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Emotional Reactions in First-Time African American Fathers during the Postnatal Period

Aisha Wilkins
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Aisha Wilkins

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Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2021

Abstract

Emotional Reactions in First-Time African American Fathers during the Postnatal Period

by

Aisha Wilkins

MA, Spring Arbor University 2006

BS, University of Detroit Mercy 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Educational Psychology

Walden University

November 2021

Abstract

Individuals who have recently become first-time parents can find the experience to be both rewarding and challenging. While research has mainly focused on the challenging experiences of first-time mothers after giving birth, recent studies have begun to find that first-time fathers may have just as difficult a time adjusting to their new role. Most research studies conducted in this area have primarily focused on the experience of European American and Asian American first-time fathers and not specifically on African American fathers. Social exchange theory was used in this interpretive phenomenological analysis study to explore how first-time African American fathers handled transitioning into the role of parenthood. This study provided insight into first-time African American fathers' emotional reactions, thoughts, and how they responded to their new experience. The data for this study were comprised of semi-structured interviews to 12 first-time, African American fathers. Data were analyzed using the principles of interpretative phenomenological analysis. Results from this study suggested that a variety of emotions, from joy to uncertainty, impacted participants after learning they were becoming fathers. They experienced a series of adjustments, stressors, and changes in their family roles; and they became more centered, mature, and involved. The findings of this study have the potential for positive social change by providing mental health providers with useful information to develop culturally sensitive psychoeducational and treatment programs for first-time African American fathers on adjusting and transitioning to their new role.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Just like first-time mothers, first-time fathers may experience a variety of emotions while adapting their new role as a parent. According to Letourneau et al. (2012), research studies conducted on new fathers have shown that postpartum depression contributes to poor communication between them and their partners and lower quality interactions with their child as well as feelings of being overwhelmed, isolated, and stigmatized. Many first-time fathers lack the necessary skills to engage and interact with their child. This is sometimes due to not having had the appropriate role model to provide them with clear guidance on what to expect when transitioning to fatherhood. As a result, some men may experience psychological and behavioral issues that may go unnoticed until a crisis has emerged after assuming the role of parent (Singley, 2015). In this research study, I explored the emotional reactions and thoughts of African American men who have become fathers for the first time. This chapter included a description of the background, a description of the theoretical framework being used, the methodology being used for this study, both the purpose and the problem statement, the background of the topic, and the research questions. Definitions that were relevant to the study as well as the significance, the limitations, the assumptions, and scope of the study were also addressed.

Background of the Study

Research studies have only recently begun to document the impact childbirth can have on first-time fathers. Numerous articles have addressed the experience of first-time fathers, and how fatherhood has impacted them psychologically (e.g., Boyce et al., 2007;

Bradley & Slade, 2010; Figueiredo et al., 2007; Hanson et al., 2009; Hildingsson et al., 2014; Labrague et al., 2013; White, 2007). The research studies in this area have become more extensive due to researchers believing that while it is important to acknowledge and focus on the emotional experiences of first-time mothers, it is just as important to focus on and explore, the experiences of first-time fathers.

Researchers have also placed emphasis on understanding how the health of first-time fathers can also be affected during this transition (e.g., Baldwin & Bick, 2017; Condon, 2006; Fagerskold, 2008; Gage & Kirk, 2016; Garfield et al., 2006; Plantin et al., 2011; Steen et al., 2012). More specifically, many researchers have focused on depression in first-time fathers (e.g., Mulgora, 2016; Philpott & Fitzgerald, 2017); and how they are affected on both a mental and psychological level. Some studies in this area have addressed first-time Chinese fathers (e.g., Gao et al., 2009; Kamalifard et al., 2014; Magil-Evans et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2016). Other studies have focused on Swedish (e.g., Backstrom & Wahn, 2011), and Italian first-time fathers (e.g., Molgora et al., 2016). Most of the studies conducted in the United States, have focused primarily on White, first-time fathers and not on first-time, African American fathers (Figueirdo et al., 2007; Hanson et al., 2009; Kim & Swain, 2007).

Because very little research has been conducted in this area, it is important to consider and explore the feelings, thoughts, and emotional reactions of first-time African American fathers to better understand both treatment and intervention methods that may assist them with adjusting to their new role. An interpretative phenomenological analysis approach (IPA) was used within this research study to assist with providing insight into

the emotional experiences of African American men (see Smith et al., 2009). Key to this research study is understanding the various psychological responses that African American men may have after becoming parents; and how these responses may differ from first-time fathers of other races and cultures.

Problem Statement

It is expected that first-time parents will experience some challenges and difficulties during their transition to parenthood. Although postpartum depression, uncertainty, anxiety, resentment, and other emotions are expected in first-time mothers, they are often overlooked in first-time fathers. During this period, first-time fathers are faced with shifts in their lifestyles, while also marking a major developmental period with important implications (Deave & Johnson, 2008). Between the perinatal and the postnatal period, first-time fathers are likely to experience a range of emotional changes (Chin et al., 2011). While some first-time fathers will experience positive emotions, others may experience an emotional upheaval, which could result in mental health issues (Chin et al., 2011). In a meta-analysis conducted by Paulson et al. (2010), depression appeared to be common among men who were transitioning into fatherhood, when compared to the general male population. The researchers also determined that when compared to the postnatal period, first-time fathers found the pregnancy period to be more stressful (Paulson et al., 2010).

Most research conducted on postpartum depression comes from studies conducted on mothers with postpartum depression (Biebel & Alikhan, 2016). Although the symptoms associated with postpartum depression in both men and women are similar,

there are symptoms that are unique to men. Some of these symptoms include violent behavior, impulsivity, irritability, substance abuse, and indecision (Biebel & Alikhan, 2016), as well as extramarital affairs (Ogrodniczuk, & Oliffe, 2011). These specific behaviors are expressions of depression in men who completely lack awareness of their own feelings (Wilhelm, 2009). Additionally, some men may also use avoidance and emotional numbing to not face this transition (O'Brien et al., 2016). This is referred to as masked depression or depressive equivalents, which have been linked to their refusal to display vulnerability or weakness (O'Brien et al., 2016). The emotional state and behavior of a new father can greatly influence their ability to parent effectively (Halle et al., 2008). According to O'Brien et al. (2016), anxiety is more common than depression in first-time fathers. Because depression and anxiety are comorbid, it is important that both are considered when examining mental illness in first-time fathers (O'Brien et al., 2016).

There are several instances in which postpartum depression in new fathers can be misinterpreted. This is primarily due to additional stressors that are associated with having a new baby (O'Brien et al., 2016). Irritability in first-time fathers can be justified as exhaustion and preoccupation with work can be interpreted as the need to maintain the provider role (Melrose, 2010). Paternal postpartum depression in first-time fathers is an extremely serious problem for not only them, but also for their families (Melrose). This research study provided insight into how first-time fathers have been able to handle their new role; however, previous studies have not specifically addressed first-time African American fathers.

Because there are few studies in this area that specifically address first-time African American fathers, new research could likely assist in the development of preventative intervention treatment programs that would help these fathers cope with their new role. It may even be more helpful if the treatment programs were culturally specific. Treatment programs that are culturally or ethnically specific can be tailored in a way that are psychologically and socially beneficial to first-time African American fathers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the emotional reactions and thoughts of first-time African American fathers. Becoming a father for the first time can spur emotional upheaval for some men. Just as with new mothers, new fathers may experience a barrage of emotions ranging from joy, happiness, and elation to depression, anxiety, and uncertainty (this did not come from an article)(citation). Some first-time fathers find it easy to transition into their new role, while others have difficulty with the transition, creating ambivalence or disruption in their relationships with their partner and child. Western society clearly defines and accepts the woman's rite of passage to motherhood, but it neglects the paternal rites of passage (Kowlessar et al., 2015).. Paternal feelings of marginalization, uncertainty, and separation before and after becoming a father reflect how paternal rites of passage are not as clearly defined or accepted (Kowlessar et al., 2015). Men would likely benefit if Western society viewed fatherhood as a continuous process that evolves as men begin to negotiate the social changes and complexities of the practice of fathering (Kowlessar et al., 2015).

Nature of the Study

In this study, I used an IPA approach (see Smith et al., 2009). IPA allowed me to understand and explore the thoughts, emotional reactions, and feelings of first-time African American fathers, and compare them to past and current literature that have explored topics like this one. The participants consisted of married African American men who were first-time fathers. Semistructured, face-to-face interviews were the tool used to assist with the collection of data. In addition to face-to-face interviews, participants who were not able to meet face-to-face were interviewed by phone. During the face-to-face interviews, each of the participants were interviewed in a neutral location. This process has been discussed further in Chapter 3.

Research Questions

For this research study, I explored the thoughts and emotional reactions of first-time African American fathers during the postnatal period. Although there have been research studies that have addressed topics like this one, they have failed to focus on the experience of African American men. As a result, two research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the emotional reactions and thoughts of African American men after the birth of their first child?

RQ2: How do African American men describe changes in themselves after the birth of their first child?

Theoretical Background

The major phenomenon this study explored were the thoughts and emotional reactions of first-time African American fathers during the postnatal period. To better understand this phenomenon, it was important to acknowledge that like many first-time mothers, first-time fathers are likely to experience a broad array of emotions following the birth of their first child. However, while these fathers were likely to experience these feeling, they were not necessarily willing to express them in ways that are readily apparent. Many of these fathers preferred to endure in silence rather than tell anyone about their psychological suffering. I used the social exchange theory to help explain the emotional variations that some first-time fathers may experience. According to Cook and Rice (2014), the social exchange theory is defined as social behavior that often involves social exchanges where individuals are motivated to attain some form of reward for which something of value must be forfeited.

This theory operates under the premise that individuals interact socially to minimize cost and maximize benefits that will then lead to positive outcomes (Holthausen, 2010). Social exchange theory has been used to closely examine the relationship between maternal parental self-efficacy, postnatal depression, and social support in women who have become mothers for the first-time (Leahy-Warren et al., 2011). Social exchange theory conveys the idea that individuals always measure the benefits and losses before making a life changing decision (Holthausen, 2010).

The social exchange theory includes both a notion of a relationship and a shared obligation in which both individuals perceive responsibilities to one another (Lavell et al.,

2007). According to Shamsavarani, et al. (2016), the social exchange theory suggests that the primary force within interpersonal relationships is the satisfaction of both individuals' self-interest. Cost, rewards, and profit are three major concepts of social exchange theory. These concepts are main components of an exchange equation. Cost is an element in relational life that has negative value. For example, carrying on a conversation is an example of costs, because there is the cost of energy and time that could have spent elsewhere. Social rewards, refer to elements of a relationship that have some positive value. Social rewards can only be met through interaction with another individual. The author further posits that being respected, loved, attractive, being socially accepted and having opinions all depend upon other individuals. Profit is the final major concept, which affects an individual's decision regarding communication and relationships. Individuals tend to seek relationships that are profitable. Equity and distributive justice are additional social exchange concepts. While gaining any kind of profit is desirable, individuals often find themselves dealing with achieving fair trade or an equitable trade. Individuals tend to be more concerned with the reward being proportionate to the degree of cost. In other words, the more cost that is incurred, the more individuals expect the reward to be (Cook & Rice, 2014).

Because this theory has been used to examine depression in first-time mothers, it revealed how first-time African American fathers view themselves, their relationship with their child, their relationship with their partner, and their relationship with the world around them (Leahy-Warren et al., 2011). This theory may further reveal if these fathers believe the benefits of becoming a father outweigh the cost. The idea that there are more

risks involved than there are benefits to becoming a father can greatly affect his sense of well-being. This is important to understand, because many first-time fathers are ill-prepared for this role and may experience serious psychological issues.

Definition of Terms

Anxiety: An emotion that is characterized by feelings of worry and tension, while also possibly causing physical changes (American Psychological Association [APA], 2013).

Depression: A serious and common mental illness that negatively affects how an individual feels, thinks, and acts (APA, 2013).

Emotions: A complex pattern of mental states that include feelings, behavioral reactions, physiological arousal, and cognitive processes evoked in response to situations perceived to be significant (APA, 2013).

First-time African American father: A man who has never fathered a child and is of African descent.

Postnatal period: The period immediately following the birth of a child.

Postpartum depression: A mental illness that women experience after giving birth to a child. During this period women experience feelings of extreme anxiety, indifference, and sadness, which may cause changes in eating and sleeping habits (APA, 2013).

Postpartum period: Like the postnatal period, the period immediately after the birth of a child. Postpartum and postnatal will be used interchangeably in this study.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions that were made for this research study. There was the assumption that participants would be forthcoming with their responses to the questions presented to them. I also assumed that each participant would be married and have had their first child within the past 2 years. It was additionally assumed that each participant would meet the demographic criteria to be a part of the study. For this study, the final assumption was that I would ensure that all personal biases would remain in check. To help enable the truest responses from participants and to ensure that the study lives up to the highest qualitative standards, quality questions were asked, and I remained focused and aware of all potential sources of bias within the study.

Delimitations

In this study, I explored the feelings, thoughts, and emotional responses of first-time African American fathers during the postnatal period. When transitioning to parenthood, some first-time fathers face emotional and psychological challenges that are like their partners upon giving birth. The emotional state and behavior of first-time father can greatly influence their ability to parent (Halle et al, 2008). Research has suggested that transitioning to fatherhood can be an extremely stressful period for men (Boyce et al., 2007).

