Raising Black sons in the UK: The unheard voices of Black fathers

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Existing literature highlights a prevalence of deficit and problem saturated narratives of Black fatherhood. A paucity of literature focusing on the subjective experiences of Black fathers has limited the ability for Black fathers to describe their reality in their own words. Black men and boys occupy unique social positions and Black fathers make distinct and fundamental contributions to the wellbeing and healthy development of their Black sons. Despite this, Black father's experiences of raising their sons in the UK have been under researched. Given the disparities Black men face across a multitude of systems, research rooted in inclusion, community empowerment and participation have the potential to elevate their voices and drive social change.

METHODOLOGY: A social constructionist epistemology and critical realist ontology was used to qualitatively explore Black fathers' experiences of raising Black sons in the UK. This study was guided by principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and African Psychology and was driven by an ethos of community, collaboration and commitment to social change. Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used to situate Black fathers' experiences within the lens of race, racism, intersectionality and social justice. Ten Black fathers recruited as co-researchers through purposive and snowball sampling took part in focus group discussions. Black fathers were involved in the study design, data collection and analysis of focus group discussions.

FINDINGS: Reflective Thematic Analysis was used to develop three overarching themes that represented Black fathers' lived experiences *"Black fathers navigate unique challenges", "The new era of Black fatherhood"* and *"The power of collaboration".* Black fathers navigated unique challenges when raising their Black sons such as contending with racialised and gendered experiences which impacted their wellbeing and how they parented their sons. Black fatherhood was influenced by contextual factors such as navigating two cultures, generational differences and shifts in fatherhood roles which led to a new concept of fatherhood. The collaborative nature of this research highlighted the utility of a PAR approach which led to the development of meaningful action rooted in community, empowerment and self-change.

IMPLICATIONS: The findings of this research project have implications for interventions and research aimed at supporting Black fathers and young Black boys. Interventions rooted in participation, community and cultural values relevant to Black fathers and their sons will be fundamental in improving their experiences. Clinical recommendations as well as further research suggestions to continue to elevate Black fathers' voices and generate social change are discussed.

Keywords*: Black fathers; Black Fatherhood; Parenting; Black sons; Participatory Action Research*

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I will outline my positionality as a researcher through discussing my relationship with the topic and the underpinning epistemological and ontological stance. I will outline key language terms and Critical Race Theory which will offer a theoretical lens to critically explore existing literature relevant to Black fathers' experiences and to understand their experiences within a wider historical, political, and socio-cultural context. I will explore the social milieu of Black fathers through the intersection of gender and race to highlight their unique experiences of socio-political disparities and the tension between dominant and counter narratives. I will conclude the chapter by outlining the need for research that centres on the lived experiences of Black fathers.

Position of the Researcher

Reflexivity is both a concept and process that refers to the acknowledgment of the researcher's subjectivities (Dowling, 2006). Conceptually, reflexivity refers to the researcher's self-awareness of their active role in research and appreciation that this role is not neutral or passive (Palaganas et al., 2017). Reflexivity as a process refers to the introspection gained through continuous self-reflection and consideration of the researcher's position in the social world, which consequently influences how the research is approached, interpreted and interacted with (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). Reflexivity requires explicitly naming the researcher's relationship to the research and the 'researched' (Jootun et al., 2009). At all points of this research, reflective journaling and research supervision with the wider research team supported the continuous process of reflexivity before and throughout the research. Some of these reflections will be discussed within the main text of this thesis as well as signposted to in the appendices. The nature of this research does not consider Black fathers as 'participants' and the author of this thesis as the 'researcher' as this implies an imbalance of power which marginalises the role of the Black fathers in this research. Instead, Black

fathers are considered as co-researchers, co-authors and co-constructors of knowledge who were meaningfully involved in the exploration and representation of their experiences, and this will be reflected in writing in the first-person perspective and the use of language such as 'we' and 'us'. The intention behind this is explicitly in opposition to conventional research paradigms, which positions the researcher as the expert and de-centres the expertise of the people being 'researched' (Baum et al., 2006; Hall, 1992). At times the third-person perspective will be used in recognition of the author's simultaneous role in both writing *with* but also *about* the Black fathers, in line with the vernacular of academia. Quotation marks will be used throughout this thesis to highlight socially constructed concepts.

Personal Relationship with the Research Project

I identify as a Black woman of Afro-Caribbean heritage who resides in the diasporic context of the UK. Being raised in London, I feel 'British' but also experience a strong affinity of dually belonging to the Caribbean and the ancestral homeland of Africa. Socially, I occupy markers of privilege in my identity as cis-gendered, heterosexual, able-bodied and emanating from a middle-class background. I can also be seen to have marginalised facets of identity as being both Black and a woman, which are constructed as markers of oppression in the location I reside in (Shlasko, 2015). These facets of my identity are significant as they impact my social position which influences the way I interpret and interact with the world and the way the world interprets and interacts with me (Day, 2012). Growing up in the UK I have been privy to negative representations of the Black community which I belong to and experience race and racism as impacting my daily experiences and interactions with others. Frequently these external negative representations do not match with my personal experiences in my community as well as the representations in my countries of origin, which leads me to approach the world in a critical, cautious way and to question the power relations that underpin social structures that imbue how Black people are perceived. In simultaneously occupying markers of privilege, I experience instances of freedom and agency and paradoxically feel

'not oppressed' and view my Blackness as a strength, being a power in its own right and liberation as possible. I bring to this research the explicit values of dismantling systems of convention, a positive strengths-based view of Blackness and that change is possible through unifying the Black community.

My relationship to Black fathers is borne out of my close relationship with my father and the plethora of amazing examples of Black fathers that I have witnessed within my family. Though my immediate experience is one of positivity, I am also aware of Black men who experience barriers to enacting their roles as fathers. In speaking to my interest in Black male mental health more generally, I have also seen the unique challenges Black men face in society and how expression of their experiences is curtailed under the guise of masculinity. Professionally working in the field of psychology with predominant work experience in forensic services, I have been exposed to the disparities Black men face in diagnosis, treatment, accessibility and their disproportionate representation in the most coercive ends of mental health care and the criminal justice system. In my career I have only met two qualified Black male clinical psychologists which I believe has contributed to the lack of research focusing on topics that directly impact Black men. Given that the population of Black men is smaller in the UK than the USA, I feel this has positioned the focus on Black men as less of a priority in the UK, which contributes to the marginalisation of their importance in Black families and diminishes their fundamental roles in raising Black children in the UK (Ojurongbe, 2023). As a Black woman I hope to be an ally to Black men to amplify their voices, to use the markers of privilege I have to tell their stories, to offer the world a counter-narrative and to acknowledge their strengths and unique contributions to the Black community.

Epistemological and Ontological Position

Epistemology concerns the way we make sense of the world, and the scope and parameters of knowledge (Crotty, 1998), the acquisition and communication of this knowledge to others (Cohen et

al., 2007), and queries what should even be considered as knowledge (Bryman, 2008). Ontology pertains to the nature and structure of reality and what we can know about it (Crotty 1998), and queries whether social entities exist separately from social reality and the existence of a shared reality or multiple social realities (Bryman, 2008; Ormston et al., 2014).

This research is grounded in a social constructionist epistemological stance which posits that psychological reality is produced through social consensus and is dependent on the socio-cultural and historical context in which it exists (Gergen, 1973). This stance sees knowledge and reality as emanating from language and discourse and produced by social interaction between people (Burr, 1998). A pure social constructionist approach can be seen as anti-realist, which would imply that nothing can be known of the world, that social structures do not have causal power and that there is no material world (Elder-Vass, 2012). Therefore, this research will be grounded in critical realist ontology which appreciates the causal powers of socially constructed language and discourse and their ability to influence the material and social world; conferring a moderate social constructionist epistemology or a realist social constructionism (Elder-Vass, 2012). Although social constructionism is typically positioned in opposition to critical realism this approach highlights their ability to stand in tandem. It allows for a plausible account of how material human beings are shaped and influenced by socially constructed language and discourse, which also allows for the recognition that change is possible, that things could be constructed differently, and this could lead to a new tangible social reality (Hacking, 1999).

A realist social constructionist stance is appropriate for this research, as it will focus on Black father's experiences of fatherhood which will be co-constructed through collaboration between all those involved, leading to the interdependent construction of meanings and realities which is in and of itself a form of social action and has implications for those it concerns (Burr, 1998). The current research places emphasis on the social construction of race and gender when understanding Black father's experiences; a stance that offers an explanation of how these constructs causally impacts

their social reality, positioning gendered racism as a real experience. This is in line with the aims of

the research to develop an alternative narrative to dominant representations, to centre the lived

experiences of Black fathers and to influence change.

Language and key terms

Language can be defined as a system of communication through which members of a social

group express ideas (Ellis, 2012). Language is of social significance due its ability to define reality

and influence social relations (Wodak, 2012). Sociolinguistics assert the interconnection between

language use and power, as language both produces and maintains power relations and power

struggles (Fairclough, 2013). The way we communicate and how we communicate is constrained by

the social context in which we live in; such that language can be seen a form of social action shaped

by societies' discursive norms and ideologies (Elder-Vass, 2012). Language has a dialectical

relationship with identity as we come to be who we are through language (Wodak, 2012). The key

terminology defined reflects the ethos of this research, which aims to centre the community that is

being authored and to elevate their voices (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Definitions of key language terms

Key term	Definition
Black	In the UK, the term 'Black' is a socially constructed category which broadly groups together individuals who identify as being from African or Caribbean heritage or ancestry, whilst the term 'Black British' is used to describe descendants of immigrants who migrated to the UK from the West Indies and Africa (Office for National Statistics, 2022). The current research study uses the term 'Black' to describe individuals who proudly self-identify as being from African or Caribbean descent, a term which is positioned as signifying positive social identity and a unifier of the heterogeneity and shared struggles and resilience within the Black community (Prentoulis, 2012).

	'Black' will be capitalised throughout this thesis to reflect the salience of the term as a cultural construct for the Black community.
Black fathers and Black fatherhood	'Father' has been defined biologically to describe a man who has impregnated a woman (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006) and socially as a man who is involved in the raising of a child (Bzostek, 2008). 'Fathering' typically encompasses the parenting practices of fathers with their children (Morgan, 2004). 'Fatherhood' encompasses the social-cultural constructions of being a father, conceptualised as the interaction between father, fathering and fatherhood (Morgan, 2004). In this thesis 'Black fatherhood' is used to conceptualise the experience and state of being a 'Black father' which refers to men of African and Caribbean descent who have fathered biological children, to highlight that being 'Black' is central to the identity of being a father, the action of fathering and the all-encompassing construct of fatherhood.
Racism	Conceptually racism refers to the organisation of the social world according to a socially constructed global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority which categorises humans along a white-non white, human-nonhuman, being-nonbeing axes (Fanon, 1973; Jung & Costa Vargas, 2022). Cultural racism refers to the legitimisation of dominant/Euro-centric beliefs, norms, culture and values which ontologically leads to white people or those endorsing these beliefs to be advantaged (Dismantling Racism Works, 2021). Institutional racism refers to legislation, policies and practices in institutions (e.g. housing, government, education, healthcare, employment, criminal justice) that structure reality to perpetuate disadvantages to those not in proximity to whiteness (Dismantling Racism Works, 2021). Individual racism refers to individuals who endorse, perpetuate and assume racist beliefs and engage in racist behaviours both consciously and unconsciously, which is learned from internalised societal views (Dismantling Racism Works, 2021). Structural racism or systemic racism refers to the multitude of inequalities as a result of the interconnected nature of cultural, personal and institutional racism, which leads to the processes and outcomes of inequity (Banaji et al., 2021).
Gendered anti-blackness	Anti-blackness is distinct from racism and refers specifically to the experiential and ontological exclusion of Black people and highlights the significance of the Black experience, which is qualitatively and quantitatively distinct from racism experienced by non-white and non-

black individuals and groups (Jung & Costa Vargas, 2022). Anti-blackness as a paradigm encapsulates real world processes and practices that produce and reproduce a dominant social order which results in how Black people historically and currently are treated and mistreated and positioned at the bottom of the social order (Wynter, 2003). 'Gendered anti-blackness' refers to the interconnected nature of race and gender in which racial oppression is aggravated by gender (Vargas, 2018). As Vargas (2018) states "Antiblackness is fundamentally gendered not only because gender modulates how Blackness is perceived and experienced but also because Blackness shapes the ways in which gender is perceived and experienced". This asserts the experiences and positionality of Black men are semantically and symbolically distinct from Black females (Vargas, 2018).

In this thesis gendered anti-blackness will be used analytically to understand how the quality of being both Black and Male intercedes to produce the Black male experience.

The Black Diaspora	Diaspora is a political and analytical term broadly applied to both the voluntary (i.e. consensual migration) and involuntarily (i.e. slavery) dispersion of communities from their homelands to a peripheral place (Safran, 1991). Analytically, diaspora provides a model of understanding the social, historical and cultural experiences of groups that lead to formation of a 'diasporic identity' which is a product of interconnected histories and cultures and a sense of belonging contemporaneously to more than one place or home (Hall, 1992). 'The Black diaspora' encompasses the shared experiences and commonalities among people of African descent globally and the formation of new communities and regenerated identities outside of the homeland (Morehouse, 2015). Whilst recognising the heterogeneity of experiences within the Black diaspora and the drawbacks of essentialising these experiences, the Black diaspora as a framework unifies the shared experience and common histories of Black people over time and in particular peripheral locations (Gilroy, 1993; Morehouse, 2015). In this thesis, the term Black diaspora is used specifically to conceptualise the experiences of Black people in the UK, based on the assumption that there will be some commonalities due to residing in the same context, time and space.
Global North	The Global North is a term that symbolically and metaphorically groups nations constructed as rich and powerful such as Europe and North America but also Australia, New Zealand and South Africa evidencing its nature as a construct due to its geographical inaccuracy (Khan et al., 2022). The motivation to simplistically categorise and organise nations within a global world order is underpinned by racism, imperialistic and colonial ideologies (Braff & Nelson, 2022). Using the term the Global North has fewer negative connotations than

referring to these nations as the 'West' or 'Western' which was underpinned by socio-political motivations to position the West and Western values as hegemonic over the rest of the world (Khan et al., 2022).

