

Regular Work, Underground Jobs, and Hustling: An Examination of Paternal Work and Father Involvement

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This paper analyzes data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study to examine a sample of urban fathers, a majority of whom were unwed at the time of their child's birth. Integrating research on race/ethnicity, poverty, family, work, and crime, this study explores how fathers' participation in regular work, underground employment, and illicit hustles is related to engagement with their children; it also investigates how these relationships vary by race. The results show that the more time fathers spend in illegal hustling, the less engaged they are with their children. In contrast, time spent working in the formal economy has a positive effect on father engagement. Importantly, the effects of work on father engagement vary by race/ethnicity. The positive relationship between fathers' participation in regular work and engagement with children is even greater for African Americans than whites. In addition, underground work has a more positive association with father engagement for African American fathers than white fathers. Finally, hustling has a more negative effect on engagement among African American fathers than among Latino fathers.

Keywords: inner-city fathers, employment, race, informal economy, parenthood, poverty, fragile families, impulsivity, crime

Many researchers and policy analysts are concerned about low levels of father presence in children's lives, especially for children from less stable families and from Latino and African American households. Researchers consider children born outside of marriage to be living in "fragile families" and have shown that they are often at a disadvantage compared to children born to married parents (Aquilino, 1996; Bane & Ell-

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wood, 1986). Existing research on fragile families explores the limited opportunities for successful marriage (Testa, Astone, Krogh, & Neckerman, 1989; Wilson, 1987), child support problems (Stier & Tienda, 1993), the spread of single-parent families (Furstenberg, 1995; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Jencks, 1992), and the need for multigenerational households to avoid poverty (Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). To the extent that research on fragile families examines fathers, it has emphasized the changing paternal role in families (Burton & Snyder, 1998; Lamb, 1998), effects of marriage on men's lives (Nock, 1998), and the gendered ways that fathers contribute to their children's lives (Amato, 1998). Yet, even with a general renewed interest in fatherhood (see, for example, Ishii-Kuntz, 1994; Lamb, 2004; Marsiglio, 1993, 1995), few studies quantitatively examine the role of work in fathering behaviors among fragile families of varying racial/ethnic groups.

The neglect of the importance of types of employment among fathers in fragile families represents a gap in the literature. In the current age of welfare reform, many underemployed inner-city men go to extremes to generate income, reporting that they work in the regular service sector, underground, *and* through risky hustles (i. e., illicit employment used to supplement income, like drug sales) (Edin, Lein, & Nelson, 1998). Three decades of deindustrialization have diminished the employment opportunities for many nonwhite men and have contributed to a drastic decline in traditional mother-father families (Anderson, 1999; Kasarda, 1989; Levy, 1980; Wilson & Neckerman, 1986; Wilson, 1996). With an economically bifurcated labor market (Wilson, 1987, 1996), declining wages (Jencks, 1992; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999), high rates of joblessness (DeParle, 2004; Wilson, 1987, 1996), and a growing dependence on the underground economy (Sullivan, 1989; Wilson, 1996; Venkatesh, 2000), many urban men of color are in poor positions to be involved fathers who spend time with their children.

This paper addresses two questions. First, does participation in illicit hustles (i. e., selling drugs, pushing stolen goods) or underground jobs have a different association with father involvement than participation in regular employment? Second, given the importance of race and ethnicity in the literatures on work and fathering, do potential employment effects on father-child engagement vary by race/ethnicity? In exploring these questions in this sample of fragile fathers, this study controls for sociodemographic (race/ethnicity, age, education) and familial (mother-father relations) factors, as well as a potentially important variable that has been neglected—impulsivity. The use of these controls will reveal the association of fathering with demographics and familial factors, which may be distinct from associations found in other samples of fathers. Additionally, this analysis may also present interesting associations between impulsivity and fathering that have not been previously studied. In sum, by extending the qualitative research by Edin et al. (2001) and others, this study quantitatively examines the relationships between different kinds of employment for inner-city fathers and father-child relations and shows how these relationships vary by race/ethnicity. In so doing, this paper examines whether all kinds of work are equally beneficial for all fathers and children.

Research Literature

While some literature shows that fathers who work more hours spend less time with their children (see Pleck & Masciadrelli's review 2004), urban fragile families may be a special case. Studies pertaining to the inner-city labor market show that work opportunities are scarce, especially for African American men (Jencks, 1992; Sullivan, 1989; Wilson, 1987, 1996). This review focuses on: 1) how inner-city fathers' decisions to assume fathering roles and behaviors are tied to the *socializing effects of work*; and 2) how the relationship between work and fathering varies by race/ethnicity.

