sleep disturbance. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they felt certain ways during the past week using the following four-point scale: (0) rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day); (1) some or a little of the time (1-2 days); (2) occasionally or a moderate amount of the time (3-4 days); and (3) most or all of the time (5-7 days). This measure was scored by summing the 20 items, which yielded scores ranging from 0-60. Ninety-nine percent of patients with known depression score at or above 16 (Radloff, 1977). Examples of items include: "I was bothered by things that don't usually bother me," and "I felt that I was just as good as other people." The CES-D scale has high internal consistency, test-retest repeatability, and validity. Coefficient alpha and Spearman-Brown coefficients were .90 or above for both clinical and general samples. Split-half correlations were .85 for patient groups and .77 for general groups (see Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991, for a review). The psychometric properties have previously been found to be consistent across age, sex, and ethnic

subgroups (Radloff & Locke, 1986). The current study also found the CES-D to have strong internal consistency with Cronbach's coefficient alpha equal to .73.

### **History of Violence Exposure**

History of violence exposure was assessed using a modified version of the original Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979; see Appendix E). The CTS is an 18-item self-report inventory that assesses the extent, frequency, and intensity of diverse conflict tactics, such as verbal aggression and physical violence, on a 7-point scale. Reliability of the CTS has been shown to be good (Cronbach's alpha = .87 for men, Cronbach's alpha = .88 for women). For this study, a shorter form of the CTS used in several previous violence studies was administered to fathers (Langhinrichsen-Rohling & Neidig, 1995). Fathers were asked to report on the frequency of only nine conflict behaviors (curse, threaten to hurt, push, slap, kick, hit with fist, hit with object, threaten with a knife or gun, use a knife or gun) using a 7-point scale. Response options included: (0) never; (1) once; (2) twice; (3) 3-5 times; (4) 6-10 times; (5) 11-20 times; and (6) more than 20 times. The nine conflict tactics were presented in three sections addressing fathers' victimization (i.e., the violent acts fathers have personally experienced), fathers' witnessing of violent acts, and fathers' personal use of aggressive/violent behavior. Subscale scores were computed by summing the nine items of each subscale. A total violence exposure score was also computed by summing the three subscales. Cronbach coefficient alphas calculated for the total scale and each subscale (total scale = .93; victimization = .82; witnessing violence = .92; personal use = .83) indicated that the measure was reliable for use in this study.

## **Parenting Practices**

To examine paternal parenting practices, this study employed the Parenting Practices Questionnaire (PPQ; Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995; see Appendix F). The 62-item PPQ was developed by Robinson et al. (1995) to assess global parenting typologies consistent with Baumrind's (1971) authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive typologies. Robinson et al. (1995) also identified several factors that reflect specific parenting practices within the global typologies. There are four authoritative factors: Warmth and Involvement (11 items); Reasoning/Induction (7 items); Democratic Participation (5 items); and Good Natured/Easy Going (4 items). Authoritarian factors include: Verbal Hostility (4 items); Corporal Punishment (6 items); Nonreasoning, Punitive Strategies (6 items); and Directiveness (4 items). The three permissive factors include: Lack of Follow Through (6 items); Ignoring Misbehavior (4 items); and Lack of Self-confidence (5 items). To administer the PPQ, each respondent was asked to tell how often each item described him as a father of a preschool child using a 5-point scale anchored by "never" (1) and "always" (5). The PPQ was scored by summing items that made up the three global parenting typologies and dividing by the total number of items within each typology to compute response averages.

The PPQ was developed for use with both mothers and fathers of preschool and school-age children. Robinson et al. (1995) established the reliability and validity of the measure with a sample of predominantly white, two-parent families whose median

income was approximately \$30,000. The researchers reported that the 27 authoritative items had a Cronbach's alpha of .91, the 20 authoritarian items had a Cronbach's alpha of .86, and the 15 permissive items yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .75. Internal consistency was also established for this study, with the following coefficient alphas for African American fathers: Authoritative = .93; Authoritarian = .84; and Permissive = .70.

### **Social Support**

Father's social support was assessed using a modified version of the Family Support Scale (FSS; Dunst, Jenkins, & Trivette, 1984; see Appendix G). The FSS is an 18-item measure designed to assess the degree to which different sources of support are helpful to families raising young children. The FSS was modified slightly for this study by adding four items of support to the original scale. The added items assessed the helpfulness of the father's current partner, her parents, her relatives, and friends if different from the child's biological mother. Respondents were asked to use a five-point scale anchored by "not at all helpful" (0) and "extremely helpful" (4) to rate the helpfulness of specific individuals or groups in raising their families during the previous six months. Three subscales of support were analyzed including: familial supports (e.g., parents, partner, own children); extra-familial supports (e.g., friends, co-workers, social groups, church members); and professional supports (e.g., teachers, doctors, therapists, social service agencies, mental health agencies). Indices of helpfulness were computed by summing the ratings of items within the three subscales and dividing by the number of items in

each subscale. The total FSS score was also computed by summing all 22 items. Total scores could range from a low of 0 to a high of 88.

Dunst et al. (1984) established the reliability and validity of the FSS using a sample of parents of developmentally at risk and physically and mentally challenged preschool children. The researchers reported that the alpha coefficient for the total scale was .85, and the split-half (odd-even) reliability was .75. A second study of predominantly African American homeless and low-income housed mothers of preschool children also found the FSS to be a reliable measure of support, with a Cronbach's alpha of .81 for the total scale (Letiecq et al., 1996). For the current study, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was again found to be acceptable for the total FSS scale (alpha = .88) and for the three subscales (familial supports = .80; extra-familial supports = .79; and professional supports = .72), indicating that the measure was reliable.

### **Sex of Child and Demographic Information**

Fathers were also administered a demographic questionnaire. This measure ascertained information about the targeted Head Start child, including the child's sex, age, and date of birth. The measure also gathered information about the father's age, highest level of education attained, employment status, residence (i.e., resides in same household as child, resides in separate household), relationship to child (e.g., biological father, stepfather), and the frequency of contact with the target Head Start child. Sex of the child was dummy coded (male = 0; female = 1) for use in the regression analyses.

### **Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods Scale**

The dependent variable, strategies used by fathers to protect children from community violence, was assessed using the new measure, “Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods Scale” (PVNS; See Appendix H). The PVNS subscales, psychometric properties, and scoring procedures are described in the “Results” section below.

#### *Procedure*

During the second phase of the study, fathers were recruited from the same five UPO Head Start centers, seven DCPS Head Start centers, and four PGCPS Head Start centers initially targeted by the DOE study (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996). This study also recruited fathers from four additional DCPS Head Start centers in order to increase the sample size. All 20 Head Start centers were located in neighborhoods with high levels of violence exposure, as determined by crime data supplied by the District of Columbia and Maryland Police Departments and subjective reports of violence provided by Head Start grantees.

Participants were identified and recruited by Head Start teachers and staff or Head Start’s Significant Male Task Force/Positive Men’s Coalition. A letter describing the project and inviting participation was sent home with every preschool child enrolled in the participating Head Start centers (see Appendix I). Interested fathers were instructed to fill out the form letter (listing their name, relationship to the child, and availability) and to return the form to the Head Start center. All interested fathers were contacted by phone by a member of the research team. Members of the research

team also went to the centers and approached fathers/father-figures as they dropped off their children at the school and invited them to participate in the study. Other recruitment techniques involved asking Head Start mothers for referrals and attending special events at the centers (such as a Father's Day event). All fathers were assured of the voluntary and confidential nature of the study. Once a father consented to participate, an interview appointment was scheduled.

Interviews took place at the Head Start centers or another convenient location (e.g., father's residence, local library, restaurant) and lasted approximately 1-1/2 hours. The interviews were conducted by African American male students recruited from the Family Studies Department at the University of Maryland, College Park. One interviewer was a graduate student, two were undergraduate students with senior standing, and one was an alumnus of the Family Studies undergraduate program. All interviewers were extensively trained in administration of project measures and interview techniques with low-income populations and were compensated for their work.

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewers discussed the confidentiality of the project with the fathers and also reviewed the consent to participate form (see Appendix C). Once the father's questions had been adequately addressed and the father agreed to be interviewed by signing the consent form, the interview began. Fathers with more than one Head Start child were asked to focus on the oldest child. For measures requiring fathers to choose among multiple response options, fathers were presented with a card listing possible responses. The response options were also

read aloud to the fathers. The interviewers recorded fathers' responses on the interview form. After all the data were collected, the fathers received a stipend of \$25 for their participation.

In order to ensure the anonymity of the Head Start fathers, each participant was assigned an identification number. The names of the participants were not written on any of the measures. A master list of participants was kept in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed upon the completion of the project. Data were entered by the author and a trained research assistant using SPSS for Windows, a statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS, 1990).

To enhance the credibility of the data analyses and data interpretations, the principal investigator used specific techniques suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), including the use of prolonged engagement, triangulation, and peer debriefing. Prolonged engagement involves having the researcher spend time in the natural research setting to become familiar with the context and culture of those who live there. To achieve this, the principal investigator and research team spent many hours in Head Start centers and volunteered in several of the participating Head Start classrooms. The principal investigator also went on a police ride-along with an officer who polices the 6<sup>th</sup> District of Washington, D.C.. The 6<sup>th</sup> District covers several of the neighborhoods/Head Start centers included in this study and borders several neighborhoods in Prince George's County, Maryland, which were also included in the study. The police ride-along allowed the investigator to safely scan the neighborhoods

at night and to observe, for example, the proximity of Head Start centers to known crack houses and high drug traffic areas (as reported by the police officer).

Triangulation of methods refers to the use of multiple measures that serve to check or validate one another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout this study, both qualitative, open-ended questions and quantitative measurement scales were used. This triangulation approach allowed the qualitative findings to be backed up by the quantitative measures and, likewise, allowed the author to explain the quantitative findings using qualitative data from fathers (Steckler, McLeroy, Goodman, Bird, & McCormick, 1992).

Regarding the use of peer debriefing, the principal investigator met individually with advisory committee members throughout the study to discuss possible meanings underlying the data. Advisory committee members included Head Start fathers, teachers, and staff; key leaders in the broader Head Start community (e.g., members of the Significant Male Task Force and Positive Men's Coalition); and experts in the area of African American family life from the University of Maryland. By using prolonged engagement, triangulation of methods, and peer debriefing, the principal investigator made every effort to interpret father responses as accurately as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### *Data Analyses*

Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the demographic information about the participants, as well as their scores on the measures of individual and family functioning (e.g., psychological well-

being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, social support). Comparisons of scores on the demographic and other measures obtained by fathers of sons and fathers of daughters were also made using Chi-square tests for nominal data and independent *t*-tests for continuous data.

Additionally, Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficients were computed to examine relationships among paternal functioning variables. Correlation coefficients were also computed to examine the relationships between the 54 items of the new measure, Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods (PVNS). Patterns of strong relationships between PVNS items were identified in order to construct clusters of strategies or subscales of paternal strategies. For confirmatory purposes, principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to examine the construct validity of the newly created PVNS subscales. Due to the small sample size ( $N = 61$ ), factor analysis was limited as a primary tool for subscale construction; however, it was helpful as a statistical tool used to confirm the conceptualized subscales of the PVNS. This process was conducted several times in order to refine the subscales and find the best fit among scale items. Cronbach's coefficient alphas were computed as well to examine the internal consistency of the newly formed subscales of the PVNS.

Finally, for each constructed PVNS subscale, multiple regression analyses with backward elimination were used to test the relative strength of selected demographic and paternal variables (e.g., father's psychological well-being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, social support, sex of target child) in predicting the nature of fathers' strategies. The final regression models were "cleaned" in order to

present only those variables that contributed to the explanation of variance in the strategies used by African American fathers to help their preschool children cope with community violence (Pedhazur, 1982).

## Results – Phase II

### Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Table 2 provides demographic information about the Phase II sample. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 70 with a mean age of 36.2 years. Forty-one participants (67%) reported that they were the biological father of the child. The remaining participants identified themselves as the child's uncle (12%), grandfather (8%), or stepfather (7%). Four participants (7%) had other kinship or social ties to the child (i.e., the mother's boyfriend, the child's cousin, the child's great uncle, and a close family friend). Thirty-two of the children were male (53%) while 29 were female (48%). The ages of the children ranged from 3 to 6 years with a mean age of 4 years. The participants reported involvement with their Head Start child for most of the child's life ( $M = 3.9$  years).

Thirty-three of the fathers were currently single, not living with a partner (54%) while twenty-eight were married or cohabiting (46%). The majority reported living in the same household with the Head Start child (77%) and with at least one other adult (84%). Of the 14 children not living in the father's residence, all lived with their biological mother.

The mean years of education completed was 12.7 years. The majority of fathers had completed high school or earned a GED (51%) and an additional 33% reported completing at least one year of college. Fifty fathers (82%) reported being employed currently. Of these employed fathers, 72% reported working at least 40 hours per week (working hours ranged from 10 to 80 hours per week).

Comparing the demographic profiles of the biological fathers and the non-biological social fathers, there were few significant differences. However, biological fathers were more likely to be younger ( $M = 33.9$ ,  $SD = 6.5$ ) than social fathers ( $M = 40.8$ ,  $SD = 15.3$ ),  $t(59) = 2.47$ ,  $p < .05$ . Biological fathers were also more likely to have been involved in the Head Start child's life for more years ( $M = 4.1$ ,  $SD = 0.8$ ) than the social fathers ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ),  $t(59) = 2.13$ ,  $p < .05$ . Further, as compared to social fathers (60%), biological fathers were more likely to live with the child in the same household (85%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 61) = 4.89$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Table 2  
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Demographic Characteristic (N = 61)	<u>M</u> ( <u>SD</u> ) or <u>N</u> (%)	Range
Child's Sex		
Male	32 (52.5 %)	
Female	29 (47.5 %)	
Child's Age in years	4.0 (0.8)	3 to 6 years
3 years	15 (24.6%)	
4 years	30 (49.2%)	
5 years	15 (24.6%)	
6 years	1 ( 1.6%)	
Father's Age in years	36.2 (10.6)	18 to 70 years
Relationship to Child		
Biological Father	41 (67.2 %)	
Stepfather	4 ( 6.6 %)	
Grandfather	5 ( 8.2 %)	
Uncle	7 (11.5 %)	
Other	4 ( 6.6 %)	

Table 2. Continued

Demographic Characteristic (N = 61)	<u>M</u> ( <u>SD</u> ) or <u>N</u> (%)	Range
Years of father involvement in child's life	3.9 (0.9)	.5 to 6 years
Age at birth of first child	23.4 (5.0)	15 to 34 years
Number of children	3.1 (2.3)	1 to 12 children
Father's Education	12.7 (2.1)	8 to 17 years
8-11 <sup>th</sup> grade completed	10 (16.4%)	
High school diploma or GED	31 (50.8%)	
13+ years of school completed	20 (32.8%)	
Marital Status		
Single, not living with partner	33 (54.1%)	
Married, living with partner	28 (45.9%)	
Number of adults living in household	2.0 (0.6)	1 to 4 adults
Number of children living in household	2.0 (1.4)	0 to 6 children
Head Start child living in household		
Yes	47 (77.0%)	
No	14 (23.0%)	
Employment Status		
Employed	50 (82.0%)	
Not Employed	11 (18.0%)	
Number of hours worked weekly	42.6 (13.5)	10 to 80 hours

### **Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods: Subscale Construction**

To further assess the strategies used by fathers to protect their children from community violence, this study examined how the various items of the new measure “Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods” (PVNS) hung together to form clusters of strategies or strategy subscales. To identify these clusters or subscales, a series of correlation matrices were computed to examine the relationships among the 54 items of the PVNS. There were two main criteria for the initial construction of these subscales: for each subscale, the items had to be conceptually related (based on the original conceptual strategies; see Table 1) and statistically related to at least one other item in the subscale. In a few instances, items were dropped from some subscales and added to others because – even though believed to be conceptually related – they were not statistically related to any other item in the subscale and significantly intercorrelated with several items from another subscale. This procedure produced five subscales of PVNS items. Tables 3 through 7 present the initial subscales that met the above criteria.

The first subscale, “supervise children and teach personal safety” (presented in Table 3), comprised 16 items and combined three strategies, including “supervise children,” “teach alternatives to violence,” and “use prayer and positive thinking.” Two other items were included in this subscale because of their very strong correlations with several other items in this grouping (PVNS54: “I take turns with other parents doing things that keep preschool children safe, like watching them at

the playground” and PVNS2: “I stay to myself to protect my family from neighborhood violence”). One item from the “supervise children” strategy was dropped from the subscale because it was not statistically related to any other item in the subscale (PVNS25: “I keep my child busy with TV and video games so s/he won’t want to go outside”).