To explore this phenomenon, the sample was clearly defined. The participants must (a) be an African American male, (b) be a new parent, (c) be married, (d) and have a first child that is less than 2 years old. The sex of their child is irrelevant; however, the child must reside in the home with the parents. Individuals who do not fit these criteria

were excluded from the study. Clients, former clients, coworkers, former coworkers, and family members were also excluded. All participants must speak English.

The delimitations of this research study was to closely examine the transition to parenthood for African American men fathers. Another delimitation is that only the participants were interviewed. The participants' wives were not interviewed for this study. Although it could be beneficial in future studies, this study does not require the participation of their participants' spouses. Doing so would go beyond the scope of the research.

Limitations

As the researcher, it is important to understand that there may be limitations with this study. To obtain quality data, it is important to ask participants quality questions (Mago et al., 2014). While it is true that face-to-face and phone semistructured interviews were used for this study, there was the possibility that some participants in the study might not have been as honest as others when responding to some of the questions; and thereby, causing the results of the study to be skewed. During this research study, there might have been instances in which some participants might have decided not to divulge specific information about themselves to disguise their feelings regarding their transition to parenthood. Another limitation of this study might involve participants providing responses to questions that they believe I wanted to hear as opposed to relating their actual experiences. This is another factor that might affect the results of this research study.

Significance

The findings from this study may potentially help with identifying ways to appropriately prepare and support these fathers during their transition to parenthood. This could be done through the development of specific intervention and treatment programs that are tailored to the psychological needs of African American male population. This study had the potential to provide helping professionals with a clearer understanding regarding the specific needs of first-time African American fathers. This study could potentially contribute to social change through understanding and raising awareness about the psychological needs of first-time African American fathers. This understanding and awareness may help those African American fathers who struggle emotionally after the birth of their child and are reluctant to seek help.

A clearer understanding provided by this study may help healthcare workers implement appropriate treatments that may assist first-time fathers with addressing psychological needs during and after their partners' pregnancies. The research study findings may also provide value by determining if culturally specific treatment and interventions would be beneficial. With such culturally specific programs, first-time African American men may be better equipped to handle the emotional and psychological changes that occur when becoming a father. With help of these programs, fathers may be able to be more empathetic and sympathetic towards their partners.

Summary

This chapter provided available background knowledge related to the experiences of first-time fathers along with various emotional reactions experienced after

transitioning to parenthood, focusing on the emotions and thoughts of first-time African American fathers throughout the postnatal period. This chapter presented the research questions, an introduction to the social change theory, and interpretative phenomenological analysis. Important terms related to this study were defined and assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study were addressed. Lastly, this researcher also discussed the significance of the study. In the following chapter, literature relevant to the study will be addressed and reviewed to provide a foundation for the research study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Transitioning to parenthood can be both difficult and challenging for new parents. Although depression is most common in women during the postnatal period, research studies are beginning to suggest men also experience depression during this period (Edmondson et al., 2010). Halle et al. (2008) pointed out that the transition to fatherhood is considered to be less important than the transition to motherhood. Nevertheless, the birth of a child can have an extremely profound effect on a man's identity, moods, relationships, and community (Fletcher et al., 2006). Because there has been a significant shift in the primary role of fathers, traditional roles that used to define the man's relationship within the family have undergone several changes (Versken, 2010). This has in turn resulted in the expectation that men will equally participate in the upbringing of their children (Bond, 2012). The transition to fatherhood can most certainly have a transforming effect on the men (Knoester et al., 2007). Researchers recommend focusing more on the psychological aspects, experiences, and needs of new fathers (Halle et al., 2008). In some cases, men may begin to experience their partners' pregnancy, therefore, viewing the birth of their new child as a stressful period of unwanted challenges, adjustments, and new routines (Wee et al., 2011). During this transition, men are likely to report feeling fatigued and stressed because of increased demands (Darwin et al., 2017). They further report feeling frustrated, angry, and resentful (Letourneau et al., 2012). A reported number of cases regarding postpartum depression in men may be half as high as the percentage reportedly known to occur in women (Melrose, 2010). Research

conducted in the United States examining symptomology and risk factors in first-time fathers has focused solely on White populations (Kim & Swain, 2007; Ly, 2010; Paulson & Bazemore, 2010; Rosenthal et al., 2013; Tinkew et al., 2007; Vogel, 2011). In the same line, other themes which have focused solely on the White population included the experience of depression in these new fathers (Decosta, et al. 2015; Earls, 2010; Edward et al., 2014; Musser et al., 2013). Additionally, there were numerous international research studies that addressed the topic (Bergstrom, 2013; de Montigny et al., 2012; Koh et al., 2014; Luoma et al., 2013; Ramchadani et al., 2011). None of the research, however, have been specific to African American first-time fathers. Kim and Swain (2007) recommended conducting studies on fathers from ethnic minority backgrounds to assist with determining if the experience of depression is similar or different in other cultures. This phenomenological qualitative study explored the experience of postnatal thoughts, feelings and emotional reactions in first-time African American fathers.

This chapter addresses positive and negative symptomatology associated with the experience of becoming first-time father. It also addresses several risk factors that researchers believe contribute to the different emotional reactions that some first-time fathers may experience. In addition, cultural factors are also discussed to help determine if race/culture influences the emotional responses of first-time fathers. This chapter presents the social exchange theory to help provide insight into first-time fathers and the various emotional responses they have towards transitioning into parenthood and caring for their newborn.

Literature Search Strategy

Walden University's electronic library was used to assist me with the extensive process of obtaining peer-reviewed and relevant scholarly journal articles related to the topic. The Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO) was primarily used because this system allows multiple databases to be searched simultaneously. The following databases were searched: ProQuest Central, Academic Search Complete PsycINFO, PsycEXTRA, PsycBOOKS, psycCRITICS, PsycARTICLES, , SocINDEX and ScienceDirect with full text. Most of these searches were conducted between September 2015 and April 2016 using a variety of search terms and keywords and key word pairs. Some of these terms included *depression, depression in new fathers, fatherhood and mental illness, first-time fathers, fatherhood and psychological distress, paternal post-natal depression, anxiety and new fathers, first-time fathers and risk factors, cultural differences and fatherhood, supporting for first-time fathers, marital satisfaction of first-time fathers, paternal post-partum depression, and expectations of first-time fathers*. Because the EBSCO system allows for searching databases simultaneously, all the previously mentioned terms were used to allow for a broader search of articles related to the topic. Because one source often cites many others, I was also able to obtain those articles to assist in further developing the literature review. Some of these articles also allowed this researcher to use references that were cited. Because research in the area of first-time fathers, specifically African American fathers, and their experience of various emotional reactions during this transition is limited, additional research was needed to examine this population's transition to parenthood. Some of the research used in this literature review is no more

than 10 years old. After doing an extensive literature search, recent studies were fairly sparse for this specific study.

In addition to using Walden University's database, I conducted online searches using Google scholar. Using similar key words, phrases, word pairings and search criteria resulted in specific publications that were relevant to the study. The publications were available in electronic and print format. The articles were studied, reviewed, and are included in this chapter.

Theoretical Framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014) posited that the theoretical framework can serve as a foundation for a research study while also assisting with guiding the researchers' choice of design and data analysis. The authors further posited that the theoretical framework must remain front and center in order to justify the research problem and the research question in order to determine the analysis plan and the research design (Grant & Osanloo). In order to understand the various emotions that first-time dads experience after their child's birth, it is important to consider the theoretical framework that could help clarify this phenomenon. As men take on their new role as first-time fathers, many will experience a broad array of emotions. Some may feel ecstatic, joy, while others may experience sadness, uncertainty, or some form of depression (Tehrani et al., 2015). The framework that may best describe the emotional variations that first-time fathers may experience is the social exchange theory (Homans, 1958). Social exchange was defined by Homans (year) as being the exchange of tangible or intangible activity and less costly and rewarding. Cost is typically viewed as alternative opportunities of activities forgone by

the individuals involved (Homans, 1958). This theory was used as a framework to address various aspects of social behavior, including that of first-time mothers who experience postpartum and postnatal depression.

Cook and Rice (2014) described five propositions that Homans (year) framed for the study of social behavior in terms of punishments and rewards. The first proposition, referred to the *success proposition*, suggests that behavior that generates positive consequences has a greater chance of being repeated. The second proposition, the *stimulus proposition*, suggests that behavior that has been rewarded on past occasions will likely be performed in similar situations. The third proposition, otherwise referred to as the *value proposition*, specifies that the more value the result of an action is to an individual, the more likely that same action is to be performed. The fourth proposition, or the *deprivation-satiation proposition* posits that if an individual has received a reward several times for a specific action, the value of that rewards becomes less valuable. The final proposition, the *frustration-aggression proposition*, specifies an emotional reaction. Individuals are more likely to become angry and aggressive when they do not receive an expected reward (Cook & Rice, 2014).

Driven by the social exchange theory, this study was designed to look at emotional, feelings, and thoughts of first time African American fathers, while also identifying some of the changes that occur within the relationship between the parents after taking on this new role. This theory may also help identify some of the various losses and gains that these fathers may have experienced after becoming a parent. Some things to consider regarding the social exchange theory and this study would be to

consider how important it is for first time fathers to receive reciprocity in giving and receiving emotional support in order to have a high quality intimate relationship with their partner (see Goldberg & Carlson, 2014), and how important giving and having support is needed for the well-being of the baby.

Because there are also men of all races who experience a variety of emotional changes when they become new fathers, this theory may also be applied to them. Freitas et al. (2016) reported that during the mothers' gestation and postpartum period, fathers are increasingly at risk of experiencing a variety of depressive symptoms. It is only recently that research in this area is beginning to focus on and understand some of the sociological, biological, and psychological aspects of this unique mental health issue. Posmontier and Waite (2011) suggested that postpartum depression is experienced by 19.4% of women around the world and may contribute to cognitive behavioral issues in children as well as depression in their partners. The authors stated that although there are current theoretical frameworks that provide a rich context towards the study of postpartum depression, none of them provide a framework that speaks to address the dynamic relationship of the woman's personal experience within the cultural, and social context of postpartum depression (Postmontier & Waite, 2011). Because new fathers are additionally at risk of experiencing postpartum depression, Posmontier and Waite asserted that the social exchange theory may help provide insight into the understanding of postpartum depression and help determine specific interventions that could help with targeting inter- and intrapersonal disturbances that occur within the social and cultural context.

To better understand how the social exchange theory may be applied to African American first-time fathers, it is first important to address how the social exchange theory is applied to the experience of postpartum and postnatal depression in new mothers. Postpartum depression has been described as a, sometimes, debilitating mental health problem that affects women who have given birth (Austin et al., 2007.) Like postpartum depression, postnatal depression has been described as another form of clinical depression which can last longer than two weeks, while interfering with the ability to function as a caregiver for the newborn child (Austin et al., 2007). Both are characterized as persistent irritability, anxiety, low self-esteem, and sadness (Jahromi et al., 2015). Leahy-Warren et al. (2011) posited that new mothers are often faced with daily demands of having to learn new skills in order to help them properly care for their infant child, in addition to assisting them with recovering both physically and emotionally. New fathers may not face the same physical challenges that first-time mothers may face; however, they still are faced with some of the same demands. Numerous studies have shown that the rate of depressive symptoms and anxiety in men increase during their transition to fatherhood (Pinto et al., 2016). When first-time mothers experiencing some form of distress, it is also likely that their partner, who is also new to parenthood, will also experience some form of emotional distress (Fletcher et al., 2006).

Leahy-Warrn et al. (2011) suggested when addressing postpartum and postnatal depression in first-time mothers, the social exchange theory can cover numerous activities, which include informational, instrumental, emotional, and appraisal support. Like postpartum depression, postnatal depression may negatively impact the mother-

infant interaction (Leahy-Warrn et al.). It may be fair to say that like first-time mothers, first-time African American fathers may have similar emotional outcomes when transitioning to fatherhood.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Emotional Reactions

Transitioning to parenthood can weigh heavily on the emotions of both the mother and father, especially if the parents are new to the experience. Although much of the research focuses on the emotions of mothers during and after childbirth, researchers are noticing that men who are either becoming or have become fathers also experience various emotions during this transition (Schumacher et al., 2008). While the experience of becoming a first-time father can be positive, it can also be an experience that is met with disruptions in various areas of their lives. This experience can affect their social relationships, create changes in their work habits, cause feelings of ambivalence, irritability, work habit changes, while also causing emotional and psychological distress (Gross & Marcussen, 2016), which may result in mental health issues (Chin et al., 2011). Paulson and Bazemore (2010) conducted a meta-analysis which suggested that new fathers compared to the general male population are more susceptible to experiencing depression. These findings further suggests that it is extremely important to understand how first-time fathers are affected by this transition. Tuszynska-Bogucka and Narwa (2008) reported that because the psychosocial problems of first-time fathers have primarily been ignored, the reason behind this phenomenon is therefore widely unknown.

