

Father and Male Engagement:
A Child, Family and Community Strengthening
Practice

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WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT FATHERS AND FAMILIES?

Questions Based on National Studies

National Survey of Adolescent Males, The Urban Institute.

The Fragile Families and Child Well Being Study, Princeton University and Columbia University.

Young Unwed Fathers, Report from the Field, Public/Private Ventures.

Doherty, W. J., Kouneski, E. F., Erickson, M. F. (1996). *Responsible fathering: An overview and conceptual framework*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota. Department of Health and Human Service Commissioned by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Jones, J, and Mosher, W.D. (2013). Fathers' Involvement with Their Children: United States, 2006–2010. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistic .

What is the factor that has the most impact on whether or not a young mother seeks early prenatal care?



- A. Easy access to a clinic
- B. Support of her male partner
- C. Education level
- D. Transportation



Answer B: Support of her male partner.

The others are significant, but partner support plays the most significant role.

What is the percentage of young unmarried fathers who are in a romantic relationship with the mother at the birth of the child?



- A. 18%
- B. 38%
- C. 44%
- D. 82%

Answer D: 82%

18% are not in a romantic relationship

38% are in romantic relationships but living apart

44% are living together

- Over 70% of mothers say their chances of marrying the baby's father are 50-50 or greater.
- Among couples not romantically involved about one half of the mothers say they are friends with the father.

Source: Fragile Families Research Brief May 2000 - Number 1

What percentage of young, unmarried fathers visited the mother and baby in the hospital at birth?



- A. 23%
- B. 91%
- C. 75%
- D. 37%

Answer C: 75%



91% of fathers of couples living together visited the hospital at birth

37% of fathers in couples not romantically involved with each other visited in the hospital at birth

These figures are based on reports by the mother.

Source: Fragile Families Research Brief May 2000 - Number 1

What do the majority of young fathers believe to be the most important thing they can provide to their child?

- A. Financial Support
- B. Strong Discipline
- C. Care and Support
- D. Teaching