Work, Family, and Father Engagement

Economic factors play a prominent role in fathers' decisions to engage with their children (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1999; Danziger & Radin, 1990; Johnson, 2000). Studies examining employment and fatherhood show that factors related to the postindustrial economy have hampered father engagement through family problems associated with fathers' inability to be financial providers (Anderson, 1999; Edin & Nelson, 2001; Jencks, 1992; Liebow, 1967; Wilson, 1987, 1996; Wilson & Neckerman, 1986). Thus, since many urban men do both as part of a patchwork of employment to make ends meet (Venkatesh, 2006), this paper examines the way in which fatherhood is associated with both regular and irregular work.

Regular Work and Fathering. One possible explanation for an association between work and fathering is role selection. Advocates of the role selection argument assert that certain kinds of people "select into" conventional lifestyles (Yamaguchi & Kandel, 1985). Fathers who work regular jobs may be traditional in other ways, such as religion, personality, political beliefs, or other attitudes and behaviors; this conventionality may be the underlying cause of better fathering. Similarly, people with unconventional values "select into" unconventional roles. Fathers employed in regular work may have conventional personalities, attitudes, and behaviors that increase their chances of being engaged with their children. Role selection factors, like impulsivity, may be especially important for this sample since this sample contains fragile families who have already had children outside of marriage (a less conventional sequence of life events).

Aside from the issue of role selection, the direction of causality in the work-engagement association is also uncertain. There are some reasons to think that more engaged fathers in fragile families will work more hours in a regular job. Some research comparing fathers to nonfathers shows that fatherhood has a role socializing effect. For instance, engaged fathers—especially those who live with their children—are more involved in the community, increase their ties to other relatives, and spend more time working for income (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Snarey, 1993). Thus, fathers who are more engaged may be more motivated to secure stable employment that is often found in regular work. Although this paper does not explore this causal direction, future researchers might find it productive to study such a causal flow.

This analysis explores the influence of work on fathering for three reasons. First, several examples from the empirical literature bolster the assertion that poor work opportunities can trigger family problems. For instance, Anderson (1999) found that the lack of family-sustaining jobs in inner cities impedes young people's opportunities to form economically self-reliant families, particularly in neighborhoods with concentrated disadvantage. Research also shows that poor labor market opportunities contribute to poor parenting and father absence (McLanahan, 2001; Sullivan, 1989). Additionally, recent research reports that parental disagreement over money is one of the strongest predictors of dissolved mother-father relations and declines in father-child engagement as children age (Edin et al., 2000). Similarly, research shows that the lack of good jobs contributes to high rates of female-headed and welfare-receiving households in African American and Latino communities and weakens nuclear families among whites (Sullivan, 1989). Also, Parcel and Menaghan's (1994) study of fathers with young children found that those who worked fewer hours had children with more behavioral problems.

Second, past research shows that employment *encourages* higher levels of paternal involvement. The role socialization hypothesis asserts that the link between employment and father engagement is independent of personality and behavior factors and implies that conventional work socializes men to be engaged fathers (Yamaguchi & Kandel, 1985). The role of conventional worker may reduce risky behaviors involving danger, instability, or crime. Fathers who have a regular job (i.e., in the formal sector) may be involved as part of their perceived duty to be a good provider and "show love and affection" (Edin et al., 2000; Kalil, 2003). The ability to provide financially for their families tends to leave fathers in good standing with their children's mothers; in turn, good mother-father relations often have a profoundly positive effect on father-child relations (Edin et al., 2000).

Third, research shows that lack of employment opportunity has a psychological effect on fathers. Low income fathers' economic situations challenge their commitment to their new families (Furstenberg, 1995). Since regular work is often unavailable, fathers are frequently driven to compete for scarce resources among many other similar contenders (Furstenberg, 1995); under economic strain, they *conceive of* and *carry out* parental obligations differently. In contrast, enhanced job opportunities for young fathers can foster an assumption of paternal obligation among young men (Danziger & Radin, 1990). These findings are supported by others who claim that many young fathers want to take long-term responsibility for their children, but are hampered by a lack of educational and economic opportunities that enable good parenting (Anderson, 1999; Sullivan, 1993).

Therefore, if a lack of legitimate work interferes with socialization into fatherhood, employment encourages involvement, and a lack of regular work changes the way fathers view the fathering role, this paper formulates:

Hypothesis 1: All else being equal, fathers in fragile families who spend more time doing regular work will have higher levels of father-child engagement than fathers who work fewer hours in a regular job.

Irregular Forms of Work and Fathering. Many fathers participate in irregular work within the underground or illicit economies to generate the missing revenue resulting from underemployment and joblessness (Anderson, 1999; Norland, 2001; Rich, 2001; Rich & Kim, 2001; Sullivan, 1993). Some have challenged the very definition of work in fragile families, suggesting that many low income fathers are not jobless, but work in jobs that are not recorded in official employment statistics (Edin & Nelson, 2001). Sociologists have distinguished between two types of irregular work: underground work and hustles (Anderson, 1999; Venkatesh, 2000, 2006). For example, Venkatesh (2000, 2006) operationalized the untaxed exchange of “legitimate” goods and services as merely legal-but-underground. Examples might include unreported revenue from garage sales, unlicensed taxi services, or selling homemade items. In contrast, he labeled drug trafficking, racketeering, prostitution, and bribing police as “hustles” (Venkatesh, 2000). Hustles may also include trading stolen goods, drug manufacturing, and fraud (Schneider & Enste, 2000).