In this thesis the Global North is used as a descriptor and location in which the research is situated, whilst also recognising the continued existence of dominant socio-political and cultural ideologies in these locations.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) – which was developed through the movement of activist scholars in the legal sector in the USA – examines the racialised artefacts of liberal societies in the Global North that impact an individual's life experiences and social freedom (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). CRT provides an overarching framework which aims to understand and resist the factors that perpetuate inequality and power imbalances in society (Lawrence & Hylton, 2022). In psychological research CRT has critiqued mainstream methodologies that reinforce oppressive structures by excluding the knowledge and voices of certain groups (Hylton, 2012). In the USA, CRT has been used as an analytical tool in research on Black male mental health (Robinson-Perez, 2021); and Black male students (Cummins & Griffin, 2012); with others using CRT to understand Black fatherhood and family formation (Lemmons & Johnson, 2022). There have been less attempts to apply CRT to the UK context, however some have applied it to understanding Black masculinity and crime (Glynn, 2013). CRT can be applied to Black fatherhood, namely proposing that the existence of deficit-based and problem saturated approaches as well as the paucity of research involving Black fathers are the product of dominant narratives and perpetuates and reinforces inequality and exclusion (Wilson & Thompson, 2021). For this reason, CRT views social justice, action and change as intertwined in academia and research (Lawrence & Hylton, 2022). Five central tenets of CRT will be applied to understand the experience of Black fathers:

- **Centrality of race and racism:** Recognition that race is a socially constructed category in which proximity to whiteness is privileged and has led to racism being embedded in societal structures, resulting in inequality and power imbalances in the Global North (Lemmons & Johnson, 2022). Intersectionality and systems of inequality impact an individual based on multiple overlapping and interrelated aspects of identity (Crenshaw, 1989). This emphasises that Black fathers' experiences will be impacted by their identity as both Black and male.

- **Interdisciplinary perspective:** This involves examining race and racism across disciplines and fields to promote a multifaceted understanding of the manifestation of the experiences of race and racism across cultural, historical, social, political and psychological domains (Wilson & Thompson 2021). Interdisciplinary perspectives provide a nuanced framework to understand Black fathers' experiences across different contexts and how this impacts fatherhood.

- **Challenging the dominant ideology:** Recognising the influence of dominant narratives which tell stories about people often without their own voices. Resistance to claims that we live in an equal, neutral, objective society which espouses essentialism, colour blindness and values sameness rather than appreciation of difference (Lawrence & Hylton, 2022). Placing value on developing counternarratives by elevating the voices of Black fathers will allow Black fathers to tell their own stories, define their own realities and challenge stories told about them.

- **Commitment to social justice:** Research underpinned by social justice, which emphasises collaboration, partnership and community and aims to influence social action and change (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This emphasises the need for Black fathers to be included in each stage of research and places value on methodology rooted in collaboration and participation.

- **Commitment to experiential knowledge:** Prioritising the community of interest's voices and their lived experiences and recognising the fundamental role they have in dismantling systems and telling their own stories (Wilson & Thompson, 2021). This promotes a focus on qualitative research that goes beyond statistics and numbers and places value on experiential knowledge (Wilson & Thompson, 2021). In order to understand Black fathers, it is integral to understand the world through their lens and utilise their voices to drive social change and influence clinical practice, policy and interventions.

Overview of empirical and theoretical literature

This section begins by exploring the social, historical and political context that influences dominant discourses surrounding Black men in the UK and in the Global North more widely. Black fatherhood as a construct can be understood through theoretical frameworks which draw on concepts of race, racism, masculinity and gendered anti-blackness. Empirical evidence will be explored to understand dominant depictions of Black men and Black fatherhood and consider the existence of both dominant and counter narratives. This section will end with providing a rationale to focus on Black fathers' lived experiences.

Being Black in the UK

The most recent census estimates that 4.2% of the UK population identify as belonging to Black, Black British and diaspora Caribbean or African ethnic groups (Office for National Statistics, 2022). Mass migration from the Caribbean to the UK occurred in the context of World War 1 and World War 2 in the Windrush Era[1] leading to the construction of the Afro-Caribbean ethnic group (Stephenson, 2006). Mass migration from African countries typically occurred later from 1960's onwards due to the experiences of civil and political unrest but also desires for social transformation, economic and

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1   The Windrush Era denotes the people who emigrated from the Caribbean to Britain on the HMT Empire Windrush between 1948 and 1971 (see Gentleman, 2019).

educational advancement (Domboka, 2018; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). In this period, legislation was introduced in response to racism such as the Commonwealth Immigration Act (1962) which promised free migration and the Race Relation Act (1965) which outlawed racial discrimination in public spaces and the extended Race Relation Act (1968) which applied this protection to housing, employment and public services. However, this legislation was not applied to the criminal justice system and significant disparities were found in policing and the application of police law when it pertained to Black people (Field & Roberts, 2002). This contributed to long standing tension between the police and the Black community and led to various race-related riots and protests against the nature of policing and the deaths of Black people, mainly Black men at the hands of the police (Field & Roberts, 2002). Notable protests include the 1980 St. Pauls Riots in Bristol[2], 1981 Brixton Uprisings[3], 1981 Chapeltown riot in Leeds[4], 1985 Toxteth Riots in Liverpool[5] and 1985 Handsworth Riots in Birmingham[6]. Despite the dominant depictions of these events as "violent disturbances" and "riots" enacted by "defiant aggressive young men", alternative discourses highlight these events as "political mobilisation" and "collective action" in response to inequalities in housing, employment and discriminatory policing (Peplow, 2019). Other notable protests were community calls for police failures into the racially motivated death of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, leading to investigations into systemic racism in the police force namely the Macpherson Report (1999), which recognised institutional racism in the police. This contributed to changes in the Race Relations Act (2000), which required police and statutory organisations to eliminate racial discrimination and promote equality, but this had little impact on the deep-rooted institutional and systemic racism embedded in British culture. Several other riots and protests took place in Brixton in 2001[7] and 2022[8] and

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2   1980 St. Pauls Riots in Bristol (see Byrne, 2020)

3   1981 Brixton Uprisings (see Pierre, 2022)

4   1981 Chapeltown Riots in Leeds (see Leeds Libraries, 2021)

5   1985 Toxteth Riots in Liverpool (see Liverpool Echo, 2013)

6   1985 Handsworth Riots in Birmingham (see Authi, 2017)

7   Brixton 2001 protests due to the death of Ricky Bishop during a police arrest (see Lawrence-Jones, 2020)

8   Brixton 2022 protests due to the death of a Chris Kaba by police (BBC News, 2022)

Tottenham in 2011[9] all due to the wrongful deaths of Black men at the hands of police. The Black community in the UK showed solidarity to the Black Lives Matter civil rights movement in the USA in 2020[10], which also led to the UK revisiting and refocusing on existing racial disparities, particularly those faced by Black men (Prasad, 2023). Despite several reviews highlighting the disparities faced by Black men across systems and institutions such as the criminal justice system and mental health system, recent statistics show that the disparities faced by Black men are worsening (Roberston & Wainwright, 2020). These occurrences highlight that little has changed since the introduction of legislation and most importantly the enactment of violence towards Black men.

The Black Man

Social construction of the Black male identity

Both gender and race can be seen not as a static, objective reality but as socially constructed categories within which meanings are bound to time and socio-cultural context (Hall, 1992). Historically in the Global North, there has been a propensity to divide humans into categories of difference and focus on arbitrary physical differences (Witzig, 1996). This was fuelled by a dominant ideology which asserted that there is an objective truth based on a positivist philosophy, which led to a hierarchal ranking of humans which could be 'proven' by science (Machery &Faucher, 2017). Such rankings constructed white males and white intellect as 'superior', which led to race and gender becoming stories of power (Hall, 1992). This discourse both created and legitimatised social events of slavery and subordination of those deemed as 'other' and 'inferior' (Bryant Davies & Johnson-Williams, 2022). Such discourses were embedded into culture, institutions, systems and law, governing who has the power and means to access resources, to produce knowledge and what is

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9   Tottenham 2011 riots due to the death of Mark Duggan by police (see Lawrence-Jones, 2020)

10   Black Lives Matter is an international social movement concerned with tackling anti-black racism, violence and police brutality which gained increased traction due to the death of George Floyd in 2020 by police in the USA (see Smith, 2021).

deemed as 'normal' and 'abnormal' and 'good' and bad' (Bryant Davies & Johnson-Williams, 2022).

Over time, there was a shift in positivist philosophies as contemporary science highlighted the

socially constructed, arbitrary nature of race and gender, and disregarded pseudoscientific historical

studies which reinforced racial and gender subjugation (Clark & Hurd, 2020). Despite both gender

and race becoming widely accepted as social constructions, they remain a currency in the world

today and there is still a drive to assign humans into categories of difference (Clark & Hurd, 2020).

The long-standing discourse concerning race and gender produce and reproduce the social

reality of being a Black male (Vargas, 2018). Black males have frequently been described in the

Global North as 'Big Black and Dangerous', 'hypersexual', 'sexual deviants' and 'violent criminals';

narratives which perpetuate racist ideologies and leads to the subjugation and dehumanisation of

Black male bodies and their experiences (Curry, 2017). These negative connotations can be seen as

an artefact of socio-political, cultural and historical factors which governed and normalised dominant

discursive spaces (Hall, 1997). Black men have often been subject to a myriad of conflicting interest

which include the paradoxical sexual fetishisation and objectification yet negative portrayal of the

Black man (Hall, 1997). Discursive constructions have real implications through socially

manufacturing stereotypes and negative caricatures which constrict the realities of Black males

(Milton, 2012). Both academia and the media can be seen as vehicles of dominant discourse which

control, produce and reproduce majority ideologies and underpin the ways in which systems and

society experience and are experienced by Black males (Hall, 1992). In academia, Black people have

largely been excluded from being able to author their own narratives and to produce knowledge on

their experiences as they are often the objects but rarely the subjects of representation (Hall, 1997).

Academia has been used to reinforce negative stereotypes by developing theories and empirical

evidence underpinned by a deficit view (Curry, 2021; Oluwayomi, 2020). In the media there are

pervasive controlling images of Black men where they are celebrated as the 'sexual superstud' and

'athlete' or demonised as the 'violent criminal', 'gangsta' and 'rapist' (Milton, 2012). Mass media

has significant power in shaping popular ideas and attitudes and is the basis by which the majority forms their perceptions (Hall, 1997). For Black men, negative portrayals of their identity in the media and academia impact their mental health, how they see themselves and how the world sees them (Alibhai-Brown & Henry 2008; Ojurongbe, 2023).

Being both Black and Male

Understanding the Black male experience, requires acknowledging the intersection of their identity as both *Black* and *male*, and both their gendered and racialised experiences constituting gendered anti-blackness (Vargas, 2018). Intersectionality, as a theory to understand how multiple classes of identity intersect to produce an experience, positions Black women to be the 'worst off' in society due to both racial and gender subjugation through male and racial domination (Crenshaw, 1989). Black feminists argue that Black males are compelled to be violent to overcome their oppression and dehumanisation by performing an exaggerated view of white manhood and patriarchy, which reproduces politicised constructions of Black men (Crenshaw, 1989, hooks, 1999). Intersectionality is underpinned by essentialist views, assuming a sameness between Black men and white men, in which they both benefit from patriarchy and dominate women and hold a privileged position on the basis that they are men (Curry, 2021). Such views deny the formulation of Black men's unique experiences and ignores the social and empirical evidence that Black men experience greater systemic disadvantages in health, education, economic status, mortality, police violence and incarceration (Curry, 2021). Analyses regarding 'Black male privilege' doesn't account for the social evidence that Black men have been denied access to patriarchy, typically being positioned as outside of hegemonic constructions of being a 'man' leading to historical erasure and continued denial of access to resources (Curry, 2021; Wallace, 2023). Moreover, findings that Black women have higher social capital, political participation and are more likely to surpass Black men in academia, leadership and decision-making positions, has implications for the production of knowledge centred on the experience of Black men (Farris & Holman, 2014; Kaba, 2008; Turner & Grauerholz, 2017).

Despite research highlighting the physical and epistemic violence Black men experience and providing insight into their views, attitudes and behaviours, this knowledge is often not accepted as a counter narrative (Curry, 2021; Oluwayomi, 2020). Moreover, intersectionality theories do not themselves include the voices of Black men and their lived experiences (Curry, 2021). The focus on Black women and their experiences emphasises their strengths and ability to overcome oppression and form a unique definition of womanhood rooted in strength (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2009). This is evident in the construction of the 'Black Matriarch' and 'The Strong Black Woman', in which Black females were historically seen to occupy superordinate positions in comparison to Black men and to counterpoise traditional female-male gender relations (Fraser, 1989). Black men are not afforded the same opportunity to create a strength-based, positive identity of Black manhood in response to systemic challenges (Curry, 2021). The way in which Black men are socially conceptualised, perceived and positioned has implications for their experiences not only as men, but as fathers, as Black fatherhood intercedes with the meaning the world ascribes to their Blackness and gender (Wallace, 2023).