Freitas et al. (2016) asserted that there is an increased risk of depression in first-time fathers during their partners gestation and postpartum period. While both men and women experience various degrees of emotions after becoming new to parenthood, experiences associated with this transition will vary by gender (Gross & Marcussen, 2016). Bronte-Tinkew et al. (2009) pointed out that the transition to parenthood for first-time fathers represents an important opportunity that can help them view themselves in a more active role as a parent. Within the context of a pregnancy that was unplanned, transitioning to parenthood can have some serious implications on the man's identity (Epifanio et al., 2015). During this transition men are faced with reestablishing themselves and reorganizing their personal identity, both their current role and their role of becoming a new father (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2009). While some men may have success with reorganizing their personal identity, others may find it more challenging (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2009).

Both antenatal and postnatal depression are health issues that have been well recognized in women (Wee et al., 2010). Antenatal depression reportedly affects a woman's ability to properly care for herself, which could lead to drug or alcohol abuse (Chapman & Wu, 2013). Postnatal depression has commonly resulted in the predisposition to worry about the health and wellbeing of the child (Biaggi et al., 2016). Like women, men have been susceptible to depression during both the postnatal and antenatal periods. Research has shown first-time fathers may experience their partner's psychological and emotional symptoms during this time (Fletcher et al., 2006). During either one of these periods, first-time fathers are challenged with adjusting to new

routines, while also facing unforeseen challenges (Condon, 2006). Just as these unforeseen challenges sometimes lead to depression in mothers, they can similarly lead to depression in first-time fathers (Bria, 2013). Fletcher et al. (2006) discovered that at 6 weeks postpartum, 2% to 5% of first-time fathers have been diagnosed with depression. According to Tohotoa et al. (2012), further research in this area has determined that the rate of depression in first-time fathers can be increasingly higher than in that of first-time mothers, this is due to the father's dramatic shift in their role and expectations. Chin et al. (2011) have further addressed research studies, which suggest that the pregnancy period is more difficult than the postnatal period for first-time fathers when compared to that of first-time mothers. Because first-time fathers can greatly influence the well-being of mothers during, before, and after pregnancy, they should always be included in maternity care and to openly discuss any feelings or fears they may have regarding becoming a parent (Ives, 2014)..

Rosich-Medina and Shetty (2007) suggested that during pregnancy women experience a transition which is more structured through the physical changes that are occurring, while first-time fathers attempt to understand their partners' changes by proxy. Kowlessar et al. (2014) reported that as first-time fathers are transitioning into their new roles, it becomes important for them, their partners, and practitioners to understand some of the factors that may facilitate or hinder their adjustment. Labrague et al. (2013) addressed a study in which first-time fathers admitted that during the birth of their child, they experienced a variety of mixed feelings and emotions which consisted of fear, gratification, satisfaction, and excitement. More than 50% of the fathers studied felt

uncomfortable, helpless, and afraid (Labrague et al.). According to Premberg et al. (2012), attending the birth of their child can be of great benefit to first-time father by helping to facilitate and solidify the relationship with his partner, while also promoting early attachment and bonding between father and child.

Bronte-Tinkew et al. (2009) stated that the transition to parenthood for fathers that occur within the context of an unplanned pregnancy can have serious emotional and psychological implication on the man's identity. An unplanned pregnancy can create a negative transition into fatherhood, which could have serious repercussions for not only the father's self-identity and role perceptions, but also for his bonding with his child. Fletcher et al. (2008) suggested that the needs of first-time fathers should be identified as early as possible to help alleviate some of the stressors associated with parenthood. Kim and Swain (2007) acknowledged that currently there is no clinical diagnostic criteria for paternal postpartum depression, which has been defined in various ways. For the primary purpose of this study, researchers must assess postpartum depression in men by using the diagnostic tools used to diagnose maternal postpartum depression (Swain & Kim). The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5th Edition* (2013) defined maternal postpartum depression as a major depressive episode that has an onset which will occur within a least 4 weeks of the baby's birth. Swain and Kim (2007) reported that paternal postpartum depression develops more gradually than maternal postpartum depression. Some longitudinal studies have suggested that depression during the prenatal period tends to decrease upon the birth of the child, while it tends to increase within a year of the child's birth (Swain & Kim. 2007). The authors provided an example which showed that 4.8% of

first-time fathers met the criteria for anxiety and depression during their partners' pregnancy, and experienced depression during the three months post-partum period, while 23.8% of first-time fathers experienced depression during the 12-month postnatal period (Swain & Kim, 2007). The prevalence of perinatal depression in first-time fathers within the United States was reported as being 10% (Vogel, 2011

When experiencing postnatal depression, first-time fathers are likely to display fear and anger as opposed to sadness (Tuszynska-Bogucka & Narwa, 2014). The authors suggested that when uniform assessment criteria are unavailable, paternal postnatal symptoms are more likely to be misunderstood. Some research has shown a possible connection between paternal postnatal depression and changes that occur in their testosterone levels. These levels are reportedly lower during their partners' pregnancy, while their estrogen levels are escalated (Tuszynska-Bogucka & Narwa, 2014). Nurbaeti (2014) posited that sex hormones are an important factor in depressed first-time fathers. According to Verma (2011), male stress systems are highly affected by changing levels of sex hormones. Although research studies on first-time fathers and the occurrence of hormonal changes have been well documented in previous studies, Edeilstein et al. (2014) suggested that it is not clear if whether these changes occur during the postnatal or prenatal period.

Entsieh and Hallstrom (2016) stressed the importance of recognizing the emotional needs of first-time fathers. The authors purported that there are tremendous benefits on both an individual level and societal level when first-time fathers receive emotional and psychological support. When men become involved in the fathering

process it can positively affect their mental health and create opportunities for them to become more involved in their community, while also fostering personal growth (Darwin et al., 2017). According to Umberson et al. (2010), having individual choices and a sense of personal control as it relates to transitioning to fatherhood is important because it helps shape the effects of parenthood on wellbeing. A correlation exists between having a high sense of control and first-time fathers who have a high sense of control and exhibiting proactive behavior which can lead to positive psychological outcomes for first-time fathers (Keeton et al., 2008). Without this sense of control, first-time fathers are likely than first-time mothers to experience disorders related to anxiety, depression, and stress (Keeton et al., 2008).

Risk Factors

Although researchers identify several risks factors associated with postpartum depression, the exact causes are not well understood (Holopainen & Hakulinen, 2012). The authors suggest that the etiology is multifaceted. Giallo et al. (2015) indicated that several risk factors are associated with the psychological distress of first-time fathers. Giallo et al. (2015) posits that some first-time fathers are more likely to experience various forms of psychological distress after the first year of becoming a parent. During the postnatal period 10% of first-time fathers will experience depression and 10 to 17 percent will experience some form of anxiety (Giallo et al., 2015).

Leigh and Milgrom (2008), addressed the importance of identifying risk factors in first-time fathers throughout the antenatal and postnatal periods of their partners pregnancy. During the antenatal and postnatal period, there tends to be a high prevalence

of depression which may at times result in serious emotional consequences, it is believed that enormous efforts should be taken to help identify each individual risk factor.

Identifying these risk factors can help with the development of treatment and prevention programs that could provide first-time fathers with the necessary skills and tools needed to improve the well-being for themselves and their families.

Some of the risk factors identified by researchers have included demographics, psychosocial, biological, and ecological. Within the demographic risk factors, researchers considered age, socioeconomic, education level, marital status, family income and religion. Although, these demographic risks factors have been identified in some studies, the results of the studies have been inconsistent (Tannous et al., 2008). Psychosocial risk factors include social support, family and work conflict, marital satisfaction, self-esteem, and unplanned pregnancy (Koh et al., 2014). Biological risk factors might include changes within male cortisol, estrogen, testosterone, prolactin, and vasopressin levels. While ecological risk factors might include environment, society, and culture (Swain & Kim, 2007).

Nishimura and Ohashi (2010) report that there are numerous research studies which have identified maternal depression as being the strongest predictor and risk factor of paternal depression, particularly within the first postnatal year. The authors pointed out that most first-time fathers are initially supportive of their partners depression. Unfortunately, as their partners depression persists over several months, they begin to withdraw their support. This is primarily because they are beginning to experience depressive symptoms of their own (Nishimura & Ohashi, 2010).

Conflict within Parental Role

The transition to fatherhood for first-time fathers also means there may be conflicts within their other roles; and an increase in their responsibilities and feelings about themselves (Ganapathy, 2016). While both men and women may experience parenthood at the same time, unfortunately, they do not make the transition in the exact same way (Condon, 2006). Compared to women's transition to parenthood, the men's transition is considered to be relatively smooth and easy, because they do not have to deal with the emotional and physical changes that their partners have to deal with. Bradley et al. (2008) have indicated that fatherhood is considered to be the benchmark for masculinity, which is characterized by an array of patriarchal stereotypes, ideals expectations, and assumptions that dictate the role of the father. Katz-Wise et al. (2010) reported that there are implications for changes in identity salience, attitudes, divisions of labor and gender roles for both parents when transitioning to parenthood. Not only does their level of parenting experience create changes in their attitudes and behavior, but their gender will also have a great impact on the attitudes and behavior. The attitudes towards gender roles during the transition to parenthood are considered to be an aspect of psychological changes that are observable in new parents (Katz-Wise et al.). There are a few psychological changes that first-time fathers may experience during their transition. Some may feel a strong need to be the bread winner of the family, become more involved in childcare decisions and to also hold and maintain the family unit (Ganapathy, 2015). Tension experienced by first-time fathers can greatly impact the relationship with their partner and child. These psychological changes may contribute to their physical health

being overlooked by health care practitioners, whose primary focus is on the mother (Ganapathy, 2015).

Some first-time fathers become apprehensive about their finances and uncomfortable with the changes that are occurring during this period. They may also feel as though their relationship may dissipate, while feeling overwhelmed with an increase in their responsibilities (Ganapathy, 2015). Some first-time fathers may also question their ability to maintain a sense of self during this time. When men transition from the role of partner to father, they are forced to recognize and become more aware of their new lifestyle. The experience that men have after becoming fathers tend to be the result of their own personal characteristics that are connected to the quality of the relationship he has with his partner, which results from personal endowments that include; cultural factors, personal abilities, attitudes, personality and knowledge (Genseoni & Tallandani, 2009). The authors point out that during this transitional period, men struggle with balancing work and their own personal needs, while also attempting to attend to the new demands of becoming a father and embracing their new self-image. Habib (2012) addressed five different types of fathering roles that conceptualize the paternal role along a continuum of behavioral involvement.

The first role Habib mentioned is that of the remote role. The remote role is characterized by fathers showing little interest in their newborn child. The second role is referred to as the provider role, this involves the father participating in traditional the parenting role. He is committed to being the breadwinner in the household. The third role is referred to as the secondary or consistent parent role, the father primarily helps the

mother in rearing the child. The fourth role is the shared caregiver role. In this role, the father co-parents and shares various tasks and responsibilities equally with the mother as it relates to their child. The final role is that of a primary caregiver, which means that the father is fully and singlehandedly responsible for his child with no one to assist him. As with any life changing event, becoming a father for the first-time will not only influence the time to participate in roles prior to fatherhood, but it will require serious role readjustment (Hamilton & DeJonge, 2010). Hamilton and DeJonge have indicated that current research suggests that while first-time fathers desire to be an active and involved parent, they can be met with several barriers that will prevent them from maintaining their previous roles.

Fatherhood and Physical Health

Garfield et al. (2006) stated that the conceptualization of men's health can overlook fatherhood, which tends to be a central aspect of many men's lives. The authors point out that while numerous studies have been conducted on men's physical health and its relationship to diseases and reproductive organs, studies fail to look at how becoming a parent may impact a man's physical and mental health. The authors suggest that a bi-directional dynamic relationship can exist between children and their fathers. Specifically, how some children may affect the physical health of their fathers and how they may influence the physical health of their children. Garfield et al. (2006) point out that this may occur in several different ways. One way involves how children can affect their fathers' health with their presence. Their presence can affect him either positively or negatively. Some of the positive effects that father's may experience include seeing their

child as a source of happiness; they may also begin to participate in more physical activities to get themselves in shape, while also providing them a sense of well-being and contentment. While some of the negative effects experienced by first-time fathers might include feeling financial pressure; having to balance work and family added more stress. Garfield et al. (2006) posit that men who live separately from their children, tend to have feelings of guilty due to their limited involvement in the child's life, which can greatly influence their parenting style and level of involvement.

Fatherhood and Hormonal Changes

Nunes-Costa et al. (2011) point out that even though hormone concentrations in expectant of new fathers are much lower when compared to those found in women, research data suggest that there are biological dispositions for fathers to care for their child. Some research studies have determined that the hormonal changes that arise in first-time fathers, causes them to experience postpartum depression. These hormonal changes are referred to as biological risk factors, which include changes in testosterone, estrogen, cortisol, vasopressin, prolactin (Kim & Swain, 2007). While it is known that hormone changes occur in first-time fathers, it is unclear if these hormonal changes are strictly limited to the postnatal period or if these changes occur prenatally (Edelstein et al., 2014). There is a strong possibility that postpartum depression in first-time fathers is related to the decrease in testosterone levels throughout their partners pregnancy and also afterwards (Kim & Swain, 2007). The authors explain that this decrease in testosterone may provide a biological explanation for depression in first-time fathers. Edelstein et al. (2014) pointed out that after the birth of a child, the decline in the testosterone levels are

believed to help support paternal care by reducing aggression towards the newborn, removes the father's attention from mating efforts with his partner and helps facilitate paternal attachment.