As shown in Table 4, the second subscale, “Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety,” contained 10 items from two strategies: “teach neighborhood and household safety skills” (excluding PVNS19: “I tell my child to avoid eye contact with other children”) and “teach about real-life violence and its consequences” (excluding PVNS20: “I prepare my child to handle violence by having her/him watch violent movies or shows like ‘Cops’”). PVNS19 and PVNS20 were both excluded due to the lack of significant intercorrelations with any of the other items in the subscale. One additional item (PVNS17: “I keep an eye out for people who don’t belong in the neighborhood”) was also included in this subscale because it was significantly related to all but one of the items in the subscale and conceptually appeared to fit.

The third subscale, “Reduce Exposure to Media Violence” (see Table 5), comprised the items from the original strategy coupled with one item from the “teach about real-life violence and its consequences” strategy (PVNS20: “I prepare my child to handle violence by having her/him watch violent movies or shows like ‘Cops’”). The latter item was reversed for use in this subscale.

A fourth subscale, “Arm and Protect Family” (see Table 6) combined four original strategies: “arm family for protection,” “teach how to fight back,” “move

away from bad residential areas,” and “keep to oneself/do nothing” (excluding PVNS2: “I stay to myself to protect my family from neighborhood violence”). One additional item (PVNS25: “I keep my child busy with TV and video games so s/he won’t want to go outside”) originally conceptualized as a supervisory strategy was also included in this 13-item subscale as it was highly intercorrelated with the other items in the subscale.

As presented in Table 7, the fifth and final subscale, “Engage in Community Activism,” combined the original items of the “engage in community activism” strategy (excluding PVNS17: “I keep an eye out for people who don’t belong in the neighborhood” and PVNS54: “I take turns with other parents doing things that keep preschool children safe, like watching them at the playground”) with the “confront parents and children causing trouble” strategy to form a 10 item subscale.

Table 3

## Correlation Matrix of PVNS Subscale 1: Supervise Children and Teach Personal Safety

Item	2	3 <sup>R</sup>	5	8	9	10	12	13	16	21	22	27	33	39	53	54
PVNS2	--	.51**	.43**	.56**	.43**	.45**	.51**	.36**	.33**	.43**	.53**	.26*	.39**	.31*	.25	.48**
PVNS3 <sup>R</sup>		--	.36**	.46	.27*	.24	.59**	.45**	.34**	.31*	.42**	.14	.37**	.25	.34**	.45**
PVNS5			--	.52**	.34**	.21	.51**	.22	.57**	.26*	.32*	.33**	.56**	.58**	.31*	.63**
PVNS8				--	.39**	.59**	.60**	.43**	.51**	.46**	.54**	.13	.50**	.45**	.36**	.68**
PVNS9					--	.17	.25	.30*	.24	.42**	.36**	.26*	.29*	.24	.15	.29*
PVNS10						--	.35**	.30*	.31*	.39**	.39**	.18	.16	.32*	.22	.52**
PVNS12							--	.65**	.41**	.46**	.50**	.23	.43**	.46**	.47**	.69**
PVNS13								--	.37**	.66**	.32*	.31*	.28*	.50**	.27*	.53**
PVNS16									--	.48**	.32*	.22	.65**	.65**	.37**	.59**
PVNS21										--	.54**	.27*	.38**	.48**	.16	.58**
PVNS22											--	.02	.37	.29*	.50**	.48**
PVNS27												--	.28	.35**	-.05	.29*
PVNS33													--	.50**	.22	.51**
PVNS39														--	.19	.57**
PVNS53															--	.38**
PVNS54																--

<sup>R</sup>Reversed item.

\*p&lt;.05. \*\*p&lt;.01.

Table 4

## Correlation Matrix of PVNS Subscale 2: Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety

Item	1	4	7	11	17	18	23	30 <sup>R</sup>	41	46
PVNS1	--	.40*	.62**	.41**	.33**	.52**	.61**	.27*	.54**	.37**
PVNS4		--	.24	.22	.29*	.30*	.15	.12	.54**	.08
PVNS7			--	.39**	.38**	.47**	.58**	.26*	.48**	.53**
PVNS11				--	.35**	.49**	.47**	.09	.48**	.01
PVNS17					--	.31*	.36**	.28*	.46**	.04
PVNS18						--	.47**	.03	.54**	.29*
PVNS23							--	.17	.45**	.37**
PVNS30 <sup>R</sup>								--	.18	.43**
PVNS41									--	.27*
PVNS46										--

<sup>R</sup>Reversed item.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 5

Correlation Matrix of PVNS Subscale 3: Reduce Exposure to Media Violence

Item	20 <sup>R</sup>	42	49 <sup>R</sup>	51
PVNS20 <sup>R</sup>	--	.28*	.15	.28*
PVNS42		--	.38**	.15
PVNS49 <sup>R</sup>			--	.23
PVNS51				--

<sup>R</sup>Reversed item.  
\*p<.05. \*\*p<.01.

Table 6

## Correlation Matrix of PVNS Subscale 4: Arm and Protect Family

Item	14	24	25	26	29	31	32	34	38	40	43	44	48
PVNS14	--	.65**	.23	.13	.39**	.15	.33**	.10	.18	.62**	.59**	.12	.12
PVNS24		--	.25	.24	.27*	.34**	.27*	.26*	.11	.65**	.54**	.17	.25
PVNS25			--	.07	.20	.05	.41**	.18	.41**	.27*	.37**	-.02	.21
PVNS26				--	.06	.07	.12	.60**	.22	.36**	.10	.16	.27*
PVNS29					--	.36**	.36**	-.10	.17	.16	.28*	.21	.05
PVNS31						--	.15	-.04	-.07	.07	.20	.23	-.09
PVNS32							--	.06	.38**	.28*	.35**	-.02	.19
PVNS34								--	.21	.32*	.22	.19	.39**
PVNS38									--	.20	.18	.14	.33*
PVNS40										--	.56**	.03	.40**
PVNS43											--	.15	.32*
PVNS44												--	.33*
PVNS48													--

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 7

Correlation Matrix of PVNS Subscale 5: Engage in Community Activism

Item	6	15	28	35	36	37	45	47	50	52
PVNS6	--	.31*	.21	.24	.28*	.12	.28*	.02	.42**	-.07
PVNS15		--	.20	-.02	-.01	.31*	.28*	-.08	.19	.12
PVNS28			--	.50**	.43**	.33**	.22	-.29*	.42**	.29*
PVNS35				--	.73**	.44**	.23	.07	.59**	.10
PVNS36					--	.55**	.26*	.20	.64**	.17
PVNS37						--	.31*	.29*	.49**	.48**
PVNS45							--	.04	.33*	.17
PVNS47								--	.11	.06
PVNS50									--	.26
PVNS52										--

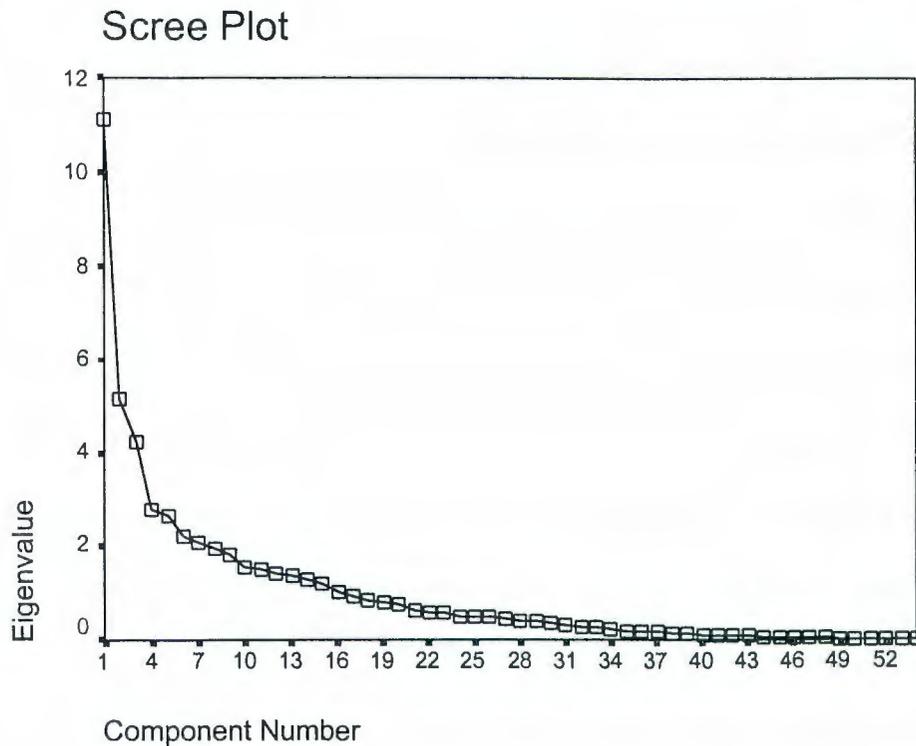
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## **Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

A factor analysis employing the principal components method of extraction with varimax rotation was used to perform a confirmatory factor analysis of the scale data. The advantage of varimax rotation is that the resulting factors are mutually independent of one another. Results revealed fifteen factors with eigenvalues greater than one (1) that accounted for 78.20% of the variance in parenting strategies. However, examination of a scree plot (see Figure 1), percentages of variance associated with each factor, and interpretability of the factors (Comrey & Lee, 1992) led to the conclusion that five factors provided the best fit of the data to the conceptual foundation of the instrument. Although factors 6 through 15 combined explained 30.37% of the variance in responses, each factor contained only 1 to 2 items and individually accounted for 2% to 4% of the variance in responses. Based on the interpretation of the initial factor analysis, a second factor analysis was run forcing five factors. The minimum loading criterion for an item to be included on a factor was .35. The five factors accounted for 48.17% of the total variance. Factor 1 accounted for 16.04% of the variance, factor 2 accounted for 9.27%, factor 3 accounted for 8.27%, factor 4 accounted for 8.05%, and factor 5 accounted for 6.54%.

Figure 1

Scree Plot for Confirmatory Factor Analysis of PVNS Items



Comparisons of the subscales constructed using the correlation matrices (see Table 3-7) and the confirmatory factor analyses revealed few conceptual discrepancies. The first factor contained all the items in the “Supervise Children and Teach Personal Safety” subscale with two exceptions. One item from the “use prayer and positive thinking” strategy failed to load on this factor (PVNS53: “I pray that God will protect my child from violence”), and one item from the “move away from bad residential areas” strategy loaded strongly on this factor (PVNS32: “I take my child to parks, restaurants, malls, or other activities to get her/him away from the

neighborhood”). The latter item suggests that parents may choose to supervise children’s activities in settings other than their immediate neighborhood to protect them from violence.

The second factor comprised the items used to make up the “Engage in Community Activism” subscale. Four items failed to load on this factor (PVNS6, PVNS15, PVNS47, and PVNS52). One additional item (PVNS4: “I prepare my child to handle violence by reading books or telling stories about how to settle conflict peacefully”) loaded on this factor rather than the second subscale, “Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety.” One can speculate that some of the stories parents relate about conflict resolution may illustrate positive examples of community activism. For instance, a parent might tell his child about how a group of fathers convinced drug dealers to move their operation away from a playground in the neighborhood.

The third factor comprised the items from the “Arm and Protect Family” subscale minus three items: PVNS29 “I keep something ready to use, like a baseball bat, in case someone breaks into my home” and PVNS31 “I keep a gun in the house to protect my children and my family” from the original “arm family for protection” strategy, and PVNS32, which loaded on the first factor.

The fourth factor comprised all the items from the “Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety” strategy with the exception of PVNS4: “I prepare my child to handle violence by reading books or telling stories about how to settle conflict peacefully.” Also, PVNS15: “I try to correct older children in the neighborhood who are causing trouble” loaded on this factor. One can speculate that fathers who teach

their own children how to behave safely in the neighborhood may be attentive to the potentially dangerous behaviors of older children on the streets, and may make efforts to correct and guide these youth.

The fifth and final factor drew items only from the “Reduce Exposure to Media Violence” subscale. This subscale consisted of 4 items (PVNS20, PVNS42, PVNS49, and PVNS51) as shown in Table 5.

Based on the results of the factor analysis, seven items (PVNS6, 19, 29, 31, 47, 52, and 53) included in the preliminary subscales constructed with the results of the correlation matrices were excluded from the final subscales. These items either failed to load on any factor, or loaded marginally on two or three different factors. Table 8 presents the means, standard deviations, and factor loadings for each of the items that make up the five final subscales.

Table 8

## Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods Scale Constructs

Factor and Items	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Loading
<u>Factor 1 (Supervise Children and Teach Personal Safety)</u>			
54. I take turns with other parents doing things that keep children safe, like watching them at the playground.	2.55	1.21	.79
12. I teach my child to tell the teacher if another child picks on her/him.	3.27	0.97	.79
8. I think positive thoughts about my preschool child's safety.	3.23	0.99	.77
2. I stay to myself to protect my family from neighborhood violence.	2.63	1.19	.70
13. I permit my child to play at playgrounds only when <u>directly supervised</u> by an adult.	2.83	1.30	.68
21. I teach my child to tell me if another child picks on her/him.	3.07	0.94	.66
33. I teach my preschool child about the strengths and values of African American families.	2.77	1.20	.63
5. I teach my preschool child to forgive and forget when another child picks on her/him.	2.60	0.94	.62
3. I allow my preschool child to walk alone in the neighborhood. <sup>R</sup>	0.40	0.87	.62
22. I pray for my preschool child's safety when s/he is out of the house.	3.13	0.98	.62
16. I point out some of the good things in our neighborhood to my preschool child.	2.77	1.01	.61
39. I teach my child to respond with calm, firm words when another child picks on her/him.	2.57	0.98	.61
32. I take my child to parks, malls, or other activities to get her/him away from the neighborhood.	2.50	1.03	.59
9. I keep my preschool child inside when not in school to avoid community violence.	2.48	1.05	.58
10. I tell my child to stay with a friend whenever s/he is outside.	2.88	1.15	.49
27. I teach my child to walk away if another child hits her/him.	1.93	1.16	.44

<sup>R</sup> Reversed item.

Table 8. Continued

Factor and Items	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Loading
<u>Factor 2 (Engage in Community Activism)</u>			
36. I ask community groups or businesses to do things that will make children safer.	1.57	1.11	.82
35. I talk to people at a neighborhood church about ways to improve children's safety.	1.78	1.14	.77
50. I participate in neighborhood watch or other groups that try to reduce neighborhood violence.	1.20	1.17	.74
37. I call the police when I hear gunshots.	1.32	1.26	.63
28. I talk to other parents about ways we can keep our children safe.	2.07	1.13	.55
4. I prepare my child to handle violence by reading books about how to settle conflict peacefully.	2.32	1.03	.53
45. I let dealers and other troublemakers know they should leave my child(ren) alone.	2.08	1.52	.48
<u>Factor 3 (Arm and Protect Family)</u>			
48. I send my child away to friends/relatives on weekends or specific times of the year to be safer.	1.10	1.13	.67
40. I tell my preschool child it's okay to hit another child if the other child hits her/him first.	0.97	1.28	.67
43. I teach my preschool child how to fight so s/he can protect her/himself.	1.70	1.31	.65
34. I don't report neighborhood violence because I'm afraid the troublemakers might come after my family.	1.45	1.21	.65
24. I tell my preschool child to fight back in order to be safe.	1.28	1.30	.56
14. I tell my child that you have to fight back when others hit you so they won't think you're weak.	1.40	1.44	.50
26. I don't report neighborhood violence because I don't want to get my family involved.	1.52	1.28	.50
38. I save my money to move my family to a safer neighborhood.	2.38	1.37	.49
25. I keep my child busy with TV and video games so s/he won't want to go outside.	1.82	1.07	.45
44. I carry a weapon, like mace or a knife, in case I need to protect myself or my child.	0.62	1.06	.42

Table 8. Continued

Factor and Items	M	SD	Loading
<u>Factor 4 (Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety)</u>			
30. I allow my preschool child to answer the front door when I'm not in the front room. <sup>R</sup>	3.82	0.62	.57
7. I tell my child to avoid drug dealers or troublemakers in the neighborhood.	3.15	1.23	.56
41. I talk to my child about the violence that happens in the neighborhood.	2.00	1.22	.55
1. I talk to my child about safe routes for walking in the neighborhood.	2.55	1.32	.53
11. I keep my child away from windows, especially at night.	2.28	1.30	.51
23. I teach my child specific things to do when s/he hears gunshots, such as going to a certain place in our home.	2.40	1.50	.50
17. I keep an eye out for people who don't belong in the neighborhood.	2.60	1.12	.48
15. I try to correct older children in the neighborhood who are causing trouble.	2.23	1.20	.48
18. I teach my child about the real-life pain that comes from violence such as bleeding or dying when you get shot.	2.47	1.23	.45
46. I teach my preschool child how to dial 911.	3.18	1.20	.35
<u>Factor 5 (Reduce Exposure to Violent Media)</u>			
51. I keep my preschool child from playing video games that have a lot of violence.	1.77	1.33	.57
49. I allow my preschool child to watch TV or movies that have violent scenes. <sup>R</sup>	3.30	1.01	.56
20. I prepare my child to handle violence by having her/him watch violent movies/shows like "Cops." <sup>R</sup>	3.11	1.18	.51
42. I limit my preschool child's TV viewing time to 1-2 hours a day.	1.67	1.10	.39

<sup>R</sup> Reversed item.