Fatherhood

In the Global North, the conceptualisation of fatherhood is underpinned by dominant social-cultural traditions of pronatalism and heteronormativity which idealises biological reproduction and heterosexual parenthood and family practices (Hadley, 2019). Fathers are primarily described as 'providers' and 'breadwinners' which portrays a distant parenthood role with mothers assigned the role of caregiver and nurturer (Coltrane, 2010). This has influenced a predominant focus in parenthood literature on the mother-child dyad and has contributed to a paucity of research on fatherhood experiences (Diamond, 2017). Modern fathers have increasing responsibilities in caregiving and nurturing roles traditionally socially prescribed to women, representing a new concept of 'involved fatherhood' which has fuelled more research on fathers (Valiquette-Tessier et

al., 2019). There has been an increased recognition of father's contributions to their child's socio-emotional development (Garcia et al., 2022; Lamb & Lewis 2004); and shifts in discourse regarding gender roles (Valiquette-Tessier et al., 2019). However, the majority of fatherhood research is based on white fathers in the Global north with the vast majority located in the USA (Adams, 2019). There has been even less of a focus on Black fathers, and there is a lack of research regarding their experiences and contributions to their children lives, especially in the UK (Adams, 2019).

Black Fathers

Dominant narratives of Black Fatherhood

Understanding 'Black Fatherhood' requires acknowledging the interaction between intersecting social constructions of the identity of being Black, male and a father. Existing research on the topic of Black fathers have predominantly originated in the USA (e.g. Doyle et al., 2015); with some research in Canada (e.g. Green & Chuang, 2021); and the Caribbean (e.g. Gray & Brown, 2015); and a paucity of research in the UK (Williams et al., 2012). Commonly used language describes Black fathers as 'absent' frequently labelling them as 'deadbeats' and their children as 'fatherless' (Adams, 2019). In 1965, a report described African American families as "maladaptive" and a "tangle of pathology" who lacked patriarchal structure due to "absent fathers" and "overbearing Black women" (Moynihan, 1965). Such ideologies fuelled a propensity in academia to investigate Black families using a deficit, problem-based narrative to legitimise claims, with findings indicating Black fathers reside away from their children at higher rates than white families in the USA (Castillo et al., 2011); and the UK (Platt, 2009). Such findings evoke a negative depiction of Black fathers in the collective imagination and seeks to represent Black families in contrast to the normative white family, and frequently focuses on low-income, non-residential Black fathers with limited contact with their children (Johnson & Young, 2016). This lens erases the contributions Black fathers make who do not reside with their children but are actively involved in their lives and a

limited focus on Black fathers who do reside with their children (Lemmons & Johnson, 2022). This is further compounded by stereotypical depictions of Black men as 'hypermasculine', 'hyperaggressive', and 'threatening' which impede their representation as fathers who are loving and caring towards their children (Reynolds, 2001). These conceptualisations fuelled a "father absence as risk" paradigm in which Black fathers were blamed for an increased risk of juvenile delinquency, incarceration and low academic achievement in adolescent Black males (Cao et al., 2004; Mandara et al., 2005; Wilson & Thompson, 2021). Black fathers were also blamed for high rates of pregnancy, early menstruation, puberty and increased sexual behaviour in young Black girls, with their absence leading to such outcomes (Deardorff et al., 2011). The blame attributed to Black fathers fails to take into account the impact of context, structural racism and inequality which impact not only on Black fathers' lived experiences but the lives of Black children (Lemmons & Johnson, 2022).

Counter narratives of Black fatherhood

A growing number of more recent studies predominantly in the USA refute that Black fathers are absent (Fagan, 2024). Closer interrogation of fatherhood involvement studies shows that Black fathers' involvement is comparable to white fathers in the USA, and more involved than other groups when non-resident (Doyle et al., 2015; Franklin, 2010); and the same rates of non-resident fatherhood are found in Black and white families of the same socio-economic status, highlighting the importance of contextual factors (Amato & Sobolewski, 2004). When accounting for socioeconomic status and residential status, African American fathers are sometimes more involved with their children than white and Hispanic fathers (Cabrera et al., 2008; King et al., 2004; Leavell et al., 2012; Roopnarine et al., 2005). In the UK, the majority of Black fathers remain stably involved in their children's lives even when not residing with them (Hauari & Hollingworth, 2009; Kiernan & Mensah, 2010); are actively involved in childcare (Reynolds, 2009); and more involved in their children's education than white British fathers regardless of residential status (Platt, 2009).

Research on Black fatherhood rarely includes their actual voices, or their material lived experiences often simplifying and essentialising the complex concept of fatherhood and measuring involvement as a quantifiable phenomenon (Adams, 2019). Contrary to the depiction of Black fathers as "uninterested" and "uninvolved", qualitative studies providing insight in the subjectivities of Black fathers in the USA consistently highlight that Black fathers place emphasis on being present and involved in their children lives (Hamm et al., 2018; Henson, 2023; Moore et al., 2018). Black fathers are also found to be involved in their children's lives irrespective of their own experiences of being fathered, such that instead of repeating family patterns, Black men who did not have active fathers in their lives were even more motivated to be highly engaged parents (Perry & Lewis, 2016; Robinson, 2021). Black fathers in Wilson's (2018) study shared that they felt dominant depictions in the media and mainstream academia misrepresented their engagement and dedication towards raising their children. This emphasises a need for research to focus on Black fathers' lived experiences and to elevate their voices and allow them to be authors of their own stories.

Models of Black fatherhood

Scholars have developed an African American model of fatherhood, as dominant models essentialise fatherhood and assume models based on white and European fathers can accurately reflect the experiences of other fathers. For example, McAdoo (1993) identified African American fathers roles which were: the provider, shared-decision maker, child socialiser, and supporter of his spouse. McAdoo (1993) found that they placed less importance on being a sole provider and many had active roles in caregiving and egalitarian parenting practices which is commonly observed in Black families and represents a key strength in their ability to hold flexible family and gender roles (McAdoo & McAdoo, 1998; Waites, 2009). Child socialisation is a key priority for Black fathers who engage in racial and cultural socialisation regarding preparing their children for racial discrimination and prejudice, teaching culture and history and instilling egalitarian values and promotion of racial pride (Hughes et al., 2006). This highlights the impact of racism and how this

shapes the enactment of parenthood, with Black parents both in the UK and USA, sharing their experiences of devoting substantial psychological and material resources to protect their children from societal and institutional racism, inequality and disadvantage (Adams, 2019). Racial socialisation is found to lead to positive outcomes in Black children such as positive coping strategies (Caughy et al., 2011); increased educational attainment (Wang et al., 2020); and improved mental wellbeing (Neblett et al., 2013). Through socialisation Black fathers contribute to their children's socio-emotional development by providing their sons with support to navigate the systemic challenges that impact on their lives and development (Doyle et al., 2016; McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017); and supporting their daughters to develop a positive self-esteem (Cryer-Coupet et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2022).

Black fatherhood in the Global South

Research outside of the Global North, such as Nigeria (Onyeze-Joe & Godin, 2020); Ghana (Ampim et al., 2020); and South Africa (Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015); highlight the influence of communal family relationships where caring responsibilities are shared among parents, extended family and the community. A key strength of African family ideology is the high value placed on interdependent and intergenerational networks of extended families, which provides additional resources to raise children (Aborampah & Sudarkasa 2011; Jemmott, 2015). These values are also reflected in Caribbean contexts where the community are involved in the protection and rearing of children (Green et al., 2019). Involuntary displacement or separation from families coupled with the focus on community support led to the phenomenon of social fathering in Black communities which is defined as men's involvement in caregiving for non-biological children through continuous roles (i.e stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers) or situational roles (i.e mentors, mother's romantic partners, community leaders) (Green & Chuang, 2021). The prevalence of social fathering and the willingness to father non-biological children represents a key strength of Black men (Green & Chuang, 2021). In the USA, African American fathers commonly enact community fathering roles, reflecting the legacy

of communal values (Letiecq & Koblinsky, 2004). In the context of migration Black families negotiate their native and majority ideologies, moving to individualistic cultures from collectivistic and communal cultural values which can affect their family structures and practices (Reynolds, 2001).

The unique position of Black men and Black boys

In the Global North, Black men navigate a myriad of challenges across different systems as a result of gendered anti-blackness (Lemmons & Johnson, 2022). In the USA it is well documented that Black men face disparate employment rates (Austin, 2021), disproportionate incarceration and criminalisation (Schnittker et al., 2011), disparate mental health diagnoses (Metzl, 2010); punitive child welfare systems (Roberts, 2022) and mortality rates (Curry, 2018). Similarly, in the UK, Black men are consistently over-represented in secure mental health services (NHS Digital, 2018); the criminal justice system (Lammy, 2017); face discrimination in family services (Williams et al., 2012); and are least likely to be employed despite their qualifications (Khan 2020; McGregor-Smith, 2017). Research centred on the experiences of Black men highlight that they perceive racial and gender discrimination as key factors which influence their self-image and aspirations (Alibhai-Brown & Henry, 2008); mental health (Ojurongbe, 2023), and their identity and experiences as fathers (Wallace, 2023; Williams et al., 2012). Black fathers raise their children whilst contending with their own experiences of social injustice.

The disparities Black men face start in childhood, with Black boys being labelled as 'problematic' and as a 'threat' to society, which has influenced disproportionate rates of school expulsions and criminalisation of Black boys from a young age (Dumas & Nelson, 2016); and detrimental impacts on their socio-emotional development and mental health; rendering their experiences as distinct from other childhoods (Gilmore & Bettis, 2021). Father's involvement in their son's lives has distinct contributions to the wellbeing of boys (Cunningham et al., 2012). For Black fathers they are tasked with supporting their sons to develop healthy identities and ensure their

psychological and physical safety in society that negatively views their Blackness and gender and poses an existential threat (Lemmons & Johnson, 2022). Black fathers provide their sons with protection, support and the unique insight of surviving the same context, which highlights the importance of the Black father-son dyad (McLeod & Tirmazi, 2017). Given that Black boys will grow up to be Black men, understanding Black fathers' roles in supporting their development in the face of disparities is paramount.

Conclusion

Overall, the existing literature demonstrates the prevalence of deficit, problem saturated narratives of Black men and a lack of consideration of socio-political, systemic and contextual factors that influence Black fathers' experiences. There has been a paucity of research that focuses on Black fathers' lived experiences, which has limited the understanding of Black fathers' experiences of raising their children and their ability to describe their reality in their own words and to create their own narratives. Given that Black fatherhood will be influenced by historical and current factors that shape the meaning of both being Black and male, this highlights a need to elevate Black fathers' voices and to recognise their varied familial and social experiences across the diasporic spectrum, with the recognition of the ever-present impact of race, racism and power embedded in social structures in the Global North.

CHAPTER TWO: SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Overview

In this chapter I will outline the Systematic Literature Review (SLR), detailing the aims, review strategy, methodology and quality appraisal of identified studies. I will discuss the themes generated through a meta-synthesis of the literature and provide a summary of the findings which informs a rationale for the current study.

Aims and Scope of the SLR

A SLR provides an overview, synthesis and critical appraisal of existing literature using standardised, rigorous and replicable methods (Thomas & Harden, 2008). The bringing together of knowledge from the existing evidence base allows researchers to identify gaps in the literature and to construct novel research questions (Gough & Richardson, 2018). This systematic literature review aims to provide a synthesis and quality assessment of existing literature pertaining to Black fatherhood. This SLR aims to explore what is currently known about Black fathers lived experiences in the Global north. It will specifically explore:

What are Black fathers' views on raising Black children in the Global North?

What are Black fathers' lived experiences of fathering and being fathered?

What are Black fathers' views on supports and barriers that impact fatherhood?

Review Strategy

A scoping search on Black fathers' experiences was conducted on PROSPERO international prospective register of systematic reviews, Cochrane Library and the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination databases, which highlighted an absence of a systematic literature review on this topic. The review protocol for this systematic review was registered with the PROSPERO international prospective register of systematic reviews (http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero,

registration number: CRD42023474173). A meta-synthesis approach was employed, which entailed summarising key findings of qualitative literature exploring Black fathers lived experiences to form a new interpretation of the phenomena of Black fatherhood (Siddaway et al., 2019). This approach allows for the synthesis of results from primary qualitative research whilst preserving the context of each study, which has demonstrated utility in informing clinical practice and policy through highlighting key constructs that represent the phenomenon being reviewed (Siddaway et al., 2019; Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria are illustrated in Table 2. This review excluded quantitative studies, as quantitative methodologies focus on numerical representativity and reliance on statistical analysis, which is not compatible with understanding the complex phenomena of Black fatherhood and the social constructionist epistemological stance of this research (Queirós et al., 2017). Studies with mixed methodologies were initially considered for inclusion, however a scoping search found they often lacked an in-depth focus on individual experiences and qualitative methodologies were often used to complement or confirm quantitative findings; therefore, mixed method studies were omitted from the review (Taherdoost, 2022). Moreover, a scoping search identified an absence of a review in this area and qualitative studies are well placed to explore a phenomenon with limited existing research (Creswell, 2016; Queirós et al., 2017). Studies that focused on non-biological fathers were excluded, as social fathering within Black communities are found to constitute as a construct within its own right and there have been studies solely focusing on this as a phenomenon (e.g. Green & Chuang, 2021; McDougal & George, 2016). Studies conducted in the last decade (2013-present) were included to capture contemporary research due to the concept of fatherhood being amenable to time, social-cultural context and discourse which is ever changing (Dermott & Miller, 2015; Prattes, 2022). Research outside of the Global North was considered, for example Black fatherhood in the Caribbean (Green et al., 2019); and Black Fatherhood in Africa (Sikweyiya

et al., 2017); however, such studies indicated that concepts of fatherhood were socially, culturally and contextually bound to geographical location. Only studies in the Global North were included, due to the shared experiences of Black people in this diasporic context (Hall, 2015). Only studies written in English were included due to a restricted budget and time constraints which would pose difficulties in translating non-English research studies.