Estrogen is associated with caregiving and bonding and caregiving in mammals and humans (Mileva-Seitz & Fleming, 2011). Estrogen has additionally been associated with individual differences in responses to desire for emotional responses (Edelstein et al., 2014). Based on a study conducted by Edelstein et al, there was a significant prenatal decline estradiol among expectant fathers. Swain and Kim (2007), on the other hand, have suggested that estradiol levels in first-time fathers begin to increase during the last month of their partners pregnancy through the postpartum period. The authors suggest the increase in estrogen in men during this period may increase active parenting behaviors once the child is born. The authors further suggested fathers who are more involved in parenting, will have higher levels of estrogen compared to those fathers who are not involved in parenting.

Cortisol is a stress hormone which is found to be responsive to social challenges and stressors. While pregnant, women will experience increased levels of cortisol throughout their pregnancy and it will gradually decline after given birth (Edelstein et al., 2014). First-time fathers appear to have lower levels of cortisol after the birth of their child when compared to non-father (Nunes-Costa et al., 2011). Swain and Kim (2007) have pointed out that lower levels of cortisol in some new fathers may be related to difficulties that exist within depressed mood and father-infant bonding. Vasopressin is another hormone that appears to also affect first-time fathers and their relationship with

their newborn. Swain and Kim (2007) report that low levels in vasopressin may contribute to postpartum depression in first-time fathers. Vasopressin reportedly plays an intricate role in enhancing the development of parent-infant bonding with fathers. Lastly, postpartum depression in new fathers may also be affected by changes in their prolactin levels. Prolactin plays a key role in lactating process of women and maternal nurturing behavior (Gettler et al., 2011). This hormone is important for its maintenance and onset of parental behaviors. These hormone levels in men tend to increase throughout their partners pregnancy and will continue to increase during the first postnatal year (Swain & Kim, 2007). High levels of prolactin are related to greater responses to infant stimuli among first-time fathers, while lower prolactin levels may cause distress as they attempt to adapt to their role as a parent. This in turn could cause them to experience negative moods during the transition to fatherhood (Swain & Kim, 2007).

Ecological risks factors should also be considered when attempting to determine the various emotions that first-time fathers experience. When considering ecological factors, it is important to look at environment, culture, community work, family, and society (Swain & Kim, 2007). Because first-time fathers are being faced with new demands, stressors, and challenges, it is important to understand how their environment is affected by this new role. Kowlessarar et al. (2014) have stated that men who are new to the role of fatherhood tend to be viewed as someone who is primarily there to serve as a form of support for their partner, which results in their needs being overlooked or ignored. The authors pointed out that this attitude of ignoring the father has been attributed to having a poor understanding of men's needs by health professionals, a lack

in communication, limited male role models and a very poor understanding by health professionals of the fathers needs.

Social and Cultural Constructs of First-Time Fathers

An additional risk for first-time fathers can be social and cultural constructs of gendered practices that are well rooted in paternal masculinities (Zerach & Magal, 2016). The idea of traditional masculinities can be grouped into striving for power and status, toughness, aggressiveness, and the rejection of stereotypical femininity (Mankowski & Maton, 2016). Eerola and Huttenon (2011) posit that the cultural concept of the “new father” sheds light on the conflictual demands of new fathers. The cultural concept suggests a dramatic change within the traditional gendered parental role. Finn and Henwood (2009) stated that within western society, men are enacting fatherhood and are feeling compelled to become more involved and more hands on when it comes to caring for their new child. The authors posit that this is due to the continuously changing role of women within the workforce, the decline of the traditional patriarchal and masculine and the increasing divorce rates, the changing roles of women in the labor force and the obvious decline of the traditional masculine and patriarchal authoritative figure and the increasing rate in divorces. Western society has demonstrated that there has been and continues to be a change within the parental role, particularly with that of fathers. Becoming a father is no longer simply confined to being a provider, it consists of maintaining attitudes and behaviors that will encourage engagement and affective contact with their child (Martins et al., 2014).

The perspective of what it means to parent changes once men become fathers, which is almost always influenced by their personal experiences. This includes their relationship with their children and their child's mother (Roberts et al., 2014). Since the early 1980's, a notable shift has occurred within the culture of fatherhood. As a result of this shift, fathers are expected to be responsible, nurturing, sharing the parenting responsibility with their partner and being emotionally engaging, if they intend to be involved in their child's lives (Wall & Arnold, 2007). Before becoming fathers, some men may form their own ideas related to fathering. These ideas are based on the relationship they did or did not have with their own father. Fathers will either emulate their father's parenting methods out of admiration, or they will reject their father's parenting methods, because it negatively affected their childhood (Roberts et al., 2014). As a result, some men will develop their own ideas regarding the type of father they want to be to their child. Some men may identify themselves as the type of father who has a good relationship with their child's mother while jointly caring for the child. Other men may identify themselves as the type of parent who may want to participate in unconventional parenting methods, such as being a single or non-resident parent as a non-resident or single father. Men who have never had positive examples of successful parenting, will more than likely continue a cycle of being absent or having very little involvement in their child's life (Roberts et al., 2014).

Adamson and Paisley (2013) point out that the identity theory suggests one factor which may influence a father's involvement with their child. This factor involves clearly understanding what it means to be a parent. The authors further pointed out that the

identity theory also suggests that men construct meanings from their interaction with others, which helps provide clues regarding societal expectations of the social status to which they occupy as it relates to being a parent. These societal expectations are interpreted by the men which eventually results in the creation of their identity and becomes evident in their behavior towards parenting (Adamson & Paisley, 2013).

Cultural representations shape and reflect assumptions that take the role of fathering for granted, while social change evolves throughout interactions between ideology, agency and structure cultural expectations and understandings play a significant role in defining boundaries that are acceptable, possible, and plausible (Wall & Arnold, 2007).

Changes within Fathering Beliefs and Ideas

The primary belief regarding fathers and their behavior tends to be determined largely by the culture to which they belong. Knowing the culture and subcultural membership of fathers, provides great insight into the behaviors and attitudes that are related to the specific roles attached to the father's position and social status (Seward & Stanley-Stevens, 2014). According to the authors, major subgroups, such as ethnic groups and social status, will often have different cultural expectation. Because fathers tend to play numerous roles within the family's culture, paternal expectations will always vary. Fathers have a very complex role which encompass numerous important roles and is greatly influenced by cultural and societal expectations, which eventually manifest through the ideas they have of themselves in that role. Therefore, it becomes important for fathers to fine tune and adapt to those ideas in order to fulfill the specific needs of their child (Hermansen et al., 2015).

Becoming a father involves being interconnected with a variety of other roles that compete with and support role enactment and paternal involvement. Some of these roles include son, husband, provider, community leader, community member, etc. Each of these roles at some point or another competes for attention and seeks a way to express themselves (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009). Anything that can drastically change a man's life has the potential to cause a transition within fathering. According to the authors, each transition within the fathering process can change the long-term fathering trajectory. Although this is done incrementally, gradually and slightly they contribute to different levels of fathering behavior, identity and commitment, while also providing fathers with another anchor or context to allow them to view themselves as fathers. Men's fathering identity becomes more central and focused, when they are able to view these changes in a positive light. The more contexts fathers have for connecting everyday roles, functions, and interactions, the more of a dad he becomes to his child (Palkovitz & Palm, 2007).

Emotional Triggers During the Transition to Fatherhood

When fathers are faced with circumstances that are challenging, such as transitioning to parenthood, their trajectory is altered, therefore requiring adjustments to be made to their patterns of behavioral and cognitive engagement with their child and families (Pelchat et al., 2007). During their transition to fatherhood, there will likely be a variety of triggers that will contribute to the responses that some men experience as a result of feeling the pressures associated with transitioning (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009). There will be individual differences in each transitioning fathers' experience of social support, coping strategies, stress and the utilization of available resources (Fagan &

Palkovitz, 2007). Through their transition, fathers will experience a loss of stability that may initiate emotional behavioral and cognitive changes. These changes will then begin to have affects on the children and their partner (Palkovitz & Palm).

The transition of fathers has primarily been based on the assumption that mothers and fathers and mothers experience the transition to parenthood differently (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009). In an exploration of gender similarities and differences with parenting children with health issues, Pelchat et al. (2007) determined that fathers and mothers handle stress differently as it relates to their child. While fathers become more stoic and become determined to conceal their vulnerability, mothers have no problem expressing their emotions and will seek out support from friends and family. To alleviate the stress, fathers tend to use avoidance techniques by either escaping, evading, and distracting themselves with evading, escaping, or distracting themselves with activities they enjoy. While mothers will try to problem solve to help relieve themselves of stress (Pelchat et al., 2007).

Becoming a Good First-Time Father

Research studies that address some of the expectations associated with becoming a father, helps to shape the identity of those men who become fathers for the first-time (Carson et al., 2016). The authors describe three components that address the idea of good fathering. The relational component is associated with being a loving and caring father; the role component is associated with being a provider for their children, setting parental boundaries and being supportive of their child. Finally, the personality component refers to the father being patient with their child and invested in their

upbringing. During the prenatal period, research studies have shown that the majority of men strive to be good fathers, which fuels parenting behavior. However, while some fathers strive to be good fathers, what a good father looks can vary. Race, culture, socioeconomic, geographic location, social class can greatly influence how new fathers internalize messages along with social norms regarding what is meant by being a good father (Carson et al., 2016).

Carlson et al. (2016) describe fatherhood as being like an engine that drives both emotional developmental and growth in men. According to the author, this engine is ignited in first-time fathers when a man learns he is becoming a father and during the prenatal period. This is when new fatherhood identities begin, yet their identities can and more than likely will evolve over a period time. Palkovitz (2007) suggests promoting fatherhood as a life project for the majority of men, primarily because there will continue to be demands regarding changes to their self-identities and questions regarding their values. Framing fatherhood as a development engine for men, helps recognize and embrace the evolution of identity (Carlson et al., 2016).

Parenting Experience and African American Fathers

Schetter et al. (2016), addressed the importance of understanding the psychological experience of African American fathers. This is important because the experience of African American transitioning can greatly impact their parenting skills. When compared to men in general, depressive symptoms in new fathers is tremendously high (Bradley & Slade, 2011). The authors address a study in which nonresidential African American fathers experienced high levels of depressive symptoms were related

to limited contact with their child, yet high instances of father-child conflict. It is suggested that racism is an important risk factor which demonstrate depressive symptoms in some first-time African American fathers of infants (Schetter et al., 2016), this is when compared to fathers of other cultures. This refers to a study that examined depressive symptoms reported by African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic fathers as it relates to father involvement at nine months and child development at 24 months. This study revealed that fathers who experienced symptoms related to depression were less likely to engage in important parenting practices (Bradley & Slade, 2011).

African American fathers are more likely to experience adverse social experiences associated with mental health when compared to fathers of other ethnic or racial backgrounds to experience adverse social experiences associated with mental illness. These experiences include disruptions within the family, poverty, increasingly high unemployment levels. In addition to these factors contributing to mental health issues, African American fathers are also more likely to have a higher non-marital birth rate and to reside outside of the home of their child (Doyle et al., 2012).

When compared to Caucasian and Hispanic fathers, African American fathers are just as involved, if not more so involved in the lives of their children, even when after they have separated from the mother (Doyle et al., 2012). Non-residential African American fathers experience with depressive symptoms tend to be associated with less contact with their children, the inability to close to their child and an increase in conflict with their children. (Doyle et al., 2012). While there is knowledge regarding the racial

disparities among fathers, very little information is known regarding the differences within the rate of mental illness among African American fathers (Doyle et al., 2012).

Baker (2014) posits that African American fathers are greatly underrepresented in current parenting literature. As a result of this underrepresentation, there are very few studies that have sought to understand some of the predictors associated with positive paternal involvement among African American men. However, Paulson et al. (2009) conducted a study in which they examined psychological determinants of father involvement among a large sample of Hispanic, African American and White fathers. It was overall determined that fathers who experienced more depressive symptoms were unlikely to participate in parenting practices that were an important part of their child's development.

Along with possibly having major health problems, depression among African American fathers can be extremely detrimental to their families. Should the father experience poor mental health, the quality of their relationship with their partner will likely decrease, which will eventually greatly impact their relationship with their child (Sinkewicz & Lee, 2011). It is also likely that their child's development and health will be impacted, as well as their economic well-being. Dismissing mental health concerns among African American fathers may result in increased financial spending in such areas as; healthcare, education welfare, education, and criminal justice systems (Sinkewicz & Lee, 2011).

African American fathers play an extremely important role when it comes to positively influencing the development of their children. Baker (2014) conducted a study

in which the relationship between a father reported stress and depression and father involvement among African American fathers was examined. What this study revealed was that fathers who actively participate in play and caregiving with their child, are less likely to experience depressive symptoms. The overall findings of this study suggest that healthy psychological functioning along with positive interactions with their partner, were obvious predictors of positive paternal involvement among African American men. (Baker, 2014).

