

African American Fathers' Support Networks: Associations with Fathers' Identity and Involvement

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BACKGROUND

- Fathers play an instrumental role in the outcomes of their children, but discrimination can impact African American fathers' parenting (Cooper et al., 2021).
- African American fathers' beliefs about their identity as fathers can impact the degree to which fathers are engaged in their children's lives (Cooper et al., 2019).
- Family and community support networks can help strengthen African American father's identity and increase fathers' supportive parenting (Cooper et al., 2020).
- Black fathers' parenting behaviors are multiply determined (Belsky, 1984) and embedded in community contexts (McBride Murry, 2018).

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

- (H1):** Black fathers' fatherhood identity will be positively associated with fathers' supportive parenting.
- (H2):** Family support and community support will be positively associated with fathers' supportive parenting.
- (H3):** The relationship between Black fathers' fatherhood identity and supportive parenting will be moderated by support networks (i.e., family; community).
- (H3a):** High support will strengthen the association between Black fathers' fatherhood identity and father's supportive parenting.

RESULTS

Model 1: OLS Regression Results for Fathers' Supportive Parenting

Independent Variables	β
Father Identity	0.08 ***
Family Support	0.12 ***
Discrimination	-0.02
Marital Status	0.03
Education	-0.02
Age	0.01
Father Identity x Family Support	0.02
Father Identity x Discrimination	-0.01
Family Support x Discrimination	0.01
Father Identity x Family Support x Discrimination	-0.03 *
Adjusted R-squared	0.11

Model 2: OLS Regression Results for Fathers' Supportive Parenting

Independent Variables	β
Father Identity	0.07 ***
Community Support	0.10 ***
Discrimination	-0.03
Marital Status	0.01
Education	-0.02
Age	0.01
Father Identity x Community Support	0.01
Father Identity x Discrimination	0.01
Community Support x Discrimination	-0.01
Father Identity x Community Support x Discrimination	-0.02
Adjusted R-squared	0.09

METHODS

Procedure and Sample

- This study uses data from Representations of Fatherhood: Roles, Awareness, & Meaning (REFRAME; PI, Cooper).
- The current sample (N=580) included fathers who self-identified as Black/African American and who have a child between the ages of 8 and 17.
- Participants were recruited from communities in the U.S.

Measures

- Black Fathers' Fatherhood Identity.** Fathers reported on their personal beliefs about being a Black father in six items (e.g., I am proud to be a Black father).
- Father Discrimination.** Fathers reported on their experiences of discrimination in the last 12 months in eleven items (e.g., others reacting to you as if they were afraid or intimidated).

- Father Supportive Parenting.** Fathers reported on their level of support and responsiveness toward their children's emotional needs in four items (e.g., I cheer my child up when they are sad).
- Community Support.** Fathers reported the level of support from their community in eight items (e.g., I have a good bond with others in my community).
- Family Support.** Fathers reported the level of support from their family in eight items (e.g., I can count on my family when things go wrong).
- Covariates.** Father's education, father's age, and father's marital status.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Support networks, particularly community support, can strengthen fathers' supportive parenting behaviors.
- When fathers experience high levels of discrimination and low family support, fatherhood identity positively predicts supportive parenting behaviors. When fathers experience low levels of discrimination, fatherhood identity positively predicts supportive parenting at all levels of family support.
- Black fatherhood identity and support networks can strengthen fathers' supportive parenting in the context of discrimination.



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