Table 2.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
The study must contain data from Black men and a focus on their lived experiences of fatherhood	The study focuses on Black fatherhood in the Global South
Primary studies using a qualitative design	The study focuses on Black fathers' non-biological parenting experiences
The study must be empirically based	The study is a review of previous literature
The study must be in a peer-reviewed journal	The study uses a quantitative design
The study must have been published in the last 10 years (2013-2023)	The study is in another language other than English
The study is based in the Global North and must be written in or translated into English	The study was published before 2013

Search Strategy

An electronic database search was conducted using SCOPUS (25.09.2023); APA PsycArticles (25.09.2023); and SAGE journals (28.09.2023). These multi-disciplinary databases allowed for a wide range of literature to be identified from psychology, health, social science and behavioural disciplines. In addition, Google Scholar (05.10.2023) was used to supplement the search and citation searches were carried out from the reference lists of relevant papers to identify further relevant

literature. Alerts were created to identify any new publications and final searches were conducted on 01.12.2023. Search terms were informed by the PICo review protocol to conduct an expansive search of the databases (Appendix 1). Using broader search terms and Boolean '*AND'/ 'OR'* operators lead to the identification of relevant literature (see Table 3) (see Appendix 2 for specific search terms used in each database).

Table 3.

Example search terms used for conducting systematic review

BLACK	*FATHERS*	*RAISING*	*CHILDREN*
Black AND	Fathers AND	Raising AND	Children
African OR	Men OR	Bringing up OR	Kids OR
Caribbean OR	Male OR	Rearing OR	Youth OR
Afro-Caribbean OR	Man OR	Parenting OR	Sons OR
OR African American	Dad OR	Fatherhood	Daughters

Covidence, an online software platform was used to aid screening and data extraction. Papers identified from journal searches were imported into Covidence and 1,374 titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevancy. Once duplicates were removed and irrelevant papers were screened out, a total of 61 studies underwent an in-depth review which led to a total of 25 included in the systematic review. Determining relevancy involved continuously referring to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The systematic review process is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

PRISMA Diagram
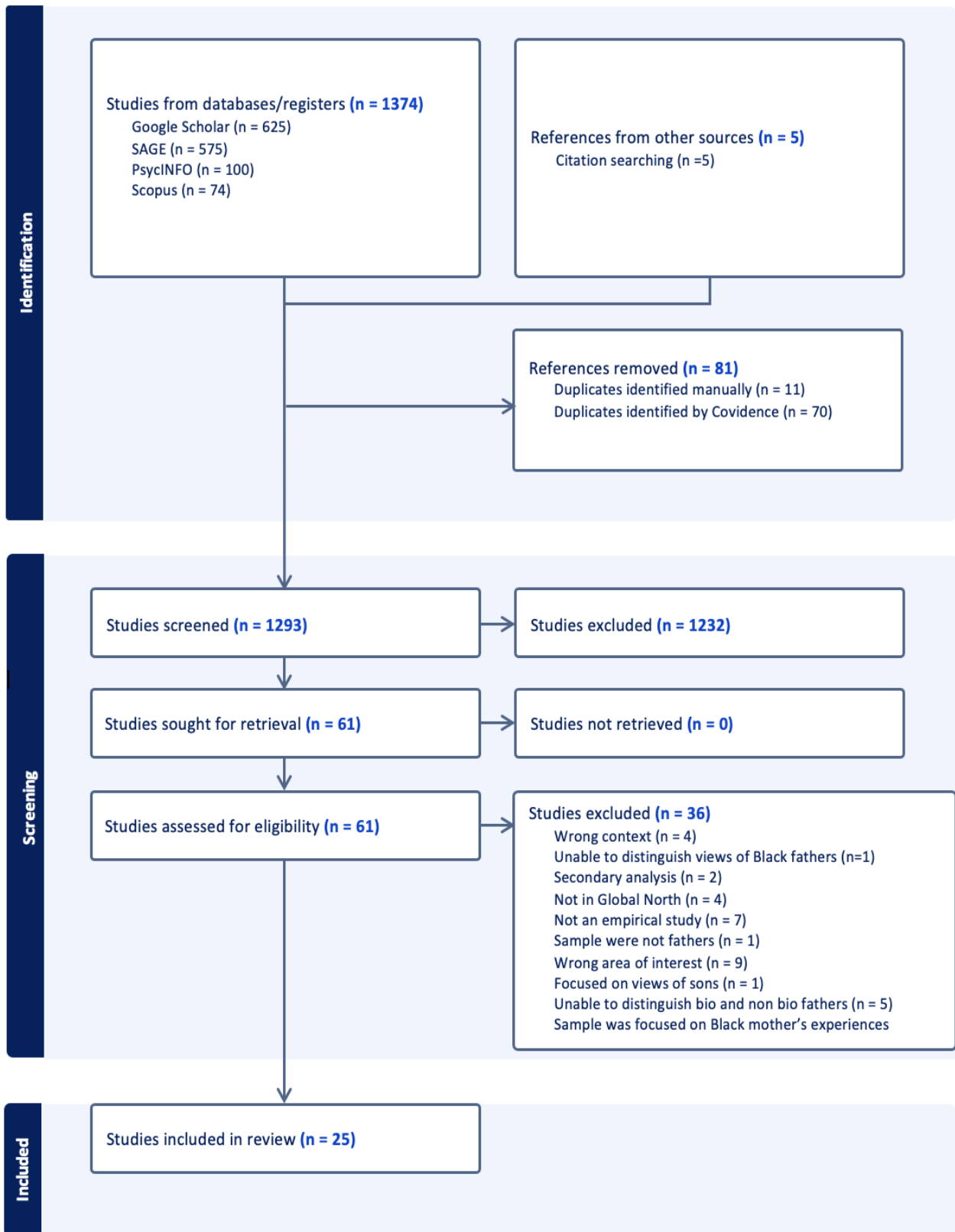
Summary of Results

The final 25 included studies were selected in line with the inclusion and exclusion criteria and are summarised in Table 4. The majority of studies were based in the USA (n=23), whilst a limited number of identified studies were based in the UK (n=2); highlighting the lack of research conducted with Black fathers in the UK context. The studies all included a wide age range of Black fathers from 18 years old to 61 years of age, who had a varying number of children. Most studies included only Black men however two studies included the views of white fathers (Hamm et al., 2018); and Hispanic fathers (Roy et al., 2023); as Black fathers' responses were clearly labelled these studies were included in the literature review. The majority of studies only included biological fathers however two studies (Hamm et al., 2018; Howard et al., 2013), also included non-biological fathers, however as the majority of the samples were biological fathers and their responses were clearly labelled these papers were included. Five papers were excluded as biological and non-biological fathers' responses were grouped together and were not distinguishable from the results. Whilst some studies focused on Black fathers' general experiences, findings highlight that Black fathers' experiences were often explored in specific contexts. Such contexts include: Black fathers who had been incarcerated or arrested (Dill et al., 2016; Henson, 2023; Welch et al., 2019); urban and low income Black fathers (Fleck et al., 2013; Threlfall et al., 2013); marriage and co-parenting influences on fatherhood (Doyle et al., 2014; Murray & Hwang, 2015, 2020; Perry et al., 2013); experiences with their own fathers (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Leath, 2017; Perry & Lewis, 2016; Robinson, 2021); and Black fathers' views on raising sons (Doyle et al., 2015; Doyle et al., 2016; Gordon et al., 2013; Howard et al., 2013). The majority of the studies used interviews as a method of data collection (n=19), with a minority using focus groups (n=2), both focus groups and interviews (n=2), one using written responses (n=1) and one paper utilised a single case study design (n=1). Common data

analysis methods employed were thematic analysis (n=8); phenomenological approaches (n=7); grounded theory informed approaches (n=6); with a minority of studies using a mixture of approaches (n=2); content analysis (n=1); and Consensual Qualitative Research (n=1). Fifty-six percent of the studies used recruitment strategies that involved collaboration with community gatekeepers and organisations, showing that this is a common and successful method of recruiting Black fathers. Despite the growing uptake of Participatory Action Research which promotes equitable participation of 'participants' in research, none of the included studies utilised this approach. However, it was noted that in line with the ethos of decolonising research, which critiques traditional western systems of knowledge production and aims to highlight the voices of marginalised groups, a proportion of the studies (n=14) acknowledged dominant narratives in the Global North regarding Black fathers and aimed to provide counter-narratives and strengths-based perspectives. This suggests this was a key agenda in research on Black fatherhood in the last 10 years.

Table 4.

Data extraction

Title, Author, Country	Aim	Participants/ Sampling	Data Collection, Analysis, Theory	Main Themes	Strengths (+) And Limitations (-)	Consideration of Decolonisation/inclusive research/counter-narratives
A new form of double consciousness: Narratives on the duality of being a Black father and counselor educator during# BlackLivesMatter. Brooks et al. (2021) USA	To explore double-consciousness in Black men who are educators and Black fathers in the context of police brutality.	Purposive, Convenience, Snowballing N=10 Black fathers who are counsellor educators	Written responses to survey questions Narrative Theory Hermeneutical stance Thematic Analysis	1) Intensified state of mind 2) Burning the candle from both ends 3) Opportunities come in the greatest struggle	+ Used multiple methods to enhance credibility of findings. + Addressed a gap in the literature regarding men who are Black fathers and work in academia. - Limited demographic information. - Written responses to questions lack depth of interviews.	Framed Black men as the experts of their lived experiences and used a strengths-based focus. Highlighted the importance of Black males telling their stories and countering dominant discourses.

"I Want a Second Chance" experiences of African American fathers in reentry. Dill et al. (2016) USA	To explore the experiences of African American fathers' post incarceration, in re-entry.	Sampled from community-based organisation providing fatherhood initiatives N=16 Age M=28 African American fathers post incarceration	One semi-structured focus group Standpoint theory Interpretive Thematic analysis	1) Redemption 2) Employment 3) Health care 4) Social support	+ Sample sufficient for thematic analysis. + Provided insight into the usefulness of fatherhood initiatives. - Limited generalisability due to specific sample. - Findings emerged from one focus group in a specific town. - Limited information regarding data analysis process.	Standpoint theory used to amplify fathers' voices, to centre research and thinking from the lives of the oppressed.

Black fathers' personal histories, worldviews, and fathering behaviors. Dilworth-Bart et al. (2022) USA	To describe how Black fathers connect their childhoods to how they view and engage in the work of fathering.	Strategy not stated N=30 Age range= 29-61 (M=41.97, SD =8.81) Average no. children = 3.31 children (range 1–5) Age range of children = 3 weeks to 26 years old Black fathers	In depth semi-structured interviews Life course theory Integrative model of minority child development Thematic analysis	1) Personal History 2) Fathering Worldview 3) Fathering Relationships and Behaviours	+ In depth, rich data collection and analysis. + Large sample size. + Highlighted the voices of Black fathers. - Sampling strategy unclear. - Existing theories drove analytical strategy.	Used model specific to minority child development which counters deficit approaches and considers social position in understanding the experiences of Black fathers (Coll et al., 1996).

"You gotta have a good help mate": African American fathers' co-parenting experiences. Doyle et al. (2014) USA	To explore residential and non-residential African American fathers' co-parenting experiences.	Convenience sampling Community liaison, word of mouth, flyers in local community businesses N=30 Age range =28–60 (M=40.67, SD=8.66) N=20 residential. N=10 non-residential Fathers of sons 8-12 years old at broad risk for developing aggressive behaviours or depressive symptomology African American fathers	Semi-structured Interviews Demographic questionnaire Pilot study Informed by grounded theory	1) Value of family 2) Gender differences in parenting 3) Key coparenting domains	+ Under researched area of interest. + Developed a preliminary conceptual framework which can be used to inform future studies. + Rigorous data analysis. - Criteria of 'at risk sons' was broadly defined and not clearly operationalised. - Limited generalisability to fathers of sons 'at risk'. - No reflection on researcher position. - Convenience sample poses limited application of grounded theory.	Not considered.

Unheard voices: African American fathers speak about their parenting practices. Doyle et al. (2015) USA	To explore African American fathers' parenting practices and how they promote healthy behaviours, emotions and positive coping in their at risk pre-adolescent sons.	Convenience sample Community liaison, word of mouth, flyers in local community businesses N=30 Age range= 28–60 (M=40.67, SD=8.66) Fathers of sons 8-12 years old at broad risk for developing aggressive behaviours or depressive symptomology African American fathers	Semi-structured Interviews Demographic questionnaire Systematic Inductive analysis	1) Managing emotions 2) Encouragement 3) Discipline 4) Monitoring	+ Multiple methods used to enhance credibility of findings. + Included diverse sample of fathers. + Large sample size. - Criteria of 'at risk sons' was broadly defined and not clearly operationalised. - Limited generalisability to fathers of sons 'at risk' - No reflection on researcher position.	Not considered.