Summary and Conclusion

Although becoming a parent for first-time can be an amazing experience for some first-time fathers, others may find the transition difficult to handle, thereby causing both emotional and psychological distress. These feelings of emotional and psychological distress can severely impact the fathers' ability to be a nurturing and loving parent. Numerous research studies support the idea of there is a correlation between paternal depression and parenting impairment (Psychogiou et al., 2015). Depression in first-time fathers has reportedly been associated with their inability to show warmth and sensitivity towards their child and unfortunately displaying conflict, rejection, and hostility instead (Davis et al., 2011). Depression in men is typically masked by somatic complaints, avoidance behavior, interpersonal conflict and drug and alcohol use (Addis, 2008). Wilhelm (2009) suggests that these behaviors are merely expressions of various depressive symptoms in men who are not aware of their feelings.

In addition to understanding the various emotional responses of first-time fathers, it is important to become knowledgeable of treatment options that could assist them with

coping with their new role as a father. These treatment options should be specifically tailored to the needs of the individuals in order to be effective. According to Fletcher et al. (2014), current research studies show that there is a strong need for gender-oriented treatments that are geared towards helping men who experience paternal perinatal depression. These treatments will not only better prepare first-time fathers for their role as a parent, but it can also provide them with the necessary tools to help them cope and manage their depression and anxieties regarding fatherhood.

Although research in this area is rapidly increasing, lack of research conducted specifically on first-time African American fathers, and how they may be emotionally and psychologically affected by this transition, continue to be limited. The majority of studies in this area appear to primarily focus on Asian, European, and Caucasian-American first-time fathers. To better understand the emotional experiences, feelings and thoughts of all first-time fathers, researchers should consider looking at first-time fathers from various cultures and races. The next chapter provides a clear description of the methodology used for this project.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this IPA study, I explored the emotional reactions and thoughts of first-time African American fathers during the postnatal period. The data for the study comprised of semistructured interviews. This chapter provides a thorough description of the research design used for the study, an explanation of my role as the main researcher in this study, a description of ethical considerations, a presentation of the limitations relevant to this study, and a portrayal of how data were coded and analyzed.

Research Design and Rationale

The goal of this study was to explore how first-time African American fathers responded to fatherhood during the first two years of their child's birth. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the emotional reactions and thoughts of African American men after the birth of their first child?

RQ2: How do African American men describe changes in themselves after the birth of their first child?

The central phenomenon of this study focused on the feelings, thoughts, and emotional reactions of first-time African American fathers after the birth of their first child. For this study, emotional reactions were defined as a neurological response which is generated in the body to provide information regarding what is being experienced (Barrett et al., 2007). Feelings were defined as a perception of events that occur within

the body and are closely related to emotions (Lowe & Ziemke, 2011). Each participant was asked to describe how they initially felt when learning they were becoming a father.

Qualitative Research Approach

I used IPA approach (see Smith et al., 2009) to assist with examining the thoughts, feelings, and emotional reactions of first-time African American fathers. This analysis places high value on research participants' experiences from their perspective (Smith et al., 2009). It employs a realist approach to life experiences and acknowledges the ontological independence of the study from the researcher (Jeong & Othman, 2016). Larkin et al. (2006) asserted that research studies that employ IPA, typically involve detailed and highly intensive analysis of specific accounts that are produced by a small number of participants.

This research approach was used to examine the imperatives, meanings, and lived experiences of first-time African-American fathers during pregnancy, birth, and the first year of their child's life. The potential for psychological distress in soon to be fathers was also examined. Phenomenological research conducted within the area of human science can result in valuable knowledge regarding the individual experience (Penner & McClement, 2008). IPA is capable of offering approaches to phenomenological research that is both accessible and adaptable, while also adhering to guidelines regarding validity and rigor (Pringle et al., 2011).

There are numerous benefits to using the phenomenology approach to research (Wilson, 2015). The IPA approach offers researchers the possibility of learning and understanding lived experiences that may not otherwise be understood when using other

research methodologies (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Phenomenological research allows a researcher to find a deeper meaning behind the human experience in a specific situation (Smith & Osborn, 2015). This approach looks at emotions, moods, and sensations; an IPA researcher investigates what the experience means to the individuals and what the personal implications may be (Wilson, 2015). Using IPA allowed me to effectively bring to the forefront the perceptions and experiences of each participant. This approach was a good fit to explore African American men experiences of becoming fathers. The findings of the study both confirmed and brought about a further understanding of the phenomenon that was investigated.

Role of the Researcher

I conducted this study, obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval, designed the phenomenological study, located, and screened potential participants, analyzed the findings of the study, and reported the findings of the study. The primary data collection tool consisted of semistructured interviews. Each participant was interviewed in a private library room at the University of Detroit Mercy or by phone. I was open and honest to establish a good rapport with each of the participants. Part of establishing a rapport was to reassure the participants that their participation in the study would remain confidential from the beginning to the end and thereafter. I offered participants \$25 gift cards to Target Department Stores as a gesture of appreciation for their willingness to participate in the study.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The phenomenon under study was the thoughts and emotional reactions of first-time African American fathers during the postnatal period. The selection criteria for this study were specific. Participants for this study were African American men who became fathers within the past 2 years and have experienced various emotions since their child was born. The participants needed to be married and lived with their child since birth. To determine if participants met the criteria for this study, I asked a few qualifying questions that helped make that determination. These questions are listed in Appendix A.

Participants who met the criteria for this study and were willing to be part of the study were accepted. The selected number of participants depended on how many were needed to address all the important elements of the phenomenon that was being studied (Sargeinant, 2012). Smith et al. (2009) suggested using small numbers of participants to allow for richness and depth within the data analysis. Therefore, the sample size for this study consisted of 12 participants. Smith et al. stated that there is not a single answer to help determine what the correct sample size for a research study is. Smith et al. posited that the size of the sample will depend upon a few things: the richness of each individual case, the organizational restraints that the researcher operates under along with the degree of commitment to the case study level of analysis and reporting. Using a sample size that was small resulted in findings that specifically revealed first-time African American fathers' emotions and thoughts after the birth of their child.

Criterion and snowball sampling were the strategies that I employed for this study, primarily because it helped with identifying potential participants who might otherwise be difficult to reach. Snowball sampling was developed as a nonprobability approach to use in hard to reach or hidden populations (Heckathorn, 2012). Noy (2008), asserted that snowball sampling partakes in and relies on the dynamics of both organic and natural social networks. Social knowledge is a part of snowball sampling and is viewed as being processual, emergent, and dynamic, and is also in line with both feminist and qualitative conceptualizations of knowledge. This is tied to the fact that snowball sampling makes great use of natural social networks (Noy, 2008). Criterion sampling suited this study well as I sought participants who met the specific criterion: being males, married, and living with their spouses and child. The strength of using criterion sampling is that it provided the latitude to obtain information rich cases within a homogeneous sample.

Instrumentation

Data Collection Method

Demographic Questions

Each participant was interviewed for approximately 45 minutes to ensure that all pertinent information from each participant has been obtained. Before asking the participants any questions related to the research study, I began by asking them a standard set of demographic questions to not only get a clear picture of them, but also to gain rapport that was open and honest. Appendix A displays the demographic questions used.

Semistructured Interviews

According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2009), semistructured interview questions allow the participants and the researcher to engage with one another in real time dialogue. This form of interviewing also provides space to discuss issues that may arise (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2009). I developed semistructured interview questions for this study by drawing information from prior studies conducted by Boyce et al. (2007), Dayton et al. (2016), and Schmitz (2016), which addressed the emotional responses of first-time fathers from different ethnic groups. Questions were also developed considering the theoretical framework of the study. These semistructured questions can be found in Appendix A. Interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder. I transcribed the audio tapes. Later, I listened to the audio tapes while reading the transcripts, to ensure accuracy during the interpretation process (see DiCicco-Bloom, & Crabtree, 2006).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Upon approval from Walden University's IRB, my first step was to advertise my study on social network sites; I also contacted several churches in the Dearborn and Detroit areas because I am fairly familiar with the areas. I focused on the local churches that considered allowing me to speak with a few of their male members who were married and residing with their wives and child. I recruited four participants from the Dearborn and Detroit areas and interviewed them in face-to-face format in a private library room at the University of Detroit Mercy, which allowed participants privacy and confidentiality. Since I could not recruit more participants, I requested an additional

change in IRB procedures and expanded my search via social network sites to other areas of the country including the states of Georgia, Texas, and South Carolina. Eight participants from these areas were interviewed via audio conferencing.

Interested participants in this study sent me a message by email or phone; I followed up with them and responded by email or phone. I screened participants to see if they fit the criteria for participation. If they did, I clearly explained the purpose and nature of the study, how their participation had the potential to contribute to the study, and how much time might be needed to complete the study. I presented the informed consent form for their review. Once the participants reviewed and signed the informed consent form, the interview process began. Each participants' consent form was placed in their individual files. Participants were given a pseudonym, which is common practice in order to maintain confidentiality (see Allen & Wiles, 2016). All recordings and documents that have been used in this study were referenced using their pseudonym.

Towards the end of the interview, each participant was thanked for their participation. They were reminded that the information that they provided for the study was confidential. Each participant was asked if there were any additional concerns or questions that they may have related to the study and their participation. All communications between the participants and I were saved and recorded. To maintain the integrity of the data collected, all original data were separated from the copies that have been used for the purpose of analysis and coding. Upon completion of the interview process, each participant received the \$25 Target gift card as a token of appreciation for their time and responses.

Data Analysis Plan

In studies that utilize IPA the objective is to provide a detailed examination of the research participants lived experiences (Smith, 2010). I followed the steps in IPA analysis. Once transcription of the data was completed, it was necessary to work intensely and thoroughly with the text. I read and re-read the transcriptions numerous times because it assisted me with immersing in the data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) while also identifying patterns that captured the important qualities of the interview (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). This meant providing detailed coding of the transcriptions (Larkin & Thompson, 2011). Coding the transcripts provided me with a clear picture of the participants' perspectives and experiences. While the analysis was developing, emerging codes from this study were catalogued as I looked for similar patterns within the data.

These patterns are referred to as themes, which are essentially thoughts, ideas and feelings that are recurring throughout the data. These themes helped with identifying what matters most to the participants, while also providing meaning to what was most important to them (Gale et al., 2013). Capturing the themes was important because they not only related to the research questions, but it provided a clear understanding of each individual participants' experience within the phenomenon that was being researched. Once the connection between emerging themes was determined, it was then necessary to provide each identifiable cluster with a descriptive label (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Upon reading the text, it was necessary for me to suspend all judgments and assumptions in order to focus primarily on what was being presented within the data

provided. This is what has come to be known as bracketing (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). It meant that I suspended all critical engagement and judgment which could impact the data to avoid including my experiences and assumptions (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). I provided an overall structure to the data analysis by being able to relate the themes that have been identified into concepts or clusters. At this stage of the data analysis, it was my primary goal to arrive at a specific group of themes, while also identifying superordinate categories (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). According to Larkin and Thomson (2011), the researcher must then organize all of the collected material and format them in a manner, which will allow the coded data to become traceable through analysis. This will start from the initial codes on transcripts, through initial clustering to thematic development into the final structure of themes.

The final stage involved developing a table or master list of themes. This process was very useful in looking at the organized whole or the gestalt that has emerged from the analytic process (Smith et al., 2009). These specific themes were located in an ordered system that identified the concerns and primary features identified by each participant. I linked the themes with major quotation which I felt captured the emotions, thoughts, and feelings that the participants of my study experienced (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Ensuring quality in a qualitative research study involves considering credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as the qualitative inquirer's equivalents

for internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Creswell, 2007). The issues of trustworthiness and their application to this study are described next.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative studies represents the congruency of the findings with describing reality (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement, negative case analysis, and peer debriefing were used in this study to ensure credibility. Prolonged engagement required me to spend enough time in the field and gain an understanding of the phenomenon under study and its context. I conducted several interviews to ensure that saturation was achieved. Negative case analysis involves refining working patterns of findings as data analysis and inquiry progresses in consideration of disconfirming or negative information (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I revised all instances in which findings did not fit to understand more extensively why they did not. I revised the analysis until all cases fit. Peer debriefing involved consulting with my chair across all moments of data collection and analysis. This provided an external perspective that helped me review my own procedures and analysis.

Transferability

Transferability is concerned with the extent to which results of a study can be transferred or applied to similar contexts. To make transferability possible, the researcher should demonstrate enough depth and detail in data description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I established transferability by carefully and thoroughly identifying, coding, transcribing and documenting themes that might emerge in this study. I provided thick and rich

description of data and results with the expectation that the reader would be able to make decisions regarding the applicability and transferability of the results (Creswell, 2007).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of research procedures. The consistency, stability, and transparency were needed to ensure that a replication of the study with the same context, participants, and methods, would result in similar findings (Shenton, 2004). I ensured dependability in my study by describing the planning of the study, reporting the details of data gathering, and reflecting on the overall research process. I kept an audit trail; it included the research field notes, interviews, reflexive journaling, and data analysis reports. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), an audit trail is important when attempting to seek rigor. To establish an audit trail, researchers must provide clear documentation of all activities and decisions made throughout the study. To describe this specific process Lincoln and Guba (1985) utilize the analogy of a fiscal audit. I described the study's procedures and methods in great detail which would allow the reader to follow the exact sequence of interpretation, data collection, analysis, and conclusion. The audit trail also allowed me to keep track of my research procedures and processes.