Underground work. Underground work that is legal but untaxed is common in poor urban families (Edin & Lein, 1997b; Fernandez-Kelly, 1995; MacDonald, 1994; Stack, 1974; Uehara, 1990) and forms a hidden part of the U. S. urban economy (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987). The regular sector cannot financially sustain many fragile families (Rich, 2001), so fathers work underground or “under the table” to generate needed revenue. While it is possible that more engaged fathers are driven to work underground, this paper maintains that quasi-legitimate, underground work is likely to positively affect father-child engagement. As with regular work, underground work may socialize men into fathering roles by providing them with the ability to legitimately fulfill their role. This study argues that among disadvantaged groups, the socializing influence of underground work operates in a similar fashion to regular work. For these groups, underground work is part of a *moral convention* (Venkatesh, 2006). In his study of a Chicago housing project, Venkatesh (2000) distinguished the types of irregular work based on what some inner-city residents characterize as detrimental, threatening activity. Thus, urban fragile families are struggling in the regular economy and off-the-books work is morally acceptable way to help fathers provide while also socializing them into a successful fathering role.

Urban fragile families are struggling in the regular economy and off-the books work is morally acceptable way to help fathers provide while also socializing them into a successful fathering role:

Hypothesis 2: All else being equal, fathers in fragile families who spend more time working off-the-books in the quasi-legitimate underground economy will have higher levels of father-child engagement than those who spend less hours working in the informal economy.

Hustles. The term “hustling” is taken from urban vernacular, movies, and music (Venkatesh, 2000) and has become a sociological concept referring to illicit activities

that generate income, including narcotic and gun trafficking, gambling rackets, prostitution, and bribing government officials. In terms of causal ordering, it is possible that lack of engagement with the child causes fathers to participate in hustling. However, the opposite direction seems more likely. First, unlike regular and underground work, illegal hustling disproportionately exposes fathers to contexts that are negatively correlated with fatherhood, such as violence, problematic drug and alcohol use, criminal activity, and incarceration (Edin et al., 1998; Waller & Bailey, 2002). Fathers who hustle are being socialized into a role that has diverged from the norms of “decent” economic behavior and into “street” behaviors associated with the hustling role (Anderson, 1999). Indeed, many fathers who hustle are poor providers who only come through on special occasions and during economic crises (Bourgois, 1995).

Second, the negative socialization of hustling is likely to interfere with the father’s relationship with the mother. Within fragile families, mothers may end or threaten to end relationships with fathers who are involved in risky behavior (Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Waller & Bailey, 2002) or illicit hustles (Edin et al., 2000). Risky behavior can come in many forms, such as sexual risk or peer-based behaviors that emphasize masculinity (Anderson, 1999). Indeed, high levels of participation in a hustling economy might orient a man toward relationships with friends or gangs that compete with the father role. Hustling may be seen as especially suspicious to mothers in the highly distrustful context of high poverty neighborhoods where many women fear that men become involved with them to obtain sex or money only to leave them behind (Anderson, 1999; Wilson, 1996). Thus, mothers, acting as gatekeepers to their children, are often reluctant to permit unemployed or illegally employed fathers to visit their children (Edin et al., 2000).

Finally, it may be that fathers who are attached to their children are driven to sell drugs or push stolen goods, for example, to support their infants. However, hustles are incongruent with the nurturing role required of fatherhood, and research shows that men who are serious about taking care of their children are more likely to exit hustling roles (Edin et al., 2000). This may be why many men combine work or switch back and forth from illegal hustles into legitimate and underground occupations, which are less dangerous for them and their families (Edin & Nelson, 2001; Venkatesh, 2006). Thus, it seems more likely that hustling socializes men to become disengaged fathers because these activities interfere with father engagement.

If hustling socializes fathers into attitudes and behaviors that are inconsistent with fathering and contributes to conflict with the child’s mother, then:

Hypothesis 3: All else being equal, fathers in fragile families who spend more hours hustling will be less engaged than fathers who spend fewer hours hustling.

Although underground work and hustles offer alternatives to traditional employment and are often combined with regular work, they create different images of fathers. One is the image of the hard-working, devoted father who strings together employment through multiple odd jobs; the other is the father who is involved in dangerous, illegal

work. Both may be seen as involved in irregular work because these jobs offer the best opportunities for providing for their families. Researchers tend to view parents' involvement in alternative kinds of work as a demonstration of commitment to the family, but there is a lack of quantitative evidence about the actual relationship between these alternative kinds of work and fathering. In addition, it is unknown whether alternative forms of work mean the same thing for all fathers in fragile families.

