The experiences of low income non-resident African American fathers with parenting and depressive symptoms

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DISCLOSURE

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Introduction

- Low income non-resident African American fathers are a vulnerable group of parents who experience barriers and stressors that affect parenting, and put them at risk for depressive symptoms.

- Parental depression is associated with less favorable parenting practices (Caldwell et al., 2010; Hamer & Marchioro, 2002; Julion et al., 2007)
The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of low income non-resident African American fathers with regards to parenting and depressive symptoms.
Research aims

1. Describe the parenting practices of low income non-resident African American fathers

2. Reveal their challenges and barriers to parenting

3. Disclose their resources and supports with parenting

4. Examine their experiences with depressive symptoms
Research Design

- Interpretive Phenomenology or Hermeneutics: Facilitates everyday understanding; appropriate for studying human phenomenon (Benner, 1985)

- Protection of human subjects: approved by Saint Louis University, Institutional Review Board. Informed consent, confidentiality, incentive
Fourteen fathers

Ages ranged from 25 to 46 years (mean age 34)

Number of children ranged from 1 to 10

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<th>Education</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>(6 some college)</td>
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<td>No diploma or GED</td>
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# Data Collection Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visit 1</th>
<th>Visit 2</th>
<th>Visit 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consent</td>
<td>Childhood Experiences Interview</td>
<td>Work History and child support Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Questionnaire</td>
<td>Adverse Childhood Experiences questionnaire</td>
<td>Gotland Scale for Male Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatherhood interview</td>
<td>Culture Interview</td>
<td>Center for Epidemiologic Depression scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting Practices Interview</td>
<td>Parenting Practices Interview (repeat)</td>
<td>Clarification of data</td>
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</table>
Data analysis

- Interview transcripts coded
- Themes, exemplars, and paradigm cases identified
- Responses to scales enriched data analysis
- Interpretive summaries
- Interpretive sessions
Parenting practices of low income non-resident African American fathers

Parenting practices:
- Parenting differently (than they had been parented)
- Spending time with their children
- Support and encouragement
- Being there: significant events, important milestones
- Teaching
- Family legacies
Exemplar: Teaching what you know

- “Being able to teach my daughter stuff she need to know to make a good life. Make sure she know how to conduct herself being a good, decent person. She need to know the basic, like your common sense, like your values and morals”  Carl
Parenting challenges and barriers from childhood

- Adverse childhood experiences (7 fathers had a score of 4 or higher)
- Socio-economic disadvantages
- Parental absence
- Exposure to violence
- Disrupted education
- Difficult adolescent years
Exemplar: Disrupted education

“High school was confusing, because I ended up thinking I’m in tenth grade, finding out I’m a freshman, by the time I found out it was late and that’s what made me drop out. I was always behind but I was thinking that I was passing” Paul
Parenting challenges and barriers in adulthood

- Employment

- Challenges with child support: connected to TANF benefits, penalties, barriers to employment

- Difficult co-parenting relationships and multiple partner fertility

- Discrimination and negative stereotypes
“Now they trying to give me probation, the state, for child support. They suspended my driver’s license already, so…I don’t know, guess I keep praying. If I get arrested I could lose my house. I don’t want to lose that, that’s most important to me besides myself and my family……” Paul
Low income African American fathers experiences with depressive symptoms

- CESD and Gotland male depression scales

- Four fathers scored in the possible depression range & three of these fathers scored a 4 or greater on the ACE questionnaire

- Three fathers scored in the at-risk range

- Some childhood trauma not captured by ACE questionnaire
Experiences with depressive symptoms

- Feelings of anxiety and uneasiness
- Trouble sleeping “nightmares”
- Loneliness
- Worried: about being arrested, losing home, losing everything, no support, having to start over
- Feelings of failure, despair over loses, fear of relapse
- Anger, irritable, frustrated, more aggressive when stressed
- Unpredictable and uncertain world
Parenting resources and supports

- Family support
- Spirituality
- Community agencies: job training, peer support
Future plans and finding hope

- Future plans: Education, job training, employment, start new businesses, family
- Gaining hope: discovering talents and gifts
- “I want to go back to school for sociology and get a job working in an institution like foster care. I want to work with people and help people like me” Bill
- Bill was enrolled in college classes by end of study
Implications for practice, research, and policy

- Educate: parenting skills, coping with stressors and past childhood traumas. Provide resources: referrals

- Develop programs to aid fathers with parenting life skills, education, job training and placement

- Adverse Childhood Experiences questionnaire

- Education and employment. Justice system, discrimination and child support policies
Conclusion

- **Strengths**: the lived experiences of the sample, captures fathers’ parenting practices, barriers and supports. Multiple data sources, interpretive sessions

- **Limitations**: Small sample size, limited to one region, exclusion of other mental health disorders

Findings expand the knowledge of the challenges and supports faced by low income non-resident African American fathers