

2020

## African American Noncustodial Fathers' Perceptions of Fatherhood Programs

Melissa Marie Smith  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Melissa Smith

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

African American Noncustodial Fathers' Perceptions of Fatherhood Programs

by

Melissa Smith

MS, Capella University, 2016

MS, University of Phoenix, 2010

BS, Elizabeth City State University, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human and Social Services

Walden University

May 2020

## Abstract

Fatherhood programs have varying intentions, including encouraging peer interaction among fathers, supporting healthy father-child relationships, developing positive family dynamics, and identifying parenting strategies. However, much less is known about how fatherhood programs fulfill the needs of fathers as examined by the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The purpose of this qualitative generative research study was to explore African American noncustodial fathers' experiences of fatherhood program in which they participated, and how these programs fulfilled their needs as framed by those from Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The research question for this study focused on how African American noncustodial fathers perceive the role of fathering programs in fulfilling their hierarchy of needs. A purposive sample of 6 participants engaged in in-depth, semi structured interviews. Using NVivo software to analyze data and identify themes, participants shared their experiences of taking part in a fatherhood program. Four overarching themes were identified: relationships, challenges, incarceration, healthy living. While, the fatherhood programs did fulfill some of the participants' needs, found from Maslow's hierarchy of needs such as self-actualization and belongingness, some needs were not fulfilled. The participants expressed their desire to receive added support to increase their stability, seeking housing, receiving psychological counseling, learning financial management, and avoiding future incarceration, which could have fulfilled the participants' esteem, safety, and physiological needs. Implications for social change include educating families, agencies, and the community of interventions that should be included in fatherhood programs.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all who supported me throughout this process. To my children, Michael and Maciyah, you are my favorite youth in the world. I love you both. We have grown together. I have noticed how you became accustomed to my early mornings and late nights typing and reading. You adjusted to me saying, “I’m tired” and “I have to work on schoolwork.” You both have always allowed me to be a student and Mommy. I thank you both for being yourselves, you are my motivation. To my mother, Connie, I love you and thank you for giving me the tools for life and showing me how to use them. You have done wonderful things. To my father, I love you and thank you for showing wonderful support. To my grandparents, Erma, Ida, and William. I thank you for encouragement. To my family, canine son, and friends who remained supportive, I appreciate you. To encouraging and praying coworkers, I am grateful. To my nieces and nephews, Aunt Me Me loves you. Sylvester, Regina, Amanda, my siblings, and best friends, I know many days you did not want to hear me discuss school however, you still listened. You have been incredibly supportive and cheered me on. I love and appreciate you. Last, however not least, I would like to thank my personal guardian angel, my sister, the late Lakisa “Gail” Crouch, whom I thought about every day since her joined heaven, while I worked on the completion of this dissertation. The dissertation process can reveal a strength you have never ignited. Words cannot describe the love I have for my Angel Gail, I love you. You have always supported and cheered me on. I miss everything about you, and I will continue to reminisce until we meet again. Again, I love you all. I thank God for you all, and I thank God.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

The influence of fathers' involvement with their children has been an ongoing research topic for many years (Threlfall & Kohl, 2015). Researchers have suggested the father-child relationship is influenced by the interaction fathers and their children have with each other, in addition to other contributing factors such as location, economic issues, relationship with the mother, and health of the child or father (Flouri, Midouhas, & Narayanan, 2016). The considerable amount of literature on how the involvement of fathers in their children's lives suggests that the positive involvement of noncustodial fathers influences the lifestyle of their children (Dion et al., 2018).

Although noncustodial father involvement is important, fathers' perspectives of fatherhood program strategies, which are intended to meet noncustodial fathers' needs, has not been heavily studied. Understanding noncustodial fathers' perception of participation in fatherhood program strategies, which are designed to provide fulfillment of the fathers' needs, can develop new fatherhood programs and/or improve currently operating fatherhood programs.

My qualitative research study adds to the findings of the fathering role in research and examines the noncustodial fathers' perspectives of how their participation in a fatherhood program fulfilled their needs, defined through each tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943). I reviewed the noncustodial father-child relationship through the perceptions of the research participants. The perceptions of the fathers are important because they can provide the lived experience of noncustodial fathers'



participation in a fatherhood program. Their perceptions would increase the knowledge of finding the strategies from a fatherhood program that has impacted their ability to manage the fathers' needs.

In this chapter, I provide a discussion of the current studies' key components, which include the background, conceptual framework, statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study. I also outline the research question, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, and delimitations limitations, the significance of the study.

### **Background of the Study**

The relationship between noncustodial fathers and their children has been reviewed in earlier literature (Ewart-Boyle, Manktelow, & McColgan, 2015). The existence of fathering groups has been developed to increase the support of fathers in their children's lives (Elam, Sandler, Tein & Wolchik, 2015). Child support workers' perspectives have been examined to better understand the barriers fathers develop when supplying financial support for their children (Leon, Bai, & Fuller, 2016). Literature exists of how father involvement influences the father-child relationship (Elam, et al., 2015). The reviewed literature I found helped to review the background of African American non-custodial fathers, fatherhood programs, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. I searched literature to help increase the understanding of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and the theory is relevant to my research study by identifying what the needs are, as included in Maslow's theory, and identifying the explanation of the different needs. Through the explanation of the diverse needs within Maslow's hierarchy, the review further identified the areas which were determined through the research with

the fathers to be met or not met from the participants' perspectives in the research. Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been applied in various areas including medical education, where the framework was used to train staff on addressing initiatives for wellness (Hale, Ricotta, Freed, Smith, & Huang, 2018). I explored the reviewed literature to further gain understanding of how father involvement can lead to better father-child relationships through fathering programs, in addition to a better-managed child's health, and improved academic success can support alignment within my research study (Kelly-Trombley & Bartels, 2014). Karnatovskaia, Gajic, Bienvenu, Stevenson, and Needham (2015) mentioned that Maslow's hierarchy of needs was utilized in approaching critically ill patients in the intensive care unit of a hospital by considering the different levels Maslow has identified to exist among the critically ill patients. Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be applied in different fields and is popular and easy to understand (Fallatah & Syed, 2018).

### **Noncustodial Father Involvement**

Abdullah-Winstead (2012) reviewed how male children are affected by the relationship they have with their noncustodial father. The relationship between father and son formed expectant behavior when the father was actively involved in the sons' life, which positively influenced the interaction of the son and in social performance with others (Kabi & Pereira, 2017). Fathers who are involved in their child's health promote the overall well-being of their children (Garfield & Isacco, 2012; Panter-Brick et al. 2014). Clark et al. (2015) discussed that African American fathers were found to enhance their sons' development when they provided a high rate of social support.

Furthermore, daughters were found to experience puberty at later ages when their father was active in their life; therefore, the physical development of daughters has been found to be slowed (Bartels, 2014). Julion et al. (2016) conducted a study that used a randomized controlled trial, which included fathers not living with their children and single mothers. Fathers' psychological well-being, communication, problem-solving ability, and other areas were reported during the study by the parents. Julion et al. (2016) found strategies to recruit mothers and fathers in involvement of community-based intervention, which included the use of reimbursement, and gifts. The researchers found that the community-based intervention encouraged positive father-child interaction (Julion et al, 2016).

### **Barriers of the Father**

Even though it is known that fathers have an influence in the relationship with their child, barriers have been mentioned that affect the relationship the fathers have with their children. Elam et al. (2015) found that fathers' involvement with their children altered depending on their relationship with the mothers. The authors further noted that when problems existed between the parents, the contact between the children and father declined (Elam et al., 2015). Elam and colleagues stated that person-centered analysis was used in a research study to determine the different type of involvement fathers had with their children. Elam and colleagues developed four profiles and fathers were assigned a specific category based on how they reported to interact with their children (Elam et al., 2015). After six years, fathers who had lower interaction with their children were found to have greater internalizing and externalizing behaviors, which negatively

affected their relationship with their children. African American fathers often suffer from poor health outcomes when compared to men of other ethnic groups and to women, due to mental and physical health, as well as relationships they have with others (Caldwell, Allen, & Assari, 2016). Service workers have identified barriers that some noncustodial fathers have reported, which include meeting financial expectations for their children, fathers not being aware of how their role impacts their children's well-being, and the lack of the father's understanding their children's psychological needs (Threlfall & Kohl, 2015).

### **Fatherhood Polices and Program**

Coakley, Roberts, Kelley, and Washington (2014) found that most fathers were committed to protecting their children and engaging in co-parenting practices to promote safer living for their child, which further supported the interest of fathers in support of their parenting. Cabrera and Tamis-Lemomda (2013) reviewed research findings affecting child development and policies regarding child development programs, families and fathers. The authors discovered that children received lasting expectations of who they are and how others can behave from the relationship the children had early in their lives (Cabrera & Tamis-Lemomda, 2013). Lippold, Sorensen, and Nichols (2013) discussed programs that were established in New York to determine if supportive services aided parents with paying their child support payments. The results found the supportive parenting programs offered parents help with employment, parenting workshops, case management, and other supportive services. The programs were found to help many of the participants find a place of employment. Maxwell, Scourfield,

Featherstone, Holland, and Tolman (2012) mentioned that some biological fathers have low levels of participation in child welfare services, however that from 2000 to 2010, engaging fathers in child welfare services was not highly reported. The participation of fathers in the programs have been reviewed; however, studies have not explored the individual needs of the father through a theoretical framework of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to see if the psychological needs of the fathers have been met through these fathering programs.

### **Problem Statement**

Literature exploring single parenthood has primarily focused on the role of the single mother (Harrison, 2018). Single parents are identified as parents who have been divorced, widowed, have never been married, and/or who have separated from the other parent (Chiu et al., 2018). DeGarmo, Jones, and Rains (2018) noted that in evidence-based research, exploring couples and mothers in clinical treatments determined that fathers were found to be under-represented in research studies. This is concerning because the U.S. Census Bureau (2017) found that there were 11,667,000 single parent families. Importantly, of the 11,667,000 families, a higher percentage of the households were female-headed households (9,497,000), while the remaining 2,170,000 were headed by men (Helgren, 2018). There have been documented concerns on single-parent households (Nieuwenhuis & Maldonado, 2018). Even though not all children from single-parent families have disadvantages, single-parent families have been found to have a higher disadvantage in educational support which may lower children's educational performance (Nieuwenhuis & Maldonado, 2018). Poorer mental health among single

parents has also been documented in many countries (Collings, Jenkin, Carter, & Signal, 2014).

Single parents can be either the mother or father; however, Harrison (2018) elaborated that women were more commonly expected to be single parents than fathers. Mothers have generally been identified as the primary custodian of children; however, researchers suggested that treating the mother as the primary parent should be avoided in order to provide support to fathers in different cultural dimensions that include African American fathers (Mazzo & Perry, 2017). Milkie, Nomaguchi, and Denny (2015) found that mothers who were primary custodians influenced their children's social status by the amount of time they spent with their children. Furthermore, it was found that for children aged 3 to 11 years, when mothers were actively involved in the children's lives, there were fewer adolescent delinquent behaviors (Milkie, Nomaguchi & Denny, 2015).

Additionally, single mothers have been found to be more vulnerable than the overall role of being a single parent, including more unfavorable economic circumstances (Duvander & Korsell, 2018). Consequently, Panter-Brick et al., (2014) noted the fathers' role in their children's lives is critical and suggested increasing co-parenting to involve fathers in promoting and managing the health and development of their children to increase the children's healthy living.

The literature on the influence of healthy father involvement in children's lives is extensive (Julion, et al., 2016; Panter-Brick et al., 2014). The considerable amount of research on the barriers of fathers, as well as the impact of active and inactive father-child relationships, indicates the importance of a strong fathering role and lack of focus on

African American fathers (Abdullah-Winstead, 2012; Clark et al., 2014; Elam et al., 2015). For example, poor father-child relationships often led to disappointment, anger, and rejection in the children when close relationships with the father were not maintained (Nixon, Greene, & Hogan, 2012). Problems between the relationship of fathers and their children increase when the children develop negative emotions and behaviors toward fathers (Nixon et al., 2012). Coakley et al. (2014) discovered how active paternal involvement from fathers for both female and male children increased healthier interaction of the children with their teachers and peers.

Although active fathering ultimately forms a positive outcome of father-child relationships, a more precise understanding of strategies used in fathering programs, which work in the promotion of father involvement in the well-being of children and families, has been suggested as future research studies in the literature (Shirley, Roger, & Mary, 2015). Wilson, Havighurst, Kehoe, and Harley (2016) discussed how evaluations of fathers' emotions before they participate in fathering programs and after they participate are not well-known throughout research. The authors also said when fathering programs were introduced to fathers early in their children's lives, the fathers were more involved with their children (Wilson et. al, 2016). Noncustodial fathers' positive involvement in their children's lives greatly impacts the social and emotional development of their children; however, many fathers experience financial and physical barriers limiting their ability to meet child support agency recommendations that often impact the father-child relationship (Lippold & Sorensen, 2012).

The aforementioned research regarding noncustodial father-child relationships illuminates important findings (Ewart-Boyle, Manktelow, & McColgan, 2015). However, I have found no research to date that has examined African American noncustodial fathers' perspectives of received fathering program interventions, and whether those fathers have strengthened their fathering role or identified interventions that promote their knowledge of their families and children well-being. Further research is warranted that could examine the lived experience of African American fathers in an effort to address the documented problem of the need to examine perceptions of noncustodial fathers' experiences in fathering programs, including how to increase the effective practices which work in fathering programs (Shirley, Roger, & Mary, 2015).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand noncustodial African American fathers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the paternal strategies taught in a fathering program and how the program has affected their fathering experience. My goal for the study was to address the established gap in literature that had not identified the specific interventions from the fathering program which increase father-child involvement and fulfill noncustodial fathers' needs. The needs I focused on were needs outlined from Maslow's original hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943). Understanding the noncustodial fathers' perspectives could illuminate the lived experience African American fathers have when they participate in a fatherhood program. Panter-Brick et al. (2014) mentioned that fathers' participation in their children's lives is



essential; however, even though fathers may take part in parental programs, they typically do not identify the specific interventions that are found helpful.

The results from this study can provide evidence of whether African American noncustodial fathers' general hierarchical needs, from Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, are fulfilled through fathering programs. The findings from the research can influence father-child relationships, fathering programs, and human services agencies' suggested training. Noncustodial fathers can use the results to strengthen or maintain their parental relationships. Policies and interventions with the focus of improving the quality of the father-child relationship may be helpful in the child's behavior (Yoon, Bellamy, Yoon, & Kim, 2018). The results I found from this study can be used to develop and understand strategies to improve father-child relationships in future fatherhood programs and family partnership agencies.

In this study, I attempted to understand the perception of noncustodial fathers who participated in fathering program experience with the program's practices and whether the program fulfills their needs defined by each level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Motivation develops when individuals pursue personal growth and fulfillment. (Maslow, 1943). The fathers provided their perceptions and distinguished the practices from the program which have improved their active involvement with their children while meeting their own needs identified from Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Aiming to better understand the fathers' experience was an attempt I had to learn practices to strengthen the fathers' involvement with their children and ultimately strengthen their

fathering role. The participants engaged in a semistructured interview and shared their perspectives on fulfillment of needs from Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

### **Research Questions**

The objective of this study was to identify needs outlined from Maslow's hierarchy of needs through the fathers' role perceptions. The following research question guided this research study: How do African American noncustodial fathers perceive fathering programs' role in fulfilling their hierarchy of needs?

### **Conceptual Foundation**

Maslow's hierarchy of needs was developed by Maslow in 1943. Maslow (1943) identified five basic needs, which he arranged in a hierarchy where one need influences the following within the hierarchy to increase understanding of human motivation. Maslow's (1943) needs pyramid consists of physiological needs, such as breathing, sex, sleep, water, and food at level one, which is the bottom of the pyramid. The needs move upward to the next level in the hierarchy of needs pyramid. The second level after the physiological needs are safety needs. According to Guy and Pentz (2017), the safety needs consist of having a secure place that is organized and structured to live in. The authors further noted, love and belongingness is the next level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs after safety needs are met (Guy & Pentz, 2017).

Friendships, family, sexual intimacy, and relationships are included within the third level, which is the belongingness and love area within the hierarchy of needs (Gordon & Jones, 2018). The fourth level, self-esteem follows the need to belong and is defined as the belief one has of themselves, which includes feeling independent, their

status, and achievement. The fifth level, which is the top of Maslow's original hierarchy of needs is self-actualization. Maslow (1943) identified self-actualization needs to consist of the personal growth and fulfilment one is able to identify they obtain. Guy and Pentz (2017) elaborated on how the top of the hierarchy of needs pyramid was the self-actualization need, which is when an individual has found his/her potential and lives up to it. Padmanaban and Swathi (2018) identified self-actualization as the last of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Self-actualization, according to the authors, is the need for self-contentment, growth, and the want to reach one's capability. Maslow (1970) added that individuals help others achieve self-actualization after they can realize their own potential.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs initially consisted of five needs; however, Maslow expanded the needs of individuals in the pyramid (Maslow, 1970). Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid expanded to include cognitive, aesthetic and transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970). The expanded hierarchy of needs pyramid levels alter the position of some of the original levels of the needs. In the expanded hierarchy of needs the first level is physiological needs, safety needs are second, belongingness and love needs are third, esteem needs are fourth, cognitive needs are fifth, aesthetic needs are six, self-actualization needs are seventh, and transcendence needs are eighth (Maslow, 1969; Maslow, 1970). The levels in the expanded pyramid reflect the first level, which is the bottom of the pyramid to the eighth level, which is the top of the pyramid. Aesthetic needs reflect an appreciation that one has for balance and beauty (Maslow, 1970). According to Maslow (1970) cognitive needs include individuals' ability to be curious,

have the need to better understand, and the want to predict and want meaning in situations. Maslow (1970) also added that transcendence needs consists of when a person is motivated by values including faith, spirituality, religion, and experiences from sexual and science.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory addresses human behavior motivation. D'Souza and Gurin (2016) discussed that Maslow believed individuals gained more insight as they became older and gained spiritual and psychological support. Serious ongoing and future mistrust with others is influenced by neglect early in childhood, due to basic needs not being met. These needs include a safe and secure living arrangement (Akhtar, 2017).