Confirmability

Confirmability reflects what quantitative researchers refer to as objectivity. It refers to the researchers' ability to demonstrate how the data represents the responses of the participants and not the viewpoints or biases of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). In my study, I used reflexivity to establish confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I kept a

private reflexive journal and used memos to report the decisions, changes, and directions made throughout the research process. The reflexive journal allowed me to capture my thoughts, reactions, and biases.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed the legal and ethical requirements of both the APA and the IRB. Prior to the beginning of this study, all participants were informed of the purpose of this study. Participants were reassured that all information provided during the study was kept confidential and pseudonyms were used to protect their identity. Each of the participants were informed of their right to withdraw from this research study at any given time. Each participant had the right to engage or not engage in any of the discussions pertaining to the study. All interviews were conducted using an audio recorder. Written records, along with transcripts and audio remained safely secured in a file cabinet that was locked at all times.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the phenomenological approach to this study and the rationale to use it. IPA was used in this study. Semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain data from twelve first-time African American fathers. The methodology mentioned assisted with conducting the research study. I addressed the inclusion criteria for selecting the participants, along with the selected strategy and procedure. Next chapter reports the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

This study was conducted to address the gap in research on the emotional reactions and thoughts of African American men who recently became first-time fathers. Research studies have focused on the challenging experiences of first-time mothers after giving birth but more recent studies have begun to find that first-time fathers also experience difficulty adjusting to their new role. In addition, most studies in this area have focused on the experience of European American and Asian first-time fathers. The objective of this study was to explore the gap in the knowledge in exploring the emotional reactions and thoughts of first-time African American fathers. Two research questions guided the exploration:

RQ1: What are the emotional reactions and thoughts of African American men after the birth of their first child?

RQ2: How do African American men describe changes in themselves after the birth of their first child?

In this chapter I provide an in-depth description of the process that was used to collect data and conduct the analysis. I also provide a detailed description of the study results with emphasis on the participants' demographics, themes, and research setting.

Upon receiving IRB approval for this study (IRB No. 11-21-18-006628), I began recruiting participants with fliers at several different local churches and community centers in my area and on social media websites. Candidates contacted me via phone or email. Twelve candidates fit the study criteria. Eight candidates were interviewed by phone and four in face-to-face format. The participants were adult, married, African

American men who were willing to talk about their emotional reactions and thoughts they experienced upon becoming fathers for the first-time. The participants were informed that

- Participation was strictly voluntary.
- They could withdraw from the study at any time.
- They could choose not to answer any question.
- They could choose to be identified with a first name or with a pseudonym to better protect their identity.
- They could end the interview for any reason, at any time, and I would provide them the opportunity to help them seek support.
- They would receive a \$25 gift card from Target as compensation for their time and participation.
- Through their participation in this study, they would be helping in the development of prevention and intervention programs for first-time African American fathers who were psychologically adjusting to their new role as a parent.

Each participant was given a code and pseudonym to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality. Each transcribed interview was filed in my password-protected computer using the assigned participant code. The participants' actual names and consent forms were kept in separate files, independent of the collected data. I am the only with complete access to the corresponding number and participants' name. The consent forms from each participant were placed in a separate file from the transcripts, also in a password protected file. All paper files will be kept for 5 years and then shredded; all

audio files and electronic data files will be kept for 5 years and then deleted from the computer hard drive. No backup files were generated to ensure the data were not misused or compromised by identifying participants of the study.

Each participant was asked a series of open-ended questions about

- His feelings on finding out that he was becoming a first-time father. While most participants expressed elation or happiness, a few felt apprehensive and unhappy.
- His feelings after finding out that his wife was pregnant,
- His feelings during his wife's pregnancy
- His feelings after the birth of the child.

Vignettes were used in this chapter to reveal themes and then to show the relationship between the themes and the research questions. Comparing and contrasting the themes helped in identifying unique themes that did not overlap with each other.

Demographic Data

Table 1 provides the demographics of the 12 participants. A numerical code was used to identify each participant. The average age was 40. Each participant was African American, married, and a first-time father.

Table 1*Participants' Demographics*

Participants	Age	Length Married	Occupation	Highest Level of Education
Participant 1	38	5	Army Sergeant	Some College
Participant 2	42	3	Engineer	Bachelor's Degree
Participant 3	45	3	Therapist	Master's Degree
Participant 4	46	3	Truck Driver	High School
Participant 5	40	3	Construction Worker	High School
Participant 6	39	3	Plant Manager	Bachelor's Degree
Participant 7	27	2	Emergency Medical Technician	Bachelor's Degree
Participant 8	43	5	Plant Manager	Some College
Participant 9	40	3	Contractor	High School
Participant 10	45	1	Retired Army Sergeant	Bachelor's Degree
Participant 11	39	2	Financial Advisor	Bachelor's Degree
Participant 12	41	2	Plant Manager	Some College

Data Collection

To collect the data for this study I recruited participants through social media websites and by word of mouth from some of the participants who agreed to be a part of the study. For this study, I used criterion and snowball sampling processes which allowed me to identify participants who may have otherwise been difficult to reach. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, the participants were given a clear description of the study via email to ensure they knew what their rights and role were as part of the research study. Each of the participants were informed of their rights as participants and confidentiality details.

Upon receiving the signed consent forms, the interviews were scheduled. Each participant agreed to share their marital status, their current employment and salary, age, and place of residence. Each participant also agreed to have their interviews audiotaped. Prior to consenting to participate in the study, the participants either emailed or called to make their availability known. To conduct the interviews, a prepared interview guide was used (See Appendix A). The interviews were conducted between June 2019 and October 2019. Based on the participants' availability, different methods were used to conduct the interviews. While some were face to face, there were other participants who were not physically available and agreed to be interviewed over the phone. The interviews that were conducted face to face were conducted in a private room at the University of Detroit Mercy. To record the interviews, I used a digital audio application which had been password protected prior to transcribing the interviews. To transcribe the interviews, I first used a transcription application; then, I manually reviewed each transcription to ensure accuracy. The transcriptions have also been stored on my computer and are password protected.

Data Analysis

According to researchers that used IPA, the objective in data analysis is to provide a detailed examination of each of the participants' lived experiences (Smith, 2010). Several steps were taken in order to properly analyze the responses from each participant. While playing back the interviews that were recorded on my iPad, I was able to effectively transcribe each interview. Each interview was transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft Word document. Each participant was numerically labeled to help identify the

participants' interview. After each interview was transcribed, they were then saved in separate files in Microsoft Word. In an effort to ensure that each interview was accurate, it was important for me to re-read and on some occasions relisten to some of the participants' interview to make certain that their transcribed responses were accurate. In some instances, long pauses and coughs were not included in the transcriptions. Each interview was read and re-read before identifying the codes that would be used to determine the parallels, themes, similarities, and differences. Rereading each of the transcriptions allowed me to immerse myself in the data (see Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) while also helped me identify patterns that captured the important qualities within each of the interviews. (see Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Coding each of the transcripts provided me with a clear picture of the participants' perspectives and experiences. Capturing the themes from the study helped me with better identifying the participants experience within the phenomenon. Upon determining the connection between the themes each cluster was identified with a descriptive label. There were a few themes that did not connect and were therefore dropped (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In an effort to keep the data organized, a code template was created in my Word document. The code template consisted of line-by-line coding and then focused coding which helped identify recurrent patterns within the participants responses. After completing all the coding for the interviews, I then proceeded to determine which themes were prevalent among the participants. For this study, numerous steps were taking to assist with providing the accurate results. A codebook was created, all codes were then grouped within a family of codes. Within each family of codes, I compared the family of codes, interview by

interview; I also made comparisons across interviews and decided what overarching themes encompassed participants perceptions across interviews.

Upon collecting the data, I was able to contrast and compare the codes and themes by connecting statements that were similar along with concepts and ideas. I was able to clarify themes by organizing and recognizing their commonalities and connectivity. In addition to this, a digital codebook was developed to capture the frequency in which specific themes arouse within the interviews of the participants. The use of a digital codebook was important because the data that were obtained from each of the interviews not only accumulated fast, but also changed as the process of data analysis progressed.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Evidence of trustworthiness is assured through assessing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability within the research study (Creswell, 2007). To ensure the trustworthiness for the study, it was important to demonstrate that the data analysis was conducted in an exhaustive, precise and consistent manner. This was achieved by disclosing, systematizing, and recording the analysis method thoroughly. It is expected that my reader will be able to determine whether the process used for this study is credible (see Nowell et al. 2017).

Credibility

As previously discussed, credibility in qualitative studies represents the congruency of the findings with describing reality (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The accuracy of the data was based on interviews that were thoroughly transcribed verbatim. A digital recording device was used for each interview to assist with ensuring

accuracy of each of the participants' personal accounts. All the data collected from the interviews were transcribed from the recording device and placed in individual word documents in an effort to ensure the integrity of each of the participants' responses. Upon completing each of the initial transcripts, I replayed the participants' recorded interviews to ensure that they were transcribed accurately. This step allowed me to detect any omissions that may have occurred and could have likely impacted the integrity of the data. Credibility was attained by obtaining accurate descriptions of each participants lived experience as a first-time African American father.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of the study can be applied or transferred to similar contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order for transferability to be possible, it is important to be able to demonstrate enough detail and depth within the data description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As previously indicated in Chapter 3, to ensure transferability I provided thorough and comprehensive accounts of the experiences of these first-time fathers and their emotional reactions and thoughts related to this phenomenon. A thick description of the participants' voices was presented to allow the reader to assess if findings of the research study are transferable to their own individual setting (Creswell, 2007).

Dependability

Dependability relates to the consistency and stability of research procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, dependability was ensured by planning the study, reporting the details of data gathered, and providing a reflection of the overall research

study process. This study consisted of interview recordings, and transcripts that captured the participants' responses. I used on-going reflexivity in addition to critical self-awareness that were fostered through the use of journals and through comparison of all forms of data.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate how the data represents the responses of the participants and not the viewpoints or biases of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Confirmability relates to the aspect of neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interpretation of the data should not be based upon the researcher's specific viewpoints and preferences because such interpretation must be grounded in the data generated to respond to the research questions. It primarily focuses on the interpretation of the process that has been embedded within the analysis process (Lincoln & Guba). Due to my experience in working with first-time African American fathers, there might have existed biases or preconceptions. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I kept a private reflexive journal and used memos to report the decisions, changes, and directions made throughout the research process. The reflexive journal allowed me to capture every thought, reaction, and bias that may have occurred.

Results

Three major themes emerged as a result of the data analysis. The first theme was emotions before and after the birth of the child. Within this theme three major emotions participants discussed including feeling joy, uncertainty, and stress. The second theme was support received and provided. It referred to how participants provided support to

their spouse and child, but they were also recipients of support that family, coworkers, and friends provided. The third theme, role changes, referred to how the participants viewed their role as a father. It included the challenges the participants experienced after the birth of their child, how the participants felt inconvenienced after the birth of his child, and the financial responsibilities that came along with being a first-time father.

Theme I: Emotions Before and After the Birth of Their Child

In this study I sought to explore the emotional reactions of first-time African American fathers during the post-natal period. I primarily focused on how these fathers felt and dealt with the knowledge that they were becoming fathers and how they handled being fathers after their child was born. The first theme captured the range of emotions first time fathers experienced. The emotions' theme became immediately apparent in all 12 of the participants responses. The emotions ranged from experiencing joy to uncertainty. Within this theme there were several emotions described including joy, uncertainty, and feeling stressed out. Except for uncertainty, the rest of the emotions were experienced before and after the birth of their child. In this section, the feelings are described and exemplified with participants' vignettes. It is relevant to notice that, while each feeling was isolated and described independently, it was not uncommon for participants to experience more than one emotional reaction at any single stage in becoming fathers.

Joy

Among the participants in this study, feeling joy represented the feeling of happiness or elation felt by the first-time father. Some of the participants described

feeling joy when they learned they were going to be parents. The participants who planned, thought, or previously discussed with their partners about having children were more likely to experience joy.

Participant 4: Very, very happy. I mean very excited; ugh I was very ugh...awe. Oh my God, my seed is coming into the world. And um, I guess I can just pretty much, you know, imagine all the things that you would do with a child, you know, the kind of things that we would be doing. ugh, having fun, going to the park, you know, all those things that you would be doing with a child, you know, I kind of envisioned it at that moment.

Participant 1: I guess it is one of those things that I always knew that I wanted a family eventually. Uh, then when I found out...uh then when I found out that my wife was pregnant, you know it was good news and I was already prepared to take care of business, it was like I was already prepared for it. Um...it was pretty cool; like hey, this is my child right here.

Another layer to the experience of joy emerged among few participants who described not having a strong father figure as role model when growing up. They felt this was the opportunity to revert what happened to them and prepared themselves for the experience of becoming fathers.

Participant 2. Although I didn't have my father in my life, I had always known that I would be a strong father figure for my son when I had one because I wanted to make up or compensate for fact that I didn't have that. I have always mentally, all my life pretty much prepped to be that father figure for my child.

While most fathers experienced and described joy when learning they were becoming fathers, some of them experienced more uncertainty and nervousness.

