Reviewer's report

Title: Partner support in a cohort of African American families and its influence on pregnancy outcomes and prenatal health behaviors

Version: 1 Date: 20 May 2013

Reviewer: Angela Miller

Reviewer's report:

The authors have made a thoughtful attempt to expand upon previously published observations between father involvement and partner support with pregnancy outcomes and prenatal health behaviors.

Discretionary Revisions
1. None

Minor Essential Revisions
1. There are a number of spelling and grammatical errors throughout the manuscript that need to be corrected (e.g., Background, paragraph 1: “lives births”; , last line of background section: “during pregnant among Black women”; Results section, paragraph on Relationship Type: “abuse was a confounder is the association”).

2. The authors list as a strength their ability to better classify relationship type. The three categories used do go beyond the basic married vs. unmarried classification. However, it may be worthwhile to see if it is possible to further divide the unmarried/non-cohabiting group into those romantically involved vs. those who are no longer in a romantic relationship but the father may maintain an active role, similar to the “visiting” and “just friends” categories used by the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study.

3. The authors also assume that father involvement is completely dependent on relationship status. As stated in fourth paragraph of Methods section, “...did not have a regular partner or fiancé, thus...questions were not applicable”. This may be true, with the items included in the partner support scale, but may not be true more broadly. Given this analysis focuses on the potentially more nuanced paternal relationships in the African American community, fathers can be involved or provide support without being romantically involved. A better description of the support items would be helpful (see below).

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. It would be beneficial to the reader if the authors further described their 8-item partner support scale. A description of the types of partner support (material support, household support, etc.), or a list of the questions should be provided. The authors compare and contrast their findings to other studies of involvement. The difference in measures of involvement may very well explain the difference
in findings.

2. The study enrolled women both pre- and postnatally. The authors do not state how many women were enrolled at each of the time points, and it is unclear if the authors evaluated differences in women enrolled at the different time points. In the description of data collected, it seems that the same information may not have been collected from women in both subsets.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have a non-financial competing interest in relation to this paper. I recently completed my doctoral dissertation (May 2013), on paternal involvement during pregnancy and preterm birth, though my analyses used different measures of paternal involvement and support. In June 2012, I engaged in email conversations with Dr. Misra regarding this manuscript, and received a confidential draft by email. I did not read the paper at that time, and declare that I have provided an unbiased review of the paper.