

Racial Identity, Masculine Identity, and Young, Black Fathers' Involvement



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Paternal Identity



- **The construct of paternal identity has been essential to understanding father involvement (e.g., Fox, 2001; Stryker, 2000)**
- **Fathers who are more invested in their parenting role are more likely to be positively involved in children's lives (Adamsons & Pasley, 2016; McBride & Rane, 1997)**
- **Relatively little research has considered other aspects of men's identities as potential influences on fathering**

Identity and African American Young Men



- For young, African American men establishing identity during emerging adulthood is particularly important (e.g., Arnett & Brody, 2008)
- Young, African American men in resource-poor rural communities face numerous contextual stressors
 - Chronic poverty and economic distress
 - Lack of resources and employment/educational opportunities
 - Racial discrimination

Identity and African American Young Men



- **Developing adaptive racial and masculine identities can build resilience for Black men in challenging contexts (e.g., Caldwell et al., 2004; Courtenay, 2000)**
- **Racial identity – the extent to which one takes pride in being Black (e.g., Sellers et al., 1998)**
 - What does it mean to be Black?
- **Masculine identity – the attributes that one values in masculinity (Mahalik et al., 2003)**
 - What does it mean to be a man?

Identity and African American Fathers



- While facing these contextual challenges, many young men make the transition to parenthood
- Identities and conceptions of blackness and manhood may undergo important changes during this time (Roy, 2006)
- Conceptions of race and masculinity are intertwined with new demands of the fathering role (Cooper, 2015)

Research Questions



- To what extent are these aspects of men's identities related to fathers' involvement and provision of material support?
 - Racial Identity
 - Masculine Identity
- Are changes in these aspects of identity across early emerging adulthood related to fathers' involvement and material support?

Participants



- **African American Men's Project (AMP)**
 - Ongoing longitudinal study of African American emerging adults
 - Sampled from small towns and rural areas of Georgia
- **3 waves of data collection every 18 months**
 - Mean age: 20.3 , 21.8. 23.3 years
- **$N = 505$ young men for entire AMP sample at Wave 1**
 - $N = 132$ fathers

Participants



- **Child Age (Wave 3)**
 - M = 3.17 years, SD = 2.30 years
 - Range: 2 months – 8 years; 82% less than 5 years old
- **Residential Status**
 - 53.4% lived in the same home as their child
- **Education**
 - Median education was a high school diploma
 - 61.3% graduated from high school
- **Income**
 - Mean monthly income = \$693 per month, SD = \$587

Measures: Identity



- **Racial Identity**

- Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al., 1997)
- 11 items; 4 pt. Likert scale
- e.g., “I feel good about Black people”, “I am proud to be Black”

- **Masculine Identity**

- Social Assets Valuation measure
- 9 items; 4 pt. Likert scale assessing “Respect-Based Assets”
- e.g., “A real man has a good job”, “A real man works hard to get ahead”

Measures: Fathering



- **Father Involvement**

- 6 items (4 pt. Likert Scale) adapted from Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study
- e.g., “How often did you play with your child?”, “How often did you prepare meals for your child?”, “How often do you help your child get dressed?”

- **Paternal Support**

- 4 items (4 pt. Likert Scale) assessing provision of financial and material support
- e.g., “How often did you buy clothes, diapers, toys, or presents for your child?”, “How often did you help pay for your child’s childcare expenses?”

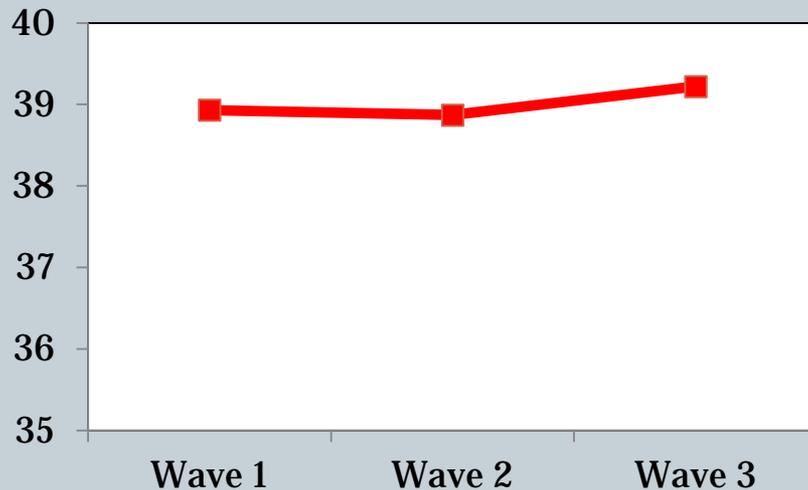
Results: Descriptive Statistics



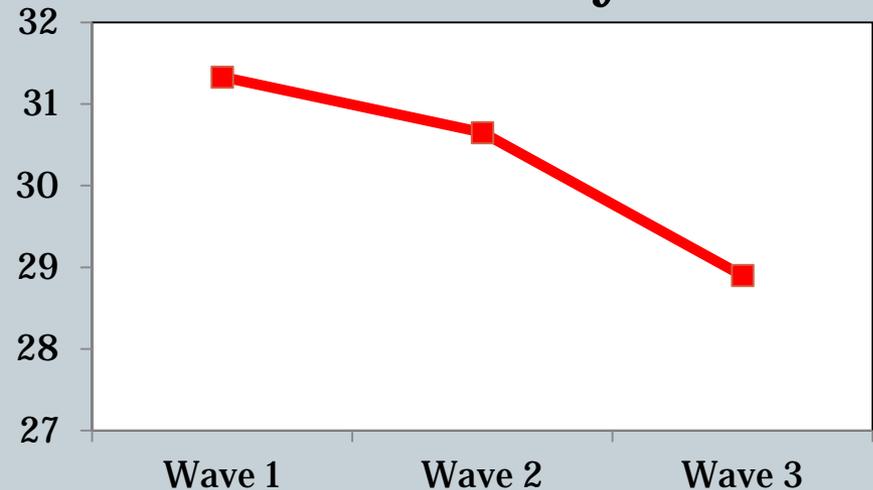
- **Fathering**

- Involvement: Mean and Median was “several times per week” for each item
- Support: Mean and Median was “sometimes” for each item