Race/Ethnicity and the Work-Fathering Link

The effects of work on fathering may vary by race/ethnicity. While all fathers deal with time constraints that may inhibit paternal involvement (Toth & Xu, 1999), fathering patterns vary across racial/ethnic groups (Bartz & Levine, 1978; Cooksey & Fondell, 1996; Toth & Xu, 1999). Many work-related factors contribute to racial/ethnic differences in fathering. Whites, African Americans, and Latinos have very different work realities. There are continuing racial/ethnic gaps in education, earnings, and employment (McKinnon, 2003), and nonwhites face persistent discrimination and limited social networks. In addition, nonwhites face geographic disadvantages that limit work opportunities. For instance, African Americans and Latinos are more likely to live in cities, where good jobs in the formal sector are scarce and opportunities for irregular work are abundant. Given their low socioeconomic status compared to whites, Latinos, many of whom are immigrants, and African Americans may be especially drawn to irregular work. Yet, African Americans have the worst employment options. For example, they have the highest unemployment rate among all racial/ethnic groups and African Americans with low educational attainment are far less likely to be employed than similarly educated Latinos and whites (U. S. Department of Labor, 2006).

Thus, the literature suggests that unlike their white counterparts, fathers of color endure disproportionate levels of economic hardship and face race/ethnicity-related disadvantage and discrimination that constrain their time and prevent them from meeting some responsibilities of fathers (Allen & Connor, 1997; Madhubuti, 1990; Toth & Xu, 1999). Simply put, many fathers of color wish they could spend more time with their families and provide for their children's needs (Hyde & Texidor, 1988), but they are unable to do so. With work posing a challenge for nonwhites, they may be more sensitive to its effects. This study hypothesizes:

Hypothesis 4: Within fragile families, the effects of work factors on father engagement will vary by race/ethnicity. The positive effects of regular work and underground work will be larger for African Americans and Latinos than other groups. Also, the negative effects of hustling will be worse for African Americans and Latinos than whites.

In examining these hypotheses, this study controls for sociodemographic and family characteristics that are associated with father engagement, including father age, education, and mother-father relations. The analyses also control for impulsivity, a more

stable personality characteristic, but one that may be associated with both fathering and employment (Dickman, 1990). Impulsivity affects individual life course trajectories and is an increasingly important factor in crime research (Farrington, 1998; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Sampson, Morenoff, & Raudenbush, 2005; Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). In terms of fathering, some have argued that impulsivity and its associated outcomes (e.g., crime, violence, risky sexual behavior) may be linked to a lack of father involvement and union formation (Anderson, 1989; Sullivan, 1993). In addition, impulsivity may be a third variable that is highly correlated with nontraditional work and illegal work because it may be associated with counterproductive work behaviors that interfere with regular employment (Roberts, Chernyshenko, Stark, & Goldberg, 2005).

Methods

Sample

This study uses one-year follow-up data (and some baseline data for mothers and for fathers with missing data on some items) from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study (FFCW). The data also contain a sample of married fathers that are included in the analyses for the purpose of comparison. The unmarried sample is representative of non-marital births in U. S. cities with populations over 200,000 (when weights are applied). The data were designed to evaluate the circumstances of unmarried parents and their children over the first few years following a non-marital birth. Parents completed an interview at the child's birth and then one year, three years, and five years subsequently. The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study was chosen because it contains a unique and rich list of questions addressing fatherhood and illegal work. These data are from a sample of inner-city fathers, the majority of whom were responsible for a 1998 non-marital birth. All variables come from the fathers' data except for child's sex, which is from the mothers' baseline data.

Not all fathers interviewed at the baseline were interviewed at the one-year follow-up and not all fathers in the follow-up were interviewed at the baseline, so cases were selected if they were present in the one-year follow-up data when the children were aged between 12 and 18 months. The baseline and one-year follow-up data for fathers combined have a total N of 4,898. About 31.74% of the sample was excluded because there was no follow-up data for the fathers ($N = 3,367$). Then, cases where respondents were not white, Latino, or African American were excluded (2.9% of the total sample reducing the N to 3,224). Respondents were excluded if they had no race/ethnicity data in either the baseline or one-year follow-up (2.39% of the total sample, reducing the N to 3,107). The final sample of 2,663 excludes all cases for which data was missing in variables used for analyses and could not be estimated using baseline data (9.06% of the total sample). Given the neediness of toddlers and the fact that child age is negatively associated with parental involvement (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004), the toddler stage is a time when fathers are especially likely to be engaged because they are more likely to be involved with the baby's mother and less likely to have formed new families

and children. Thus, fathers who are less engaged with children at this phase of the child's life may be seen as especially at risk and detached from fatherhood, providing a good point at which to test these hypotheses.