This study offers an understanding of the first-hand perspective of the needs of noncustodial fathers who have participated in a fatherhood program. In this study, I used Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to shape the development of interview questions and to answer the research question. I used Maslow's hierarchy of needs as the framework of the study and allowed the participants an opportunity to express their personal feelings toward needs they have wanted to have met, while adding their overall feelings regarding their fathering role.

### **Nature of the Study**

I discovered fathers' perceptions of how fatherhood programs address needs, which are outlined by Maslow hierarchy of needs fills a gap in the current literature. Better understanding the fathers' perceptions of fatherhood program strategies using in-

depth, semistructured interviews increased the understanding of if fatherhood programs strategies fulfill the needs of African American, noncustodial fathers.

I used the generic qualitative approach for this research study on African American noncustodial fathers and their perspectives on fatherhood programs and interventions related to the programs. Generic qualitative research has characteristics of all qualitative research; however, it is used to focus on the targeted population to understand of their significant experiences (Percy, Kostere, and Kostere, 2015). The generic qualitative research approach does not follow the rules of a specific qualitative research approach such as phenomenology, grounded theory, or ethnography (Kahlke, 2014). I used the generative qualitative approach in this study, and I utilized implied characteristics of different qualitative approaches without following rules of one only one qualitative approach.

I explored the experiences shared by the participants to review if their general needs had been fulfilled through their participation in a fatherhood program. I interviewed participants in semistructured interviews and retained fieldnotes to gather data. In chapter 3 I provide further information on the generic qualitative research approach.

### **Definitions**

I used the following key terms in this study:

*Child development:* the progression of changes that occurs from birth until the beginning of adulthood, which includes changes in the body, the nervous system, and learning (Piaget, 1964).

*Father involvement:* the role of a father who provides direct and indirect involvement with his child or children that can include caregiving, financial support, play, and cognitive monitoring of the child (Schoppe-Sullivan, McBride, 2004).

*Fatherhood program:* a supportive program provided to fathers to strengthen their relationship with their children to better manage their parental skills and fathering role.

*Maslow's hierarchy of needs:* Maslow (1943) suggested that five needs motivated every individual's life. These needs were arranged on a pyramid, which Maslow (1943) said that from the bottom to the top of the pyramid identified the needs met of the individual. The needs from bottom to top are: physiological, safety, psychological (belongingness, love), esteem, and self-actualization (Guss, Burger, & Dorner, 2017).

*Noncustodial father:* a father who does not have custody of his child and is not the primary parent.

*Perception:* the ability of becoming aware of something with the use of the body's senses through personal growth (Maslow, 1943).

### **Assumptions**

I assumed that African American noncustodial fathers' opinions and beliefs could be understood using a generic qualitative method approach. I assumed that participants would provide honest responses regarding their perspectives toward questions during their interview. I also assumed that the participants would be able to read, write, and speak from the English language, as well as understand the meaning of questions asked to them. I assumed the participants would ask questions at any time during the study to maintain clarity of any questions and concerns they had. Furthermore, I assumed that

participants would take part in the study at their own free will and answers to the research question would be gained from the participants' responses. Finally, I assumed Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory would explain noncustodial fathers' needs that are fulfilled when they have participated in fatherhood programs.

### **Delimitations**

According to Simon and Goes (2013) delimitations are boundaries and choices the researcher uses when conducting a study. One delimitation of the research study was that I included the narrative from only the father participants to gain the lived experiences and perception of the fathers. Although the staff of parenting support programs and mothers could have provided their perception of information they had gained from relationships with the fathers, only the fathers' insight was reviewed in the study.

### **Limitations**

This qualitative research study included several limitations such as: location, researcher gender, sampling, unforeseen circumstances, and time. I focused on African American fathers. I focused only on English-speaking participants who lived in a city in the state of Virginia; therefore, individuals in other areas of Virginia or in other locations could possibly provide rich responses that were not included in the study. I am female; therefore, fathers may have feelings regarding themselves being interviewed with a woman while being recorded about their parenting and experience in a program. I relied on the fatherhood programs to influence noncustodial father, which met the requirements to be participants of the study. I also relied on the participants to provide correct data for

the research. The research study was conducted with face-to-face interviews; therefore, my interpretation was a possible limitation to the study.

### **Significance of the Study**

As noted above, Shirley, Mary, and Roger (2015) suggested that future research increase an understanding of helpful strategies through father perception of helpful strategies of fathering programs; therefore, this study address the documented gap in literature related to noncustodial fathers. The noncustodial fathers in the research allowed fatherhood programs to be informed of noncustodial fathers' perspective of the influence the fatherhood program's experience has had on them.

### **Significance to Practice**

The research topic was significant to the field of human services and psychology because it will allow community leaders, stakeholders, fathering programs, and individuals in the psychology field to acquire the ability to address and understand noncustodial fathers' perspectives on effective interventions gained from fatherhood programs as it addresses the phenomenon of interest.

### **Significance to Theory**

This study was unique because I reviewed if the participants' needs outlined by Maslow's hierarchy of needs were addressed in the fathering program. Maslow suggests in his hierarchy that there are needs that individuals obtain at distinct stages within their lives (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 1970). The results I found from the research can inform more effective interventions for fatherhood programs, which could potentially improve



noncustodial fathers' ability to receive fulfillment of obtaining needs aligned with Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

### **Significance to Social Change**

The results I found from the research study could increase the effectiveness of support workers who give services to African American noncustodial fathers and promote positive social change. Families, fathers, and communities could benefit from the results of this research study by increasing their knowledge they can gain from the participants' reported experiences of how the fatherhood program has influenced their lives linked to their fathering role. The experience of the noncustodial fathers could support the modification of fatherhood programs and how society view the fathering role of noncustodial fathers, and support suggestions for father-child relationships.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 1, I introduced how the involvement of noncustodial fathers in their child's life is affected. While I explored current research regarding how the relationship between noncustodial fathers and their children are influenced, I revealed that there is not a substantial amount of research on how fatherhood programs' intervention fulfilled the noncustodial fathers' needs as mentioned from each tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. I conducted the generative qualitative research study to discover what specific perceptions and experiences the fathers developed from their participation in a fatherhood program, and if their needs from each tier in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory were fulfilled from the strategies they received from the program. I attempted to fill the gap in literature by focusing on African American noncustodial fathers' perspective of how a

fatherhood program influenced their needs outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Chapter 1 also included significance, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study, which linked the reviewed literature that is found in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth review of literature about Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the relationship noncustodial fathers had with their children. I reviewed literature found on Maslow hierarchy of needs, single parenting, noncustodial father involvement, barriers of the noncustodial father, fatherhood policies, supportive resources, and the fatherhood program. In Chapter 2, I included an exploration of how the relationship between noncustodial fathers and their children are impacted. In addition, I explored how the involvement of noncustodial fathers in their children lives could ultimately benefit the development of the child. At the completion of Chapter 2, I discuss Chapter 3. In Chapter 3, I provide a review of the research studies' design in Chapter 3. In Chapter 3, I include an explanation of the procedure of the study, information gathered, description of participants, and the sampling method.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In Chapter 2, I review the background of the study. I provide an overview of the available literature on the father-child relationship with noncustodial fathers. I include a detailed synopsis of how research has influenced the understanding of noncustodial fathers' relationship with their children and of fatherhood programs and policies. I organized the literature into distinct categories. The first section includes the study's conceptual framework. In the second section, I explored the role of the single parent and how the role influenced parents and children. I explored how the involvement of fathers has been found to influence the father's children, in the third section. The fourth section includes barriers of the noncustodial father to better understand the areas the fathers have identified to contribute to their relationship with their children and others involved in their parental role. Finally, I conclude the chapter by identifying the need to explore noncustodial fathers' perspective of their involvement in a fatherhood program. I also review the literature associated with noncustodial father involvement in a fatherhood program.

My purpose of the completion of this study was to understand noncustodial African American fathers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the paternal strategies taught in a fathering program and how the program has affected their fathering experience.

My goal of the study was for me to address the established gap in literature. I have found that literature neglects to increase an understanding of the specific

interventions from the fathering program which increase father-child involvement and fulfill, noncustodial fathers' needs. Maslow's motivation theory consists of needs outlined in his hierarchy of needs pyramid (Maslow, 1943), therefore I used the hierarchy to review if the fathers' needs were fulfilled.

The data I collected from this research study include responses for the interview questions about the lived experiences of noncustodial fathers. I have helped, through after the completion of the research, to name the different support for noncustodial fathers, the impact of noncustodial fathers' involvement with their children, and perspectives of the noncustodial father-child relationship. There is a plethora of literature on child development; however, the father-child relationship is a growing topic that addresses the child's academic, social, health, and emotional development (Threlfall & Kohl, 2015).

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The literature review for this study is composed of several source searches from the following databases: ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Emeraldinsight, Walden University Library, SpringerLink, Science Direct, Google Scholar PsycArticles, and SocIndex. I sought the relevant literature, which I searched from the years 2010–2018. I examined the literature on noncustodial fathers' parental involvement, Maslow hierarchy of needs, fathering programs, and influence of fathering on their children. I used the following terms to conduct the search; *noncustodial fathers, def needs, Maslow hierarchy of needs, African American fathers, father perception, emotional support, academic support, the health of children, father's attitude of involvement with their children, noncustodial*

*father role, barriers of noncustodial fathers, noncustodial father groups, and noncustodial fathers' perception of their children needs.* I found literature during the literature review resulted in a larger quantity of older research regarding the conceptual framework rather than current. I found older references while reviewing literature and I used the literature in this literature review for that reason, in addition to the original founder of the conceptual framework.

### **Conceptual Foundation**

Researchers have focused on how the active and inactive fathering role has affected children, in addition to how there have been established programs to address barriers of the fathering role (Bartels & Kelly-Trombley, 2014). There has been a growing movement toward increasing noncustodial fathers' involvement in their children's lives. The Claims Resolution Act of 2010, which was a fatherhood grant under President Obama, awarded grants to states with the attempt to increase supportive resources to fathers (Mazza & Perry, 2017). Paternal incarceration has been named in having an impact on families and on children's well-being; therefore, support to fathers is utilized in prisons (Fowler, Rossiter, Dawson, Jackson & Power, 2017). Furthermore, Lippold and Sorensen (2012) noted many fathers have identified lack of employment as a barrier they face; therefore, the New York legislature has suggested employment support to fathers to assist fathers in meeting their financial obligations developed through child supporting agencies. Researchers suggested that fathering service workers have an obligation to learn the needs of the father to better include them in the life of their children (Mazzo & Perry, 2017). Lippold and Sorensen (2012) discussed there is a need

to strengthen and understand noncustodial fathers' issues with meeting child support obligations using supportive practices.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory that is used to examine the hierarchy of physiological, safety, social, esteem, self-actualization, and other human needs (Maslow, 1943; Tikkanen, 2009). Maslow's original hierarchy of needs has been used throughout social science and business to find the motivation of a specific sample (Zalenski & Raspa, 2006). Motivation is defined as the force that encourages individuals to improve their performance to achieve a goal (Ta'rifin, 2018). Maslow believed people are motivated to achieve specific needs; therefore, he developed a pyramid designed to reflect that human needs are ordered in the pyramid to move from the bottom to the top of the pyramid, indicating that is how each need is obtained (Beatty, 2018; Maslow, 1943). Saeednia and Nor (2013) mentioned the original Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) had five basic needs that include self-actualization, esteem, belongingness, safety, and physiological needs. A more recent version of the pyramid was altered in 2010 which replaced self-actualization at the top of the hierarchy with parenting (Griskevicius, Neuberg, Kenrick, & Schaller, 2010; Schaller, Kenrick, Neel, & Neuberg, 2017). Griskevicius et al. (2010) suggest that the hierarchy of human motives should reflect the needs to overlap, indicating a continued process of the needs continuing throughout life, rather than occurring in chronological order.

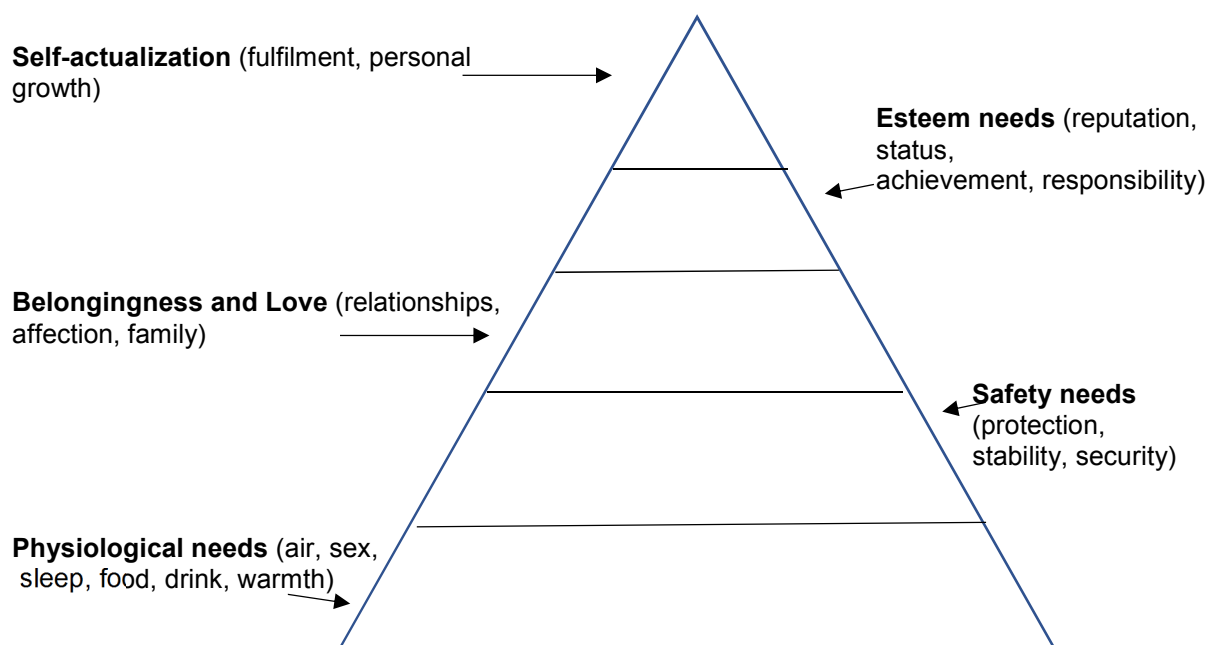
Due to the change of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it is important to understand the levels included within the pyramid and I will focus on the original needs suggested

from Maslow; however, I will not refrain from mentioning the participants' fulfillment of their needs from Maslow's expanded hierarchy of needs later in the analysis review if the needs are presented. The various levels of the hierarchy include transcendence, self-actualization, aesthetic, cognitive, esteem, belongingness, safety, and physiological needs (1970). Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is the most powerful tool to explain motivation of humans (Nor & Saeednia, 2013).

The following figure is a representation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Figure 1

*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid*



*Note.* Maslow's original hierarchy of needs pyramid. I used Maslow's original needs for his motivation theory to determine if these needs were fulfilled by the fatherhood programs.

### **Physiological and Safety Needs**

When physiological needs, which are the most important needs, are not satisfied, the human body cannot function at its best (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 1954). Maslow named the physiological needs to be sleep, clothing, shelter, food, air, sexual reproduction, and water, due to them all being needed for human survival (Arnowitz, 2018). In addition to physiological needs, Maslow included safety into the bottom level of the pyramid. Dunn is a researcher that conducted a study to determine if a housing program met the needs of residents and he used Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory as a theoretical framework to guide the study (Dunn, 2017). The author further aligned with Maslow's level of physiological and safety needs, in which it finds that the safety need satisfies individuals' needs in different situations and it is relevant. Nor and Saeednia (2013) mentioned that the basic needs of individuals are the goal from their research; however, the basic needs of adults and children have been found to differ and their differences should be considered when reviewing the needs of all ages.

Maslow (1943) included financial security, safety toward situations, wellness, and health in his second level, safety needs. Financial security includes obtaining employment or a source of obtaining money, contributing money, or saving money. Residing in a safe living area and having safety measures established for the keeping of self, others, and items is included within the safety level. Obtaining a healthcare provider, health insurance, and healthcare facilities are included within the safety level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 1954).

### **Love, Social, and Esteem Needs**



Maslow's third level, which is social needs include friendships, family, community and social groups, religious and spiritual organizations and affiliation, and personal relationships (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 1987). Social needs assist in decreasing or eliminating loneliness and other mood concerns. Maslow's fourth level of his hierarchy includes how individuals feel about themselves and their worth. The psychological needs of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are formed with the use of the levels, self-esteem, and the social need level.