"Don't wait for it to rain to buy an umbrella:" The transmission of values from African American fathers to sons. Doyle et al. (2016) USA	To explore the values African American fathers' instil within their sons.	Nonprobability sample Community liaison, word of mouth, flyers in local community businesses. N=30 Age range= 28–60 (M=40.67 SD=8.66) Fathers of sons 8-12 years old. (M=9.87, SD=1.20) At broad risk for developing aggressive behaviours or depressive symptomology African American fathers	Semi-structured Interviews Demographic questionnaire Informed by Grounded Theory	1) Cultural messages 2) Education 3) Respect 4) Responsibility 5) Modelling	+ Diverse sample of African American fathers. + Informed understanding of relationship and transmission of values between fathers and sons. + Large Sample Size - No reflection on researcher position - Did not use sampling techniques associated with grounded theory such a theoretical sampling. - Criteria of 'at risk sons' was broadly defined and not clearly operationalised. - Limited generalisability to fathers of sons 'at risk'	Not considered.

You can't put a dollar amount on presence: Young, non-resident, low-income, African American fathers. Fleck et al. (2013) USA	To describe the lived experiences of young, non-resident, low-income, African American fathers	Convenience sample Recruited from community fatherhood programme N=6 Age range = 19-24 No. of children 1-4 Young, non-resident, low-income, African American fathers	Semi-structured interviews Transcendental Phenomenology	1) A Work in Progress: Fatherhood Investment 2) A Little Island by Myself: Barriers to Fathering 3) I'm Going to be There From Day One to Infinity: Presence 4) The Tomorrow Dad: Not Like my Dad	+ Counter narrative to negative perceptions of non-resident fathers. + Participants attended focus groups to validate themes. - Small sample size. - Limited generalisability due to recruitment from fatherhood programme. - Specific to low income, non-resident fathers		Consulted African American mothers and fathers, field experts and community-based fatherhood coordinator in design and analysis.
Raising Black males from a Black father's perspective: A phenomenological study. Gordon et al. (2013) USA	To describe the lived experiences of Black fathers and their views on parenting their sons and raising a successful Black male in America.	Purposeful and criterion sampling N=7 Age M= 34 Black fathers	Interviews Demographic questionnaire Written responses Participant observation. Phenomenological study	1) Fathers are role models 2) It takes a village 3) Critical juncture 4) Exposure 5) Education was mandatory	+ Multiple methods used to enhance credibility of findings. + Used existing theories relevant to Black experiences to inform interview questions. - Limited information on where participants were recruited from.		Not considered.

			Narrative analysis	6) Essential ingredients	- Unclear how written responses and participant observations influenced findings. - Small sample size.	
"The Financial Is the Main Issue, It's Not Even the Child": Exploring the Role of Finances in Men's Concepts of Fatherhood and Fertility Intention. Hamm et al. (2018) USA	To explore how finances impact Black fathers' views of fatherhood, fertility intention, and contraceptive use	Opportunistic and Purposive sampling N=31. Age range 18-45 N=21 Black fathers	Semi-structured Interviews. Demographic Questionnaire Content analysis	1) Financial stability is important before starting a family 2) "Providing" is an important component of good fathering 3) Men's financial stability appears to shape their fertility intentions but not necessarily their behaviours 4) Desire for financial counselling in family planning services	+ Sufficient sample size for content analysis. + The use of content analysis and interviews supported analysis. - Black and White fathers grouped experiences were group together based on low-income status, but differences were not explored in content analysis or interpretations. - No reflection on researcher position	Not considered.

"The biggest thing you can rob is somebody's time": Exploring how the carceral state bankrupts fathers through temporal debt. Henson (2023) USA	To understand and examine the process of temporal debt	Flyers, approaching men in the community and snowball sampling N=22 Average of 1.96 children (SD = 1.4) Children ages M= 8.8 (SD = 3.84) Black fathers with an arrest record	Semi structured interviews Inductive approach	1) Criminal Legal System Impact on Fatherhood 2) Prison Impact on Children 3) Influence on Fathers	+ Engaged in coding comparison with objective researcher and changes made if less than 80% agreement. + Explored views of an under researched group. - Does not address study limitations. - Limited generalisability to fathers with arrest records.	Not considered.
Raising African American boys: an exploration of gender and racial socialization practices. Howard et al. (2013)	To explore Black parents' racial and gender socialisation practices with African American sons.	Recruited at child-care centres local social service agencies and via e-mail N=6 Age of sons= 3-8 years old	Interviews Grounded theory	1) Racial socialisation 2) Building pride 3) Acknowledging diversity 4) Spirituality or religion 5) Gender socialisation 6) Role models	+ Sufficient sample size for small qualitative study. + Guided by gender and racial socialisation theories. - No reflection on researcher position. - Does not address study limitations.	Not considered.

USA		African American fathers			7) Strength and leadership 8) Performances of masculinity	
Being better than my dad: A qualitative case study of one African American father's journey with parenthood and intergenerational change. Leath (2017) USA	To explore the story of an African American father.	Recruited from a church intervention programme N=1 Age=22 Son=3 African American father	Semi-structured interviews Phenomenological grounded theory approach	1) Father-Absence in the Neighbourhood 2) Tron's Father 3) Intergenerational Change	+ Highlighted a counter narrative to dominant narratives about Black men. + In depth analysis of one father's story. - Recall bias could have impacted ability to recall childhood experiences. - Based on a single case.	Aim of the study was to present a counternarrative and employ a strengths-based framework. Critiqued deficit based literature. The father's experiences guided the interview process.
Raising children in the UK: the screams of Zimbabwean migrant parents. Machaka (2023)	To explore Zimbabwean migrant parents' experiences of raising children in the UK.	Purposive and snowball sampling N=5 Age range=37-50 Children: 1-4	In depth interviews Field notes Drawings/images that reflect parenting experiences	1) Shared Worlds 2) Parenting in the UK System 3) The Parenting Journey 4) This is our home now	+ Used a conceptual framework to guide the research study. + Highlighted voices from a under researched group. - Unclear how images or drawings contributed to findings.	Used 'The Screaming Silences' framework which recognises the importance of individual or group interpretations of experiences and highlights the voices of those under researched or actively silenced (Serrant-Green, 2011). Individuals who shared cultural background of participants supported data analysis.

UK		Age range= 1-22	Phenomenologic al approach		- Limited generalisability.	
		Black fathers who have migrated from Zimbabwe to the UK	Thematic analysis			
Barriers to successful fatherhood among African American men. Moore et al. (2018) USA	To explore barriers to successful fatherhood among African American men and to explore their perceptions regarding the utilisation of marriage and family therapy treatment.	In person, social media, flyers in community spaces Snowball sampling N=10 Age range: 24-55 No. of children= 1-5 African American fathers who do not have physical custody of their children	Semi-structured interviews Written notes Observations Phenomenology	1) Perceptions of Success 2) Perceptions of Barriers to Fatherhood 3) The Stigma of Therapy	+ Had difficulties in recruitment but did get men to take part. + Focused on successful fatherhood as opposed to deficits. - Small sample size. - Limited generalisability.	Critiqued deficit-based literature. Focused on highlighting successful Black fatherhood.

Perceived father roles of married African American men: A phenomenological study. Murray & Hwang (2015) USA	To explore how married African American men define their fatherhood role.	Purposeful, criterion, and snowball sampling Recruited in local churches and through community organisations/ gatekeepers N=8 Age M=36 No. of children M=2 Married African American fathers	Email and telephone communications Semi-structured interviews Field notes Transcendental Phenomenology	What does it mean to be a good or responsible father? 1) Provide for their children 2) Physically and emotionally present What is the role of fathers in the family? 1) Provider 2) Role Model/Sex-Role Model 3) Disciplinarian 4) Leader 5) Supporter 6) Spiritual Teacher/Teacher 7) Guide	+ Multiple methods to enhance credibility. + Approach allowed fathers to describe their individual experiences. + Used conceptual frameworks to guide analysis. - Sample limited to married fathers living with their children, all college educated, small geographical area. - Small sample size.	Critiqued existing research and negative portrayals of Black men. Strengths-based focus and aimed to provide counter narrative.

Exploring Parenting Influences: Married African American Fathers' Perspectives. Murray & Hwang (2020) USA	To explore married, resident African American fathers' perceptions about sources and influences on parenting approaches.	Purposeful and snowball sampling Collaboration with community gatekeepers N=8 Age M=36 Married African American fathers	Email and telephone communication Semi-structured interviews Field notes Thematic coding	1) Diverse Influences	+ Illuminated fathers lived experiences. + Used a range of theories of intergenerational transmission, social learning theory and modelling and compensation hypotheses. - Limited generalisability. - Small sample size.	Critiqued existing research and negative portrayals of Black men. Strengths-based framework.
A Package Deal? African American Men's Perspectives on the Intersection of Marriage and Fatherhood. Perry et al. (2013) USA	To explore African American fathers attitudes toward marriage, romantic relationships, and fatherhood.	Targeted, community-based sampling Recruited from a local university, social service agencies, barbershops, and philanthropic organizations N=33 Age M= 41.00 (SD = 15.88) No. of Children= 1.96 (SD= .63)	Semi structured in depth interviews Consensual qualitative research (CQR) approach	1) Package deal 2) Untangling marriage and fatherhood (3) Engaged fathering as a pathway to marriage	+ Highlighted fathers' perceptions of fatherhood and marriage. + Diverse sample illuminated different views. + Large sample size. - Limited generalisability. - No reflection on researcher position. - Used traditional western family structures to understand Black	Not considered.

		fatherhood.					
		African American fathers					
Leaving legacies: African American men discuss the impact of their fathers on the development of their own paternal attitudes and behavior. Perry & Lewis (2016) USA	To explore the lived experiences of African American fathers relative to their relationships with their fathers and their own fathering attitudes and behaviours.	Purposive sampling N=25 Age M=47.20 (SD = 13.36 Age range= 19–64 Children M= 2.70 (SD = 3.39) Age range= 1–10 African American fathers	Semi-structured interviews Phenomenologic al approach	1) "Chip off the old block" 2) "Turning it around" 3) "leaving a legacy"	+ + - -	Highlighted a diverse group of fathers. Addressed gap in the literature. No reflection on researcher position or use of reflexivity. Recall bias due to fathers having to recollect their own experiences of being parented.	Not considered.
Black Fathers' Perspectives About Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress: Results From Focus Groups.	To assess Black fathers' perspectives about early childhood adversity to help guide strategies and social service practices to	Face-to-face conversations, word of mouth, presentations at community father-initiative meetings, flyers in Black neighbourhoods and businesses,	Focus Groups Thematic Analysis	1) Contributors to Early Childhood Adversity in the Black Community 2) Assets to Help Prevent Early	+ + -	Engaged in community member checking. Sufficient sample size for thematic analysis. No reflection on researcher position or use of reflexivity.	Checked findings with the community to include their views in interpretating the results.

Powe et al. (2023) USA	increase their engagement in primary prevention programs.	local fatherhood groups N=16 Age range= 18-59 M= 39 (SD=9.30) Children M=2.44 (SD=1.32) African, Afro-Caribbean, Black/African American Fathers		Adversity and Toxic Stress 3) Needs to Help Prevent Early Adversity and Toxic Stress	- Limited generalisability.	
Exploring parental identities: How single Black males understand fatherhood in the absence of their fathers. Robinson (2021) USA	To gain an understanding of how single Black males raised without a father navigate their own roles as fathers.	Purposive maximum variation sampling Recruited from mentor and coaching programme N=7 Age range 19-30 M=27 Children	Structured interviews Demographic questionnaire Inductive and deductive Thematic Analysis	1) Fatherhood and being a father requires a personal commitment 2) Being present in their child's life is a way of acknowledging fatherhood.	+ Highlighted a counter narrative to dominant stories. + Used theories such as social-ecological theory of social development and a cultural ecological perspective to inform study. - Small sample. - Limited generalisability due to recruitment from fatherhood programme.	Consulted with Black fathers from conception of research. Counter narrative and strengths-based focus.

		M=2				
		Age range= 2 months to 11 years old				
		Single Black fathers				
The Experiences of Hispanic and African American Student-Fathers on College Campuses. Roy et al. (2023) USA	To investigate the lived experiences of African American and Hispanic fathers attending minority-based institutions.	Selective sampling Flyers on college campuses N=9 Age range 20-27 Children Age range= 2 months-6 years old Black and African American fathers	Semi structured interviews Focus groups Demographic data Grounded theory	1) Family support 2) Uncertainty in parenting practices 3) Co-parenting relationships 4) Responsibility as a father 5) Negative stereotypes 6) Fatherhood as motivation	+ Rich data. + Combined focus group and interview data to enhance findings. + Included diverse sample (resident, non-resident, single and married fathers). - Small sample and limited to fathers who are students. - Grouped Hispanic and Black fathers together and did not explore potential differences between groups.	Highlighted resilience and strengths of fathers. Offered counternarratives to dominant depictions.