Description and Measurement of the Variables

Dependent Variable

Father engagement is measured using the one-year follow-up data and is the father's self-reported number of times a week he engages in a series of activities with his child. Direct engagement and play is particularly relevant for fathers, as mothers tend to take on a large part of the "managerial" or logistical tasks in children's lives (Parke, 2002). Several father involvement variables from the FFCW one-year follow-up codebook were selected, using a widely documented set of criteria suggested in the *Fathering Indicators Framework* (see Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 1998; Lamb, 1987; Lamb et al., 1985). Each variable selected indicates the number of days per week that a father engages in certain caregiving and socializing activities with his child.

The Fragile Families data also contains mothers' reports of fathers' levels of engagement, but we use the father's reports for four reasons. First, the Fragile Families data is unique because it gathers information from men and captures fragile fathers' voices after a longtime reliance on mothers' reports (Greene, Emig, & Hearn, 1996). Second, just as some researchers assume that fathers are biased toward inflating their reports of engagement, mothers may be biased toward underreporting engagement. Third, recent research shows that fathers' reports of involvement are rather trustworthy and are similar to mothers' reports, even in low income nonwhite samples (Coley, 2003; Wical & Doherty, 2005). Finally, absolute levels of engagement should not affect the hypothesis tests.

The final engagement scale is composed of seven items with a Cronbach's alpha value of .88, which exceeds the recommended value of .7 (Pallant, 2001). The final scale is composed of seven items, each indicating how many days per week a father engaged in certain activities with his child. The seven items are: playing games, singing songs, reading stories, telling stories, playing with toys, hugging the child to show physical affection, and putting the child to bed. Since the total scale multiplies the seven items by seven days in each week, fathers may score a maximum of 49 points, indicating that they performed all of the involvement items every day of the week. Cases were deleted if they had missing data on any variable in the analyses. The only exception was missing data on father's education and race/ethnicity. In the one-year follow up data, if data were missing on these items, we used the father's baseline data as a proxy.

Independent Variables

Employment. Employment is measured using the one-year follow-up data and is the logged number of hours that fathers worked each week in the regular economy, the

number of hours each week they spent hustling, and the number of hours each week they worked underground/off-the-books. We did not use the baseline data about employment for two reasons. First, the employment questions in the one-year follow-up data asked about recent work and work in the 12-18 months since the baby's birth, the time period most relevant to the hypotheses tested in this study. Second, some fathers in the one-year follow-up did not have baseline employment data and a subset of baseline fathers were not in the follow-up data.

Regular work was operationalized using the following item that asks about the respondent's most current or recent job: "How many hours (do/did) you usually work per week at (this/that) job? Include regular overtime hours." Next, hustles were operationalized using the following codebook item asking about the last 12 months: "About how many hours per week did you (sell or deliver drugs, engage in prostitution, or do other kinds of hustles)?" Finally, underground work was tabulated using the item about the previous 12 months, "About how many hours per week did you spend (off-the-books or under the table work, own business underground, do anything else off-the-books to earn money)?"

In all regressions, we used a log transformation for the employment variables because the data are substantially non-normal for underground work and hustling (see descriptives in Table 1). In separate analyses not shown here, we used dummy variables to measure fathers' participation in the three types of work and found similar results. In those analyses, regular work and hustling had a significant positive association with engagement. However, in those analyses we did not find interaction effects involving race. Thus, the interaction effect is related to the number of hours working in each type of work.

A number of control variables reflecting personal characteristics that may affect father engagement are also included. These include demographic attributes, personality, educational attainment, and mother-father relations. The inclusion of these variables helps control for role selection.

Race/ethnicity. Respondents' race/ethnicity is measured using three categories: non-Latino white (reference category), African American, and Latino.

Father's age. This is a continuous variable and is the father's self-reported age in 1999.

Impulsivity. This study includes a variable about the father's personality that is a measure of more stable individual differences in risk for poor fathering. Impulsivity was measured using a six-item index (Cronbach's alpha = .80). The impulsivity items ask a father whether he agrees that he often "says whatever comes into his head without thinking first," "doesn't think to spend enough time thinking over a situation" before acting, "says or does things without considering the consequences," "gets into trouble because he doesn't think before he acts," has plans that "don't work out" because he "hasn't gone over them carefully enough in advance," and "often makes up his mind

without taking the time to consider the situation from all angles.” Fathers who respond “yes” are scored as “1,” so those who answer affirmatively to all six items received a score of “6.”

Educational attainment. Fathers’ educational attainment is coded into four dummy variables based on a one-year follow-up item asking fathers about the highest grade of school completed: high school dropout (reference category), graduated from high school or has GED, completed some college, and graduated from college or more advanced schooling. In the questionnaire, the responses are categorical rather than in continuous years.