### **Cognitive and Aesthetics Needs**

In Maslow's eight tier pyramid the cognitive level is the fifth level, while aesthetic needs are the sixth level (Maslow, 1970). Cognitive needs address the need to understand, explore, receive meaning, predict, and obtain knowledge in different situations within life (Meishar-Tal, Pieterse, 2017). Cognitive needs refer to the ability for people to understand, and solve issues (Fisher, 1990; Khan, 2017). The cognitive needs level includes the gathering of information on an issue (Rauschnabel & Rossmann, 2017). Cognitive needs should not be blocked, if they are needs on the hierarchy are threatened, due to the impact knowledge has on the basic needs within the hierarchy of needs

The aesthetic level includes beauty, balance, and appreciation in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Partalidou, & Anthopoulou, 2017). Chae and Evenson (2014) reviewed aesthetic needs to include design principles and art elements. Yu and Wang (2018) stated that aesthetic experience is the ability of individuals to understand themselves and the world, otherwise known as the discovery of self. The authors also

noted that the aesthetic experience contributes to personality development and the healthy development and keeping of a decent quality of life (Yu & Wang, 2018). When aesthetic needs are met, individuals are satisfied with art, music, and beauty they take an interest to (Hou, 2017; Liu, 2016).

### **Self-Actualization**

In the self-actualization state, individuals listen to themselves and behave according to decisions they make, are responsible for themselves, and are selfless (Maslow, 1965). Self-actualization is found as an individual's need for self-fulfillment (Maslow, 1965). After facing survival and safety issues, self-actualization follows (Guidera, 2018). Maslow identified fifteen characteristics to be associated with a self-actualized individual, including: accepting themselves, having an unusual sense of humor, being highly creative, objectively viewing life, being problem-centered, having a need for privacy, possessing strong ethical and moral standards, being concerned for the welfare of others, and maintaining and establishing deep interpersonal relationships (1970). Zalenski and Raspa (2006) named self-actualization as the ability of an individual to be aware of his or her potential.

### **Transcendence**

Transcendence is the eighth level in Maslow's eighth tier motivational model (Maslow, 1970). Transcendence is defined as a belief that individuals are motivated by science and an experience beyond their normal belief (Westgate, 1996). Maslow (1969) defined transcendence as a loss of self-awareness and self-consciousness, which includes individuals not being concerned with being popular at proper times. Venter and Venter

(2010) mentioned that Maslow added the transcendence need, which is the need that address how during an individual's lifetime they could obtain a level of consciousness from life changing experiences. Maslow's hierarchy of needs identifies the needs individuals have during their lives, which are associated with the reason for their behavior. Obtaining knowledge of the needs can increase the awareness of the different parenting styles that are associated with the needs of the noncustodial fathers.

### **Literature Review**

To better understand how the life of a child can be influenced by a noncustodial father's interaction, a better understanding of the effects of single parenting was warranted. When there is no marriage or cohabitation between parents, the parents are labeled single parents (Lansford, 2016). When the father is absent from the family home, the mother is referred to as a single mother (Chetty, Hendren, & Katz, 2016). While many single parents are female, there has been a rise in male single parent households (Ayer, Kohl, Malsberger, & Burgette, 2016). In 2017, the U.S Census Bureau found that 11,667,000 single parent homes existed in the United States, and that 9,497,000 of the single parent homes were headed by mothers (Helgren, 2018). Single parenting is also suggested to be caused by: divorce, abandonment, substance abuse, residence of the custodial and noncustodial parent (Arditti, Molloy, Spiers, and Johnson, 2018). Incarceration has been a cause of single parenting; the largest portion of children who have incarcerated fathers in prison has been identified as African American children (Wakefield, Lee, Wildeman, 2016; Wakefield & Wildeman (2015).

## **Family Structure**

Family structure influences the outcome of children's development (Amato & Patterson, 2017). Substance abuse and mental health have been named as factors that influence the relationship between some of the family members within a family (Ayer et al, 2013). The authors also noted that the father's mental health and use of drugs did not influence their children's mental health. However, family structure instability and the arrangement of the family affects the outcome of a child's life (Ayer et al., 2016; Brooks-Gunn et al., 2015). In addition to understanding linkage between family structure and children's well-being, Brown, Manning, and Stykes (2015) mentioned the structure of families does indeed support overall development of children.

### **Noncustodial Father Involvement**

Noncustodial fathers who are actively involved with their children have been found to be proper models for their children, since they often exhibit lower negative and inappropriate behaviors (Coates & Phares, 2014). Saleh (2003) said that fathers who are actively involved in their children's lives and who receive parental support from fathering programs and assistance provide beneficial fathering practices that contribute to the overall development of their children. Active fathering relationships have also been found to influence the decrease of delinquent behaviors among children (Yoder, Brisson, & Lopez, 2016). Fathers are known to be important in the development of their children (Arditti, 1990; Kelly, 2018). Early father involvement has shown to have positive outcomes on cognitive development (Jeynes, 2015). Fathers' involvement is important to the well-being of families and their positive involvement with their children contribute to

their children's well-being, as well as their children being responsible and engaged (Jeynes, 2015). When fathers are physically and emotionally involved with their children, the children preserved higher cognition, a better understanding of interacting, socializing, and displaying their emotions with others (Kelly, 2018). Additionally, father involvement positively affects the physical, mental, and social development of children (Campbell, Howard, Rayford, & Gordon, 2015; Coates & Phares, 2014).

In other words, positive effects have been shown to exist in the lives of children when their fathers are involved (Hellfeldt, Kallstrom, & Nylander, 2018). Father involvement has been found to improve children's academic success and reduce both delinquency and drug use (Jones & Mosher, 2013). Single parent families, when compared to two parent families, have reflected that there are negative effects on the educational and social development of the children (Hawthorn & Lennings, 2008). Furthermore, when a child has emotional and behavioral issues, the relationship between the father and child can be poor (Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018). The interaction a father has with their child has been found to be influenced by when fathers experience stress. A linkage between the stress a father has and his influence on the behavior of their children through interaction has been found (Lee, Pace, Lee, & Knauer, 2018). Fathers have traditionally been viewed as being advisors to their children, supplying positive encouragement and being investors in their children's education (Jethwani, Mincy & Klempin, 2014). Jethwani et al. (2014) recommended that responsible fatherhood programs and policy facilitators suggest involvement of fathers in their children's education to promote active participation of the children to plan and reach their

educational goals. When children enter school, they have a better success rate when their fathers are highly involved with them during infant and toddler ages (Baker, 2017).

### **Barriers of the Noncustodial Father**

#### **Psychosocial influences**

Jethwani et al. (2014) named barriers that noncustodial fathers with diverse racial, occupational, and educational backgrounds face to remain involved with their children. These include role modeling, active involvement, communication, conflict with the biological mother, education of the parents, and economic status (Jethwani et al., 2014). Issues fathers have been found to have impact the father-child relationship and child rearing, however; services are attempted to increase parent's ability to control his/her children's activities, parental lifestyle, and the involvement of the legal system, including child support and custody orders (Newman & Grauerholz, 2002). A combination of psychosocial factors, demographic, being misunderstood, and personal characteristics affect the contact African American fathers have with their children (Clark et al., 2015; Hall, 1995; Vogt Yuan, 2016). Noncustodial fathers usually face a challenge with keeping contact with their children (Vogt Yuan, 2016). Vogt Yuan (2016) found that noncustodial fathers were found to experience a higher level of psychological distress compared to married parents, which was like the level of single mothers. Arditti (1995) additionally discussed that divorced men sufferer emotionally during and after the separation from their marriage, including feelings of anxiety, depression, loss of self-esteem, and guilt. The perspective fathers have of their fathering role, the relationship they have with their children's mother, their own work schedules, having multiple

children, and their physical proximity of their children impacted their relationship they had with their children (Hamer, 1998). Brown, Bell, & Patterson (2016) reviewed that relatives of repeated, incarcerated African American fathers have been found to have a poorer health status, due to a larger amount of psychological distress when compared to relatives of African American fathers who have not been incarcerated. Furthermore, the mental health of men has been found to be influenced by the distress of his father's incarceration (Brown, Bell, and Patterson, 2016). Additionally, fathers who lived in urban settings were found to be more involved in their children's lives than fathers who lived in rural settings (Martinez & Salgado, 2018).

### **Homelessness**

Among the barriers of the father, being homeless is a struggle for noncustodial fathers to keep a relationship with their children due to their lack of stable housing (Ferguson and Morely, 2011). Literature has examined that homeless noncustodial fathers is clear, and researchers found that in 2011, 29% of noncustodial fathers were found to be homeless (Ferguson & Morely, 2011; Rice et.al, 2017). Barrett-Rivera and Lindstrom (2013) explored how fathers face barriers when they are homeless, due to the stress of having a lack of resources, the changes of the relationship between the father and the child, and the perspective of a homeless father caring for his child. Burt (2001) mentioned that children who have a homeless father will usually live with their mothers, who are not homeless. Homeless noncustodial fathers struggle to maintain housing and the role of being a father (Ferguson, Morley, 2011). Homeless fathers are viewed as a less discussed group among policymakers, even though family homelessness is a well-

known topic around the world (Pattnaik & Medeiros, 2013) Roche, Barker, and McArthur (2017) reviewed how homeless fathers distance themselves from their children in an attempt for the fathers to avoid recognizing their inability to fulfill the role of what is said by society to be the normal representation of fatherhood. Rice et al. (2017) explored eleven males' perspectives regarding residing in a homeless shelter and how the results of being homeless caused psychological and physical challenges, which ultimately caused them to experience low-self-esteem and limit their fulfilling of demonstrating what they believed they should reflect of their role as a father.

### **Employment and Finance**

The occupation of the father and his work schedule can be a barrier in father-child relationships because a challenging work schedule can discourage the involvement in child raising (Martinez & Salgado, 2018). The Fragile Families Study identified that fathers' child support debt is an important barrier to father involvement with their children, including less engaging contact with the daily activities of their children (Turner & Waller, 2017). Fathers with a moderate income usually have a higher possibility of being in contact with their children compared to fathers who do not have moderate incomes (Guarin & Meyer, 2018). Hamer (1998) found that many noncustodial fathers made a significant amount of effort to uphold a relationship with their children, but that those fathers who did not meet their financial obligations as a father also decreased their interaction among their children (Cuesta & Meyer, 2018; Hamer, 1998).



## **Community Resources**

Noncustodial fathers have been found to take part in community resources, such as fatherhood programs. The services available to fathers influence fathers' parental role and knowledge of added support available to them that can increase healthy relationships and self-worth for African American men and their families (Frey, Farrell, Cotton, Lathen, & Marks, 2014). Many fathers have been found to have an interest within fatherhood programs and support the programs (Coakely, Shears, & Randolph, 2014; Ferguson and Morely, 2011). Baum (2017) discussed that female social workers should be aware of how their own relationship with their father could affect the interventions they provide to the fathers who are recipients of their services. Therefore, the quality of care toward the fathers could be biased rather than objective, due to the workers' perspectives negatively influencing the encouragement of the father-child relationship (Baum, 2017). Three fundamental issues that were determined to impact the relationship between the social welfare service workers and the fathers in the child welfare services include power relations, communication differences, and mutual fear (Baum, 2017). Allport et al. (2018) said that effectively engaging fathers and addressing the need to improve the families' health, attitudes, and beliefs improve the fathers' participation in clinic and other settings.

## **Co-parenting**

Cooper, Beck, Hognas, and Swanson (2015) linked successful co-parenting to positive parenting and child adjustment, due to the ability of both parents to work together with the upbringing of their child. Appropriate co-parenting is suggested and

encouraged in courts (Perrin, 2017). Restrictive gatekeeping behavior from the mother can decrease the access of fathers to their children (Coates & McHale, 2018). Hardesty, Crossman, and Khaw (2016) associated poor co-parenting with negative effects for the mother, in addition to the management of co-parenting with an abusive former partner. A history of domestic violence between the father and the mother creates tense interactions between the father and child (Wright & Jefferson, 2014). Poor co-parenting has been found to predict attention problems among children (Christopher, Umemura, Jacobvitz, Hazen, & Mann, 2015). The relationship between the noncustodial father and the mother of his child affects the frequency fathers have with their children African American children are twice as likely to grow up in homes without their biological father; therefore, noncustodial fathers are more prevalent in families of African American ethnicity (Jeynes, 2015).

### **Emotional**

Fathers have reported to have feelings of grief when they end visits with their children, due to their children crying when they leave them; additionally, fathers have reported anxiety of leaving their children (Brandth, 2016; Lewis & O'Brien, 1987). Through the participation of fatherhood programs, noncustodial fathers can participate and work toward overcoming the barriers that have been mentioned in this reading. The programs have been developed to provide the noncustodial fathers with an opportunity to be involved.

### **Fatherhood Policies and Programs**

Fatherhood grants are intended to help fathers to manage circumstances that impact economic issues for their families and themselves, as well as to maintain healthy relationships with their children (Avellar, Covington, Moore, Patnik, & Wu, 2018). Edin, Tach, and Nelson (2015) suggested that policymakers continue to develop laws and policies to strengthen the father-child relationship. President Clinton suggested that surveys be administered to fatherhood programs and welfare services to improve management of fathers in research and to increase fathers' involvement with their children (Jones & Mosher, 2013). Campbell, Howard, Rayford, and Gordon (2015) reviewed the Connecticut Comprehensive Outcome Review and acknowledged that efficient information needed to be added to child welfare services

Hayes, Jones, Silverstein, and Auerbach (2010) found that multiple supportive services for fathers, including fatherhood programs, help to improve the positive participation of fathers in their children's lives. According to Threlfall and Kohl (2015), since 2006, more than \$300 million has been given to Responsible Fatherhood grants to promote responsible parenting strategies and healthy marriages. Stahlschmidt, Threlfall, Seay, Lewis, and Kohl (2013) said that programs for parenting have been found to improve father-child relationships by increasing the fathers' knowledge of effective parenting strategies. Maxwell et al. (2012) found that when fathers took part in fatherhood programs early in their child's life, they were found to have more involvement with their children, which resulted in better father-child relationships. McBride et al. (2017) have determined that, due to the positive interaction of fathers toward their

disabled children, fatherhood supportive programs and services encourage the beliefs of fathers to be useful when the development of services are provided to disabled children.

Sattler and Thomas (2016) pointed out that supporting and educating single parents can strengthen parenting abilities of single parents while offering the opportunity for human service workers to express their perspective regarding parent challenges and practices that better provide support to the parents. Even though co-parenting is encouraged, studies have determined that African American men have been found to be successful when raised by single mothers and the results from the study could be used to educate the community, educate counselors, and to provide support and encouragement in African American, single parent homes (Wilson, Henriksen, Bustamante, and Irby, 2014).

Arroyo and Peek (2015) determined that a lower amount of research has been found, which give the perspective of child welfare caseworkers toward non-custodial fathers, that ultimately assist in the development of fatherhood programs. The perspective of child welfare caseworkers toward non-custodial fathers, and the education of the case worker, all influenced the parental support from child welfare workers (Arroyo & Peek, 2015).

### **Fathers' Participation in Research**

Fathers' participation in research has influenced the development and management of social welfare policies about fathering and the fathers' participation in research (Ayer et al., 2016). Stahlschmidt et al. (2013) aimed to identify better strategies in the recruitment of urban African American fathers for fatherhood programs with the

use of semistructured interviews and a nationwide sample. Different strategies have been used to increase the participation of fathers in fatherhood programs (Stahlschmidt et al., 2013). The use of noncustodial fathers in research is important, including the use of community agencies that partners with the researcher, word of mouth, and informing potential participants they could receive incentives if they participated (Julion, 2016).

Ayer et al. (2016) shared that efforts to improve the engagement of fathers in research can help manage fatherhood policies to improve father-child relationships. Identifying fathers' perception of the benefits from fatherhood programs and the barriers of participating in the programs can guide development of fatherhood support (Anderson, Kohler, & Letieca, 2002). Different grants, which include Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families as well as Maryland Department of Human Resources Community Services Administration, have taken part in research studies pertaining to fatherhood programs (Anderson et al., 2002). The Father Initiative is a program that was developed to increase father involvement in their child's life, which increase the father's knowledge of how to address owed child support and care for their child (Luckey & Potts, 2011). A fatherhood program that underwent rigorous testing in a randomized controlled trial was developed with the guidance of African American fathers, with the purpose of supporting the fathers' involvement in helping risky behaviors in their preadolescent male children (Caldwell, Antonakos, Assari, Kruger, Loney, & Niai, 2014).

### **Fulfilled Needs in Parenthood**

When parents' needs are met, their parental role improves due to improved mental and physical energy and ability to better handle situations (ParentsTogether, 2014). Fathers need reliable information from professionals and the acknowledgment that they are equal in importance to the mother (Palsson, Persson, Ekelin, Hallstrom, & Kvist, 2017). Evaluating fulfillment in parenting is suggested in future research studies, including understanding the needs of fathers (Fagan & Kaufman, 2015; Trahan & Cheung, 2018). A parenting program, ParentsTogether (2014) asked 1,674 parents open-ended questions about challenges they faced and what they needed in their role as a parent. The parents were given the opportunity to provide needs they had, including: financial support, more time, better self-care, policy changes, better discipline strategies for their child, better parenting strategies, better balance with work and life, being patient, and needing more time with other adults (ParentsTogether, 2014).

Hairston (2017) discussed that fathers need to feel that they are needed, supported, and that they are good parents. Physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, and intimacy are psychological needs parents should obtain, including fathers in order to improve their parenting practices (Patel, Begley, Premberg, & Schaufelberger, 2019; Scourfield, Allely, Coffey, & Yates, 2016). To help facilitate the needs of fathers, the Obama administration formed the fatherhood legislation, named the Claims Resolution Act of 2010, which led to grants being awarded in 28 states to fund responsible fatherhood programs (Karberg, Aldoney, & Cabrea, 2017). The administration identified that noncustodial fathers had a need to learn how to meet financial obligations, provide positive parenting skills, learn how to engage with their

children, receive guidance with improving their relationships with their child's mother, learn to be more responsible, and that the fathers needed to receive support with maintaining healthy marriages (Karberg et al., 2017). These programs have been shown to help fulfill Maslow's hierarchy of needs, although Xue, Shorey, Wang, and He (2018) found that younger fathers need informational and psychological support more often than older fathers. Consequently, more research is needed to understand how fathering programs can fulfill the psychological needs as defined by Maslow.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Throughout the reviewed literature, varied factors were found to support the basis for my study. I provided a background of what a noncustodial father is and how their role in their children lives affect their children, in addition to what fatherhood programs are and their role in supporting healthy development of children and positive, active involvement of fathers in their children lives. I reviewed the various stages of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and explored how each need, according to Maslow must be reached prior to moving to the next need in his hierarchy (Maslow, 1943).