The parenting role of African-American fathers in the context of urban poverty. Threlfall et al. (2013) USA	To understand how low-income urban African American fathers shape their paternal role and practices	Flyers in high-poverty neighbourhoods Collaboration with community partner N=36 Age M=37 Children At least one child Age range= 1- 4 Urban, low income African American fathers	Focus groups Individual interviews Inductive Thematic Analysis	1) Providing and Nurturing in Poverty 2) The Psychological Burden of Poverty 3) The Burden of Child Support 4) A Different Environment 5) Teaching and Role Modelling 6) Beyond the Neighbourhood	+ Large sample size. + In depth data from focus groups and interviews. + Used cultural ecological perspectives as a conceptual framework. - Limited to low-income urban fathers. - No reflection on researcher position or use of reflexivity.	Not considered.
What are the experiences of black African and African Caribbean men during the transition to fatherhood? Turner & Stenner (2021) UK	To explore the experiences of Black African and Caribbean fathers in England during the transition to fatherhood.	Purposive, Snowball sampling Posters at churches and children's centres N=8 Age= 29-43 Children Age range=	Semi-structured interviews Interpretive Phenomenological Approach	1) Preparation for fatherhood 2) Experiences post birth 3) Influences on ideas about fatherhood 4) Reflections on transition and suggestions for support for future fathers	+ Included a 'hard-to-reach' population. + Illuminated views in an under researched area. - Small sample recruited mostly from churches. - Limited generalisability.	Consulted with the community regarding the research materials and terminology and incorporated feedback.

		1 month- 9 years old						
		Black African and Caribbean fathers						
"That's How They Label Us:" Gendered-Antiblackness, Black Fathers, and the Parenting of Black Children.	To understand how gendered antiblackness shapes the experiences, perceptions and parenting approaches of Black fathers.	Purposive, Criterion and snowball sampling	In depth semi structured interviews	1)	Racialised Experiences	+	Theoretical lens allowed data to be analysed at a societal, social ecological level.	Sought to counter dominant knowledge and use of conventional research designs and theories.
				2)	Racialised Perceptions			
		Information distributed in local community areas and organisations	Thematic Analysis	3)	Racialised Fathering Strategies & Practices.	+	Used novel approach of understanding Black fathers' experiences through gendered antiblackness.	Used a gendered antiblackness interpretative lens to centre research on Black fathers' unique experiences and consider the impact of race, racism and gender.
		N=10				-	Limited demographics (age, children).	
Wallace (2023)								
USA		Black fathers from working- and middle-class backgrounds				-	Limited generalisability.	

Through their lens: The parental experience of formerly incarcerated Black fathers. Welch et al. (2019) USA	To explore the lived parental experience of formerly incarcerated Black fathers.	Criterion sampling N=7 Age range 20-59 No. of children Range= 1-4 Formerly incarcerated Black fathers in a transitional living facility	Short interviews Transcendental Phenomenology	1) Past experience influenced parenting in the present 2) Contact with children was consistent 3) Personal growth contributed to parental growth	+ + -	Sample size sufficient for a phenomenological study. Detailed information about each participant. Interviews intended to last 45-90 minutes but they were 10-30 minutes. Limited generalisability.	Study sought to give voice to Black fathers' narratives. Included Black fathers in analysis and dissemination.

Quality Assessment

All of the included studies were critically appraised to determine the quality, credibility and value of the research through evaluating methodological strengths and limitations (Noyes et al., 2018). To assess the quality of studies, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool for qualitative research was used (CASP, 2018). The CASP tool is frequently used as a quality appraisal framework for syntheses of qualitative research in health and social sciences and is endorsed by the Cochrane Qualitative and Implementation Methods Group (Noyes et al., 2018). The suitability of the CASP tool for novice qualitative researchers has been noted (Long et al., 2020). The CASP tool consists of 10 checklist questions broadly assessing the validity, methodological credibility and value of the research (CASP, 2018). Despite the usefulness of the tool, it has been critiqued for limited guidance on its implementation and interpretation (Long et al., 2020). Due to this, studies will be rated as 'high quality' if they meet at least 8 of the criteria, 'medium quality' if they meet 5–7 of the criteria and 'low quality' if they meet 4 or less; this scoring interpretation has been used previously in systematic reviews (e.g. Kanavaki et al., 2016; Masnoon et al., 2018). The quality assessment of all included papers is shown in Table 5.

Overall, the included studies were rated as medium (n=5) to high quality (n=20), highlighting that most research completed in this area was of high quality. The vast majority of included studies provided a clear aim and rationale for the research and highlighted the need for qualitative research methodologies to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of Black fathers. The studies frequently used multiple methods to enhance the credibility of the research such as member checking, multiple coders and reviewers and triangulation methods. Despite reflexivity and exploration of researcher positionality deemed essential in qualitative research due to the influence of the researcher's socio-cultural context throughout the research process (Bourke, 2014); several included studies did not reflect on this (n=15).

Commonly, they simply stated the race of researchers without detailed or explicit reflection on the impact of this or the totality of their context on the research (Doyle et al., 2014, 2015, 2016; Perry & Lewis, 2016; Powe, 2023; Turner & Stenner, 2021). Another common factor that impacted quality ratings, were the lack of ethical considerations in some included studies (n=10). The included studies made valuable contributions to the field by highlighting Black fathers' views which are frequently underrepresented in the literature. The findings had implications for policy, fatherhood interventions, social care, healthcare and supporting families and children.

Reflexivity

In order to enhance the quality of the systematic review, reflexivity through completion of reflexive journals and multiple reviewers in data extraction and quality appraisals, were used as methods to enhance the credibility of findings (Laher & Hassem, 2020). As the review involved the analysis of primary research studies, I reflected on my researcher position, which has the potential to influence the selection, interpretation and appraisal of the findings (Rees et al., 2017). I reflected on my position as a Black female researcher, who was heavily invested in the topic of Black fathers due to personal and professional experiences. I became aware that some identified papers used stigmatising language to describe Black fathers, which I found personally triggering. To manage these feelings, I used a reflexive journal and research supervision (see Appendix 3). To reduce potential biases of having one reviewer, two doctoral level researchers reviewed 25 % of the identified papers (n=6) for data extraction and quality appraisal, and ratings were combined. This achieved a 95% concordance rating. This also helped to reduce the limitations of the CASP model, which is critiqued for low inter-rater agreement, although high concordance between reviewers were found in this study (Long et al., 2020).

Table 5.

Quality Assessment

Title, Author	1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	2. Is a qualitative method appropriate?	3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	7. Have ethical issues been considered?	8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	10. How valuable is the research?	Rating
Brooks et al. (2021)	Yes- outlined rationale and aims for the research	Yes- appropriate to explore and understand experiences	Can't tell - used written responses to a survey for data collection and no outline of rationale	Yes- stated recruitment and sampling strategy, had specific target population in line with study aims and proximity to participants	Yes- clear methods of data collection, outlined questions used in the survey	Yes- bracketing and reflexivity used, each author reflected on their researcher position	Yes- discussed ethical issues	Yes- rigorous data analysis process, methods to enhance credibility of findings. Discussed how supporting quotes were selected and how reflexive process affected findings	Yes- clear findings explicit and supporting quotes, findings discussed in relation to research questions and aims	Yes- addressed gap in the literature	High

Dill et al. (2016)	Yes- clear rationale and research questions stated	Yes- methodology appropriate to explore experiences	Yes- outlines rationale for design and the use of theory	Yes- recruitment strategy appropriate to achieve sample	Can't tell - outlines method but does not include topic guide	Yes- first authors position discussed and shared with participants	No- did not discuss ethical issues	Yes- outlined rigorous process of data analysis	Yes- explicit findings and themes with supporting quotes and links to theory	Yes- valuable for specific area of interest and context of post incarceration	High
Dilworth-Bart et al. (2022)	Yes – outlined rationale and aims for the research	Yes- methodology appropriate to describe Black fathers experiences	Yes- clearly outlines analytic approach and rationale of research design	Can't tell- specific strategy not stated, unclear selection criteria or where participants were recruited from	Yes- clear methods of data collection and relation to aims	Yes- each authors relationship to research and participants discussed	Yes- discussed ethical issues	Yes- rigorous analysis process and links to theory	Yes- detailed descriptions of themes with supporting quotes and explored within theme differences	Yes- outlined links to child development and socio-historical factors	High
Doyle et al. (2014)	Yes - outlined rationale and aims for the research	Yes- to identify themes in fathers' co-parenting experiences	Yes- highlights need and value for qualitative research in this area and the employed the design	Yes- outlined recruitment strategies and selection criteria	Yes- outlined interview process and topic guide	No- only stated researchers were Black women	Yes- outlined most ethical issues except process of approval	Yes- rigorous data analysis process, multiple methods to enhance credibility	Yes, clear findings and supporting quotes, clear link to aims, themes linked to theory	Yes- illuminates under researched area of African American fathers co-parenting experiences	High

Doyle et al. (2015)	Yes- outlined rationale and aims for the research	Yes- the study sought to explore fathers' perspectives and parenting views	Yes- highlights need and value for qualitative research in this area and rationale for design	Yes- clear recruitment strategy, inclusion criteria, processes to determine eligibility	Yes- outlined interview guide and topics, recording methods	No- only stated researchers were Black women	Can't tell- ethical issues not explicitly discussed	Yes- rigorous data analysis process, multiple methods to enhance credibility	Yes-clear findings and supporting quotes, explored contradictions within themes	Yes- highlights specific experience of fathers with 'at risk sons'	High
Doyle et al. (2016)	Yes – outlined rationale and aims for the research	Yes- to explore fathers parenting practices with their sons	Yes- highlights need and value for qualitative research in this area	Yes- clear strategy, selection criteria, processes to determine eligibility	Yes- outlined interview process and topic guide	No- only stated researchers were Black women	Yes - outlined most ethical issues except approval	Yes- rigorous data analysis process, multiple methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear findings and supporting quotes, clear link to aims, themes linked to theory	Yes- valuable and highlights parenting in the context of father and sons	High
Fleck et al. (2013)	Yes – outlined rationale and aims for the research	Yes- design appropriate to describe lived experiences	No- does not discuss rationale for design	Yes- outlined recruitment strategy, clear selection criteria	Yes- outlined data collection method, includes interview guide	Can't tell- researcher describes using reflexivity methods but does explicitly discuss their position	Yes- outlined ethical issues	Yes- rigorous data analysis approach and multiple methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear findings with supporting statements	Yes- discusses implication of findings in the development of fatherhood interventions	High

Gordon et al. (2013)	Yes- outlined rationale and aims for the research	Yes- study design compatible with study aims and research questions	Yes- clearly states rationale for design and method	No- states sampling method but unclear where or participants were recruited from and specific criteria	Yes- outlined data collection methods and rationale, topic guide included	Yes- researchers reflected on their position and discussed reflexivity methods	Can't tell- stated approval but does not outline other ethical issues	Yes- rigorous data analysis approach and multiple methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear findings with supporting statements	Yes- provides insight into raising Black males	High
Hamm et al. (2018)	Yes - outlined rationale and aims for the research	Yes- study design compatible with study aims and research questions	Can't tell - does not explicitly outline rationale for qualitative design	Yes- outlined recruitment and screening process	Yes- outlined data collection process and interview topic guide	No- researchers did not reflect on their position	Can't tell – did not address ethical issue of withholding information from participants	Yes- outlined process of analysis and resolving inconsistencies, multiple coders	Yes- clear statement of findings, could identify quotes from black and white fathers	Yes- valuable insight into how finances impact fatherhood	Medium
Henson (2023)	Can't tell- outlined background to research but unclear of aims and research question	Yes- design appropriate to understand and explore the concept of temporal debt	Yes- outlined rationale for in depth interviews	Yes- clear process and rationale for recruitment strategy	Yes- outlined data collection processes and rationale	Yes- stated position and relationship to research which was shared with participants	No – no explicit discussion of ethical issues	Yes- rigorous analysis and methods to enhance credibility	Yes- outlined themes, supporting quotes and links to existing research	Yes- explored the emerging concept of temporal debt and outlined policy implications	High
Howard et al. (2013)	Yes- outlined aims and rationale for research	Yes- appropriate to explore the sociocultural context of fathers and	Yes- highlights rationale for research design	Yes- explained strategy and inclusion criteria	Yes- outlined interview guide and process	No- researcher did not reflect on positionality	No - no discussion of ethical issues	Yes- rigorous data analysis process and methods to	Yes- clear statement of findings with supporting quotes	Yes- insight into parenting African American sons	High

										their perspectives	enhance credibility	
Leath (2017)	Yes - clear rationale for research and aims	Yes- in depth exploration of a father's experiences	Can't tell- did not explicitly outline rationale for a case study design	Can't tell- unclear how the father was selected for the study	Yes- outlined interview process, topics and modifications	Yes- in depth analysis of positionality, reflexivity throughout	Can't tell- did not discuss ethical issues	Yes- rigorous process, methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear statement of findings, links to existing research and theory	Can't tell- limited to one experience, limited generalisability	Medium
Machaka (2023)	Yes - clear rationale for research and aims	Yes- highlights need to understand migrants parenting experiences	Yes- highlights need and value for qualitative research in this area	Yes- explained recruitment strategy and rationale	Yes- outlined conceptual framework and how this informed data collection	Yes- in depth analysis of researcher position	Can't tell- stated ethical approval but did not consider other ethical issues	Yes- rigorous analysis and methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear findings and supporting quotes, links to theory	Yes- valuable insight into the experiences of African migrants in the UK	High
Moore et al. (2018)	Yes- clear and detailed rationale and aims	Yes- design appropriate to explore lived experiences	Yes- highlights rationale for qualitative research design	Yes- outlined recruitment strategy and rationale	Yes- detailed outline of data collection methods and process	Yes- detailed discussion of reflexivity and researchers' positions	Yes- clearly outlines ethical considerations	Yes- multiple methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear statement of findings and themes with supporting quotes	Yes- valuable research into fatherhood barriers	High
Murray & Hwang (2015)	Yes- clear and detailed rationale for research and aims	Yes- design appropriate to understand perceptions of fatherhood	Yes- highlights need and value for qualitative research	Yes- discussed recruitment strategy and rationale	Yes- outlined data collection methods, rationale and topics covered	Yes- discussion of researcher position and reflexivity methods	Yes- clearly outlines ethical considerations	Yes- rigorous analysis process and methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear findings and supporting quotes, themes linked to theory	Yes- illuminated experiences of married fathers	High