Uncertainty

This emotional reaction was mainly present when first time fathers felt unsure about how they should feel about the birth of their children. This feeling was more common among participants who did not plan or discuss with their partners the possibility of having children.

Participant 6. I am not exactly sure, I wasn't excited and I wasn't sad either. I didn't know how to take the news because we were not planning on having children. We never really talked about it.

Participant 10. Initially I was surprised, you know, coming from the war zone, my mind was in a different place and I was trying to transition, trying to be a father was not a part of my transition plan.

Feeling Stressed Out

Participants felt stressed out at different stages of the process of becoming fathers. Stress was described in the context of experiencing unexpected issues during the birth of the child or in planning what they would do after birth. Caring for the child imposed new challenges that made fathers feel stressed out.

Participant 11. They had to get him out of her because she was having problems for whatever reason, he couldn't breathe or whatever it was; but that was stressful, and he was born a month early, he had to stay in the hospital for like a week.

Participant 4. Balancing the whole new experience out, you know, trying to make sure that they were fed when they needed to be fed, one eye open, one eye closed, still trying to get some sleep in their bed; you know, then if they just happen to fall asleep on you or in the bed, try not to make the mistake and roll on them, you know, they don't fall out of the bed, the whole thing about people talking about the SIDS and things like that. Those types of things were stressful, of being worried, because the baby is so delicate like an egg.

Most participants reported feeling excited about becoming a father. In addition to feeling excitement some participants experienced stress, joy, and uncertainty. Within this theme, there were participants who were not certain of their role as a first-time father. Some of these participants did not have a father in the household or did not have a good role model father figure who could have taught them how to prepare and understand their role as a father. However, participants believed that they did not necessarily need to be raised in a household with a father in order to be prepared for parenthood.

Theme II: Support Received and Provided

The second theme in the data addressed the support the participants either received after becoming fathers or provided to their spouse during pregnancy and after their child's birth. This theme provided additional insight into the first research question as it relates to the thoughts and emotional reactions of first-time fathers.

Support Received

The level of support received after becoming fathers varied among the 12 participants. There were participants who received a great amount of support from

friends, family, and co-workers, while other fathers acknowledged that they received minimal, if any support from family members or friends. The support they received related to having family or friends who helped them take care of the newborn, gave advice as experienced parents, or provided emotional support by listening and normalizing their experiences. For example, participant 11 indicated that after his baby was born, his parents stayed with him and his wife to offer their support.

Participant 11: You know talking with parents on the phone and telling them about the experience getting there. Getting their advice and you know their opinions ... then we had our parents come and stay also. So all of that was part of huh, I guess the support from an emotional standpoint

Participant 3. So my mom stepped in and was a supporting factor emotionally and physically.

Participant 6. I had my family and close friends who assured me that I could do it. They also said they would help if I needed it.

Co-workers provided support by allowing participants to adjust their work schedule, in this way participants were able to accommodate time to take care for the baby. Co-workers were mindful of participants' challenges in their role as fathers.

Participant 11. Everyone I work with is always very understanding ...you are really lucky when you work with people who can relate to you.

Support Provided

Participants also describing providing support to their partners during pregnancy and after the birth of the child. Most participants described providing significant support to their wives and focusing on their needs.

Participant 2. When she couldn't stay up, I would stay up, you know when I...we pretty much take turns so that's the kind of support we really give each other.

Participant 11 described how he was both emotionally and physically supportive of his wife after their child was born. This participant explained how he would allow his wife to reset while he got up to take care of the child's needs.

Participant 11. I was the emotional support for her, but um when the baby came out of course would take turns getting up at night so. when she couldn't stay up I would stay up, you know when I...we pretty much take turns so that's the kind of support we really give each other.

Participants indicated that being supportive of their wives were more important to them because they felt as though they made all of the physical and psychological sacrifices that were involved when giving birth. For example, participant 12 expressed being scared after his son was born due to his wife having a preeclampsia; and therefore, he felt he had to be very supportive of both the baby and his wife. He felt compelled to care and support his wife to ensure that she was supported while dealing with her health issue.

Theme III: Role Changes

Becoming a father for the first time brought about emotional, psychological, and mental changes in participants. While some participants welcomed these changes, others

found them challenging and unwelcoming. The role changes that some of the participants experienced were related to the second research questions that asked how African American men described some of the changes that they may have experienced before and after the birth of their child. The changes participants described were grouped into three areas. One related to increasing their financial responsibilities, a second one referred to experiencing inner personal changes in the way they acted, and a third one referred to adjusting to having new duties and even making sacrifices by giving up activities they used to do when they did not have a child.

Financial Responsibilities

Participants commented on how they felt concerned about having the necessary monetary support for the baby and the family.

Participant 8. I didn't want him to have to struggle for anything, so I worked hard to make sure that he...to make sure that I had for him.

Participant 1. In terms of financially, you know there may be times when we don't have any money, or whatever the case may be. And you know, I think more than ever we kind of talk about that; and see what's best for the kid.

Personal Changes

Participants described how they experienced personal changes as a result of becoming fathers. Changes were related to feeling more mature, selfless, and centered to face the new role.

Participant 11. I think I became a lot more patient. You know like umm. Yeah, I think my level of patience just went up. I was umm, I would put myself second in

many circumstances. Like for example, I was like you know if I direct some responsible to do, like go grocery shopping or so. I would do that. Before then, I would probably be trying to figure out who should be doing it (participant laughs). That would be my first question, you know I did it last time. Right, this time it is your turn. That kind of attitude significantly changed afterwards. Quite significantly, so I would just take on responsibilities without questioning or trying too. Ummm you know reason around it, you know that. So, I would say it was a behavioral shift probably happened.

Participant 2. I am more centered, I'm more exact about the things that I do, I am thinking about what my principles are and what my standards are because as my child gets older, I want him to mimic what I do, so I think that I have gotten even more centered than I normally am. And what I mean by that I think that I realized that I have to be a certain way if I want the best for him.

Participants also reflected on how adjusting to the new role took some time. Yet, they self-assessed that they became more centered and mature.

Participant 1. Yea, it took me a while to mature. Not only for fatherhood, but more so for you know being a husband. It kind of took me a while to kind of grasp that. And I say now you know, I say we are pretty. Its us against the world. pretty much.

Adjustment to New Routine

Participants also described how some activities they liked to do did not fit anymore due to concentrating on taking care of the newborn. This was perceived as a sacrifice and adjustment.

Participant 10. You know, there are times that I didn't want to like share. But you have to share, you have to give of yourself. I mean technically, you get immune to a baby crying and I am used to blocking all kinds of stuff out so I can focus on something. So you know you have to tune in, be tuned in to what is going on.

Participant 5. Trying to work, being up for a long night with the baby then getting up and having to go to work. You know it was kind of stressful. Then working long hours then having to get back in time, where the babysitter won't be in too long. Stuff like that so. It was stressful. It involved balancing the whole new experience.

Addressing the Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the emotional reactions and thoughts of first-time African American fathers. There were two foundational research questions to address this phenomenon: (a) What are the emotional reactions and thoughts of African American men after the birth of their first child? and (b) How do African American men describe changes in themselves after the birth of their first child? The first theme that emerged in the results were the emotional reactions that the participants experienced before and after the birth of their child. There was acknowledgement of joy, uncertainty, and stress. The second theme that emerged addressed the support received and provided.

The journey of becoming fathers carried the need for participants to take a leading role helping their wives in the process of becoming mothers. They appreciated the support received from family members, partners, and coworkers. The third and final theme that emerged addressed some of the role challenges that some of the participants experienced before and after becoming first-time fathers.

The first theme specifically responded to the first research question. Some participants described feeling overwhelmed and excited at the same time while others were not as jovial when hearing that they were becoming fathers. This, in turn, required them to make mental and psychological adjustments so that they can prepare themselves for their new venture. The second theme also addressed the first research question considered the support the participants received and gave before and after becoming first-time fathers. Participants described that the support received was very helpful and assisted them with becoming more comfortable with their new role. They also learned to become more available for their families and began to provide more support to their partners.

The second research question sought insight into some of the changes that may have occurred with the participants after the birth of their child. The theme that emerged within this question explored some the challenges that the participants may have experienced after becoming fathers. Some of the participants acknowledged that their new role was an adjustment. This was mainly due to some of them not being mentally, financially, or emotionally prepared. However, there were some participants who welcomed the new challenge and understood that not everything is planned. These

participants acknowledged that they were prepared to make the necessary sacrifices needed to care for their child appropriately.

Summary

This chapter presented the context of the study, the data collection methods, and the data analysis procedures used to develop the themes from the interviews to first-time fathers. It also provided a description of what steps were taken to ensure quality and trustworthiness and introduced the results of the study. Semistructured interviews with 12 participants who met the project's criteria were conducted either in person or on the phone. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, proofread, manually coded, and organized into major themes.

Three main themes emerged from the data analysis: emotions before and after the birth of the child, support received and provided, and role changes. Findings from this study suggested that a variety of emotions impacted participants from learning they were becoming fathers through the birth of the child. They experienced a series of adjustments and changes in their family roles becoming more centered, mature, and involved. They became aware of the need to provide financially and emotionally to their families and accepted the support of family and friends around them who had experience raising their children. In the next chapter, the findings of the study are interpreted, limitations are noted, and implications for future research are described.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

An extensive literature review related to how African American fathers experienced the birth of their first child revealed the need for further investigation on the unique experiences of African American fathers' emotional reactions and thoughts after the birth of their first child. Most research on first time fathers have been conducted on European American, Asian American, or fathers from other ethnic groups or nationalities (see Backstrom & Wahn, 2011; Kamalifard et al., Molgora et al., 2016). Research on African American men and their experiences with transitioning to first-time fathers have been neglected in past studies. African American fathers are highly underrepresented in literature that addresses their responses to their new role as a parent (Baker, 2014). This I explored the emotional reactions and thoughts of first-time African American fathers during the postnatal period. To uncover these experiences, a qualitative, IPA research design was used.

The participants of this study provided details of their experiences after learning that they were becoming fathers for the first time. There were three primary themes that emerged from the participants: (a) emotions before and after the birth of child, (b) support received and provided, and (c) role challenges. Participants identified joy, uncertainty, and stress as the main emotional reactions they experienced. They gave support to their wives in their role of new mothers, they also received support from others to overcome the difficulties and happiness of becoming fathers. The challenges they described were related to more financial responsibilities and the adjustment to a new routine around the new member of the house and the maintenance of the household. In

this chapter, I interpret these findings as they relate to the existing literature as well as provide limitations and recommendations for future study.

Interpretations of the Findings

The data collected consisted of semistructured interviews of each participant and their reaction after learning that they were becoming fathers. Through the transcripts I was able to identify three primary themes. The findings of this study both confirmed and extended empirical knowledge about fathers' emotional reactions and thoughts after the birth of their first child. All themes that originated from this project are supported by findings in the existing literature. By comparing the findings from this study to the foundational understanding of parents' experiences after the birth of their child, future directions for research and practice can best be informed.

Theme 1: Emotions Before and After the Birth of Their Child

The participants of this study openly expressed their experience with becoming fathers for the first time. Consistent to what fathers from different ethnic backgrounds reported, participants of this study identified various emotional reactions related to the birth of their child including joy, uncertainty, and stress. While becoming a parent was generally looked upon as being a new and exciting adventure, participants also viewed the experience as being stressful or overwhelming (Howarth et al., 2019).

Prior to the birth of their child, some of the participants acknowledged feeling enthusiastic, excited, surprised, happy, and proud. Others acknowledged feeling uncertain, angry, upset, and shocked. The participants who welcomed their new role as fathers, indicated that they had always had dreamed of or anticipated becoming fathers.

These participants viewed themselves as being ideal fathers and caretakers for their families and wanted to be the type of parent that would have a positive influence on their child. They viewed their roles as the kind of father some of them wish they had had while growing up. According to Leath (2017), fatherhood can be looked upon as a turning point for some men, who may have lacked a father figure in their life. This, in turn may cause the father to see the birth of his child as a way to have a fresh start (Leath, 2017).

The study showed that first-time African American fathers can experience some of the same emotions that women experience prior to and after giving birth. According to Talley (2017), first-time fathers are subjected to numerous changes that take place during their spouses' pregnancy. Talley indicated that some the occurring changes include psychological changes, social changes, physical changes, and feeling inadequate as well as feeling the burden of additional financial responsibilities. After the birth of their child, some of the participants admitted that although they were excited and looked forward to parenting there was still some uncertainty and anxiety. This was due to their new role as a father. However, once they became more comfortable in their role, confidence took over and there was less uncertainty. According to Genosoni and Tallandini (2009), pregnancy can be an extremely demanding period for the first times fathers. This is because this tends to be a time in which these fathers must reorganize psychologically because of their new role and expectations. Genosoni and Tallandini further stated that the period before and after birth can be highly emotional for fathers in which mixed feelings emerged ranging from anxiety and helplessness to pride and pleasure.

Some participants revealed that they did not expect their wives' pregnancy; hence, they did not feel prepared for their role. This was mostly because the pregnancy was unplanned and unexpected. According to Baldwin et al. (2018), depression and anxiety are two of the most common mental health issues that first-time fathers experience during the perinatal period. With this understanding, it may be safe to say that it was expected for some of the participants of this study to experience feelings of depression and anxiety (Edmondson et al., 2010) in addition to fear, uncertainty and resentment. DaCosta et al. (2017) posited that in addition to experiencing anxiety and depression, first time fathers can also experience poor sleep quality and poor marital satisfaction.