Researchers have found that the role of noncustodial fathers can positively and negatively affect the lives of their children (Hoffman, 1995; Mazzo & Perry, 2017). Fathers have provided that their parental duties and their relationship with their children has affected their role of providing parental duties. The fatherhood programs mentioned in the literature supports the idea of continuing to improve fatherhood program to strengthen father-child relationships. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the

methodology for my study, the sample size, participant selection, ethical considerations, data analysis, and data collection.



## **Chapter 3: Research Method**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to identify the perspectives of African American noncustodial fathers who participated in a fatherhood program and whether their needs were being met. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) are the needs I reviewed to be determine if they were fulfilled through the perspective of the fathers in the study. The findings of this study can support the development and implementation of strategies that can be used in fatherhood programs. The earlier chapters provided research that identified factors associated with barriers noncustodial fathers have, the influence of community support for fathers, and the relationship between noncustodial fathers and the father-child relationship. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research methods that were used in this study and reviewed the association between the noncustodial fathers' needs based from Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and the strategies the fathers have learned and practiced from the fatherhood program.

In this chapter, I review the research question for the research study, identify relevant studies, and provide studies that are relevant to this study. I also addressed the research design and approach that were used in this study. In the following section, I address the design and rationale of the study; then, I discuss my role as the researcher. I highlight how the sample was achieved, the instrumentation that was used within the research study, collection of data, and data analysis.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to be a part of the data collection by gathering pictures or words and analyzing the information that is collected from the

participant (Austin & Sutton, 2014). Collection of data in qualitative research includes, but is not limited to, interview and observations. The generic qualitative research methodology is a suitable approach when the researcher intends to investigate a specific issue in a research study (Jamshed, 2014). In the end of this chapter, I focus on the concept of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and a summary of the review of the chapter.

## **Research Design and Rationale**

### **Research Question**

Information I obtained from this study addressed the gap concerning if the fulfillment of noncustodial fathers' needs, identified from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, are fulfilled by participation of fathers in fatherhood programs. The process of inquiry is designed to address the following research question for the study: How do African American noncustodial fathers perceive fathering programs' role in fulfilling their hierarchy of needs?

### **Research Designs**

There are different qualitative approaches to research, including phenomenology, grounded theory, case study method, and ethnography. However, a generic qualitative method was the most appropriate for this study due to it not claiming the rules of one specific qualitative method (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). Percy et al. (2015) further mentioned that the generative method approach relies on the use of semi or fully structured interviews, from a sample of individuals that share their experiences about real-world events. Cronin and Lowes (2015) said that phenomenological research puts

the experience of humans as the focus of the process of the research study. According to Meyer (2015), case study explorers use a variety of data sources within research studies. In ethnographic qualitative approach, researchers engage in studying the customs of the target population (Carbaugh & Boromisza-Habashi, 2015). I was able to gain more insight into the perceptions of the noncustodial fathers by using the generic qualitative method. I did not aim to build or develop a theory in the research study as in the case of grounded theory. Ostini, Martini, and Kairuz (2016) suggest to focus on identifying patterns and categories with the aim of describing phenomena from the results of the participants and understand the participants' perspectives in generic qualitative studies, therefore I found patterns and gain understanding of perspectives of the participants in the research study. According to Percy et al. (2015), a generic qualitative design can be used when the research is not suited for other qualitative designs such as grounded theory, phenomenology, case study, or ethnography. Kahlke (2014) mentioned that generic qualitative researchers avoid aligning with one specific methodology and have the intent to better understand information from the participants from the research study. Qualitative research methods can lead to the discovery and understanding of the perspectives of the noncustodial fathers involved in the study. Generic qualitative method combines techniques from different methods and does not claim a particular methodological viewpoint (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). Quantitative approaches would not allow me to insert myself as the interviewer within the study, thus ultimately being able to gather the lived experiences of data using semistructured interviews. Quantitative

studies typically rely on tests of statistical significance and analysis (Paquot & Plonsky, 2017).

### **Role of the Researcher**

According to LaRoss, Bennett and Gelles (1981) the role of the researcher is to be honest and ethical during and after the research process. As I do not live in the environment of the participants, I had the role of an outside observer who was empathic, neutral, objective, nonthreatening, and organized. I was an instrument of data collection, which means that, other than providing demographic intake questionnaires, I attempted to access the thoughts and feelings of the participants. Sutton & Austin (2015) suggested researchers gather information from participants to better understand the perspective of participants. I am English-speaking; therefore, the participants needed to speak, read, and write from the English language to allow a better analysis of their responses. I transcribed responses of the participants to provide the true responses of the participants and the use of an audio recorder was utilized. I documented any changes I experienced during the research and determined if the changes affected the study. I did not share any experiences of others. My final role as the researcher was to remain as objective and unbiased as possible in my role of the researcher.

### **Researcher Bias**

My experiences, values, beliefs, and opinions helped to form the design of the study. I am a human services professional and my experience has been working with individuals and families within the community. Some researchers have attempted to achieve the goal of being objective; however, by being honest about the background of

the researcher, one cannot completely separate his/her interests and experiences from a research study (Austin & Sutton, 2014). I have worked in the field of human services for more than 10 years and held some of the following roles: mental health professional for adults and children, community support worker, and a referral source. Qualitative studies can decrease bias by being transparent, coherent, and having characteristics of trustworthiness and impact (Robinson, 2013). According to Shamoo and Resnik (2014), researchers should be aware of avoiding assumptions of bias or passing judgment regarding the participant's response or position in the study. I demonstrated objective behaviors during the study by being open-minded and accepting the participants' feedback as rich information.

I have sole custody of my two children who are both minors; therefore, I have personal experience working with human service providers to gain a better understanding of noncustodial and custodial parent rights. Even though I am a single mother, I separated my role as a mother from the study so readers could gain a better understanding of the intent of the research study. I have been the facilitator of a youth group in the community and a women's group for over 2 years. Both groups have allowed me to engage in interaction with families affected by several different concerns, including active and inactive fathering practices. I remained objective during the research study and used an interview guide. During all interviews I maintained a copy of interview questions to better obtain important data (Appendix D). Patton (2015) mentioned that the interviewer should not be judgmental of the interviewee; instead, the interviewer should understand the perception of the interviewee. The development of an interview guide

assists with trustworthiness and maintaining the objectivity of studies (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016).

### **Addressing Researcher Bias**

Professional roles in employment trained me to be well-rounded with the professional and ethical standards of human services and the importance of human rights (Johnson, Sparkman-Key, and Kalkbrenner, 2017). I had a desire to strengthen the relationships between families, communities, and individuals. My experiences affected the interpretation of the interview data, the research question, and the methodology. I wanted to contextualize my personal bias and avoid influencing the analysis of the research data. According to Marcus, Gelleri, Gurt, Hergert, and Weigelt (2016), when studies are performed in an honest and organized manner, bias is eliminated in studies. I journaled and expressed my thoughts regarding the study from the beginning to the completion of the research, as well as to support my note taking regarding concerns or issues which may have developed. I followed the ethical standards and protocol that were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and my committee. My IRB approval number was 06-05-19-0267784.

### **Methodology**

The methodology section includes the steps of identifying my participant selection and data analysis. I explained each step below with detailed information and I clarified the methods that were used in the study. I also reviewed the instrumentation that was used in the research study.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Purposeful sampling also known as purposive sampling, was used in the study to represent the targeted population for the research and it better identified the specific area the participants were selected from. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) said that purposive sampling is a commonly used nonprobability sampling. The purpose of sampling was to obtain opinions about experiences, events, and the collection of data from questionnaires, surveys, and interviews (Bellamy, Ostini, Martini, & Kairuz, 2016). Purposeful sampling is appropriate to ensure participants meet the requirements of a researcher (Palinkas et al., 2015)

### **Participant Identification**

Participants self-identified as African American and male. Braun (2017) noted that the age of participants in research studies should be considered. The participants were fathers who were older than 21 years of age to increase the possibility of them having a school-aged child who was at least between 5 and 17 years of age. The father must not have lived with his biological child and had been officially considered noncustodial by the courts. The fathers must have been involved in a fathering program, been honest, completed the demographic questionnaire, and named the fatherhood program they participate in, which remained confidential.

### **Participant Selection**

I used purposeful sampling to obtain participants from fathering groups. I interviewed African American noncustodial fathers who were in fathering programs. I partnered with local fatherhood programs that focused on providing support to fathers

who aimed at teaching fathers' strategies to increase and maintain their fathering role with their children. The programs were not linked to any other current research study. I contacted the programs determine if the programs could help in the recruitment of participants for the study. Eligible participants had to meet the specific criteria to be included in the research study. The criteria included: being English-speaking, an African American, noncustodial father, and having at least one school-aged child while they participated in the program. I recruited all potential participants in the same manner. Participants had to complete a demographic questionnaire, which was provided at the site of fatherhood programs and services to ensure they met the research study's participant expectations and be eligible as a participant. I asked all potential participants to put their demographic questionnaires in a locked box at each site. The locked box was in a locked facility to secure the demographic questionnaires. I checked the locked box often to identify potential participants who met the expectations for eligibility until saturation of the data was determined. African American noncustodial fathers who met the eligibility requirements to participate in the study contacted me or I contacted them by phone or email and scheduled a time to interview at a local library's meeting room. I briefed eligible participants prior to the interviews I conducted. The participants signed a consent form prior to the interviews on the interview day. The consent form was signed prior to the interview to increase ability for the participants to receive all information needed for the study as well as eliminating issues with meeting in the future to complete an additional step for research.



**Sample Size**

According to Chesnay (2014), the ideal sample size of a qualitative study should be between five and twenty participants, depending on the number of individuals able to participate and the nature of the research topic. The exact sample size of a qualitative study is typically unknown prior to the conducting of the study (Land & Harvey, 2016). The authors further noted the researcher should expect to recruit between five and twenty-five participants (Land & Harvey, 2016). When I determined data saturation occurred, I found that six participants were included within this study. The sample size affects findings from research in relevance (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). According to Saunders et al. (2018), saturation is necessary in qualitative research. I used saturation in this study, and I found that saturation was when researchers obtained information from participants who shared repetitive information that lacks new findings (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I started with one participant; however, the richness of the data could guide the overall number of participants for the research study.

**Instrumentation**

The instrument I used in the research study was in the form of semistructured interviews. My copy of the interview questions was an instrument that was used in each interview (Appendix D). According to Jamshed (2014), in-depth, semistructured interviews are an appropriate interview strategy when interviewing others to receive an understanding of the interviewee. The noncustodial fathers were expected to take part in in-depth semistructured interviews. The interview questions I developed helped to

identify if the noncustodial father's needs, which were guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, were being fulfilled through their participation in a fatherhood program.

The use of semistructured interviews allowed the participants to share their perspective regarding the research topic in a manner which allowed them to openly share their feelings and experiences. The noncustodial fathers shared their perspective of their participation in a fatherhood program, through providing open-ended responses to the interview questions. The participants were not limited of what they could say during the interview. The questions were organized in five different sections, with consideration of five needs from Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. The order was organized to review the father's perspective of each level of the hierarchy of needs, which included; self-actualization, esteem, belongingness and love, safety, and physiological needs. Interview questions were developed to support my objective and to be dependent on the direction of the responses from the participants.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

#### **Informed Consent**

The noncustodial father participants were interviewed after they agreed to take part in the study. I reviewed with the participants what informed consent was to ensure they were aware of the purpose of the research study. In addition to supplying informed consent, an introductory statement was provided to further offer information about myself as the researcher. The informed consent is in the Appendix C.

I provided participants with the potential risks, benefits, and personal impact their participation could have by being a participant in the study. I presented them with a copy

of my disclosure statement that furnished them with contact information if they would need to reach Walden University's research department and the process for grievance if they chose to do so. The participants were given with an explanation of their obligations as a participant. I informed them that without a negative consequence they could withdraw from participating at any time. The participants were required to provide their signature if they agreed to the terms of the informed consent.

I suggested the fathers contact me if they had questions or concerns about this study. If the participants felt distressed by taking part in the study, they were encouraged to call the National Hopeline Network via phone at 1-800-184-2433. And lastly, they were thanked for their participation in the research study.

### **Developing Anonymous Participant Identifiers**

Anonymity was kept during the explanation of the results from the study, interviewing process, and recruitment of participants. The participants were referred by different names while other identifying factors were not included in the study.

### **Data Collection Plan**

Data were collected from demographic questionnaires and open-ended questions during semistructured interviews. Demographic questionnaires were provided to each participant which provided data for each participant, supported in participant selection, and can be found in Appendix F. Participant observations were recorded and noted that appeared to had relevance during each interview. The interviews were expected to be held at local libraries, in a private room, on a scheduled day and time. The interviews were held with one participant at a time.

## **Interviews**

I used open-ended questions during all semistructured interviews with the research participants. According to Larkin and Thompson (2011), interviewer's use of open-ended questions in an interview allow participants the opportunity to provide in-depth and background information (Jacob & Furgeson, 2012). The participants were recorded with a handheld WJLING digital recording device as well as I used my LG password protected cellular device. The handheld WJLING digital recording device had a feature that transcribed, while I recorded the participant's responses to support the analysis of the research. According to Patton (2014), using an audio recorder allows verbatim responses to be received. I planned to use Google Voice Talk to help in the transcribing. The use of the audio recorders and Microsoft Word dictation were utilized to form the transcription of each interview. The participants were asked to allow up to the duration of an hour to complete the full interviewing and recording process. I uploaded the transcriptions of all the interviews to my computer. The research study allowed the possibility for repeat interviews. When researchers repeated interviews researchers are able to receive additional information about earlier interviews' issues and clarification as time has passed (Vincent, 2013). The interview questions I provided, addressed the participants' perceptions of how the fatherhood program provided strategies to address the father's relationship with others, managed their security, identified personal growth, and other needs associated with Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

I included the following interview questions in interviews with all the research participants. I used the questions for conducting a semistructured interview to answer the

research question, How do African American noncustodial fathers perceive fathering programs' role in fulfilling their hierarchy of needs?

1. Let's begin with, what can you tell me about your experience participating in the fatherhood program?
2. Are there additional trainings you could receive to better support your custodial role?
3. What other services have you been referred to and do you believe the services
4. Tell me what stressors or barriers you have identified you have in the involvement with your child(ren).
5. What type of relationship do you have with your children?

### **Interview Notes**

I used interview notes to ensure I noted true information provided to me during the interview, as well as while listening to the recorded audio from each interview. I performed in note taking to additionally allow me to provide vivid details about each participant and his interview. I also noted each participant's nonverbal reaction toward questions when it occurred.

### **Questionnaire**

I asked each fatherhood program that my research materials to be placed at their facility, the locked box, informed consent forms and demographic questionnaires. I attached a note to each lock box asking all interested research participants to complete the forms and place them inside the lock boxes. Potential participants who contacted me due to their interest in the research study and who were referred by fatherhood program

completed a screening on the phone with me to ensure they met the research participant criteria; however, they completed the informed consent then questionnaire prior to the interview on the same day. I stored the demographic questionnaire for each participant in a locked box. Through my use of the locked box I obtained demographic information from each participant and maintained his privacy at the same time. The order of the participants' questionnaires in the locked box were not in a specific order, which eliminated the connection to each participant. I did place a unique symbol on the informed consents and questionnaires so I could distinguish responses of the participants. I kept the locked box and locked box key at my home. The locked box was only opened on each day a new demographic questionnaire was placed in the box and during the data analysis of the research study.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

I collected data through demographic questionnaires, semistructured interviews and note taking. I organized transcriptions with the use of the NVIVO data analysis software. After transcription had taken place, I identified themes that emerged and my observations of each participant were documented and categorized. My discoveries from the overall verbal and observing response of all participants were organized, coded, and themes were identified.

NVIVO has been found to be beneficial software, due to the ability to compare themes and concepts used in PhD research (Beedell, 2014; Greaves, 2014). I used margins of the transcripts to make notes about the collection of data from the semistructured interviews. According to Woods, Atkins, Paulus, and Macklin (2016),

NVivo is data analysis software used by researchers in a variety of research design. The authors further noted that data gathered from field notes, focus groups, and interviews are among the research designs that are most commonly used to analyze data with the software. I used NVIVO and logical reasoning to analyze the data (Wargo, 2013). The analysis of data provided preliminary analysis of the coded data to share with the participants through member checking.

### **Coding Preparation**

I used open coding to analyze the interview results in the study, which consisted of selecting codes from the noncustodial fathers' responses to further make connections and categorize the data (Tsai, Kohrt, Matthews, & Betancourt, 2016). I reviewed the data from the research and organized the data by labeling the results. I reviewed the transcription and audio three times to ensure I did not miss any information, as well as reviewed my notes. Horizontalization helps to form categories and themes which are represented in research data (Burland et al, 2018; Costell, 2019; Adams, 2019). Husserl developed the phenomenological method in the early 1900s and termed horizontalization (Adams, 2019; Van de Riet, 2001). I completed horizontalization by reviewing all transcriptions from the interviews and selected statements that were significant about the participant's experience taking part in a fatherhood program. The significant statements were direct quotes from the participants. When I found repeated statements, I was able to organize the significant information and form an interpretation of the significant information. According to Fletcher (2019), horizontalization, clusters of meanings, descriptions of the structure, and textural descriptions have been used for transcript and

interviewing analyzing. I engaged in clustering of themes. Clustering was looking for repetitive, significant information from the research participants and I made note of the reason for the clustering and what was sorted into themes in the margins of my transcriptions. After I completed interviews, I identified themes. I performed member checking to ensure available participant's documented responses were accurately provided for the research study. Participant 1 was not included in the member checking, due to his cellular phone no longer having service.