Racial Identity



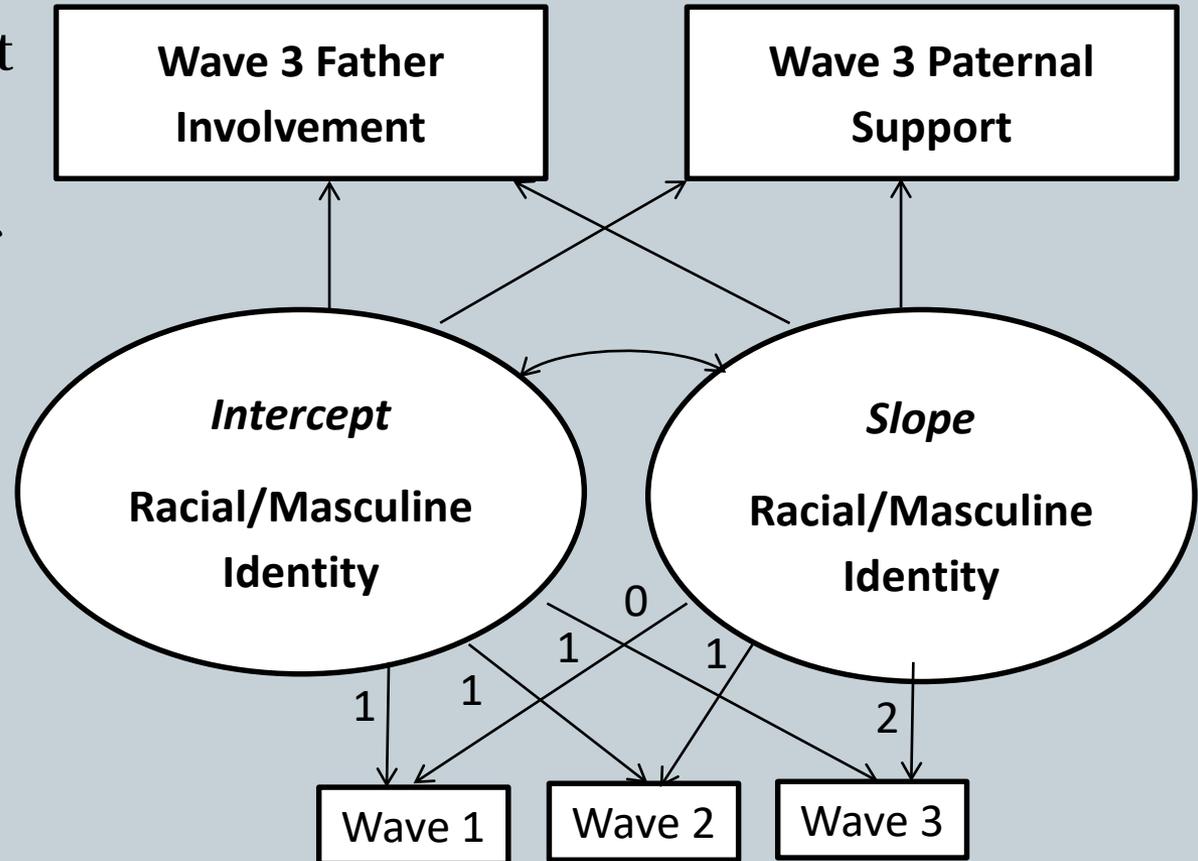
Respect-Based Masculinity



Latent Growth Curve Models



- Examined starting point (intercept) and trajectory (slope) of identity as predictors of fathering behavior
- Separate models examined racial and masculine identity
- Covariates: number of children, residential status, economic distress



Racial Identity Model



- Model Fit: $\chi^2 (12) = 18.09$, $p = .11$; CFI = 0.97; RMSEA = .05

	Involvement	Support
Racial Identity Intercept	.18*	.29**
Racial Identity Slope	.21*	.38**

- Fathers who started with stronger racial identity demonstrated more involvement and financial support
- Increasing trajectory of racial identity over time was also associated with more involvement and support.

Masculine Identity Model



- Model Fit: $\chi^2 (12) = 26.55, p = .01$; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = .08

	Involvement	Support
Masculine Identity Intercept	.19*	.20*
Masculine Identity Slope	.17†	.34**

- Fathers with more respect-based attitudes toward masculinity showed greater involvement and financial support
- Increases in respect-based masculinity over time were associated with higher levels of support and marginally more involvement

Conclusion



- **Men who a) take pride in Black identity and b) view respect as key to masculinity are more involved fathers**
 - Controlling for residential status, number of children, and SES
- **Both starting points and trajectories of development across several years predicted fathering**
 - Early emerging adulthood is a critical time for Black men's identity formation
 - Navigating this transition successfully may have downstream consequences for father-child relationship

Conclusion



- **Identity development critical for both dimensions of fathering**
 - Particularly important for paternal support
- **Direction of causality between fathering and racial/masculine identity remains to be seen**
- **Implications for preventive interventions that could target men even before they become fathers**
 - Key aspects of adult development may also have intergenerational consequences

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