## Means, Standard Deviations, Psychometric Properties, and Bivariate

### Relationships of the PVNS Subscales

Once the PVNS subscales were finalized, items within each subscale were summed and divided by the total number of items in the subscale. Means and standard deviations of the PVNS and its subscales are presented in Table 9. Examining the means and standard deviations of the PVNS subscales revealed that fathers supervised and taught their children about violence prevention “very often” ( $M = 2.80$ ,  $SD = .70$ ). Additionally, fathers reported teaching home and neighborhood safety strategies ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = .78$ ) and reducing exposure to violent media ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = .76$ ) “about half the time” to “very often.” Fathers reported arming their children and families for protection “once in a while” ( $M = 1.42$ ,  $SD = .74$ ). And lastly, fathers engaged in community activities that reduced neighborhood violence “about half the time” ( $M = 1.76$ ,  $SD = .82$ ).

Table 9 also presents the internal consistency estimates for each of the subscales: “supervise children and teach personal safety” = .91; “teach home and neighborhood safety” = .84; “reduce exposure to violent media” = .56; “arm and protect family” = .80; and “engage in community activism” = .81. The low alpha coefficient associated with the “reduce exposure to violent media” strategy may be due to the small number of items (4) included in this factor and the small sample size; nonetheless, analyses using this subscale should be viewed with caution.

Table 9

Means, Standard Deviations, and Alpha Coefficients for the PVNS and its Subscales

	Number of Items	<u>M</u>	( <u>SD</u> )	Alpha Coefficient
<b>Total PVNS</b>	47	2.28	(.50)	.90
Supervise Children/Teach Personal Safety	16	2.80	(.70)	.91
Teach Home/Neighborhood Safety	10	2.67	(.78)	.84
Reduce Exposure to Violent Media	4	2.46	(.76)	.56
Arm and Protect Family	10	1.42	(.74)	.80
Engage in Community Activism	7	1.76	(.82)	.81

Note. PVNS rating options included: (0) Never, (1) Once in a while, (2) About half the time, (3) Very often, and (4) Always.

The correlation matrix in Table 10 depicts the bivariate relationships among the PVNS subscales. Three of the subscales were significantly positively correlated. Fathers who were more likely to supervise and teach their children personal safety skills were more likely to teach home and neighborhood safety strategies ( $r = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and engage in community activism ( $r = .35$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Likewise, fathers who taught their children about household and neighborhood safety issues were more likely to also engage in community activism ( $r = .54$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Table 10

## Correlation Matrix of PVNS Subscales

Subscale	ST	HNS	RE	AP	CA
Supervise Child/Teach Personal Safety (ST)	--	0.53**	0.13	0.22	0.35**
Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety (HNS)		--	0.24	0.16	0.54**
Reduce Exposure to Violent Media (RE)			--	-0.13	0.09
Arm and Protect Family (AP)				--	0.09
Engage in Community Activism (CA)					--

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

### Paternal Strategies as a Function of the Sex of the Target Child

This study sought to determine whether fathers used differential protective strategies as a function of the sex of their preschool child. Table 11 depicts the five strategies fathers use to protect their sons and daughters from community violence. Interestingly, mean scores reveal that fathers of daughters tended to supervise and teach about personal safety slightly more often ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) than fathers of sons ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = .71$ ). Fathers of sons and fathers of daughters obtained almost identical scores for three other protective strategies: teach home and neighborhood safety; arm and protect their families; and engage in community activism. Independent  $t$ -test results revealed no significant differences between fathers of sons' and fathers of daughters' use of the four parenting strategies described above.

However, fathers of sons were significantly more likely to attempt to reduce their child's exposure to violent media ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = .76$ ) than fathers of daughters ( $M = 2.22$ ,  $SD = .71$ ),  $t(58) = -2.36$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Table 11  
Paternal Strategies as a Function of Child's Sex

Paternal Strategy	Child's Sex	
	Male (N = 32)	Female (N = 29)
	Mean (Standard Deviation)	
Supervise Children & Teach Personal Safety	2.70 (0.71)	2.92 (0.68)
Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety	2.69 (0.79)	2.65 (0.78)
Reduce Exposure to Violent Media	2.67 (0.76)	2.22 (0.71)*
Arm and Protect Family	1.45 (0.75)	1.39 (0.74)
Engage in Community Activism	1.76 (0.83)	1.78 (0.82)

\* $p < .05$ .

## **Predictors of the Strategies Used by Fathers to Protect their Children from Community Violence**

Fathers were administered a variety of measures of individual, family, and community functioning, including depression, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, and social support. Table 12 provides the means and standard deviations of these independent variables. With regard to paternal depression, the present sample reported depression scores on the CES-D ( $M = 8.43$ ,  $SD = 5.77$ ) that were similar to those of community-wide samples ( $M = 8.97$ ,  $SD = 8.50$ ; Radloff, 1977). It is important to note that only five fathers in this study met the clinical cut-off score for depression ( $M \geq 16$ ). With respect to violence exposure, fathers were more likely to report witnessing violence ( $M = 14.77$ ,  $SD = 11.44$ ), than being victimized by violence ( $M = 6.05$ ,  $SD = 6.57$ ) or using violence ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = 6.33$ ). In the area of parenting, fathers reported utilizing authoritative parenting practices ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = .62$ ) more often than authoritarian ( $M = 2.29$ ,  $SD = .52$ ) or permissive ( $M = 2.19$ ,  $SD = .47$ ) parenting practices. When asked about the helpfulness of their social support network, fathers reported receiving more help from familial sources of support ( $M = 1.86$ ,  $SD = .71$ ), followed by professional sources of support ( $M = 1.48$ ,  $SD = .64$ ) and extra-familial sources of support ( $M = 1.29$ ,  $SD = .71$ ). Examining the independent variables by sex of the target Head Start child revealed no significant differences by fathers of sons and daughters.

Table 12

## Means and Standard Deviations of Predictor Variables

Predictor Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Psychological Well-Being		
Paternal Depression	8.43	5.77
Violence Exposure		
Total Violence Exposure	25.72	21.11
Victimization	6.05	6.57
Witness	14.77	11.44
Personal Use	4.90	6.33
Parenting Practices		
Authoritative	3.77	0.62
Authoritarian	2.29	0.52
Permissive	2.19	0.47
Social Support		
Total Social Support	1.65	0.57
Familial Support	1.86	0.71
Extra-Familial Support	1.29	0.71
Professional Support	1.48	0.64

**Bivariate Relationships between Predictor Variables**

Table 13 presents a correlation matrix depicting the interrelationships among the independent variables. Psychological well-being as measured by the CES-D was significantly positively related to victimization ( $r = .30, p < .05$ ), personal use of violence ( $r = .29, p < .05$ ), authoritative parenting practices ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ),

Table 13

## Correlation Matrix of Predictor Variables

	PD	TV	VV	VW	VP	PA	PT	PP	TS	FS	ES	PS
Psychological Well-Being: Depression (PD)	--	0.31*	0.30*	0.25	0.29*	0.28*	0.39**	0.28*	-0.13	0.03	-0.13	-0.26*
Violence Exposure: Total Violence Exposure (TV)		--	0.86**	0.90**	0.82**	0.22	0.02	-0.05	0.01	0.02	-0.03	0.05
Victimization (VV)			--	0.62**	0.73**	0.13	0.11	0.11	0.08	0.01	0.07	0.05
Witness (VW)				--	0.54**	0.31*	-0.09	-0.07	-0.02	-0.01	-0.10	0.08
Personal Use (VP)					--	0.05	0.11	0.02	-0.04	-0.02	-0.00	-0.05
Parenting Practices: Authoritative (PA)						--	-0.23	0.11	0.17	0.24	-0.06	0.19
Authoritarian (PT)							--	0.46**	0.15	0.18	0.11	0.01
Permissive (PP)								--	0.20	0.31*	0.03	0.16
Social Support: Total Social Support (TS)									--	0.86**	0.78**	0.79**
Familial (FS)										--	0.54**	0.45**
Extra-Familial(ES)											--	0.50**
Professional (PS)												--

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

authoritarian parenting practices ( $r = .39, p < .01$ ), and permissive parenting practices ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ), and significantly negatively related to professional supports ( $r = -.26, p < .05$ ). Fathers reporting more depressive symptoms were more likely to have been victims and perpetrators of violence than fathers with fewer symptoms. Interestingly, fathers with higher depression scores reported a higher likelihood of practicing all three parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) than fathers with lower scores. Fathers reporting higher scores on the depression measure were also less likely to have received help from professional sources of support.

With regard to father's history of violence exposure, the three violence exposure categories were all significantly related: fathers who had been victims of violence were also more likely to have witnessed violence ( $r = .62, p < .01$ ) and to have perpetrated violence ( $r = .73, p < .01$ ) than their nonvictimized counterparts. Similarly, fathers who witnessed violence were more likely to perpetrate violence than fathers who had not witnessed violence ( $r = .54, p < .01$ ). Lastly, in terms of violence exposure and parenting practices, fathers who witnessed more violence were more likely to use authoritative parenting practices ( $r = .31, p < .05$ ).

Although no significant relationship was found between authoritative parenting and authoritarian parenting or permissive parenting, there was a significant relationship between authoritarian and permissive parenting ( $r = .46, p < .01$ ). Fathers who employed more authoritarian parenting practices (e.g., were verbally hostile, used corporal punishment and other punitive strategies) were more likely to

also employ permissive parenting practices (e.g., lack follow through, ignore misbehavior, lack self-confidence). Additionally, there was a positive correlation between fathers who employed more permissive parenting practices and fathers' familial support ( $r = .31, p < .05$ ): with higher levels of familial support, fathers exhibited higher levels of permissive parenting practices.

The three social support subscales were also positively intercorrelated. Fathers who reported receiving more help from family members were also more likely to have received help from extra-familial sources of support ( $r = .54, p < .01$ ) and professional sources of support ( $r = .45, p < .01$ ). Likewise, as fathers' extra-familial support increased, professional support was also more likely to increase ( $r = .50, p < .01$ ).

### **Bivariate Relationships between Predictor Variables and Paternal Strategies**

Correlation coefficients depicting the strength and direction of the relationships between predictor variables and paternal strategies are presented in Table 14. Interestingly, depressive symptomatology was significantly positively related to three paternal strategies: supervise children and teach personal safety ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ); teach home and neighborhood safety ( $r = .31, p < .05$ ); and arm and protect family ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ). Fathers who had more depressive symptoms were more likely to supervise their children, teach personal, home, and neighborhood safety, and arm and protect their families than fathers with fewer symptoms.

Predictor variables describing father's history of violence exposure during the past year were also intercorrelated with several paternal strategies. Fathers with high

Table 14

## Correlation Matrix of Predictor Variables and Paternal Strategies

Predictor Variable	ST	HNS	RE	AP	CA
Psychological Well-Being					
Paternal Depression	.38**	.31*	.02	.44**	.16
Violence Exposure					
Total Violence Exposure	.23	.23	-.06	.31*	.15
Victimization	.19	.21	-.09	.30*	.15
Witness	.29*	.28*	-.05	.26*	.16
Personal Use	.03	.06	-.19	.24	.07
Parenting Practices					
Authoritative	.69**	.50**	.03	.16	.36**
Authoritarian	-.15	-.05	-.09	.33**	.08
Permissive	-.17	-.30*	-.15	.23	-.05
Social Support					
Total Social Support	.08	.09	-.15	.16	.39**
Familial Support	.21	.15	-.07	.35**	.35**
Extra-Familial Support	-.18	.06	-.01	-.07	.33*
Professional Support	.10	.02	-.23	-.03	.27*
Sex of Child (0 = female; 1 = male)	-.16	.03	.30*	.04	.01

Note. ST = Supervise children and teach personal safety; HNS = Teach home and neighborhood safety; RE = Reduce exposure to violent media; AP = Arm and protect family; CA = Engage in community activism.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

total violence exposure scores were more likely to also report arming themselves and their children for protection against community violence than fathers with less violence exposure ( $r = .31, p < .05$ ). Likewise, fathers who reported a history of victimization ( $r = .30, p < .05$ ) or a history of witnessing violent situations ( $r = .26, p$

< .05) in the last year were also more likely to arm and protect their family than fathers with no history of victimization or witnessing violence. Additionally, fathers who witnessed more violence were more likely to supervise their children and teach them about personal safety ( $r = .29, p < .05$ ), and to teach about home and neighborhood safety ( $r = .28, p < .05$ ) than fathers who had witnessed less violence.

With regard to parenting practices, fathers who employed more authoritative parenting styles were significantly more likely to supervise their children and teach personal safety ( $r = .69, p < .01$ ); to teach home and neighborhood safety ( $r = .50, p < .01$ ); and to engage in community activism ( $r = .36, p < .01$ ) than fathers who used fewer authoritative parenting practices. Fathers who utilized more authoritarian parenting practices were more likely to arm and protect their families than fathers who used fewer of these practices ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ). And lastly, fathers who utilized more permissive parenting practices were less likely to teach their children specific ways to be safe at home and in the neighborhood than fathers who used fewer permissive parenting strategies ( $r = -.30, p < .05$ ).

In terms of social support, fathers who received more help from their collective networks of support (including familial, extra-familial, and professional support) were significantly more likely to engage in community activism ( $r = .39, p < .01$ ) than fathers who received less support. Interestingly, there was also a significant, positive relationship between familial support and the strategy “arm and protect family” ( $r = .35, p < .01$ ). Fathers who reported receiving more help from family members (parents, relatives, own children) were more likely to carry a

weapon and to adopt other strategies to protect their families (e.g., teach their children how to fight back in order to be safe) than fathers who received less help from family members.

Lastly, sex of child (dummy coded so that 0 = female and 1 = male) was significantly positively correlated with father's efforts to reduce exposure to violent media ( $r = .30, p < .05$ ). As mentioned earlier, fathers were more likely to attempt to reduce their son's exposure to violent television programming and violent video games than to reduce their daughter's exposure to such media.

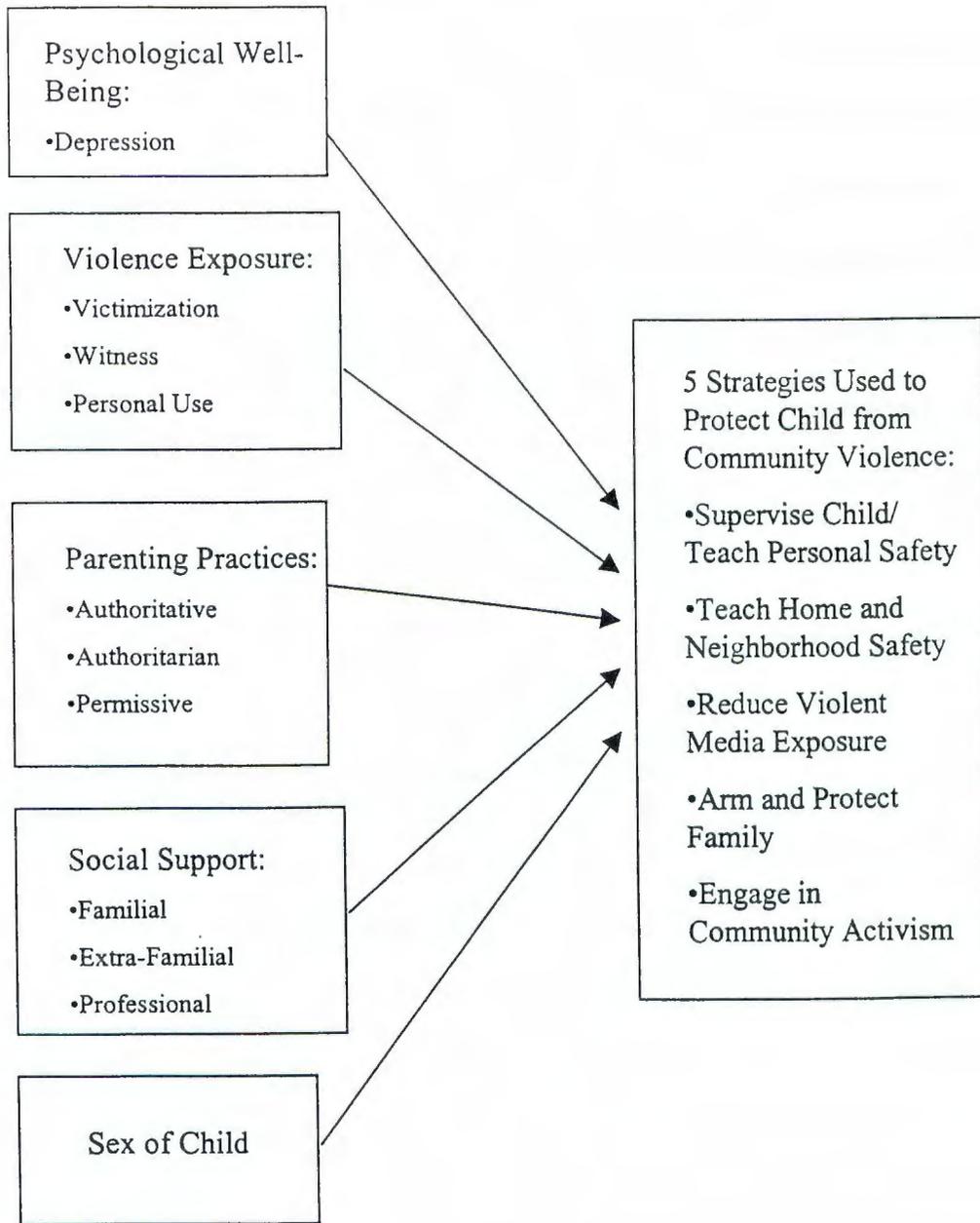
### **Regression Models**

One of the major objectives of this study was to examine the relative strength of selected independent variables (psychological well-being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, social support, and sex of the target child) in predicting the paternal strategies used to protect children from community violence. Figure 2 presents a conceptual model of the predictors of the five major paternal strategies.