### **Data Interpretation**

I identified categories from participants' responses and identified clear themes. The participants' responses helped to develop coding that was found from the collected data, which supported the understanding of the participants' experience (Allen, 2017). This research study had a small sample and I paid attention to the quality of the data, rather than the quantity of the data within its analysis (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). The findings from the research study were analyzed and interpreted to ascertain if a phenomenon was found within the sample (Joseph, 2014).

The interpretation of the data was included in the note taking and by manually checking the audio with the transcriptions. I ensured information was accurate and that nonverbal actions were considered within the data. I listened to interviews as many times as necessary to ensure the response of all participants matched the transcription of interviews and that nothing was missed to identify the emerging themes.



## **Issues of Trustworthiness**

### **Credibility**

I showed credibility by using my training when performing interviews.

According to Fusch, Fusch and Ness (2018), triangulation adds depth to collected data in studies. The authors further noted that triangulation promotes social change and increase ability to reach data saturation in research studies. Liao and Hitchcock (2018) discussed how prolonged engagement is a technique that promotes credibility. I implemented prolonged contact, saturation, triangulation, and member checking. I reviewed the questionnaires completed by all the research participants and used the responses as data for the research study, in addition to their responses from interviews, email, and phone conversation. I also maintained prolonged engagement by communicating with participants I was able to communicate with to clarify the interviews. Lawlor, Tilling, and Davey Smith (2016) identified triangulation as the practice of obtaining more answers to research questions that are reliable from results that come from various approaches that are not related.

I practiced triangulation to ensure information provided in the research was rich, which involved me completing member checking. Triangulation also encouraged the participants to continue to trust me and the mentioned intent of the study (Amankwaa, 2016).

I maintained credibility by using member checking within the research study to eliminate bias when understanding and presenting the results of the research study (Anney, 2014). According to Amankwaa (2016), member checking is a useful technique

that allows direct quotes to be approved by the participants in research studies. Member checking involves providing research participants the opportunity to validate the accuracy of the gathered data they provide (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Harvey, 2015). Member checking allows participants the ability to add to the data and analyze the data from their interviews, while building trust between the researcher and participants (Birt, et al., 2016; Gunawan ,2015). I attempted to follow-up with all the interviewees to ensure the interpretations of the responses and accuracy of the transcriptions. I was unable to communicate with one participant, due to his phone no longer being in service. All other participants verified that they enjoyed taking part in the interview process with me and that the information was accurate. I allowed all participants opportunity to make changes to the completed transcription (Birt et al., 2016). I implemented the education and training I have received from Walden University, in addition to my understanding of analyzing purposeful sampling and member checking. I remained committed to showing training I have received in my PhD studies combined with my professional role in the community and human services field. I maintained confidentiality and avoided bias by completing member checking, and utilizing all information gained from the responses of all

### **Transferability**

I provided detailed information about the steps I performed to conduct my research study. By doing this, others are able to replicate the research study. I presented the findings of the research study in a manner that allowed others to understand the

responses of the participants, coding, and the themes through the use of visual aids and in Chapter 4.

### **Dependability**

I supplied reliable information to support the duplicating of the study in the same setting if researchers choose to do so (El Hussein, Jakubec, & Osuji, 2015). Hadi and Closs (2016) suggested to create detailed documentation of the research study's process therefore, I used an audit trail and field notes in the research study, to help others understand how I reached my conclusions. I used methods to gather and organize the data to describe the protocol of the research study. I used member checking to ensure that the information provided by the participants was accurate and that the audio recorded information was transcribed completely. The notes I took from the research study were used to remember the perspectives of participants from his verbal and nonverbal cues.

### **Confirmability**

According to Connelly (2016), confirmability is ensuring findings in research are consistent and could be replicated; therefore, in this study, I was consistent in performing the same steps during the research process. I sustained confirmability in this study. I noted my own personal feelings about the interviews with the participants to ensure confirmability. As the interviewer and analyzer in the study, I influenced the data and responses; therefore, I maintained being objective. I avoided drifting from the focus of the interview and actively listened to the participants during the interviews. I reserved a journal to document concerns and any information that could be considered important and valuable for the research study. I reviewed with the participants information they

provided to me from their own interview. I reviewed all information found from the research study and ensured that correct information was provided with no found issues. I remained in control of the interview and allowed the participants the ability to openly share information as responses to all questions.

### **Ethical Procedures**

I provided an informed consent document; which participants were required to sign to take part in the research. I obeyed the rights of the participants, including how I collected and managed the responses and privacy of the participants. The participants received a form that reminded them of how confidentiality was to be kept and that their responses would be stored securely. I did not share the responses of the interviews with anyone other than the dissertation committee members.

The participants signed an informed consent after they agreed to take part as research participants. The participants were not asked to complete any steps determined to be harmful to them; in addition, they were not be asked to disclose any identifying information during the interviewing process. The interview process had a minimum risk toward the participants. The participants and I decided on a time that they could best met, in a private and safe location. I stored the transcriptions and audio recording of the participants in a safe location that only I had.

I plan to store notes and recordings from the research in a locked container for five years. The locked container is stored inside of a locked cabinet that is inside a locked building with a security system. I am the only person to have access to the key of the locked container. A required password is needed to retrieve any information about the

study on the computer used, which is also within the secured building in a locked cabinet. The original recorded interviews that do not have the names of the participants are stored in the locked and secured building as well.

### **Institutional Review Board**

Walden University's Institutional Review Board granted approval to conduct the research study. I provided participants with an approved informed consent by Walden University IRB (2015), that informed them of the nature of the study, and expectations of me as the researcher. I was able to obtain approval from Walden University's IRB by receiving approval number 06-05-19-0267784 and an expiration date of June 4, 2020.

I addressed ethical concerns related to the research materials, recruitment process to Walden University as well as potential research participants and fatherhood agencies in the community. I reminded participants more than once that their participation in the study was voluntarily as well as that I would not share their names or any other information linking them to the research study. I informed participants that there was no incentive for participating in the research study. I also shared with all participants that they could stop the interviewing process at any time if they chose to do so. I followed Walden University Institutional Review Board guidelines (Walden, 2015), ensuring I exhibited appropriate ethical consideration. I avoided working with the vulnerable population and individuals I provide professional services to. I also avoided interviewing individuals I had a personal relationship with. I ensured that the research study aligned with the expectations of approval from the Institutional Review Board, throughout the study, and avoid causing harm to human subjects (Taylor, Ehrhardt, & Ervin, 2019).

I was sensitive to cultural differences prior, during, and after the research process. English-speaking ability was a requirement for the participants within the study to increase the ability to understand the responses of the participants. Participants were asked to review forms prior to the interviews to ensure they were aware of my disclosure statement, my respect toward confidentiality, and to identify potential cultural incompetence between the interview process.

### **Summary**

I used the generative qualitative approach to explore the experiences and perspectives of noncustodial African American fathers, who participated in a fatherhood program. I recruited my population by placing locked boxes, fliers, demographic questionnaires, and informed consent in agencies that provide fathering services. I also communicated with the facilitators of fatherhood programs to supply clarity of the criteria for the potential participants. The participants had to have participated in a fatherhood program, be over the age of 21 years of age, be African American, and have a child who was at least school-aged. Prior to the interviews, participants signed an informed consent form, then they completed a demographic questionnaire. The participants were informed about the study, confidentiality, their rights to end the interview at any time, and that they could ask any questions they had. I completed interviews less than 60 minutes and I used the WJLING and Microsoft Word to support the development of every transcription. I used NVivo, a qualitative data software program to store and code the data.

Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were all maintained to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations. I was able to avoid interviewing

individuals I knew personally to collect data. To keep credibility, I transcribed all interviews and tried to provide participants with their transcribed interview for verification. I ensured the research design and data collection method aligned. I followed ethical procedures for conducting a study with permission from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the research study and worked with my dissertation committee to avoid bias while interpreting, conducting, and analyzing the research. Data I collected was secured and were not visibly linked to the responses from interviews. I maintained transferability by providing descriptions of context, experiences and behavior of conducting the research study. I used other options to assist in the research process, which included; providing resources of available counseling to participants, providing other helpful resources to handle results, and participating in the suggested use of minimal risk, which supports maintaining ethical considerations (Resnik, 2018).

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this generic qualitative research study was to examine the experiences of African American noncustodial fathers who have participated in a fatherhood program. I also wanted to gain more knowledge of how their participation in the program contributed to their needs being fulfilled. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) were reviewed during the research's interview process. According to Qian, De Loney, and Caldwell (2018), nonresident African American fathers face issues at times with being satisfied with their own parenting; this can affect their fathering role if they doubt their capabilities or success meeting their parental expectations. Fathers have been found to have a significant role in the lives of their children; however, fathers have been found to be an understudied population (Hayward-Everson, Honegger, Glazebrook, Rabeno, & Yim, 2018).

To explore this research's phenomenon, I examined the question: How do African American noncustodial fathers perceive fathering programs' role in fulfilling their hierarchy of needs? I wanted to better understand if fathers' needs are being met by receiving noncustodial African American fathers' beliefs of their experience taking part in fatherhood programs.

Chapter 4 includes my discussion of the setting of the research study. I also discuss the demographics of the participants and the method that I used for data collection. Connelly (2016) stated that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are areas which should be maintain for trustworthiness. Therefore, I



explained, how the data was analyzed, the results of the analysis, and evidence of my trustworthiness. In addition, I also review a synopsis of Chapter 4 and provided an answer to the research question.

### **Research Setting**

I conducted in depth, semistructured interviews with six African American noncustodial fathers. I used purposive sampling for data collection. All the participants identified as being African American. They all lived in cities in the Southeastern, Virginia area. I asked these participants to name a comfortable location to interview with me. I suggested places such as meeting rooms and libraries to all participants. I asked them to share a location that was suitable for the interview that was public, convenient, and that would allow a private interview for the research study to be allowed. Most of the participants disclosed they had transportation issues and wanted to interview closer to their homes; therefore, most interviews were in meeting areas closer to the participants' homes. I arranged the times of the interviews individually between me and each participant. I provided the interview questions used for all interviews in Appendix D.

### **Demographics**

The responses from the demographic questionnaire and responses of the participants determined that similarities of the participants' background and experiences were clear. I was able to distinguish differences between the participants as well. The participants' demographic data were collected using the demographic questionnaire, in addition to responses they provided during the meeting and initial phone conversation.

All the African American participants volunteered to be a part of this study. I screened each volunteer by asking questions to determine if he met the criteria to partake in the research study. All the participants shared that they resided in cities within the Southeastern Virginia area; were a noncustodial father; had participated in a fatherhood program; and understood they would need to complete an informed consent form, demographic questionnaire, and schedule a time to participate in an audio recorded face-to-face interview. Two of the participants lived in the same city, while the other participants lived in other cities within the Southeastern, Virginia area.

### **Demographic Data**

All the participants received a demographic questionnaire letter (Appendix E) and completed a one-page demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) to gather information about age, marital status, number of children, employment status, and affiliated ethnic group and if he had participated in a fatherhood program. I provided informed consent forms and a copy to all noncustodial participants. I reviewed with all participants their own demographic questionnaire on the day of the scheduled interview. I allowed the participants time to review the questionnaire prior to the start of the interview. I provided them with opportunities to ask questions. I reminded participants they could ask questions at any time they decided to do so. I reviewed with them that they could stop the interview process at any time if they chose to do so. I also waited until they reviewed and signed the forms before the start of interviews. Participants' biographical information can be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Participants' Demographic Information*

Participant	Age	Number of children	Participation	Marital Status	Employment	Residence
1	19-25	1-3	voluntary	Never married	employed	Southeastern Virginia
2	53-59	4-6	voluntary	divorced	Not employed	Southeastern Virginia
3	19-25	1-3	voluntary	Never married	employed	Southeastern Virginia
4	33-45	4-6	voluntary	married	employed	Southeastern Virginia
5	26-32	1-3	voluntary	divorced	employed	Southeastern Virginia
6	33-45	1-3	voluntary	Never married	Disabled, not employed	Southeastern Virginia

*Note.* This table shows the demographic information of participants who interviewed in the study.

All six of the noncustodial fathers' personally recognizable information, such as place of employment, name of fatherhood program participants were affiliated with, and the names of children, were excluded from the research study. The names of the children's mother were excluded as well, due to it not being relevant information pertaining to the research study. I changed the participants' names in the research study to maintain confidentiality of the participants and their families. The noncustodial fathers who were interviewed are called Participant # to better maintain confidentiality.

## **Data Collection**

### **Participant Recruitment**

I used purposive sampling to identify the noncustodial fathers who were participants in the study. Purposeful sampling is used to identify participants who can provide information regarding the interested phenomenon of the research study and is well-known in qualitative research (Palinkas et al., 2015). My original contact was by inviting 16 local fatherhood programs agencies, three churches, and five Department of Human Service agencies to participate in the recruitment of potential participants. I contacted twenty-four organizations, however not all the organizations were interested in participating in the research study. I provided phone calls and an email message to community stakeholders for early correspondence to the research. The invitation letter is found in Appendix A. In the initial correspondence, I explained the purpose of the study along with the criteria that potential participants must have met to be considered as research participants. I furnished flyers about the research study to agencies to inform interested individuals about the research study. I answered any questions the organizations had to eliminate confusion regarding the study. I provided copies of the informed consent and questionnaires along with a lock box in the facilities that allowed the locked boxes in their office. I placed the locked boxes in locations at the facilities that agreed to display the study's materials. During the research study, I used a lock box to store all informed consent forms, which are found in Appendix C, and questionnaires, which are found in Appendix F. I kept the key to the lock box and no other individuals had access to the key or the ability to unlock the box. I checked the locked boxes often

over the course of two months to detect if any interested individuals completed forms and placed them in the locked boxes. I contacted individuals who provided completed forms in the locked boxes to determine if they met the research study's requirements. I also contacted individuals who disclosed an interest in participating in the study to the staff of the fatherhood programs. I informed the fatherhood program staff and potential participants of the expectations of the researcher from the Walden Institutional Review Board. The research sample consisted of interested participants to whom fatherhood facilitators linked me and participants who had heard about the research study. I shared issues with recruiting a sample to Walden Institutional Review Board and was told I could place research flyers in different fatherhood settings for potential participants. I communicated with one agency which invited me to bring my research materials to leave in the meeting room of a fatherhood program during a fatherhood meeting. While I visited the private program, I left behind the questionnaires and informed consent to be stored in a locked box for interested participants. The facilitators reminded the fathers they could complete the forms and place them in the locked box if they were interested in participating. The fathers were informed they did not have to volunteer during the meeting to avoid violating their confidentiality; they were also provided with my contact information if they became interested in taking part in the research study. I did not know any of the fathers in the meeting.

### **Sample Size**

I conducted semistructured interviews in this generic qualitative research study with the goal of obtaining data saturation. I used the interview guide, which is in

Appendix D, and asked participants the same interview questions, from the guide to ensure they received the same questions to answer in the semistructured interview. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that interview questions be identical when asked to the participants to help achieve data saturation. To gain a better understanding of responses participants shared I did follow up with additional questions to increase an understanding of the participants' responses as needed. Data saturation affects the quality of research, and smaller studies typically reach saturation quicker than larger studies (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) said that data saturation is a strategy in sampling that does not identify a specific number for a sample. The authors further noted that during data saturation, the sample could result in as few as six participants (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Glaser and Strauss (1967) discussed that data saturation supports the development of a sample, when there is no additional information that emerge from data in the research study. In this research study, data saturation was obtained through the sample size of six participants.

### **Location, Frequency, and Duration of Data Collection**

I used a secure and confidential location to conduct the interviews. According to Rimando et al. (2015), when challenges are presented in conducting interviews, safe and convenient locations should be selected between the participant and researcher. The authors further noted that the researcher should identify how the location could influence the interviews as well (Rimando et al., 2015). I presented a commitment of up to 60 minutes to all potential interviewees. Participants often obtain comfort in taking part in interviews when they are aware of the expected duration of the interview process

(Rimando et al., 2015). I informed all participants I would perform a follow up phone call to explain and provide more detail if there was any information that was not clear. The recorded interviews remained in the average range of no more than 40 minutes each.

### **Transcriptions**

Cope (2016) said that transcription is the process of transferring audio and historical documents that are hand-written into digital text. Each of the six interviews was transcribed using double space font. I distinguished the researcher and participant for clarity in each transcription. The transcriptions occurred within 2 days of each interview, so I could remember the details of each interview while the information was fresh. With the use of the WJLING digital audio recorder and the LG cellular device, the transcribed information was reviewed, and all necessary edits were made in Microsoft Word to ensure accurate information of the recorded interviews. I printed each transcribed interview individually and reviewed each transcribed interview to ensure the recorded interview matched the written transcripts. The transcribing service of the WJLING digital audio recording device assisted in the transcribing of each semistructured interview. I used Microsoft Word's dictation tool to support necessary edits to the transcriptions.

