

THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD: AN EVALUATION OF LOW INCOME  
NON-MARRIED NEW MOTHERS' EXPECTATIONS ON THEIR  
RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 2001

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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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School of Family Studies and Human Services  
College of Human Ecology

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Manhattan, Kansas

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## Abstract

Previous research on the transition to parenthood has focused predominantly on middle-class White married mothers. The present research expands upon this literature by evaluating the transition of non-married, low-income, White and Women of color experiences as new mothers in their transition to parenthood. This investigation uses the Fragile Families Child Wellbeing Study. Data from 1,195 first time mothers were examined. Baseline data on mothers, as well as one-year follow-up data, were used to evaluate the *New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model*. This model was developed as a response to the current literature and theory as it related to low-income, people of color, and single never married women who have been overlooked or ignored in the literature. The New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model examines the effects of expectation fulfillment, father's behavior, experience of motherhood and family support on mothers' relationship satisfaction. The model was then used to evaluate different groups of mothers based on their race/ethnicity and then their relationship status. Findings indicated race/ethnicity and relationship status differences among several of the constructs in the New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model. For some women the experience of motherhood and father's behavior did not have a significant effect of their relationship satisfaction as predicted by the current literature. This investigation takes the first step in providing a comparison group of new mothers that have been overlooked by much of the research in this area.

This research underscores the importance of differences that exist in mothers' transition to parenthood and points to a need for further research with more diverse

populations. Social scientists interested in the transition to parenthood must focus their research and theory on a more diverse population of new mothers in order to fully understand and give meaning to this experience.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The transition to parenthood is experienced by millions of couples annually (U.S. Health Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). It is not surprising that researchers have been dedicated to examining this phenomenon. In fact, research on parenthood transition spans back to the 1950's when LeMasters (1957) exposed the transition as a period of crisis for couples. In an article entitled "Parenthood as crisis," LeMasters (1957) warns that for most couples the transition to parenthood is very stressful. He states that the transition to parenthood is a time when "roles have to be reassigned, status positions shifted, values reoriented, needs met through new channels" (LeMasters, p. 352). Thus began a debate as to whether having a child is a crisis for the marital couple or just a "somewhat stressful" event (see Hobbs, 1965, 1968).

Over a decade later Rossi (1968) work shifted the view of parenthood as a "crisis" to a "transition" arguing that even using the concept of "normative crisis" was inappropriate for this change because it implied a "successful outcome" (Rossi). She believed that there were developmental stages in becoming parents and argued that although the parental role is a more difficult one for couples to transition to it is simply a transition from one developmental stage for the couple to the next (Rossi). This theoretical assumption was echoed in the work of researchers who identified the transition to parenthood as a normal developmental event (Miller & Sollie, 1980).

The addition of a first child into the dyadic couple relationship not only changes the family configuration into a triad, but also creates new roles. Researchers have applied different theoretical frameworks to determine how the transition into parenthood affects

marital change, for example, lifespan development (Belsky, 1985), systems theory (Cowan & Cowan, 2000) and ecological development (Levy-Shiff, 1994). Such theories can be extensive. Trying to include elements that focus only on the transition into parenthood can be confusing. At the same time, a theory that focuses solely on the individual or couple dyad may be far too simplistic to explain the multiple factors that can influence the transition to parenthood. Such a focused theory could also be problematic if the family unit functions as a system of extended kin. The research on African American families has been criticized for being too internally focused, excluding the family unit and the influences of greater societal factors in play (Hill et al., 1989).

Since then researchers have concluded that the relationships of all couples' are not affected in the same way by this transition (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Shapiro, Gottman, & Carrere, 2000). Although this topic has been investigated across multiple disciplines using multiple theoretical frameworks a gap in the empirical literature remains, particularly as it relates to families of color. This has occurred largely because of a limited sample population participating in most studies. In general the research on the transition to parenthood has focused on middle-class White couples. In particular there exists a gap in the information we know about African American couples' transition to parenthood.

Hobbs and Maynard-Wimbish (1977), in an investigation of transition to parenthood among African American couples, replicated two previous studies both conducted with samples of new White parents. Some of their findings were consistent with those of previous studies, for example, African American parents reported that the most bothering aspect of being a parent was the interruption of their life styles, the same

for White parents. Hobb and Maynard-Wimbish (1977), however, also reported that African American couples experience “slightly more difficulty” in their adjustment to their child than reported by their White counterparts. For example, African American mothers ranked increased money problems as their number one source of difficulty while interference from in-laws was ranked first by their White counterparts. Interestingly, Hobb and Maynard-Wimbish found interference from in-laws ranked as the fifth source of difficulty for African American mothers. In addition, they indicated that African American mothers had greater difficulty adjusting to their first child than did African American fathers. This finding paralleled later investigations that revealed that the arrival of a child affects a woman’s life more than it does a man’s (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Gallant, 2000). The fact that women typically assume primary responsibility for both childcare and household tasks was found to be a causative factor (Belsky, 1985; Ruble, Fleming, Hackel, & Stangor, 1988). More recently, even though men are believed to be more involved in household and child care tasks today than they were just a decade ago, the transition to parenthood remains a “critical moment” in which an inequality in time spent on household tasks begins (Baxter, Hewitt, & Haynes, 2008).

Literature evaluating the transition to parenthood has, however, been limited in its sample of African American, Mexican and Other race/ethnicity couples from experiencing this transition. According to Hill et al. (1989) by omitting Black families from the social science literature there is an assumption that they are unimportant. I believe there is an erroneous assumption that the experiences of White couples can be generalized to other races or ethnicities. For example, a meta analysis on parenthood and marital satisfaction suggests role conflicts and restriction in freedom as two causes of a

decrease in marital satisfaction observed in couples after they have their first child (Twenge, Campbell, & Foster, 2003). However 85% of the studies in this analysis were predominantly White couples. This can be problematic because it assumes race is not an important factor. This is in stark contrast to some earlier findings where racial differences between the marital quality of African American and White couples had been disclosed (Xu, Hudspeth, & Estes, 1997).

Hill et al. (1989) argued that because social scientists have mainly focused on subgroups of African American families there is a fragmented understanding of African American families. These fragments however are not identified as such and instead generalizations are made that all African American families are essentially the same. This is often the error made by social scientists when they conduct research comparing White, Hispanic and African American parents. Scientists that make cross group comparisons are not acknowledging the variations that may exist within one racial or ethnic group. This is even complicated further by the fact that the social science literature under samples the African American and Mexican population. The cycle of a fragmented understanding of what is occurring in African American and Mexican Families continues. This limited understanding becomes especially problematic because it allows unchecked generalizations to occur about African American and Mexican families.

Making generalizations about a certain population is not just a limitation in the literature but it can lead to harm when practitioners use these limited sources in the literature to make generalizations about their clients. For example, Sawyer (1999) in a qualitative investigation evaluated the transition to motherhood among African American women found that these new mothers consistently reflected on how they had been

stereotyped as being on welfare, single and uneducated by one or more medical professional during their pregnancy and shortly thereafter. Most of the 17 mothers interviewed were married, employed and college educated. These findings support the notion that the heterogeneity of African American experiences has been overlooked in the current literature on the transition to parenthood.

According to Billingsley (1992), relatively little attention has been given to African American couples because researchers are unable to go beyond the pathological approach to African American families, which emphasizes single-parent families and teen pregnancies. This is particularly true in the literature on the transition to parenthood where studies on the African American population have focused on single mothers or adolescent couples (Florsheim et al., 2003; Gee, McNERney, Reiter, & Leaman, 2007; Leadbeater & Linares, 1992). When the majority of the literature on African American's focuses on a specific portion of the population a void is created in our understanding of the possible differences that may exist in the transition to parenthood for this population. The message that is created from the literature, holds that African American who are transitioning to parenthood are single mothers, adolescent couples or adult couples identical to their White counterparts.

A common misconception that African American fathers are not involved in their children's lives is merely accepted in most investigations focused on African American mothers (Sawyer, 1999). Historically, the literature on child development has either negatively characterized African American men or they were simply kept invisible (Coley, 2001). Demographic data on children growing up in contemporary society would suggest that most African American children do not live in the same household as their

biological fathers (Conner & White, 2006). This demographic data implies that most African American fathers are not part of the nuclear family. The insidious nature of these assumptions conceals the many different ways African American men participate in the fathering experience. In fact other investigators have found that the strongest predictor of father involvement with their child during the postpartum period, among low-income, urban African American mothers, is the quality of the romantic relationship between the child's mother and father (Gavin et al., 2002). These findings point out that parental relationship quality is an important factor in the determining the continuity of father involvement, especially when African American parents are involved.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to evaluate factors that affect low income non-married new mothers' relationship with their child's father. New non-married mothers from different race/ethnicity groups and relationship statuses will be evaluated in order to make cross group comparisons. Mother's post birth expectations of their child's father, their perceptions of his behavior and overall experience of motherhood will be investigated in order to see how these elements influence the mother relationship with her child's birth father. In addition, the effects of support systems external to the couple themselves will be evaluated as a factor influencing the mother's experience of motherhood.

#### Theoretical Orientation

##### *Toward a New Theory of Transition*

In order to evaluate new mother's relationships during the transition to parenthood I believe it is important to combine concepts from different theories, not only



to add depth but to account for cultural differences that may have been overlooked. Several existing family theories are not robust enough to explain the transition to parenthood. This is especially true when considering possible cultural variations that these theories often intentionally and/or unintentionally overlooked. To address these shortcomings I am using an eclectic blend of family theories, borrowing concepts from role theory as immersed within the symbolic interaction and the ecological frameworks to develop the multisystem model known as the new mothers' relationship satisfaction model. By integrating these two different theoretical approaches I believe a clearer picture as to how new mothers are adjusting to the transition to parenthood can be explored.

Role theory is a viewed sub-theory immersed in the symbolic interactionist framework (Kuhn, 1964). Others have argued that role theory is synonymous with the interaction framework (Stryker, 1964). Burr, Leigh, Day, and Constantine (1979) illustrate the overlapping aspects of these two theories by presenting them on two continua subjective versus objective and a macro versus micro orientation (Burr et al. 1979). On the subjective versus objective emphasis continuum, symbolic interactionism is at an intermediate position. On the same continuum, the portion of role theory that is not overlapping with symbolic interaction theory is at the objective extreme. On the second continuum which evaluates the micro versus macro orientation, role theory can have either a macro or micro orientation while symbolic interaction usually has a micro orientation (Burr et al., 1979). In this dissertation I will be applying the structural view of roles with a micro orientation.

The structural approach to symbolic interactionism identifies an individual as a role taker. According to the role-theory perspective roles in society carry expectations that an individual who takes on the role, either by circumstance or choice, must adhere to (Thomas, 1999). These expectations serve as series of requirements from which one's performance in a social role is judged within a given culture. Role expectations become particularly important when evaluating a dyadic relationship in which agreement among individuals on role expectations such as the position and responsibilities of the role can lead to less role strain (Burr et al., 1979). The role expectations held by society are not only important in judging role performance but expectations held by those closer, such as an intimate partner, can also be important. Empirical literature suggests that it is the fulfillment of partner expectations that is of importance when evaluating the transition to parenthood (Belsky, 1985; Ruble et al., 1988). Taking this literature and theory into account the first concept within the *New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model*, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, is mother's expectations of father fulfillment.

A second concept within the *New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model* is quality of father's behavior which has been borrowed from the role enactment middle range theory (Burr et al., 1979). Because I am taking a structural approach using role theory within a micro orientation, I am focusing on how role enactments can be influenced by partners' expectations. In order to better understand a mother's transition to parenthood it is essential that we evaluate expectations of her child's father and the quality of his role enactment as she perceives it outside the influences of society. In other words, the *New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model* is model is more concerned

with the mother's expectations and perceptions of role enactment rather than society's expectations and perceptions.

The third concept in *New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model* influenced both by the mother's expectations and her perceptions of quality of father's behavior is mother's general feelings or experience of motherhood. Her level of role expectations and quality of father's role behavior will both influence her relationship with her child's father. A fourth concept is a mother's relationship satisfaction. This concept evaluates a mother's relationship with the child's father as influenced by her experience of motherhood. The assumption holds that if a mother experiences role strain in her role as mother, this strain will trickle into other roles.

The above four concepts are imbedded in the mother-father system. Because this system is composed of individuals in interaction with identified roles it will be defined as a microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the microsystem as "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced" by a person (p.22). The term experienced is essential as it represents not only the object properties of the environment but it also implies a subjective perception of the individual in the environment. The microsystems in this model represent the smaller unit of interpersonal relations such as the parental dyad.

The second object within this model, a microsystem in its own right, is the extended family system an idea adapted from the ecological framework. The ecological framework recognizes the interdependence of many intrafamilial and extrafamilial processes affecting a family's capacity to foster healthy development (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). This model acknowledges that there are systems outside the individual parent or

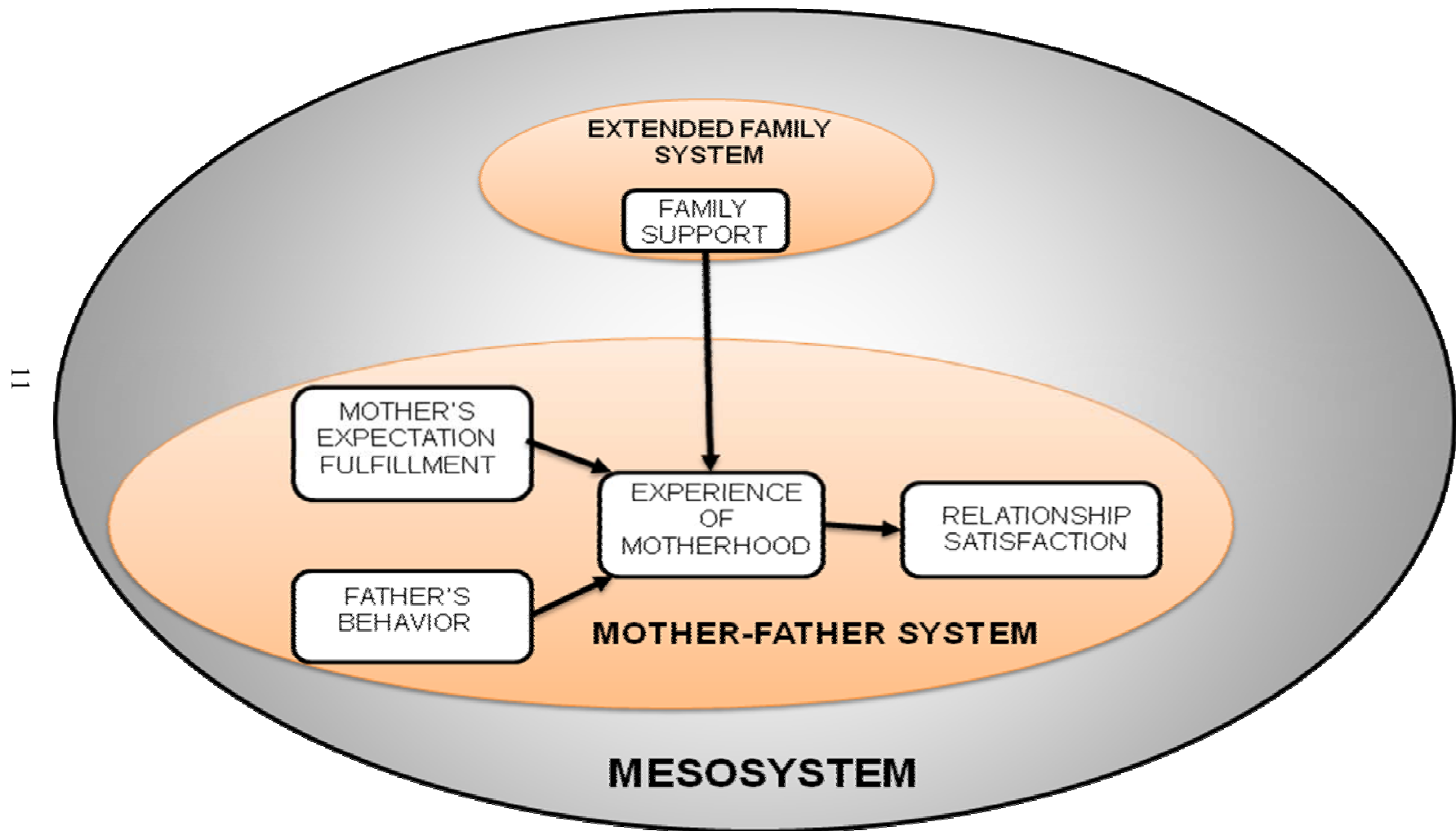
parental relationship that influence their adjustment to parenthood. Thus, the fifth and final concept in this model is the family support system which influences the mother's experience of motherhood. The extended family system has a support function that is external of the mother-father system. The mesosystem, the system between other systems, plays an important role in the relationship between support systems and the mother's experience of motherhood. Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the mesosystem as "interrelations among two or more settings" in which a person actively participates (p. 25).

### Research Questions

To better explain the associations between, mother's expectations, quality of father's role enactment, family support, organizational support, mother's experience and their relationship satisfaction as defined by the *New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model*, the following questions are generated. The research questions are as follows:

1. How does a non-married mother's expectation fulfillment by the birth father affect her perceived relationship satisfaction with the birth father?
2. How does a non-married mother's evaluation of the birth father's behavior affect her perceived relationship satisfaction with the birth father?
3. How does external support affect a non-married mother's perceived experience of motherhood?
4. How does a non-married mother's perceived experience of motherhood affect her perceived relationship satisfaction with the birth father?

Figure 1.1. New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model.



In addressing these questions I will provide information to fill gaps in the literature on the transition to parenthood, particularly as it relates to the experiences of non-White women. In addition, the usefulness and novelty of the new mother transition to parenthood model will be tested.

### Hypotheses

The hypotheses developed for the purpose of this dissertation explore the relationships that exist between mother's expectation fulfillment, quality of father's behavior, family support, mother's experience of motherhood and their relationship satisfaction. It is believed that mother's expectations and the quality of father's behavior as well as family support influence a mother's experience which then influences the mother's relationship satisfaction. There are four hypotheses that will be used in this research investigation. They are:

- Hypothesis I:* The more positive the mother's expectation fulfillment by birth father the more positive her experience of motherhood.
- Hypothesis II:* The more positive the mother's evaluation of the birth father's behavior the more positive her experience of motherhood.
- Hypothesis III:* The more positive the levels of family support the more positive the mother's experience of motherhood.
- Hypothesis IV:* The more positive the mother's experiences of motherhood the more positive her relationship satisfaction with the birth father.

### Conceptual Definitions

The framework and the variables used in the *New Mother's Relationship Satisfaction Model* have been generated by both theory and previous research. There are five conceptual definitions relevant to this model. The first four concepts, (expectation fulfillment, father's behavior, mother's experience of motherhood and mother's

relationship satisfaction) have been adapted from the symbolic interaction framework and empirical research. These concepts are based on the mother's perceptions. The final concept, family support, has been borrowed from the ecological framework and empirical research based on mother's perceptions of support.

The concepts that are relevant to the current investigation are listed below. They are listed in the order of impact as evaluated by the *New Mother's Relationship Satisfaction Model*.

*Family Support*—support the mother receives from her relatives and/or the child's birth father's relatives.

*Father's Behavior*—is defined as the mother's subjective evaluation of her child's father's behavior; in other words, the mother's perceptions of how well he is doing as a father.

*Expectation Fulfillment*—has been borrowed from the literature on the transition to parenthood and role theory and is defined as the fulfillment of expectations held for a social position such as the father role. In this model expectation fulfillment is how well the father fulfills the expectations the new mother holds for her child's birth father in his role as father.

*Mother's Experience of Motherhood*—is a subjective evaluation of the mother's experiences in her new role as a parent.

*Mother's Relationship Satisfaction*—is defined as her subjective evaluation of the relationship she has with her child's birth father.

### Importance of Study

There are several reasons as to why this research would be beneficial. First, it helps fill in some of the gaps in the literature on racially/ethnically diverse mothers' transition to parenthood. Second, it provides some understanding of the differences in new non-White mothers' transition to parenthood. Finally, it provides a theoretical model for evaluating how new mother's relationship satisfaction with her child's father can be impacted by factors both within and external of her relationship.



CHAPTER TWO  
LITERATURE REVIEW

Transition to Parenthood

The transition to parenthood is arguably one of the most important transitions an individual can make. Much like other transitions, this one brings with it change in the roles and responsibilities that men and women take on as new parents. Becoming a parent can have both immediate and long-term consequences for an individual and family unit. Perhaps this is why it is the most common life cycle transition studied (Kalmuss, Davidson, & Cushman, 1992). Due to high levels of empirical interest there exists a large volume of literature spanning over several decades. Since the 1950's, research on heterosexual married couples' transition to parenthood has evolved from retrospective and self-reporting studies to longitudinal studies that follow couples from the newlywed stage to well after they have had their first child. While early research focused on the "crisis" of becoming new parents (Dyer, 1963; Hill, 1949; LeMasters, 1957), recent investigations have focused on factors that may cause the variability present in couples' adjustment to the transition to parenthood (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Shapiro et al., 2000).

Although initial studies on this topic were concerned with how this life cycle transition affected both individuals and families (Hobbs, 1965, 1968; LeMasters, 1957; Miller & Sollie, 1980), more recently studies have been concerned with how this transition affected the marital relationship (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Lawrence, Nylén, & Cobb, 2007; Lawrence, Cobb, Rothman, Rothman & Bradbury, 2008; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Shapiro et al., 2000). The narrowed focus of

investigation on the marital unit is not however the major limitation in this literature. We have gained a great deal of knowledge from these investigations. Although researchers have changed their methods and foci when evaluating the transition to parenthood, there remains the pressing issue of sampling populations. The majority of investigations focused on this issue utilized primarily middle class White participants. This lack of diversity is problematic.

In this chapter I shall examine previous literature on the transition to parenthood in four parts. In part one, the history of the literature on heterosexual couples' transition to parenthood is examined. Part two, focuses on the transition to parenthood literature as it relates to the following five issues: (a) family support; (b) father involvement; (c) unfulfilled expectations; (d) mothering experience; and (e) marital satisfaction. This literature is predominantly based on findings pertaining to White middle-class married samples. In part three, these established five areas will be examined as they relate to African American and other multicultural families. The literature on diverse race and ethnicity groups is limited; therefore African American families shall be discussed at greater length to illustrate the presence of race/ethnicity differences. Finally, limitations in the literature and the gaps in our understanding of the transition to parenthood and its effects on all families in general are overviewed.

## Part I

### History

The transition to parenthood for married couples has been an area of important social science research since the mid 1950s. LeMasters (1957) warned that for most couples the transition to parenthood was very stressful. He indicated that the transition to

parenthood is a time when individual parents need to take on new roles, reestablish themselves within these roles and find new ways of getting their needs met. LeMasters' (1957) instigated a debate as to whether having a child is a crisis for marital couples or just a stressful event that required minimal adjustment by couples (Hobbs, 1965, 1968).

Over a decade later Rossi (1968) helped shift the view of parenthood from a crisis to a normative developmental issue that some adults encounter. She believed that there were developmental stages in becoming parents and argued that although the parental role is a more difficult one for couples to transition into, it is simply a transition from one developmental stage to the next. This theoretical assumption was echoed in the work of researchers who identified the transition to parenthood as a normal developmental event (Entwisle & Doering 1981; Feldman & Nash 1984; Miller & Sollie, 1980).

Although the transition to parenthood is no longer viewed as a crisis, it is a transition that is believed to hasten marital decline among couples (Lawrence et al., 2008). A series of panel studies using non-parental control groups found that parents generally report greater declines in their marital satisfaction as compared to their non-parent counterparts (Cowan & Cowan 2000; Kurdek, 1993; Lawrence et al., 2008; Shapiro et al., 2000). However, the idea that all couples' marital satisfaction follows the same pattern across the transition to parenthood is not uniformly supported (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Cowan & Cowan, 1995; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Shapiro et al., 2000). For example, Cowan and Cowan's (2000) findings indicated that 45% of fathers and 58% of mothers showed declines in their levels of marital satisfaction, however, 18% of parents who did not participate in any intervention group showed increases in their marital satisfaction. Similar findings were reported by Shapiro et al., (2000) who indicated that

33% of women who became mothers during their study showed stability or increases in their marital satisfaction while the other 67% of mothers showed declines. Different patterns of marital change between couples is not only expected but documented to occur for a variety of life events that couples experience (Belsky & Hsieh, 1998). In short, as couples become parents, some couples experience an increase in their marital satisfaction while other couples do not.

## Part II

As couples become parents they take on new roles and responsibilities. As individuals and couples try to cope with their new roles and responsibilities across the transition to parenthood their patterns of contact with and support received from family members change. These interactions may increase in frequency (Belsky, 1984; Bost, Cox, Burchinal, & Payne, 2002; Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006; McCannell, 1987) or decline, depending on several factors including such things as geographic location, in-law relationships quality and the financial resources of the couple (Belsky, 1984; Bost et al., 2002; Cowan and Cowan, 2000; Gjerdingen & Chaloner, 1994).

### Family Support

This notion of an increase in contact with kin has been well documented in several classical studies (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Duvall, 1954; Sussman, 1959). Another series of investigations have suggested that close family members served as a primary source of support during the postpartum period (Cronic, Greenberg, Ragozin, Robinson, & Basham, 1983; Hopkins, Marcus, & Campbell, 1984; Tinsley & Parke, 1984). Still other studies have reported that support received from the maternal grandmother, in

particular, played an important role in a new mother's adjustment to motherhood (Fischer, 1981; Tinsley & Park, 1984).

Extended family members have been found to provide support with childcare, an area of great difficulty for many new parents (Gjerdingen & Center, 2004). Although the proximity to family members can affect the hands-on support they provide, such as childcare, emotional and material supports are not affected by proximity to families of orientation (Belsky, 1984; Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008). When the endless amounts of disposable goods are considered children can initially be very expensive for most new families. For example, when the cost of diapers an infant may require is taken into account, at the same time that a possible loss in income is sustained due to a parent staying home with a new infant parenthood, can be financially costly. As new parents face such costs, monetary support from extended family members is especially welcomed even when geographical distance between families exists. Extended family members have provided a great deal of support regardless of their proximity. It has, however, been suggested that no matter how much support was received from extended family members, high expectations for support were associated with more difficult adjustment to motherhood (Kalmuss et al., 1992).

Research on heterosexual couples has shown that women experienced more stress after the birth of their child than during pregnancy, and that support during the postpartum period was crucial to their adjustment to parenthood (Goldstein, Diener, & Mangelsdorf, 1996). One study has shown that generally all women experience stress due to the adjustment to the parenting role (Thorp, Krause, Cukrowicz, & Lynch, 2004). In the same study specific stressors among women varied based on cultural and

socioeconomic status (Thorp et al., 2004). Although an increase in the amount of support received from the child's father was one factor that decreased postpartum maternal stress (Thorp et al.) cultural and socioeconomic differences in the types of stressor experienced by new mothers should be explored further. By identifying these different stressors research can guide more appropriate support for new mothers. Mothers who reported high levels of stress and low levels of relationship satisfaction indicated childcare tasks as one of their greatest stressors (Horowitz & Damato, 1999). Father support on such task was found to be crucial. Some researchers suggested that spousal support had the greatest impact of mothers' well-being and adjustment to motherhood (Cox, Owen, Lewis, & Henderson, 1989; Crinc et al., 1983; Levitt, Weber, & Clark 1986).