Due to the small sample size ( $N = 61$ ), this study was limited in the number of variables it could enter into the regression models. For each model, the following variables were initially entered: depression, total violence exposure, authoritative parenting, permissive parenting, total social support, and child's sex (dummy coded: 0 = female; 1 = male). Because authoritarian parenting was highly intercorrelated with permissiveness, it was left out of the initial models to reduce the chance of multicollinearity (Pedhazur, 1982). Substituting permissive parenting with authoritarian parenting in subsequent analyses revealed that the authoritarian parenting

Figure 2

Conceptual Model of Predictors of Paternal Strategies Used to Protect Children from Community Violence



variable did not account for significant amounts of variance in any of the fathering strategies; thus, those models were not presented. To further explore the “best” regression models, a third series of regressions were run with the three social support subscales entered as a block (replacing the total social support variable).

The models presented below represent the best regression models – in other words, these models account for the largest amount of variance in the five major protective strategies used by fathers to keep their children safe from harm. The rationale for selecting the “best” regression model was based on constructing the model with backward elimination, where predictor variables were entered into the equation and then sequentially removed (Pedhazur, 1982). After the first step, in which all selected variables were entered into the model, the variable with the smallest partial correlation coefficient was examined, and, if the probability of its  $F$  was greater than the criterion value of .05, the variable was removed. This procedure was repeated until the best model was constructed (Pedhazur, 1982).

### **Supervise Children and Teach Personal Safety**

As presented in Table 15, the first model examined the predictors of the strategy “Supervise Children and Teach Personal Safety.” The overall model was significant,  $F(5,54) = 15.18, p < .001$ , with an  $R^2$  of .58. Significant predictors included authoritative parenting practices ( $p < .001$ ), depression ( $p < .02$ ), permissiveness ( $p < .05$ ), family support ( $p < .03$ ), and extra-familial support ( $p < .03$ ).

The strongest predictor of the “Supervise Children and Teach Personal Safety” strategy was authoritative parenting practices. As compared to fathers who used fewer authoritative parenting practices, fathers who were often warm and nurturing, used reasoning and democratic practices, and were easy going with their children were also more likely to keep close watch of their children and to teach behaviors that encouraged personal safety. Fathers who employed more permissive parenting styles were less likely to supervise their preschoolers and teach them peaceful ways of resolving conflicts as compared to fathers who utilized fewer permissive practices.

Table 15

Regression Analysis Examining Predictors of the  
“Supervise Children and Teach Personal Safety” Strategy

Strategy	Predictor Variables	Slope ± <u>SE</u>	Beta	p <	<u>R</u> <sup>2</sup> Change
Supervise Children and Teach Personal Safety	Authoritative	0.02 ± 0.01	.520	.001	.48
	Depression	0.03 ± 0.01	.235	.017	.04
	Permissiveness	-0.02 ± 0.01	-.220	.042	.03
	Family Support	0.26 ± 0.11	.265	.027	.02
	Extra-Familial Support	-0.25 ± 0.11	-.250	.026	.01

$F(5,54) = 15.18, p < .001$

$R^2 = .58$

Adjusted  $R^2 = .55$

Depressive symptomatology was also a positive predictor of this strategy: fathers who had more depressive symptoms were more likely to supervise their children and teach them personal safety than fathers who had fewer depressive symptoms. Again, examination of depression scores revealed that only five fathers in the sample fell in the clinical range for depression ( $M \geq 16$ ). The average score on the CES-D was 8.43, far below the clinical cut-off for depression.

Two social support variables were also significant predictors of this strategy. Fathers who perceived their familial support networks as helpful were more likely to watch their children closely and teach personal safety than fathers who perceived their familial supports as less helpful. As compared to fathers with high levels of extra-familial support, fathers with low levels of help from their friends, coworkers, or other parents were more likely to report using supervisory and personal safety strategies to protect their children from community violence.

### **Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety**

In Table 16, the results of the regression analysis of the “teach home and neighborhood safety” strategy are presented. The best regression model included the following predictor variables: authoritative parenting practices ( $p < .001$ ), permissiveness ( $p < .008$ ), and depression ( $p < .03$ ). The overall model was significant,  $F(3,56) = 10.85$ ,  $p < .001$ , with an  $R^2$  of .37. Fathers who employed more authoritative parenting practices were more likely to teach home and neighborhood safety strategies to their preschool children than fathers who employed fewer authoritative practices. Fathers who were more permissive in parenting were less

likely to teach safety strategies than less permissive fathers. Additionally, fathers with higher scores on the depression measure were also more likely to teach their children specific ways to be safe at home and in the neighborhood than fathers with lower depression scores.

Table 16

Regression Analysis Examining Predictors of the  
“Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety” Strategy

Strategy	Predictor Variables	Slope $\pm$ SE	Beta	p <	R <sup>2</sup> Change
Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety	Authoritative	0.02 $\pm$ 0.01	.394	.001	.25
	Permissiveness	-0.03 $\pm$ 0.01	-.303	.008	.06
	Depression	0.04 $\pm$ 0.02	.259	.028	.06
$F(3,56) = 11.11, p < .001$ $R^2 = .37$ Adjusted $R^2 = .34$					

### Reduce Exposure to Media Violence

The next regression model examined the best predictors of the “reduce exposure to media violence” strategy (See Table 17). The best and only predictor of this strategy was sex of the target child ( $p < .03$ ),  $F(1,58) = 5.58, p < .05$ , which accounted for 9% of the variance. As reported earlier, fathers of sons were more

likely to try to reduce their child’s exposure to violent television programming and violent video games than fathers of daughters.

Table 17

Regression Analysis Examining Predictors of the  
“Reduce Exposure to Violent Media” Strategy

Strategy	Predictor Variables	Slope ± <u>SE</u>	Beta	p <	<u>R</u> <sup>2</sup> Change
Reduce Exposure to Violent Media	Sex of Child	0.45 ± 0.19	.296	.021	.09

$F(1,58) = 5.58, p < .05$   
 $R^2 = .09$   
Adjusted  $R^2 = .07$

**Arm and Protect Family**

Table 18 presents the regression model predicting the strategy “arm and protect family.” The overall model was significant,  $F(3,56) = 10.72, p < .001$ , with an  $R^2$  of .37. Three independent variables made significant contributions to the model, including depression ( $p < .01$ ), family support ( $p < .001$ ), and extra-familial support ( $p < .03$ ). Fathers who reported more depressive symptoms were more likely to arm and protect their children from community violence than fathers with fewer symptoms. Fathers who reported receiving more help from their family members were also more likely to arm and protect their family than less supported fathers.

Finally, as compared to fathers who received more help from extra-familial supports (such as friends, coworkers), fathers who received less help were also more likely to arm themselves and their children (e.g., teach how to fight back) for protection.

Table 18

Regression Analysis Examining Predictors of the  
“Arm and Protect Family” Strategy

Strategy	Predictor Variables	Slope $\pm$ SE	Beta	p <	R <sup>2</sup> Change
Arm and Protect Family	Depression	0.05 $\pm$ 0.01	.384	.001	.19
	Family Support	0.52 $\pm$ 0.13	.498	.000	.12
	Extra-Familial Support	-0.30 $\pm$ 0.14	-.289	.030	.06

$F(3,56) = 10.72, p < .001$

$R^2 = .37$

Adjusted  $R^2 = .33$

### Engage in Community Activism

As presented in Table 19, the final regression model assessing father’s engagement in community activism revealed two significant predictors, total support ( $p < .005$ ) and authoritative parenting ( $p < .014$ ),  $F(2, 57) = 8.98, p < .001$ . These two variables accounted for 24% of the variance in fathers’ involvement in community activism. Fathers who received help from their familial, extra-familial, and professional support networks and utilized more authoritative parenting practices (e.g., were warm, easy-going, and used reasoning and democratic participation practices) were more

likely to also engage in community activities that improved the safety of their neighborhood (e.g., participate in Neighborhood Watch, work with churches to reduce violence).

Table 19

Regression Analysis Examining Predictors of the  
“Engage in Community Activism” Strategy

Strategy	Predictor Variables	Slope $\pm$ SE	Beta	p <	R <sup>2</sup> Change
Engage in Community Activism	Total Social Support	0.48 $\pm$ 0.17	.340	.005	.15
	Authoritative	0.02 $\pm$ 0.01	.299	.014	.09

F(2,57) = 8.98, p < .001  
R<sup>2</sup> = .24  
Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .21

A summary of the five regression model findings is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Summary of the Significant Predictors of Paternal Strategies

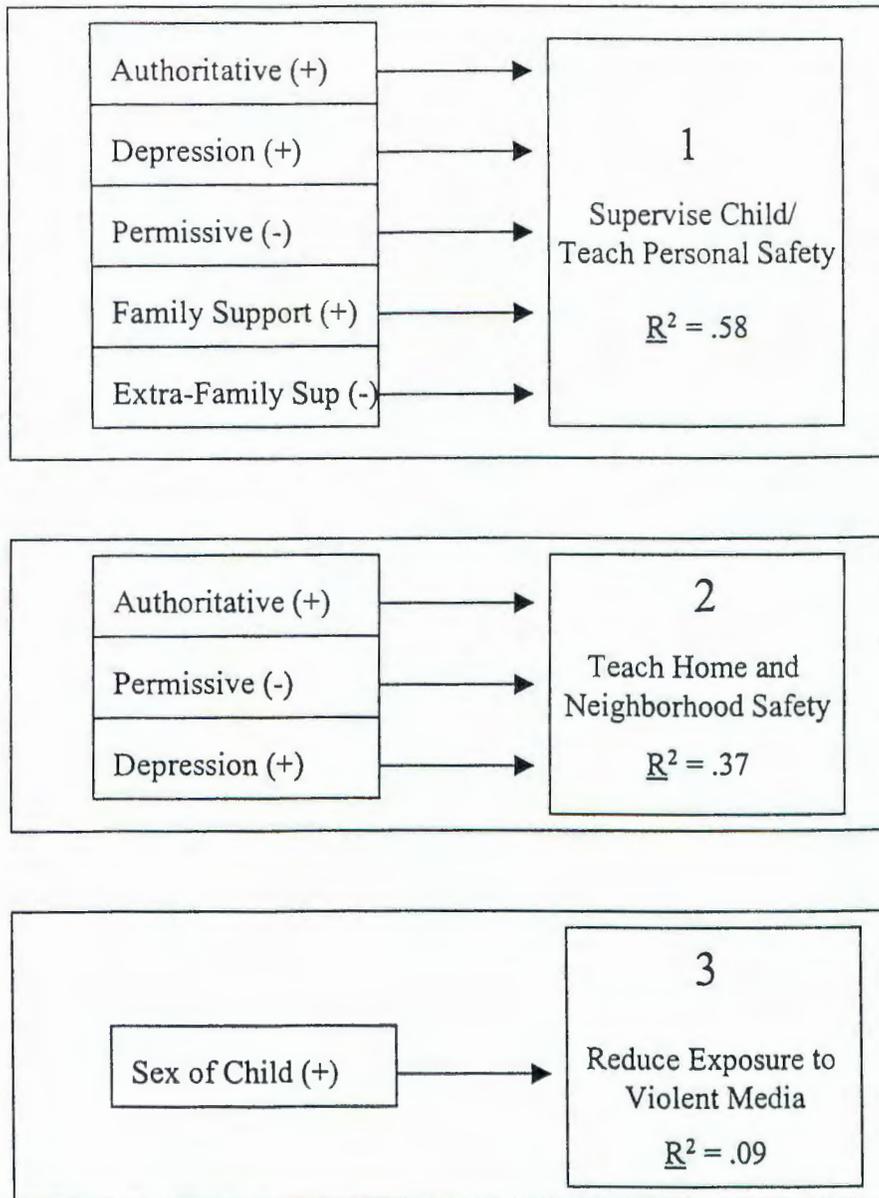
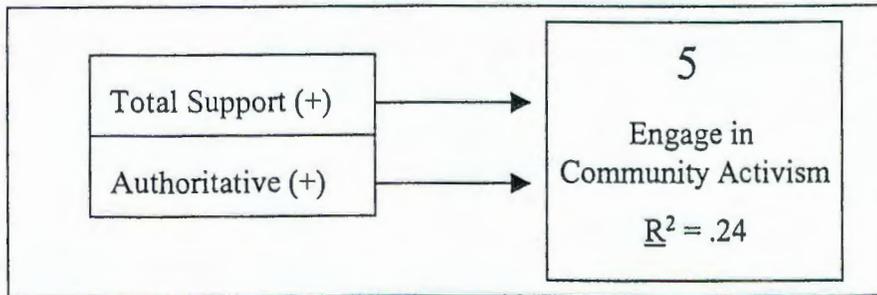
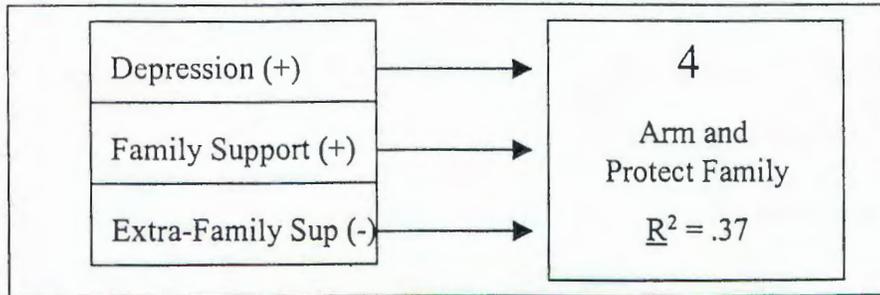


Figure 3. Continued



## Chapter V

### **Discussion**

The current exploratory study had two major objectives: to identify the various strategies African American fathers employ to protect their young children from community violence, and to determine individual, familial, and community factors that were significant predictors of fathers' protective strategies. This study was unique in that it examined the parenting techniques of African American fathers and father-figures of Head Start children. Moreover, the research shed light on the ways in which men are attempting to ensure the safety of young children in violent neighborhoods.

#### **Strategies Used by Fathers to Protect Children from Community Violence**

Focus group data revealed that fathers employed twelve general strategies to protect their children from neighborhood dangers. Those strategies included: 1) supervising children; 2) teaching neighborhood and household safety skills; 3) teaching about real-life violence and its consequences; 4) teaching how to fight back; 5) teaching alternatives to violence; 6) reducing exposure to media violence; 7) confronting parents/children causing trouble; 8) keeping to oneself/doing nothing; 9) using prayer and positive thinking; 10) arming family for protection; 11) moving away from bad residential areas; and 12) engaging in community activism. These strategies are consistent with a generative model of fathering (Allen & Connors, 1997; Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997) in which African American biological and social fathers

have developed a broad and creative range of strategies to protect their young children from neighborhood dangers.

