


## Black Dads Matter

An Equity-Centered Examination of Black men's Transition to Fatherhood and Health Outcomes.



By: Adaobi Anakwe, PhD, MPH, CHES  
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Drexel University  
Dornsife  
School of Public Health

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**This presentation uses gendered language for clarity and alignment with the literature in this field. This usage is not intended to exclude, misrepresent, or diminish other gender identities.**

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## THE TEAM




 Adaobi Anakwe	 Chizoba Okorie	 Colleen Kazokas	 Jude Eyamba	 Taquoia Green	 Triny Efanga
 Sulaf Ghanim	 Joan Wangui Wanyama	 Jordan Wilson	 Rev. Anthony Stevenson		

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## Presentation Outline

- 1 BACKGROUND
- 2 STUDY 1: TRANSITIONING TO FATHERHOOD AND HEALTH
- 3 STUDY 2: NEW FATHERS IN PHILADELPHIA
- 4 CONCLUSION



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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Highlight the unique challenges faced by Black men** during the transition to fatherhood: Identify individual, relational, contextual and other systemic barriers that impact Black men's fathering experiences and health trajectories
- **Assess the current state of research** on Black fathers' health during the transition to fatherhood: Review the findings from a systematic literature review, including the heterogeneity in health outcomes and transitional experiences observed across the included studies.
- **Identify opportunities for improving paternal health and MCH outcomes:** Discuss the gaps in fatherhood research and propose strategies to address systemic inequities and improve the health and well-being of Black fathers and their families.

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## BACKGROUND

**Why do we need to understand fathering experiences and perinatal health consequences to Black men?**

- Men's health during the transition to fatherhood impacts maternal and child outcomes
  - Biologically (i.e., biological contributions to pregnancy) [1-4]
  - Psychosocially (i.e., paternal involvement, poor paternal mental health) [5-7]
- Confers health benefits in certain areas but not in others [8-17]
  - Reduced alcohol use vs increased weight gain and poorer mental health
- Black fathers navigate unique challenges to their fatherhood and optimizing their health
  - Social, political, and historical contextual factors. [18-23]
- Existing studies examine fathers homogenously
  - Ignores the heterogeneous experiences - racial discrimination/ colonization; cultural variations



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## OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTION

**How do Black men navigate their health in the context of childbearing and childrearing?**

### PARADIGMS AND FRAMEWORKS GUIDING THIS STUDY

1. Critical Race Praxis
2. Intersectionality/ Intersectional Theory
3. Life Course Theory
4. Integrated Perinatal Health Framework

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## BLACK FATHERHOOD(ING) CONTEXT

- Black men have poorer overall health and **shorter life expectancy** than their white counterparts. [19,20]
- Preconceptionally, Black men have **poorer health** than their White counterparts. [21, 22]
- **Racially-defined negative contexts** of Black fatherhood may contribute to shaping health/wellness across the reproductive continuum. [23]
- **Too little is known** about how fatherhood may differentially predispose or protect Black men's health
- An important **(yet missing) pathway** in understanding Black maternal and child outcomes



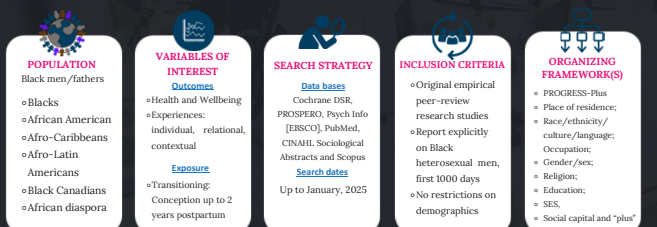
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## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What effect does the transition to fatherhood have on Black men's mental and physical health, and wellbeing
- In what ways do individual, relational, and contextual experiences influence Black fathers' health during this transition?

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## METHODS



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## FINDINGS ON REPRESENTATION

Table 1. Preliminary results on sample description, health outcomes assessed and participant experiences (n=22)

DESCRIPTION	RQ1 [HEALTH DOMAINS ASSESSED]	RQ2 [DOMAINS OF EXPERIENCE]
Study location	US=18, UK =4, Belize=1	Biophysiological outcomes (n=7) Individual: n=9
Participant's Age	Range 14 - 60 years	Behavioral/ mental health (n=15) Relational: n= 10 Contextual: n = 10
Occupation	3 (13%)	-
Religion	5 (21.7%)	-
Educational attainment	16(72.7%)	-
Employment status	13(59.1%)	-
Social Capital	4(8.7%)	-

Of the total sample size (n=10239) only 20.9% were Black fathers.