In general, today's new parents may find themselves completely on their own (Schulz, Cowan, & Cowan, 2006) in situations unfamiliar to their own parents' generation. The experience of being a more isolated nuclear family and an economic need for dual incomes (Cowan & Cowan, 2000), can be mitigated or at least reduced when extended family support is present even if there are generational differences in parenting experiences. The majority of the literature on extended family support across the transition to parenthood has failed to identify cultural differences in the amount of extended family support received because too often this literature is based solely on a White population.

### Father Involvement

When men become fathers they assume a culturally proscribed fathering role that possesses certain behavioral requirements (Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006). For example, men are expected and in most cases required to provide care and financial support for

their children (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1996). As individuals become parents, their roles become more gender based (Cowen & Cowan, 2000) and emphasis is placed on the economic provider role of the father (Jordan, 1995). In fact, it was suggested that there exists a socially constructed consensus that fathers are more prone to be concerned with the financial security of their children and are less naturally prone than mothers to care giving (Jordan, 1995). By contrast, fathers expected new mothers to be competent in caring for the baby, while neither mothers nor fathers expected fathers to have such competence (Cowan & Cowan, 2000). In essence fathers were rarely given the opportunity to learn such competence because at the first sign of incompetence, the mother or another family member would take over leaving little room for fathers to learn (Cowen & Cowan, 2000).

Investigations into family and social support across the transition to parenthood demonstrated that the emotional and tangible support received from husbands had the greatest influence on new mothers. For example, the support a mother received from her husband has been found to influence her adaptation to motherhood (Cox et al., 1989; Goldstein et al., 1996), her mental health (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004; Ugarriza, 2006) and eventually her relationship with her husband (Belsky, Lang, & Huston, 1986; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Levy-Shiff, 1994). The majority of this research is focused on married couples overlooking possible differences or similarities in the support received by both cohabiting and non-residential fathers. For example, do non-residential fathers differ in the level or type of support they provide to mothers in order to compensate for their physical absents?

Although there has been consistent evidence that mothers play a greater role in childcare and household labor after the birth of a child (Leifer, 1980; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Cowan et al., 1985; Besky & Pensky, 1988; Gjerdingen & Chaloner, 1994; Kotelchuck, 1976; Lamb, 1978; McHale & Huston, 1985, Ruble et al., 1988), mothers continue to have expectations of father involvement in the care of their child and home (Belsky, 1985; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Harwood, McLean, & Durkin, 2007; Kalmuss et al., 1992; Lawrence, Nylene, & Cobb, 2007; Ruble et al., 1988). These researchers have all reported that generally women's expectations of their husbands were fulfilled, however, when there were discrepancies, between expectations and experiences, women's adjustment to motherhood (Harwood et al. 2007; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004; Kalmuss et al., 1992), as well as their relationship with their husbands, suffered a decline (Belsky, 1985; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Harwood et al., 2007; Lawrence et al. 2007; Ruble et al., 1988).

### Unfulfilled Expectations

Shared expectations concerning responsibilities are important in the maintenance of an ongoing intimate relationship (Backman, 1981). The decline in marital satisfaction across the transition to parenthood is due in large part to spouses' unfulfilled expectations. For example, most couples anticipate equal involvement in childcare and household responsibility, even if the division of labor is not equal before the birth of their child (Cowan & Cowan, 2000). Although many couples expected equality when they have their first child, women typically assumed primary responsibility for both childcare and household responsibilities (Belsky, 1985; Ruble et al., 1988). The majority of women in one study reported that their responsibilities increased after the birth of the first child,



and in fact, they found themselves performing both household labor and childcare a majority of the time (Cappuccini & Cochrane, 2000).

It is also clear that many women cherish their traditional roles as mothers and may not want to have egalitarian roles once they have children. Some women want to take on the traditional role of mother by leaving work and staying home to take care of their babies. They would rather have sole responsibility for the care of their children and have their husbands go to work and fulfill his traditional role as provider. The decision for a new mother to stay home could also be based on the cost of childcare and the inequality in women's income compared to their male counterparts. In addition some women have to work after the birth of their child because they need a second income or they are the only providers of income. Therefore, a new mother's decision to stay home or go to work may not always be a free choice, but a choice constrained by economic pressures. Researchers have found that working-class women who were doing less domestic work than they expected appeared to be more prone to depression (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004). These findings suggest that working-class women who perform less of the childcare than they expected, tend to experience an increase in symptomatology.

Earlier research concluded that women's expectations of their child's father went unfulfilled more often than those of their spouses (Belsky, 1985; Belsky et al., 1986; Ruble et al., 1988). In fact, Belsky et al. (1986) reported that 10% of men's variance and 25% of women's variance in marital dissatisfaction can be accounted for by unmet expectations. These findings confirmed that the women whose burden of household labor increased the most also experienced the greatest declines in their marital quality.

In yet another investigation, Ruble et al. (1988) suggested that the greatest impact on a women's relationship with their husband was the mismatch of postpartum experience and expectation, rather than the impacts caused by divisions of labor. Perceived unfairness in the division of labor was another concept that received attention (Feeney, Hohaus, Noller, & Alexander, 2001). These findings lead to the conclusion that expectations of a partner's role and the fulfillment of these expectations appeared to have an impact on the perceptions of fairness and the mothers' marital relationship more so than actual divisions of labor.

Given the literature on the impact of new mothers' unfulfilled expectations on their marital relationship, it is not surprising that empirical findings indicated that women were the first to report declines in marital satisfaction after the birth of the first child (Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983). In general, the arrival of a child affected a woman's life more than it did a man's (Delmore-Ko, Pancer, Hunsberger, & Pratt, 2000; Pancer et al., 2000). Not only were women found to be doing a greater share of the division of labor (Ruble et al., 1988), but motherhood and the responsibilities that this role carries were often seen by researchers as an innate quality possessed by all women. For example, Ruble et al. (1988) discussed the inconsistency of discrepancies in expectations and actual division of labor and childcare, where childcare discrepancies did not appear to have an impact on the marital relationship the same as division of labor discrepancies, due largely to an "intrinsic" reward received by offering childcare. This discussion promotes the belief that a woman's role as childcare provider to her own children is an innate characteristic. This assumption is not only incorrect; it engenders a damaging effect of expectations of motherhood and how to perform motherly duties. If the general

literature on the transition to parenthood assumes a reduced level of marital satisfaction due to unfulfilled childcare expectations, researchers should not explain away their contradictory findings by making assumption about women in general. Rather they should further examine the limitations in the general literature especially the fact that it is based mainly on White middle-class couples. Unfortunately there is a lack of literature evaluating racial/ethnic differences in expectation fulfillment and this needs to be explored further.

### Mothering Experience

The transition to parenthood brings with it new roles for both women and men. However, women's lives were found to be generally more affected by this transition (Belsky et al., 1986; Delmore-Ko et al., 2000; Pancer et al., 2000). Given that women carry the child through pregnancy and generally take on more responsibility for childcare and the division of labor postpartum (Belsky, 1985; Ruble et al., 1988), it is not surprising that this transition represented a greater change in the lives of women (Belsky & Pensky, 1988). The transition to motherhood generates many life changes (Belsky, Rovine & Fish, 1989); not only physical, but also mental and emotional.

Kalmuss et al., (1992) proposed that women's adjustment to motherhood could be assessed by evaluating the following: women's self assessment of ease of making the transition; life satisfaction; and stress levels one year following the birth of their child. In particular, these researchers were interested in how discrepancies between mother's expectations and experiences of paternal and family support impacted their overall adjustment (Kalmuss et al., 1992). Their general findings indicated that discrepancies between expectations and experiences did influence women's adjustment to parenthood.

Although, in general most of the sample adjusted well to this transition, the authors suggested that it is quite possible for young, unmarried and/or poor mothers to have greater difficulty in making adjustments. Unfortunately, mothers with such demographics were not part of this sample. However, findings by Kalmuss et al. (1992) supported the argument that unfulfilled parenting expectations effected mothers' perceived adjustments to parenthood.

Two related investigations, Pancer et al., (2000) and Delmore-Ko et al., (2000) examined the effects of individual differences in prenatal expectations on the individual's postnatal experience. They examined the individuals' prenatal expectations compared to the actual experiences of parenting. Their findings indicated that women who had more complex expectations about the parental role demonstrated higher levels of self-esteem, lower levels of depression, and better marital adjustment postpartum (Pancer et al., 2000). In addition, Delmore-Ko et al. (2000) found that 35% of women and 29% of men reported being fearful of their new roles as parents.

The evaluation of mother's violated expectations becomes important when we take into account the consequences it can have not only on the couple, but more specifically on the mother herself. For example, when primiparous mothers' experiences were negatively related to their expectations there was evidence for a greater depression symptomatology and poorer relationship adjustment (Harwood et al., 2007).

### Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is the subjective evaluation of married couples' overall satisfaction with their romantic relationship. Since the 1990's much of the research on the transition to parenthood focused on how the presence of a new child affected the marital

relationship in particular a couple's marital satisfaction. An ongoing debate exists as to whether the transition to parenthood caused a decrease in marital satisfaction (Belsky, 1985; Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Belsky et al., 1983; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Lawrence et al., 2008; Shapiro et al., 2000) or if this decrease was a normal process that was experienced by all couples regardless of presence of children (Karney & Bradbury, 1997; MacDermid, Huston, & McHale, 1990; White & Booth, 1985).

Researchers evaluating marital satisfaction during the transition to parenthood progressed from retrospective pre- and post-pregnancy studies to more pseudo-longitudinal studies, and have most recently started comparing the marital satisfaction levels of non-parental and parental couples (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Lawrence et al., 2008; Shapiro et al., 2000). These investigations revealed that while declines in marital satisfaction remained a normal process of marriage, couples who were parents generally have a greater decline (Shapiro et al., 2000) or a more hastened decline (Lawrence et al., 2008). Although declines in marital satisfaction may be a normal process for all couples, there were statistically significant differences reported between parental and non-parental couples' marital satisfaction over the same period of time (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Lawrence et al., 2008; Shapiro, et al., 2000).

The idea that there exist one uniformed pattern of marital satisfaction, or an average pattern of marital change, illustrating the experiences of new parents would be a mistake because different patterns of change have been reported (Belsky & Rovine, 1990). In their research on the transition to parenthood Belsky and Rovine reported that 50% of couples indicated no change or modest positive change in their marital relations. Cowan and Cowan (2000) also reported that 18% of the couples participating in their

non-intervention group indicated an increase in marital satisfaction. In addition, Shapiro et al. (2000) also found that 33% of wives who became mothers reported either an increase, or no change in their marital relationship. These researchers, as well as others, questioned why some couples make a smoother transition to parenthood than others. These inquiries ushered in a new wave of research that evaluated what made the transition to parenthood different for couples. The new focus highlighted the dyadic characteristics of couples (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Feeney et al., 2001; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Shapiro et al., 2000) and individual characteristic of parents (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Feeney, et al., 2001; Levy-Shiff, 1994; Pancer et al., 2000), as well as cultural differences as variables that had some impact on the transition to parenthood.

Research on characteristics among couples that buffer or stabilize their marital satisfaction across the transition to parenthood found three predictors of stability: (a) fondness and admiration a husband has for his wife; (b) awareness or cognitive room from husband allocates to his wife; and (c) awareness or cognitive room from wife to husband (Shapiro et al., 2000). In addition, individual characteristics of each spouse were found to be influential in marital satisfaction. For example, Levy-Shiff (1994) reported that husbands who view themselves as nurturing, caring and protecting experienced less of a decline in marital satisfaction than their counterparts. Interestingly, fathers who reported more involvement in childcare perceived their marriages more positively (Cox, Paley, Burchinal, & Payne, 1999) and both mothers and fathers reported higher levels of marital satisfaction than their counterparts (Levy-Shift, 1994).

After the birth of their first child wives who enjoyed being unattached and had difficulty in coping with additional tasks showed a greater decrease in their marital satisfaction as compared to other mothers. In addition, women who put “high priority” on their careers experienced a greater decline in marital satisfaction (Levy-Shiff, 1994).

Literature on the transition to parenthood across cultures, comparing non-Western and Western women living in Israel, demonstrated that non-Western women on average have less decrease in their marital satisfaction (Levy-Shiff, 1994). This may be explained by the finding that the transition to parenthood shifts couples into more traditional gender roles (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Levy-Shiff, 1994) and the presence of these traditional male/female roles may already be present within some cultures before the birth of the first child. The outcome of this investigation leads to the question that if there are cross-cultural differences in how couples are affected by the transition to parenthood, based on the presence or absence of traditional roles, then what are the differences in the transition to parenthood among racial and ethnic minority groups who tend to display more non-traditional roles than their White counterparts? In an effort to address this question and further explore literature on the five concepts discussed above across more diverse populations the literature concerning African American and multicultural families will now be explored.

### Part III

#### African American and Multicultural Families

The literature on African American parents has been saturated by negative or problem based research primarily focused on low-income single mothers and the lack of biological father involvement (Wilkinson, 1993). Currently 71.6% of African American

children born in the United States are born to single mothers compared to a national average of 39.7% of births to single mothers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). This statistic, however, can be misleading if one assumed children born to unmarried mothers have no involvement or ties with their biological father. Social scientists and human service professionals often make the mistake of assuming that because African American fathers are not always residential fathers they are not involved in the care of their children (Livingston & McAdoo, 2007).

If researchers investigating the transition to parenthood do not acknowledge or recognize the differences in African American family composition, they will continue to conduct research that is relevant to only White middle-class families. If there are differences present in African American parents' transition to parenthood, then they should be explored regardless as to whether or not these new parents fit the traditional nuclear family unit. In the following review of literature I will explore the issues related to the concepts discussed above as they pertain to the literature on African American families. Beginning with a brief introduction on family composition in African American families, I will discuss the importance of family support, the misconceptions of father involvement, mothers' expectations, mothers' experiences, and finally mothers' relationship satisfaction. This part of the literature review is not intended to replicate the above sections but rather fill in some of the differences found in the literature on African American Families. Since the literature on married African American families is limited, there will be references made to literature on minority families, low-income families and nonresidential fathers, all of which are characteristics not uncommon to new African Americans parents.



Social scientists who evaluated African American families argued that family structure especially that of the nuclear family was less important to individuals in ethnic minority groups than it was to Whites (Billingsley, 1992; McAdoo, 1997). Another argument held that the term family structure was not inclusive of African American families who tended to have non-residential family members who may or may not be conjugally related, but whom they considered part of their family composition (Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, & Stephens, 2001). Family composition was a term that was valued as more inclusive of the extended family structures associated with African American families (McAdoo, 1997). In fact, a strong kinship bond was one of the strengths identified in the social science literature on the African American families (Hill, 2003).

African Americans are however not the only minority group that has been overlook by the literature on the transition to parenthood. Although families in the United States are considered part of the Western World and as such constitute unique family structures and roles from the non-Western World (Georgas, 2006), there are racial and ethnic differences within the United States. For example, the Latino community in the United States is especially influenced by the concept of familialism, which is a collective orientation of cultures of Hispanic or Spanish origin which places the extended family at the center of life and from which identity and social support are drawn. Researchers in the family field have reported on racial/ethnic differences in the division of labor, martial relations and children's adjustment to family change have been reported (McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000). Therefore in addition to the literature on African

American families this section will also evaluate some of the literature present on other minority groups as well taking a multicultural perspective.

### *Family Support*

Kinship networks are often referred to as extended family, which includes individuals who are connected by blood, marriage or in the case of fictive kin, by self-ascribed association, or more simply by choice. Fictive kin are an important part of the African American extended family network. A study which evaluated fictive kin relations in African American families reported that two out of three respondents identified a fictive kin relative in their family (Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994). Not only do fictive kin receive the respect granted to other kin, but they are also responsible for duties expected from other extended family members. The extended family is an extension of the nuclear family, parent(s) and dependent children, and for African American families they are an important source of support whether it was instrumental or expressive. Instrumental support refers to support that provides a service and/or tangible goods, such as help with child care or providing clothes. Expressive support refers to interpersonal interactions that provide emotional support such as advice giving or simply conversing about daily problems (Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008).

An investigation evaluating the nature of kin-based support systems of African American mothers found the most prevalent form of support was childcare at 35%, followed by financial assistance at 28% and emotional assistance at 24% (Jayakody, Chatters, & Taylor, 1993). The high need for childcare support is not surprising because in low income and single mother African American families, mothers and grandmothers were found to be the primary caretakers of children (Chase-Lansdale, Gordon, Coley,

Wakschlag, & Brook-Gunn, 1999). When evaluating the quantity of kin support provided to African American mothers, marital status, region, age, household structure, proximity to family and kin empathy, all emerged as significant predictors of support (Jayakody et al.). In a comparison of never married, married, divorced and widowed mothers, when there was a high prevalence of poverty, never married mothers received the greatest level of financial support when there was a high poverty ratio. However, when the poverty ratio was not high, married mothers received more financial support (Jayakody et al.). This may be a result of larger kinship networks among married women which included in-laws, who may not be present for mothers with other marital statuses.

African American families have long been recognized for their strong extended family support systems (Billingsley, 1992; Hill, 2003; McAdoo, 1997). Scholars have recognized that in, and around, communities with high concentrations of very poor families, the capacity of kin and other informal social networks to provide members with support is limited (Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008). Individuals who have lower incomes were also more likely to have smaller networks, perceived lower levels of family solidarity and closeness, and received help less frequently if at all (Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008). The notion that African American kin networks are becoming smaller is no different than general observations that American families are becoming more isolated. Another cause of isolation in African American families, that is similar to American families in general, is the proximity to kin. Residential proximity influenced patterns of support in African American families (Jayakody et al., 1993; Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008). For example, the further kin are from one another the less they are able to participate in various types of resource exchange. Proximity may not affect financial or

emotional support but it can limit the amount of child care support received, which has been reported as the most prevalent support to African American mothers (Jayakody et al., 1994). This notion of isolation may be more problematic for African American families who have depended on their kinship networks for various forms of support.

It has been suggested that the amount of support a family receives from their extended family is a direct result of their cultural beliefs (McLoyd et al., 2000). There is some evidence that the family support received by African American, Latino, and Asian American parents do not reflect their White counterparts, however due to that lack of literature on such differences there is no clear consensus on how these families differ (McLoyd et al.). The level of grandmother support and adolescent mothers is one area in which there are some clear racial and ethnic differences (McLoyd et al.). The African American and Latino adolescent tends to have higher levels of grandmother support compared to their White counterparts. In addition African American parents report receiving greater extended family support in caring for their children than their Hispanic counterparts (Hossain, Field, Pickens, Malphurs, & Del Valle, 1997). These findings on low-income adolescent parents suggests, when socioeconomic class is equal there are race/ethnicity differences in the amount of family support received.

Hispanic women report greater support from their child's father and their mothers during pregnancy than their African American and White counterparts (Norbeck & Anderson, 1989). While pregnant African American adolescences report greater support from their relatives than their White and Hispanic counterparts (Koniak-Griffin, Lominska, & Brecht, 1993). Sagrestano and colleagues (1999) suggest that the racial/ethnic differences in the literature on support from the child's father and family

members during pregnancy may be more the result of marital status and less a racial/ethnic difference. Their findings suggest that there are racial/ethnic differences in the support received from extended family and friends but these differences do not hold for partner support (Sagrestano, Feldman, Killingsworth-Rini, Woo, & Dunkel-Schetter, 1999). As suggested marital status was a consistent predictor partner support such that married mothers received great support from their child's father (Sagrestano et al.). These findings suggest that it is important to evaluate not only differences in extended family support by race/ethnicity but also by relationship status.

#### *Father Involvement*

Although a disproportionate number of African American families are headed by females (Billingsley, 1992; Hill, 2003; McAdoo, 1997; McLoyd et al., 2000; Murry et al., 2001), African American fathers are not as invisible as they have so often been portrayed (Coley, 2001; Conner & White, 2006). Research has indicated that African American women have contributed to their family income as early as 1890's (Taylor, Tucker, & Mitchell-Kernan, 1999) and historically, many African American women have shared the role of family provider role to a greater extent than their White counterparts (Taylor, Leashore, & Toliver, 1988). These contributions by African American women do not, however, mean that African American men do not see themselves as the primary providers for their families. In a study of African American men's assessment of themselves in the provider role, approximately 55% of the sample reported that they provided very well for their families, and approximately 40% reported that they provided fairly well (Taylor et al., 1988). These researchers also reported a positive relationship

between income levels and provider assessment, in that the greater the man's income, the more likely he was to assess himself as a good provider.

It has been argued that a combination of inadequate education, high unemployment, underemployment, and racism have limited the ability of African American men to be good providers (Wilson, 1996). In fact, researchers have argued that the reason a gap continues to exist between African Americans and their White counterparts, whether it be in marriage rates or employment, is a direct result of a lack in opportunity (Hattery & Smith, 2007). In other words, the reason African Americans' lives do not parallel the lives of their White counterparts is a result of barriers that continue to block full access to opportunity.

Literature on the socialization of young African American boys suggests that they are not socialized to believe that part of their masculinity is to be the sole or primary provider for their families (Wallace, 2007). This is due to the fact that historically African American men have not had the opportunity to fulfill the provider role on their own due to high rates of unemployment and underemployment (Wallace). In a study evaluating men's attitude towards the provider role and role enactment, African American men were found to have more positive attitudes towards their wives working than their White counterparts. Ironically, African American men in the same study were also more likely to endorse more traditional role of men as head of household and primary economic provider (Taylor et al., 1999). These findings suggest that although African American men are accepting of their wives contributing to the family, for the sake of the family's well-being, they may actually want to be the sole provider or primary provider of their families. In fact, family satisfaction (Orbuch & Custer, 1995) and psychological well-

being (Bowman, 1989) of African American men have been compromised when they have experienced strain associated with fulfilling their provider role responsibilities.

In addition, it has also been found that even though African American men have more traditional role attitudes, they are also more likely to have egalitarian role enactment (Taylor et al., 1999). Again this could be contributed to a lack of employment opportunity available to the African American man; he is more accepting of sharing the provider role outside the home. It has also been suggested that in the face of economic disadvantage and denial of equal opportunity in society, married African American men take more co-operative or egalitarian approaches to the division of household labor and child care in order to keep their family operating (Xu et al., 1997). In a comparative analysis of White and African American husband's marital quality and participation in child rearing and household labor activities, African American husbands contributed more to household responsibilities than White husbands. They also found that White husbands reported higher levels of marital quality and contributed more economically than their African American counterparts (Xu et al., 1997). Again these researchers concluded that African American men may be more willing to contribute to household duties because they contribute less economically.

Other researchers have argued that African American men's contributions to household activities were not necessarily due to a lack of economic contribution to the family (Shelton & John, 1993). An investigation evaluating paid labor time, education, age, presence of children, and husbands' and wives' gender role attitudes they found time spend in household labor varied by race and ethnicity (Shelton & John, 1993). These researchers reported that not only did African American men contribute to more

household activities when time spent in paid labor was controlled; but when paid labor was evaluated, that the more time African American men spent in paid labor, the more time they spent on household labor.

Reviewing African American men's provider role literature is important to the transition to parenthood because we know that, as couples become parents, there is a shift in men as they take on more traditional roles such as providers. Another male role that is important to the literature on the transition to parenthood is a man's role as father, in particular his involvement with his children. African American fathers were more likely: to have their first child at a young age; to be unemployed at the time of their child's birth; and to see their first child be raised in a nontraditional home (Livingston & McAdoo, 2007). These factors have fostered the belief that African American men were not actively involved fathers. In reality, there exists a great deal of diversity within African American fathers (Livingston & McAdoo, 2007) and to view all African American fathers based on a subgroup of a population is a common error made by scholars in their evaluation of African American families (Hill et al., 1989).

Nonmarital childbearing and noncustodial parenting which are reported to be particularly prevalent in low-income and minority populations, have been defined as social problems that contribute to family instability and problematic child development (Coley, 2001). Far too often, African American fathers who do not meet traditional married, residential, provider role are viewed as contributor to such social problems. Unfortunately this has more to do with the fact that African American fathers do not conform to the conceptual view of father involvement and less to do with these fathers actual willingness to be involved.



The responsibilities of fatherhood have been defined as encompassing four tasks: providing financial support; providing care; providing emotional support; and establishing legal paternity (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1996). These terms have often translated into traditional residential father roles and are terms researchers have used to define a father's role or father involvement. This is problematic in the evaluation of African American fathers who may not be residential fathers. For example, many studies have found that nonresidential fathers have regular contact with their children during the first few years after birth (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Furstenberg, 1976; Lerman, 1993), and if these fathers' involvement was void simply because they were nonresidential fathers than the value of their involvement would be overlooked.

In addition, traditional measures of paternal involvement such as financial contributions, shared residence, or custodial child care, would not necessarily capture all types of father involvement (Coley & Hernandez, 2006). One barrier that is present in the literature on minority fathers is their access to employment and education. Research has shown that many unemployed fathers access to their children is restricted by the child's mother or other family members, because of the man's inability to provide for the child (Sullivan, 1993). It is also possible that unemployed men remove themselves from their children because of shame or disrespect (Johnson & Doolittle, 1998). Studies have reported that low-income, nonresidential, minority fathers with jobs and education were more likely to be involved with their children (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Cooksey & Craige, 1998; Rangarajan & Gleason, 1998; Sullivan, 1993). In a qualitative study on African American fathers with sole custody of their children, the factors that seem to enable custody were employment and secure housing (Coles, 2003).

There are suggestions from the literature that fathers from different racial/ethnic backgrounds may participate in fathering differently because of cultural norms or structural barriers and supports (Bowman & Forman, 1997; Caldera, Fitzpartick, & Wampler, 2002). It may be the case that ethnic differences in co-parenting arrangements of young couples are related to culturally based differences in normative beliefs about marriage and childbirth (Florsheim et al., 2003). For example, on average African American fathers who did not remain in a relationship with their children's mother were more likely to remain involved in their children's life than their Latino and White counterparts (Florsheim et al., 2003; Gee et al., 2007). That is, African American fathers may be less likely than non-African American fathers to believe that their involvement with their child is contingent on their involvement with their child's mother.

In fact, even though African Americans have nonmarital birth rates significantly higher than those of Hispanics (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009), unmarried African American fathers are more likely to visit and participate in child-related decision making and marginally more likely to provide financial support than their White or Hispanic counterparts (Lerman, 1993; Seltzer, 1991). Given the prevalence of nonmarried childbearing among low-income African American, African American men may have developed a more clear shared understanding of the role of unmarried fathers in their children's lives. While among married low-income minority fathers employment was the primary barrier limiting their involvement with their child, nonmarried fathers reported partners' expectations and negative affect as barriers to their involvement with their young children (Garfield & Chung, 2006).

Low-income African American and Hispanic fathers show little difference in their level of participation in the parental role (Hossain et al., 1997). Yet there are distinct differences between African American, Hispanic fathers and their White counterparts. For example, African American Hispanic father are more likely to report monitoring of their children's activities than their White counterparts (Toth & Xu, 1999). Hispanic father have been found to spend greater time in shared activities with their children than their White counterparts (Toth & Xu).

### *Unfulfilled Expectations*

Much like other mothers in American society, low-income mothers hope to achieve conventional parenthood, which consists of raising a child in a two parent home (Anderson, 1990; Edin, 2000). In fact, the traditional gender roles of mother staying at home and providing care while the father works and provides for his family has been reported as the "golden standard" low-income African American, Hispanic and White mothers desire (Roy & Burton, 2007). In a qualitative investigation evaluating mothers' recruitment of biological fathers and father-like figures in the lives of their children, low-income mothers expected fathers to be present in the lives of their children in order to provide a sense of social legitimacy not only for themselves but also for their children (Roy & Burton). Mothers were reported to believe the birth father should be involved with the family and their children should know their biological father (Roy & Burton).