The protective strategies adopted by fathers of preschoolers in this study can be compared with those used by mothers of preschool and elementary-aged children in two previous investigations (Holland et al., 1995; Hill et al., 1995). The most common protective strategies of mothers include restricting neighborhood contact, providing constant supervision, teaching practical household safety skills, developing a structured home environment, praying, thinking positive thoughts, and keeping to oneself/doing nothing. Hill et al. (1995) also found that mothers with some college education who lived in lower violence areas engaged in community activism, but this protective strategy was not common among less educated mothers in high violence neighborhoods.

While these same strategies were also employed by fathers, this study identified some unique paternal strategies used to shelter children from harm. These unique strategies included teaching children about real-life violence and its consequences, teaching how to fight back, teaching alternatives to violence, reducing exposure to media violence, confronting parents/children causing trouble, arming the family for protection, and moving away from bad residential areas.

Many fathers in this study reported that their choice of protective strategies had been influenced by changes in the neighborhood since they were children. Given the potential for violence in their neighborhoods, these fathers emphasized that they are having to come up with new ways of parenting their children, such as teaching about

violence and alternatives to violence, reducing children's exposure to violent media, and confronting the parents of children who are creating trouble for their own preschoolers.

One finding that was particularly striking was the number of fathers who discussed the necessity of teaching their preschoolers about the realities of violence in their neighborhoods. Many fathers did not want their children to be shocked by images and situations that they will undoubtedly experience within their community, such as witnessing illicit drug transactions, seeing a fight, hearing gunshots, and even seeing a dead body on the street. Fathers who reported teaching about violence wanted their children to be prepared and knowledgeable about the potential threats to their well-being. They pointed out that teaching children about the real-life pain that comes from violent interactions, as well as how to avoid conflict and be safe, may help children develop critical "survival skills" that will protect them from physical and psychological harm.

Based on these preliminary findings, it would appear that parental strategies used to protect children from community violence may differ as a function of the parent's gender. While mothers may be more likely to closely supervise children and isolate their families from the community, fathers may be more likely to adopt such strategies as confronting troublemakers in the neighborhood and arming their family for protection. A number of fathers expressed the need to take a stand in the community and "do what I gotta do." Such fathers expressed traditional masculine traits such as strength and courage in undertaking community-level activities that

reduce violence in the neighborhood (e.g., participating in Neighborhood Watch, patrolling the streets and confronting drug dealers). Some fathers may also feel that it is their responsibility as the “good provider” of the family to earn enough money to move their families to safer neighborhoods (Bernard, 1981; Furstenberg, 1988). In fact, this family goal was noted by 62% of fathers who stated that their number one objective for the upcoming year was to improve their financial situation so they could purchase a home and move their family to a safer neighborhood.

### **Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods – A New Measure**

Because there was no existing measure to assess the strategies parents use to protect their children from community violence, the author of the present study collaborated with the investigators of a larger U.S. Department of Education study (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996) to develop a new measure, entitled the “Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods Scale” (PVNS). Numerous approaches were used to establish the reliability, face validity, and construct validity of the PVNS with fathers. Involving the help of a community advisory committee was particularly useful to ensure that the new measure was culturally appropriate and sensitive for use with African American parents.

Based on the findings generated from the PVNS, this study identified five strategies used to protect children from community violence, including: supervise and teach personal safety; teach home and neighborhood safety; reduce exposure to violent media; arm and protect family; and engage in community activism. The most commonly used strategy, “supervise children and teach personal safety,” comprised

such items as “I take turns with other parents doing things to keep children safe like watching them at the playground” and “I keep my preschool child inside when not in school to avoid community violence.” The majority of fathers mentioned the need to constantly supervise their children in the home and neighborhood and restrict or limit their children’s contact with the neighborhood. This supervisory strategy is also commonly used by mothers of preschool and elementary school children in Chicago (Garbarino et al., 1992), Washington, D.C. (Hill et al., 1995) and the Baltimore-Washington area (Holland, 1996).

Although fathers perceive constant supervision and home confinement as often critical to their child’s safety, such restrictive strategies may impact the development of preschoolers who are mastering motor learning skills and curious about their environment (Holland, 1996). Children who are closely confined to their homes may lack opportunities to develop independence and to cultivate social relationships with peers and adults in the larger community. Such restrictions in children’s behavior – literally keeping children out of sight of one’s neighbors and friends – may run counter to African American traditions of child-centeredness (Hill, 1993) and collectivism (Nobles & Goddard, 1993), where children are parented by the entire neighborhood and represent the continuity and well-being of the community. Interestingly, fathers reported that they had to remove children from their home neighborhoods to such places as shopping malls and regional parks in order to provide children with opportunities for outdoor play and exploration of their environment.

The “supervise and teach personal safety” strategy also included items about teaching personal alternatives to violence (e.g., telling a parent or teacher if picked on), thinking positively, and using prayer as a protective strategy. Although prayer and positive thinking were not originally conceptualized as being linked with supervision and teaching personal safety, these items were strongly related to this strategy. The use of prayer and positive thinking is consistent with an Africentric “world view” that promotes harmony, unity, spirituality, and communalism (Butler, 1992; Nobles & Goddard, 1985). Thus, some fathers may not only engage in the physical supervision of their children, but may also rely on prayer as a spiritual means to protect their children from harm.

Another protective strategy reported by fathers was to teach home and neighborhood safety. This strategy included items about household safety, such as “I keep my child away from windows especially at night” and “I teach my child how to dial 911.” This strategy also included items about neighborhood safety, such as “I tell my child to avoid drug dealers and other troublemakers in the neighborhood” and items about teaching about violence and its consequences, such as “I teach my child about the real-life pain that comes from violence such as bleeding or dying when you get shot.” While fathers may perceive such strategies as imperative to protect children, some of this safety information may be too cognitively complex for three, four, and five-year-olds to understand. For example, preschoolers may not be sophisticated enough to identify drug dealers in the neighborhood and therefore may not be able to avoid them. Preschool children also have difficulty understanding the concrete

manifestations of death (e.g., no life, no movement, no return to existence), especially when parents use abstract spiritual explanations (Furman, 1978). Teaching preschoolers about death, drug dealers, and the real-life pain that comes with community violence may also increase young children's fears and anxieties about the neighborhood, which may have negative effects on socioemotional development and adaptive functioning (Garbarino et al., 1992).

A third strategy used by fathers in this study was to reduce children's exposure to violent media. This strategy was made up of such items as "I keep my child from playing video games that have a lot of violence," "I prepare my child to handle violence by having him/her watch violent movies/shows like 'Cops'," and "I allow my child to watch TV or movies that have violent scenes." (The latter two items were reversed for scoring purposes.) While reducing exposure to violent media may be important to decreasing aggressiveness and emotional desensitization in young children (Smith & Donnerstein, 1998), this strategy may be difficult to employ consistently, especially if there are older siblings or other adults in the home with access to the television. Additionally, parents who restrict or limit their children's outside activities due to the threat of community violence may look to the television and video games (e.g., Nintendo) as a means of keeping their children occupied and entertained. Unfortunately, this latter practice may actually increase the likelihood of children being exposed to media with violent content.

The fourth strategy, “arm and protect family,” included carrying a weapon or keeping a weapon in the home in case fathers needed to protect themselves or family members. Several focus group fathers admitted to having guns for protection. However, one might question the wisdom of this strategy given that accidental shootings are the third leading cause of death for 10 to 29-year-olds and the fifth leading cause of death for children from 1 to 15 years of age (Weiss, 1996). In addition to arming themselves for protection, some fathers also revealed that they “armed” their children by teaching them how to fight other children who provoked them. Such fathers responded positively to items such as “I teach my preschool child how to fight so s/he can protect her/himself,” and “I tell my preschooler to fight back in order to be safe.”

In this study, “arm and protect family” was the least common protective strategy adopted by African American fathers of preschoolers. The finding that fathers used this practice only “once in a while” is consistent with focus group discussions where fathers talked about the real dangers of children or parents engaging in conflict in violent neighborhoods. Such fathers may recognize that teaching their children how to fight back or carrying a weapon themselves could quickly escalate to serious violence and even death. These fathers may also opt to teach their children personal and home safety strategies to maximize their families’ chances of survival in violent neighborhoods.

The last strategy, “engage in community activism,” comprised items such as “I participate in Neighborhood Watch or other groups that try to reduce

neighborhood violence,” and “I talk to other parents about ways we can keep our children safe.” As compared to previous studies examining maternal strategies to protect children from community violence (Holland et al., 1995; Hill et al., 1995), fathers appear much more likely than mothers to engage in community-level activities to reduce violence in their neighborhoods. Fathers may feel they have the physical strength and networks of other men to confront neighborhood problems, while mothers may feel less confident about these resources. Moreover, fathers may feel it is their duty as men to take action in their community to ensure their families’ safety and well-being.

### **Protective Strategies and Sex of Child**

This study also examined fathers’ use of protective strategies as a function of their Head Start child’s sex. Findings revealed that fathers of sons and fathers of daughters tended to use similar strategies to protect their children from community violence with one exception. Fathers of sons were more likely to reduce their child’s exposure to media violence than fathers of daughters. It is possible that fathers of sons were more concerned about the negative images of African American men on TV than fathers of daughters, and were more worried that their sons might internalize such images. It is also possible that fathers of sons have noted a relationship between their sons watching violent TV shows or playing violent video games and acting aggressively towards others. Since most of the media perpetrators of violence are male, fathers of daughters may be less fearful that their daughters will imitate aggressive media models than fathers of sons. Given the extremely high rates of serious violent

crime victimization and homicide for African American male youth (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1999), fathers may be especially concerned about reducing their sons' exposure to media and other forms of violence.

Although reducing violent media was the only fathering strategy that differed as a function of the child's sex, this finding suggests one difference in the way fathers may socialize their sons and daughters. As Randolph et al. (1996) has noted, "it has long been argued that African American mothers socialize their children differently based on gender (that they 'love' their sons, yet 'raise' their daughters)..."(p. 288). Perhaps these fathers feel a special responsibility to "raise" their sons. Many fathers may wish to counter stereotypical images of absent fathers and portray a strong, responsible male model for their sons to emulate. Such fathers may emphasize nonviolent solutions to problems, as compared to the confrontational aggressive tactics promulgated in the media.

### **Predictors of Paternal Strategies**

Another major objective of this study was to examine the relative strength of certain individual, familial, and community-level variables (e.g., psychological well-being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, social support, and child's sex) in predicting the five major strategies used by fathers to protect their children from community violence. Following is a discussion of the best predictors of each strategy.

*Supervise Children and Teach Personal Safety.* The best predictors of the "supervise and teach personal safety" strategy included authoritative parenting

practices, depression, permissiveness, family support, and extra-familial support. Overall, these five predictors accounted for 58% of the variance in this strategy. Authoritative parenting practices, which singularly accounted for the largest amount of variance (48%) in the strategy, include using warmth and nurturance, reasoning, and democratic participation when parenting children (Robinson et al., 1995). It is not surprising that fathers who often utilized verbal reasoning and problem-solving in parenting would also teach their children nonviolent problem solving strategies, such as how to walk away when other children hit them and how to tell a teacher when they feel threatened by another child. Additionally, fathers who used more authoritative parenting practices were more likely to teach their children how to respond to peer aggression with calm, firm words than fathers who used fewer authoritative practices.

Whereas fathers who employed more authoritative parenting practices were likely to supervise their children and teach about personal safety, findings revealed that fathers high in permissiveness were less likely to use this strategy to protect their children. According to Robinson et al. (1995), fathers who employ permissive parenting practices often lack self-confidence as parents, failing to follow through on discipline and ignoring misbehavior. Fathers who use such permissive practices may just “let their children go,” without seeing a necessity for constant supervision. Their behavior may be motivated, in part, by their appraisal of the level of danger to which their children are exposed. Some fathers reported that they felt their neighborhoods were relatively safe for small children and did not yet feel a need to teach their children about personal safety. However, given that the neighborhoods included in this study

were identified as highly violent based on police crime reports and key informant appraisals, it is possible that these fathers were underestimating their children's vulnerability to harm. Skogan and Maxfield (1981) have suggested that people often underestimate dangers in their own neighborhoods, perceiving the incidence of neighborhood crime as less serious than in other areas. As Perloff (1983) suggests, this "illusion of invulnerability" may be an adaptive coping mechanism that enhances one's sense of control and reduces anxiety and fear. However, this illusion may be maladaptive if it reduces a father's tendency to engage in self-protection and protective parenting behaviors.

Interestingly, depressive symptomatology was a positive predictor of the "supervise children and teach personal safety" strategy. Fathers who had more depressive symptoms were more likely to supervise their children and teach them about personal safety than fathers with fewer symptoms. Further examination of the depression scores, however, revealed that the vast majority of fathers did not score in the clinical range of depression (only five fathers scored at or above the cutoff score of 16). Possibly the depression score not only measured father's mental health, but also his willingness to share personal feelings. Fathers who are more in touch with their own feelings might be more likely to talk to their children about how it feels to be bullied or afraid, or how to avoid potential conflict with peers. It should be noted that this study found a relationship between fathers' depression scores and the frequency of their violence exposure. Thus, fathers' feelings of sadness and depression may be tied

to concrete incidents of neighborhood violence, motivating fathers to feel greater fear for their children's well-being and to teach them more personal safety strategies.

Lastly, fathers who received more help from their families were also more likely to report supervising their children and teaching them about personal safety. It can be speculated that fathers with strong familial support had family members to help them supervise their children when playing in their homes and neighborhoods and had more time to socialize their children about safety issues. Interestingly, fathers who received less help from extra-familial supports (e.g., friends, other parents, coworkers) were also more likely to supervise their children and teach personal safety than fathers who received more extra-familial help. Fathers who felt isolated in their neighborhoods may have felt a greater need to supervise their children closely than fathers who had other parents and friends in the neighborhood to help watch over their children.

*Teach Home and Neighborhood Safety.* Both authoritative and permissive parenting typologies were significant predictors of the strategy "teach home and neighborhood safety," accounting for a combined 31% of the variance in this strategy. As in the case of personal safety, fathers who utilized more authoritative (e.g., warm, nurturant, democratic) parenting practices were also more likely to teach their children about home and neighborhood safety as compared to fathers who used fewer authoritative practices. Fathers who used more permissive parenting practices, often ignoring misbehavior, failing to follow through with discipline, and lacking self confidence in their parenting ability, were less likely to teach such safety strategies to

their children. Such parents may be less engaged with their children and may not perceive the need to teach their children home and neighborhood safety strategies. Parents who use more permissive practices may also lack confidence in their ability to teach their children ways to protect themselves in their homes and communities.

Lastly, as compared to fathers with lower depression scores, fathers with higher scores on the study's depression measure were more likely to teach their children home and neighborhood safety strategies, just as they were more likely to supervise their children and teach personal safety skills. Again, these fathers may be more aware of their feelings – rather than debilitated by them – and may act on this awareness in constructive ways. Given the finding that fathers with higher depression scores had personally experienced more violence, it is also quite possible that fathers who have more symptoms of depression are more aware of the dangers in their homes and communities and thus more likely to teach their children home and neighborhood safety skills.

*Reduce Exposure to Violent Media.* The only predictor of the strategy “reduce exposure to violent media” was sex of the child. As noted earlier, fathers of sons were more likely to attempt to reduce exposure to TV and other forms of violent media than fathers of daughters. Again, fathers of sons may be more worried about the negative portrayals of African American men in the media than fathers of daughters, and more concerned that their sons might imitate aggressive media models. Such factors may influence father's efforts to reduce media violence more for sons than daughters. It should be noted that the individual, familial, and community variables selected for this

study were less successful in predicting father's reduction of violent media (accounting for only 9% of the variance) than they were in predicting other protective strategies. Thus, other factors may play a greater role in motivating fathers to attack the problem of media violence.

*Arm and Protect Family.* The strongest predictors of the fourth strategy, "arm and protect family," included social support and depression. The latter factors accounted for 37% of the variance in this strategy. Fathers who were more likely to receive help from their familial support network were also more likely to personally carry a weapon for protection and to teach their children how to fight back than fathers who received less help from family members. Although a perplexing relationship, it can be speculated that fathers who have a close knit, supportive, and helpful family may also feel more protected in times of trouble, and more willing and able to confront someone who is causing them conflict. These fathers may feel like their family "has their back"(providing protection and support), enabling them to engage in more confrontive behaviors with troublemakers and to teach their children how to fight when necessary.

Fathers who received less help from extra-familial support networks were also more likely to arm and protect their family from community violence than their more supported counterparts. In this instance, fathers who feel more isolated in their neighborhoods may also feel the need to be ready for a confrontation and to teach their children to be ready for a fight. On the other hand, fathers who feel more connected to their community and extra-familial supports may feel it less necessary for their children

to know how to fight back in order to be safe. Instead of fighting back, such fathers may teach their children to seek out other adults in the neighborhood (i.e., other parents, close family friends) for help in times of need. It is interesting to note that fathers with lower extra-familial support appeared especially attentive to potential dangers in their community, as they were more likely than other fathers to both arm and protect their family and to supervise and teach children personal safety.

