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of itself, has a significant impact on children’s ideas about sex and gender. And while
the conclusion that sperm-as-evidence-of-a-crime perpetuates the notion that ejacula-
tion is the ultimate objective and proof of sexual relations, it does not follow necessarily,
as Moore suggests, that the culture’s attitudes about men and masculinity are shaped by
television programs and specifically by how certain programs report on or fictionalize
the collection and analysis of sperm.

Within the context of Moore’s main thesis concerning the conceptions and represen-
tations of sperm, some of the specifics of her arguments ring true. Yet, overall her
book lacks the research necessary to substantiate adequately all of her claims. For ex-
ample, a more thorough examination of sexuality itself as it relates to attitudes about
sperm and its relation to ideals of masculinity, beyond what is found in children’s books,
is needed. Additionally, if both boys and girls are receiving the same messages about
sperm, sex, and gender from children’s books, one must ascertain if and how these
messages modulate into adolescent and adult attitudes and behaviors.

In the end, Moore’s work raises more questions than it answers. For this reason,
Sperm Counts can serve as a point of departure for further explorations. Because much
of the evidence Moore uses to support her main thesis is anecdotal, and thus unscien-
tific, scholars and practitioners can use her observations and insights as a beginning
point for important research on matters concerning the nature and the scope of represen-
tations of sperm in children books and on television and, therein, to explore how dis-
courses on sperm more generally might illuminate the construction and experience of
specific masculinities.

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Voices of African-American Teen Fathers: “I’m Doing What I Got to Do” by Angelia

The past two years have seen an increase in the nation-wide rates of teenage preg-
nancies. These findings will likely lead to additional studies on teenage motherhood,
as most research on adolescent parenthood focuses on mothers. Receiving scant schol-
arly attention are adolescent fathers. Thus, “by examining the lived experience of fa-
thership from the perspectives of unmarried, low-income, African-American
adolescent fathers in a Midwestern urban area,” Voices of African-American Teen Fa-
thers makes a much needed contribution “to the social science literature on adolescent
parenthood” (p. 3).

Paschal’s study is based on in-depth interviews conducted between 2000 and 2002
with 30 young men residing in Wichita, Kansas. The young men all self-identified as
heterosexuals, were 14-19 years of age, with an educational level ranging from the
eighth grade to college. The majority came from low-income families making less than
$25,000 in annual income and living in an urban area in northeastern Wichita. “With
the exception of two participants, these young men were socially and/or financially dependent on their parents or other adults” (p. 43). The research participants were recruited by word of mouth from schools and community-based service agencies. None of the young men were drop outs, had ever been incarcerated, nor were any gang members.

Paschal begins her book with a discussion of the literature on teenage motherhood in order to situate her study on teenage fatherhood. She then goes on to address the following research questions:

1. How and why do African-American teens become fathers?
2. How do African-American adolescent fathers define or conceptualize fatherhood?
3. How do African American adolescent fathers enact fatherhood, and does a relationship exist between their enactment and their conceptualizations of fatherhood?
4. How do the relationships that African-American teen fathers have with significant others impact their fatherhood experiences and vice versa?
5. What challenges to [sic] African-American teen fathers perceive, and how do these challenges influence their fatherhood experiences and conceptualizations?
6. How do African-American adolescent fathers construct masculinity, and how does it impact their fatherhood experiences and conceptualizations? (pp. 41-42)

Paschal relies on social ecology and gender theory to analyze the data, taking into account the works of leading scholars on urban communities, poverty, black young men, and gender (e.g., Urie Bronfenbrenner, Elijah Anderson, William J. Wilson, Robert Sampson, Candace West, and Don Zimmerman). By taking a social ecology approach, she thoroughly “examine[s] the structural and social contexts in which the teens became fathers”, and, thus, avoids attributing the young men’s behaviors to deep-seeded cultural pathologies (p. 29). Likewise, perhaps as a result of her reliance on gender theory, she recognizes that the young men held agency and made choices, even if their perceived options were limited by structural factors and/or gender norms.

Paschal finds that the young men in her study became fathers, largely due to four main factors. One, their sexual behavior was greatly influenced by their friends’ masculine notions and so they chose not use condoms out of a sense of “[p]ower, control, and male entitlement” (p. 186) that was present in their peer group. Two, the young men failed to discuss contraceptive use with their sexual partners. Three, they looked unfavorably upon abortion and adoption. And four, a few of them wanted to have a child, although these men were not necessarily more involved fathers.

The young men, all of whom believed that childrearing was primarily the responsibility of the mother, “defined fatherhood in three major ways: provider, involved nurturer, and independent father” (p. 172). While some young fathers wanted to provide economically for their children, the best they could do, as a result of their poverty and low-wage jobs, was to make supplemental monetary contributions. Their inability to be providers frustrated them and caused them to worry about being legally obligated to provide child support. Given their limited financial resources, some teen fathers rarely supplied their children’s mothers with money, and defined fatherhood as involved nur-
turer, emphasizing the importance of fathers spending time with their children. However, the fathers visited their children only periodically and continued to hang out with friends as much as they had done prior to their children’s birth. Those who viewed themselves as independent fathers were the least involved in their children’s lives because for them fatherhood was not a salient part of their identity. The teen fathers’ inability to supply economic support and their lack of equal parenting led to (additional) tension with their children’s mothers.

Paschal’s book will be of great interest to students and scholars of masculinity and urban poverty. It moves beyond the simplistic polarizing analyses (i.e., cultural explanations vs. structural explanations) often applied to “social problems” associated with the urban poor, particularly youth, and convincingly explains “how limited resources and structural constraints, perceived career and educational opportunities, and social definitions influence and shape African-American male adolescent behaviors, perceptions, and experiences as young fathers” (p. 41).

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Dying to Be Men is a thought-provoking examination of how young men residing in urban neighborhoods in the United States, Brazil, Nigeria and other African regions, and the Caribbean attempt to attain manhood. Barker, who works on violence prevention and gender equity, convincingly illustrates that some urban young men, particularly those from racial and ethnic minority groups within their societies, define manhood as the ability to work hard and provide material goods and financial stability for mates and eventually for their own families. Excluded from the economy as a result of their social marginality and poor education, many young men turn to the brutal world of gangs as means of gaining power and access to manhood. With violent masculinity as an available option and a means by which to attain manhood, an exceedingly high number of socially marginalized, low-income young men throughout the world die each year at the hands of other excluded young men. However, not all disenfranchised men turn to gang violence to enact manhood. Barker describes how some men choose alternative, humane routes to masculinity, thus, providing us with stories of “resistance and hope” (p. 155).

Relying on data collected from participatory observations over several years, in-depth interviews, action research, and case studies with heterosexual young men (ages 15 to 24), Barker addresses the following five issues which influence young men’s choice of masculinity:

* the general challenges they face while coming of age in settings of social exclusion

264