Although mothers held expectations for father involvement in the lives of their children they also reported monitoring men and holding them accountable for their responsibilities, such as financial support. Mothers believed that if the father was not contributing to his child's well-being then he had no right to see his child (Roy & Burton,

2007). These findings confirm unmarried father reports that mothers' expectations, if not fulfilled, can be a barrier to their involvement with their children (Garfield & Chung, 2006).

### *Mothering Experience*

Motherhood is experienced by women across many cultures, and for the most part the factors that influence a mother's experience are not unique to any one cultural group. However, there is a possibility that different parenting concerns or view exists across different race or ethnic groups. In a qualitative investigation evaluating mothers' views of the transition to a new baby Tamis-LeMonda and Kahana-Kalman (2009) found different parenting views across four different ethnic groups. In this comparison of low-income, urban, African American, Mexican immigrant, Dominican immigrant and Chinese immigrant mothers hopes, concerns and expectations were evaluated.

African American mothers were found to share greater concerns about economic conditions, work, living conditions and child care about then any other group (Tamis-LeMonda & Kahana-Kalman, 2009). African American mothers who resided with their child's birth father were more concerned about their daily routines and responsibilities, their parenting roles, mother-child and father-child relationships. African American mothers who did not reside with their child's birth father were more concerned about interdependence among family members, family's affective climate, and the general well-being of the family (Tamis-LeMonda & Kahana-Kalman, 2009). These finding may suggest that the mothering experience of African American mothers is dependent, to a greater extent than had been previously shown, on her child's father and his involvement in their family lives.

### *Marital Satisfaction*

Although the literature on the transition to parenthood and marital quality has spanned over several decades there has been little focus on African American couples. The two exceptions have been studies by Hobbs and Maynard-Wimbish (1977) and Crohan (1996). Hobbs and Maynard-Wimbish's (1977) investigation resulted in findings consistent with those of previous studies. Although there were differences identified in the rank order of stressors between African American couples and their White counterparts, these researchers suggested that the experience of becoming new parents is generally the same (Hobbs & Maynard-Wimbish). They also reported that African American mothers had greater difficulty adjusting to their first child than did African American fathers (Hobbs & Maynard-Wimbish) which is similar to the literature on White couples reported in previous investigations (Pancer, et al., 2000). The fact that women typically assume primary responsibility for both childcare and household tasks was found to be a causative factor (Belsky, 1985; Ruble et al., 1988). Considering African American mothers have been reported as having relatively equitable distribution of childcare responsibilities and overlapping work and parental roles (Billingsley, 1992) they also may report assuming responsibility for both childcare and household tasks as causative factors. If the general literature on the transition to parenthood is assumed to be applicable to all race/ethnicity parents than one would suspect that African America would have greater role strain as they take on more parental roles. Yet, Hobbs & Maynard-Wimbish (1977) suggest similar outcomes between White and African America couples. This contradiction of the literature to report findings would suggest that the general transition to parenthood literature needs to be evaluated using more

racially/ethnically diverse samples in order to further explore its applicability to all new parents.

In a comparison study of legally married African American and White couples' marital quality and conflict across the transition to parenthood, Crohan (1996) reported that African American parents had higher marital quality than their childless counterparts one year after they became parents. These findings were not replicated by White parents who reported lower marital quality than their childless counterparts (Crohan, 1996). Given the disproportion of African American couples who have a child before marriage, eligible participants included a random sample of eligible White couples while all eligible African American were asked to participate. By limiting the eligibility of participation to only couples who are legally married the literature on the transition to parenthood has created only a partial understanding of how new African American's romantic relationship is influence by this transition. This partial understanding is also true for all nonmarried couples as they too are overlooked in the general literature on the transition to parenthood.

The fact that African Americans have lower marriage rates and higher numbers of children born outside of marriage research efforts that do not evaluate a variety of marital status couples across the transition to parenthood would not be able to provide a provided broad picture of how African American couples' relationship is impacted by the presences of a child. The current literature on African American couples' relationship quality after the birth of a child has been limited to adolescent or young adults (Cutrona, Hessling, Bacon, & Russell, 1998; Florsheim et al., 2003; Gee et al., 2007). Although this research has resulted in some informative findings, there need to be further investigation

and discussion on the transition to parenthood and relationship satisfaction on non-White couples. Predictors of marital quality appear to remain consistent across racial/ethnic groups in the literature; however the disparities in marital happiness for African American couple are particularly larger (McLoyd, 2000).

#### Part IV

##### Limitations of the Current Literature

The transition to parenthood has been empirically investigated for several years. Much of the research in this area has been based on married, White, middle-class heterosexual couples. But not all children in America are born to parent who are married, White or middle-class. Considering the fact that in recent decades marriage rates have declined, cohabitation rates have increased and the numbers of children born outside of marriage has increased (Bumpass & Lu, 2000), the literature on the transition to parenthood must be expanded in order to be inclusive of all families. This expansion must include investigations that evaluate families that do not exhibit what has become known as a traditional married, residential father family unit—sometimes this is not traditional in practice only as an ideal type.

The inclusion of non-residential fathers who are romantically involved with the mother and those who have some type of non-romantic relationship with the mother is also necessary. Far too often the transition to parenthood has been evaluated for married residential couples but children are being born to mothers who are no longer in a relationship with the child's birth father and may or may not be in contact with him. An examination of the different parental relationship statuses would add to our knowledge of how the transition to parenthood effects a greater population of new parents.

Although the presence of different race/ethnicity groups have been acknowledge in the sample populations of several studies, these groups compose two to five percent of the overall participants within these studies. Given that there is a limited amount of research focused on racial/ethnic diverse groups' transition to parenthood there is a need for more investigations on such populations. It would be erroneous to assume that the literature on the transition to parenthood, which has been based on mostly White couples, applies to all race/ethnicities. The gap in the literature could leave to stereotyping and a lack of acknowledgement of possible race/ethnicity group differences. Applying both theory and current literature on the transition to parenthood I will evaluate whether or not a population of racially/ethnically diverse group of non-married mothers' relationship satisfaction across the transition to parenthood is effected in the same manner.

The literature on the transition to parenthood, although extensive, is arguably limited in its depiction of a diverse group of new parents. The diversity in both family structure and race/ethnicity have not been given as much attention in this literature, as many studies have been conducted using sample population of White married couples. Although the physical aspects of having a child can be similar across families, how this transition affects family dynamics may vary across different family structures and race/ethnicity groups. Due to the gaps in the literature on non-married couples there is a limited understanding on how couples in different relationship statues are affected by the transition to parenthood. In addition, the lack of race/ethnic diversity among participant within the literature has also limited what we know about the transition to parenthood.



## Summary

In this chapter I examined previous literature on the transition to parenthood in four parts. The brief history of the concept and how it has developed over time was followed by an examination of the literature as it relates to the following five issues: family support; father involvement; marital satisfaction; unmet expectations; mothering experience; and marital satisfaction. Following that, I applied these concepts to African American and multicultural families from the scant literature available. Finally, I highlighted the limitations in the literature that has created gaps in our understanding of the transition to parenthood and its effects on all families.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this dissertation is to evaluate factors that affect low income non-married new mothers' relationship satisfaction approximately a year after they give birth. This dissertation will examine how fulfillment of mother's expectations of the birth father, the birth father's involvement, the mother's experience of motherhood and family support influence the mother's relationship satisfaction. More specifically the purpose of this research is to understand whether or not there are race/ethnicity and/or relationship status differences among women making the transition to parenthood.

Although the literature on the transition to parenthood and relationship satisfaction is extensive, there is a large gap that has generally overlooked the experiences of low income non-married mothers. The majority of this literature has focused on middle class married White couples. The findings in this current research project will add to the literature by examining variables that may influence how a group of racially diverse, low income, non-married mother's relationship with her child's birth father develops and sustains itself.

#### Research Questions

The research questions in this dissertation were generated from interested in family and organizational support as well as father's behaviors and mother's expectations influence a mother's experience and relationship satisfaction with her child's birth father. They are also influenced by my attempt to address some issues that I saw as major gaps in the existing literature. The questions are as follows:

1. How does a non-married mother's expectation fulfillment by the birth father affect her perceived relationship satisfaction with the birth father?
2. How does a non-married mother's evaluation of the birth father's behavior affect her perceived relationship satisfaction with the birth father?
3. How does external support affect a non-married mother's perceived experience of motherhood?
4. How does a non-married mother's perceived experience of motherhood affect her perceived relationship satisfaction with the birth father?

### Research Hypotheses

The four hypotheses, listed below were constructed to accurately address the research questions in this dissertation. Supported by both theory and/or empirical research each hypothesis evaluates the issues identified by the above research questions. These hypotheses are written in such a way that the concepts of family support and a mother's perception of her expectation fulfillment and child's birth father's behavior influence her experience of motherhood; and the experience of motherhood then influences her relationship satisfaction with her child's birth father are clearly identified for empirical testing. The research hypotheses are as follows:

*Hypothesis I:* The more positive the mother's expectation fulfillment by birth father the more positive her experience of motherhood.

*Hypothesis II:* The more positive the mother's evaluation of the birth father's behavior the more positive her experience of motherhood.

*Hypothesis III:* The more positive the levels of family support the more positive the mother's experience of motherhood.

*Hypothesis IV:* The more positive the mother's experiences of motherhood the more positive her relationship satisfaction with the birth father.

These hypotheses address the relationships between the theoretical constructs illustrated in the *New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model*. This model consists of three different systems embedded in one larger mesosystem with much attention given to associations between variables in the parental system. The parental system, with an outcome variable of mother's relationship satisfaction, is influenced by the experience of motherhood.

#### Data Source

The data for this research is a subsample of the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008). The original study addresses three specific areas—non-marital childbearing, welfare reform, and the role of fathers (Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 2001). The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study was conducted in 20 cities following a cohort of nearly 5,000 children born to urban (mostly) unmarried mothers in the United States between 1998 and 2000. Sixteen of these cities consist of the nationally-representative sample as these cities were randomly selected from 77 U.S. cities with a population of greater than 200,000. The study consists of data collected during interviews with both mothers and fathers at their child's birth (in hospital) and again when the child is one, three and five. Baseline data collected between 1998 and 2000, in hospitals shortly after the child's birth with an 86% response rate, consists of the following information relevant to this research: child's health and development; father-mother relationship; demographic characteristics; education; employment; and income. The one-year follow-up interviews conducted between 1999 and 2002 had a response rate of 90% and in addition to updated data from the baseline interviews consisted of the following

information: family characteristic, the father-child relationship, environment and programs.

The Fragile Families sample was selected using a complex sample design, where participants were not selected independently and with equal probabilities (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008). For example nonmarital births were oversampled while a smaller sample of married births was collected for comparison. Therefore, weights have been adjusted for the sample design (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008). Baseline interviews were conducted with recent eligible mothers in 75 hospitals, where eligibility requirements were based on the analytical goals and design of the study. Screening questions for eligibility included whether the mother was married, if she was 18 years or older, planning to give her baby up for adoption as well as questions on the status of the father. Nearly all baseline interviews were in person, however there were some interviews conducted over the phone. The one-year follow-up interviews were designed to be conducted by telephone using a Computer assisted Telephone Instrument (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008).

For this dissertation, a small subsample of 1,195, non-married, first-time mothers were extracted. The original baseline sample consisted of 4,789 respondents. To determine if respondents were first time parents, an essential fact needed for the current investigation, this subsample was reduced based on a screening question that asked whether or not the respondents had any other biological children. Among those who had not had any other biological children these respondents were then screened into the sample pool of 1,869 mothers. This sample was further reduced by a screen question,

asked during the one-year follow-up survey, “What is your Relationship with Child’s Father Now.” Mothers who were married to their child’s father were eliminated from the sample. This final screening left 1,195 mothers in the subsample of non-married first-time mothers. Baseline data on the subsample of the 1,195 cases was used for demographic and income information on participants. One-year follow-up data was used for hypothesis testing. The final sample size for this dissertation provided a useful number from which appropriate inferential statistical analyses would be possible. I believe women’s adjustments to motherhood and their relationship satisfaction are reflected in their perceptions only after their child is born, therefore assessment of mothers perceptions are measured using the one-year follow-up (Time 2) data.

#### Operationalization of Research Variables

In order to provide a better understanding of the relationships within the *New Mothers’ Relationship Satisfaction Model* the theoretical constructs of the model are presented. These construct are: expectation fulfillment; father’s behavior; experience of motherhood; relationship satisfaction; and family support. The constructs are then operationalized such that their utility to the overall model is illustrated.

#### *Theoretical Model Measures*

The *New Mothers’ Relationship Satisfaction Model* is composed of six components. These five components are:

- (A) *Family Support*—Any financial and/or childcare support that is received from a member of the mother’s or child’s birth father’s family.

- (B) *Father's Behavior*—Mother's perception of birth father's parenting role fulfillment. Birth father's behaviors will be operationalized in terms of childcare support and household labor support.
- (C) *Expectation Fulfillment*—Mother's expectations of the father's role as fulfilled by the birth father. These expectations will be operationalized in terms of birth father's behavior and amount of support he provides to the mother.
- (D) *Experience of Motherhood*—Mother's self reports as to her experiences in regards to being a new parent. Mothers' experiences will be operationalized in terms of her attitude toward parenting and her behaviors.
- (E) *Relationship Satisfaction*—Mother's subjective evaluation of her relationship with her child's birth father. Relationship satisfaction will be operationalized using negative and positive affect.

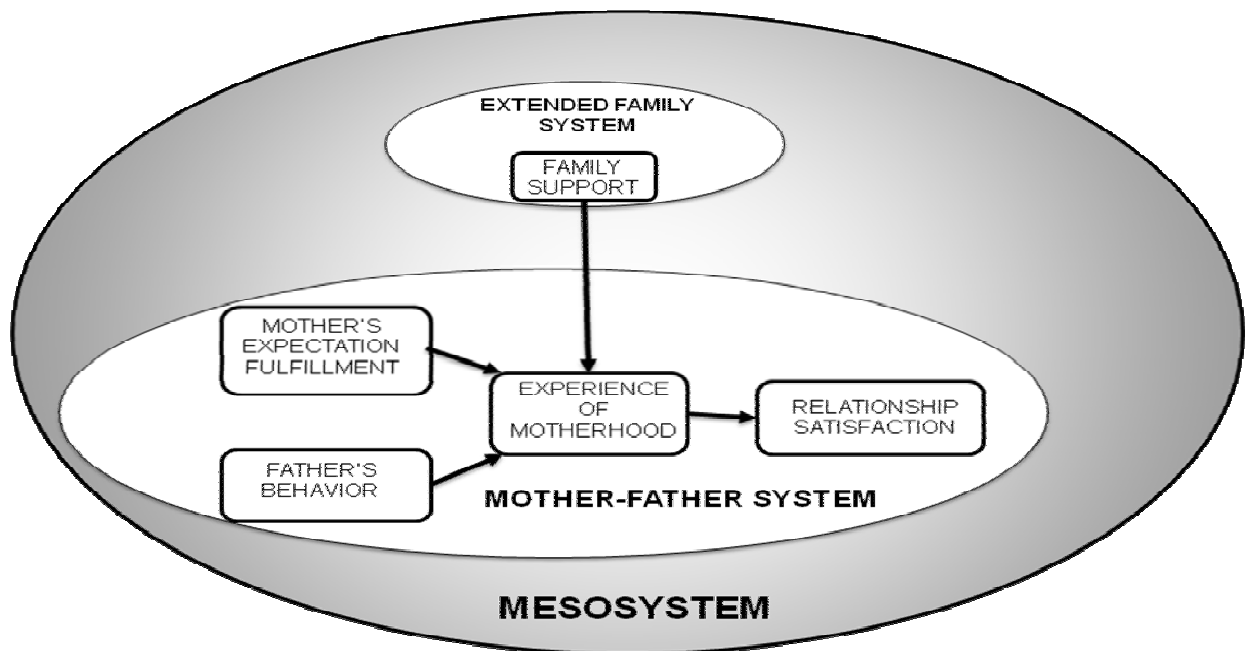


Figure 3.1. Theoretical Model of New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction

## *Operational Definitions*

### Predictor Variables

Predictor variables are the variables within the theoretical model that influence the outcome variables. The predictor variables in the model of New Mothers' Experience of Motherhood are: family support; mother's expectations fulfillment by birth father; quality father's behavior and mother's relationship satisfaction.

*Family Support.* Family support is defined as the amount of financial and childcare support provided by family and/or friends. Evaluated in the one-year follow-up survey this variable is measured by asking respondents if they have received financial or childcare assistance from family or friends. Possible responses are given on a yes/no scale with (1) = Yes and (2) = No, for both questions on financial assistance and childcare assistance. Responses are recoded for multivariate analyses using a dummy coding scheme in which 0 = No support received and 1 = Receives support.

*Father's Behavior*—Quality of father's behavior is defined as a mother's perception of the birth father's parenting behavior. Evaluated during the one-year follow-up survey this variable is measured using a four-item index. These items are: "How often does father—Watch child when mother needs to do things;" "How often does father—Take child to daycare, doctor, etc.;" "How often does father—Run errands for mother;" and "How often does father—Fix/paint/maintain or improve around home" with  $\alpha = 0.90$ . Possible responses to all four items are on a four-point scale with 1 being "Never," 2 being "Rarely," 3 being "Sometimes" and 4 being "Often" yielding total possible scores of 4 to 16.



*Expectations Fulfillment*—Mother's expectation fulfillment by birth father is defined as a mother's perception of whether the birth father has fulfilled her expectations of his role as a father. Evaluated during the one-year follow-up survey this variable is measured using a six-item index. The items in this index are: "How often—When father is with child, he acts like the father you want for your child;" "How often—He respects the schedules and rules you make for child;" "How often—You can trust father to take good care of child;" "How often—You and father talk about problems that come up with raising child;" "How often—He supports you in the way you want to raise child;" and "How often—You can count on father for help when you need someone to look after child for a few hours," with  $\alpha = 0.87$ . Possible responses for the index are on a three-point Likert-type scale with 1 being "Rarely True," 2 being "Sometime True" and 3 being "Always True," yielding total possible scores of 6 to 18.

*Experience of Motherhood*—Mother's experience of motherhood is defined as the mother's perceptions of her experiences as a parent. Evaluated during the one-year follow-up survey this variable is measured using a four-item index. The items in the index are: "How much do you agree/disagree—Being a parent is harder than I thought;" "How much do you agree/disagree—Feel trapped by parental responsibilities;" "How much do you agree/disagree—Taking a care of children more work than pleasure;" and "How much do you agree/disagree—Often feel tired and worn out from raising family," with  $\alpha = 0.60$ . Possible responses for this index are on a four-point Likert-type scale with 1 being "Strongly Agree," and 4 being "Strongly Disagree" yielding total possible scores on each index of 4 to 16.

## Outcome Variable

*Relationship Satisfaction*—Mother’s relationship satisfaction is defined as the mother’s subjective evaluation of her relationship with the birth father. Evaluated during the one-year follow-up survey this variable is measured using 4-item index. The index consists of the following items: “How often is father—fair and willing to compromise when you have a disagreement;” “How often is father—He expresses affection or love for you;” “How often is he—He encourages or helps you to do things that are important to you;” and “How often is father—He insults or criticizes you or your ideas.” The possible responses for these items are on a three-item Likert-type scale with 1 being “Never” and 3 being “Often,” yielding total possible scores of 4 to 12.

## Structural Variables

*Household Income*—is defined as any type of economic support. The household income variable was computed using four items from the baseline survey. These items are: 1—earnings; 2—public assistance, welfare or food stamps; 3—unemployment insurance, workmen’s compensation, disability or social security benefits; and 4—family and friends. The responses reported from all four sources were added together for a final household income monetary value.

*Race/Ethnicity*—is defined as the race or ethnicity an individual identifies themselves as. The race/ethnicity variable was computed using two-items from baseline data. The first item asked respondents “What is your race?” Possible responses were; White, Black, Asian, American Indian, Other and Hispanic. The second item, which was a secondary question for individual who reported they were of Hispanic or Latino origin or descent. This question asks respondents to indicate whether they are: “Mexican, Puerto

Rican, Cuban or Other Hispanic.” The responses from these two questions were computed into the following categories; non-Hispanic White (n = 229), non-Hispanic Black (n = 610), Asian (n = 21), Mexican (n = 171), Puerto Rican (n = 66), Other Hispanic (n = 86) and Other (n = 6). For the purposes of more efficient analyses within this dissertation these categories were further collapsed into five groups consisting of the following subgroups: White—non-Hispanic White (n = 229); Black—non-Hispanic Black (n = 610); Mexican (n = 171); Puerto Rican (n = 66); Other Race—Asian, American Indian, Other, Cuban, Other Hispanic (n = 113). These race/ethnicity categories were further collapsed into four categories in order to increase the efficiency of further multivariate analyses. These four categories are: White—non-Hispanic White (n = 229); Black—non-Hispanic Black (n = 610); Mexican (n = 171); Other Race—Puerto Rican and Other Race (n = 179).

*Relationship Status*—is defined as the type of relationship the mother has with the child’s birth father. The measure of this variable is an item that was constructed by the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study administrators based on information collected during the one-year follow-up survey on both the relationship status and the cohabitation status of the mother with the child’s birth father (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008). Information collected from the mother on her status was also verified by cross referencing of father interviews for cases in which mother had reported father unknown. The possible categories of response to this item are: Romantic cohabiting—mothers who are romantically involved and live with their child’s father all or most of the time (n = 432); Romantic some cohabiting—mothers who are romantic with child’s father but live with him some of the time (n = 58); Romantic non-

cohabiting—mothers who are romantic with child’s father but rarely, never or rarely/never live with father (n = 104); Separated/divorced/widowed—mothers who are separated or divorced from child’s father or in cases where the father is deceased (n = 36); Friends—mothers who are friends with the child’s birth father (n = 261); Not in any relationship—mothers who have no relationship with the child’s father (n = 292); and Father unknown—mothers who report father is unknown (n = 12). Both mothers who are friends with their child’s father or no longer in a relationship are asked to respond to relationship questions based on the past relationship with the birth father. The inclusion of both mothers who are Friends and Not in Relationship mothers is important because this dissertation is evaluating all mothers relationships with their child’s birth father included both past and present relationships. If the *New Mothers’ Relationship Satisfaction Model* is to explain relationship satisfaction it should explain the relationship satisfaction of all new mothers.

For the purposes of more efficient analyses within this dissertation these categories were further collapsed into four groups consisting of the following subgroups: Romantic cohabiting (n = 432); Romantic non-cohabiting—consisting of both mothers who reported some cohabiting and no cohabiting mothers (n = 162); Friends (n = 261); and Not in any relationship—mothers who have no relationship, separated/divorced/widowed and father is unknown (n = 340).

*Education*—is defined as the level of educational attainment reported by the mother. This variable was measured using an item from the baseline survey which asked mothers “what is the highest grade or year of regular school you have completed?” Responses were categorized in the following groups: no formal schooling; 8<sup>th</sup> grade of

less; some high school; high school diploma; G.E.D.; Some college or 2 year school; Technical or trade school; bachelor's degree; Graduate or professional school. Of the 1,195 mothers in this dissertation, no mother reported "no formal education attainment" therefore this response item was dropped from reports coded. In addition, there are two missing reports from mothers on this item in this subsample.

### Plan of Analysis

My objective in this research is to gain a better understanding of how factors pertaining to the mother's expectations, her perceptions of her child's father, and her experiences of motherhood as well as support received from systems external to the mother-father dyad affect a mother's relationship satisfactions. In particular I am interested in whether or not there are Race/Ethnicity and relationship status differences in these predictor and outcome measures. Initially simple descriptive statistics will be utilized to help explain and describe the sample in this dissertation. In order to meet these objectives of this dissertation I will apply bivariate analyses such as one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) and correlations. In addition I will also use multivariate analyses such as path analyses using maximum likelihood estimation (MLE), to test both my theoretical model and the relationships between multiple variables within my model.

Although this dissertation will apply a multivariate statistical approach that allows for the evaluation of a theoretical model, I will begin my analysis with more simple procedures that will add clarity to my final analysis. Sophisticated statistical approaches can provide a clearer picture of the relationship between multiple variables, but these methods of analysis are essentially building on the knowledge gained from more simple

procedures. Thus, in order to create a clear picture for the reader I will begin my analysis using simple statistical procedure and build up these with more complex procedures.

### *Analytical Strategy*

There will be three parts to my analysis; the first part will focus on individual variable descriptions and variable relationships while the second part of my analysis will focus on testing mean differences between different Race/Ethnicity groups and Relationship Status groups, the third part will focus on my theoretical model of a mother's transition to parenthood. Bivariate and multivariate approaches such as one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlations and path analyses constructed using Analysis of Moment Structure AMOS 7.0 (Arbuckle, 2007).

#### Univariate Analyses

A simple univariate approach using frequency distributions and measures of central tendencies, such as the mean, mode and median of a single variable will be used to provide descriptive statistics on each individual variable. Missing data will be identified and possible reasons for such missing data will be explored. Such statistics are important in creating a clear picture that describes the sample variance within each variable. In addition, these simple univariate statistics are important to as building blocks to more complicated statistical approaches.

#### Bivariate Analyses

Bivariate approaches attempt to determine associations between two variables within a sample. In this dissertation hypothesis testing will be conducted using bivariate analyses. Such analysis will be conducted through one-way ANOVA and correlations. ANOVA's will investigate the group differences between Race/Ethnicity groups and

relationship status groups. In addition, first-order correlations and the use of correlation matrices will be used to examine the statistical significance of the relationships between all the variables in my theoretical model. Correlations will also be conducted between model variables and each Race/Ethnicity and Relationship Status group; dummy variables, for each of the Race/Ethnicity and Relationship Status groups, will be created for the purposes of this analysis.

#### Multivariate Analyses

A multivariate approach will be applied in order to test my theoretical model. Path analyses will be conducted using MLE techniques provided in AMOS 7.0 to test the overall effects of the predictor variables on the outcome. Maximum likelihood estimation does not try to reproduce the sample data but rather attempts to “estimate the population covariance matrix” from existing data (Thompson, 2004). Mean substitutions will be applied to missing data in order to run analyses as required when using MLE in AMOS. In addition to an overall path analyses for the entire sample of 1,195 mothers there will be path analyses conducted for each Race/Ethnicity and Relationship Status groups. In order for Race/Ethnicity and Relationship Status group path analyses to be conducted subsamples for each group category will be created and used for further analyses.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

In this chapter the focus will be on explaining the current investigation's findings and will consist of four sections. The first section provides information on the sample population through simple descriptive statistics. The second section consists of bivariate analysis such as analyses of variance (ANOVA), and first-order correlations. The third section consists of the hypotheses and the fourth and final section consists of multivariate analyses.

#### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are the most basic statistical description of the data evaluated in this dissertation. Prior to examining the descriptive statistics on both predictor and outcome variables, descriptive statistics examining the sample population of non-married new mothers will be explored. This data  $n = 1,195$ , of first-time mothers who are not married to their child's birth father will be presented in table format and described in subsequent paragraphs.

