Black otherfathering and its influence on Black men's mental health & wellbeing

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2019 American Counseling Association Conference

March 30, 2019

AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION
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Defining fathering and otherfathering

What is fathering? Typically described in two ways in research:

1. relationship to biological children; and/or,

2. behavior of fathering

What is Black otherfathering?

• Black male (teachers) who fulfill an important role as other fathers or role models for students, particularly Black male students (Lynn, 2006a)

• Expressed as holistic care, support, parenting, modeling, and life coaching (Brooms, 2017)

Why is this important to counselors and counselor educators?

1. Becoming a father is developmental milestone for men and has potential to support their mental health and wellness (Lamb, 2010)

2. Little research exists about diverse roles Black men assume in their communities (Hannon & Vereen, 2016) and it can influence their mental health

3. Fathering is rewarding, stressful and been found to be catalyst for positive shifts in men's attitudes, dispositions, and behaviors (Chin et al., 2011; Shezifi, 2004; Garfield et. al, 2010; Settersten & Cancel-Tirado, 2010)

4. Consequences of fatherhood directly influence a range of domains related to wellbeing including social relationships, physical and mental health, work, and education (Settersten & Cancel-Tirado, 2010)

What do we know about Black fathering and otherfathering?

- Black fathers assume similar familial & communities roles as fathers of other racial and ethnic groups (McAdoo, 1993, 1988; McAdoo & McAdoo, 2002)

- To comprehensively & accurately understand Black fatherhood, their experiences must be considered systemically recognizing influence of racist systems, policies, and agencies on their capacity to fulfill fatherhood roles
  - Disproportionate number of imprisoned Black men
  - Disproportionate number un/under employed Black men
  - Disproportionately lower levels of educational attainment

What do we know about Black fathering and otherfathering?

- Black otherfathering (Lynn, 2006a; Brockenbrough, 2012; Brooms, 2017) drawn from othermothering (Case, 1997; Mawhinney, 2012)

- The current research about Black otherfathering largely in context of educational settings (e.g., Black male teachers w/Black male students) (Brockenbrough, 2012; Brooms, 2017)

- Two dominant discourses – dearth of Black male teachers and concern for fatherless Black homes - have influenced studies about Black otherfathering

What do we know about Black fathering and otherfathering?

- **Brooms (2017) found that 20 students from a single-sex public high school reported :**
  - **They conceptualized their Black male (BM) teachers as otherfathers based on pedagogical practices and level of concern;**
  - **They needed more BM teachers and appreciated learning from Black male teachers**
  - **Their BM teachers provided insights on being Black and male, helping them understand how race and gender matter in their lives**
  - **Their BM teachers helped elevate their critical consciousness.**

What do we know about Black fathering and otherfathering?

Brockenbrough's (2012; 2015) research on BM teachers has illuminated challenges based on school & community expectations for specific type of patriarchal performance.

- 2012 study about how BM MS and HS teachers negotiated expectations for them to be father figures to Black students; teachers expressed two challenges:
    1. Ambivalence toward extra-pedagogical responsibilities associated w/father figure roles;
    2. Student resistance to the paternal nature of teacher authority.
- 2015 study about how BM teachers assigned disciplinary roles in largely Black, urban district.
    - 11 teachers reported complexities & challenges of being deliberately positioned as authoritative disciplinarians as expectation of teaching
    - Teachers struggled to meet disciplinarian expectations; authoritarianism expectation was source of stress, anxiety, and frustration
    - Participants reported frustration in being disproportionately assigned responsibilities for misconduct issues.

What do we know about Black fathering and otherfathering?

- Brown's (2009) study on pedagogic performance among BM teachers with BM students might be described as otherfathering

- Studied teaching and interaction styles of BM teachers w/BM students

- Teachers' pedagogic performances categorized as:
    1. *Enforcer*, seeks abrupt & immediate enforcement of rules/expectations in school setting;
    2. *Negotiator*, prioritizes asking questions to understand students' perspectives; and,
    3. *Playful*, characterized by exchanging jokes, debating ideas, and sharing personal experiences

- At least two can be identified w/Broom's (2017) and Brockenbrough's (2012; 2015) scholarship, via the enforcer and negotiator roles.

- Knowledge base about Black otherfathering by BM teachers in schools continues to grow

Conclusions about prior research…

1. These relationships are an implicit, if not explicit, expectation for BM teachers

2. BM teachers are expected to be authoritative, patriarchal disciplinarians, and those expectations can be rewarding and challenging.

3. BM teachers do serve as otherfathers to Black students, as a function of their personal/professional obligations to broader Black community

4. No counseling research documents how otherfathering influences the mental health of Black men

5. Little to no research documents experiences of non-teaching Black men who are otherfathers in community contexts; important opportunity to understand Black otherfathering non-teachers' perspectives how it may influence their mental health and wellness.