Theme 2. Support Received and Provided

Participants described the support they received and provided. The study showed that while most of the participants received support, there were some participants who received less support from family or friends. More relevant, participants explained in more detail how they focused on providing support to their wives before and after their child was born. According to participants, the needs of their partner were more important than their own. Participants' emphasis on providing support to their wives was consistent with literature that indicated that first-time fathers tend to have an important role for their spouses. They help to create a sense of security that is necessary for their wives to have a successful and less complicated pregnancy and childbirth experience (Onyze-Joe & Godin, 2017).

Participants in this study also indicated that they appreciated the support received from their wives, family members, and even coworkers. Experiencing support for first-

time African American fathers was important simply because it helped build confidence in their ability to parent. According to Huusko et al. (2018), it is important for first-time fathers to receive professional support in their upcoming role as a parent. This support provides them with the knowledge needed to become psychologically healthy, nurturing fathers, and more confident in the parenting role. Social support is also highly beneficial for men becoming parents. Men find helpful to talk and share with new parents regarding their experiences because it aids in processing and normalizing their experiences during the antenatal and postnatal period (Chin et al., 2011).

Those participants who received little support were likely to feel less satisfied with their role. According to DaCosta et al. (2017), fathers who receive less tangible, emotional, and affectionate support by individuals who play a key role in their life are more likely to experience depression. As a result, these fathers will tend to feel less satisfactions within the relationship that they have with their partner, which will further contribute to their feelings of depression. These specific participants additionally expressed feeling overwhelmed and one even felt blind-sided by the unexpected pregnancy of his wife. Professional support and support received from family members are essential in helping men make the transition to fatherhood (Huusko et al., 2018).

Theme 3. Role Changes

Each of the participants recognized that there would be changes and challenges as they stepped into their roles as new fathers. Changes in men as they become fathers have been documented. Chin et al. (2011) asserted that men experience an adaptive crisis that can be characterized by three phases. The first phase includes emotional reactions, in

which feelings of detachment and confusion may be present. The second phase involves identifying with the paternal role. This is where processes oriented to the appropriation of new responsibilities and routines tend to emerge. The final phase consists of redefining oneself and place within the new family structure as well as in society. Participants of this study reported going through similar stages.

Participants discussed the challenges they experienced including feelings of being obligated, having to be responsible for the well-being of another person, feeling inconvenienced, and having to make certain sacrifices. Most importantly, they identified taking care of family finances as the most challenging. Each of the participants acknowledged that thinking about finances put a lot of pressure. Participants described they became more responsible and aware of the need to provide to their families. This would suggest that even if some of the participants were not financially ready for a family, they were willing to take on the financial responsibility. Ganapathy (2016) asserted that one of the primary stressors for first-time fathers is the financial responsibility they have acquired. According to the author, men have always been expected to fully participate financially and to behave as providers for their families. They are also encouraged to construct their identity as masculine subjects throughout their work role (Ganapathy, 2016).

Prior to the birth of their child, some of the participants believed that they were able to manage their finances. However, once their child was born, purchases outside of necessities had to be discussed with their spouse. According to Smith et al. (2005), transitioning to the economic realm is important to African American men, especially

when they are becoming fathers for the first time. Due to economic and social conditions, most African American men may not initially be able to financially support their family (Ransaw, 2014).

Participants described positive changes in themselves after becoming fathers. They felt more mature, self-centered, and willing to support and share with their families to ensure the wellbeing of their child and spouses. Dick (2011) posited that the role of the father continues to evolve over time. According to the author, the way in which men carry their paternal role is reflective of their current historical time in which they live, in addition to cultural and social forces, the expectations of both parents as it relates to fathering behaviors as well as their own personal desires, capabilities, and wishes.

Theoretical Framework

Social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) constituted the theoretical basis for this study. It referred to the exchange of tangible or intangible activity that are less costly and rewarding (Redmond, 2015). Cost was defined as alternative opportunities of activities forgone by the individuals involved. Results of this study showed a relationship between the participants' experience with becoming first-time fathers and the cost and benefits attached to becoming parents. Some of the participants in this study clearly expressed feeling rewarded after becoming a father and not feeling as though they had to sacrifice something. These participants believed that the sacrifices made (money, friends, time for themselves, or work) were worth it. Other participants in the study felt some form of discontent after they became fathers. This discontent came in the form of anxiety, depression, detachment, or even resentment. In other words, these participants felt as

though they loss more than they gained. There were several losses including less time with friends, loss of discretionary income, loss of sleep, and even loss of independence or freedom. According to O'Brien et al. (2016), it is not unusual for new fathers to experience psychological distress during this period, which can lead to poor quality of life and intimate relationships in addition to losing their social networks. This might suggest that the participants who experienced resentment or anxiety towards their new role might have also felt isolated or alone throughout the process of becoming a father.

The process of receiving and providing support was related to social exchange theory tenets. A number of activities relate to social exchange including informational support (provision of information), instrumental support (hands-on services), emotional support (emotive sharing of experienced), and appraisal support (offering approval to each other) (Homas, 1958). Participants of this study described how they saw a change in themselves as a result of becoming fathers; they provided emotional support to their wives during the pregnancy and afterwards; they felt more self-centered and turned their focal point to the new baby and wife; and became more available for family time. In turn, they also received support from their wives, family, and friends. They valued the informational and emotional support friends and family provided by exchanging with them about their experience of becoming fathers.

Elmir and Schmeid (2015), assert that research on first-time fathers describes them as head of households, protectors, breadwinners, and supporters. This is how participants described themselves; and they identified that financial issues were their first and main concern after learning they were becoming fathers. Historically, African

American fathers have been perceived as absent. Evidently, participants of this study did not see themselves as such; in fact, they stayed with their wives and took the responsibility of raising their children. Yet, some of them described how they had the experience of an absent father as children, and they worked hard to revert that situation and be available for their own children.

Limitations of the Study

Reasonable efforts were made to ensure the accuracy and validity of the study. This study was conducted in an effort to possibly identify emotional, mental and psychological changes that first-time African American married fathers may experience during and before the birth of their child. Given this intention, the transferability of this study's findings is limited. For example, the results of this study may not be transferred to fathers who are in a less committed relationship with their partners or who are separated. Fathers living outside the home of the mother and child might have a different perspective or face different challenges than the participants of this study. Although the search for a homogeneous sample was intended in the recruitment procedures for this study, more research is called for a more diverse African American population in other contexts and living arrangements.

This study was expected to be bounded geographically within the Detroit Metropolitan area. However, geographical limitations were somewhat alleviated by the change in procedures that was executed due to not targeting enough participants from the Detroit area that were willing to partake in the study. Considering that potential participants were eager to tell their stories but were unable to travel to my location, I

extended the recruitment to participants who lived in the states of Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas. These participants expressed being more than willing to participate in this study and share their experience of becoming a father for the first-time.

Finally, I expected that potential for personal bias might be a limitation of this study. I have personal passion about the topic of investigation and target population. However, I bracketed my biases and used a reflective journal to prevent interfering with participants voicing their lived experiences. I reviewed my analytical steps at every stage with my chair who helped me debrief the process. I also found that I was open and curious to make meaning based solely on the participants' shared opinions for this study.

Recommendations

More research needs to be conducted on African American first-time fathers' needs and sources of support so that their transition to fatherhood can be less stressful. Although this study explored their experiences and emotional reactions, more research is needed to determine what resources, information, or support can be available to help them out in becoming fathers for the first time. Results of this study revealed that additional research is needed to gain an understanding regarding the emotional, psychological, and mental experiences of first-time African American fathers. Some participants did express a need for support systems to better assist first-time African American men with transitioning to the role of fatherhood.

Additional research should focus on psychological treatment or psychoeducational support for first time African American fathers. Some of the participants expressed not being prepared or even not necessarily wanting to become

fathers at that stage in their lives. These fathers would likely benefit from treatment or psychoeducational support that stress the importance of fatherhood. Treatment should be culturally inclusive and sensitive considering that cultural beliefs can influence the fathers' level of involvement and engagement with their child.

It is further important that additional research focus on ways in which first-time African American fathers can be supported during this transition. To better understand the support, emotional, psychological, and mental health needs that first-time African American fathers can benefit from, it is important to establish exactly what preventative and intervention services would best benefit them (Baldwin et al., 2018). First-time African American fathers may benefit from programs that will be specifically geared towards including and complementing their knowledge and ideas of parenting. Further research will also help provide a broader understanding of first-time fathers' mental health and overall needs during the transition to fatherhood.

As previously discussed, this study was also limited given the fact that only married men living with their wives were considered. These homogenous traits impact the transferability of this study's findings. To verify the transferability of the themes that emerged from this investigation, more research needs to be done to examine the experiences of African American men who are not living with their spouses, who live with same sex-partners, or who do not live all the time with their children. It remained to be seen whether they experience the same types of emotional reactions, concerns about financial security for the family, challenges, or stressors. This is a topic worthy of future investigation.

Implications

Each of the 12 participants expressed their personal feelings upon becoming fathers for the first time. Some participants within the study found the transition to fatherhood to be emotionally, psychologically, and mentally challenging. Doyle et al., (2012) posit that, when compared to fathers of other racial or cultural backgrounds, African American fathers are more likely to experience social circumstances that are associated with mental illness. These circumstances include discrimination, high unemployment, disruptions in the family and poverty. There were few participants in this study that were able to identify with some of these social circumstances. According to Baker (2014), fathers who experience depressive symptoms after the birth of their child are less likely to engage in parenting practices that are positive. This, in turn, can place a strain on the fathers' relationship with their spouse, his child, and even himself. These factors may cause fathers to become detached from their role as caregivers. Baker asserts that it is these fathers that are more likely to be less warm towards their child and more psychologically controlling.

Participants reported that receiving support in the transition to fatherhood was important. It helped them ease the stressors of planning and preparing for changes in the family after the birth of the child. Cooper et al. (2019) suggest that family of origin interactions and experiences are important to gain context for understanding the development of men's ideologies as it pertains to parenting and related practices. This can prove to be extremely important for African American men who are considering becoming fathers. It allows them to reflect on their personal beliefs as it pertains to

parenting and from there decide whether that role is right for them. First-time African American fathers are in a greater need of support and resources to embrace their new role.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the emotional reactions and thoughts of first-time African American fathers. Although each of the participants agreed that becoming a father was a new experience, not all of them were thrilled with the idea of becoming one. When transitioning to this role, it is important that men, specifically African American men, are provided with information and support that can assist them with preparing for their parental role. Smith et al. (2014) postulate that understanding the needs of urban African American fathers is important to design parenting programs that can both effectively and efficiently convey the information that they are likely seeking. Therefore, both preventative and intervention services could prove beneficial in helping these fathers prepare psychologically, mentally, and even spiritually to their new role. It is expected that results of this study may create awareness of African American first-time fathers' emotions, stressors, and needs in transitioning to fatherhood.

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Appendix A: Demographic Questions and Interview Guide

Please respond to the questions that best represent your current situation

- (1) What is your age? _____
- (2) Where you raised in a 1 parent or 2 parent home?
- (3) What is your primary occupation? _____
- (4) How long have you been married? _____
- (5) How old is your first child (years/months)? _____
- (6) What is the highest level of education that you have completed? _____
- (7) Which category represents your household income:
 - a) \$0-\$25,000
 - b) \$25,000-\$50,000
 - c) \$50,000-\$75,000
 - d) \$75,000 or over

Interview Questions:

RQ1: What are the feelings thoughts and emotional reactions among AA men after birth of their first child?

1. Please describe your experience when you found out that you were becoming a father
 - a. How did you mentally picture being a father at that time?
 - b.
 - c. What were your thoughts and feelings regarding your spouse when she announced she was pregnant?
 - d. How did you experience the birth of your child?
 - e. When did you hold your baby for the first-time?
 - f. How did it feel to hold your baby for the first-time?
 - g. What are your biggest fears about fatherhood?
 - h. What concerns do you have he most about fatherhood?
 - i. Has becoming a father been what you expected? Please elaborate.
 - j. Describe (if any) the emotional support you received during this transition.
 - k. How did you cope with news of your new role as a father?
 - a. What were your beliefs about becoming a father?
 - b. What were your expectations about becoming a father?

RQ2: How do AA men describe changes in themselves and their context after birth of their first child?

- 1) Please describe your experience after your child was born.
 - a. What changed in your life after your child was born?
 - b. How would you describe the changes you experienced in your life after your child was born?
 - c. Has becoming parents affected your relationship with your partner? If so how?
 - d. Do you think you have changed since becoming a father? If so how?
 - e. Describe how you felt after your child was born.
 - f. How would you describe the changes you experienced in the relationship with your wife after your child was born?
 - g. What kinds of challenges have you experienced after your child was born?
 - h. How would you describe your emotions and feelings after your child was born?
 - i. In what ways have your daily activities changed after your child was born?
 - j. In what ways did the family dynamics change after the birth of your first child?
 - a. What are the activities that you do with your child?
 - b. Do you feel included in all aspects of caring for your child?