As illustrated in Table 4.1 the majority, at approximately 86.6% ( $n = 1,032$ ), of the sample report being born in the United States while the 13.4% ( $n = 160$ ) report being foreign born. There are 3 missing responses to this item leaving a total  $n = 1,192$ . While the computed race and ethnicity item has 6 missing responses with a total  $n = 1,189$ , of these respondents the majority, at 51.3% ( $n = 610$ ), are Black Non-Hispanic mothers. This majority is followed by White mothers who comprise 19.3% ( $n = 229$ ) of the sample. In addition, Mexican mothers (including Black Mexicans), comprised the third largest population in this sample at 14.4% ( $n = 171$ ). In order to increase the efficiency of



further statistical analyses the RACE/ETHNICITY variable was collapsed into five categories; White, Black Non-Hispanic, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Other. The sample size of the new Other category which now consists of both Asian and Other Hispanic has a  $n = 179$ .

The variable of EDUCATION has a total  $n = 1,193$  with 2 missing responses. There is an eight-item response scale for this variables ranging from 1 to 9. The majority of the sample at 33.2% ( $n = 396$ ) report having “Some High School” education, the average level of education for mothers is a “High School Diploma” ( $M = 4.4$ ). A higher mean than mode for the education level of this sample is not surprising considering the fact that “GED” ( $n = 45$ ) is a on a higher value in the response coding scheme, and only 3.4% ( $n = 50$ ) of the sample report having a “Bachelors Degree” or higher.

The measure of RELATIONSHIP STATUS has a total  $n = 1,195$ , with a majority of mothers at 36.2% ( $n = 432$ ) report as to being in a “Romantic Cohabiting” relationship with their child’s birth father. RELATIONSHIP STATUS of “Not in a Relationship” (24.4%,  $n = 292$ ) and “Friends” (21.8%,  $n = 261$ ) with the child’s birth father are the second and third most common responses by non-married first-time mothers respectively. In order to increase the efficiency of further statistical analyses the RELATIONSHIP STATUS variable was collapsed into four categories; Romantic Cohabiting, Romantic Not Cohabiting, Friends and Not in a Relationship. The sample new category of Romantic Not Cohabiting consists of both mothers who report being romantic with their child’s father and cohabiting sometimes and rarely/never and has a new  $n = 162$ ). The new Not in a Relationship consists of Separated/Divorced/Widowed (3%,  $n = 36$ ),

mothers who report that the father is unknown (1%, n = 12) and not in relationship (24.4%, n = 292) for a new n = 340 (28.5%).

Table 4.1

*Descriptive Statistics of Non-Married First Time Mothers' Demographic Variables*

Variable	Coding Scheme	n	%
BIRTH PLACE U.S	Yes	1,032	86.6
	No	160	13.4
RACE/ETHNICITY	White	229	19.3
	Black Non-Hispanic	610	51.3
	Mexican	171	14.4
	Puerto Rican	66	5.6
	Other	113	9.5
EDUCATION	Less than 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	46	3.9
	Some High School	396	33.2
	High School Diploma	324	27.2
	GED	45	3.8
	Some College	294	24.6
	Technical Training	38	3.2
	Bachelors Degree	40	3.4
	Graduate or Prof. School	10	0.8
RELATIONSHIP STATUS	Romantic –Cohabiting	432	36.2
	Romantic –Non-Cohabiting	162	13.6
	Friends	261	21.8
	Not in Relationship	340	28.5

*NOTE.* The total of each variable may not equal the sample size (n=1,195) due to missing data.

As illustrated in Table 4.2, HOUSEHOLD INCOME ranged from less than \$1,000 to greater than \$25,000, with a coding scheme range from 1 to 15, and an average HOUSEHOLD INCOME falling between \$6,000 and \$7,999 ( $M = 6.56$ ). The medium HOUSEHOLD INCOME is between \$5,000 and \$5,999 ( $Mdn = 5$ ). There are 271 cases missing from the household income data leaving an n = 924 for this item.

Table 4.2

*Descriptive Statistics of Mothers' Household Income and Age.*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	n
HOUSEHOLD INCOME (<1K to >25 K)	6.56	4.86	5.0	924
AGE (15-43)	21.35	4.38	20.0	1,195

*NOTE.* The total of the income variable does not equal the sample size (n=1,195) due to missing data.

In contrast to HOUSEHOLD INCOME, AGE has an n=1,195 indicating no missing data. Mothers' AGE in this sample ranges from 15 to 43 years old. Mothers have an average AGE of 21 years old ( $M = 21.35$ ) median and mode of 20 and 19 years old respectively. The standard deviation of 4.38 indicates that a large percentage of mothers are in their late teens or early twenties, in fact approximately 95% of participating mothers are under the age of 30.

### Predictor Variables

#### *Expectation Fulfillment*

The construct of mother's expectation fulfillment consists of six variables with a three-item response scale ranging from 1—"Always" to 3—"Rarely" as illustrated in Table 4.3. These response scores were recoded such that the high number indicated a more positive outcome, 1—"Rarely" to 3—"Always" so that higher scores would indicate more positive outcomes. The majority at of the sample indicated that their child's birth father is "Always" acting like the father they want him to be (ACTS LIKE FATHER) at 65.6% (total n = 884); respectful of their schedule/rules made for the child (RESPECTS SCHEDULE) at 68.2 % (total n = 877); trusted to care for child (TRUST WITH CHILD) at 82.2% (total n = 884); able to talk to father about problems (TALK

ABOUT PROBLEMS) at 67.1% (total n = 873); and supportive of how mother wants to raise child (SUPPORTS YOU) at 66.4% (total n = 882). In addition, the majority of the sample indicate that the birth father can “Always” be counted on to watch child for a few hours (CAN COUNT ON) at 63.1%(total n = 865). Missing responses were either skipped by the respondent, not asked or the respondent indicated they did not know the answer or refused to respond to the question (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008).

Table 4.3

*Descriptive Statistics of Variables Composing Expectation Fulfillment Scale.*

	Coding Scheme	n	%
ACTS LIKE FATHER	Always	580	65.6
	Sometimes	231	26.1
	Rarely	73	8.3
RESPECTS SCHEDULE	Always	598	68.2
	Sometimes	190	21.7
	Rarely	89	10.1
TRUST WITH CHILD	Always	727	82.2
	Sometimes	92	10.4
	Rarely	65	7.4
TALK ABOUT PROBLEMS	Always	586	67.1
	Sometimes	169	19.4
	Rarely	118	13.5
SUPPORTS YOU	Always	586	66.4
	Sometimes	188	21.3
	Rarely	108	12.2
CAN COUNT ON	Always	546	63.1
	Sometimes	160	18.5
	Rarely	159	18.4

*NOTE.* The total of each variable does not equal the sample size (n=1,195) due to missing data.

### *Father's Behavior*

The construct of father's behavior consists of four variables with a four-item response scale ranging from 1—"Often" to 4—"Never" as illustrated in Table 4.4. These response scores were recoded such that the high number indicated a more positive outcome, 1—"Never" to 4—"Often" so that higher scores would indicate more positive outcomes. The majority of the sample indicated that their child's birth father "Often" runs errands for the mother RUN ERRANDS at 43.3% (total n = 980); and father watches child when mother runs errands WATCHES CHILD at 49.4% (total n = 980). The majority of the sample also indicate that the birth father "Never" fixes, maintains or makes improvements to the home MAINTAIN HOME at 38.8% (total n = 980). Whether the birth father takes the child to childcare TAKES CHILD (total n = 981), however does not have distinct majority response, approximately 35% (n = 341) of mothers report a response of "often" while another 33% (n = 326) report a response of "never". Missing responses were either skipped by respondents, not asked or the respondent indicated they did not know the answer or refused to respond to the question (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008). Responses on this variable were also skipped by mothers who indicated they were not in a relationship with their child's birth father at the time baseline data was collected in the hospital, n = 103.

Table 4.4

*Descriptive Statistics of Variables Composing of Father's Behavior Scale.*

	Coding Scheme	n	%
RUN ERRANDS	Often	424	43.3
	Sometimes	200	20.4
	Rarely	71	7.2
	Never	285	29.1
MAINTAIN HOME	Often	319	32.6
	Sometimes	196	20.0
	Rarely	85	8.7
	Never	380	38.8
WATCHES CHILD	Often	484	49.4
	Sometimes	178	18.2
	Rarely	88	9.0
	Never	230	23.5
TAKES CHILD	Often	341	34.8
	Sometimes	207	21.1
	Rarely	107	10.9
	Never	326	33.2

*NOTE.* The total of each variable does not equal the sample size (n=1,195) due to missing data.

*Family Support*

As illustrated in Table 4.5, the construct of family support consists of two variables, both of which have a two-item response scale of 1 = "Yes" and 2 = "No." The variable pertaining to where a mother has received FINACIAL SUPPORT has a total n = 1,192, and the majority of mothers at 52.9% (n = 630) report having received financial support from their family members. The majority of mothers at 61% (n = 729) also report having received CHILDCARE (total n = 1,187) from family members. Missing responses were either skipped by respondent or the respondent indicated they did not know the answer or refused to respond to the question (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008). Given the binary nature of the response scale for these two variables the response scales will be recoded into dummy variables in which 1 = yes

support received and 0 = no support received. This will allow for further analyses using this variable.

Table 4.5

*Descriptive Statistics of Variables Composing Family Support Construct.*

	Coding Scheme	n	%
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	Yes	630	52.9
	No	562	47.1
CHILDCARE	Yes	729	61.0
	No	458	38.3

*NOTE.* The total of each variable does not equal the sample size (n=1,195) due to missing data.

*Experience of Motherhood*

The construct of mother’s experience of motherhood consists of four variables, with a four-item response scale ranging from 1—“Strongly Agree” to 4—“Strongly Disagree” as illustrated in Table 4.6. “Parenting Harder” than the mother had thought and “Feel Trapped” (total n = 1,047). The majority of mothers at 40.4% (n = 423) “Agree” that parenting is harder than they thought it would be PARENTING HARDER (total n = 1,048). A majority at 40% also “Agree” that they feel tired and worn out from raising a family TIRED WORN (total n = 1,047). A majority, however, “Strongly Disagree” that they feel trapped by their parenting responsibilities at 59.9% FEEL TRAPPED and that taking care of children is more work than pleasure at 57.9% MORE WORK, both variables have total n = 1,047. Missing responses were either skipped by the respondent, not asked or the respondent indicated they did not know the answer to the question (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008).

Table 4.6

*Descriptive Statistics of Variables Composing Experience of Motherhood Scale.*

	Coding Scheme	n	%
PARENTING HARDER	Strongly Agree	324	30.9
	Agree	423	40.4
	Disagree	186	17.7
	Strongly Disagree	115	11.0
FEEL TRAPPED	Strongly Agree	51	4.9
	Agree	139	13.3
	Disagree	230	22.0
	Strongly Disagree	627	59.9
MORE WORK	Strongly Agree	112	10.7
	Agree	131	12.5
	Disagree	198	18.9
	Strongly Disagree	606	57.9
TIRED WORN	Strongly Agree	167	16.0
	Agree	419	40.0
	Disagree	220	21.0
	Strongly Disagree	241	23.0

*NOTE.* The total of each variable does not equal the sample size (n=1,195) due to missing data.

## Outcome Variable

*Relationship Satisfaction*

The construct of relationship satisfaction consists of four variables, with a three-item response scale ranging from 1—“Often” to 3—“Never” as illustrated in Table 4.7. These response scores were recoded such that the high number indicated a more positive outcome, 3—“Often” to 1—“Never.” The majority of mothers indicate that the birth father is “sometimes” fair and willing to compromise (FAIR WILLING) in their relationship at 46% (total n = 877); They also report that their child’s birth father is “often” affectionate and loving (AFFECTION LOVE) at 68.1% (total n = 878); and encourages and helps them (ENCOURAGE HELP) at 60.5% (total n = 878). In addition, the majority of mothers also indicate that their child’s birth father “never” insults or



criticizes them (INSULT CRITICIZE) at 56.4% (total n = 879). Given the nature of this question the response scale-items were not recoded and the original response scale of 1—“Often,” 2—“Sometimes” and 3—“Never” were utilized for this item. This made the negative affect variable comparable to the positive affect variables in which a lower score indicated a more positive relationship. Missing responses were skipped or the respondent indicated they did not know the answer or refused to respond to the question. Responses on this variable were also skipped by mothers who indicated they were not in a relationship with their child’s birth father at the time baseline data was collected in the hospital, n = 103.

Table 4.7

*Descriptive Statistics of Variables Composing Relationship Satisfaction Scale.*

	Coding Scheme	n	%
FAIR WILLING	Often	350	39.9
	Sometime	403	46.0
	Never	124	14.1
AFFECTION LOVE	Often	598	68.1
	Sometime	227	25.9
	Never	53	6.0
ENCOURAGE HELP	Often	531	60.5
	Sometime	226	25.7
	Never	121	13.8
INSULT CRITICIZE	Often	101	11.5
	Sometime	282	32.1
	Never	496	56.4

*NOTE.* The total of each variable does not equal the sample size (n=1,195) due to missing data.

## Scale Variables

In order to conduct analysis of the relationships between the construct in the theoretical model of *New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction and Experience of Motherhood Model*, four scales were developed. They are: the Expectation Fulfillment Scale (EXPECTFILL); Father's Behavior Scale (FATHBEHV); Relationship Satisfaction Scale (RELSAT); Experience of Motherhood (EXPMOTHER). These scales and their central tendencies are presented in Table 4.8. All four scales consisted of items that had missing data. Missing data was excluded from scale construction therefore there are different n scores illustrated on Table 4.8. These scales are summative and have been divided by the number of items representing each scale.

EXPECTFILL was created using the following six items: "How often—When father is with child, he acts like the father you want for your child;" "How often—He respects the schedules and rules you make for child;" "How often—You can trust father to take good care of child;" "How often—You and father talk about problems that come up with raising child;" "How often—He supports you in the way you want to raise child;" and "How often—You can count on father for help when you need someone to look after child for a few hours," with  $\alpha = 0.87$ . Responses were on a three-point Likert-type scale, yielding total possible scale scores of 1 to 3.

Table 4.8

*Descriptive Statistics of Expectation Fulfillment, Father's Behavior, Relationship Satisfaction and Experiences of Motherhood Scales.*

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	N
EXPECTFILL	2.58	0.53	.873	2	2.83	844
FATHBEHV	2.69	1.11	.901	3	3.00	979
EXPMOTHER	2.80	0.66	.603	3	2.75	1,046
RELSAT	2.45	0.50	.730	2	2.50	875

FATHBEHV was created using the following four items: “How often does father—Watch child when mother needs to do things;” “How often does father—Take child to daycare, doctor, etc;” “How often does father—Run errands for mother;” and “How often does father—Fix/paint/maintain or improve around home” with  $\alpha = 0.90$ . Responses were on a four-point scale, yielding total possible scale scores of 1 to 4.

EXPMOTHER was created using the following four items: “How much do you agree/disagree—Being a parent is harder than I thought;” “How much do you agree/disagree—Feel trapped by parental responsibilities;” “How much do you agree/disagree—Taking a care of children more work than pleasure;” and “How much do you agree/disagree—Often feel tired and worn out from raising family,” with  $\alpha = 0.60$ . Possible responses for this index are on a four-point Likert-type scale with 1 being “Strongly Agree,” and 4 being “Strongly Disagree” yielding total possible scale scores of 1 to 4. For further discussion on these four scales please refer to Chapter Three.

RELSAT was created using the following four items: “How often is father—fair and willing to compromise when you have a disagreement;” “How often is father—He

expresses affection or love for you;” “How often is he—He encourages or helps you to do things that are important to you;” and “How often is father—He insults or criticizes you or your ideas.” Responses for these items were on a three-item Likert-type scale, yielding total possible scale scores of 1 to 3.

### Bivariate Analyses

#### *Contingency Analyses*

The purpose of the initial contingency analyses is to determine if there is an association between race/ethnicity and relationship status. The reason that this must be examined is that in previous investigations there has been an implicit, if not explicit, argument that non-married women of color who are mothers, relationship statuses were different from the their White counterparts and those of different social class statuses. In this investigation we have been able to control for social class, in effect all the women in this study have similar social class background. What could be considered unique were their relationship statuses. The important question to address then was what is the association between race/ethnicity and relationship status? A Pearson Chi Square test was conducted (see Table 4.9) to examine this relationship. The results revealed that there was a significant association between race/ethnicity and relationship status ( $\chi^2 = 91.01, df = 9, p < .001$ ), suggesting that knowledge of a person’s race/ethnicity group membership is not independent of their relationship status. In other words, you cannot tell a person’s relationship status by knowing their race/ethnic grouping. This is important because it reinforces the idea that relationship status is an important factor that must be considered when dealing with women of similar social classes no matter what their race/ethnicity.

Table 4.9

*Contingency Table of Mother's Race/Ethnicity and Their Relationship Status.*

Relationship Status	White	Black	Mexican	Other
Romantic Cohabiting	104	164	87	73
Romantic Non-Cohabiting	17	114	14	17
Friends	32	177	19	32
Not in Relationship	76	155	51	57
Total	229	610	171	179

( $\chi^2 = 91.01, df = 9, p < .001$ )

*Analysis of Variance*

A series of ANOVA tests were conducted to examine the differences between race/ethnicity across a variety of measures aimed at uncovering the conceptualized ideas of expectation fulfillment, father's behavior, relationship satisfaction, family support and experience of motherhood (see Tables 4.10 to 4.19). These ANOVAs were initially used to test for response differences among the five different race/ethnicity groups and relationship statuses. Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons were also conducted on all variables to examine if there were significant differences between group means.

Race/Ethnicity Comparisons

*Expectation Fulfillment.* The overall ANOVA results for Expectation Fulfillment measures by Race/Ethnicity revealed only one significant  $F$  score for how often father showed respect for the schedule established by the birth mother. The resultant score ( $F_{4, 874} = 2.97, p < 0.05$ ) suggested that there were significant differences in how different

race/ethnicity group mothers felt about how birth fathers adhered to schedules (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

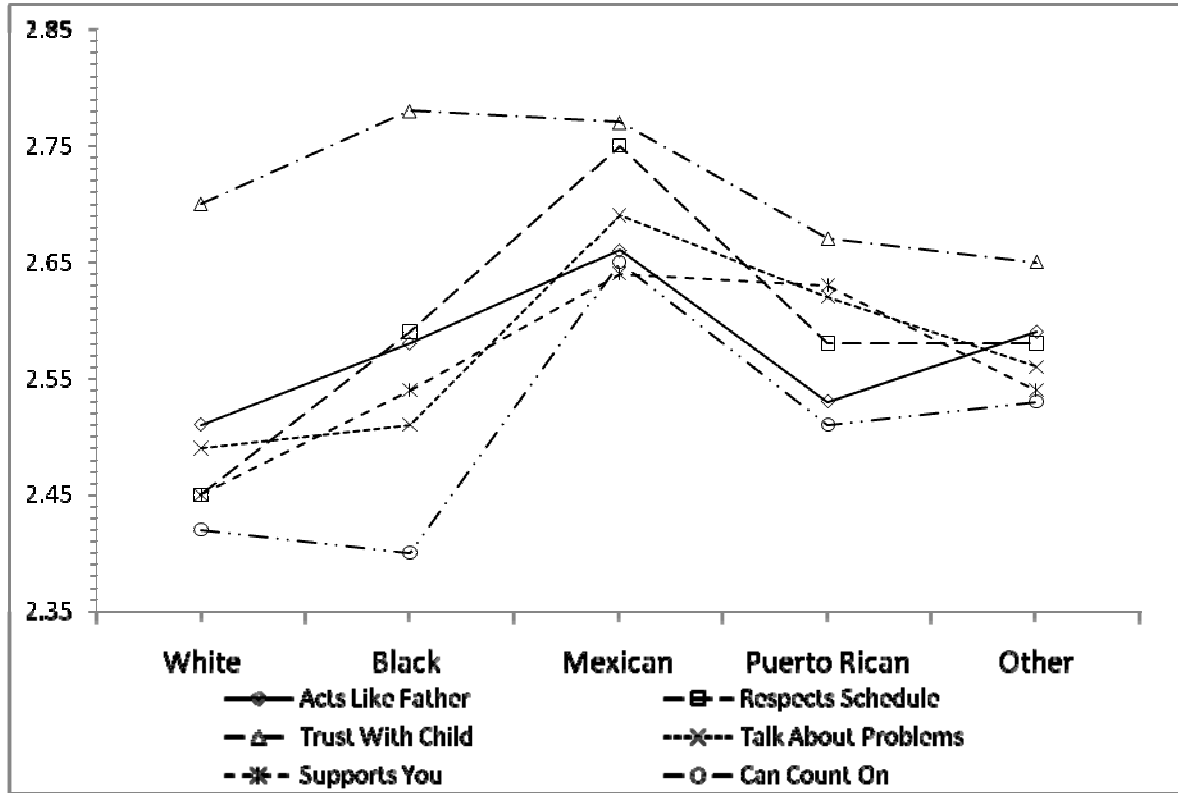
*ANOVA for Mother's Expectation Fulfillment by Race/Ethnicity Group.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
ACTS LIKE FATHER	BSS	1.58	4	.396	0.96
	WSS	359.72	874	.412	
	TSS	361.31	878		
RESPECTS SCHEDULE	BSS	5.27	4	1.319	2.97*
	WSS	385.42	867	.445	
	TSS	390.70	871		
TRUST WITH CHILD	BSS	2.09	4	.523	1.56
	WSS	293.84	874	.336	
	TSS	295.93	878		
TALK ABOUT PROBLEMS	BSS	3.44	4	.860	1.66
	WSS	446.38	863	.517	
	TSS	449.82	867		
SUPPORTS YOU	BSS	2.51	4	.628	1.27
	WSS	431.38	872	.495	
	TSS	433.89	876		
CAN COUNT ON	BSS	5.74	4	1.435	2.35
	WSS	522.91	855	.612	
	TSS	528.64	859		

\*= $p \leq .05$ . NOTE. BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

Additional post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD procedure were conducted to determine how and when these differences exist among the groups. The results of these tests demonstrated that White mothers ( $M = 2.45$ ) gave significantly lower responses than Black mothers ( $M = 2.59, p < 0.05$ ) and Mexican mothers ( $M = 2.75, p < 0.001$ ). There was a significant difference between Black and Mexican mothers,  $p < 0.05$ . The means of the Expectation Fulfillment variables are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Expectation Fulfillment Mean Differences by Race/Ethnicity Groups.



Although ANOVA did not indicate significant  $F$ -statistics on other variables within Expectation Fulfillment post-hoc comparisons indicated that there were significant differences between mothers on some measures. A comparison evaluating how often mother could talk to the father about problems that arise when raising a child revealed significant differences between Mexican mothers ( $M = 2.69$ ) and both Black ( $M = 2.51, p < 0.05$ ) and White mothers ( $M = 2.49, p < 0.05$ ).

Race/Ethnicity group differences on how often mothers could count on father to watch their child demonstrated significant differences between Mexican mothers ( $M = 2.65$ ) and both Black ( $M = 2.40, p < 0.05$ ) and White mothers ( $M = 2.42, p < 0.05$ ). Additional post-hoc comparisons also revealed significant differences between Mexican mothers ( $M = 2.64$ ) and White mothers ( $M = 2.45, p < 0.05$ ) on how often father

supported the ways mother wanted to raise their child. Comparisons between all groups and the Puerto Rican and the Other Race/Ethnicity groups were not significant.

Table 4.11

*ANOVA for Father's Behavior by Race/Ethnicity Group.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
RUN ERRANDS	BSS	13.03	4	3.26	2.02
	WSS	1,564.78	970	1.61	
	TSS	1,577.81	974		
MAINTAIN HOME	BSS	30.85	4	7.71	4.68**
	WSS	1,599.22	970	1.65	
	TSS	1,630.07	974		
WATCHES CHILD	BSS	14.70	4	3.68	2.43*
	WSS	1,464.82	970	1.60	
	TSS	1,479.53	974		
TAKES CHILD	BSS	12.59	4	3.26	1.97
	WSS	1,552.53	971	1.65	
	TSS	1,565.12	975		

\*= $p \leq .05$ , \*\*= $p \leq .01$ . NOTE. BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

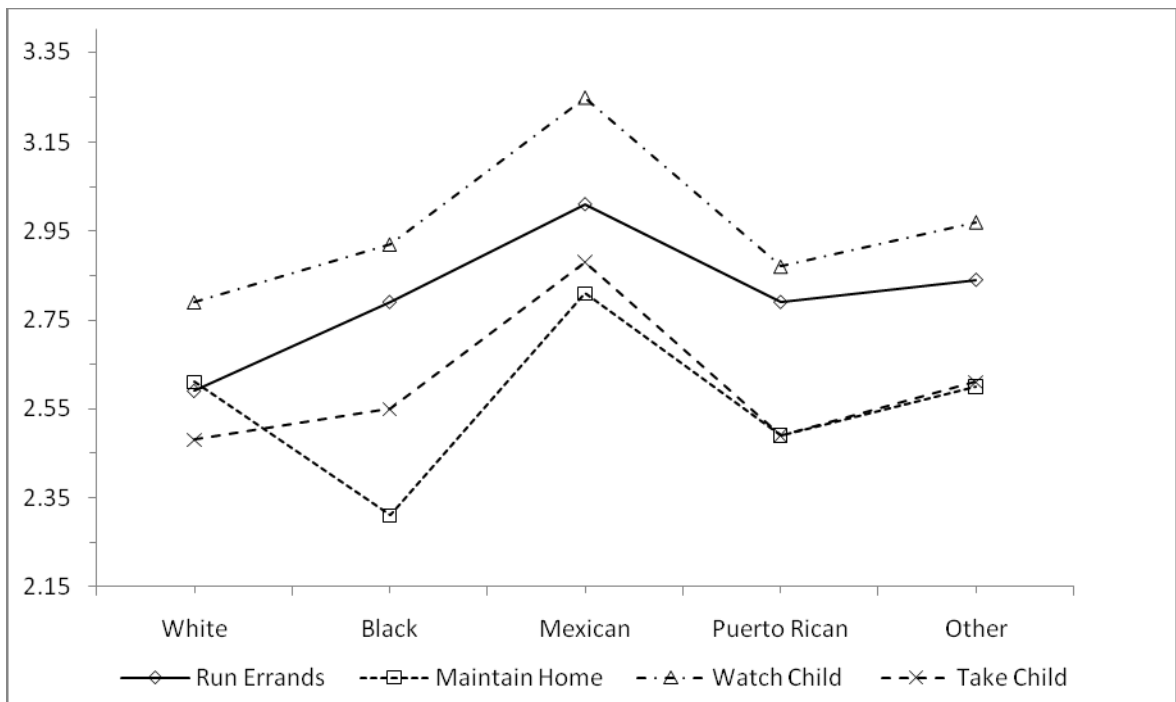
*Father's Behavior.* The ANOVA results for Father's Behavior measures by Race/Ethnicity revealed two significant findings for how often father maintained home and watched child when mother ran errands (see Table 4.11). The resultant scores for how often father maintained home ( $F_{4, 970} = 4.68, p < 0.01$ ) and watched their child ( $F_{4, 970} = 2.43, p < 0.05$ ) suggested that there were significant differences in how different Race/Ethnicity group mothers perceived these two behavior by the birth father.

Additional post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD procedure were conducted to determine how and when these differences exist among the groups. The results of these tests demonstrated significant differences between Mexican mothers ( $M = 3.25$ ) and both Black ( $M = 2.92, p < 0.05$ ) and White mothers ( $M = 2.79, p < 0.01$ ) on



how often father watched their child when the mother was busy. Black mothers ( $M = 2.31$ ) gave significantly lower responses on how often father maintains the home than Mexican ( $M = 2.81, p < 0.001$ ), White ( $M = 2.61, p < 0.01$ ), and Other ( $M = 2.60, p < 0.05$ ) Race/Ethnicity group mothers. The means of all Father's Behavior variables are illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2. Father's Behavior Mean Differences by Race/Ethnicity Groups.