### **Unusual Circumstances Encountered During Data Collection**

I provided five different agencies locked metal boxes that would allow interested noncustodial fathers the ability to volunteer for the research study. An unusual circumstance I met was during the development of the research's sampling. I encountered a lack of community agencies participation during the recruitment of the

research participants. Sampling has been identified as a difficult task within the qualitative research design (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). I contacted 23 fatherhood agencies; however, only six of them responded that they could allow me to advertise my research material in their facility and inform potential participants about the study. The staff at three of the agencies informed me that the time of the year they facilitated their fatherhood program had recently ended; however, the locked boxes could be placed in their offices if other interested individuals who met the criteria chose to be included for the research study. The three programs that had active fatherhood program being facilitated allowed the locked boxes to be placed in their facility over the course of at least 2 months. Individuals who responded that they were interested did not meet the criteria of the research from those three programs. Another unusual circumstance was at some point during the interview with Participant 4, loud sounds, and voices of others on the outside of the building could be heard; however, the interview continued.

The research study included six participants who met the research criteria. Interviews were recorded with two recording devices. Both recording devices were shown to the participants and reviewed with them if they agreed to be recorded during the meeting. I used the audio recorder function from my password protected LG cellular phone, as well as the WJLING digital voice sound recorder. A variation in the data collection was that I planned to use Google Voice Talk, however I used other audio recorders instead. Due to the use of the LG cellular phone and the ability of the WJLING digital voice recorder also having a transcribing feature, the WJLING device was used to



record and transcribe. Two audio recorders were used in the case of technical difficulties, so there was a backup. I started and stopped the audio recorders at the same time; therefore, the duration of each interview was the same on both devices. Variation further occurred when some of the participants had issues getting to a library's meeting room. Participant 2 met with me in a meeting space in a corporate building because it was easiest for him with his use of public transportation. Participant 6 asked to meet at his home due to a recent surgery. The other participants mentioned they wanted to meet near their homes, rather than in a library's meeting room.

### **Data Analysis**

When using qualitative data, the goal is to better understand the data that has been collected by identifying patterns, being able to answer research questions, seeking themes, and providing the results from the data collected (Patton, 2015). I recorded all interviews with audio digital recorders with the permission of all participants. I also showed the participants the recording devices prior to the start of the interviews. I informed all participants that the WJLING audio device also would support in transcribing their interview with me and what transcribing was. I wrote field notes during interviews to support my interpretation of the interview. Information I wrote included body language and information the participants said. My reason for making notes of the participant's body language was to further support my interpretation of the participants' responses. During the interview process I noted body language, which helped me to determine if I should ask further questions to receive information. I examined the responses of each participant in the research study. I organized consistent

responses of the participants into themes. I organized the themes by perspectives and experiences into groups shared by the participants. I used Microsoft Word to document transcribed recorded data and field notes. To support data analysis, I used NVivo. NVivo is a qualitative data software, that analyzed the data collected from the interviews. NVivo provided visuals of the findings from the transcripts of the participants in the research. NVivo allowed me to upload the transcripts of all the interviews and select distinct colors to better code and distinguish themes from each interview transcript. NVivo also helped to organize and sort data set (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

I stored field notes, recorded interviews, and transcripts in a secure location protected with a password. According to Nowell et al. (2017), when coding is conducted, researchers simplify specific and important characteristics of data. I coded the interview transcriptions, which led to the development of themes. I used transcripts to find direct quotes from research participants. I utilized the direct quotes to better illuminate the findings from each theme.

I used 17 questions during the interview process for all participants. I searched for similarities and differences from participants for all interview questions. Grammatical concern may be visible in the transcription; however, they were not altered, due to the data not being changed. I wanted to keep the true responses and quotations from each interview. I was able to cluster the similarities and differences of the statements into themes.



*Figure 2.* My word cloud from NVivo. I used the NVivo software to show the frequencies of words, and to discover themes for my research.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

I kept trustworthiness of the collected data and analyzed it through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. While maintaining trustworthiness, I present responses of all participants from the study. In research studies, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity support determine trustworthiness (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen & Elo, 2019). To present and preserve the existence of the received experience of each participant, ethical consideration was maintained throughout the research study.

### **Credibility**

To further discuss credibility mentioned in Chapter 3, it was important to collect data in a way to reflect the accuracy of the data and the perceptions of each noncustodial father participant consistent with his experience. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), trustworthiness in qualitative research asks the question, “Can the findings be trusted?” In addition, some strategies to maintain credibility include the following: prolonged engagement, member checking, and developing the concepts, codes, and categories of data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I established credibility in the study by identifying themes in the participant’ responses to the interview questions. I reviewed all participants’ responses with other participants for consistency, which added to the authentication to the study’s results. I ensured member checking was performed with the participants who were available when I tried to make contact. I encouraged each

participant to ask any questions he had and reminded him that he could contact me later if he had any questions about the interview process and his participation if he chose to do so. To ensure that the statements participants gave were clear, I asked them if they wanted to provide additional information and that they could elaborate more if they chose to do so of the statements they made. Within 2 weeks, participants I was able to contact were offered an emailed transcript of their interview with me for verification of accuracy. I shared with participants themes that had been determined during that time on the telephone, as well as educated them on what themes were. Participants indicated the descriptions of their perspective from their interview was accurate. Participants confirmed that the data collection was accurately interpreted of their experiences during the meetings.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is found as having the same findings at various situations (Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016). I searched descriptions from each interview to confirm themes and to strengthen the ability for readers to better understand the responses and perspectives of each father. This research study can be replicated. I provided steps of the recruitment process, tools used in the research study, the criteria for all the participants, the analysis of data can be found in the data analysis area, and the findings of the research study can be found in the area, study results.

### **Dependability**

I described the research steps from the beginning of the study to the reporting of the findings. I kept the records of the research throughout the study. Dependability is

identified as maintaining consistency within the research study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I wrote notes on the body language of the participants during the interview process, as well as information they provided after signing the informed consent that was included within the audio recorded interview. Member checking was used when it was possible to ensure the information transcribed was accurately completed, as well as to review that the participant's responses were correct. The interview questions were arranged to align with the structure of needs outlined by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Each participant was asked seventeen questions from the interview question sheet. The order of the questions was arranged to build rapport with the participants and to increase comfort during the interview process. The use of the interview question guide helped to maintain dependability of the data collected and the process it was collected.

I used triangulation to gain a deeper understanding of rich information from the responses of the participants. I facilitated face-to-face semistructured interviews, engaged in observations, and I took notes to engage in triangulation. According to Kern (2018), in qualitative and quantitative research, triangulation increases validity in studies. I also provided and reviewed results from questionnaires. To maintain dependability, I also used audit trail within the research study by keeping records and logs of steps I completed during the research study.

I remained objective throughout each interview to avoid leading each participant to respond in a specific manner. I was able to receive and interpret the response from each father without including my own judgment. I kept a journal to record my thoughts and feelings about each interview, as well as how I felt prior to interviewing each

participant. By keeping the journal, I was able to be better aware of my thoughts of my day prior to the interview. Maintaining the journal helped to identify any potential bias in order to ensure I conducted ethical interviews with open-ended questions. I wanted to ensure that I interpreted data in a clear manner. I wanted to remain objective; therefore, I wanted to provide a summary of how I felt regarding each participant and how I felt after completing each interview. I utilized the same steps for each participant to ensure I also maintained dependability, which included; I reviewed each statement of the participants to determine if the experience of the participants were described and if I had any confusion of the father's statements. I recorded relevant statements of each father. I found repetitive statements and experiences of the participants. I organized the information received from the participants to develop themes. I identified quotes from participants to link the quotations of the participants ultimately to better describe the experience of the participants.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is found as being neutral while obtaining data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I reviewed responses of all participants to ensure I had a clear understanding of information they provided. I allowed participants the ability to respond to questions openly. Norris, White, and Moules (2017) mentioned confirmability should reflect that information received in research should be from participants and the interpretation should not be the researcher's perspectives. I gave each participant the opportunity to share any other information he wanted to provide during each interview as well as before we left from the meeting space. I used bracketing during the research study to maintain

trustworthiness. Bracketing is mentioned as a practice in research studies that should be maintained to ensure the researcher does not influence participants' understanding of phenomenon (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). I was able to review with the participants information they provided during the meeting to avoid issues and increase clarity. Confirmability encourages obtaining the same findings from research at various times (Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, 2017). In addition, the use of audit trail supported maintaining trustworthiness and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I developed notes of my decisions I made during the research process. The notes I kept consisted of reflective thoughts, materials I used for the research, and sampling.

### **Results**

The results from the research study indicated that African American noncustodial fathers have found benefits in participating in fatherhood programs, as a result of their own participating. Fatherhood programs provide informative information to support the fathering role. The participants in the study mentioned how the program they participated in helped them to understand how to think more about their children as well as find strategies to implement positive communication skills toward their children and their children's mothers. The participants were asked questions related to each need aligned with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Participants divulged their experience of how the program they participated in addressed their needs and how the program did not address them. After reviewing the transcripts for all interviews, I identified four themes. The four main themes were: relationships, challenges, incarceration, and healthy living.



The following section addressed how the results supported in answering the study's research question.

The research question for the study was: How do African American noncustodial fathers perceive fathering programs' role in fulfilling their hierarchy of needs? In response to the research question, I asked participants to share their experience of how they believed their participation in the fatherhood program supported their fathering role, in addition to their relationship with others. I asked the participants to describe their experience of how the program they took part in influenced their personal growth. I asked the participants to tell me about their experiences of the program addressing how they keep their feelings. I asked participants to tell me about their experiences with challenges, stress, and barriers they had in their fathering role. I asked participants to share their experience of how they were linked to the fatherhood program they took part in. I asked the participants to describe their relationship they had with their children. I asked the participants to tell me about their experience of a rewarding part of their participating in a fatherhood program. I asked participants to share if healthy lifestyle was reviewed in the fatherhood program, they took part in. I asked the participants about their experience of a change in their sleeping habits, if healthy eating and drinking was addressed in the fatherhood program they participated in, and if they had any other information they wanted to share about their participation in a fatherhood program. The participants informed me that they answered the questions during interviews in an honest manner and that they were pleased to share their experience participating in a fatherhood program.

Every participant in the research study was African American, took part in a fatherhood program and was able to be included in face-to-face interviews for the research study. Each participant reported he signed up for the fatherhood program he participated in voluntarily. The participants shared their perspective of how their participation in the fatherhood program supported their fathering role, in addition to relationships with others. Every participant provided their experience of challenges and barriers of their fathering role. The participants described how they found out about the fatherhood program. Every participant described his experience of how healthy living was addressed in their fatherhood program, as well as their practices. Research participants shared the common themes of relationships, challenges, incarceration, and healthy living. The following information provided a comparison of the participant's responses, each theme from the research study with direct quotes from participants to better support findings from the research, and a review of demographic information of the participants. The participants shared responses associated with the relationship theme and their overall responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Relationship Theme*

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Relationship	Father- child relationship improved and altered with others	Father- child relationship improved and altered with others	Father- child relationship improved and altered with others	Father- child relationship improved	Father- child relationship improved and altered with others	Father- child relationship improved and altered with others

*Note:* This table shows participant's response related to the relationship theme.

**Theme: 1:** Relationships Participant 1 shared his relationship with his child's mother had improved, in addition his communication skills with others had also improved. He said, "Like I said it kind of helps me. It kind of helps me build a better bond with my child's mom even though we not together." He shared that he was able to communicate more with others, due to his participating in the program. He mentioned he stays in his house more often than he had in the past. Participant 1 discussed how the fatherhood program helped him with putting his daughter before himself. He said,

I achieved better communication skills, better listening skills and I'm not impulsive how I used to be due to the fact that I had to sit down and think about the consequences if I do something it's going to affect not just me but my family.

When Participant 1 was asked about his relationship with his daughter he stated,

"I talk to her everyday she know her dad is when I come around, she be happy to see me. It's just a daughter daddy bond I guess." When I asked him if his relationship with others

had altered since he took part in the fatherhood program, he stated, “Yes, I don't even deal with some of the same people no more.”

Participant 2 shared that he had a good relationship with his children and that he has taken responsibility for being an absent parent. He said he had taken part in the program and gained a better understanding that things are not just about himself. He credited the fatherhood program with increasing his understanding of listening better to others and using the perspective of others to guide him. He said,

I believe that I achieved better communication skills, I learned to um be a listener um more less um not so much as reasoning but just hearing from their perspective and putting that up to use to a point where we're now trying to understand each other, as a parent as a child.

He also stated,

In time, whereas I pretty much came to a decision to inform them that the gap pretty much got to be bridged, going forward not backwards it's nothing I can do as far as reaching back and make up for that time on things all I can do is go forward...I have a pretty good relationship as far as them knowing that I am their father.

He also discussed that he altered his interaction with peers. He said,

Yes, it has, I rather associate myself around people that has kids, respect kids and that love kids.um working class people, people that have their own home and that raise their kids. people that have pretty much parenting skills. I have friends that

don't have kids, but they respect the idea of a person having kids in need raising and the time they need to spend with them.

Participant 3 mentioned that he was actively involved in his children lives, which was what all the other participants disclosed. Participant 3 and Participant 4 discussed that they no longer interacted with the same individuals as Participants 1 and 2 had shared. Participant 3 and 4 also shared a similar experience of how the fatherhood program supported their healthy relationships. Participant 1, 2, and 3 discussed that the programs they participated in helped them to be less selfish and not only think about themselves. Participant 3 said,

Like I ain't go, say like I was real selfish. I'm saying selfish, cause I do, do for my kids, now I do more. Like I said open my eyes more in a more manly way. I started thinking it ain't about me all the time. Especially when I do get this money. I won't do as much because I was still young and immature.

Participant 4 shared how his relationship between his children and himself was great. He spoke about how they joked, laughed, ate, prayed, and participated in outings together. Participant 4 stated the following, "Our relationship is great, they, they both have my sense of humor. And so, you know it's funny because my wife don't have such a sense of humor like we do and so she's always like serious." He also shared that he did not interact with the same individuals that he once interacted with just as all the other participants shared. He said,

You know like, I might go out the hood tonight and I don't know what been going on for a couple months because I ain't been out there and I'm kicking it with the

fellows or whatever and I don't know what they did last night, then somebody come round there retaliate or whatever in reference to them, and here I am in the midst of this for nothing, so it taught me how to just lay low and just take my time and you know, um move accordingly. You know, that's how I do.

Participant 5 provided his perspective of his relationship with his daughter to being good, which is how all the other participants viewed their relationship with their children. He stated,

Well I mean as far as like I've been in my daughter's life all her life like since she came out, my baby Mama uh see I done time I went to penitentiary in came back she still know who I was. When I went to jail this time I came back she kind of knew who I was but I was talking to her on the phone but when I came home she was just like wow he's home, like it won't nothing too serious like she won't really happy. For real like I can see it in her face but when I sit down and talk to her, she kind of got that bond back.

When I asked Participant 5 about if his relationship with others had altered since his participation in the fatherhood program, he said,

Don't nobody really, don't nobody I don't got no friends I never had no friends like I'd be around here I'll be around my momma house 24/7. She like the only one that I can really sit down and talk to when I got problems or something like that. She can tell me how to handle it or whatever so like I said I ain't got no friends cause I never had none all my friends crossed me when I was locked up so I ain't, I ain't never had no friends.

Participant 5 shared that he did not spend time with peers, as much as he had in the past just as the other participants mentioned. Participant 6 shared how since his participation in the fatherhood program, he had not been putting himself first all the time, as he had in the past. He discussed that his daughter and him had a good relationship. He said,

“I got a good relationship, she talk to me, she talk to me about everything her little boys and all that, so we have a good communication relationship”. He also stated, “Yeah cause I ended up cutting a lot of people off when I came home from prison and got with the fatherhood program, cause I was trying to do bigger and better things know what I mean so I had to cut certain people off to get to where I wanted to be at.”

The first emerged theme in my study was relationships. All the participants shared how their relationships changed with others. Five out of six participants shared that they ended relationships with others after taking part in the fatherhood program to create a more positive lifestyle they discussed in the fatherhood program, and to avoid negative situations. The one participant who did not mention he did not have a change of relationships with others declared he had already stopped interacting with some individuals after he was incarcerated. Many of the participants shared how their relationship was with their children’s mother. Two out of the six participants shared how the relationship between their children’s mother was not the best. All the participants shared they had good relationships with their children.

**Table 3***Challenges Theme*

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Challenges	Financial strains, knowing you must care for others	Financial strains, Child's involvement with others, past of incarceration	Relationship with child's mother, knowing you must care for others, financial strains, past of incarceration	Relationship with child's mother, child's involvement with others, financial strains, past of incarceration	Relationship with child's mother, past of incarceration	Child's involvement with others, past of incarceration

*Note:* This table shows participant's responses related to the challenges theme.

**Theme 2: Challenges** All the participants said they had challenges or barriers while taking part in the fatherhood program. Participant 1 discussed how financial strains was a challenge, even though he was employed. He shared that he wanted to be able to support his daughter and did not like when he is not able to do so. Participant 1 stated, "Not be able to, I just hate when my daughter got a problem and I can't fix it or I'm not right there to fix at the time so that's just my pet peeve." He also said, "It's hard when you when you taking care of yourself your daughter and other things, so it's like you gotta maintain at least try to." Participant 1 identified finances as being a challenge or barrier similar to Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 5.

Participant 2, 3,4, and 5 discussed how finances had been a barrier. Participant 2 stated, "Probably sound like any other parent barriers and challenges, basically financial. There's um, how do I say, this challenge is because my kids I have been um absent."



Participant 3 discussed his financial strains and the impact of him being incarcerated, like Participant 2. Participant 4 shared that one of his incarcerations, was due to him not being able to meet his court ordered financial obligation of child support, which was due to his financial strain and the relationship with that son's mother. Participant 2 also elaborated on a barrier of his own due to his incarceration. He shared he was not present in his children lives; therefore, his daughter developed feelings about him. He stated, "I have been absent involuntarily from my kids. It became apparent as far as trying to explain the gap."