Lastly, fathers who reported having more depressive symptoms were also more likely to arm and protect their families from community violence than fathers who had fewer depressive symptoms. These fathers may feel the need to be more hypervigilant about neighborhood threats to their families and more prepared to handle these threats personally, rather than relying on neighbors or police. It is possible that fathers with higher depression scores may also feel saddened and overwhelmed by incidents of violence in the neighborhood. Such fathers may focus their efforts on protecting their family, as one father stated, “by any means necessary.” Fathers with more symptoms of depression may perceive few other alternatives than to prepare themselves and their children to take a stand and fight back when conflicts arise.

Consistent with the strategy of arming and protecting your family, many fathers in the focus groups noted the importance of “being respected” and maintaining a “hard,” “street smart” image in order to survive in a violent, drug-infested neighborhood. Fathers also discussed teaching their sons *and daughters* to be tough and to know how to fight so others won’t see them as “weak.” The importance of posturing and earning respect (particularly from dealers and gang members) has also

been noted in other studies of African American men in low-income neighborhoods in the Baltimore/Washington area (e.g., Whitehead, 1997).

*Engage in Community Activism.* The best predictors of the fifth and final strategy, “engage in community activism,” were total social support and authoritative parenting practices. These two variables accounted for a combined 24% of the variance in this strategy. Fathers who received more help from their familial, extra-familial, and professional support networks (e.g., family members, friends, coworkers, professional helpers) were more likely to participate in community activities to help reduce the violence in their neighborhoods than their less supported counterparts. Fathers receiving help from their networks may feel more connected to their communities and be more willing to join in violence prevention activities, such as Neighborhood Watch or the Orange Hats (a neighborhood safety patrol). Many fathers felt there was strength in numbers and were willing to attack neighborhood problems if there were other men to stand with them against drug dealers and other threats. Fathers who, on the other hand, feel isolated and “on their own” in their communities may keep to themselves because they fear retaliation from drug dealers and other troublemakers if they get involved or confront the wrong person. Other fathers talked about their fears of being “shot down” if they “go out there and say the wrong thing.” These fathers did not feel that getting involved in the community was worth risking their lives or the lives of their family members.

The other significant predictor of community activism, authoritative parenting practices, suggests that fathers who employ more authoritative parenting practices (i.e.,

fathers who value reasoning and democratic participation) are more likely to participate in their communities to create safe environments for young children than fathers who use fewer authoritative parenting practices. Such fathers appear to apply the same positive problem-solving strategies they use as parents on a community level.

Taken together, these findings reveal a number of individual, familial, and community-level factors that predict the strategies African American fathers employ to protect young children from community violence. The models have good predictive power, accounting for a relatively high percentage of the variance in fathers' use of four strategies: supervise children and teach personal safety, teach home and neighborhood safety, arm and protect family, and engage in community activism. The sex of the preschool child also accounted for a smaller, but significant percentage of the variance in the violent media reduction strategy. However, this finding must be interpreted with some caution given the lower reliability for this subscale on the PVNS. Continuing research may shed more light on the frequency with which fathers reduce their children's exposure to media violence, as well as additional factors that may predict the use of this strategy.

### **Summary**

In summary, this study contributes to the extant literature in several ways. First, this study used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to identify the unique strategies employed by fathers to protect their preschool children in violent neighborhoods. This triangulation of methods provides an in-depth understanding of African American fathering in violent communities that would not be possible without

the use of multiple methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Second, the author of this study collaborated with the investigators of a larger DOE study (Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996) in the development of a new measure of parenting in violent neighborhoods that can be used in future research examining how both mothers and fathers keep their children safe from harm. Third, the study is one of the few in the community violence literature to examine whether protective parenting strategies – and particularly fathering strategies – differ as a function of the sex of the preschool child. And lastly, this study is unique in identifying individual, familial, and community-level predictors of father’s protective strategies. This approach recognizes the complexities of parenting in violent contexts and provides information that early childhood educators can use to develop violence prevention and intervention programs.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although this exploratory study sheds light on the strategies fathers use to help their children cope with community violence and the variables that best predict those strategies, it is not without its limitations. Despite the use of numerous tactics to identify and recruit fathers for participation, this study is limited by its small, nonrandom, convenience sample of volunteer fathers and father-figures. These fathers tended to be highly involved with their Head Start children and to be active in their communities. It is possible that these fathers were acutely aware of stereotypes about low-income African American fathers, which may have heightened their interest in appearing to be “good fathers” (Roy, 1997). Although interviewers worked hard to establish trust and rapport early on in the interviews, focusing on the

positive aspects of fathering, this study is vulnerable to distortions or social desirability effects. Underreporting on the items measuring father's depression and history of violence exposure may have occurred given the sensitive nature of such issues. However, employing African American male interviewers may have decreased such bias and facilitated open, honest reporting during the interview. It is interesting to note, for example, that a number of fathers reported owning guns despite the study's focus on violence prevention strategies.

To allow for generalizability, future research should attempt to replicate this study's findings using larger, more diverse samples of fathers and father-figures. Efforts should also be made to consider the socioeconomic status (education and income) of fathers in low-income African American neighborhoods as there is often great variability in the backgrounds of residents of these urban areas. Because all fathers in the current study were recruited through Head Start, results cannot necessarily be generalized to fathers whose children are not enrolled in Head Start. A broader sampling of fathers of children living in violent neighborhoods may reveal that less involved fathers use other strategies or vary in their frequency of using the strategies identified in this study. Clearly, current findings cannot be generalized to describe the parenting practices of all African American fathers or low-income African Americans residing in the Washington metropolitan area. Nor can the findings be generalized to other low-income or ethnic/cultural groups living in violent neighborhoods. These findings are exploratory and identify issues that require more systematic research.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to gain access to the experiences of low-income fathers. In order to recruit and interview 61 fathers for this study, it was necessary to identify and develop relationships with 20 Head Start centers in the Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County, Maryland areas. As noted by other fatherhood researchers (e.g., Roy, 1997), the time investment needed to establish rapport and build trust with fathers – and in this case, with Head Start centers as well – suggest potential limitations to replication. However, given the tenacity of the stereotypes about African American fathers, it remains critical that researchers continue to examine the strengths and challenges of this group of men.

Future research should also continue to investigate the diversity of protective parenting practices employed by African American fathers and mothers rearing children in violent neighborhoods. Findings from this study suggest that fathers may utilize different protective strategies than mothers. Future research should assess if mothers and fathers protect their children differently and examine how different parenting strategies affect children's adjustment and behavior. Moreover, as suggested by Hill et al. (1995), future researchers should continue to examine parents' use of protective strategies as a function of their education, financial resources, and degree of violence exposure in the community.

It is interesting to note that this study found few differences in the strategies fathers use to protect their sons and daughters from community violence. For example, there were no differences in fathers' teaching their preschool sons and daughters personal, home, and neighborhood safety skills. Surprisingly, there were

also no differences in fathers' teaching their sons and daughters how to fight back in order to be safe. Future research should continue to explore whether African American parents of sons and daughters differ in their use of protective strategies in violent neighborhoods as their children reach the school-age and adolescent years.

It is also interesting to note that this study found no differences in the psychological well-being, history of violence exposure, parenting practices, or social support of biological and nonbiological fathers. Furthermore, these two groups of men did not differ in their use of strategies to protect children from community violence exposure. Social fathers may be an excellent resource for families where there is no biological father available to the child or where an additional male figure may provide valuable support to families. Future research should continue to explore social fathering and its potential to reduce the violence in low-income urban neighborhoods.

Future research should also continue to explore the social networks of young, low-income fathers and other males living in violent neighborhoods. This study only examined one dimension of social support, perceived helpfulness. Researchers are encouraged to investigate other dimensions of fathers' social support, such as social embeddedness or the types of support (e.g., financial, emotional) fathers give to – and receive from – members of their support networks. Such information may shed light on the ways fathers function within their families and communities and inform the development and implementation of interventions designed to enhance the social networks of families living in often-isolating violent neighborhoods.

It is clear that current ability to measure community violence exposure and parenting in violent neighborhoods is in its infancy (see also Holland, 1996). The author of this study collaborated in the development of a new measure to assess the strategies parents use to keep their children safe in a violent environment. Although the current study found this new measure to be psychometrically reliable for use with African American fathers, continued research is needed to refine the measure and establish its construct and content validity. Future research is also needed to examine the measure's utility in assessing maternal strategies for protecting children from violence exposure.

The present study reveals that protective parenting strategies are varied and multidimensional. There may be additional constructs or strategies not identified in this study that may be generated through continued inductive, qualitative methods, such as focus groups, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Future research should also consider alternative ways of assessing father's psychological well-being. In this study, psychological well-being was operationalized using a measure of depression. However, admitting depressive symptoms may contrast with fathers' views of masculinity and control. Future research efforts might employ other measures, such as locus of control or self-efficacy, that may tap into different dimensions of psychological well-being and clarify the relationship between fathers' well-being and their use of protective parenting strategies in violent neighborhoods.

Lastly, longitudinal research is needed to establish causal linkages between, for example, father's history of violence exposure, psychological well-being, and parenting practices. A deeper understanding of how these and other variables not examined in this study (e.g., father's identity as a father/significant male role model, father's own history of being fathered, father's relationship with the child's mother) will shed additional light on how fathers parent in violent neighborhoods, how they personally cope with violence, and how future interventions can best support this group of men as they attempt to raise their children.

### **Lessons Learned**

The current study is one of the first studies to examine the strategies used by African American fathers to keep their Head Start children safe. Clearly, continued research is critical to the pursuit of systematic and empirical understanding of fathering in violent neighborhoods. Researchers may gain from some of the "lessons learned" from this effort.

One of the first lessons learned was the usefulness and challenge of employing theoretical models that consider the complexities and diversity of African American family life, such as the cultural ecology model (Ogbu, 1983). It is essential to "place participants' behavioral and cognitive constructs in larger sociocultural and historical contexts" (Whitehead, 1997, p. 438). Researchers should continue to develop and refine theoretical models that capture the diversity of human experience and challenge themselves to think generatively rather than in a deficit mode.

A second significant lesson learned was the importance of establishing rapport and trust in the community of interest, especially as an “outsider.” The history of “outsiders” conducting research “on” African American communities and employing deficit perspectives on interpretations of data have left many community members skeptical and even unwelcoming of researchers. “Outside” researchers should be prepared to spend a great deal of time in the community networking and developing trust with key leaders who may later facilitate entrance into specific groups of interest. For example, developing a relationship with the Founder of the Positive Men’s Coalition in Prince George’s County, Maryland was critical to the author’s later acceptance by focus group fathers, facilitated by an introduction that the author was a “friend” and “someone you all can trust.”

A third lesson learned was the utility and power of triangulating research methods. Although qualitative methods often take longer periods of time to implement than quantitative methods, qualitative methods were highly valuable to the current study in learning more about a seldom studied, but often stereotyped, group. Using such qualitative techniques as prolonged engagement and peer debriefing may allow researchers not only to establish networks of support in the community, but also to “bounce ideas” off community members and challenge preconceived notions as an “outsider.” Such methods were also useful in informing this study’s quantitative findings.

## **Implications for Researchers, Practitioners, and Policymakers**

Findings from this study have many implications for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. This study provides evidence that, contrary to many stereotypes, many low-income fathers are involved in the lives of their children and are using a multitude of strategies to ensure their children's safety and well-being. As one father stated, "...everybody, they forget about the fathers. [But] there are some good fathers out here who are trying to do for their child."

Recognizing the importance of father involvement in preschooler's lives, the National Head Start Association and others have called for an increase in fatherhood initiatives (National Head Start Association, 1989; Phillips & Cabrera, 1996) and, in 1999, the NHSA created a new position specifically charged with implementing programs that increase father involvement. Head Start has also supported such groups as the Significant Male Task Force and the Positive Men's Coalition, groups that encourage males to get involved with young children and that organize special events for fathers and families. Although these efforts are important to increasing father involvement in Head Start, there are several additional strategies that Head Start and other early childhood programs might consider.

The current study has identified an issue – community violence – that is of major concern to Head Start fathers. Head Start should make efforts to engage fathers in a dialogue about community violence and work to unite fathers in launching violence prevention/intervention initiatives, as fathers have clear interest in increasing their children's safety. Violence initiatives involving African American fathers may

draw on Africentric principles (e.g., communalism, spirituality, harmony, positivity) that have long sustained communities despite economic hardship (e.g., Nobles & Goddard, 1993; Randolph, Damond, & Washington, 1995).

Current findings suggest that fathers may benefit from opportunities to discuss parenting in violent communities with other fathers and professional parent educators. As this study revealed, parents who employ more authoritative parenting practices may be more effective in protecting their children from physical and psychological harm than parents who do not use these practices. Specifically, parents who adopted nurturing, democratic, and reasoning-focused parenting practices were also more likely to supervise their children, teach personal, home, and neighborhood safety strategies, and engage in community activism. These prosocial strategies are not only important to keeping children safe, but may also contribute to a child's development of security, trust, and empathy (Holland, 1996, Garbarino, et al., 1992). Thus, fathers may benefit from participating in Head Start parent education programs that teach authoritative parenting practices. Such involvement in parent education may have positive outcomes for fathers, their children, and the community at large.

In this study, fathers with more social support were more likely to engage in a number of protective strategies, including supervising children, teaching personal safety, arming and protecting their family, and engaging in community activism. These findings suggest that social support networks may help to buffer families from the stress of violence, increase children's knowledge of safety strategies, and

strengthen the community's capacity to combat violence. Current results suggest that Head Start should consider ways to build parents' social support networks.

Head Start and other early childhood programs might follow the lead of a male support group organized by a Baltimore, Maryland Head Start center that meets monthly. According to Lue, Smalley, Smith, and Seaton (1998), this group recruits the extended family – including anyone who is male and lives in the community – because the center recognizes that “anyone may afford a child ‘protective factors’” and that men can “serve as role models in the community” (p.302). Such support groups may focus on a variety of life skills including coping strategies, self esteem, interpersonal communication, and empowering fathers to mentor their children. Support groups may also provide participants with an extended social family with whom to share the challenges and rewards of being an African American father, especially during the early years of a child's development (Lue, et al., 1998).

Although the African American community has a long tradition of strong extended familial support networks and fictive kin ties (Billingsley, 1968; Roschelle, 1997), present findings and findings from studies of Head Start mothers suggest that some of these families may lack depth and breadth of social support in times of need (e.g., Letiecq et al., 1996, Randolph, Koblinsky, & Roberts, 1998). Moreover, in poorer African American communities, these extended support systems often have very limited resources, a situation exacerbated by recent local, national, and global economic and political trends (e.g., welfare reform, loss of jobs to manufacturers overseas). Roschelle (1997) notes further that “the implementation of social policy

that presupposes the availability of familial safety nets in minority communities could have disastrous consequences for individuals who do not have access to extended kin networks” (p. vii). Head Start, as a comprehensive program offering educational, nutritional, parenting, and mental health services to lower-income families with young children, is in a unique position to build the social support networks of its families. Head Start could play a larger role in helping families maintain and develop new ties to other families, professional helpers, church leaders, law enforcement officials, and mental health agencies. These networks of support could further empower fathers and families to use authoritative parenting practices and participate in community activities to improve neighborhood conditions. The development of a comprehensive, community-wide support network, as opposed to singular sources of support (e.g., family, social service professionals), may likewise reduce some fathers’ beliefs that they must arm themselves to protect their families from harm.

Head Start and other early childhood programs must also recognize that before parents can focus on building social support and improving parenting practices, they may first need help dealing with their own personal histories of violence exposure. Parents living in violent neighborhoods may be struggling with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, anger, fear, isolation, and guilt (Garbarino et al., 1991; Lorion & Saltzman, 1993; Osofsky et al., 1993). As Holland (1996) and others have noted, such parents may find themselves preoccupied, distracted, and unable to provide consistent, effective parenting and to protect their children from community violence. Head Start should also consider the effects of community violence on

teachers and staff members. Teachers, like parents, can be important buffers for children dealing with violence-related stress, but are also faced with violence exposure and their fears of future community violence (Garbarino et al., 1992; Holland, 1996). Head Start should consider offering comprehensive support services and mental health services to address violence-related problems for both Head Start parents and staff.

Current findings also hold implications for policymakers interested in curbing community violence. There has been increased political attention to fatherhood issues over the last several years, particularly in light of welfare reform. Policymakers are encouraged to draw on the existing empirical and qualitative literature in formulating new policies, rather than relying on stereotypes or sensationalized media stories. Moreover, policymakers must recognize that low-income fathers may be particularly sensitive to the negative images so often used to characterize their parenting. Clearly, more generative policies that recognize fathers' strengths and encourage father involvement through proactive (versus punitive) policies may serve children and families better.