Other variables of Father's Behavior did not indicate significant  $F$  scores.

Subsequent post-hoc testing demonstrated significant differences between Mexican mothers ( $M = 2.88$ ) and both White ( $M = 2.48, p < 0.01$ ) and Black mothers ( $M = 2.55, p < 0.05$ ) on how often father took their child to scheduled appointments. Another comparison revealed significant differences between Mexican mothers ( $M = 3.01$ ) and White mothers ( $M = 2.59, p < 0.01$ ) on how often father ran errands. With the exception

of fathers' participation in maintaining the home comparisons between all groups and the Puerto Rican and the Other Race/Ethnicity groups were not significant.

*Family Support.* ANOVA results for Family Support measures by Race/Ethnicity revealed significant findings for whether or not mother received financial and childcare support (see Table 4.12). The resultant scores for financial ( $F_{4, 1,181} = 10.28, p < 0.001$ ) and childcare ( $F_{4, 1,176} = 3.29, p < 0.05$ ) support received from family members suggested that there were significant differences in whether or not different Race/Ethnicity group mothers received family support.

Table 4.12

*ANOVA for Family Support by Race/Ethnicity Group.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	BSS	9.94	4	2.485	10.28***
	WSS	285.64	1,181	.242	
	TSS	295.58	1,185		
CHILDCARE	BSS	3.10	4	.774	3.29*
	WSS	276.61	1,176	.235	
	TSS	279.70	1,180		

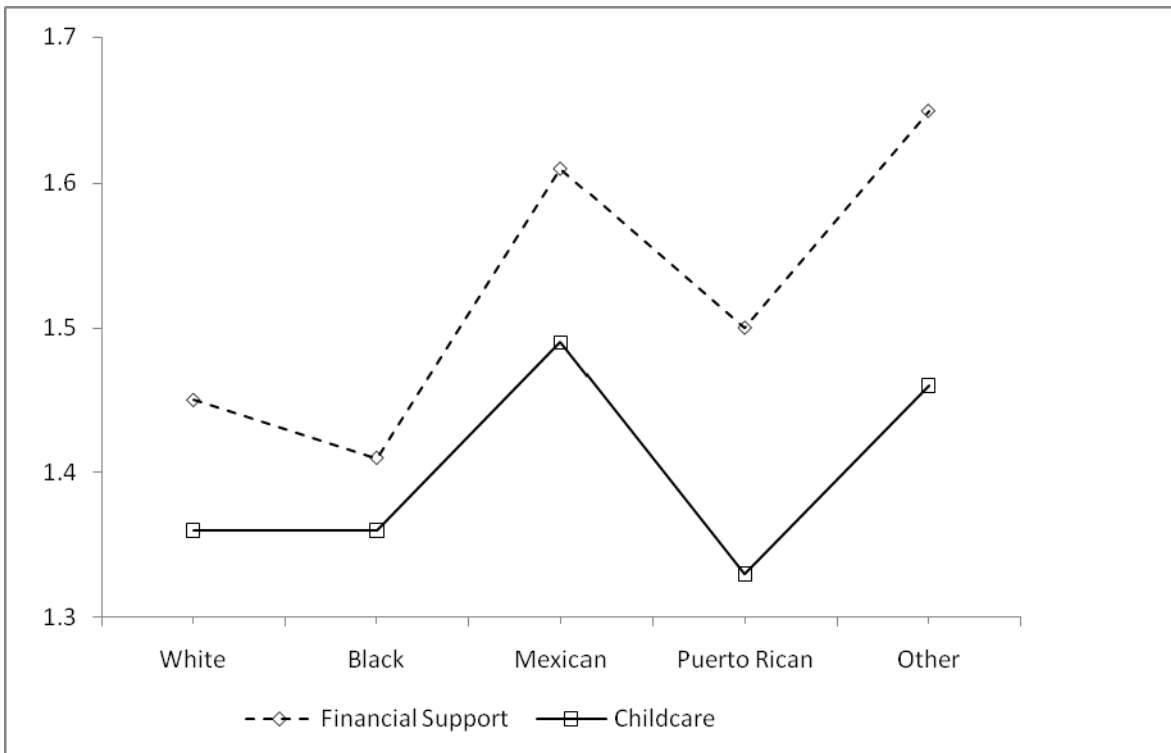
\*= $p \leq .05$ , \*\*\*= $p \leq .001$ . NOTE. BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD procedure revealed several significant differences between Race/Ethnicity on both financial and childcare support. A comparison on whether or not financial support was received demonstrated significant differences between White mothers ( $M = 1.45$ ) and both Mexican ( $M = 1.61, p < 0.01$ ) and Other Race/Ethnicity mothers ( $M = 1.65, p < 0.001$ ) (see Figure 4.4). There were significant differences between Black mothers ( $M = 1.41$ ) and both Mexican ( $p < 0.001$ ) and Other Race/Ethnicity mothers ( $p < 0.001$ ). A significant difference was also revealed

between Puerto Rican mothers ( $M = 1.50$ ) had Other Race/Ethnicity mothers ( $M = 1.65$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

A comparison on whether or not childcare support was received revealed significant differences between Mexican mothers ( $M = 1.49$ ) and White ( $M = 1.36$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Black ( $M = 1.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Puerto Rican mothers ( $M = 1.33$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, there were significant differences demonstrated between Black mothers and Other Race/Ethnicity mothers ( $M = 1.46$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Figure 4.3. Family Support Mean Differences by Race/Ethnicity Groups.



*Experience of Motherhood.* The Experience of Motherhood measures by Race/Ethnicity revealed two significant  $F$  scores for whether or not mother felt trapped by parenting responsibilities and if she felt parenting was more work than pleasure (see Table 4.13). The findings for feeling trapped ( $F_{4, 1,037} = 3.41$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and parenting being more work

than pleasure ( $F_{4, 1,037} = 2.43, p < 0.05$ ) suggests that there were significant differences between different Race/Ethnicity groups on these two experiences.

Table 4.13

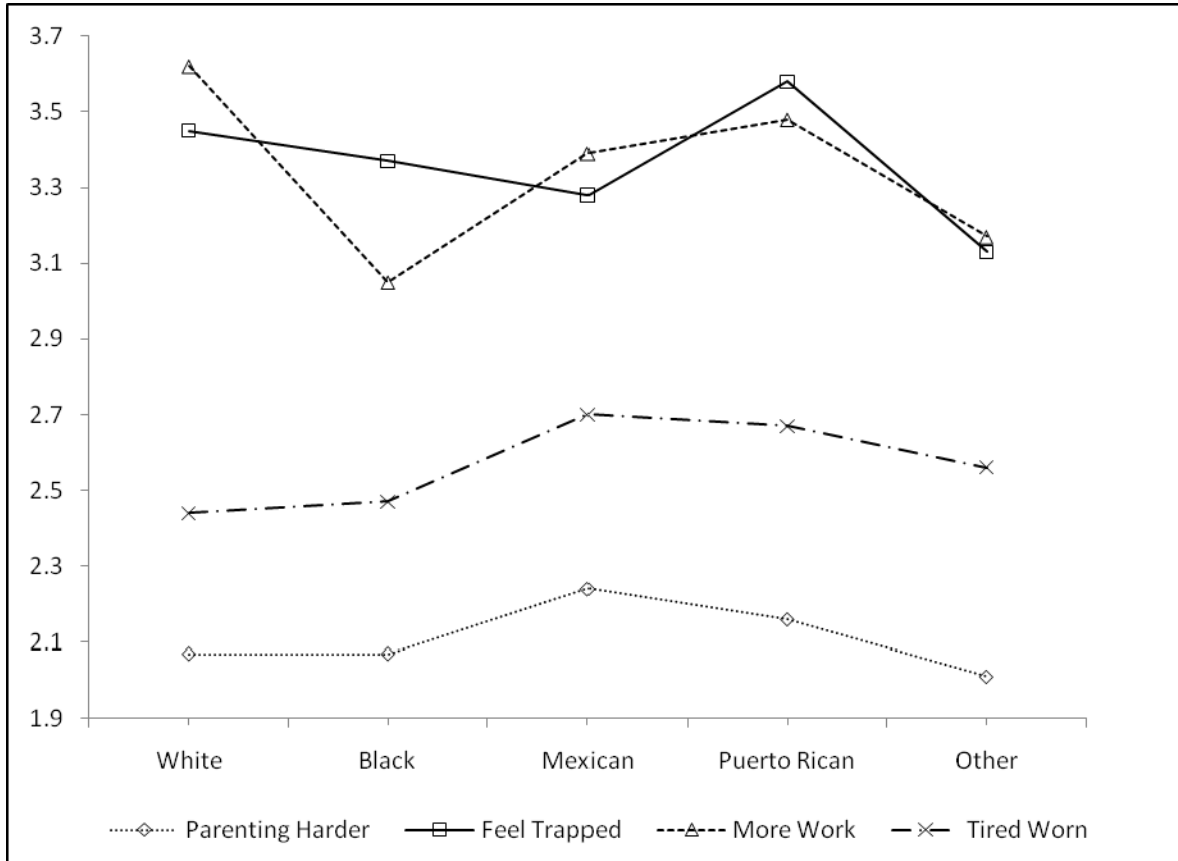
*ANOVA for Experience of Motherhood by Race/Ethnicity Group.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
PARENTING HARDER	BSS	4.04	4	1.01	1.10
	WSS	957.02	1,038	.92	
	TSS	961.06	1,042		
FEEL TRAPPED	BSS	10.72	4	2.68	3.41**
	WSS	813.77	1,037	.79	
	TSS	824.49	1,041		
MORE WORK	BSS	57.86	4	14.47	14.17***
	WSS	1,058.68	1,037	1.02	
	TSS	1,116.54	1,041		
TIRED WORN	BSS	8.12	4	2.03	1.97
	WSS	1,068.24	1,037	1.03	
	TSS	1,076.36	1,041		

\*\*= $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*= $p \leq .001$ . NOTE. BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

Results of post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD procedure revealed significant differences on feeling trapped by parenting responsibilities between Other Race/Ethnicity group mothers ( $M = 3.13$ ) and White ( $M = 3.45, p < 0.01$ ), Black ( $M = 3.37, p < 0.05$ ) and Puerto Rican mothers ( $M = 3.58, p < 0.01$ ) (see Figure 4.5). Significant differences were also demonstrated between Mexican mothers ( $M = 3.28$ ) Puerto Rican mothers ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Figure 4.4. Experiences of Motherhood Mean Differences by Race/Ethnicity Groups.



Whether or not parenting was more work than pleasure revealed significant differences between White ( $M = 3.62$ ) mothers and Black ( $M = 3.05, p < 0.001$ ), Mexican ( $M = 3.39, p < 0.05$ ) and Other Race/Ethnicity mothers ( $M = 3.17, p < 0.001$ ). Significant differences were demonstrated between Black mothers and both Puerto Rican ( $M = 3.48, p < 0.01$ ) and Mexican mothers ( $p < 0.01$ ). Although there was no significant  $F$ -statistic for whether or not mothers felt worn out by parenting a post-hoc comparison demonstrated significant differences between Mexican mothers ( $M = 2.70$ ) and both Black ( $M = 2.47, p < 0.05$ ) and White mothers ( $M = 2.44, p < 0.05$ ).

*Relationship Satisfaction.* The Relationship Satisfaction measures by Race/Ethnicity revealed no significant results (see Table 4.14). Additional post-hoc

comparisons using the Tukey HSD procedure demonstrated no significant differences. A mean score comparison of these variables is provided in Figure 4.3.

Table 4.14

*ANOVA for Relationship Satisfaction by Race/Ethnicity Group.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
FAIR WILLING	BSS	1.84	4	.460	0.97
	WSS	412.68	868	.475	
	TSS	414.52	872		
AFFECTION LOVE	BSS	1.15	4	.288	0.81
	WSS	310.97	869	.358	
	TSS	312.12	873		
ENCOURAGE HELP	BSS	0.63	4	.157	0.30
	WSS	458.77	869	.528	
	TSS	459.40	873		
INSULT CRITICIZE	BSS	0.78	4	.194	0.40
	WSS	417.50	870	.480	
	TSS	418.28	874		

*NOTE.* BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

Relationship Status Comparisons

*Expectation Fulfillment.* The overall ANOVA results for Expectation Fulfillment measures by Relationship Status revealed that the Expectation Fulfillment measures had significant  $F$  scores (see Table 4.15). How often father acts like the father your want for your child ( $F_{3, 880} = 92.30, p < 0.001$ ), respects mother's schedule ( $F_{3, 873} = 49.40, p < 0.001$ ), can be trusted to watch child ( $F_{3, 880} = 91.40, p < 0.001$ ), can be counted on to watch child ( $F_{3, 861} = 139.42, p < 0.001$ ), can talk with about problems ( $F_{3, 869} = 72.68, p < 0.001$ ) and supports you ( $F_{3, 878} = 55.47, p < 0.001$ ) have significantly different mean scores.

Table 4.15

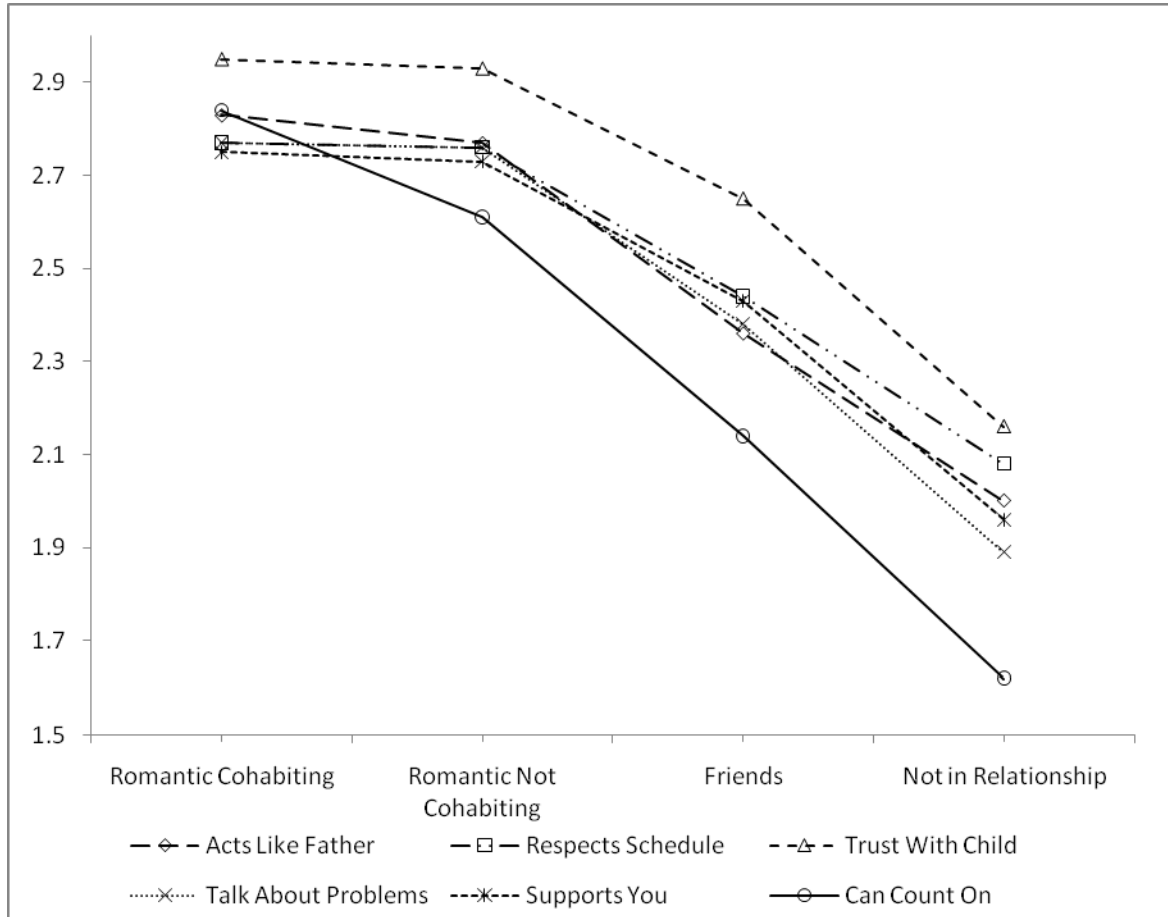
*ANOVA for Expectation Fulfillment by Relationship Status.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
ACTS LIKE FATHER	BSS	86.70	3	28.90	92.30***
	WSS	275.52	880	.31	
	TSS	362.22	883		
RESPECTS SCHEDULE	BSS	56.83	3	18.94	49.40***
	WSS	334.75	873	.38	
	TSS	391.58	861		
TRUST WITH CHILD	BSS	70.38	3	23.46	91.40***
	WSS	225.87	880	.26	
	TSS	296.25	883		
TALK ABOUT PROBLEMS	BSS	90.88	3	30.29	72.68***
	WSS	362.23	869	.42	
	TSS	453.11	872		
SUPPORTS YOU	BSS	69.30	3	23.10	55.47***
	WSS	365.65	878	.42	
	TSS	434.95	881		
CAN COUNT ON	BSS	173.89	3	57.96	139.42***
	WSS	357.97	861	.42	
	TSS	531.86	864		

\*\*\*= $p \leq .001$ . NOTE. BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD procedure were conducted to determine how and when these differences exist among the groups. These test results demonstrated that there were significant differences between all groups across all measures with the exception of mothers in romantic relationships with father. Mother in a romantic cohabitating relationship with child's father and those in a romantic but not cohabitating relationship demonstrate no significant differences across Expectation Fulfillment measures. A mean score comparison is provided in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5. Expectation Fulfillment Mean Differences by Relationship Statuses.



*Father's Behavior.* The ANOVA results for Father's Behavior measures by Relationship Status revealed that the Father's Behavior measures were significant (see Table 4.16). Findings for how often Father ran errands ( $F_{3, 976} = 239.78, p < 0.001$ ), maintained the home ( $F_{3, 976} = 333.15, p < 0.001$ ), watched their child ( $F_{3, 976} = 240.10, p < 0.001$ ) and took child to scheduled appointments ( $F_{3, 977} = 180.84, p < 0.001$ ) suggested significant differences between relationship status groups.



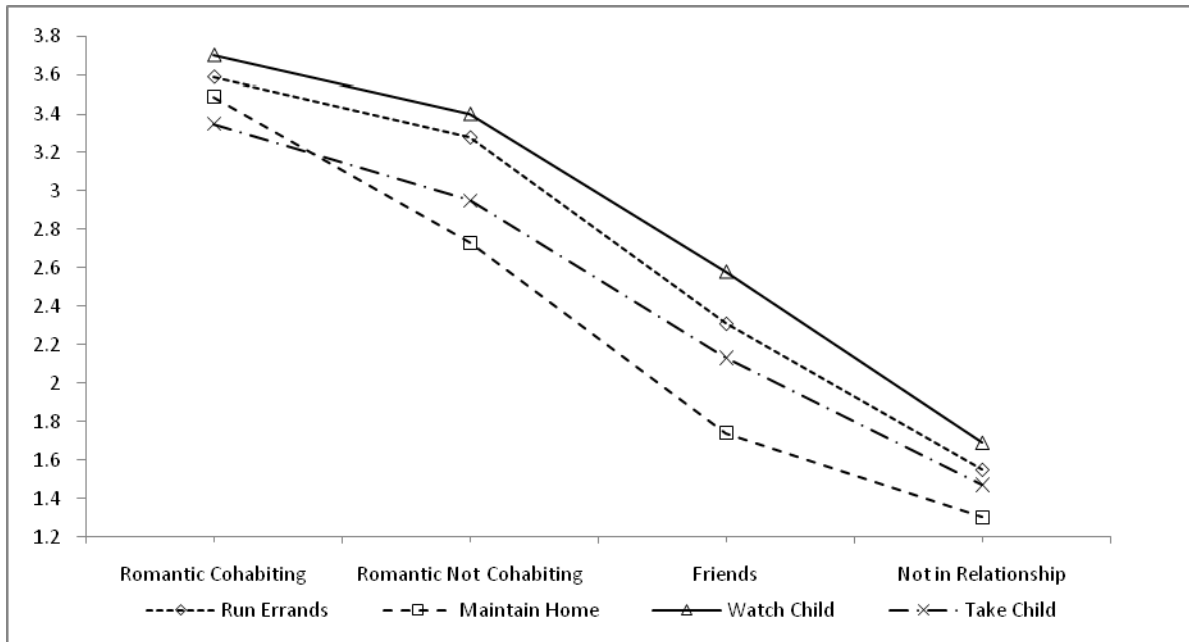
Table 4.16

*ANOVA for Father's Behavior by Relationship Status.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
RUN ERRANDS	BSS	673.36	3	224.45	239.78***
	WSS	913.60	976	.94	
	TSS	1,586.95	979		
MAINTAIN HOME	BSS	830.58	3	276.86	333.15***
	WSS	811.10	976	.83	
	TSS	1,641.68	979		
WATCHES CHILD	BSS	631.78	3	210.59	240.10***
	WSS	856.04	976	.88	
	TSS	1,487.82	979		
TAKES CHILD	BSS	561.94	3	187.31	180.84***
	WSS	1,011.95	977	1.04	
	TSS	1,573.89	980		

\*\*\*= $p \leq .001$ . NOTE. BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

Figure 4.6. Father's Behavior Mean Differences by Relationship Statuses.



Additional post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD procedure revealed significant differences between mothers in all relationship statuses (see Figure 4.6).

*Family Support.* The ANOVA results for Family Support measures by Relationship Status revealed that both Family Support variables had significant  $F$  scores (see Table 4.17). Whether or not mothers received financial support ( $F_{3, 1,188} = 13.97, p < 0.001$ ) and childcare support ( $F_{3, 1,183} = 9.11, p < 0.001$ ) from family members were significantly difference across relationship statuses.

Table 4.17

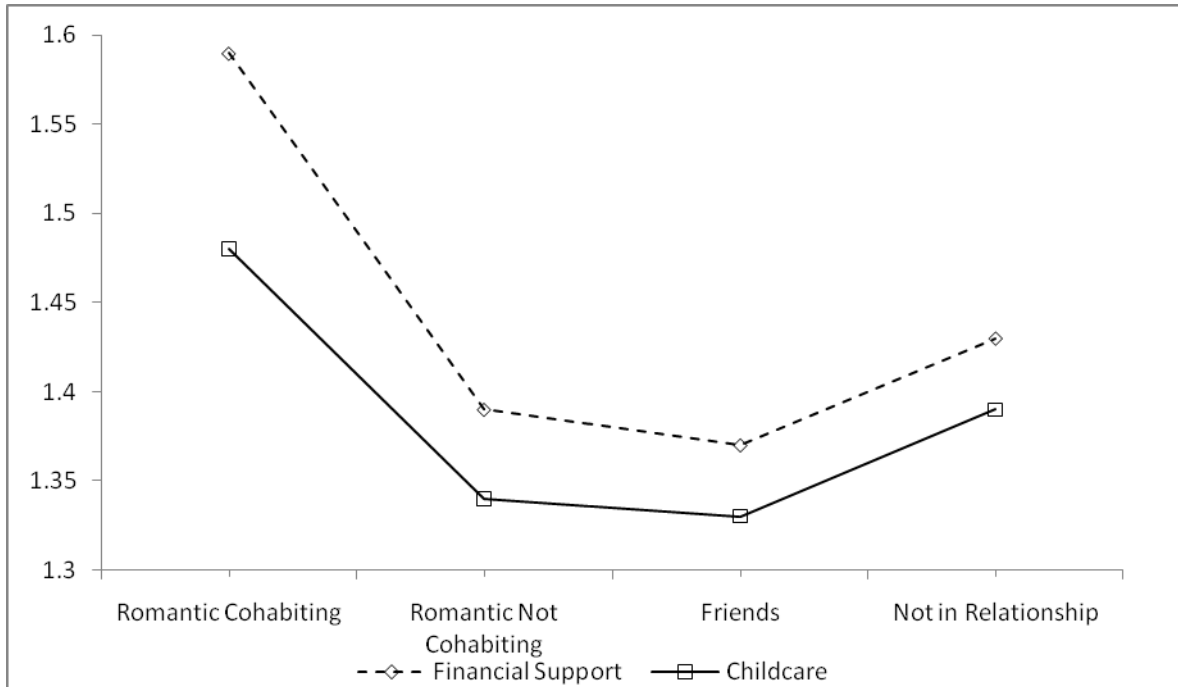
*ANOVA for Family Support by Relationship Status.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	BSS	10.12	3	3.37	13.97***
	WSS	286.91	1,188	.24	
	TSS	297.03	1,191		
CHILDCARE	BSS	6.35	3	2.12	9.11***
	WSS	274.93	1,183	.23	
	TSS	281.28	1,186		

\*\*\*= $p \leq .001$ . NOTE. BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

Subsequent post-hoc testing highlighted significant differences in having received financial and childcare support from family members between mothers in romantic cohabiting relationship with child's father and all other relationship statuses (see Figure 4.7). Comparisons on both family support measures demonstrated non significant differences between mothers in romantic non-cohabiting relationship, mothers who were friends with their child's father and mothers not in any type of relationship with father.

Figure 4.7. Family Support Mean Differences by Relationship Statuses.



*Experience of Motherhood.* The Experience of Motherhood measures by Relationship Status revealed three significant findings for whether or not mother felt parenting was harder than expected, if she felt trapped by parenting responsibilities and if she felt parenting was more work than pleasure (see Table 4.18). The findings for parenting harder than expected ( $F_{3, 1,044} = 5.21, p < 0.01$ ), feeling trapped ( $F_{3, 1,043} = 4.02, p < 0.01$ ) and parenting being more work than pleasure ( $F_{4, 1,043} = 4.49, p < 0.01$ ) suggests that there were significant differences between different Relationship Statuses.

