**Our Aim**

- Fathers can play an important role in child development and family functioning. We wanted to understand how a fathers’ friends may influence his behavior or involvement with his child.

**Community & Clinical Relevance**

- Many fathers do not have positive male role models in their lives. They may turn to friends and other family members for advice.
- Fathers balance multiple relationships, especially if they have more than one child or children with more than one woman.
- Men engage in risky behavior that may be influenced by the norms of their peers.
- Peer norms may impact a father’s involvement with his child.

**Research Questions**

- Are father’s engagement in risk behaviors related to their father involvement?
- Are networks different among men that engage in high risk sexual behaviors?

**Our Participants**

- 77% of participants were African-American, 12% Latino, and 11% were of another self-reported race.
- The average age of fathers was 30.2 years old.

**Our Study**

- We asked 52 men about their behaviors and their friends’ behaviors.

  - To enroll, men had to have at least one child that was less than 16 years old.
  - Participants were recruited from an existing fatherhood group and an ongoing study of pregnant adolescent couples in Connecticut.
  - Fathers completed an interview that asked questions about their behaviors and questions about their friends’ behaviors.
  - Participants also responded to questions about their involvement as a father.

“The definition of a friend to me is somebody that you know is gonna be there at the end of the day; somebody that you could go, seek advice from; somebody that’s not always looking to receive, but is willing to give as well.” - Father 2011
**FINDINGS**

**SOCIAL NETWORKS**
- 70% of fathers’ network members were male, 53% were parents, and 49% were family members or coworkers
- 53% of network members had casual sexual partners
- 30% of network members cheated on a partner in the past year

**SEXUAL RISK AND FATHER INVOLVEMENT**
- 62% of fathers engaged in some high risk sexual activity
- On average, fathers saw their child 18 days per month
- Of those that were less involved, 88% were also engaged in high risk sexual behavior

**Fathers** with high sexual risk behaviors had more peers that had 2 or more sexual partners in the past year and more peers that encouraged them to cheat.

**NETWORK INFLUENCE AND FATHER INVOLVEMENT**
- Less involved fathers were unlikely to have friends that were “Very Involved” in their child’s life
- Network members of less involved fathers encouraged them to cheat on their partner, to drink or use drugs, and were more likely to have two or more sexual partners in the past year

**IMPLICATIONS**
- Social networks are important to fathers’ health and behaviors
- Risk behaviors may be reinforced in risky networks
- Peer norms can impact fathers’ behaviors
- Programs geared at fathers may benefit from including friends or peers in programming or focusing on peer norms

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**Percent of Sample by Father Involvement and Sexual Risk Categories**

- **50%** More Father Involvement
- **62%** High Sexual Risk Behavior

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