Welfare reform policies have a particular potential to affect father involvement in low-income and violent neighborhoods. Welfare reform systems "demand more intensive verification and monitoring of low-income and minority families' parenting practices, employment statuses, and biological links to children than for any other group of families in society" (Roy, 1997, p. 22). For fathers in low-income communities, taking care of their children involves more than providing financial support (Stier & Tienda, 1993). As this study indicates, low-income fathers are often

actively involved in supervising children's play; teaching personal, home, and neighborhood safety; and making efforts to improve the quality of their neighborhood and the larger community. Fathers who are treated only as "walking wallets" may be less likely to remain involved in child rearing, and less likely to participate in community activities that reduce violence.

Under new welfare reform policies, many states are incarcerating fathers due to nonpayment of child support (Roy, 1997). Such punitive policies appear to ignore potential strengths of low-income African American fathers and may force otherwise "legitimate" workers into illegitimate occupations (such as dealing drugs or trafficking guns) that will increase community violence. Policymakers must begin to understand how social policies designed to be "family-friendly" may, in fact, contribute to the challenges of families living in violent communities. Careful, comprehensive analyses of existing policies, as well as construction of new policies that capitalize on family strengths, are needed to support low-income fathers who are trying their best to keep their children safe, healthy, and free from violence exposure.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Human Subjects Approval Form

IRB No. 00491

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
College Park, MD 20742

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
Approval Document for Non-Exempt Projects

### RENEWAL OF RESEARCH PROJECT USING HUMAN SUBJECTS

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Sally Koblinsky Full Committee Review       
(or Faculty Advisor) Department of Family Studies Expedited Review X

CO-INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Bethany Leticq

PROJECT TITLE: Strategies Used by African American Fathers to Help Their Head Start Children Cope with Community Violence

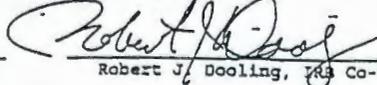
The University IRB reviewed the above-mentioned project on September 29, 1998, in accordance with Public Health Service grant policy as defined in "The Institutional Guide to DHHS Policy on Protection of Human Subjects," 12-1-71, and in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46.

The University IRB is:

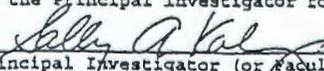
Denise C. Gottfredson, Professor, Criminology, CO-CHAIRPERSON  
Robert J. Dooling, Professor, Psychology, CO-CHAIRPERSON  
Ethelyn Bishop, Non-University Member  
Margaret W. Bridwell, M.D., Director, Student Health, Health Center  
Anne S. Geronimo, M.S., Grant Development Manager, ORAA  
Marc A. Rogers, Associate Professor, Kinesiology  
Kenneth Jennings, Jr., Non-University Member  
Andrea Hill Levy, Executive Director for Administration, Graduate School  
Stephen E. Loeb, Professor, College of Business & Management  
Ruth E. Fassinger, Associate Professor, Counseling and Personnel Services  
Sacared A. Bodison, M.D., Physician, Health Services, Health Center  
Stewart L. Edelman, Associate Dean, BSOS  
David R. Segal, Professor, Sociology  
Denise A. Andrews, University Counsel, Office of Legal Affairs  
Jude A. Cassidy, Associate Professor, Psychology  
Joan A. Lieber, Associate Professor, Special Education  
Allan L. Wigfield, Associate Professor, Human Development

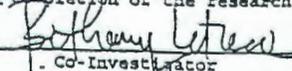
The IRB effected an independent determination of: (1) the rights and welfare of the individual or individuals involved, (2) the appropriateness of the methods used to secure informed consent, and (3) the risks and potential benefits of the investigation. The IRB has concluded that proper safeguards have been taken by the principal investigator as stated in the research proposal. The IRB approves this project as conforming to University and Public Health Service Policy in protecting the rights of the subjects.

  
Denise C. Gottfredson, IRB Co-Chair

  
Robert J. Dooling, IRB Co-Chair

The Principal Investigator (and Student Investigator, where appropriate), in signing this report, agree to follow the recommendations of the IRB, to notify the Office of the Dean for Graduate Studies and Research of any additions to or changes in procedure subsequent to this review, to provide information on the progress of the research on an annual basis, and to report any instances of injuries to subjects and unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others. Any consent forms used in connection with this project must be retained by the Principal Investigator for three years after completion of the research.

  
Principal Investigator (or Faculty Advisor)

  
CO-Investigator

THE NEXT REVIEW OF THIS PROJECT IS SCHEDULED FOR September 1999

PLEASE RETURN ONE SIGNED COPY TO THE IRB OFFICE, ROOM 2133 LEE BUILDING, CAMPUS 5111

IRB-3A  
11/97

## **Appendix B: Focus Group Guide** (Adapted from Randolph & Koblinsky, 1996)

### **“Social Fathers” Focus Group**

#### **I. Purpose of the Meeting**

Welcome to our meeting of significant males involved in the lives of Head Start children. As you may know, Head Start is interested in learning more about fathers and other significant men who are committed to helping young children cope with neighborhood violence. The goal of our research is to develop a violence prevention program for Head Start. You were invited here today to help us figure out what the biggest problems are in your community, and how you think some of those problems could be solved. We also want to know what you think about young children’s exposure to community violence and how you might protect them from violence.

#### **II. Introductions**

Let’s spend the first few minutes of the meeting introducing ourselves. Tell us your name and where you are from. Also tell us what role you play in a Head Start child’s life – for instance, are you his/her father, stepfather, grandfather, uncle, significant other, role model....I’ll start...

#### **III. Opening Discussion**

First of all, tell us about your neighborhood...

What does your neighborhood look like during the day?

Probe: Who’s out on the street? Are there panhandlers, drunks, homeless, dealers, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers, mentally-disturbed? Are they regulars or is it unpredictable?

What does your neighborhood look like during the night?

#### **IV. Issue 1: Safety of Neighborhood**

**Tell us about violence in your neighborhood...**

Question: When and where is it most likely to occur?

Question: Do you feel safe in your neighborhood? Why or why not?

**Now, we want to ask some questions about your child's exposure to violence in the neighborhood...**

Has your child seen acts of violence in your neighborhood, such as fighting or shooting?

Can you describe what happened and how your child reacted?

Tell us about a violent event your child witnessed/saw in the past 6 months and how you dealt with it.

How did your child react? What did you say or do to help your child? Did other people help you? Who and how?

Tell us about a situation involving children and neighborhood violence that you feel you handled particularly well.

Has your child seen the police arrest someone in your neighborhood?

**Tell us about the police...**

Do you have the police and fire protection you need? How satisfied are you with their response time when there is a problem?

How do you feel about neighborhood police? Do people work together with the police to reduce crime?

How does your child react when he/she sees a police officer?

**Now, let's talk about guns...**

If a child wanted a gun, could he/she get one in your neighborhood?

Do you feel you need to own a gun or weapon to protect yourself and your family?

Tell us about other people in the neighborhood...

Are there other groups of people who try to keep the streets safe? How effective are they?

How safe do you consider the area surrounding the Head Start center?

If you could, would you move out of your neighborhood to somewhere else? Why or why not?

## **V. Issue 2: Coping with Neighborhood Danger**

Now, we want you to tell us more how you cope with neighborhood danger....

What is your biggest concern about safety in your neighborhood?

What is your biggest concern about your child's safety?

What kinds of things do you do to try and keep your child safe?

Probe: What do you do if you hear shooting in your neighborhood? Where and when do you let your children play outside? What do you tell your child to do if another child bullies him/her on the street?

What advice do you give to children about dealing with strangers on the street?

When your child is upset about community violence – like fighting or shooting – how do you help your child cope?

When you are upset about a violent event in your neighborhood, what do you do?

Are there groups in your neighborhood that work to reduce violence (e.g., Orange Hats, Neighborhood Watch, religious groups, Black Muslims)?

How much power do you feel the police have in reducing violence in your neighborhood?

How much power do you feel you have in reducing violence in your neighborhood?

## **VI. Issue 3: Improving Neighborhood Safety**

Let's talk about what could be done to make your neighborhood safer...

What could people in the neighborhood do to make the neighborhood safer?

What could police do? Head Start? Schools? Churches?

Is there anything you could personally do to try to make this neighborhood safer?

What do you believe are the barriers to neighborhood improvement?

## **VII. Issue 4: Head Start and Violence**

**Now we want to talk a bit about Head Start and violence...**

How has community violence affected H.S. children in the classroom?

How aware are the Head Start staff of violence in the neighborhood?

How have teachers/staff changed their behavior or teaching practices to cope with potential neighborhood violence?

## **VIII. Conclusion...Summing it all up**

## **IX. Honorarium**

## Appendix C: Consent Form

### AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIVES OF THEIR HEAD START CHILDREN

#### Introduction

We are from the Department of Family Studies at the University of Maryland and we are conducting a study of fathers with children in Head Start who live in the Washington, D.C. area. The purpose of the study is to learn more about your involvement in your Head Start child's life. We are also interested in learning more about the strategies you use to protect your children from difficult experiences -- such as witnessing violence -- that may occur in your neighborhood. We plan to use the information to assist in the development of a violence intervention program for parents and Head Start teachers to help children cope with problems in their neighborhoods. Parents who participate in the study will receive \$25.00 for their time and effort.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY, PLEASE TURN  
THIS PAGE OVER AND READ AND SIGN THE CONSENT FORM.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Bethany L. Letiecq, Ph.D. Candidate  
Department of Family Studies  
1204 Marie Mount Hall  
University of Maryland  
(301) 405-7573

## Appendix C: Continued

### CONSENT FORM

#### AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIVES OF THEIR HEAD START CHILDREN

I (the participant) understand that I will be interviewed for about an hour and a half. During this interview, I will be asked about my background, my child, my neighborhood, and some things about my feelings and my behavior. I understand that the interview may be audio taped for coding purposes and that the audio tape will be destroyed upon completion of the study. I understand that all information collected and reported in the study is confidential, and that my name will not be identified at any time. Instead, the information will be identified using code numbers which will be logged and kept in a locked file cabinet. Only the researchers will know the code for each participant. I understand that there are no personal risks associated with participating in this study. However, the researchers are obligated to report signs of child abuse to the Head Start staff for referral to the appropriate authorities.

I understand that the study is not designed to help me personally, but that the investigator hopes to learn more about how my neighborhood affects the way I parent my child. I understand that I will be paid \$25.00 for my participation in the study; however, I am free to ask questions or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

I state that I have read the above, I am over 18 years of age, and wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Bethany Letiecq in the Department of Family Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Interviewer)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**Appendix D: Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale**  
(CES-D Scale; Radloff, 1977)

This next set of questions deals with some your own feelings over the past week. I'll read a statement about a feeling such as being happy or lonely, and you tell me how often you felt this way in the past week.

The card shows possible answers such as:

0	1	2	3
<b>Rarely or none of the time</b>	<b>Some or a little of the time</b>	<b>Occasionally or a moderate amount of time</b>	<b>Most or all of the time</b>
<b>(Less than 1 day)</b>	<b>(1-2 days)</b>	<b>(3-4 days)</b>	<b>(5-7 days)</b>

Some of the things I ask you may sound the same. Let's try one.

**DURING THE PAST WEEK, HOW OFTEN...**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Were you bothered by things that don't usually bother you?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Did you not feel like eating; your appetite was poor?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Did you feel that you could not shake off the blues even with help from your family or friends?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Did you feel that you were just as good as other people? (*Reverse*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Did you have trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Did you feel depressed?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Did you feel that everything you did was an effort?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Did you feel hopeful about the future? (*Reverse*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Did you think your life had been a failure?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Did you feel fearful?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Was your sleep restless?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Were you happy? (*Reverse*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Did you talk less than usual?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Did you feel lonely?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Were people unfriendly?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Did you enjoy life? (*Reverse*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Did you have crying spells?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Did you feel sad?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Did you feel that people disliked you?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Could you not "get going"?

## Appendix E: Adapted Conflict Tactics Scale

(Adapted from Straus, 1979)

This last set of questions deals with some experiences you may have had **during the past year**. I am going to read a list of things that you may have personally experienced or witnessed. I realize these questions are sensitive and I want to remind you that all the information is confidential. I want you to feel comfortable responding honestly.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Once	Twice	3-5 Times	6-10 Times	11-20 Times	More than 20 Times

During the past year, how many times have you **personally experienced** the following:

- 1. Someone insulted or swore at you.
- 2. Someone threatened to hit or throw something at you.
- 3. Someone pushed, grabbed, or shoved you.
- 4. Someone slapped you.
- 5. Someone kicked, bit, or hit you with a fist.
- 6. Someone hit or tried to hit you with something.
- 7. Someone beat you up.
- 8. Someone threatened you with a knife or gun.
- 9. Someone used a knife or gun.

During the past year, how many times did you **witness** someone do the following:

- 1. Insult or swear at someone.
- 2. Threaten to hit or throw something at someone.
- 3. Push, grab, or shove someone.
- 4. Slap someone.
- 5. Kick, bite, or hit someone with a fist.
- 6. Hit or try to hit someone with something.
- 7. Beat someone up.
- 8. Threaten someone with a knife or gun.
- 9. Use a knife or gun.

During the past year, how many times did you **do** the following:

- 1. Insult or swear at someone.
- 2. Threaten to hit or throw something at someone.
- 3. Push, grab, or shove someone.
- 4. Slap someone.
- 5. Kick, bite, or hit someone with a fist.
- 6. Hit or try to hit someone with something.
- 7. Beat someone up.
- 8. Threaten someone with a knife or gun.
- 9. Use a knife or gun.

## Appendix F: Parenting Practices Questionnaire

(Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995)

Now I'd like to ask you about your views and experiences in raising your child. I'll read you a set of statements that describe how a father might behave toward his child. Please tell me about how often each behavior describes you as the father of a preschool child? Remember to focus only on (child's name) as you respond. These are the possible choices.

1 = Never

2 = Once in a While

3 = About Half of the Time

4 = Very Often

5 = Always

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I encourage our child to talk about the child's troubles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I guide our child by punishment more than by reason.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I know the names of our child's friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I find it difficult to discipline our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I give praise when our child is good.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I spank when our child is disobedient.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I joke and play with our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I withhold scolding and/or criticism even when our child acts contrary to our wishes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I show sympathy when our child is hurt or frustrated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I punish by taking privileges away from our child with little if any explanation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I spoil our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I give comfort and understanding when our child is upset.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I yell or shout when our child misbehaves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I am easy going and relaxed with our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I allow our child to annoy someone else.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I tell our child our expectations regarding behavior before the child engages in an activity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I scold and criticize to make our child improve.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I show patience with our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I grab our child when being disobedient.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I state punishments to our child and do not actually do them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I am responsive to our child's feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I allow our child to give input into family rules.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I argue with our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I appear confident about parenting abilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I give our child reasons why rules should be obeyed.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I appear to be more concerned with my own feelings than with our child's feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I tell our child that we appreciate what the child tries or accomplishes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I punish by putting our child off somewhere alone with little if any explanation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I help our child to understand the impact of behavior by encouraging our child to talk about the consequences of own actions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I am afraid that disciplining our child for misbehavior will cause the child to not like his/her parents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I take our child's desires into account before asking the child to do something.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I explode in anger towards my child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. I am aware of problems or concerns about our child in school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. I threaten our child with punishment more often than actually giving it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. I express affection by hugging, kissing, and holding our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. I ignore our child's misbehavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. I carry out discipline after our child misbehaves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. I apologize to our child when making a mistake in parenting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. I tell our child what to do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 41. I give into our child when the child causes a commotion about something.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 42. I talk it over and reason with our child when the child misbehaves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 43. I slap our child when the child misbehaves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 44. I disagree with our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 45. I allow our child to interrupt others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 46. I have warm and intimate times together with our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 47. When two child are fighting, I discipline the children first and ask questions later.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 48. I encourage our child to freely express him/herself even when disagreeing with parents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 49. I bribe our child with rewards to bring about compliance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 50. I scold or criticize when our child's behavior doesn't meet our expectations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 51. I show respect for our child's opinions by encouraging our child to express them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 52. I set strict well-established rules for our child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 53. I explain to our child how we feel about the child's good and bad behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 54. I use threats as punishment with little or no justification.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 55. I take into account our child's preferences in making plans for the family.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 56. When our child asks why he/she has to conform, I state: because I said so, or I am your parent and I want you to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 57. I appear unsure on how to solve our child's misbehavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 58. I explain the consequences of the child's behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 59. I demand that our child do things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 60. I channel our child's misbehavior into a more acceptable activity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 61. I shove our child when the child is disobedient.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 62. I emphasize the reasons for rules.