Murray & Hwang (2020)	Yes - clear rationale for research and aims	Yes- design appropriate to understand perceptions of fatherhood and parenting	Yes- highlights rationale for qualitative research design	Yes- clear recruitment strategy and process	Yes- clear data collection methods and rationale	Yes- discussion of researcher position and reflexivity methods	Yes- clearly outlines ethical considerations	Yes- rigorous analysis process and methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear findings and supporting quotes, linked to theory	Yes- highlighted voices of married African American fathers	High
Perry et al. (2013)	Yes - clear aims and rationale for research	Yes- design appropriate to focus on subjective experiences and attitudes towards marriage and fatherhood	Can't tell- doesn't discuss rationale for qualitative design	Yes- explained recruitment strategy and selection criteria	Yes- clear data collection methods and rationale	No- researcher position and reflexivity methods not discussed	No – ethical issues not addressed	Yes- overview of analysis process, outlined how themes were decided, supporting quotes included	Yes-clear findings and supporting quotes	Yes- outlined implications for policy, relevance for understanding father's views	Medium
Perry & Lewis (2016)	Yes - clear aims and rationale for research	Yes- relevant to understand lived experiences of fathers	Yes- provides rationale for qualitative research and study design	Yes- clear recruitment strategy	Yes- outlined data collection methods and process, outlined topics covered	No- only states demographics of researchers	Yes- clearly outlines ethical issues	Can't tell- did not discuss rigorous analysis process or methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear findings and supporting quotes, table to illustrate	Yes- insight into specific area and unresearched group	High
Powe et al. (2023)	Yes - clear aims and rationale for research	Yes- design appropriate to understand Black fathers' perspectives	Can't tell- does not discuss rationale for qualitative design	Yes- clear recruitment strategy	Yes- clear data collection methods, included topic guide	No- states race of researchers but no mention of reflexivity methods or	Yes- outlines ethical issues	Yes- detailed and rigorous data analysis process, multiple	Yes- clear findings presented, discusses how member checking	Yes-highlights implications for supporting Black fathers and families	High

						researchers' position		coders and reviewers	influenced results		
Robinson (2021)	Yes- clear aims and detailed rationale for research	Yes- design appropriate for exploratory study of lived experiences	Yes- provided a rationale for the study design	Yes- processes to determine eligibility, rationale for strategy and sampling procedures	Yes- clear data collection methods and rationale, discussed topics covered	No- researcher position or reflexivity not discussed	Can't tell- did not consider ethical issues	Can't tell- limited information on data analysis process	Yes- clear findings, links to existing research, within theme differences	Yes- valuable research, offered counter narratives and focused on strengths	Medium
Roy et al. (2023)	Yes - clear aims and rationale for research	Yes- design relevant to understand lived experiences	Yes- provides rationale for qualitative research	Yes- clear selection criteria and rationale for sample characteristics	Yes-rationale for different types of data collection, discusses modification to data collection methods	No- did not discuss researcher position or reflexivity methods	Yes- clearly discussed ethical issues	Yes- rigorous data analysis process, themes discussed until consensus reached	Yes- clear themes and supporting evidence, within theme contradictions explored	Yes- valuable insight into student fathers, strengths based, offered counter narratives	High
Threlfall et al. (2013)	Yes - clear aims and rationale for research	Yes- design relevant to understanding fathers views on their roles	Can't tell - does not provide rationale for qualitative design	Yes- clear recruitment strategy and rationale	Yes- outlined data collection methods and procedures, how topic guide was developed	No- did not discuss researcher position or reflexivity methods	Yes- considered ethical issues	Yes- outlined rigorous analysis process, focus group and interviews compared, additional interviews until saturation reached	Yes- clear statement of findings, themes with supporting quotes	Yes- clearly outlines implications for policy, developing fatherhood programs and addressing fatherhood barriers	High

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Turner & Stenner (2021)	Yes - clear aims and rationale for research	Yes- appropriate to explore and understand experiences	Yes- provides rationale for design and use of interviews	Yes- clear recruitment strategy, strategy altered due to slow recruitment	Can't tell- limited information about process and topic guide	No- only mentions demographics of researchers, no discussion of position or reflexivity	Yes- considered ethical issues	Yes- rigorous analysis, processes to enhance credibility	Yes- clear themes discusses contradictions within themes	Yes- implications for healthcare services supporting fathers	High
Wallace (2023)	Yes- clear aims and rationale, relevance to societal issues	Yes- focus on subjective and lived experiences	Yes- provides rationale for design and use of interviews	Yes- clear strategy, rationale for sample characteristics	Can't tell – data collection methods not clear, no outline of topics covered	No- researcher position or reflexivity methods not discussed	Yes- considered ethical issues	Can't tell- limited information on data analysis process or methods to enhance credibility	Yes- clear findings and supporting quotes, themes linked to theory & existing research	Yes- valuable strengths- based focus, provided counter narratives, focused on positive parenting in Black fathers	Medium
Welch et al. (2019)	Yes - clear aims and rationale for research	Yes- relevant to understand lived experiences	Yes- provides rationale for design and use of interviews	Yes- clear recruitment strategy and rationale	Yes- clear data collection methods and rationale	Can't tell- states researcher engaged in epoche but no explicit discussion of researcher position	Can't tell- does not outline ethical approval processes, only mentions informed consent	Yes- multiple methods to enhance credibility, rigorous analysis	Yes- clear statement of findings, links to existing research and theory, within theme differences	Yes- outlined relevance to policy, highlights value of counter narratives and need for societal changes	High

Note.

Criteria
Yes= Criteria met
No=Criteria not met
Cannot tell= unsure/insufficient information
High: >8 Medium: 5-7 Low: ≥ 4

Meta-synthesis of main findings

A meta-synthesis approach was employed to extract and combine the findings of the 25 included papers to identify themes across the different studies (Thomas & Harden, 2008). This consisted of three stages: line by line coding, development of descriptive themes and generation of analytical themes; which incorporates the main components of thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2012; Thomas & Harden, 2008). This process allows for the synthesis and translation of concepts across multiple studies, whilst also considering contradictions as well as similarities across the findings (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Only first order constructs- direct quotations from Black fathers- were used to preserve the original narratives from Black fathers and to avoid second and third order interpretations of their experiences, which are prone to author biases and assumptions through multiple levels of interpretations of data (Malpass et al., 2009). Line by line coding led to the development of 98 initial descriptive themes which generated 7 main analytical themes that answered the aims and scope of this systematic literature review (see Table 6).

Table 6.

Table of themes from meta-synthesis

Major themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1. Learning to be a father	1. *Learning along the way* 2. *Influences of other family members* 3. *Media influences* 4. *Religion*
Theme 2. Parenting Practices	1. *Parenting sons* 2. *Parenting daughters* 3. *Instilling racial pride* 4. *Promoting learning and education* 5. *Preparing children for racism* 6. *Exposure to different things* 7. *Showing love and affection*
Theme 3. The roles of a father	1. *Not just being there, but being present and involved*

	2. *Being a provider*
	3. *Guiding children*
	4. *Being a role model*
	5. *Discipline*
Theme 4. Experiences of racism and discrimination	
Theme 5. Experiences of their own fathers	1. *Having absent fathers*
	2. *Positive experiences of fathers*
Themes 6. Barriers to fatherhood	1. *Financial difficulties*
	2. *Cultural mismatch*
	3. *Gender biased systems*
Theme 7. Experiences of co-parenting	1. *Difficult co-parenting*
	2. *Successful co-parenting*

Theme 1. Learning to be a father

"Having a council of elders around you and really a village".

(Roy et al., 2023, p. 468)

This overarching theme captures the different ways in which Black men described how they learned to be a father and what influenced their perceptions of fatherhood. Black fathers drew on a range of sources which they used to develop their own conceptions of fatherhood, which included themselves, learning from family, TV/media influences and principles from religion.

Subtheme 1. Learning along the way

In three studies, Black fathers described learning how to be a father on their own *"I pretty much had to learn about being a father by myself."* (Robinson, 2021, p. 828). They described fatherhood as a process in which you learn along the way through *"Just pulling everything together and just trial and error."* (Welch et al., 2019, p. 511); which was echoed

by other fathers. Learning how to be a father was experienced as hard initially but something they had to learn quickly *"I turned into a man overnight. It's pretty hard but I like it."* (Fleck et al., 2013, p.231); and continue to work on *"It was hard to get used to, to start with...I'm a work in progress."* (Fleck et al., 2013, p.232).

Subtheme 2. Influences of other family members

In six studies, fathers mentioned the influence of other family members such as grandparents, uncles and brothers who they learned the skills from to be a father (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Gordon et al., 2013; Leath, 2017; Murray & Hwang, 2020; Perry & Lewis, 2016; Welch et al., 2019). Black fathers spoke of wanting to emulate the positive examples of parenting they had observed from their grandparents*, "I was raised by my grandparents, so they showed me a lot of love and care, so I learned how to do that for my child."* (Welch et al., 2019, p. 508); and their older brothers *"I watched him [older brother] with his family and remember thinking that I wanted to have kids and play ball or help with homework like I saw him do with his kids"* (Murray & Hwang, 2020, p. 560); and their uncles *"My uncle, he's like a father to me, you know what I mean……He's a smart dude too, like he's who I really looked up to"* (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p. 1902). This highlighted the importance of positive examples and how Black men integrate these experiences to learn how to be a father and conceive what that may look like. In referring to the influences of their mothers, some fathers felt that they learned from their mothers *"She's literally raised me and kind of showed me what it's like to be a parent"*(Turner & Stenner, 2021, p.80); however others felt that they needed a male figure to show them how to be a father *"...a lot of being taught how to be a man I was taught by my mum….this might be why I failed at certain things as a dad, because obviously yes she tried her hardest but she literally can't teach me how to be a father."*

(Turner & Stenner, 2021, p.81). This captured the importance of male role models and the need for father figures.

Subtheme 3. Media influences

In three studies, Black fathers also looked to different forms of media such as TV, films and books which included examples of fathers and parenting skills they wanted to emulate. For example, one father mentioned an example of a Black father he had seen in a popular US TV show, *"Cliff Huxtable, from The Cosby Show, is the image that I've always had about either a father that I wanted to be…or the father that I choose to be… I pull pieces of different men that I have watched over the years and you know I kind of add them together as my quilt of what I think fatherhood should look like.*" (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p. 1904). This was echoed by other fathers, *"A lot of my parenting skills come from T.V. and film."* (Robinson, 2021, p. 830); some of whom also derived their ideas of fatherhood through books *"reading practical books by different authors who have good insight into parenting."* (Welch et al., 2019, p. 512).

Subtheme 4. Religion

In five studies, Black fathers described fatherhood as being influenced by religious principles and teachings (Dilworth- Bart et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2016; Gordon et al., 2013; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Welch et al., 2019). Biblical principles influenced fathers parenting and how they wanted their families to be *"using the Bible as a backdrop, here are some Biblical principles we will stick to as a family"* (Murray & Hwang, 2015, p. 1198). These principles played an important part in their development as fathers *"the involvement in the congregation played a huge role in my development ... learning bible stories, scripture quoting"* (Gordon et al., 2013, p. 157). In all cases where religion was mentioned, Black

fathers referred to Christianity highlighting the influence of Christian values in Black communities.

Theme 2. Parenting Practices

"Fatherhood takes tremendous courage and strength because it is difficult to raise a human being and give everything you know, but you gotta provide the necessary things that a child needs to move forward and grow" (Robinson, 2021, p. 828)

This overarching theme encapsulates Black fathers parenting practices, specifically strategies that they employ to raise their children. There were several dominant concepts in the literature which are represented by the seven sub-themes. Black fathers parenting practices were related to the context of raising their children in the Global North, which influenced the rationale for using particular strategies and their attitudes towards raising their children.

Subtheme 1. Parenting sons

In ten studies, Black fathers referred to particular strategies they used to parent sons which were distinct from their practices with their daughters (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2014, 2015, 2016; Fleck et al., 2013; Gordon et al., 2013; Howard et al., 2013; Leath, 2017; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Threlfall et al., 2013). In parenting their sons, Black fathers often referred to *"raising a man"*, in which they expressed hegemonic views of masculinity *"We raise men in this house. We don't raise punks in this house… That's our testosterone-filled philosophy"* (Howard et al., 2013, p. 225). Some fathers recognised the impact of traditional gender norms and restrictions of hegemonic attitudes on men in emotional expression *"We as men have been handicapped emotionally. So, I encourage them*

to express themselves, talk…because a lot of times we don't. And that can hurt you" (Doyle et al., 2015, p.7). A common worry for Black fathers were their sons experiencing violence and discrimination *"I can help him negotiate racial ignorance, but I can't help him overcome physical violence. There are places he will go where his Black body is at stake, his Black soul is at stake."* (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p.1908). Fathers described a *"constant struggle"* to keep their sons safe which was related to their social position *"look, you know, I know you think you big and just cause' you work out you can handle yourself, but I don't need you poppin' off at police or whomever. I need you to be able to come home… that's something I don't think the majority groups ever consider cause', you know, it's their world"* (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p.1906). Despite the challenges fathers took pride in raising Black sons and wanted to change the system, *"A Black man creating three Black boys, you know, it's more like something in my heart…I got to make a way for my boys, man. Try to tweak the system, man, and do something different… I take pride in that"* (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p. 1907).