Table 4.18

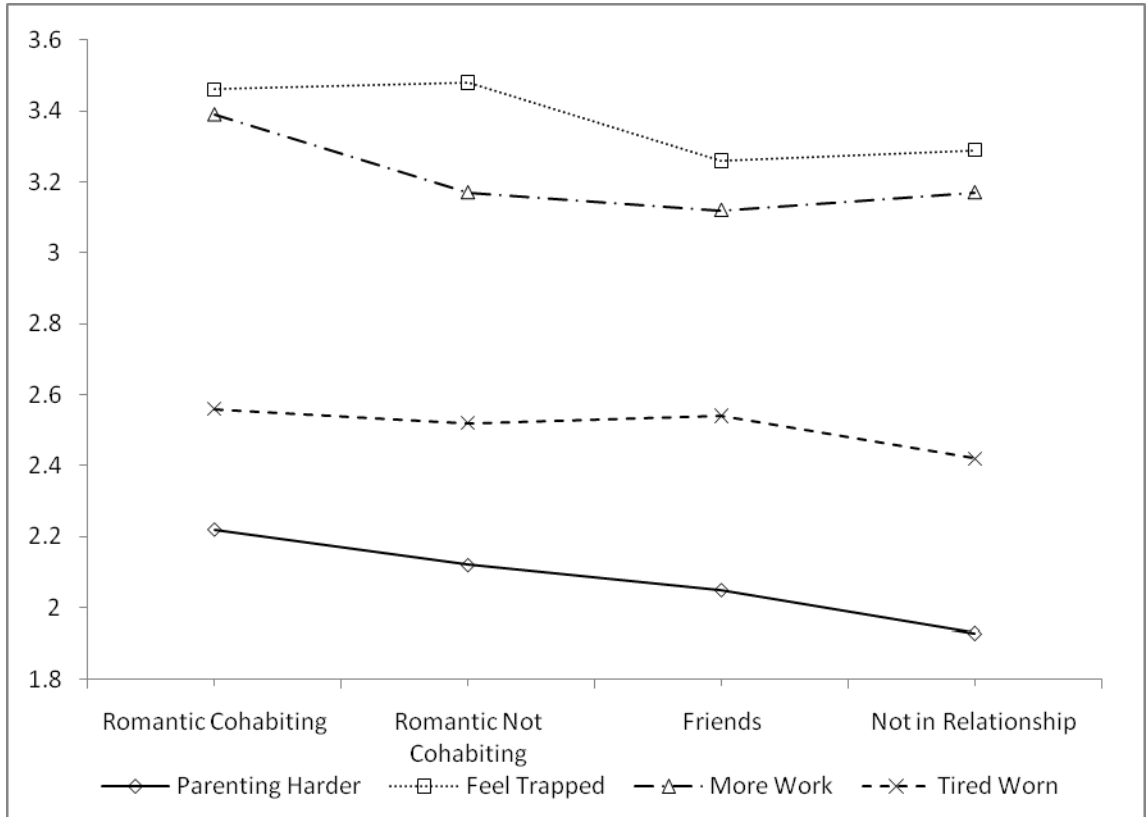
*ANOVA for Experience of Motherhood by Relationship Status.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
PARENTING HARDER	BSS	14.20	3	4.73	5.21**
	WSS	957.02	1,044	.91	
	TSS	961.06	1,047		
FEEL TRAPPED	BSS	9.46	3	3.15	4.02**
	WSS	818.23	1,043	.78	
	TSS	827.69	1,046		
MORE WORK	BSS	14.32	4	4.78	4.48**
	WSS	1,110.50	1,043	1.07	
	TSS	1,124.83	1,046		
TIRED WORN	BSS	3.51	3	1.17	1.14
	WSS	1,074.12	1,043	1.03	
	TSS	1,077.62	1,046		

\*\*= $p \leq .01$ . NOTE. BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

Additional post-hoc comparisons revealed several significant differences between Relationship Statuses on several of the Experience of Motherhood measures. A comparison on whether or not mothers felt parenting was harder than expected demonstrated significant differences between mothers who were romantic cohabiting relationship ( $M = 2.22$ ) with their child's father and mothers who were friends ( $M = 2.05$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and not in a relationship ( $M = 1.93$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (see Figure 4.8). A significant difference was also revealed between romantic non-cohabiting mothers ( $M = 2.05$ ) and mothers not in a relationship with their child's father ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Figure 4.8. Experience of Motherhood Mean Differences by Relationship Statuses.



A comparison on whether or not mothers felt trapped by their parenting responsibilities revealed significant differences between mothers in romantic relationships (both romantic cohabitating and not cohabitating) with their child’s father and mothers not in romantic relationship (both friends and not in relationship) with their child’s father. There were no significant differences between mothers in romantic cohabitating relationships ( $M = 3.46$ ) and those in romantic relationships non cohabitating ( $M = 3.48$ ). No significant differences were also demonstrated by mothers who were friends ( $M = 3.26$ ) with their child’s father and mothers not in a relationship ( $M = 3.29$ ) with him.

Whether or not parenting was more work than pleasure revealed significant differences between mothers that were in romantic cohabiting ( $M = 3.39$ ) relationships

with their child's father and all other relationships types. There were no significant differences between mothers in romantic not cohabiting relationships ( $M = 3.17$ ), friends ( $M = 3.12$ ) and not in a relationship ( $M = 3.17$ ) with child's father. Subsequent comparisons found no significant differences between relationship statuses on where or not mothers felt worn out by parenting.

*Relationship Satisfaction.* The ANOVA results for Relationship Satisfaction measures by Relationship Status revealed that the Relationship Satisfaction measures had significant  $F$  scores (see Table 4.19). The findings for how fair and will to compromise fathers were in their relationship ( $F_{3, 873} = 25.40, p < 0.001$ ), how much love and affection they showed mother ( $F_{3, 874} = 65.39, p < 0.001$ ), how encouraging and helpful they were ( $F_{3, 874} = 94.03, p < 0.001$ ) and how much father insulted and criticized mother ( $F_{3, 875} = 32.66, p < 0.001$ ) suggest significant differences between relationship statuses.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD procedure were conducted to determine how and when these differences exist among the groups. These test demonstrated that there were significant differences between all groups across the Relationship Satisfaction measures with the exception of mothers in romantic relationships with father. Mothers in a romantic cohabiting relationship with child's father and those in a romantic but not cohabiting relationship demonstrated no significant differences across Relationship Satisfaction measures. A mean score comparison is provided in Figure 4.9.

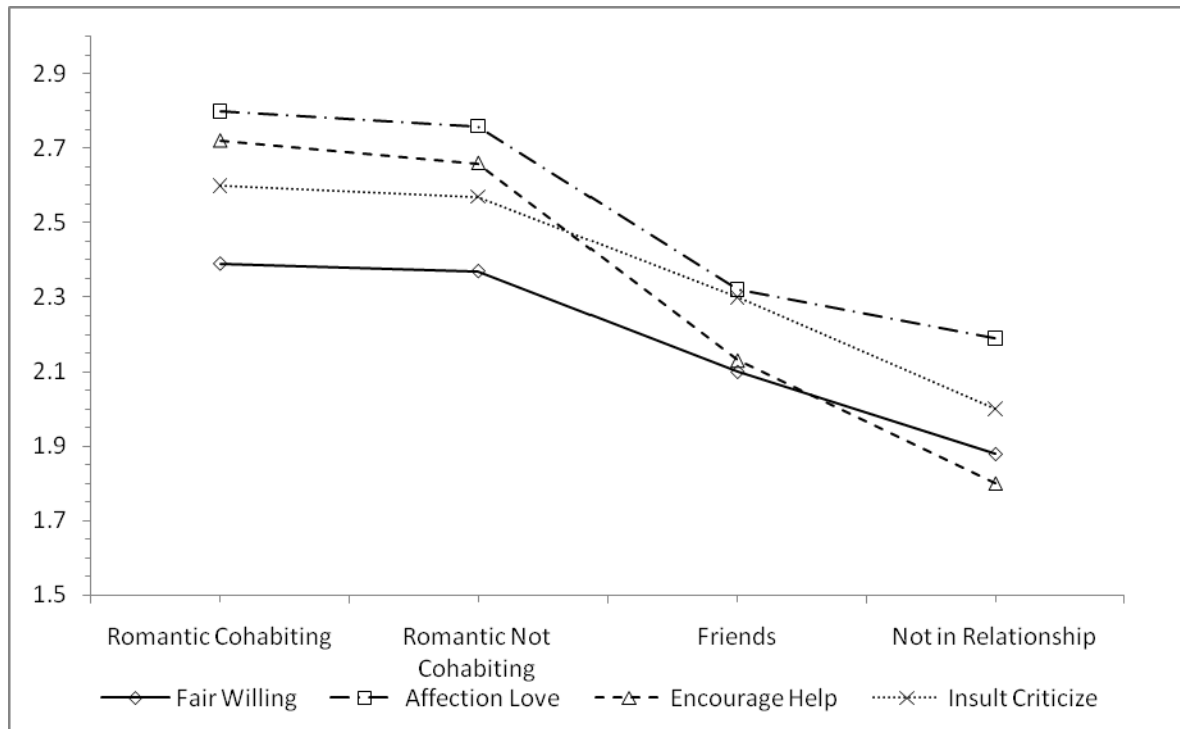
Table 4.19

*ANOVA for Relationship Satisfaction by Relationship Status.*

Variable		SS	df	Mean Square	F
FAIR WILLING	BSS	33.38	3	11.13	25.40***
	WSS	382.38	873	.44	
	TSS	415.76	876		
AFFECTION LOVE	BSS	57.32	3	19.11	65.39***
	WSS	255.38	874	.29	
	TSS	312.70	877		
ENCOURAGE HELP	BSS	112.38	3	37.46	94.03***
	WSS	348.17	874	.40	
	TSS	460.54	877		
INSULT CRITICIZE	BSS	42.25	3	14.08	32.66***
	WSS	377.25	875	.43	
	TSS	419.50	878		

\*\*\*= $p \leq .001$ . NOTE. BSS = Between Group Sum of Square; WSS = Within Group Sum of Square; TSS = Total Group Sum of Square.

Figure 4.9. Relationship Satisfaction Mean Differences by Relationship Statuses.



### *Correlations*

Initial correlations were conducted to determine the presence of relationships between hypothesized variables and selected scale measures. First order correlations controlling for Race/Ethnicity and Relationship Statuses. Initial correlations were conducted between Race/Ethnicity groups and predictor and outcome variables. Another series of first-order correlations were also conducted between Relationship Statuses and predictor and outcome variables.

#### Race/Ethnicity

A dummy variable was created for each Race/Ethnicity group. Relationships between Race/Ethnicity groups and the study measures are displayed in Table 4.20. The general findings suggest that White mothers had a significant and positive relationship with both household income ( $r = 0.102, p < 0.01$ ), and education ( $r = 0.109, p < 0.01$ ). These mothers also revealed a small but significant relationship with the Experience of Motherhood scale ( $r = 0.070, p < 0.05$ ).

Black mothers reported a significant, negative relationship with the Experience of Motherhood scale ( $r = -0.099, p < 0.01$ ). These mothers had a significant, positive relationship with financial support ( $r = 0.135, p < 0.01$ ) received from family members.

Mexican mothers were found to have significant and negative relationships with education ( $r = -0.177, p < 0.01$ ), financial ( $r = -0.114, p < 0.01$ ), and childcare ( $r = -0.084, p < 0.01$ ), support from family members. Mexican mothers had small but significant relationships with both the Expectation Fulfillment scale ( $r = 0.073, p < 0.05$ ) and the Father's Behavior scale ( $r = 0.094, p < 0.01$ ).



Table 4.20

*Zero-order Correlations for Race/Ethnicity, Predictor, Outcome and Control Variables.*

Variables	White (n = 229)	Black (n = 610)	Mexican (n = 171)	Puerto Rican (n = 66)	Other (n = 113)
HOUSEHOLD	.102**	-.064	-.016	.016	-.031
INCOME					
EDUCATION	.109**	.052	-.177**	-.050	.015
EXPECTAFILL	-.060	-.018	.073*	.025	.013
FATHBEHV	-.031	-.043	.094**	-.006	.022
RELSAT	-.035	.021	-.014	.016	.017
EXPMOTHER	.070*	-.099**	.054	.066*	-.041
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	.026	.135**	-.114**	-.014	-.119**
CHILDCARE	.024	.057	-.084**	.028	-.050

\*\*= $p \leq .01$  (2-tailed), \*= $p \leq .05$ , (2-tailed).

Puerto Rican mother were found to have a small but significant relationship with the Experience of Motherhood scale ( $r = 0.066, p < 0.05$ ). Other Race/Ethnicity mothers were found to have a significant and negative relationship with financial support ( $r = -0.119, p < 0.01$ ) received from family members.

#### Relationship Status

Dummy variables were created for each Relationship Status group where 1 indicated membership and 0 indicated no membership. Relationships between Relationship Status and study measures are displayed in Table 4.21. The general findings suggest that mothers in romantic and cohabiting relationships with their child's father have significant relationships with the Expectations Fulfillment ( $r = 0.404, p < 0.01$ ),

Father's Behavior ( $r = 0.602, p < 0.01$ ), Relationships Satisfaction ( $r = 0.354, p < 0.01$ ) and Experience of motherhood ( $r = 0.119, p < 0.01$ ) scales. Mothers in this type of relationship was found to have significant and negative relationship with both the financial ( $r = -0.179, p < 0.01$ ), and childcare support ( $r = -0.150, p < 0.01$ ) received by family members.

Table 4.21

*Zero-order Correlations for Relationship Status, Predictor, Outcome and Control Variables.*

Variables	Romantic Cohabiting (n = 432)	Romantic Not Cohabiting (n = 162)	Friends (n = 261)	Not in Relationship (n = 340)
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	.059	-.022	-.122**	.068*
EDUCATION	.023	.018	-.065*	.021
EXPECTAFILL	.404**	.146**	-.183**	-.500**
FATHBEHV	.602**	.151**	-.246**	-.580**
RELSAT	.354**	.140**	-.216**	-.413**
EXPMOTHER	.119**	.012	-.050	-.090**
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	-.179**	.066*	.102**	.048
CHILDCARE	-.150**	.038	.063*	.074*

\*\*= $p \leq .01$  (2-tailed), \*= $p \leq .05$ , (2-tailed).

Mothers in a romantic not cohabiting mothers relationships were found to have significant relationships with the Expectations Fulfillment ( $r = 0.146, p < 0.01$ ), Father's Behavior ( $r = 0.151, p < 0.01$ ), and Experience of Motherhood ( $r = 0.140, p < 0.01$ )

scales. A small but positive relationship was present between mothers in this relationship status and financial support ( $r = 0.066, p < 0.05$ ) received by family members.

The Relationship Status of Friends with the birth father had significant relationships with both household income ( $r = -0.122, p < 0.01$ ), and education ( $r = -0.065, p < 0.05$ ). Mothers with this type of relationship status also had a significant relationship with the Expectations Fulfillment ( $r = -0.183, p < 0.01$ ), Father's Behavior ( $r = -0.246, p < 0.01$ ), and Relationship Satisfaction ( $r = -0.216, p < 0.01$ ) scales. Significant positive relationships were found between these mothers and both financial ( $r = 0.102, p < 0.01$ ) and childcare support ( $r = 0.063, p < 0.05$ ) received by family members.

Mothers not in a relationship with their child's father were found to have a small but significant relationship with household income ( $r = 0.068, p < 0.05$ ) and childcare support ( $r = 0.074, p < 0.05$ ) received by family members. These mothers were found to have a significant negative relationship with the Expectation Fulfillment ( $r = -0.500, p < 0.01$ ), Father's Behavior ( $r = -0.580, p < 0.01$ ), and Relationship Satisfactions ( $r = -0.413, p < 0.01$ ) scales. Mothers not in a relationship were also found to have a small but significant relationship with the Experience of Motherhood ( $r = -0.090, p < 0.01$ ).

## Hypotheses Testing

Initial hypotheses testing were conducted using a correlation matrices displayed in Table 4.22. Three of the four hypotheses were supported by initial analyses. Using path analyses these hypotheses were further explored to evaluate how well they fit together according to the theoretical *Model of New Mother's Relationship Satisfaction*.

### *Hypothesis I*

Hypothesis I states that “The more positive the mother’s expectation fulfillment by the birth father the more positive her experience of motherhood.” This hypothesis was supported by initial correlations analysis that found a significant positive relationship between the Expectation Fulfillment and the Experience of Motherhood scales ( $r = 0.201$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Although the sample as a whole indicated a significant relationship between mothers’ expectation fulfillment and the experience of motherhood there are some relationship statuses and race/ethnicity differences that should be acknowledged. When the two scales in this hypothesis were evaluated across relationship status and race/ethnicity groups there were significant relationships between mother’s expectation fulfillment and all relationship statuses, but only a significant correlation with Mexican mothers. No other race/ethnicity group had a significant correlation with the mother’s expectation fulfillment scale. When the experience of motherhood scale was evaluated across relationship statuses and race/ethnicity there were significant correlation found with romantic and cohabiting mothers and not in relationship mothers. The experience of motherhood was significantly correlated with White, Black and Puerto Rican mothers. Mother expectation fulfillment and experience of motherhood were further evaluates thru path analyses and will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Table 4.22

*Correlation Matrix for Predictor, Outcome and Other Control Variables.*

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1) HOUSEHOLD INCOME	.442**	-.013	.004	-.001	.021	-.064	.179**
2) EDUCATION	--	.011	.004	.059	.064*	-.008	.179**
3) EXPECTAFILLED		--	.711**	.674**	.201**	-.111**	-.129**
4) FATHERBEHV			--	.575**	.126**	-.122**	-.130**
5) RELSATI				--	.179**	-.089**	-.047
6) EXPMOTHERHOOD					--	-.149**	-.047
7) FINANCIAL SUPPORT						--	-.001
8) CHILDCARE							--

\*\*= $p \leq .01$  (2-tailed), \*= $p \leq .05$ , (2-tailed).

*Hypothesis II*

Hypothesis II states that “The more positive the mother’s evaluation of the birth father the more positive her experience of motherhood.” This hypothesis was supported by initial analysis that found a significant positive relationship between the Father’s Behavior and the Experience of Motherhood scales ( $r = 0.126, p < 0.01$ ). This significant relationship was found for the entire sample however father’s behavior was significantly related to all relationship statuses groups but only to one race/ethnicity group. Mexican mothers were the only group that had a significant correlation with the father’s behavior scale when race/ethnicity groups were evaluated separately.

### *Hypothesis III*

Hypothesis III states that “The more positive the levels of family support the more positive the mother’s experience of motherhood.” This hypothesis was not supported by initial analysis that found a significant negative relationship between the Financial Support ( $r = -0.149, p < 0.01$ ) received by family members and the Experience of Motherhood scale. There was no significant relationship found between Childcare Support and the Experience of Motherhood scale. When financial and childcare support were evaluated across relationship statuses there were significant correlations between financial support and all relationship statuses except not in relationship while childcare had a significant correlation with all but romantic non-cohabiting mothers. As for race/ethnicity groups both financial and childcare support had a significant relationship with Mexican mothers while financial support also had significant correlations with Black and the Other race/ethnicity group of mothers. Financial and childcare support was not added to the final path analyses model because neither construct added to the overall significant of the model. These models will be illustrated later in this chapter.

### *Hypothesis IV*

Hypothesis IV states that “The more positive the mother’s experiences of motherhood the more positive her relationship satisfaction with the birth father.” To address this hypothesis it was necessary to examine the data via the *New Mothers’ Relationship Model Revised*. This hypothesis was supported by the initial analysis that found a significant positive relationship between the Experience of Motherhood and Relationship Satisfaction scales ( $R^2_{adj} = 0.53, p < 0.001$ ).

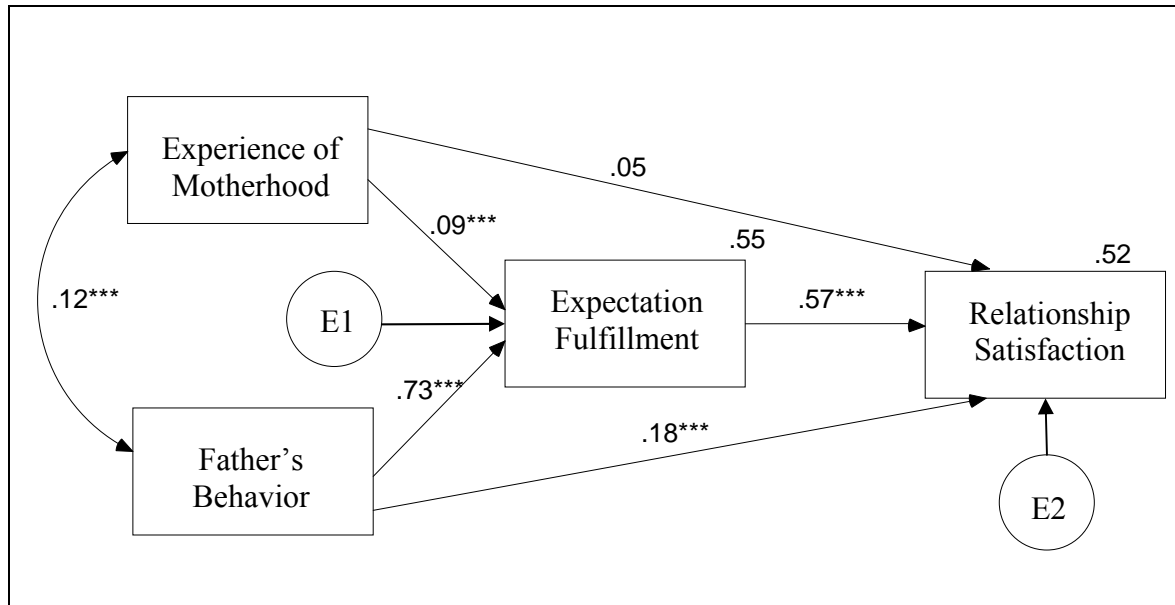
## Multivariate Analyses

### *Path Analyses*

Initial path analyses were developed from theoretical assumptions which proposed relationship satisfaction as the dependent variable. Path analyses were conducted to uncover the overall effect of Experience of Motherhood, Father's Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction using MLE in AMOS 7.0. These models were conducted for the overall sample as well as Race/Ethnicity and Relationship Status groups and are illustrated in Figures 4.10 to 4.18. All models were fully recursive and no significant interaction effects were detected. Mean substitutions will be applied to missing data in order to run analyses as required when using MLE in AMOS. A path analysis evaluating the recursive effects of Expectation Fulfillment and Relationship Satisfaction was explored. Results indicated that Expectation Fulfillment had a predominant positive effect on Relationship Satisfaction.

The overall sample of 1,195 new mothers had significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and two predictor variables—Father's Behavior and Mother's Expectation Fulfillment (see Figure 4.10). The paths between Relationship Satisfaction and Father's Behavior ( $\beta = 0.180, p. < .001$ ), and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.571, p. < .001$ ), were significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.524$ .

Figure 4.10. Path Analytic Model for All Mothers: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father’s Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.



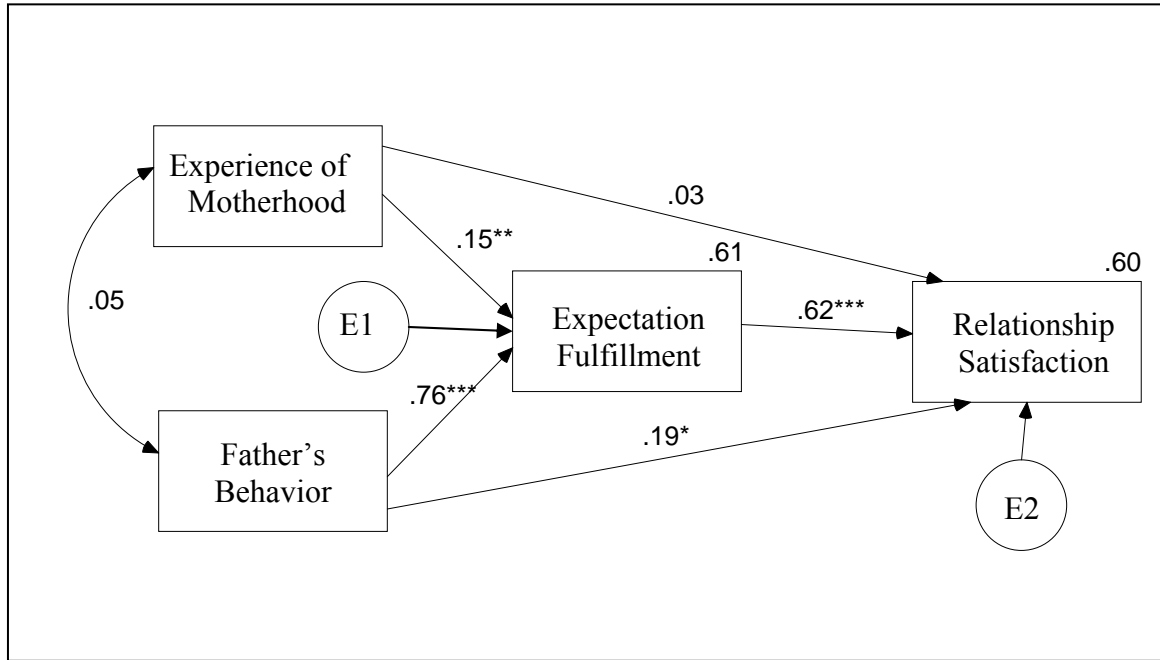
\*\*\*= $p < .001$ .  $n = 1,195$ .

#### Race/Ethnicity Models

*White Mothers.* White mothers had significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and two predictor variables—Father’s Behavior and Mother’s Expectation Fulfillment (See Figure 4.11). The paths between Relationship Satisfaction and Father’s Behavior ( $\beta = 0.188, p. < .05$ ), and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.617, p. < .001$ ), were significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.602$ .

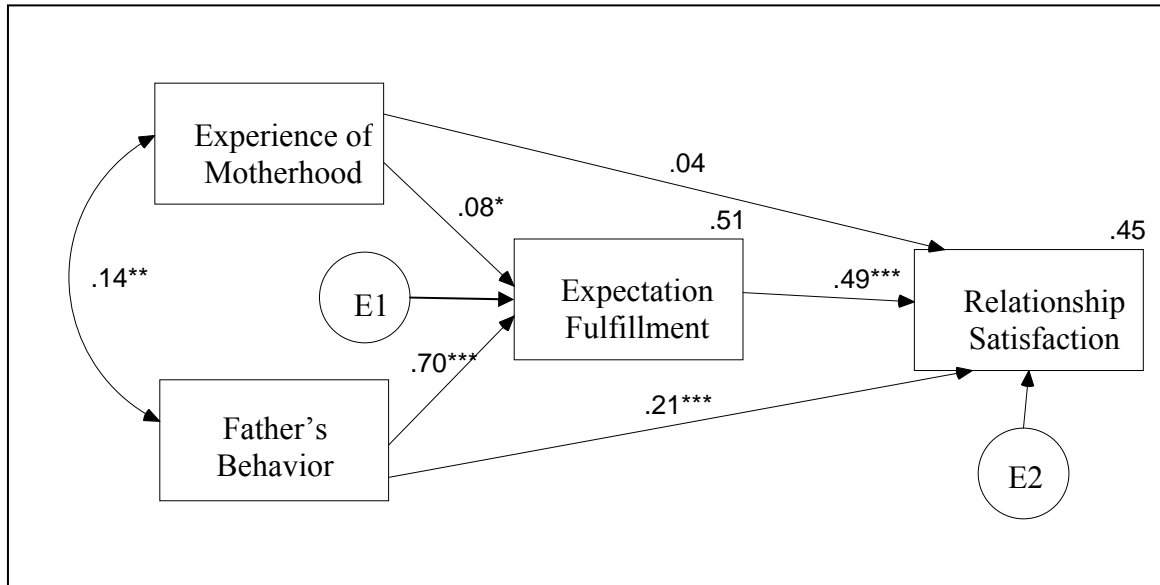


Figure 4.11. Path Analytic Model for White Mothers: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father's Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.



\*\*\*= $p < .001$ , \*\*= $p < .01$ , \*= $p < .05$ .  $n = 229$ .

Figure 4.12. Path Analytic Model for Black Mothers: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father's Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.