Participant 2 stated, "I got to say what my daughter is she has a tendency to vent. I have to sit back and allow her at times the time to vent. She doesn't know how to say dad I just need a hug, or I just need you to listen to me, so I have to sit endure some bitterness." He shared worry he experienced for his children. Participant 2 discussed, just as Participants 3, 4 and 6, that he becomes worried about his child. Participant 2 stated, "Ok, it's kind of like up and down when it comes to worrying about them." Participant 6 stated, "I see her on Instagram and all that doing the little drinking and partying, do keep your grades up and don't be out there just drinking with anybody because people putting shit in drinks nowadays and I just stress more about her being so far away from home." Participant 6 also mentioned he had to adjust to life from being incarcerated, which Participant 2 and Participant 5 shared as well. "When I came home, I had to adjust to you know getting back and doing things seeing how the world was going so I had a job and all that stuff so I kind of liked it." Participant 3 shared some worry, due to him not liking the environment his children lived in. Participant 5 discussed how his

relationship between him child's mother and himself is an issue, due to the mother wanting to be in a relationship with him. Participant 5 said, "My baby mama I can't really do what I wanna do for her because it's not enough. She look at it is like not enough if I'm not doing enough for my daughter, but I know I try my best when anytime she asked me to do something for her I do it but it's like it's not enough." Participant 4 and 5 shared they believed if they had custody of their children, they could do more for them.

The second emerged theme in my study was challenges. Many participants discussed worrying about their children, and financial strains were challenges they had. Some of the participants discussed how they tried to work on ending their financial strain. Four of the six participants discussed worry they had about their children, and their attempts to handle the challenge. Financial strain was a challenged mentioned by five out of the six participants. One out of the six participants talked about how the fatherhood program was able to provide him with a place of employment and led to his decrease of financial strain.

**Table 4**

*Incarceration Theme*

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Incarceration	Linkage to fatherhood program	Linkage to fatherhood program	Linkage to fatherhood program	Linkage to fatherhood program	Linkage to fatherhood program	Linkage to fatherhood program

*Note:* This table shows participant's responses related to the incarceration theme.

**Theme 3: Incarceration** When I reviewed with Participant 1 how he learned of the fatherhood program, he stated, “Um, I was incarcerated at the time and Ms. Williams, Mr. James they came out on. Mr. James, they came out an explained the program and it kind of help me with my case it looked good when I went to court.” Participants linked their incarceration to participating in the fatherhood program they participated in.

Participant 2 stated, “At the facility I was in was speaking on the person that happened to facilitate the classes. They said that he was giving out some very good information and I realized I was a parent and most of time our discussion will be about our kids.”

Participant 3 stated, “But I mean it gave me another way, I would say that where I was at the program like it gave me a better look on things about how to carry my kids.

Participant 4 shared that he learned about the fatherhood program he took part in after his incarceration from a friend, which eventually led him to work in the program. Participant

5 said, “I was in jail the reentry program the reentry program at City jails and it was basically voluntarily.” He shared that he successfully completed the program and

received a certificate. Participant 5 said, “Um I got a I got a certificate at the graduation from the fatherhood program I graduated from it.” “My background was good I ain’t got no violent charges, so I was approved for it.” Participant 6 stated, “How did I learn about it? I think when I was locked up when I was on my way home and they were talking about it they sent a flyer or something.” He also said, “And I just went to it when I came home.”

Incarceration was the third emerged theme in my study. All the participants discussed they had been incarcerated and that it was cause for their lack of involvement.

All the participants named their incarceration to how they eventually were linked to the fatherhood program they took part in. Most of the participants talked about how they learned about the fatherhood program from the facilitators, or other individuals incarcerated with them. All of them shared how their participation in the fatherhood program after their incarceration had overall been beneficial to their lives.

**Table 5**

*Healthy Living Theme*

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Healthy living	He used his own practices. Safe sex was addressed.	He used his own practiced. He was linked to support.	Healthy eating was addressed. He used his own practice.	Health was addressed. He received a health coach.	He used his own practices. Health was addressed.	He used his own methods. Health was addressed.

*Note:* This table shows participant's responses related to the healthy living theme.

**Theme 4: Healthy living** I asked the participants about healthy eating and practices the fatherhood program they took part in addressed. Participant 1 mentioned the program did; however, he did not elaborate on the strategies the program used. He did, however, share that he used an application on his cellular phone to remind him of healthy practices. Participant 1 said, "Um hum, I got a, I got a, app on my phone that lets me know when to drink water and stuff like that." Participant 1 discussed that the program addressed other healthy practices, which he named, "Safe sex." Participant 2, Participant 5, and Participant 6 all shared that the program they took part in provided

health and nutrition practices, however they engaged in practices they were aware of to keep their healthy practices.

Participant 2 said, “Ah, I was diagnosed with um high blood pressure during the actual participation of this class.” He also said, “I and instead of choosing medication, I chose a natural remedy.” “That was somewhat suggested from the parent class as far as exercising.” “and eating right.” Participant 2 discussed how the fatherhood program linked him to other programs, which addressed overall healthcare. He said, “Um mental health, physical, um, um nutritional um just, just overall as far as what do you need as a parent.” Participant 2 shared that the fatherhood program linked him to another program to address his health, however he did not mention the information being information he applied to his daily living. Participant 5 revealed during member checking that the program he took part in had a workbook, which addressed health and nutrition he was able to review practices from. Participants 1, 3, and 6 did not mention strategies the fatherhood program they took part in used to address health living with them as the other participants did.

Participant 3 did not share beneficial health practices he learned from the fatherhood program but did mention healthy eating was discussed during his incarceration. Participant 3 said, “I mean we um, yeah it was in a jail so we could discuss, but we talked about, what we talked about the main basis was the regular food.” Participant 4 shared that he was provided with a healthy coach during his participation in the program. Participant 4 stated,

“I had kind of let go you know, I had had that who cares attitude you know for a while and before I knew it, you know I was going all day. I had a bad habit of going all day drinking water, drinking coffee and wouldn't eat and then when I get home like later on, I would overindulge.”

Participant 4 also stated,

“And it was, it was great too, because my daughter actually she's a big young lady and, she saw the progress I had made with that time of not eating meat. So right now, my baby she don't even eat meat anymore.” Participant 4 was the only participant who discussed how the fatherhood program provided training of health and nutrition with a health coach and healthy education, which helped the father.

Participant 6 stated, “I was already doing that.” In addition, he also said, “Cutting out meat not eating pork haven't ate pork in years, so.” Participant 6 as Participant 5, Participant 1, and Participant 2 did not give credit to healthy practices they learned from the fatherhood program they took part in. They did mention they were aware of healthy practices during their interviews.

The fourth emerged theme in my study was healthy living. All the participants shared they were aware of healthy skills they could practice; however, not all the participants credited the fatherhood program of reviewing safety and healthy practices they found beneficial. Three of the six participants shared how the program they were involved addressed healthy living strategies. One out of the six participants shared the program he took part in offered a health coach. He mentioned the health coach supported him with strengthening his knowledge and practice of healthy eating and engaging in

physical activities. Another participant shared the fatherhood program he was involved linked him to another program, which discussed health, while another father shared his program used a workbook, which reviewed healthy eating practices. Four of the six participants shared how they used their own strategies to manage their healthy living.

All the participants gave credit to the fatherhood program that they took part in being beneficial in their life. All the participants shared how their relationships improved with others, in addition to how their relationship with others had changed. Many of the participants had some worry about their children. All the participants have a history of incarceration and shared how their incarceration linked them to the fatherhood program they were involved in. These findings are significant because fatherhood programs could receive help from receiving the shared experiences of the participants. These findings support implications for changes discussed in chapter 5.

### **Summary**

During interviews with the participants, the participants noticeably shared similar experiences of their participation in a fatherhood program. Many of the participants shared how the fatherhood program positively affected their lives. Many of them shared how the program decreased their selfish thoughts and behaviors and encouraged them to not always put themselves first. These participants shared they learned they should consider their children's needs in addition to their own. These findings are significant because the participants did share the fatherhood program, they joined supported their growth, however additional interventions could had increased the fulfillment of the participant's needs from Maslow's Hierarchy of needs.

The purpose of my generic qualitative study was to examine the experiences of African American noncustodial fathers who took part in fatherhood programs. According to Bishop (2016), Maslow found universal human needs to include: physiological, safety, social, self-esteem, and self-actualization in his hierarchy of needs theory. I wanted to determine if the program participants, took part in fulfilled their needs outlined by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes the following needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

There was one research question that drove the research study. The research question was, "How do African American noncustodial fathers perceive fathering programs' role in fulfilling their hierarchy of needs?" Data collection was obtained through semistructured, face-to-face interviews. I used audio recording devices, an LG cellular phone and a WJLING recording device, which allowed transcribing support as well. I used NVivo, to store and organize research data. NVivo also allowed me to code and analyze my data. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software developed by QSR International for narrative, content, and qualitative data analysis (Phillips & Lu, 2018). Four themes emerged from the process of answering the research question.

The findings support the implications for changes discussed in chapter 5. In chapter 4, I discussed the setting, demographics, the method for data collection and the evidence of trustworthiness. The evidence of trustworthiness included; credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I also discussed the results for data analysis, and a synopsis. In chapter 5, I discuss my interpretation of the findings,



limitations, recommendations, implications of social change, a conclusion, and a summary of the dissertation.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to understand noncustodial African American fathers' perspectives of the effectiveness of the paternal strategies taught in a fathering program and how the program has affected the fathers' experience. I used the generic qualitative approach to understand the noncustodial fathers' perspectives of the phenomena. Generic qualitative research studies do not claim an alliance to a single method (Kahlke, 2014). The phenomenon of interest was fatherhood programs, and I examined if these programs fulfilled noncustodial African American fathers' needs as outlined in Maslow's original hierarchy of needs theory. The conceptual framework for this study was Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is used in various fields and continue to be a relevant theory to name the needs of human (Fallatah & Syed, 2018). In a research study involving the prison settings, Bassett (2016) discussed how Maslow's hierarchy of needs was used to determine if the needs outlined by Maslow's theory were met in the prison setting, or if the prison violated the prisoners' Eighth Amendment. Literature suggests that Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is used in an array of areas. As Bassett (2016) utilized Maslow's hierarchy of needs, I also used the theory to determine if the participants' needs were being met.

The results from this research study showed that noncustodial fathers who took part in fatherhood programs were willing to share their experiences of their participating in a fatherhood program. The participants expressed how the program they took part in

addressed different areas from Maslow's hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow (1943), the hierarchy of needs displays needs associated with human behavior motivation. Singh and Behera (2016) noted that Maslow clarified his needs theory by saying that from the bottom to the top of the pyramid, the order revealed how human needs are satisfied. In the research study, I focused on gaining a better understanding of the noncustodial fathers' perspectives of how fatherhood programs had met their needs, as outlined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Along with learning the fathers' beliefs, semistructured interviews were used to find areas fatherhood programs could increase their support for meeting the needs of African American noncustodial fathers.

Even though father-child relationships have been documented, studies have not explored the individual needs of African American noncustodial fathers through the theoretical framework of Maslow to determine if the fathers' needs are met through taking part in fatherhood programs. I aimed at addressing the gap that I had not identified if the needs outlined by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) were fulfilled by receiving the shared experiences of noncustodial African American fathers. I examined how the needs were met by receiving the perspectives of the participants. Gaining a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the fathers can help with implementing areas of needed growth in fatherhood programs.

The research study's sample consisted of six African American noncustodial fathers. All the participants were older than 21 years of age. Even though a history of incarceration was not in the criteria of being a research participant, all the participants shared they had a history of incarceration. I interviewed the research participants face-to-

face and audio recorded all interviews using an LG cellular phone and WJLING digital recording device. I conducted the interviews with encouraging participants to respond openly to all questions during the interview, and all interviews did not exceed 60 minutes to complete.

I conducted a generic qualitative study to fill the gap in the current literature about specific interventions from fatherhood programs and the needs of African American noncustodial fathers. I used Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory which includes needs he has outlined in his motivation pyramid (Maslow, 1943); therefore, I used the needs to guide the study. Relevant information from the qualitative research can be reviewed and examined by fatherhood programs, policy makers, human service professionals, families, and other family agencies.

I conducted a qualitative analysis to understand emerged themes that were discovered, to answer the research question, and identified important results. I used the NVivo software to support in the qualitative data analysis, which the software found four emergent themes. The themes that emerged from the collected data were relationships, challenges, incarceration, and healthy living.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

I reviewed and examined six African American noncustodial fathers' lived experiences. The results of this study were supported with interviews and the theoretical framework, Maslow's hierarchy of needs. I found in the research study's findings that four emerged themes existed within the study's data analysis. The themes I found to be in the research study were, relationships, challenges, incarceration, and healthy living.

The participants were able to share their experiences of how the fatherhood programs enhanced their relationship with their children and others.

According to Avellar, Covington, Moore, Patnaik, and Wu (2018), responsible fatherhood grants' purpose is to support fathers with managing their barriers and obstacles. The results I found were consistent and was an extension of earlier research. The authors further discussed that fatherhood workers aimed to support healthy families, improve economic outcomes, and build and keep healthy relationships. Participants supplied diverse ways the fatherhood program helped them. All the participants declared that the fatherhood program they took part in helped them overall build a positive relationship with their children. Many of the participants shared how the fatherhood program they participated in gave them a different outlook on life, and encouraged them to put their children first, instead of only thinking about themselves. None of the participants said they were regretful of their participation in the fatherhood program. The participants who took part in the research were different in ages, employment status, relationship status, and quantity of children; however, their responses from the interviews reflect that maintaining fatherhood programs is necessary and essential to its participants in different areas. The needs of the fathers have been addressed; however, all fathers had their own experience of participation in a fatherhood program. All the participants mentioned they were aware of healthy living practices; however, only one of the participants did not name any specific way the program increased his knowledge of improving healthy living. The participants' shared experiences contribute to filling the gap in current literature.

Maslow's need in his eighth-tier hierarchy are: transcendence, self-actualization, aesthetic, cognitive, esteem, belongingness, safety, and physiological needs (Maslow, 1970). I reviewed all the participants' responses to determine if the needs outlined by Maslow's original hierarchy of needs theory were fulfilled. Maslow's original hierarchy of needs consisted of physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

**Table 6**

Emergent Themes Associated with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Physiological need	Challenges	Challenges, healthy living	Challenges	Challenges, healthy living	Challenges, healthy living	
Safety need	Relationship		Relationship	Relationship	Relationship	
Belongingness and love need	Relationship	Relationship	Relationship	Relationship	Relationship	Relationship
Esteem need	Incarceration	Incarceration	Incarceration	Incarceration, healthy living	Incarceration	Incarceration
Self-actualization need	Relationship	Relationship	Relationship	Relationship, healthy living	Relationship	Relationship

Note. The table displays how the emerged themes were associated with participants'

responses through Maslow's original hierarchy of needs.

### Physiological

Maslow said that when the physiological needs are not met, humans cannot perform at their best (Maslow, 1943). The participants from the study discussed how they were all aware of healthy practices they could take part in. Five of the participants shared how the program they took part in addressed healthy living practices. Four out of

the six participants shared that they used their own practices to manage their healthy living. Five out of the six participants shared how financial strains were a challenge for them, while one participant expressed that the fatherhood program he took part in helped him find a secure place of employment that decreased his financial strain and increased his active fathering role. According to Gadsden, Davis, and Johnson (2015), African American fathers of lower class have been found to struggle with short-term employment, unemployment, and poverty. One of the participants shared how he was incarcerated due to his lack of paying child support. The participant expressed that during that time, he could not afford to pay his child support, due to lack of income and that his child's mother was aware of the circumstance. According to Gadsden et al. (2015), African American noncustodial fathers place a greater emphasis on nurturing their children rather than how society believes them to demonstrate. African American fathers also face social factors including social problems and high incarceration levels. According to Doyle et al. (2015), incarceration is linked to noncustodial fathers' child support debt and fathers who experienced being incarcerated had higher child support arrears than fathers with no incarceration experience. The authors further noted that when fathers have better financial situations, they can contribute financially to their families (Doyle et al., 2015). Armon and Mikia (2016) discussed how African American men had a challenging time finding and maintaining employment.

Five out of the six participants shared how financial strains influenced their daily living and expressed the need of financial consistency or increase. According to Julion et al. (2016), African American fathers who do not reside with their children face many

barriers including financial issues. This information was confirmed by the study's participants, who shared financial hardship and relationship barriers they experienced. Two of the participants stated that they did not have the good co-parenting relationships with their children's mother. The research study's findings were consistent with Perry and Lewis (2016), who found that African American noncustodial fathers experienced the barrier of having an unhealthy co-parenting relationship with the mother of their child. Noncustodial African American fathers face challenges with achieving satisfaction of how they view their parenting skills (Qian, De Loney, & Caldwell, 2015). Maslow said that safety, health, financial, and housing needs are all relevant to human survival; in addition, he included those needs within the physiological tier of his original hierarchy of needs pyramid (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 1970).

### **Safety**

Tambunan, Hamied, and Sundavana (2016) discussed that Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes the need of humans to be protected from dangers and to feel safe and secure. The participants did not express significant steps the fatherhood program shared with them to improve their safety; however, the participants shared practices they did to keep safe. The participants associated their change in relationships with others and increasing their understanding of thinking in a selfless manner resulted in safer decision making. Participants 1, 3, 4, and 5 discussed how they avoid being involved with peers they had interacted with in the past to avoid issues and be safer. One of the participants mentioned he decreased visiting a specific area he visited in the past while participating in the fatherhood program. The participant also shared he avoided being involved in



dangerous activity, he may not be aware of by not visiting places he once had.