Methodology & Methods

Theoretical Framework

- **Social & cultural capital theoretical framework (Bordeiu, 1986)**
  - **3 forms of capital (i.e., economic, social, cultural)**
  - **Men particularly aware/sensitized to their forms of capital as fathers (Hannon & Hannon, 2017; Naseef, 2001)**

Interpretive Phenomenological Research Design

- **Goal is to describe the essence of a phenomenon or experience**
- **Essence of human understanding is hermeneutic; we understand world based on our interpretations (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Smith & Osborn, 2015)**

Methodology & Methods

Recruitment

- **Recruited using using criterion (Patton, 2015) and snowball (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) sampling**

- **Eligibility criteria were participants:**
  - **self-identified as being men of African descent;**
  - **able to speak and understand American English;**
  - **at least 22 years of age; and,**
  - **engage in otherfathering**

Methodology & Methods

Recruitment, con't…

- Email recruitment invitations to two organizations comprised of Black men whose mission is to mentor Black youth.
  - SJMMC (42 members)
  - NEP of Kappa Alpha Psi (79 members)

- 8 total participants interviewed to date; more to come
  - Age range – 43 – 60; mean age 50 years old
  - All had post-secondary education ranging from "technical school" to "graduate degree"
  - Reported to be engaging in otherfathering between 6 and 32 years

Methodology & Methods

Data collection

- Semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face or web conferencing

- Interview length ranged between 30 and 75 minutes

- Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by members of our research team.

- Questions asked them to reflect on motivations to otherfather, how it influences them personally, professionally, and racially.

Methodology & Methods

Data analysis

- **Used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to analyze interview data**

- **Goal is to achieve deep understandings of experiences within participants' own sociocultural contexts and realities (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2009)**

Methodology & Methods
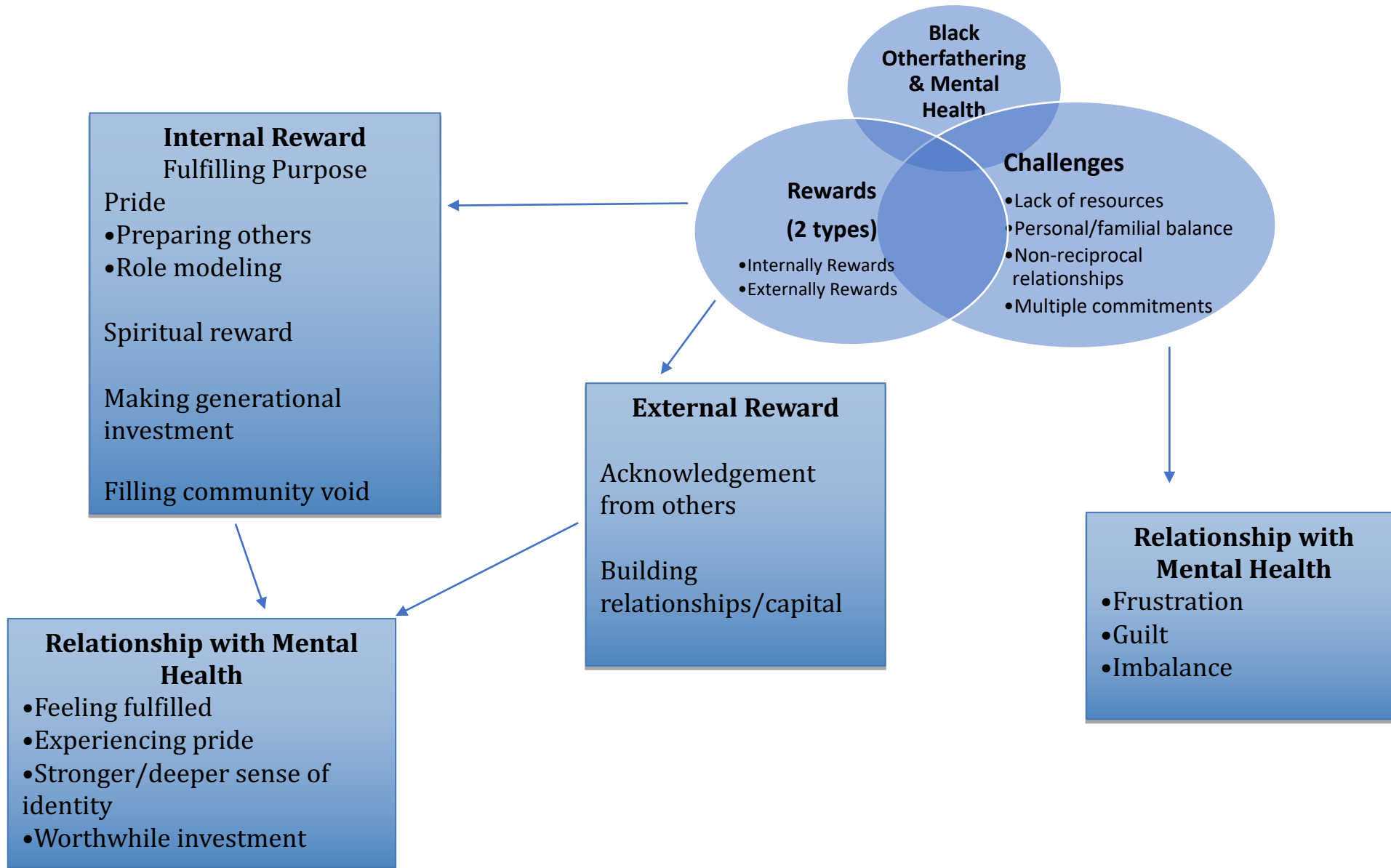
Data analysis, con't… - 5 step process