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## FINDINGS ON HEALTH OUTCOMES

RQ 1: What effect does the transition to fatherhood have on Black men's health

### HEALTH DOMAINS

#### Biological/ Physiological:

- Acute disease onset, hospitalization, medication changes (n=1)
- Semen quality (n=1)
- Couvade (n=2)
- Sickle cell screening (n=2)
- BMI (n=1)

#### Behavioral:

- STI/HIV screening (n=1)
- Substance use (n=2)
- Changes in health behaviors [diet and physical activity] (n=2)
- Mental health [ stress/coping, depressive symptoms, emotional health] (n=10)

**Summary: Black men have poorer overall health outcomes during their transition to fatherhood**

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## FINDINGS ON TRANSITIONING EXPERIENCES

RQ2: How do individual, relational, and/or contextual experiences of Black fathers impact their health during their transition to fatherhood?

### INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES

- Experience wide spectrum of emotions
- Prioritizing their fatherhood roles motivated health behavior change
- Experience educational and occupational setbacks post-fatherhood

### RELATIONAL EXPERIENCES

- Father-mother relationship varied (closer vs conflict)
- Higher mother-father conflict was also associated with depressive symptoms in both parents
- Father-son conflict was associated with depressive symptoms in adolescent fathers
- Emotional guidance from family and friends is helpful

### CONTEXTUAL EXPERIENCES

- Exclusion by health care workers/systems
- Lack of father-supportive resources in the clinic/hospital during their partners' labor
- High contextual stress associated with increases substance use and depression
- Being booked or charged with a crime was significantly associated with increased paternal depressive symptoms

**Summary: Black men value their fatherhood, but face significant challenges in the relational and contextual domains, negatively impacting their health**

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## KEY TAKE AWAYS

- Black maternal crises warrants querying missed pathways esp. of Black fathers' contributions
- Black fathers are poorly represented and often excluded from transitioning to fatherhood studies.
- Black fathers value their fatherhood and experience a multitude of emotions during the transition to fatherhood
- Wellbeing is compromised by negative relational experiences and inadequate support resources.
- Transitioning to fatherhood has more negative health effects for Black fathers, likely explained by their unique contextual experiences

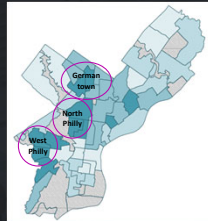
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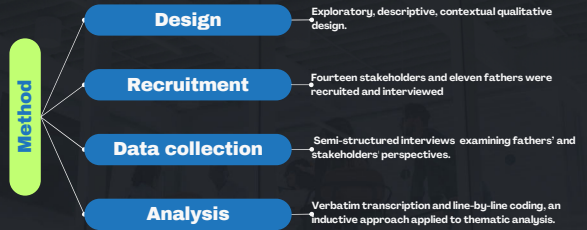
## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- **Assess** how low-income Black emerging adult men (18-29years) in Philly area think about health and wellness in the context of fatherhood
- **Explore the experiences and needs** of these emerging adults during the transition to fatherhood
- **Identify resources** and other support systems available to and/or leveraged during this transition
- **Capture stakeholder perspectives** on these experiences, needs and available support and resources among this population.



Health outcomes rankings in Philly based on length of life and quality of life. Source: <https://www.philly.gov/files/assets/2019/07/2019-Health-Outcomes-Rankings-Map.pdf>

## RESEARCH METHODS




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## THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!




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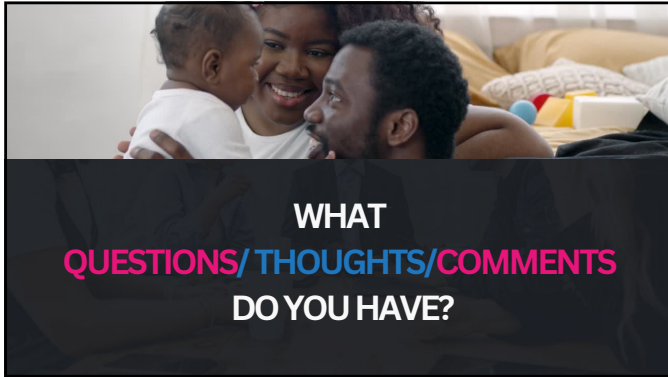
**CONTACT**  
 Adaobi Anakwe, PhD, MPH, CHES<sup>®</sup>  
 Dornsife School of Public Health  
 Drexel University  
 Philadelphia, PA 19104

Email: [aga56@drexel.edu](mailto:aga56@drexel.edu)  
 Website: <https://helper-site-f4dab3.webflow.io/>



Reference list

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