Answer C: Care and Support

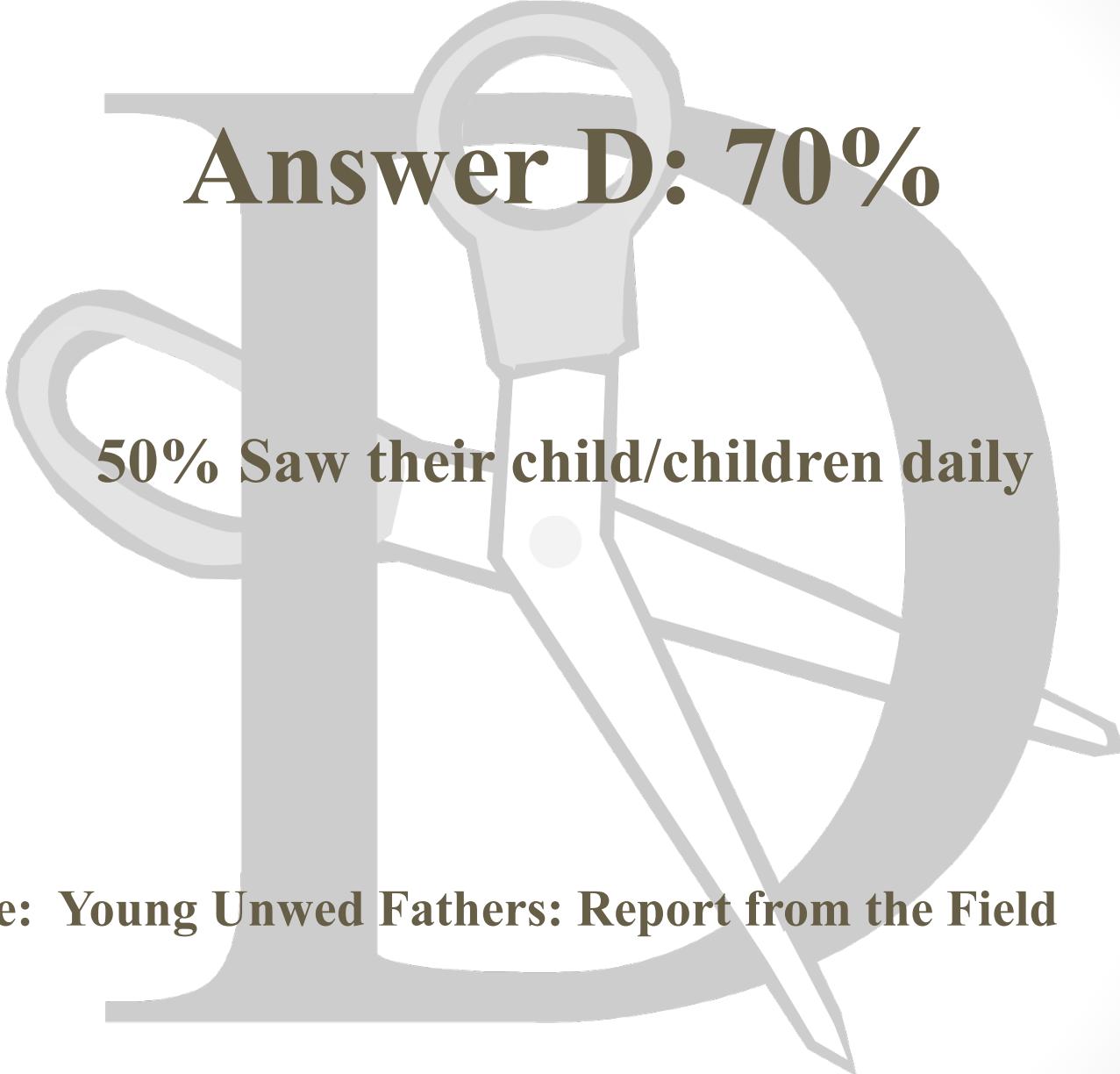
- 2nd - Teach the child about life
- 3rd - Financial Support
- Least - Strong Discipline

Source: Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study
Baseline Report August 2001

What percentage of unmarried fathers age 16 - 25 saw their child/children at least twice a week during the first two years of the child's life?