1. Two research team members conduct initial coding in first transcript for basic understanding of experiences & identify preliminary themes (Smith & Osborn, 1998)

2. Organization of preliminary themes based on what was communicated in first transcript (Smith & Osborn, 2007)

3. Two research team members discuss interpretations to reach consensus on preliminary themes within first case. Both members return to original transcript to ensure interpretations are confirmable (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2007)

4. Two research team members use first transcript to "orient the subsequent analysis" of remaining transcripts (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 73) to identify how experiences were potentially similar and different.

5. Two research team members meet to reach consensus on representative quotes that illustrated themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015); third research team member served as auditor to engage team members in detailed discussions about analysis after reviewing five transcripts

Methodology & Methods

Trustworthiness

- Investigator triangulation (Denzin, 1978 - multiple researchers in an investigation to assist with consensus and overall analysis accountability

- External auditor - allowed for cross checks for accuracy in the process of identifying themes and increased likelihood of confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

- Member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1995) – confirming understanding of participants' ideas during interviews and transcript review

- Representative quotes providing us thick descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018), allowing readers to make their own decisions about the transferability of our findings.

Preliminary Findings

Black Otherfathering & Mental Health

Rewards (2 types)
- Internally Rewards
- Externally Rewards

Challenges
- Lack of resources
- Personal/familial balance
- Non-reciprocal relationships
- Multiple commitments

Internal Reward

Fulfilling Purpose

Pride
- Preparing others
- Role modeling

Spiritual reward

Making generational investment

Filling community void

External Reward

Acknowledgement from others

Building relationships/capital

Relationship with Mental Health
- Feeling fulfilled
- Experiencing pride
- Stronger/deeper sense of identity
- Worthwhile investment

Relationship with Mental Health
- Frustration
- Guilt
- Imbalance

Preliminary Findings

Internal Rewards

- "But back then, I knew it was a vision in my head to do and God just put me in those positions and those places that presented the opportunity. And I was like, ok I'll do it and here I am." (HH)

- "Um, knowing that I have a hand in seeing not only our young Black men, but our youth as a whole getting some of the knowledge that I've attained, you know cause we always say, if I knew then what I know now... So each one, teach one mentality" (Coach D)

- "When I'm talking to you in a manner that is counseling, supportive, um challenging rebuking, as a father would" (CM)

Preliminary Findings

External Rewards

- "When you get or receive a phone call or surprise visit. Or you walk into…like recently I walked into Chick Fil A and I saw a young man who I knew and I prayed and hoped that he would make something out of his life. And that young man was an assistant manager speaking eloquently and I mean, I'm in there like man! I'm ready to start bawlin' and cryin'!" (AD)

- "I remember one of my uh, when I was doing model United Nations program and stuff and I mentored and fathered this brilliant White kids and - they all need fathering right; they all lookin' for some affirmation…so this kid who is just graduating from college he sees me and runs down the hallway [yelling] "Dad!" and he just gives me a big hug and my daughter was just like, "wow!" (CM)

Preliminary Findings

Challenges

- "So one of the biggest things is the lack of money" (Coach D)

- "Challenges at home, um, you know, like I said the time constraints. Wanting to do more with the kids that and I'm not able to do more" (HH)

- "I've helped some kids with a little bit of this or that, but nothing of any great consequence. So I don't feel like I'm way over the margins. One of the things, though, that I think I'm not sure how this relates to the question, but I've felt at times people have asked me to father when I felt like I can't father them." (CM)

Discussion & Counseling Implications

To be determined, but(at least) four points to consider

1. Findings align with other research on how fatherhood is described as rewarding and challenging simultaneously (Lamb, 2013; Garfield et al., 2010; Chin et al., 2011; Shezifi, 2004)

2. These Black otherfathers behavioral demonstration of fatherhood seems to be more diverse than the expectations communicated by Black otherfathers who are teachers (Brockenbrough, 2012; 2015)

3. These Black otherfathers desire to do more with more resources

4. These Black otherfathers are acutely aware of their boundaries with their own families as they support children, adolescents, and adults who are not biologically related