



BLACK FATHERHOOD LEGACY

STUDY TITLE:

An evaluation of a doula-informed pilot workshop to strengthen paternal involvement during pregnancy among Black fathers in Fresno, CA

STUDY DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this study is to evaluate an adapted fatherhood program to enhance paternal involvement during pregnancy in Fresno, CA. Fresno County has some of the largest racial/ethnic disparities in preterm birth, particularly in the Black community.

Exposure to stress has emerged as one modifiable risk factor for preterm birth, and some research indicates that social support, specifically from a partner, can protect from the deleterious effects of stress by providing additional coping strategies that buffer against the experience of stressful life events.

While recommendations for paternal involvement resources exist, to our knowledge, few have been implemented and tested among Black men in Fresno.

We aim to create a blueprint for harnessing community wisdom through co-design as a strategy to embed the legacy of Black fatherhood in resources that address paternal involvement during pregnancy.

Using a co-design process, we will engage the experiences of Black/African American fathers in Fresno to inform adaptations of an existing fatherhood curriculum—24/7 Dad AM.

After potential strategies are identified, we will pilot and evaluate the adapted program among 8 – 12 Black expecting or new fathers.

METHODS

A total of four fathers who self-identified as Black/African American and lived in Fresno, CA were invited to participate in two 2-hour virtual co-design sessions. Three of the four fathers were able to attend both sessions, and all participants received gift cards for meal delivery as compensation.

Session one

Session 1 focused sharing fatherhood experiences, exploring the legacy of Black fatherhood in one's own community, and rating and providing feedback on all curriculum topics.

Session two

Session 2 focused on father's perceptions, needs, and experiences around pregnancy. Both sessions were guided by a set of 5-6 questions to begin conversations.

All participants were asked to reflect on the topics from the vantage point of a Black man living in Fresno, CA. Each session was facilitated by a Black father who also resided in Fresno, CA, and three study team members were in attendance to support facilitation.

Each session was recorded for review by the study team. The recommendations from participants were organized in two themes: content and delivery method.



FINDINGS

Overall, participants were eager to share their experiences as fathers. Many participants were also able to point to how the legacies of Black fatherhood shaped their own fathering experiences.

All participants rated every curriculum topic as “Very important” (scale: (1) not important – (5) very important).



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO CURRICULUM CONTENT INCLUDED

- **Mental health topics should be discussed in the context of structural racism and external factors (e.g. quality of mental health facilities, stigma, cultural norms, etc.) that shape men’s willingness to ask for help and seek care.**
- **Session topics on discipline should recognize that there are cultural aspects in the Black community that differ from the norms everywhere else. One participant shared, “we tend to infuse our experience and what we feel to be ideal may influence this topic.”**
- **Discussions of the “ideal father” should encompass a process for developing a shared definition of “non-negotiables” or core traits that men feel are essential.**
- **During session 2, participants unanimously agreed that the biggest challenge fathers face during pregnancy is access to information, and they desired to receive as much information as possible. They also saw potential value in bringing in experts for pregnancy-related and fatherhood topics.**



Related to content delivery, all participants shared our desire to uplift and celebrate Black fatherhood and not problematize it. Participants were eager for a space where Black men could share with other Black men. One participant even shared that this co-design session was one of few times in Fresno that he was able to gather with other Black men to talk about these issues.

Another participant stressed the importance of these types of resources being rooted in personal connection and trusted relationships. Thus, facilitators and staff need to be ready to interact on a personal level.

PROPOSED ADAPTATIONS

After reviewing and prioritizing the co-design feedback, the study team decided to include the following adaptations for the pilot fatherhood program.

- Black fathers in Fresno as facilitator and co-facilitator
- Racial concordance among program participants
- To uplift and celebrate Black fatherhood include short video segments of Fresno-based Black fathers sharing positive memories with their fathers, and for pregnancy-related session include a video of a Fresno-based couple.
- Invite experts for information and Q+A sessions on specific topics (doula, social workers, mental health specialists, etc.)
- Re-order some topics to be discussed later in the program once trust among the group is established.

This research pilot is funded by the California Preterm Birth Initiative



Black Fatherhood Legacy

[Fah-th-er] noun

1. Providing love, compassion, and support. 24 Hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year



FATHERHOOD CLASS FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN DADS

Tuesdays May 18 - August 3

For more information contact:
Lynell Taylor at (559) 281-8755



ON-GOING STUDY RECRUITMENT

The aim of this pilot study is to increase fatherhood support during pregnancy. If you are a new or recent African-American/Black father (18+ years) you are eligible to participate.

Learn more and get connected at the url link or QR code:

<https://bit.ly/3wWYZxs>