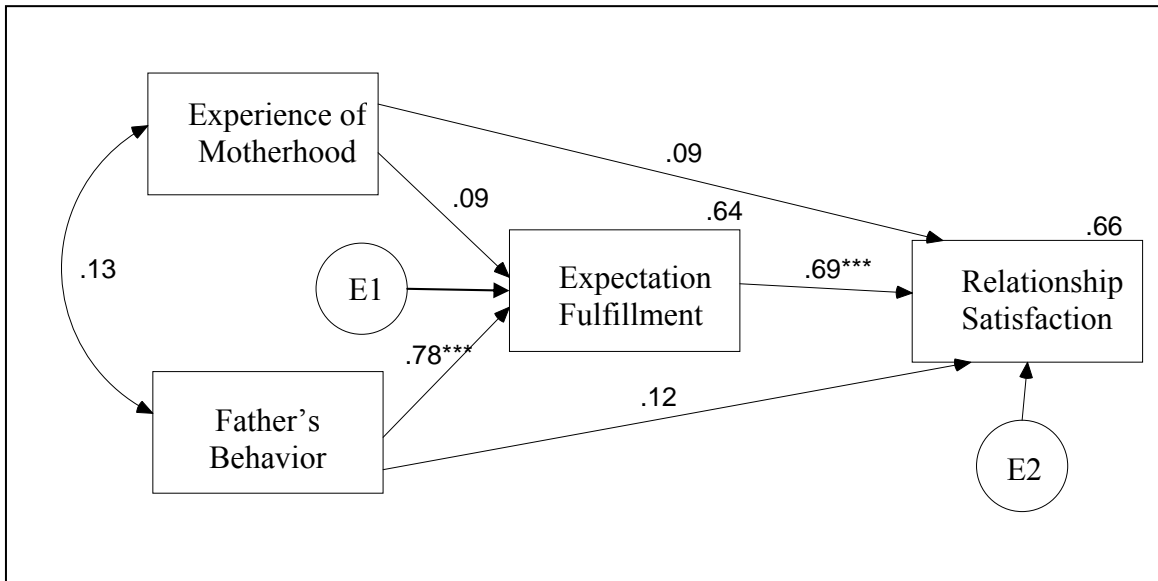


\*\*\*= $p < .001$ , \*\*= $p < .01$ , \*= $p < .05$ .  $n = 610$ .

*Black Mothers.* Black mothers had significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and two predictor variables—Father’s Behavior and Mother’s Expectation Fulfillment (see Figure 4.12). The paths between Relationship Satisfaction and Father’s Behavior ( $\beta = 0.212, p. < .001$ ), and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.494, p. < .001$ ), were significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.450$ .

Although predictor variables Expectation Fulfillment and Father’s Behavior both have significant coefficients in path models for all mothers, White mothers and Black mothers there are differences in the amount of Relationship Satisfaction variance explained. The model explains 60% of White mothers Relationship Satisfaction as compared to the 52% of variance explained for all mothers. The same model predicts 45% of the variance in Black mothers Relationship Satisfaction. Perhaps there are construct not identified in this model that better explain Black mothers relationship satisfaction. Considering the fact that this model was developed from constructs identified in the literature and the literature on the transition to parenthood has focused on White couples the possibility that there are construct overlooked in the literature is not impossible. These findings support the need for further exploration of different race/ethnicity groups’ transition to parenthood.

Figure 4.13. Path Analytic Model for Mexican Mothers: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father’s Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.



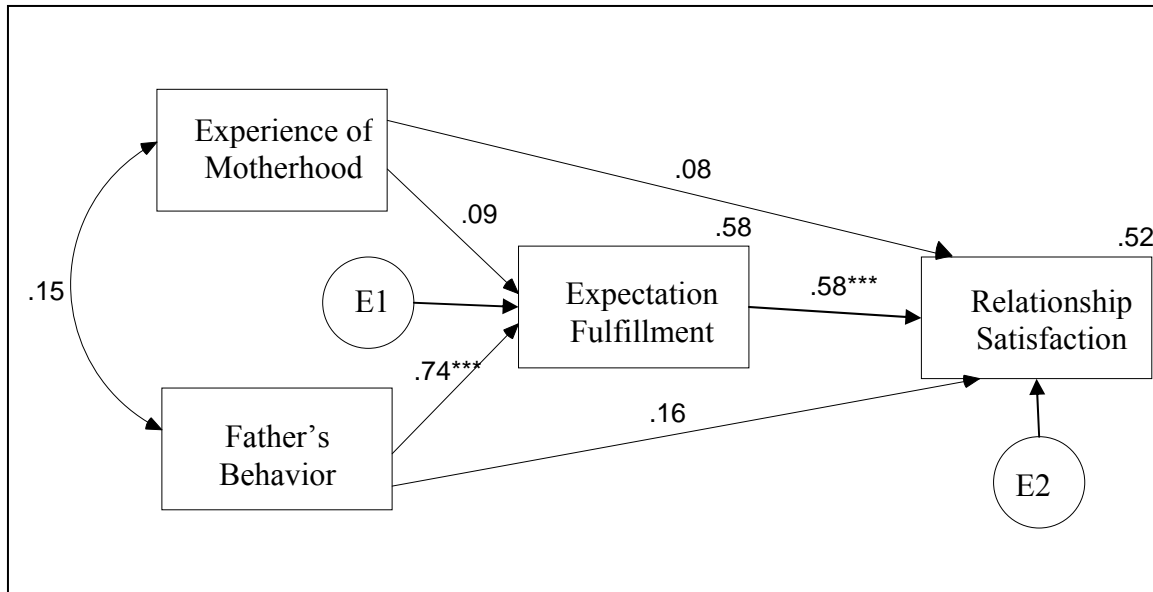
\*\*\*= $p < .001$ .  $n = 171$ .

*Mexican Mothers.* Mexican mothers had significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and one predictor variables—Mother’s Expectation Fulfillment (see Figure 4.13). The path between Relationship Satisfaction and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.691$ ,  $p < .001$ ), was significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.664$ . Unlike the White, Black and the entire sample discussed above this model had a significant coefficient for only one predictor variable for Mexican mothers. Interestingly, this model explained the greatest amount of variance for Mexican mothers’ Relationship Satisfaction at 66%.

*Other Race/Ethnicity Mothers.* Other Race mothers had significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and one predictor variables—Mother’s Expectation Fulfillment (see Figure 4.14). The path between Relationship Satisfaction and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.575$ ,  $p < .001$ ), was significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.664$ . Although the amount of variance in Relationship Satisfaction explained by

this model is the same for the Other race/ethnicity group is equal to the that for all mothers, there is only one significant coefficient for the predictor variable of Expectation Fulfillment.

Figure 4.14. Path Analytic Model for Other Race/Ethnicity Mothers: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father’s Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.

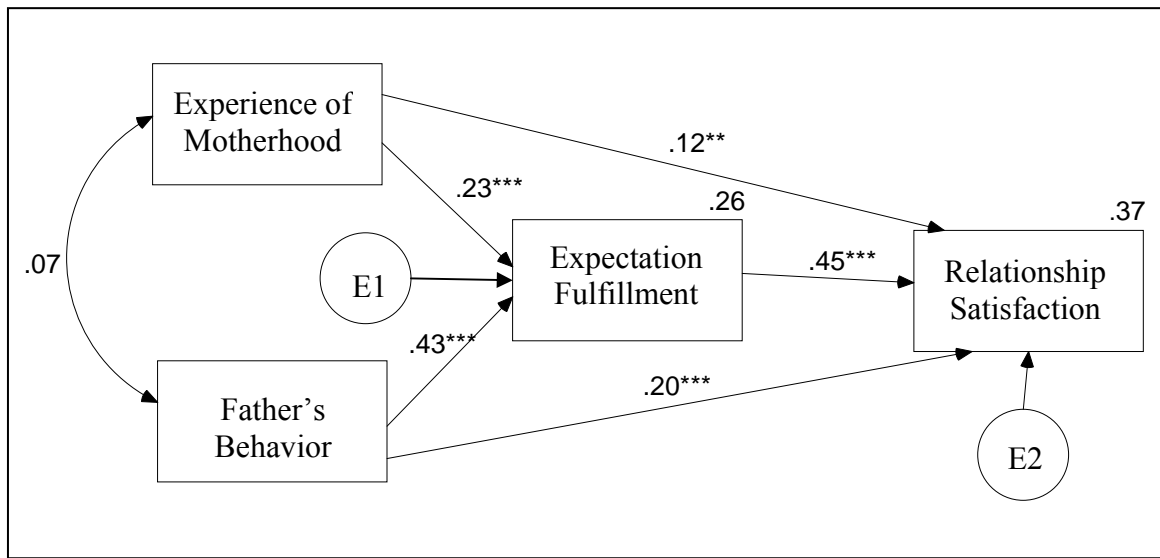


\*\*\*= $p < .001$ .  $n = 179$ .

### Relationship Status Models

*Romantic Cohabiting.* Romantic Cohabiting mothers had significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and three predictor variables—Experience of Motherhood, Father’s Behavior and Mother’s Expectation Fulfillment (see Figure 4.15). The paths between Relationship Satisfaction and Experience of Motherhood ( $\beta = 0.115$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Father’s Behavior ( $\beta = 0.197$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were significant. Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.453$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was also significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.368$ . Although this model explains less of the variance in Romantic Cohabiting mothers Relationship Satisfaction than it does for the entire sample, there are more significant coefficients in this model when it is applied to Romantic Cohabiting mothers.

Figure 4.15. Path Analytic Model for Mothers in Romantic Cohabiting Relationships: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father’s Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.



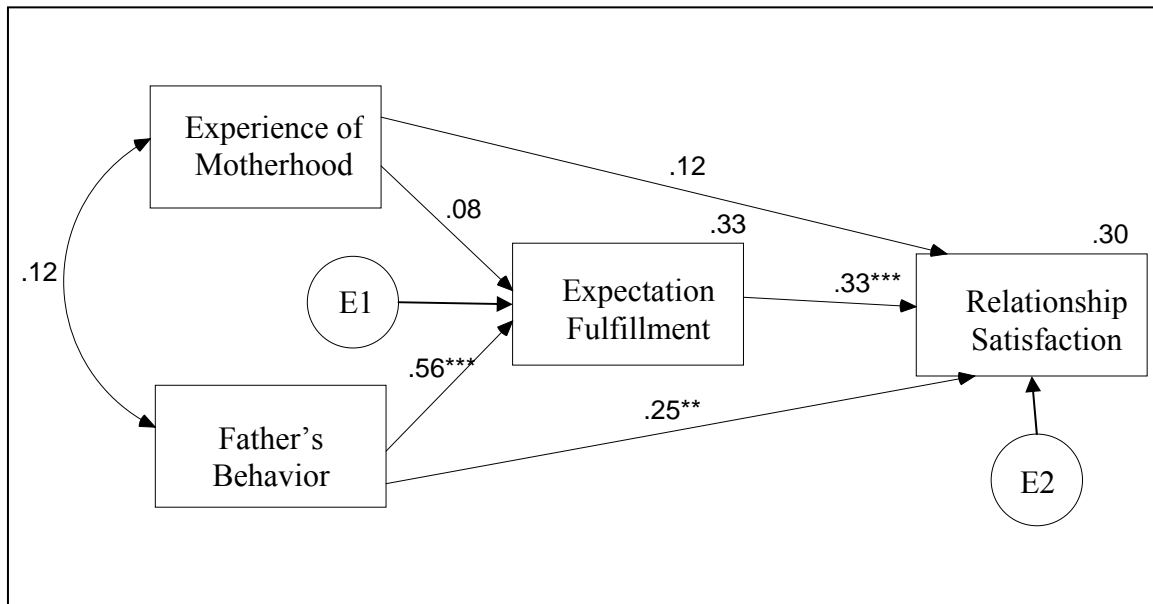
\*\*\*= $p < .001$ , \*\*= $p < .01$ , \*= $p < .05$ .  $n = 432$ .

*Romantic Non-Cohabiting.* Romantic Non-Cohabiting mothers had significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and two predictor variables—Father’s Behavior and Mother’s Expectation Fulfillment (see Figure 4.16). The paths between Relationship Satisfaction and Father’s Behavior ( $\beta = 0.212, p < .001$ ), and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.247, p < .01$ ), were significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.295$ . Compared to the entire sample of new mother in which this model explained 52% of the variance in Relationship Satisfaction, this model explained only 30% of the variance in Romantic Non-Cohabiting mothers’ Relationship Satisfaction.

*Friends.* Friends relationship status had a significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and one predictor variables—Mother’s Expectation Fulfillment (see Figure 4.17). The paths between Relationship Satisfaction and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.497, p < .001$ ), was significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.259$ . This model therefore explain about half the variance in Relationship Satisfaction

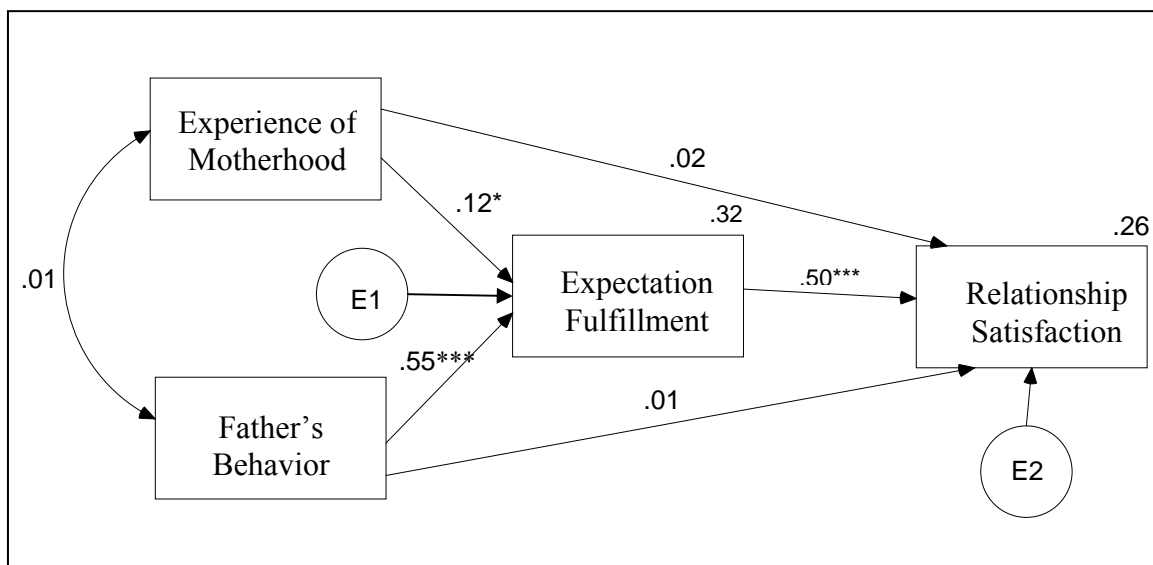
of mothers who are Friends with their child's father at 26% compared to the the 52% of variance it explained for the entire sample.

Figure 4.16. Path Analytic Model for Mothers in Romantic Non-Cohabiting Relationships: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father's Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.



\*\*\*= $p < .001$ , \*\*= $p < .01$ , \*= $p < .05$ .  $n = 162$ .

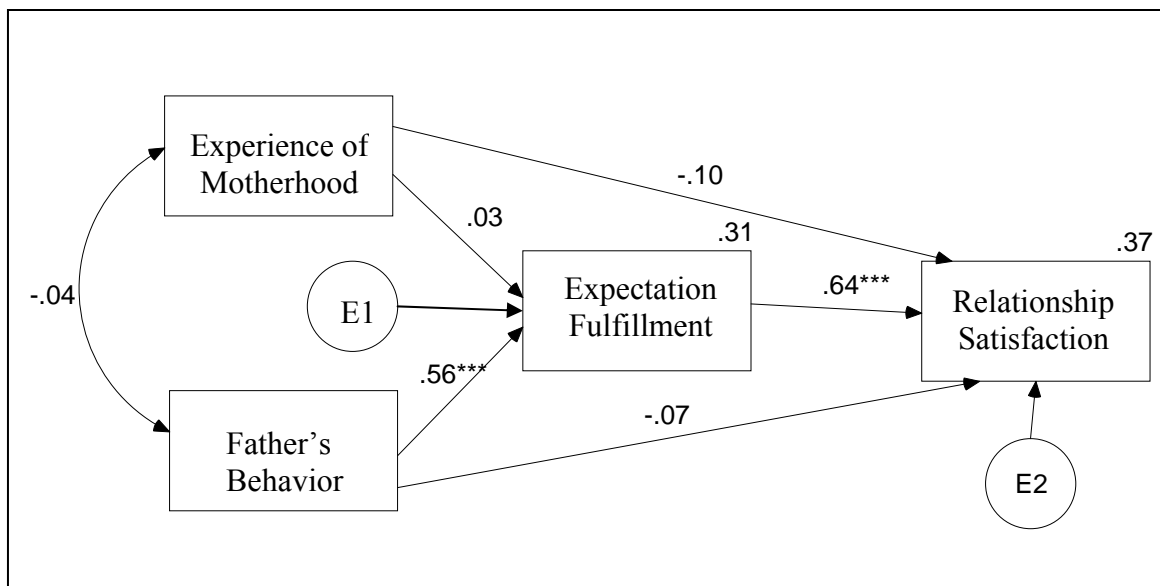
Figure 4.17. Path Analytic Model for Mothers who are Friends with Father: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father's Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.



\*\*\*= $p < .001$ .  $n = 261$ .

*Not in Relationship.* Not in Relationship mothers had a significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and one predictor variables—Mother’s Expectation Fulfillment (see Figure 4.18). The paths between Relationship Satisfaction and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.642, p < .001$ ), was significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.373$ . Surprisingly this model can explained the same percentage of variance in Relationship Satisfaction at 37% for Not in Relationship mothers as it did for Romantic Cohabiting mothers. The difference being that there is only one significant coefficient reported between Relationship Satisfaction and the predictor variable Expectation Fulfillment for Not in Relationship mothers as compared to the three significant coefficients for Romantic Cohabiting mothers discussed above.

*Figure 4.18.* Path Analytic Model for Mothers who are Not in a Relationship with Father: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father’s Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.

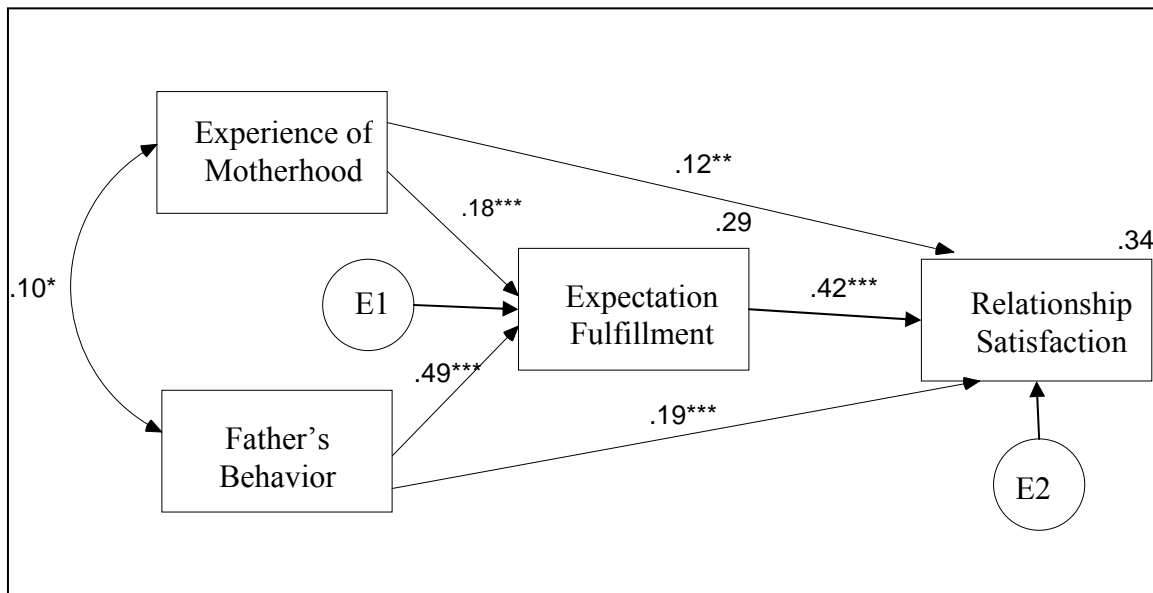


\*\*\*= $p < .001$ .  $n = 340$ .

In order to further evaluate the effectiveness of this model using a more specified sample two more path models were explored. This first model was analyzed with mothers in Romantic relationships this includes both Romantic Cohabiting and Romantic Non-

Cohabiting mothers. The overall model had significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and three predictor variables (see Figure 4.19). The paths between Relationship Satisfaction and Experience of Motherhood ( $\beta = 0.118, p. < .01$ ), Father's Behavior ( $\beta = 0.189, p. < .001$ ), and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.422, p. < .001$ ), were significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.335$ , explaining 34% of the variance in mother's Relationship Satisfaction. The amount of variance explained, was less than that explained when the entire sample was used. When both groups of romantic mothers, cohabiting and non-cohabiting, were evaluated together, the amount of variance explained ( $R^2_{adj} = 0.335$ ) was less than that for Romantic Cohabiting alone ( $R^2_{adj} = 0.373$ ) but more than Romantic Non-cohabiting mothers ( $R^2_{adj} = 0.295$ ). Controlling for Friends and Not in a Relationship with birth father, did not reveal a greater variance in Relationship Satisfaction.

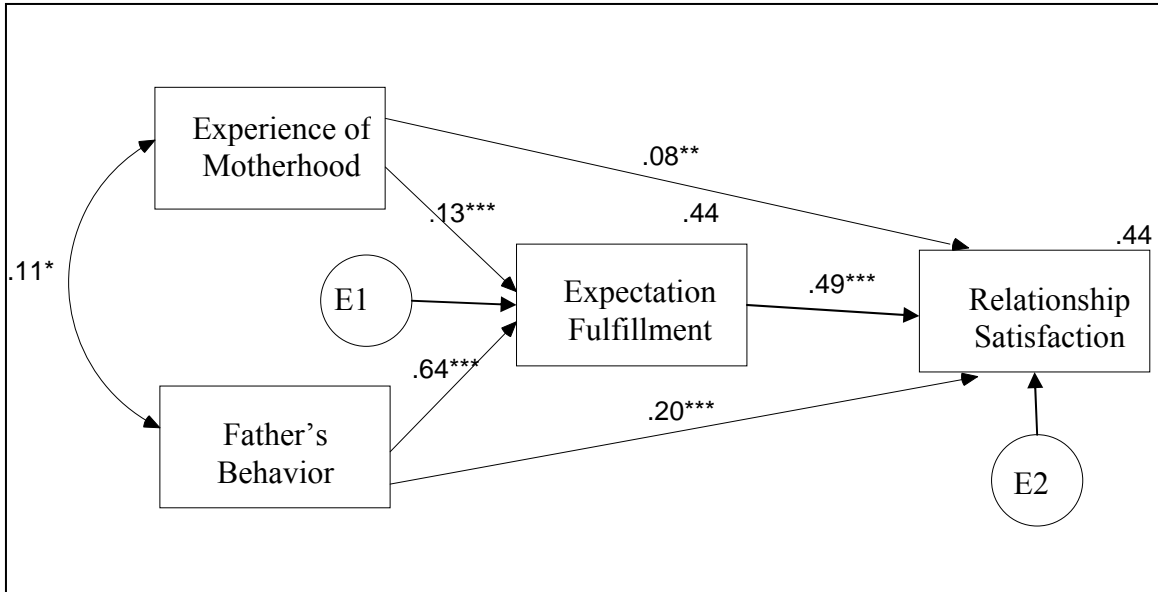
Figure 4.19. Path Analytic Model for All Mothers in Romantic Cohabiting and Romantic Non-Cohabiting Relationships: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father's Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.



\*\*\*= $p < .001$ .  $n = 594$ .



Figure 4.20. Path Analytic Model for All Mothers in Romantic Cohabiting and Romantic Non-Cohabiting Relationships and Friends with their Child’s Birth Father: The Influence of the Experience of Motherhood, Father’s Behavior and Expectation Fulfillment on Relationship Satisfaction.



\*\*\*= $p < .001$ .  $n = 855$ .

When mothers Not in a Relationships with their Child’s father were controlled for, the model had significant coefficients reported between Relationship Satisfaction and three predictor variables (see Figure 4.20). The paths between Relationship Satisfaction and Experience of Motherhood ( $\beta = 0.084$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Father’s Behavior ( $\beta = 0.202$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Expectation Fulfillment ( $\beta = 0.489$ ,  $p < .001$ ), were significant. The model had an  $R^2_{adj} = 0.436$  or 44%. The addition of mothers who are Friends with their child’s father increased the explained variance in Relationship Satisfaction from 34% to 44%. With the removal of Not in Relationship mothers the model explained 44% of the variance in mother’s Relationship Satisfaction which is less than that explained by this model for the entire sample at 52%. In general the model remains robust and has potential for exploring factors relevant to relationship satisfaction for transitioning parents.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Overview

The data for this dissertation was a subsample of 1,195 non-married first time mothers generated Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, 2008). This study addresses three specific areas—non-marital childbearing, welfare reform, and the role of fathers (Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 2001). Baseline data collected between 1998 and 2000 and one-year follow-up interviews conducted between 1999 and 2002 were the two main sources of data within the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study from which this dissertation is based.

The purpose of this dissertation was to evaluate possible factors that affect low income non-married new mothers' relationship with their child's father. In order to make cross group comparisons different race/ethnicity and relationship status groups were evaluated. Mother's post birth expectations of their child's father, their perceptions of his behavior and overall experience of motherhood were investigated in order to see how these elements influence the mother relationship with her child's birth father. In addition, the effects of support systems external to the couple themselves were evaluated as a factor influencing the mother's experience of motherhood.

As discussed in Chapter Two, previous research on the transition to parenthood and mothers' relationship satisfaction has mainly focused on married White middle class couples. This dissertation contributes to the literature by adding greater discussion on the comparisons of different race/ethnicity groups of mothers. In addition, previous literature

has identified the increase in childbirth occurring outside of a marital relationship and thus the comparison of non-married mothers is also advantages.

The *New Mother's Relationship Satisfaction Model* was developed and proposed to provide a parsimonious view of how mothers viewed their satisfaction. It was based on the current literature and theory. The general findings of this dissertation did not support the *New Mother's Relationship Satisfaction Model*. Considering the racial/ethnic diversity of mothers in this sample population, race/ethnicity may be an important consideration overlooked by much of the research on the transition to parenthood. The evaluation of both race/ethnicity and relationship status differences will be discussed. Race/ethnicity and relationship status comparisons will be discussed in length as they apply to the concepts within these hypotheses. Then the limitations and implications will be discussed. In closing the direction of future research will be presented.

#### Research Questions

To better explain the associations between, mother's expectations, quality of father's role enactment, family support, organizational support, mother's experience and their relationship satisfaction as defined by the *New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model*, the following research questions were examined

1. How does a non-married mother's expectation fulfillment by the birth father affect her perceived relationship satisfaction with the birth father?
2. How does a non-married mother's evaluation of the birth father's behavior affect her perceived relationship satisfaction with the birth father?
3. How does external support affect a non-married mother's perceived experience of motherhood?

4. How does a non-married mother's perceived experience of motherhood affect her perceived relationship satisfaction with the birth father?

These questions were addressed by testing four hypotheses. Three of the four hypotheses were supported by this data. In this section I will discuss each hypothesis and relationships present between particular race/ethnicity and relationship status pertaining to these hypotheses.

#### *Hypothesis I*

Hypothesis I stated that "The more positive the mother's expectation fulfillment by the birth father the more positive her experience of motherhood." This hypothesis was supported because mother's expectation fulfillment by the birth father resulted in more positive experiences of motherhood. Mother's expectation fulfillment pertaining to how often father respected their schedule were significantly different across race/ethnicity groups. White mothers in particular were more likely to report lower occurrences of father respecting her schedule as compared to Black or Mexican mothers. Mexican mothers on the other hand were more likely to report their child's birth father often respected their schedules than both White and Black mothers. Overall Mexican mothers were the only race/ethnicity group to have a relationship with expectation fulfillment by birth fathers. Such that Mexican mothers were more likely to report their child's father was fulfilling their expectations.