Participants mentioned the fatherhood program they took part in encouraged them work toward having stable lives, which included having stable housing, employment, not being incarcerated. Participants did not share how the fatherhood program they were involved in addressed their housing situations. Three of the participants shared they were currently living with their family and wanted to move into their own housing; however, they were not able to do so yet. According to Rogers and Rogers (2019) the quantity of homeless father in the United States is increasing. Difficulty with obtaining and maintaining housing has been found from literature as a barrier of African American fathers (Rice et al, (2017). Lewis and Kornrich (2019) shared that housing instability decrease quicker when fathers receive more informal financial support. According to Egleton, Banigo, McLeod, and Vakalahi (2016) former incarcerated African American men face homelessness, barriers, poverty, and stigma from their family members and the community.

### **Belongingness and Love**

Maslow (1943) discussed that social needs include how individuals viewed themselves and how they interact with others. All the participants shared how they had good relationships with their children and the program they participated in addressed maintaining good relationships, which is included within Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). Of the six participants, five shared they altered their relationship with peers to interact with healthier and supportive individuals when participating in the fatherhood program. Two of the participants shared their experience of how interaction

with their child(ren)'s mother was a challenge for them and impacted the relationship they had with their children and the mother. The findings were consistent with earlier research, which has found co-parenting is affected by the relationship between the children's mothers and relatives, in addition to personal challenges of the father (Fagan, Pearson, & Kaufman, 2019). Four of the participants shared that their relationship with their children altered due to their incarceration because the incarceration decreased time they could spend with their children. One of the participants mentioned he had been a gang member; however, he had not been as active as he once was, due to his fathering role. According to Moloney, MacKenzie, Hunt, and Joe-Laidler (2009) fatherhood was found to be a motivator for a lifestyle change among fathers that were members of gangs. One of the participants spoke about how his life had significantly improved and goals he had were achieved after participating in the fatherhood program. All the participants shared they gained a better understanding of the needs of their role as a father.

### **Esteem**

According to Maslow (1943), esteem is a need that includes how individuals view their achievements, reputation, status, and responsibility. According to one of the participants, the fatherhood program he participated in linked him to added support to better manage his overall health. Many of the participants shared they used their own health practices to manage their overall health. One of the participants shared how the health and nutrition information he gained from the fatherhood program supported him with liking how he appeared. The participant also shared that initially he was not interested in how he looked or how healthy he was. Three of the participants shared how

they had faced health concerns, and better understood the need to address managing their health.

The findings were consistent with earlier research, which found that when African American fathers were compared to males of other ethnicity, whereas African American fathers were found to experience poorer health (Caldwell, Allen, & Assari, 2016). One of the participants shared how his experience in the fatherhood program helped increase a healthy relationship between him and his daughter. He expressed how his daughter used healthy eating practices he showed, which he learned from the fatherhood program. According to Caldwell et al., (2016), poorer health of fathers was linked to relationships they had with others, as well as their mental and physical health.

The participants shared they no longer wanted to be incarcerated and that the fatherhood program did not address with them better understanding of how they could manage their feelings. Two of the participants shared how their relationship with others helped them gain knowledge about themselves and supported them with feeling achievement in their fathering role. Two of the participants expressed that counseling should be offered at the completion of the fatherhood program to support the expressing of feelings. Contrary to reviewed literature, the two participants named counseling as an additional resource to avoid handling issues independently. According to researchers, African American fathers believed they should handle issues they have alone, rather than including outside support to avoid what they believed to decrease how others viewed their masculinity (Franklin & Davis, 2018). Participants in this study shared experience of graduating from the program and that they viewed their completion of the fatherhood

program to be an achievement. One participant indicated after he completed the fatherhood program, he was able to network and be recognized by city officials for his hard work. One of the participants shared he did not believe he had achieved anything while participating in the fatherhood program; however, he was able to share steps he completed such as starting his own business after completing the program.

### **Self-Actualization**

According to Maslow (1970), self-actualization is the need that focuses on self-fulfillment and individual need. All the participants shared how they increased considering their children in their decision-making. Participants expressed they did not want to return to incarceration and worked toward eliminating their selfish thinking and behaviors. Two of the participants shared experiences of how they were involved in situations that led them to make positive decisions to avoid incarceration. According to Hansen (2018) incarcerated fathers that take part in fatherhood programs were found to help fathers take more responsibility for situations their children had.

All the six participants in the research study shared that they had been incarcerated. Participants shared how their incarceration linked them to the fatherhood program they took part in. The participants shared how the fatherhood program addressed positive involvement with their child(ren). All participants mentioned how the incarceration changed their lives, including how it increase their challenges and the relationship between themselves and their children. According to Bates (2018) due to incarceration and conviction, African American fathers have been found to have difficulty in obtaining employment and reestablishing their fathering role with their

children. The participants did not share how the fatherhood program addressed their criminal offenses but that they did not want to be incarcerated again. According to Skinner-Osei and Stepteau-Watson (2018) unaddressed childhood trauma, and post-release stress were found in a re-entry program, to be major barriers of African American after they were incarcerated.

### **Summary of Findings**

In conclusion, findings from this study confirmed fatherhood programs addressed needs outlined by Maslow's hierarchy of needs, however not all the needs were fulfilled from all the participant's programs. The participants from the research study believed the fatherhood program they took part in to overall had been beneficial to them. Participants shared experiences of how the fatherhood program they took part in addressed needs Maslow included in the original hierarchy of needs. Some participants shared that they used the strategies the fatherhood program offered them. Some of the participants expressed they used alternative practices to address their needs. Maslow (1943) hierarchy of needs include participants' physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization needs; therefore, I formed the questions for the interviews to address Maslow's needs. Themes found in the research study align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The fathers all shared they had a history of incarceration. Their history of incarceration contributed to factors associated with Maslow's tiers. The participants shared they wanted to avoid reincarceration, and instead accomplish their goals, which aligned with the self-actualization need. Maslow's physiological and safety needs aligned with the healthy living theme. Maslow's social and safety needs aligned with the

relationships theme. All the participants shared how the program helped to promote healthy relationships they had with others. The fathers reported having good relationships with their children. They also shared how their relationships had changed with peers to decrease negative interaction with others, which supported the fulfillment of their self-actualization, safety, and belongingness needs. Some participants shared similar experiences with the relationships they had with their children's mother to include the relationship to affect their involvement with their children. The participants shared different experiences of how healthy living practices were addressed in the fatherhood program they took part in. Even though the curriculum in the fatherhood programs were different, the strategies discussed were associated with fulfilling the participants' esteem and safety needs in the healthy living theme. The participants all took part in different fatherhood programs; however, they all associated their past incarceration by linking the experience to the fatherhood program in which they were involved. Participants shared their incarceration caused challenges and barriers they faced. None of the participants mentioned that the fatherhood program supported them with seeking housing, which ultimately could have fulfilled their esteem, safety, and physiological needs. The participants shared similarities and differences of challenges they had in their fathering role. Only one of the participants mentioned the fatherhood program increased his ability to obtain employment, which could have decreased their financial barrier. Differences I found to be apparent were between the participants manner of sharing their perception of their achievement. Three of the fathers shared that during the interview, they perceived themselves to be in a more comfortable position, related to their income and parenting

role, than they had been in the past. I found that literature supports parenting program in New York, which was evident of how parents were assisted with obtaining employment, case management and other supportive services (Lippold, Sorensen, & Nichols, 2013). All participants expressed they did not want to be involved in situations causing a return to be incarcerated. None of the participants shared how the fatherhood program reviewed their criminal charges; however, one participant mentioned to be included in his fatherhood program, participants could not be violent offenders.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation of this study was that I used only African American noncustodial participants as participants in the study. Other ethnic groups were excluded from participating in this study. Another limitation I identified was that the participants had to be English-speaking to avoid communication barriers with me. Due to my criteria for research participants, all participants lived in the state of Virginia, therefore other areas within the world were not focused on as potential participants.

The third limitation I identified was my strategy of sampling. Even though I identified purposeful sampling as the sampling method I used in the research study that recruited participants in this generic qualitative study; the sampling type limited the father participants who were chosen in the study. I sought out participants by placing research advertising in fatherhood program locations and reviewed with fatherhood facilitators the criteria to be a participant in the research study. I trusted that the fatherhood facilitators understood the steps potential participants needed to take to be screened to take part in the research study.

The fourth limitation is that I am an African American mother with custody of my children. My thoughts and perspective could have affected my data collection and analysis ability. In addition of how my thoughts and perspectives could have affected my data collection, I took notes and observed body language to further guide the interviews with all the participants. I had never met the participants prior to interviewing with them, therefore I assumed the cause of the body language and gestures during and after the interviews.

A fifth limitation of this study was the assumption that the information from the participants was provided in an honest manner from the start of our first contact. I used a demographic questionnaire to support in the screening the research study participants. I expected the participants to understand the words that were typed on the demographic questionnaire and trusted that they would ask questions if there was information on the questionnaire they did not understand. Another limitation is that I conducted face-to-face interviews with participants. Due to the need to have face-to-face interviews with participants, it eliminated fathers who could have contributed valuable information using other sources of communication. Lastly, this study consisted of six participants who lived in a specific area within the state of Virginia. Future studies should consider the limitations from this study.

### **Recommendations**

As a result of my study, there are recommendations for future research. Recommendations for future qualitative research studies involve examining non-English speaking participants of different race/ethnicities to determine if fatherhood programs



fulfill their needs. Another future research recommendation is examining noncustodial fathers' perceptions, of what they believe their needs are to better understand if their needs are identified in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Fathers in the recommended future research would not have a background of incarceration. A final future research recommendation is to consider noncustodial fathers who have not been incarcerated but who have participated in a fatherhood program.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The purpose of this study was to address the gap in research on if specific interventions from fatherhood programs fulfill the needs of African American noncustodial fathers. In addition, the needs I addressed with the participants are identified from Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1943). The research study's results have the potential to affect positive change at the family, organizational, and societal levels. The results from the research study can increase the understanding of how African American fathers view fatherhood programs. African American noncustodial fathers were asked questions during interviews to gain a better understanding of how they perceived the fatherhood program. The focus of the questions was to address their feelings about their own achievement, interaction with others, barriers and challenges of parenting, safety, and healthy living. The challenges African American noncustodial fathers have been associated with include, meeting financial expectations and poor mental and physical health (Caldwell, Allen, & Assari, 2016). Considering the needs of African American men's financial, stable housing, counseling, healthy relationships, and support needs can improve how noncustodial fathers address

their barriers. African American noncustodial fathers could receive services to increase their ability to have their needs fulfilled, improve father-child relationships, and increase healthy families.

### **Recommendations for Fatherhood Program**

Being aware of barriers, challenges, and goals of the fathers can further support the development of programs to meet the needs of noncustodial fathers, increasing the ability to affect social change. Effective support to noncustodial fathers can promote positive social change. Fatherhood programs can address and provide additional assistance in supporting African American noncustodial fathers. Areas of support could include; obtaining employment, stable housing, and providing or linking them to counseling to share and express their feelings. The research study's findings can contribute to how families view individuals within their families, support needed to improve the relationships between fathers and their children, how areas should be included in fatherhood programs, and a better understanding of support noncustodial fathers can seek to improve their needs. Noncustodial fathers can increase their role in suggesting areas within fatherhood programs they may need additional support in to better manage their role as a father and further support father-child relationships.

### **Conclusions**

I found the detailed responses from participants to be enlightening. The data received through the interviews gave further understanding of how the participants viewed the fatherhood program to address unique needs from questions asked to them. The participants were able to openly share information of their goals, achievement,

relationship with others, and how the fatherhood program they took part in affected their lives. I confirmed that strategies were used in fatherhood programs that addressed Maslow's original hierarchy of needs, with African American noncustodial fathers. The needs that were found to be addressed in the fatherhood programs, include relationships, identifying challenges, and experiencing achievement. This study also recognized needs fatherhood programs could address more, which include, social needs, seeking housing, increasing stability, psychological counseling, financial management, and avoiding future incarceration. Recommendations regarding needs that should be addressed in future related research are suggested in an attempt to avoid participants sharing that their needs are not addressed in fatherhood programs, and to ensure their needs are being fulfilled. I found that strategies should be implemented in fatherhood programs to address Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Utilizing Maslow's theory (Maslow, 1943) could help participants in fatherhood programs increase their ability to have their needs fulfilled. Fatherhood programs should also implement the hierarchy of needs theory to maintain addressing father's needs to support their fathering role.

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## Appendix A: Initial Participation Letter

Hello, my name is Melissa Smith. I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting a research study, which will consist of facilitating audio recorded interviews. You have been invited to participate in this interview. Your participation in this research study, which will assist in the completing of my doctoral program, is much appreciated.

To meet the qualifications as a participant you must be over 18 years old, have at least once child you do not have custody of, participate in a fatherhood program, be of African American ethnicity, and speak, write, and read English. If you are interested in participating in this research, due to your participation in a fatherhood program, please contact me, Melissa Smith, via text message or by dialing XXX-XXX-XXXX to schedule an interview. You can also email me at XXXXXXXXXXXX.

I am grateful if you have decided to participate as a research participant regarding your experience participating in a fatherhood program and as a noncustodial father. The study identifies the experience of noncustodial fathers' providing their needs and perception from the services they receive from a fatherhood program and their father-child relationship.

It is requested that you do not discuss with other eligible participants this study until after they have participated.

Thank you,

Melissa Smith

## Appendix B: Follow-up Email/Letter

Thank you for expressing an interest in participating in this study. As discussed during our initial phone conversation, this study looks to gain information on noncustodial fathers' experience of fatherhood programs and perception. It is my desire that this research study will provide pertinent information that has the potential to support the development and management of fatherhood programs. If you are still in agreement with participating and you meet the criteria listed below, please complete the informed consent document. If you have any questions during this time, please let me know.

The criterion for participation in this study is as follows:

1. Participant fathers must have participated in a fatherhood program.
2. Participant fathers must read, write, and speak English.
3. Participant fathers must be over the age of 18 years of age.

## Appendix D: Interview Script

1. Let's begin with, what can you tell me about your experience participating in the fatherhood program?
2. Are there additional trainings you could receive to better support your custodial role?

**Self-actualization**

3. Has the fatherhood program influenced your personal growth? If so, how?  
What other services have you been referred to and do you believe the services have been beneficial?

**Esteem needs**

4. How has participating in the fatherhood program influenced your ability to maintain feelings of achievement?
5. Do you think you have increased managing your daily living responsibilities by participating in the fatherhood program?
6. Tell me what stressors or barriers you have identified you have in the involvement with your child(ren).

**Belongingness and Love**

7. What type of relationship do you have with your children?
8. Has your relationship with others changed since you have participated in the fatherhood program?
9. If so, how? Have you reviewed in the fatherhood program information pertaining to families and affection? Please elaborate.
10. What parts of your fathering role do you find to be the most challenging?

**Safety needs**

11. Do you think the fatherhood program has increased your knowledge of safety and security for yourself?
12. Has the fatherhood program reviewed having stability with you? If so, please elaborate.

**Physiological needs**

13. Have you participated in activities to improve your eating, and drinking in the fatherhood program?
14. Do you think your sleeping habits have changed since you have participated in the fatherhood program?
15. Can you give me a specific example of a rewarding part of the fatherhood program?

**Closing**

16. How did you learn about the fatherhood program?
17. What is something else you would like to share that you have not?

## Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire Letter

Dear Research Participant,

I want to thank you for your participation in today's interview. Your responses to the interview questions will be recorded and it will be analyzed in support of understanding the fulfillment of needs of fathers while participating in a fatherhood program. Attached is a demographic questionnaire that will be used to provide context for each interviewee. Completion of this questionnaire should only take approximately 5 minutes. Once you have completed this questionnaire, please return it to me.

Thank you again for your time filling out this demographic questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Melissa Smith

## Appendix F: Demographic Questionnaire

Are you African- American?

- Yes
- No

Do you participate in a fatherhood program?

- Yes
- No

Which of the following best explains your reason for attending the program?

- Voluntarily
- Court-ordered
- Other, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Which category below, best includes your age?

- 19-25
- 26-32
- 33-38-45
- 46-52
- 53-59
- 60 or older

Are you married, widowed, separated, never married, or divorced?

- Married
- Widowed
- Separated
- Never married
- Divorced

How many children do you have?

- 1-3
- 4-6
- 6 or more

Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

- Employed
- Not Employed
- Retired
- Disabled, not able to work



## Appendix G: Follow-up Letter/Email

Hello,

I want to thank you again for participating in my research study. As discussed during our meeting, the study seeks to gain information on noncustodial fathers' experience of fatherhood programs and perception. It is my desire that this research study will provide pertinent information that has the potential to support the development and management of fatherhood programs. I would like to review with you the transcript from our digitally recorded interview. I do ask that you share any corrections that should be made and that if you have any questions during this time, that you please let me know. If you would allow, I will not review the transcript from our interview.

(Review transcribed interview)

Do you believe the information is accurate and responses are as you wish?

(Make any necessary adjustments)

Again, I would like to thank you for your participation. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Melissa Smith

## Appendix H: Subthemes and Primary Themes

***Relationships***

father-child relationship  
relationship with others  
perspective of affection  
feelings and achievement

***Challenges***

stressors and barriers of fathers  
personal growth  
father role challenges

***Incarceration***

fatherhood program involvement  
how they found out about the program

***Healthy living***

sleeping habits  
healthy living  
perspective of additional support  
safety and security  
perspective of stability