- A. 10%
- B. 20%
- C. 50%
- D. 70%



Answer D: 70%

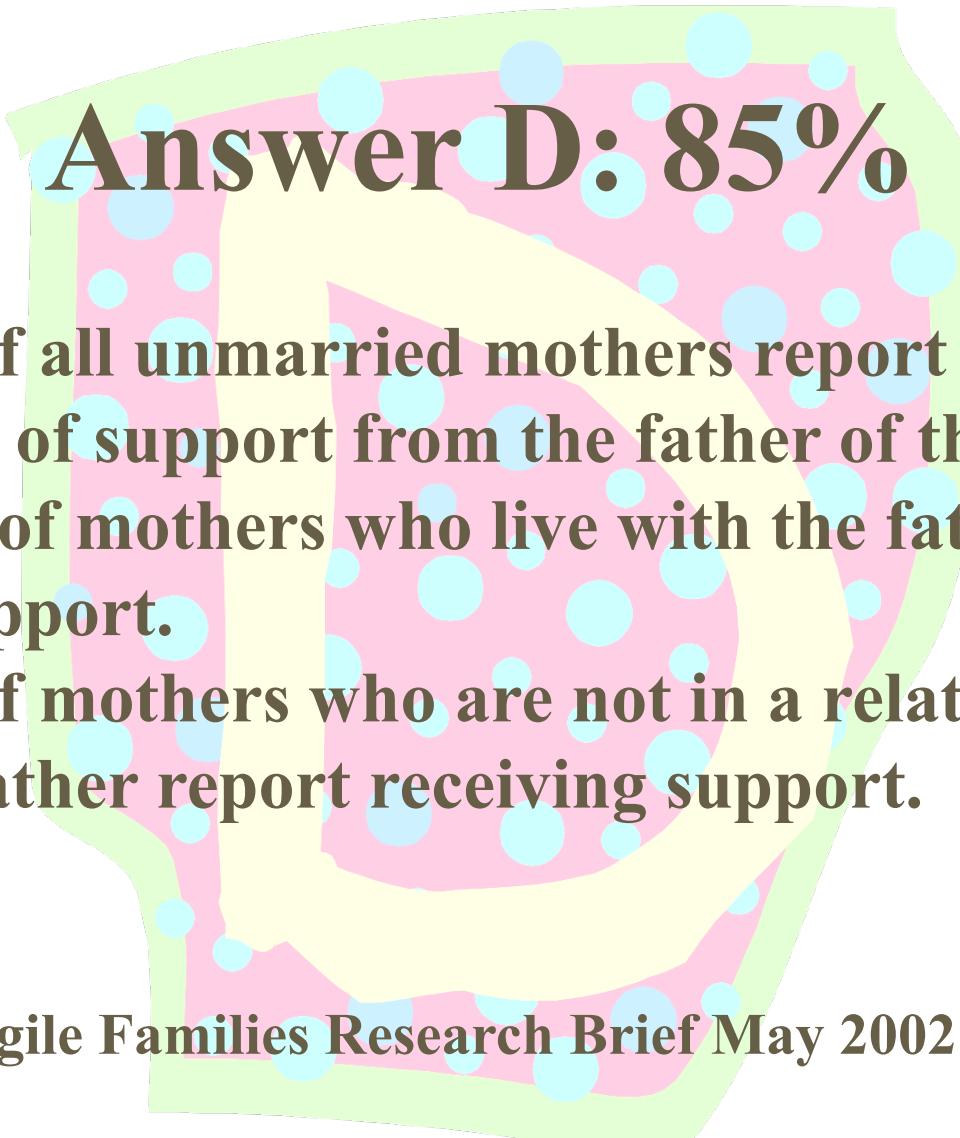
50% Saw their child/children daily

Source: Young Unwed Fathers: Report from the Field

What percentage of fathers age 16 - 25 contribute financially or in kind (groceries, diapers, toys, etc.) to their child/children?

- A. 19%
- B. 49%
- C. 63%
- D. 85%





Answer D: 85%

- **85% of all unmarried mothers report receiving some kind of support from the father of their child.**
- **100% of mothers who live with the father receive support.**
- **50% of mothers who are not in a relationship with the father report receiving support.**

Source: Fragile Families Research Brief May 2002 - Number 6

Children living with unmarried mothers are how much more likely to live in poverty than children in two parent married households?



- A. 5 times more likely
- B. 4 times more likely
- C. 3 times more likely
- D. 2 times more likely

Answer A: 5 times more likely

- **Unmarried two parent households are two times more likely to live in poverty.**
- **Divorced mothers are three times more likely to live in poverty.**

Source: Fragile Families Research Brief May 2002 - Number 6



The percentage of 15 - 19 year old males who do NOT at all believe that “getting a girl pregnant will make you feel like a real man” is

A. 5%

B. 60%

C. 17%

D. 18%



**Answer B: 60% do NOT
believe getting a girl pregnant will
make you feel like a real man**

5% - Believe it very strongly

17% - Believe it somewhat

18% - Believe it a little

Source: National Survey of Adolescent Males

What percentage of unmarried mothers indicated that they wanted the father to help them raise their children?



- A. 5%
- B. 93%
- C. 30%
- D. 50%

Answer B: 93%

B

What group of unmarried fathers tends to live closest to their children and spends the most time with their children in comparison to other groups of unmarried fathers?