Mother-father relations. Mother-father relations were assessed using items from the one-year follow-up data asking the father about his relationship with the baby’s mother and his cohabiting status with her at the time of the child’s birth. These were converted into a series of dummy variables that exhaustively measure whether the parents were romantically involved and/or living with each other. The six categories are married (reference category), romantic and cohabiting, romantic and not cohabiting, separate, friends, and no relationship.

Other controls. As with the impulsivity control, to better specify the models and address the aforementioned role selection issues, four other variables are held constant: number of children in father’s household (a continuous measure), sex of child (female = 1), father’s incarceration history (has been incarcerated = 1), and whether the father has other children who are not living with him (yes = 1).

Statistical Analyses

The means and standard deviations of the variables are reported in Table 1, while Table 2 reports the regression equations, including the interactions. This study estimates ordinary least-squares regressions to model father engagement. The primary model, Model 1, incorporates race/ethnicity, age, education, impulsivity, mother-father relations, and other controls (e.g., number children in household, sex of child, incarceration history, existence of other children living elsewhere) as predictors to determine which are associated with father engagement, net of the others. Model 2 introduces father employment to the regression model and shows whether the effects of race/ethnicity and other variables remain even after estimating the effects of employment. Model 3 adds interaction terms between individual race/ethnicity and employment to allow for estimations of group differences in the effects of employment on father engagement. All interaction terms were created with centered variables (Aiken & West, 1991).

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Variables, Fragile Families, 1998

	Mean	(S.D.)
Father engagement		
Engagement index	30.90	(13.32)
Played games	5.15	(2.40)
Sang songs	4.03	(2.68)
Read stories	2.94	(2.59)
Told stories	3.02	(2.65)
Played with toys	5.08	(2.46)
Hugged child	5.99	(2.15)
Put child to bed	4.68	(2.58)
Employment		
Hours per week of regular work	43.58	(13.12)
Hours per week of underground work	1.50	(8.03)
Hours per week of hustling	.71	(6.78)
Demographic characteristics		
Race		
White	.24	(.43)
African American	.51	(.50)
Latino	.25	(.43)
Age	29.11	(7.27)
Personality		
Impulsivity index	1.48	(1.78)
Often speak without thinking	.33	(.47)
Often fail to think before acting	.27	(.44)
Often act without considering consequences	.19	(.39)
Often get into trouble because of not thinking before acting	.15	(.35)
Plans fail because of failure to think them through first	.28	(.45)
Often make up mind without considering the situation	.26	(.44)
Educational attainment		
Did not complete high school	.32	(.46)
Completed high school or GED	.34	(.47)
Completed some college	.23	(.42)
Completed college	.11	(.32)
Relationship with mother at time of child's birth		
Married	.29	(.45)
Romantic and cohabiting	.48	(.50)
Romantic and not cohabiting	.15	(.35)
Separate	.00	(.05)
Friends	.06	(.24)
No relationship	.02	(.13)

(Table 1 continued at next page)

(Table 1, continued from previous page)

Controls		
Number of children in household	1.82	(1.39)
Sex of child is female	.47	(.50)
Father has been incarcerated	.17	(.37)
Father has other children who are not living with him	.30	(.46)

(N = 2,663)

Results

Descriptives

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the engagement composite variables and index. On average, fathers in fragile families hug their kids about six days a week (5.99). Also, they average around five days a week for playing games with their child (5.15), playing with toys with their child (5.08), and putting their child to bed (4.68). They report singing songs or telling nursery rhymes to their child an average of four days each week (4.03). Finally, these fathers report that, on average, they read and tell stories to their child about three days each week (2.94 and 3.02, respectively). Thus, fathers tend to focus their engagement on playful and affectionate activities rather than skills-enhancing endeavors, like reading to the child. In terms of work, 98% of fathers reported that they had done some regular work, 8% of fathers engaged in underground work, and about 2% of fathers used hustling to earn income.

Respondents range in age from 17 to 81 with an average age of 29 years. In terms of education, about 32% have not completed high school, a high school noncompletion rate that is more than twice the national average of 13.5% (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). About 34% of fathers have a high school degree or GED, 23% have completed some college or post-high school education, and 11% have graduated from college or attended graduate school). Fathers in the sample come from diverse backgrounds, though the sample is disproportionately African American (51%). Latinos constitute 25% of the sample and 24% of respondents are whites. Most of the fathers in this sample were romantically involved with the child's mother at the time of birth with 29% being married and another 48% reporting that they were unmarried but were romantically involved and cohabiting with the mother when the child was born. Most of the fathers do not report impulsive personalities. The item for which the highest percentage reported impulsive attitudes was "speaking without thinking," but only 33% reported this was a problem for them.

The descriptives for the control variables reveal that the average father has 1.82 children in his household. Focusing on the sex of the child that was born at the time of the baseline interview, about half of these children are female (47%). About 17% of the fragile fathers have been incarcerated at some time in their lives. Finally, about a third (30%) of fathers have another child who lives elsewhere, outside of his current household.