## Appendix G: Adapted Family Support Scale

(Adapted from Dunst, Jenkins, & Trivette, 1984)

Now I'd like to talk with you about some of the people who may have helped you in raising your child, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of Head Start child). I'd like to ask you how helpful some specific people are, like your parents or members of your church, in raising your child.

The alternatives are: Extremely helpful, Very helpful, Generally helpful, Sometimes helpful, Not at all helpful, and Not applicable (doesn't apply)

4	3	2	1	0	"N/A"
<b>Extremely helpful</b>	<b>Very helpful</b>	<b>Generally helpful</b>	<b>Sometimes helpful</b>	<b>Not at all helpful</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

Please think about the **last 3 to 6 months**. As I read the name of each person or group, I'd like you to tell me how helpful they've been to your family **in the last 3 to 6 months**.

**(Interviewer: write in number that corresponds to answer)**

In the last 3-6 months, how helpful was each in raising your child?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Your parents
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Your relatives/kin
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Your friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Your child's mother (biological)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Parents of your child's mother
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Relatives/kin of your child's mother
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Friends of your child's mother
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Your current girlfriend, wife, partner (non-biological)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Parents of your current girlfriend, wife, partner
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Relatives/kin of your current girlfriend, wife, partner
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Friends of your current girlfriend, wife, partner
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Your own children
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Other parents
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Co-workers

<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Extremely helpful</b>	<b>Very helpful</b>	<b>Generally helpful</b>	<b>Sometimes helpful</b>	<b>Not at all helpful</b>	

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Head Start parent groups or other parent groups
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Social groups/clubs
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Church members/minister
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Your family's or child's doctor(s)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Professional helpers like social workers, therapists, teachers, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Professional agencies like social services, public health or mental health agencies
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. Your child's Head Start program
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. Other school/day care center

Is there anyone else I didn't mention who has been helpful in raising your children--  
Who is she/he? [Interviewer - write in person and how helpful]

23. Person: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ How helpful?

## Appendix H: Parenting in Violent Neighborhoods Scale

Now I'd like to ask you about some things parents might do to protect their preschool children from dangers in the neighborhood. Please tell me how often each behavior describes you as the father/father-figure of a preschool child. Remember there are no right or wrong answers.

Your possible choices are :

- (0) never (1) once in a while (2) about half the time  
(3) very often (4) always

- 1. I talk to my child about safe routes for walking in the neighborhood.
- 2. I stay to myself to protect my family from neighborhood violence.
- 3. I allow my preschool child to walk alone in the neighborhood.
- 4. I prepare my child to handle violence by reading books or telling stories about how to settle conflict peacefully.
- 5. I teach my preschool child to forgive and forget when another child picks on her/him.
- 6. I help clean up our neighborhood (trash, graffiti, needles) to improve children's safety.
- 7. I tell my child to avoid drug dealers or troublemakers in the neighborhood.
- 8. I think positive thoughts about my preschool child's safety.
- 9. I keep my preschool child inside when not in school to avoid community violence.
- 10. I tell my child to stay with a friend whenever s/he is outside.
- 11. I keep my child away from windows, especially at night.
- 12. I teach my child to tell the teacher if another child picks on her/him.
- 13. I permit my child to play at playgrounds only when directly supervised by me or another adult.
- 14. I tell my child that you have to fight back when others hit you so they won't think you're weak.
- 15. I try to correct older children in the neighborhood who are causing trouble.
- 16. I point out some of the good things in our neighborhood to my preschool child.
- 17. I keep an eye out for people who don't belong in the neighborhood.
- 18. I teach my child about the real-life pain that comes from violence such as bleeding or dying when you get shot.
- 19. I tell my child to avoid eye contact with other children.
- 20. I prepare my child to handle violence by having her/him watch violent movies or shows like "Cops."
- 21. I teach my child to tell me if another child picks on her/him.
- 22. I pray for my preschool child's safety when s/he is out of the house.

- \_\_\_ 23. I teach my child specific things to do when s/he hears gunshots, such as laying on the floor or going to a certain place in our home.
- \_\_\_ 24. I tell my preschool child to fight back in order to be safe.
- \_\_\_ 25. I keep my child busy with TV and video games so s/he won't want to go outside.
- \_\_\_ 26. I don't report neighborhood violence because I don't want to get my family involved.
- \_\_\_ 27. I teach my child to walk away if another child hits her/him.
- \_\_\_ 28. I talk to other parents about ways we can keep our children safe.
- \_\_\_ 29. I keep something ready to use as a weapon, like a baseball bat, in case someone breaks into my home.
- \_\_\_ 30. I allow my preschool child to answer the front door when I'm not in the front room.
- \_\_\_ 31. I keep a gun in the house to protect my children and my family.
- \_\_\_ 32. I take my child to parks, restaurants, malls, or other activities to get her/him away from the neighborhood.
- \_\_\_ 33. I teach my preschool child about the strengths and values of African American families and communities.
- \_\_\_ 34. I don't report neighborhood violence because I'm afraid the troublemakers might come after my family.
- \_\_\_ 35. I talk to people at a neighborhood church about ways to improve children's safety.
- \_\_\_ 36. I ask community groups or businesses to do things that will make children safer.
- \_\_\_ 37. I call the police when I hear gunshots.
- \_\_\_ 38. I save my money to move my family to a safer neighborhood.
- \_\_\_ 39. I teach my child to respond with calm, firm words when another child picks on her/him.
- \_\_\_ 40. I tell my preschool child it's okay to hit another child if the other child hits her/him first.
- \_\_\_ 41. I talk to my child about the violence that happens in the neighborhood.
- \_\_\_ 42. I limit my preschool child's TV viewing time to 1-2 hours a day.
- \_\_\_ 43. I teach my preschool child how to fight so s/he can protect her/himself.
- \_\_\_ 44. I carry a weapon, like mace or a knife, in case I need to protect myself or my child.
- \_\_\_ 45. I let dealers and other troublemakers know they should leave my child(ren) alone.
- \_\_\_ 46. I teach my preschool child how to dial 911.
- \_\_\_ 47. I threaten parents whose children pick on my child.
- \_\_\_ 48. I send my preschool child away to friends/relatives on weekends or specific times of the year to be safer.
- \_\_\_ 49. I allow my preschool child to watch TV or movies that have violent scenes.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 50. I participate in neighborhood watch or other groups that try to reduce neighborhood violence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 51. I keep my preschool child from playing video games that have a lot of violence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 52. I call the police when I see a fight/violent incident in the neighborhood.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 53. I pray that God will protect my child from violence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 54. I take turns with other parents doing things that keep preschool children safe, like watching them at the playground.

## Appendix I: Letter to Parents

[DATE]

Dear Head Start Parent/Friend:

I am from the Department of Family Studies at the University of Maryland and am doing a study to learn more about **positive male involvement in the lives of young children** currently enrolled in Head Start. I am interested in talking to fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, boyfriends, and other males who are highly involved in a Head Start child's life.

In the next few weeks, I would like to interview fathers and other male role models at your child's Head Start center or another convenient location. The interview will take about 1 hour. Those males who participate will receive \$25 cash for their time and effort.

If you are a male involved in a Head Start child's life and are interested in participating in an interview or know someone who may be interested, please write your name, phone number, and best time to reach you in the space below. You should return this information to the Head Start teacher at your child's center and he/she will forward it to me.

Once I receive your information, I will call you about an interview time and place and will also provide you with more details about the project. You can also call me directly to set up an interview at (301) 405-7573. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I am looking forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,

Bethany L. Letiecq, M.S.  
Director, The Father Study  
Department of Family Studies  
University of Maryland @ College Park  
(301) 405-7573

-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Head Start child \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Best time to reach you: \_\_\_ am \_\_\_ pm

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## Curriculum Vitae

### BETHANY LYN LETIECQ

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### EDUCATION

Ph.D. Health Education with Specialization in Family Studies  
University of Maryland, College Park, MD  
December 1999

M.S. Family Studies  
University of Maryland, College Park, MD  
May 1995

B.A. Psychology with Minor in Sociology  
University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI  
August 1991

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 9/99-present Faculty Research Associate, Department of Family Studies, University of Maryland
- 4/98-present Faculty Associate, Department of Counseling and Human Services, Graduate Division of Education, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
- Teach graduate research methods course on a two-year appointment. (Course title: Research and Evaluation for Counselors)
- 9/97-present Principal Investigator, Head Start Research Scholars Grant, "Strategies Used by African American 'Social Fathers' to Help Head Start Children Cope with Community Violence."

- 1/96-present Instructor/Adjunct Faculty, Department of Family Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, MD
- Teach the following courses during regular and summer terms:  
 FMST 302: Research Methods in Family Studies (N = 65)  
 FMST 460: Family Violence (N = 45)  
 FMST 298F: Future of Families: Issues and Controversies (N = 120)  
 FMST 105: Individuals in Families (N = 45)
  - Analyze data for faculty research projects addressing issues of homelessness, community violence, and interracial couples.
  - Supervise/mentor undergraduate teaching assistants through UTA program sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence, UMCP.
  - Sponsored/mentored McNair Scholar, who assisted with the recording, transcribing and coding of data from three focus groups on African American fathers of Head Start children living in violent neighborhoods. The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program provides opportunities to increase the number of underrepresented students enrolling in graduate school.
- 4/98-9/99 Evaluation Consultant, American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, Washington, DC
- Evaluated a child abuse and neglect court improvement initiative implemented in two counties in Wisconsin.
  - Evaluated a new Child Abuse and Neglect Court Mediation Program, District of Columbia Superior Courts, Washington, DC (as part of national court improvement initiative).
- 7/96-4/97 Consultant, American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, Washington, DC
- Managed/analyzed data and prepared technical report for both the Maryland and the Michigan Court Improvement Projects.
  - Interviewed court officials in evaluating the Child Abuse and Neglect Division of the District of Columbia Superior Courts (1/97) and prepared technical report (1/97-4/97).
- 1/95-5/95 Consultant, Baltimore County Child Care Advisory Council, Baltimore, MD
- Conducted needs assessment and prepared report on the child care needs of working poor families in Baltimore County, MD.
- 9/94-6/97 Graduate Assistant, Department of Family Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

- 9/93-6/94      Research Assistant, Department of Family Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, MD
- Assisted in training interviewers for DHHS/ACYF Head Start grant investigating predominantly African American homeless and low-income housed mothers with preschool children.
  - Conducted in-person interviews with mothers, administered developmental assessments to preschool children, and assisted with data management and analysis.
- 9/91-6/93      Research Assistant, Brown University's Center for Alcohol & Addiction Studies, Providence, RI
- Coordinated and managed follow-up for two NIAAA research studies.
  - Tracked participants, conducted interviews (in-person interviews, home visits, and telephone interviews), and assisted with data management.
- 1/91-5/91      Teaching Assistant, Research Methods, Department of Psychology, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI
- 5/90-8/90      Intern, Philadelphia Family Courts Clinical Services Unit, Philadelphia, PA

## **PUBLICATIONS and PRESENTATIONS**

### *Publications in Refereed Journals:*

Letiecq, B. L., Anderson, E. A., & Koblinsky, S. A. (1996). Social support of homeless and permanently housed low-income mothers with young children. Family Relations, 45 (3), 265-272.

Letiecq, B. L., Anderson, E. A., & Koblinsky, S. A. (1998). Social support of homeless and housed mothers: A comparison of temporary and permanent housing arrangements. Family Relations, 47 (4), 415-422.

### *Presentations at Professional Meetings:*

Letiecq, B. L. & Koblinsky, S. A. (1999). African American Fathers and the Strategies They Use to Protect Their Children from Community Violence. Paper presented at the 61<sup>st</sup> Annual National Council on Family Relations Conference, Irvine, CA, November 10-15.

Leslie, L. & Letiecq, B. L. (1999). Marital Quality of Interracial Couples. Paper presented at the 61<sup>st</sup> Annual National Council on Family Relations Conference, Irvine, CA, November 10-15.

Vandergriff-Avery, M., Letiecq, B. L., & Bernstein, J. (1999). Walking Towards our Talk: Cultural Competence in Teaching, Research, and Practice. Paper presented at the 61<sup>st</sup> Annual National Council on Family Relations Conference, Irvine, CA, November 10-15.

Koblinsky, S.A., Randolph, S. M., Roberts, D. D., Letiecq, B.L., Beemer, M., & Oravec, L. (1999). Community Violence and Young African American Children: Role of Early Childhood Educators in Violent Neighborhoods. Paper presented at the 61<sup>st</sup> Annual National Council on Family Relations Conference, Irvine, CA, November 10-15.

Koblinsky, S.A., Randolph, S. M., Roberts, D. D., Letiecq, B.L., Beemer, M., & Oravec, L. (1999). Community Violence and Young African American Children: Translating Research to Practice. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, New Orleans, LA, November 13.

Letiecq, B. L. & Vandergriff-Avery, M. (1999). Anger Management. Invited presentation at Maryland Cooperative Extension's Regional Child Care Provider Training Conference, Mt. Airy, MD, September 18.

Letiecq, B. L., & Drewery, M. P. (1999). Mediation in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases: Is it an Effective Court Tool? Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Family Violence Research Conference, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, July 28.

Letiecq, B. L. (1999). The Future of African American Fatherhood: Incorporating Africentric Values and Cultural Strengths in Community-Based Fatherhood Initiatives. Workshop presented at The National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership's International Fatherhood Conference: A Message for the New Millenium: Focusing on the Future of Fatherhood, San Francisco, CA, June 2.

Koblinsky, S. A., Roberts, D., Letiecq, B. L., & Randolph, S. M. (1998). Promoting peace in our neighborhoods: Strategies African American mothers and fathers use to keep children safe in violent communities. Paper presented at the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Milwaukee, WI, November 14-17.

Letiecq, B. L. (1998). Strategies used by African American social fathers to help Head Start children cope with community violence. Poster presented at the Head Start Grantees meeting, Washington, DC, November 3-4.

Letiecq, B. L., Anderson, E. A., & Koblinsky, S. A. (1997). Social support of homeless and low-income, permanently housed mothers over time. Poster presented at the National Council on Family Relations Conference, Arlington, VA, November 7-10.

Letiecq, B. L. (1997). Strategies African American social fathers are using to protect Head Start children from neighborhood violence. Paper presented at the Head Start grantees meeting, Washington, DC, November 5-6.

Letiecq, B. L. , Anderson, E. A., & Koblinsky, S. A. (June, 1996). Social support networks: A comparison of permanently housed and homeless Head Start mothers living in four housing situations. Poster presented at Head Start's Third National Research Conference, Washington, DC, June 20-23.

Letiecq, B. L., Anderson, E. A., & Koblinsky, S. A. (June, 1996). Social support networks of homeless and permanently housed low-income mothers. Poster presented at the SPSSI's 60th Anniversary Convention, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, May 31-June 2.

### **FUNDED GRANTS**

- 9/97-present Principal Investigator, DHHS/ACYF Head Start Research Scholars Grant, University of Maryland, \$30,000, "Strategies Used by African American 'Social Fathers' to Help Head Start Children Cope with Community Violence." Conduct dissertation research on African American males involved in the lives of Head Start children residing in violent neighborhoods.
- 9/98-present Co-Principal Investigator (with Dr. Leigh Leslie at the University of Maryland), SPSSI research grant, \$2,000, "Marital Quality of Interracial Couples." Conduct research on interracial couples' marital functioning, racial identity, and social support.

### **REVIEWER**

- 6/98 Reviewed grant applications for the Head Start Research Scholars Program, DHHS/ACYF, Washington, DC.

## **AFFILIATIONS**

National Council on Family Relations (NCFR; 1993-present)  
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (1995-present)  
District of Columbia Council on Family Relations, Washington, DC (1995-present)  
NCFR Public Policy Committee, Washington, DC (1993-1997)  
District of Columbia Head Start Association (1997)

## **COMMITTEES**

- Graduate Program Committee, Department of Family Studies (FMST), UMD (1999)
- Computer Committee, FMST, UMD (1998-1999)
- Dean Search Committee, College of Health and Human Performance, UMD (1998-1999)
- Human Subjects Review Committee, FMST, UMD (1998)
- Andrew Billingsley Forum Committee, FMST, UMD (1998)
- Graduate Student Advisory Committee to the Chair, FMST, UMD (1995-1996)
- Graduate Student Representative of the Family Studies Alumni Association, UMD (1995)

## **FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, and AWARDS**

- Ruth Jewson Graduate Research Award for Outstanding Doctoral Proposal in Family Studies, National Council on Family Relations (1998)
- Distinguished Teaching Assistant, Department of Family Studies, University of Maryland (1998)
- Graduate School Fellow, University of Maryland (1993-1994)
- The President's Award for Student Excellence in Psychology, University of Rhode Island (1991)
- Phi Beta Kappa, University of Rhode Island (1991)