- A. Unmarried African-American Fathers
- B. Unmarried White Fathers
- C. Unmarried Latino Fathers
- D. None of the Above

Answer A: Unmarried African-American Fathers

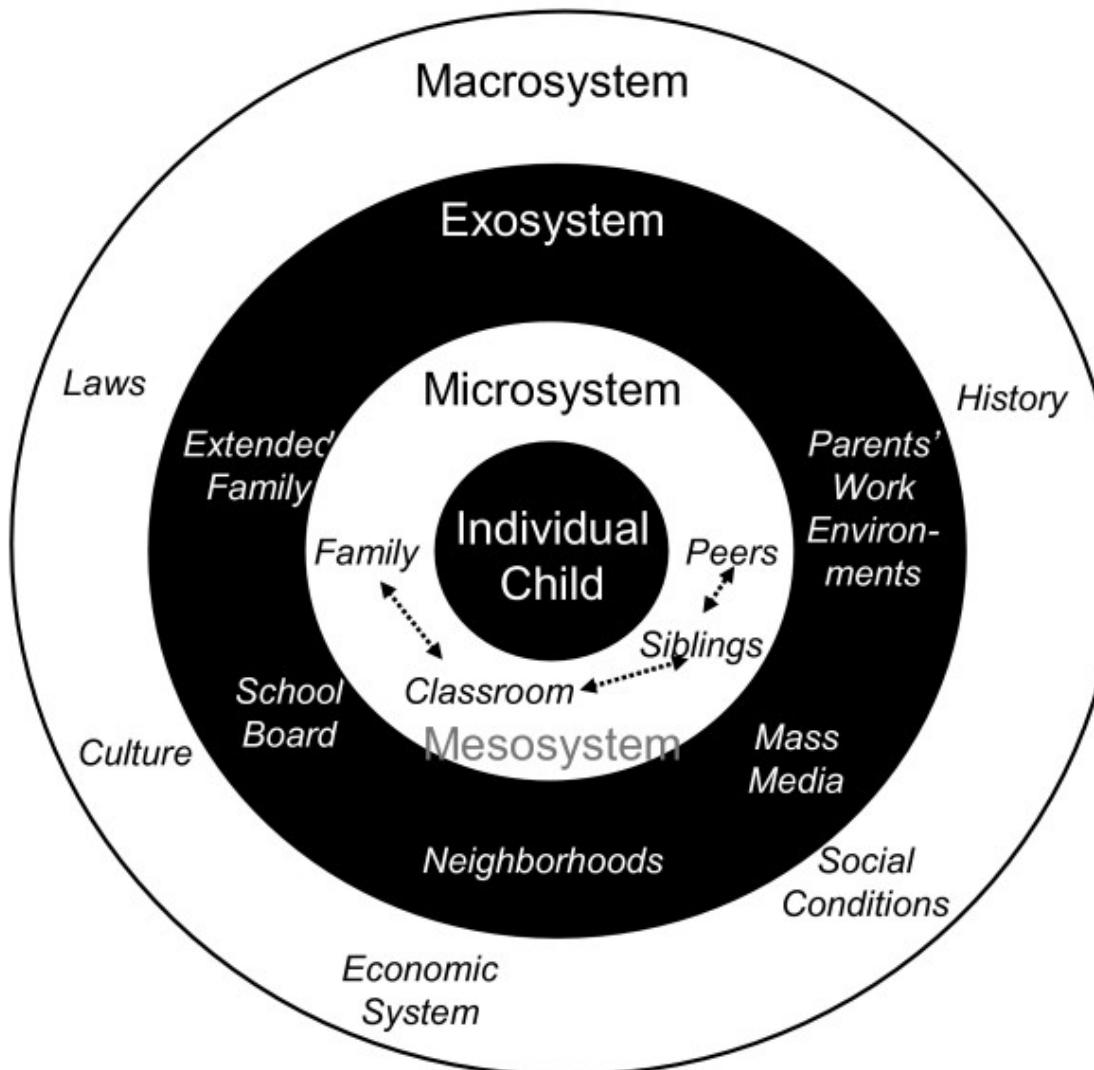
DID ANY OF THESE
ANSWERS
SURPRISE YOU?

Myths and Stereotypes Distort Our Policies and Practice

This tendency is most pronounced when considering low-income, unmarried African-American and Latino fathers.