Table 2
Regression Coefficients for the Effect of Work on Father Engagement

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	s. e.	b	s. e.	b	s. e.
Race/Ethnicity:^a						
African American	-1.689**	.648	-1.425*	.648	-1.558**	.656
Latino	-1.532*	.714	-1.610*	.712	-1.576*	.733
Age:	-.023	.037	-.034	.037	-.036	.037
Work:						
Regular			1.361**	.386	1.045**	.440
Underground			-.112	.318	-.190	.321
Hustles			-1.549**	.515	-.466	.755
African Am. x regular					2.359*	1.158
African Am. x undergr				2.009**	.817	
African Am. x hustles					-1.503	1.786
Latino x regular					1.988	1.533
Latino x undergr					1.167	.973
Latino x hustles					3.164	2.826
Education:						
High school/GED	.874	.589	.585	.592	.612	.592
Some college	1.640**	.673	1.393*	.674	1.438*	.674
College graduate	1.611*	.976	1.413	.975	1.525	.975
Impulsivity:	-.694**	.137	-.675**	.137	-.671**	.137
Relation w/ Mother:^b						
Romantic, cohabit.	-.308	.642	-.260	.640	-.275	.640
Romantic, noncohabit.	-6.700**	.862	-6.592**	.859	-6.516**	.859
Friends	-12.985**	1.125	-12.866**	1.121	-12.961**	1.121
Separate	-13.117**	4.258	-12.819**	4.247	-12.333**	4.244
No relationship	-14.150**	1.806	-14.162**	1.800	-14.289**	1.799
Controls:						
Number of kids in hh	1.237**	.177	1.244**	.176	1.252**	.176
Sex of child ^c	.132	.464	.082	.463	.104	.462
Prison	-4.917**	.653	-4.428**	.660	-4.405**	.660
Other kids elsewhere	-1.291**	.554	-1.379**	.553	-1.410**	.552
Intercept	32.874	1.341	33.236	1.339	33.368	1.340
Adjusted R ²	.199**		.204**		.207*	
F	42.230**		36.945**		28.791**	

$N = 2,663$

* $p < .05$, one-tailed test. ** $p < .01$, one-tailed test.

^aCompared with non Latino white.

^bCompared with married.

^cCompared with male.

Note: The slope for hustling was significantly different between African Americans and Latinos and more positive for Latinos ($b = 4.667$, $s.e. = 2.321$, * $p < .05$)

Regression Results

Table 2 reports the results of ordinary least squares regressions of father engagement on the independent variables. The analyses rely on unweighted data from the one-year follow-up matched to baseline data. Even though the sample design for Fragile Families oversamples nonmarital births, it is not clear whether sampling weights should be used in estimating regression equations to understand the association between illegal work schedules and father-child relations. Some argue that unweighted regression analyses are preferable because they produce more efficient standard errors (Winship & Radbill, 1994). The initial model includes only controls, the second model adds work variables and tests the first three hypotheses, and the final model includes interactions between race and work and tests the fourth hypothesis. In all regression equations, multicollinearity diagnostics were generated to detect potential problems. The results presented in this paper do not exhibit significant multicollinearity between predictors (Belsey, Kuh, & Welsch, 1980). F-tests show that all regression models are statistically significant (see Table 2).

Model 1 shows that, on average, African Americans and Latinos in fragile families are less engaged with their children than whites. Also, the analyses show that father's age has no significant effect on engagement. Compared to high school dropouts, fathers with some college and a college degree report higher levels of engagement with their children. In terms of personality factors affecting role selection, impulsive fathers are less engaged with their children. Additionally, family structure at the time of the baby's birth is strongly related to fathers' engagement with their sons and daughters. There is no significant difference between married and cohabiting fathers. However, compared to married fathers, fathers who were romantically involved with the mother but not cohabiting and those who were not in a romantic relationship with the mother are less engaged with their children. In addition, fathers with more children at home are more engaged, while fathers are less engaged when they have a history of incarceration or have other children who do not live with them.

Parameter estimates for Model 2 demonstrate that in fragile families, fathers' work experiences are important for explaining their engagement with their children. Providing support for Hypothesis 1, when adjusting for a wide range of controls, fathers who spent more time working in regular jobs are more engaged. Hypothesis 2 suggested that, in general, time spent in underground work is associated with higher levels of engagement with one's child. However, underground work has no significant main effect on engagement and these results hold even when modeling each form of work separately (without controlling for the effects of the other two). Thus, there is little evidence to support the view that fathers' efforts to increase their income through underground work are beneficial for engagement. The evidence about hustling is consistent with Hypothesis 3; hustling detracts from time spent with one's child. With the addition of the work variables in Model 2, the adjusted R^2 increases by .006, which is statistically significant (F Change = 7.178, $p < .01$).