Previous literature on heterosexual couples' unfulfilled expectations across the transition to parenthood indicates that parenthood brings about more traditional gender roles (Cowan & Cowan, 2000). When new mothers have expectations for egalitarian gender roles they are more likely to have these expectations violated (Cowan & Cowan,

2000). It would have been valuable to have measured new mothers gender roles. If the Mexican mothers had more “traditional” gender roles than the other race/ethnicity groups these roles would have lent themselves to greater fulfillment of expectations as individuals became parents.

Interestingly, although there were no significant relationship between White or Black mothers and expectation fulfillment there were significant differences on whether or not the father respected the mother’s schedule put forth for their child. The literature on Black families has established the fact that Black men respect women’s roles outside the home due to economic barriers placed on some Black families (Wilson, 1996). These current findings may support the idea that although Black women may work outside the home their roles inside the home are also valued and respected.

There were also significant differences across relationship statuses for all expectation fulfillment items which included; father acts like the father you want for your child, respects your schedule, can be trusted with your child, can talk to about problems, is support of you and can be counted on. Interestingly, there were no significant differences present between mothers who were romantically involved and cohabiting and those who were romantically involved but not cohabiting. Therefore the act of cohabitation does not seem to produce any differences across the six expectation fulfillment items in this dissertation. It could be suggested that fulfillment of expectation are not necessarily based on fathers’ residents but rather the type of relationship that is present between the parents. If shared expectations are important in maintaining an ongoing intimate relationship (Beckman, 1981) than what becomes importance more so than father residence is agreement in expectations across different relationship types. By

evaluating mothers in different relationships this dissertation adds to the general literature on heterosexual couples' transition to parenthood because it illustrated that cohabiting and non-cohabiting low-income mothers are similar in their expectation fulfillment. The findings in this dissertation also suggest that shared expectations and perhaps the communication of such expectations are important even when parents are not romantically involved. This suggestion is supported by the fact that there were significant differences between mother categories as friends with their child's father and those that were not in a relationship of any type with him. As the relationship type is more distant, the less likely the expectations are to be fulfilled.

Overall expectation fulfillment had a significant positive association with both romantic cohabiting and romantic non-cohabiting mothers such that these relationship statuses were associated with greater expectation fulfillment. The opposite was true for the friend and not in a relationship categories for which a significant negative relationship was found. Such that mothers in these relationship statuses were more likely to have less expectation fulfillment. The literature on White middle class mothers' expectation fulfillment would suggest a positive relationship between unfilled expectations and marital dissatisfaction (Belsky et al., 1986; Ruble et al., 1988; Cowan & Cowan, 2000). Again adding to the literature on the transition to parenthood that has focused mainly on White middle class mothers; this dissertation shows expectation fulfillment of cohabiting and non-cohabiting mothers is similar to their married counterparts. These findings suggest marriage is not necessarily required in order for mothers' expectations to be fulfilled.

## *Hypothesis II*

Hypothesis II states that “The more positive the mother’s evaluation of the birth father the more positive her experience of motherhood.” This hypothesis was supported by the data in this dissertation in which the more positive the mother’s evaluation of the father’s behavior the more positive her experience of motherhood. There were several differences between mothers from particular race/ethnicity and relationship status groups. For example, race/ethnicity differences were observed on two of the father’s behavior scale items—how often fathers maintained the home and watched their child while the mother ran errands. In particular, Black mothers were more likely to report fathers maintained their home less often than all other race/ethnicity groups. While Mexican mothers were more likely than other mothers to report that their child’s father often maintained their home. Mexican mothers were also more likely than White or Black mothers to report that the father often watched their child while she ran errands. According to the general literature on the transition to parenthood, as couples become parents they take on more gender based roles (Cowan & Cowan, 2000) and there exists a socially constructed consensus as how these roles are enacted (Jordan, 1995). This literature would then suggest that if there are racially/ethnically different social roles for fathers than we should see differences in their father involvement.

Black mothers had the lowest percentage of romantic cohabiting relationships, this may account for some of the reasons as to why they reported the least father involvement in maintaining the home. Although maintaining the home is a general term and could involve many different tasks it could be assumed that these mostly involve “handy-man” task. Previous literature on Black families indicates that although Black

men's ideas of family roles are traditional, in reality their behaviors are more egalitarian and women take on more roles outside the traditional female role (Taylor et al., 1999).

All four of the items measuring father's behavior were significantly different across relationship statuses. Mothers in romantic cohabiting relationships were more likely to perceive their child's father as more often participating in parenting behaviors than the other relationship status counterparts. This may in part be due to the physical presence of the father on a daily basis. For example, if the father is present he may be more inclined to run errands and maintain the home or drop their child off at daycare. Therefore the physical presence of the father in a cohabiting relationship becomes a good indication of his involvement.

In addition there was a significant association between overall father's behavior and both romantic cohabiting and romantic non-cohabiting mothers. This association is such that these relationship status mothers were more likely to also report fathers as more often involved. The reverse association was true for father's behavior and mothers in the friends and not in relationship categories such that these mothers were more likely to report less father involvement. The literature on the transition to parenthood, which has focused on married, heterosexual couples suggest that the more fathers are involved with childcare and household labor the greater the couples' marital satisfaction (Belsky et al., 1986; Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Levy-Shift, 1994). Findings in this dissertation show cohabiting and non-cohabiting mothers are more likely to report father involvement suggesting that both residential and nonresidential fathers are equally involved and this involvement contributes to the relationship satisfaction of non-married mothers.



### *Hypothesis III*

Hypothesis III states that “The more positive the levels of family support the more positive the mother’s experience of motherhood.” This hypothesis was not supported. Although this hypothesis was adapted from the literature on heterosexual couples transition to parenthood, research in this area typically avoided low income families such as those in this investigation as a result these types of support may not have the same effect. There were however significant race/ethnicity group differences on both having received financial support and childcare support from extended family members. Both White and Black mothers were more likely than Mexican and Other category of mothers to receive financial support. Puerto Rican mothers were also more likely than the Other category to have received financial support from extended family members.

Mexican mothers were less likely to have received childcare support than Black, White and Puerto Rican mothers. While Black mothers were more likely to have received childcare support from extended family than their Other category counterparts.

Overall Black mothers were associated with having received financial support from extended family members. Given the literature on a strong extended family system among Black families these findings support what has been suggested in previous research (see Jayakody et al., 1993). Mexican mothers were associated with not having received both financial and childcare support from extended family members. Other Race/Ethnicity category mothers were also associated with not having received financial support from extended family members.

Both financial support and childcare support received from extended family members were significantly different across relationship statuses. Further analyses

revealed that mothers who were in romantic cohabiting relationships in particular differed from their counterparts. Mothers in romantic cohabiting relationships were less likely to have received both financial and childcare support from extended family members as compared to their counterparts. There was however no significant difference in the support received for mother in the remaining three Relationship Statuses: romantic non-cohabiting; friends; and not in a relationship with child's father.

Overall receiving financial support was associated with mothers in romantic non-cohabiting relationship and those who were friends with their child's father, while mothers in romantic cohabiting relationship were associated with not receiving financial support. It is possible that the presence of a cohabiting partner prevents a mother from seeking financial support or requiring such support from her extended family members. Considering the fact that mothers in the romantic cohabiting category were also associated with not having received childcare support the presence of a partner again could be a factor. Having received childcare support from extended family members was also associated with mothers who were in no relationship with their child's father and those who were friends with him.

Mothers who are friends with their child's father were associated with having received both financial support and childcare support while mothers who were in romantic cohabiting relationships with father were associated with not having received these types of support. Such findings support the idea that the presence of the father may create a lack in the need for extended family support. While mothers who are friends with the father have a greater need for such types of support not because he is not present in his child's life but because he is physically not available.

#### *Hypothesis IV*

Hypothesis IV states that “The more positive the mother’s experiences of motherhood the more positive her relationship satisfaction with the birth father.” This hypothesis was supported. It revealed that the more positive a mothers’ experience of motherhood the greater her relationship satisfaction. Mothers’ experiences of motherhood were significantly different across race/ethnicity groups in terms of how much mothers felt trapped by their experiences of parenthood and how much they perceived parenthood as more work than pleasure.

Race/ethnicity differences on items such as these indicate that the experience of motherhood is not only individually different but group differences may also exist. Understanding such group differences becomes extremely vital if practitioners want to facilitate the best possible environment for a new mother. Furthermore, understanding the presence of cultural differences can lead to the establishment of different resources for new mothers. I can speculate that such differences in mothers’ experiences may be due to conflicts with societal expectations of what the parenting role should consist of. If a woman expects to receive support postpartum but finds herself more isolated after the birth of her child there can be consequences for her. In addition, if the woman is living within a different culture, whether it is a socioeconomic or a geographically new culture, these novelties may also impact her postpartum experiences.

In this study Black, White, Puerto Rican and the Other group of mothers were significantly different in their responses to how much they felt they were trapped by their role as a parent. The Other race/ethnicity group of mothers was more likely to feel trapped by the experience of parenthood than their Black, White and Puerto Rican

counterparts. Mexican mothers were the only group that differed significantly from their Puerto Rican counterparts. Often these two groups are meshed into a Hispanic subgroup yet we see differences between these groups in that Puerto Rican mothers are less likely to feel more trapped by their experience of parenthood than their Mexican counterparts.

The perception that the experience of parenthood as more work than pleasure also showed cross group differences between White, and Black, Mexican and Other category of mothers. These differences were such that Black, Mexican and Other mothers were more likely to perceive the experience of parenthood as more work than pleasure compared to White mothers. Black mothers were also more likely to perceive their experience of parenthood as more work than pleasure compared to Mexican and Puerto Rican mothers.

The overall experience of motherhood was associated with two race/ethnicity groups of mothers. White mothers were associated with perceptions of more positive experiences with motherhood, while Black mothers were associated with perceptions of more negative experiences of motherhood. When other factors such as levels of education and household income are taken into account the results show White mothers are more likely to be more educated and have higher household income. These two socioeconomic resources could create an environment for White mother which is less stressful. Thus, their perceptions of their experiences of motherhood may be more positive as compared to their less educated and lower household income counterparts.

There were however no significant differences across or associations between relationship satisfaction and race/ethnicity categories. There were no significant differences for mothers in terms of how often their child's father was fair and willing,

how often he was affectionate or loving towards them, how often he encouraged and helped them and how often he insulted them. The fact that mothers' reports did not significantly differ suggested that regardless of race/ethnicity new mothers perceive their relationship qualities with their child's father in similar ways.

There were however significant differences in the experiences of motherhood across relationship statuses. Mothers in romantic cohabiting relationships were less likely to agree with the experience of parenting being harder than expected compared to mothers in the friends and not in relationship categories. Romantic non-cohabiting mothers were less likely to agree that parenting was harder than expected compared to mothers not in a relationship with their child father. Both categories of mother in romantic relationships (cohabiting and non-cohabiting) were less likely to agree that they felt trapped by their parenting responsibilities than mothers who were not in a romantic relationship with their child's father (friends and not in relationship). Mothers in romantic cohabiting relationships were also less likely to agree that parenting was more work than pleasure compared to their counterparts.

Overall mothers in romantic cohabiting relationships with their child's father were associated with more positive experiences of motherhood. If father involvement is a predictor of new parent's relationship satisfaction for White middle class married heterosexual couples (Belsky et al., 1986; Levy-Shift, 1994), then perhaps his physical day to day presence makes for a more positive experience of motherhood for some new mothers. Mothers not in a relationship with their child's father were associated with negative experiences of motherhood. Given the opposite associations present for mothers in romantic cohabiting relationship and mother not in a relationship with their child's

father it could be suggested that the physical presence of a child's father can be associated with the experience of motherhood. Considering the fact that there were no significant associations present between the experience of motherhood and mothers in romantic non-cohabiting relationships and those who remain friends with their child's father it is important to consider the associations present when the father is completely absent as compared to when he is physically present.

In other words, if a father is involved with the child's mother whether romantically or as friends but they are not living together, her experiences of motherhood are not significantly associated with these relationship statuses. So again the physical presence of the father in the home appears to be associated with a more positive the experience of motherhood for the new mother which is supported by the literature on White middle class heterosexual couples (Belsky et al., 1986; Levy-Shift, 1994). Yet there is only a negative association with a mother's experience of motherhood if the father is completely out of the picture, there appeared to be no association if a non-cohabiting father had some type of relationship with the mother. These findings become important because the general literature's focus on married couples would suggest that all non-married couples would have the same experiences. The findings in this dissertation suggest that non-married couples certainly have different experiences in motherhood.

Although there were no significant differences in relationship satisfaction found across race/ethnicity groups there were significant differences across relationship statuses. Mothers in romantic relationships with their child's father, both cohabiting and non-cohabiting, were more likely to have greater relationship satisfaction than mothers in the friends and not in relationship categories. There were no significant differences

between mothers who were in romantic relationships and cohabitating with their child's father and those who were in romantic relationships and not cohabitating.

In general greater relationship satisfaction was associated with mothers in romantic relationships while lower relationship satisfaction was associated with mothers in friends and no relationship categories. Given the type of relationship status present it is not surprising that mothers who are romantic with their child's father are also more satisfied in their relationship with him. It is also not surprising that mothers who are not in a relationship with their child's father are less satisfied with him. However, given the items in this scale, for example how often is the father fair and willing to compromise with you or how often is father encouraging and helpful, it is surprising that mothers who consider themselves to be friends with the child's father were associated with less relationship satisfaction. This may suggest that the friendship between the parents is strictly a parental truce rather than a supportive friendship. In essence these mothers may perceive their child's father as a friend because there is a relationship there but the relationship is not necessarily a supportive one.

#### Limitations

Although the Fragile Families Child Wellbeing Study dataset was a rich source of racial/ethnic diversity in its sample population there were three limitations that need to be addressed. First, by using secondary data I was limited to the types of questions asked of the respondents. The questions in this secondary data set were limiting because they did not ask questions in a manner that may have elicited more appropriate responses for my variables. In order to address this limitation I constructed variables by combining the responses from several questions. However I was unable to do this for all questions and

thus did not gather as much information from this data as I would have liked. In conjunction with the limitation in the types of questions asked this data was also limited in the available responses categories.

The second limitation in this dissertation pertained to the possible response categories provided to the participants which limited the variation in my data. For example, many of the Likert-scale responses ranged from one to three or one to four possible responses. Such limited response categories fail to capture the extent of variation that can exist. For example, a response scale of Often, Sometimes and Never, can lose great deal of the variation that exists. If someone does something “often” how often are they doing it, or if they have done it once does that mean the appropriate response is “sometimes” and not “never” because they have done it before. In other words, by limiting the possible response scale a great deal of variation can be lost from the data.

Third, data limitations include the duality of some measures. For example, the measures on relationship satisfaction included items such as “love and affection” “fair and willing to compromise.” These terms are grouped together yet they can be perceived differently by mothers. For example, a mother may feel loved but not receive affection yet these two terms are placed in the same item. This leaves one to wonder if mothers gave adequate responses or whether they averaged out there perception on these terms. Again fair and willing to compromise may also be perceived as terms capturing different concepts and again may leave mothers with the difficult decision of either picking one of giving an average of both. Given the variables within this dissertation and the scales developed from such questions this limitation did not hinder the greater purpose of this dissertation. Although the dataset used in this dissertation is not without its limitations, it



consisted of a diversely rich population of participants. The racial/ethnic diversity allowed for a step in the right direction in adding to the literature with is overwhelmingly based on White couples.

### Implications

The literature on the transition to parenthood has been limited in the diversity of the sample population at the focus of these studies. Although some of the literature has been conducted with non-White participants, these participants have only composed two to five percent of the sample population. In this dissertation not only were mothers evaluated across race/ethnicity groups but they were also evaluated across four different relationship statuses. By evaluating mothers from different race/ethnicity and relationship status groups this dissertation has added to the understanding of differences amongst these populations. The fact that differences were acknowledged and then reported supports the notion that research consistently conducted using one particular population cannot be generalized to the general population. For example, the findings in this dissertation suggest that all non-married mothers should not be viewed in the same manner as there are significant differences amongst these groups. Cohabiting and non-cohabiting mothers who are in romantic relationship with their child's father show more similarities to the literature on White middle class married couples than differences. The differences discussed above however should be acknowledged in the literature and further explored.

The assumption that all parents make this transition in a similar manner can be harmful to some new parents because these assumptions can be misleading. For example, if couples having difficulty across this transition a misleading assumption may be that

their lacking resources when in reality these difficulties may be attributed to variables not yet acknowledged or recognized within the literature. This dissertation identifies some of the cross race/ethnicity differences that exist between White, Black, Mexican, Puerto Rican and Other race/ethnicity mothers. It is important to recognize such differences not only for the purposes of assisting all families across this transition but much can also be gained from highlighting these differences.

If we assume all couples change in the same manner we fail to recognize strengths that may be present in some race/ethnicity groups and thus fail to understand what we can learn from these groups of new parents. The literature on the transition to parenthood suggests that there is a small percentage of married couples who thrive in their relationship when they become parents (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Cowan & Cowan, 2000) a phenomenon that is unique as most couples show declines in their relationship satisfaction. If researchers can identify unique cultural practices that strengthen couples relationships across this transition these practices could be beneficial to all new parents. If Mexican couples demonstrate a greater ability to share their expectations it would be of interest to all new parents if this were explored and we found out why Mexican fathers had higher levels of meeting their partners expectations. If certain attitudes, behaviors or attribute present among a race/ethnicity group allow them to make a smoother transition to parenthood it would be beneficial to all new parents if these qualities were explored and identified. By identifying these qualities researchers and practitioners working with new parents would not only have a greater understanding of possible groups differences but they could also share the strengths present that aid some couples in hopes that all couples would benefit from this knowledge.

By adding to the literature on the differences present across race/ethnicity groups of new mothers the findings from this dissertation also present implications for practice. Practitioners working with new mothers and policy makers have been bombarded with literature that has mainly focused on the middle class White married population. Far too often couples who do not meet the requirement of married and middle class have been evaluated from a high risk perspective. A perspective that evaluates the limitations in these couples rather than the strengths they exhibit across the transition to parenthood. This perspective becomes problematic because it implies that if couples are having troubles in their transition to parenthood there are a set of reasons that are applicable to all families. This in turn leads to judgment and stereotyping of families that are the focus of the high risk perspective. For example, Black women entering a doctor's office might be perceived as single and uneducated if their "husbands" do not accompany them to a prenatal appointment, a finding illustrated in the qualitative work by Sawyer (1999).

Not only have the limitations in the literature left practitioners and policy makers with only one appropriate path from which to measure all families' transition to parenthood, but they have also led to programming for expecting and new parents that are not culturally sensitive. The cross race/ethnicity differences present in this dissertation highlight the presence of cross group differences and these differences need to be acknowledged by program developers and policy makers. If all new mothers are treated in the same manner then we fail to recognize the presence of specific needs and strengths brought by different mothers. We fail to recognize these differences because we assume that there is only one path to a smooth transition, a path based on married White middle class couples. This dissertation brings attention to the fact that there are

race/ethnicity and relationship status differences on many of the variables that have been identified in the literature as key elements in the transition to parenthood.

### Suggestions for Future Research

This dissertation takes as good first step in the direction of adding to the literature on a more diverse population of mothers' transition to parenthood. The knowledge gained from this dissertation should be further explored with another diverse population of new parents in order to support the cross group differences identified here. In addition, future research should expand on the findings of this dissertation by adding fathers' perspectives to the constructs evaluated in this dissertation. Although the general literature on the transition to parenthood suggests that mothers' transition is a good indicator of what the father's transition will look like it is import to explore whether or not this would hold for all race/ethnicity groups.

Unfortunately there was not much diversity in terms of the socioeconomic status (SES) of the population in this dissertation due to the dataset used; therefore there were no findings across different SES levels to report. Although this dissertation does report some similarities between middle SES and lower SES mothers these are assumptions based on comparisons to the literature. Due to the fact that much of the literature on the transition to parenthood has focused on middle SES White couples or lower SES Black and Hispanic couples, including this dissertation it would be an advantage if future research focuses on middle SES couples from more diverse race/ethnic backgrounds. Not only would these studies add to our understanding of this transition but they may also disprove many of the misconceptions about Black and other non-White parents that are so prevent in the literature that has focused slowly on lower SES families. As we move

into an era in which our society is becoming more diverse the literature needs to catch up and acknowledge the gaps created when the majority of the literature is based on White middle SES participants whom do not represent every family in America.

In addition, future research should move beyond this dissertation and identify new construct impacting the transition to parenthood through more in-depth interviews with a diverse group of new parents. These in-depth interviews can add to our knowledge and draw attention to constructs that may have been overlooked by the literature and current theory on the transition to parenthood. These interviews would be most beneficial if they were conducted with a population of new parents that were demographically diverse, meaning diverse in race/ ethnic, relationship status and SES. Such studies would add to our understanding of whether there are more similarities within a certain race/ethnicity group, SES group or whether similarities are more related to individual characteristics.

More in-depth studies would also add to our understanding of within group differences. Future research should attempt not only to explore across group differences but also the presence of within group differences. Such studies would allow for the exploration of whether or not there are more similarities within a person's SES or within their race/ethnicity group. These studies would also identify possible differences that exist within a certain category or group and would further add to our knowledge on diverse populations. In turn this would prevent stereotypical assumptions that would target certain groups in a negative manner.

In general future research on this transition and other life transitions should be inclusive of participants from a diverse background. Although I acknowledge that there can be difficulties in recruiting individuals from certain race/ethnicity and SES

backgrounds, as I myself have experienced. I, however, feel that even studies conducted with limited samples sizes would be an advantageous ways to begin exploring differences that may exist within a more diverse sample population.

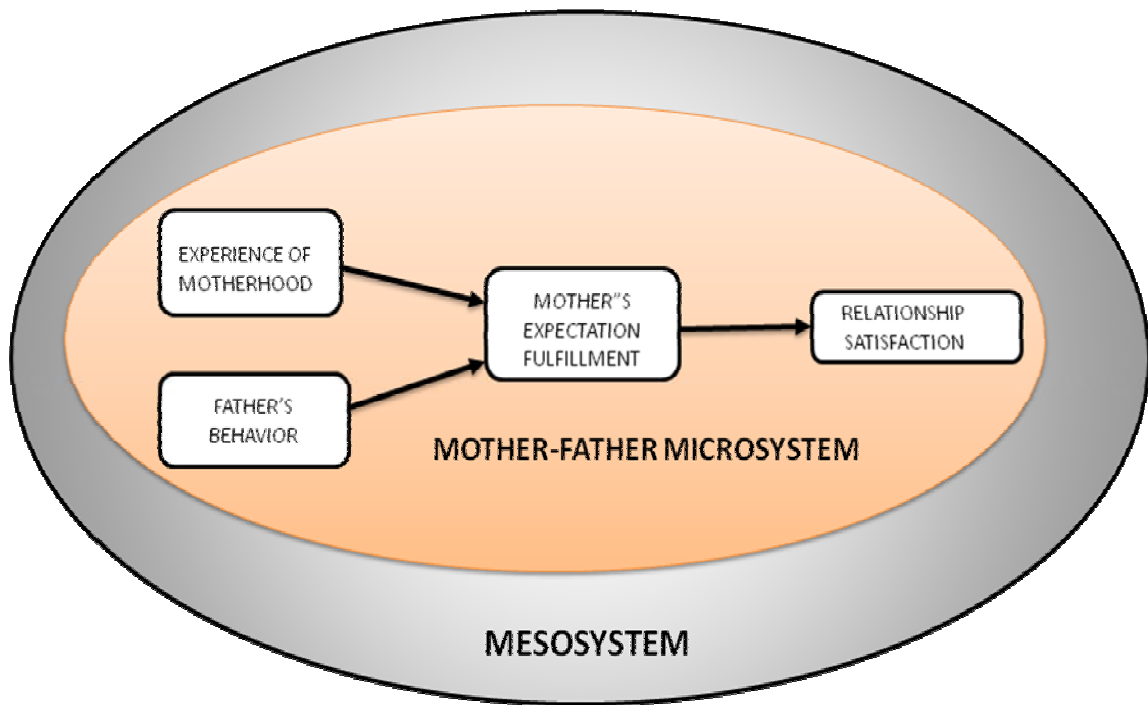
The reason the transition to parenthood and in particular couples relationship satisfaction is such an important area of study is because research illustrates that marital quality can predict child functioning. For example, researchers have reported that toddlers who exhibited a secure attachment style were more likely to be members of families in which spouses were satisfied with their marriages (Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1984). Jouriles, Pfiffner, and O'Leary (1988) have reported that marital conflict coincide with toddler deviance and conduct problems. Research has also found that marital discord is associated with problematic child functioning from infancy through adolescence (Gable et al., 1992; Gordis, Margolin, & John, 1997). In fact, marital conflict has been identified as a factor that places children at risk for a variety of emotional and behavioral problems (Jouriles, Murphy, & O'Leary, 1989). Therefore if researchers can identify what allows for a smoother transition and thus maintains a couple's relationship satisfaction we can indirectly create a more positive environment for children to thrive.

### Conclusion

The findings in this dissertation suggest that some of the key variables addressed by the literature on the transition to parenthood show racial/ethnic variation and thus should be further examined. In addition the *New Mother's Relationship Satisfaction Model* that was produced from current literature and theory on the transition was reorganized, as illustrated in Figure 5.1, to fit the data in this dissertation more accurately. Such differences are a good indication that researchers focused on the transition to

parenthood should develop beyond the typical White married middle class sample population so often used in their studies, as there are important differences across race/ethnicity group.

*Figure 5.1. New Mothers' Relationship Satisfaction Model Revised.*



The literature needs to move beyond generalizations based on only White middle class couples and recognized the distinct differences that exist amongst more racial/ethnic diverse societies. By omitting a certain population in the social science literature there is an assumption that that population is unimportant (Hill et al., 1989). Meta analysis on parenthood and marital satisfaction which evaluate studies predominantly White couples, such as the one conducted by Twenge and colleagues (2003) should be recognized as having limitations in their sampling population. We must set standards and let social scientist know that it is not acceptable to conduct research on one race/ethnic and try to generalize their findings as main stream.

It is also inappropriate to assume that a subgroup of a racial/ethnic population represents the entire population. Such implications would create a fragmented understanding of that particular population (Hill et al., 1989). Yet far too often these fragments are not identified as such and instead have lead to generalizations about a particular race/ethnicity group. So we must move beyond these fragmented understandings and this dissertation takes a step in the right direction by first establishing the presence of differences. The next step would be to explore within group differences among particular race/ethnicity groups of new parents.

In addition, as more and more couples have children outside of marriage (Bumpass & Lu, 2000) it is import to evaluate how relationship status variations are related to transitions to parenthood. By broadening the populations from which we draw on information regarding the transition to parenthood we can capture greater understanding of how and why some couples make a smoother transition to parenthood. As the number of children born in this country to non-married couples and the racial and ethnicity diversity of this country increase it become more important than ever that we acknowledge the limitations in our research and seek for a broader understanding of family transitions.

Over the past two decades researchers evaluating the transition to parenthood have moved beyond the idea that all parents make this transition in the same manner. This research has led to the identification of factors that can predict a smoother transition to parenthood. The implications of these studies have often been beneficial for practitioners, educators and families alike. Unfortunately, due to the fact that most of this research has focused on a similar uniformed sample population, we cannot speculate that



all families can and will benefit from our current understanding of factors that predict a smooth transition to parenthood. When we have captured the experiences of all families making this transition can we truly say we have an understanding of what factors predict a smoother transition to parenthood? In order to truly understand what factors impacting all parents' transition to parenthood we must diversify the populations from which we draw our research findings. This dissertation takes a good first step in that direction.

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