*Viewing fathers from the
eyes of their children!*

Ecological Model for Father Engagement and Involvement



ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT & INVOLVEMENT

- 1) Addressing Individual Experience and Attitudes
- 2) Addressing Family Dynamics and Trauma
- 3) Address Institutional Practices

Individual Experience and Attitudes

- Reflecting On One's Personal Story
 - Relationship with father (i.e., the good, the bad and the ugly)
 - Attitudes about Men (i.e., Tough, Insensitive, Not Nurturing)
 - Subtle and Not So Subtle Messages about Men (i.e., TEMPTATIONS)

[My Story]

Individual Experience and Attitudes-What to Do?

- Reflect on one's own personal experience and generally talk through issues in a supportive group setting
- Identify opportunities to directly talk with men/fathers about their experiences.
- Find opportunities to embrace and advance positive narratives of men/fathers

Addressing Family Dynamics and Trauma

- Economic stress caused by growing economic inequality and income insecurity distance men from their families
- Racial segregation, increasing isolation and social vulnerability (i.e., violence, early parenting, and a sense of a lack of mobility) stresses the family's physical and mental health in ways that limit healthy father engagement
- Loss of fathers/males in low-income families within low-income communities due to high levels of incarceration
- Survival decision-making on part of mothers and women often distance fathers/men from family (i.e., TANF, Public Housing, Child Support)

Addressing Family Dynamics and Trauma-What To Do?

- Recognize economic inequality as a component of father/male disengagement and work on developing relationships with employment and training agencies
- Call into question racism and racial segregation and its impact on the families. Partner with other organizations who can complement and add to the services you are delivering and who are also willing to advocate for change
- Challenge the practice of the hyper-incarceration that removes men and fathers of color at astonishing rates from their families and communities. Consider establishing a programs that helps keep children connect to their incarcerated and returning citizen parents.
- Support mothers in their efforts to navigate the complex web of social service so mothers can more effectively identify services that are more likely to be family-centric and less male/father unfriendly.

Addressing Institutional Practices

Social Construction Parenting Roles

Mothering Role

- Society is more tolerate of a mother who meets her emotional/nurturing obligations to her child and not her financial obligations, than it is of a mother who meets her financial obligations and not her emotional/nurturing obligation.

Social Construction Parenting Roles

Fathering Role

- Society is more tolerate of a father who meets his financial obligations to his child and not his emotional/nurturing obligations, than it is of a father who meets his emotional/nurturing obligations and not his financial obligation.

Address Institutional Practices

WAYS TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE MEN/FATHERS

- Intake forms and initial family contact
- Creating an expectation of mom
- Make a clear and meaningful invitation more than once
- Creating a welcoming environment
- Create opportunities for men/fathers to volunteer or help in a specific way
- Identify men/fathers who are regularly present and acknowledge them
- Support men/father peer group discussion
- Engage in staff training and performance incentives
- Partner with other organizations that are community connect and that are interested in working with men/fathers

REVIEW

- Need to establish that fathers matter while heightening the expectations that we have of fathers
- Legitimize the emotional and relational needs and nurturing capacity of males as fathers
- Expand the articulation of men's roles beyond that of provider when conceiving of their connect to their children
- Reorienting our service delivery frame to include fathers in the conceptualization of “family” and advance the practice of co-parenting
- Re-examine the zero-sum game of resource distribution in efforts to service fathers
- Embrace the importance of healthy relations and healthy relationship building amongst parents whether they are married, unmarried or divorced

STRATEGIC PRACTICE CHANGE

- I. **Embed** Father/Male Inclusive Practices in Community and Institutional Social Service Systems serving mothers/women and children
- II. **Scale-up** Father/Male Inclusive Practice in Community and Institutional Social Service Systems serving mothers/women and children
- III. **Sustain** Father/Male Inclusive Practices in Community and Institutional Social Service Systems serving mothers/women and children

Q & A

Thank You!

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