Even so, one could argue that among fragile families, the relationship between engagement and work depends on a father's status in the labor force and larger society, which is greatly affected by race/ethnicity. As a test of this possibility, outlined in Hypothesis 4, Model 3 estimates whether work has a different effect on father engagement across racial/ethnic groups. Model 3 adds interactions between race/ethnicity and type of work. The results from the analyses are presented in the right hand columns of Table 2 and show that the interactions of race/ethnicity with work are significant for comparisons between African Americans and the other two groups. The positive relationship between fathers' participation in regular work and engagement is conditional on race when comparing African Americans and whites. This race-conditional relationship is also present when examining the positive relationship between engagement and underground work. Specifically, the interactions show that the effects of regular and underground work are greater for African Americans than whites. Finally, the coefficient for the relationship between hustling and engagement is significant when comparing Latinos and African Americans (analyses not shown here). African American fathers who hustle are significantly less engaged with their children than Latino fathers who are employed in hustling. The addition of the interaction effects in Model 3 causes the R^2 to increase by .005. While this is a small amount, it is statistically significant even with a wide range of controls in place (F Change = 2.556, $p < .05$).

Discussion

This study of fragile families shows that work has a complex, but potentially important relationship with father engagement. On a general level, the analyses show that fathers involved in regular work are more engaged. Men who have legitimate jobs may be better fathers because work socializes them into more mainstream values about fathering or because the money they make in those jobs is more reliable and helps them meet the fathering role of provider. In contrast, hustling is associated with risky behavior and socialization into unconventional roles and values for fathering. Hence, despite qualitative accounts of the good intentions of some fathers who hustle (Anderson, 1999; Edin et al., 1998; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999; Schlosser, 2003), this paper shows that hustling is problematic because the fathers who do it are less involved with their children.

The positive relationship between regular work and engagement is higher for African Americans in fragile families. This is not surprising given that for African Americans, the deindustrialization of the urban labor market has been especially devastating for the stability of the nuclear family. In addition, although underground work had no significant association with father engagement overall, it had a more positive association with engagement among African American fathers than among white fathers. Thus, the benefits of work—even underground work—are likely to be important to family well-being. Many African American men participate in the underground economy to supplement their earnings, and it may be that these jobs allow more scheduling flexibility than working two “regular” jobs. In contrast, work-related factors are less important for white fathers' engagement and historically, white workers have not had to

rely as heavily on the informal labor market. In addition, the relationship between hustling and engagement differs between Latinos and African Americans with the effects of hustling being worse for African Americans, suggesting that a racial/ethnic hierarchy in work and family is apparent.

What other factors are important for understanding father engagement in fragile families? Common sense tells us that education and father engagement are related. Notably, there is no difference between high school dropouts and those with a high school degree, but fathers who report completing some college have higher levels of engagement with their children than those who dropped out of high school. Also, consistent with prior research, this study finds that the father's relationship with the mother at the time of the baby's birth is an important predictor of father engagement.

While intended to control for role selection and spuriousness, impulsivity is certainly an important factor when looking at father engagement in fragile families. Fathers with impulsive personalities or "constitutions" are less engaged with their sons and daughters. It is telling that antisocial personality features are associated with father engagement even after controlling for other factors (e.g., race age, education, work). Future research related to personality should examine the effects of work on father's self-esteem and the ways in which feelings of self-worth are related to paternal involvement.

This study has several limitations. First, since the battery of questions probing illicit and underground work is sensitive and this questionnaire was administered face-to-face, the data may underestimate informal work with some respondents reluctant to report illegal or untaxed work and thus providing socially desirable answers (Babbie, 2001). Second, the fragile fathers most likely to be in this high-risk group may be the ones least likely to respond to surveys and may be more likely to be in prison. This population is of special interest to researchers focused on race, crime, and urban sociology, but is likely to be undercounted in fathering surveys. Attention to this subpopulation is needed in future research and surveys on fathering. A third limitation is that data do not provide information on the reason that fathers participate in irregular employment nor do they detail how long they have done so. Such information would provide insight into the processes and motivations for this work and its linkages to the father role. In terms of the analysis, the main limitations are that the effects of work found here are significant, but small in size and that this study uses cross-sectional analyses of fathers' retrospective reports of employment. Future research should examine the impact of work factors using longitudinal methods. As for the efforts to control for role selection using demographic and impulsivity variables, role selection cannot be entirely eliminated as a possible explanation for the association between employment and fathering, but longitudinal methods could strengthen and clarify the socialization argument suggested in this paper. After all, many inner city fathers are preoccupied with their failures at in being good providers to their children, and many more "can't imagine life without them," so they are likely to do whatever it takes to earn an income (Edin et al., 1998). Yet in the process of making a living, many of these fathers will unknowingly compromise the relationship they hold so dear.

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