Subtheme 2. Parenting daughters

Black fathers described parenting practices with their daughters in five studies, which were focused on role modelling and teaching them what a 'man' should be (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Perry et al., 2013; Perry & Lewis, 2016; Roy et al., 2023). This differed from the strategies they described with their sons as there was less of a focus on protection from physical violence or systems, but with daughters fathers focused on nurturing and building up their self-esteem *"And for your daughters, making sure that they have an understanding of teaching them how to be treated…If you don't give them that value system or sense of worth by your actions or words, anyone can come along and tell them what their actions or worth is. I want her to know her worth, intrinsic worth."* (Murray & Hwang, 2015, p. 1197). Black fathers seemed to want to protect their daughters from other men *"We didn't*

want a young man influencing my daughter in any type of way, negatively. So, I had to—my voice had to be heard still constantly… To stress to her I'm the man in your life, not no other boyfriend getting in your ear, I'm the man." (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p. 1909). This idea of teaching their daughters what a man should be was echoed by other fathers, *"I have a daughter, so I need to teach her what a man is about."* (Perry & Lewis, 2016, p. 13); which highlights how gender influenced parenting.

Subtheme 3. Instilling racial pride

Instilling racial pride was described as a key parenting practice in five studies (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2016; Howard et al., 2013; Powe et al., 2023; Wallace, 2023). Black fathers were cognisant of their ancestral history and were motivated to instil positive representations of Black people in their children *"You gotta know, you came from kings and queens and you were brought from your country here to help build another country, basically you built this country."* (Doyle et al., 2016, p. 313). Black fathers were motivated to hold on to their history and the contributions that Black people had made to society, which could also be related to the Black diasporic context and wanting to hold on to their culture and reinforce counter narratives, *"One thing we did, we sorta' gave 'em somewhat African names...it really is to get them to understand, you know, where we are in America today but where ours ancestor had to, their growth and development to where we came from, right…so, we teach them about our history"* (Wallace, 2023, p. 81). There was an emphasis on focusing on racial pride as opposed to the adverse circumstances that Black people have historically faced *"Knowing that we are descendants of kings and queens—knowing what our ancestors have overcome*" (Powe et al., 2023, p.8).

Subtheme 4. Promoting learning and education

The value of learning and education was a key theme across nine studies (Dilworth-Bart et al.,2022; Doyle et al., 2015, 2016; Gordon et al., 2013; Hamm et al., 2018; Leath, 2017; Moore et al., 2018; Murray and Hwang, 2015; Wallace, 2023). Black fathers stressed the importance of educational attainment which they felt would support their children to go further in life *"going to school help better your situation to your future. If you don't go to school, then that leaves you out there with a whole lot of nonsense because you don't have nothing to really strive for"* (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p. 1905). Black fathers not only valued school and education but wanted their children to be motivated to learn and gain knowledge "*I want my kids to learn, I don't know if there is necessarily a word for that but I want them to learn in everything that they do"* (Murray & Hwang, 2015, p. 1198). For most fathers the value of education was passed down intergenerationally mostly by their own fathers, "*My daddy instilled in us the value of education. It was one of those kinds of homes where you don't bring home below a B."* (Gordon et al., 2013, p. 159); and they sought to emulate this with their children, *"You didn't hear my dad's mouth until you started messing up in school… he didn't play no games with school … so that's why I am the way I am with my kids now"* (Dilworth-Bart et al.,2022, p. 1906). Two fathers mentioned that education was not stressed by their parents and they seemed disappointed by this *"I wish I would have had a strong person that really knew the value of education because I think I had the smarts to be further along in life."* (Gordon et al., 2013, p.159).

Subtheme 5. Preparing children for racism

In nine studies, a key parenting concern was preparing children for racism which was directly related to raising Black children in the Global North (Brooks et al., 2021; Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2014, 2016; Machaka, 2023; Moore et al., 2018; Powe et al.,

2023; Wallace, 2023; Welch et al., 2019). Black fathers felt this was a key concern for living in a majority white country *"we just have to find a way of trying to explain to them….You are going to face the racism daily, especially when the majority of the people they are all white."* (Wallace, 2023, p.83). Preparation strategies included talking to children about racism and discrimination, which fathers felt could be a buffer against the negative effects *"I'm preparing her to be called a n****r. I'm preparing her to not be accepted somewhere. I'm preparing her to hear "no." I'm preparing her for this so then it's not a big struggle for her when it happens."* (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p. 1906). The need to protect and prepare children was echoed by parents in the UK as well as the USA context *"Black kids have a label already and we have to work extra hard for that label not to stick…We need to be there to protect these children".* (Machaka, 2023, p. 10). In studies based in the USA, fathers made reference to teaching children to manage police encounters, *"with what is happening now in this country, you know I keep, I keep trying to bring it up. Not in a way for them to be scared, but just for them to know that, look...the only thing that you have to know is that if you encounter a policeman or a woman, just be quiet and let the policeman talk."* (Wallace, 2023, p.82). A father explained how police violence has impacted his parenting style *"police violence has altered my fathering practice with more vigilance and protective measures"* (Brooks et al., 2021, p. 9).

Subtheme 6. Exposure to different things

A theme identified across three studies, was fathers' descriptions of exposing their children to a diverse range of experiences and people (Doyle et al., 2016; Gordon et al., 2013; Howard et al., 2013). Black fathers were keen to *"broaden"* their children's *"horizons",* which would support them to be successful *"I think another key to our children being successful is exposure. And exposure could go from a wide range of things."* (Doyle et al.,

2016, p. 314). Fathers expressed wanting their children to have diverse perspectives and friendships "*make sure that they are involved in [sic] different kinds of races*" (Howard et al., 2013, p. 223); which was also encouraged by their own parents, "*if my parents wouldn't have taken me outside of [my neighbourhood] and exposed me to other things, then I may have been caught up with the population there that may be comfortable with what is put in front of them.*" (Gordon et al., 2013, p. 158).

Subtheme 7. Showing love and affection

Showing love and affection, was mentioned as a key practice by Black fathers in six studies (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Fleck et al., 2013; Leath, 2017; Perry & Lewis, 2016; Powe et al., 2023; Welch et al., 2019). A father explained that "*The best thing we can give our kids is love. You got to show them that you love them.*" (Fleck et al., 2013, p. 234). Showing affection was motivated by fathers' experiences of not having this themselves "*I've always been like that because even when I was small, nobody ever gave me hugs and kisses.*" (Perry & Lewis, 2016, p. 14). This was linked to the social construction of gender roles "*When you just hear nurture, it automatically goes to. . . more of like a woman or more of like a coddling.*" (Powe et al., 2023, p.8); and fathers wanted to challenge these gender stereotypes "*I'm not afraid to show emotions, and I think that's true for other men, as well. You're not less of a man because you show your kids love.*" (Leath, 2017, p.7).

Theme 3. Roles of a father

"Fatherhood is the role that you play, it is all the things that you go through to be a

father, be it good or bad. . ." (Robinson, 2021, p 828)

This major theme describes Black men's perceptions of the varied roles they have as

fathers. Across the included studies, these roles could be grouped into five subthemes which

Black fathers frequently mentioned as important roles.

Subtheme 1. Not just being there, but being present and involved

The concept of *"being there"* for their children was a salient role mentioned by Black

fathers, with this being described in fourteen of the included studies (Doyle et al., 2014,

2015; Dill et al., 2016; Fleck et al., 2013; Hamm et al., 2018; Henson, 2023; Leath, 2017;

Perry et al., 2013; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Moore et al., 2018; Robinson, 2021; Threlfall et

al., 2013; Wallace, 2023; Welch et al., 2019). For Black fathers involved fatherhood was

integral which went beyond just being there, *"Fatherhood acquires a lot of attention,*

acquires a lot of involvement… You have to be hands-on and more engaged and involved in

their lives in order for a productive outcome." (Moore et al., 2018, p. 65). This was

important for fathers who did not live with their children *"Even though we ain't together, I'm*

still here. I still want to be involved... even though I live across town . . . I mean just let me be

a part of everything." (Doyle et al., 2014, p. 380). Fathers associated being there for their

children with showing that they cared, *"It's the time I spend with my child that gauges my*

caring. . .just being there and responding to them is what encourages them to grow."

(Robinson, 2021, p. 831).

Subtheme 2. Being a provider

In six studies, Black fathers identified being a provider as an important role of fatherhood (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2016; Hamm et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2018; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Robinson, 2021). This was depicted by one father who explained that a father is *"First and foremost, financial. Be the person that brings the money in, first off. You know, to take care of the child."* (Hamm et al., 2018, p. 1078). Fathers associated being a provider with being a man, which highlighted traditional attitudes towards gender roles "*Feed your family by any means necessary…I'd be less of a man if I didn't do these things or try to do these things*" (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p. 1905).

Subtheme 3. Guiding children

Guiding their children on the right path, was a key role for Black fathers and they were motivated to instil good morals in their children as identified in six studies (Dill et al., 2016; Fleck et al., 2013; Leath, 2017; Moore et al., 2018; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Robinson, 2021). Black fathers felt their role was to lead their children "*down the right path…make sure they are growing up with the right set of morals.*" (Murray & Hwang, 2015, p 1198); and to have a positive influence by *"teaching different values, positive values as far as raising them to be a good person in society, and to instil a positive foundation in your kids." (*Moore et al., 2018, p. 66). Fathers described their roles in terms of mentorship and wanted their children to be an *"overall good person"* (Leath, 2017, p.8).

Subtheme 4. Being a role model

Black fathers wanted to be a key role model for their children, as identified as a subtheme across four studies (Doyle et al., 2016; Fleck et al., 2013; Gordon et al., 2013; Howard et al., 2013). Fathers explained wanting to *"lead by example"* (Doyle et al., 2016),

and felt compelled to "*do what's right…you want them to follow the same footsteps that you're in*" (Fleck et al., 2013). Fathers were also keen to expose their children to other positive influences and role models such as "*friends with a lot of older sons who are doing a lot of positive things*" and "*I want him to see somebody that he's really proud of… spend time around me and my friends to watch us interact with each other.*" (Howard et al., 2013, p.225).

Subtheme 5. Discipline

Black men felt that discipline was a key role for them as father, a role that was both self-selected and ascribed to them by mothers (Doyle et al., 2014, 2015; Hamm et al., 2018; Murray & Hwang, 2015). Black fathers used language such as "*main disciplinarian*" and felt "*correction is a very important part of being a father*" (Murray & Hwang, 2015, p. 1197). Discipline took the form of "*spanking*" or other forms such as a "*version of time out where I just have him sit down and I'll have him write what he did and why it was wrong*" or "*Taking the things that he likes the most*" (Doyle et al., 2015, p.9). For some, they felt like the responsibility was given to them by the mothers who would call on them to support with discipline*, "the women, when it get to the point that they can't handle it, or the child fittin' go to jail, or . . . to get in trouble, then they want to call the fathers and tell the father." (*Doyle et al., 2014, p 381). This was explained as a result of gender roles in which fathers described "*that nurturing, caring, you know, sensitive aspect, that genuinely comes from a mother*" and the father roles as "*a little more hands-on with instilling discipline*" (Hamm et al., 2018, p. 1079).

Theme 4. Racialised experiences

"I mean, I think that that's one of the beautiful things about Black fathers. They're battle tested, even before fatherhood" (Powe et al., 2023, p.8)

In nine studies, Black fathers were conscious of negative stereotypes of Black men and fathers (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2014; Fleck et al., 2013; Leath, 2017; Powe et al., 2023; Roy et al., 2023; Turner & Stenner, 2021; Wallace, 2023). Black fathers described having first hand experiences of racism for example *, "I've been called n***** and stuff when I was young",* another recalled being told *"you're gonna be in prison for the rest of your life, just like your father."* and *"You'll never make it in college."* (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p. 1902-1903). Negative stereotypes of Black fathers included "*We don't look after our kids, we just have kids left, right and centre...we are not good, we are not really good relationship material*" (Turner & Stenner, 2021, p.80); which were reinforced by the media "*I feel like we don't get a lot of love as being Black fathers. . . when we think about like any movie that consist of any type of you know Black father....media doesn't do a good job of like giving the lime light to those really out here really providing for they children.*" (Roy et al., 2023, p. 469). In speaking of the impact of these stereotypes a Black father described his pain, *"We've also masked our hurt and our pain and our dysfunction in ways that appear to be "resilience" when they simply are just masks. Can we admit that we're hurting sometimes?"* (Powe et al., 2023, p. 9).

Theme 5. Experiences of their own fathers

"I look to my dad's life as he showed me all the wrong decisions to make. So everywhere he turned right, I went left." (Murray & Hwang, 2020, p.561)

This major theme captures Black males' experiences of being fathered, which include having absent fathers which led to a common experience of wanting to be better that their fathers and also positive experiences of their fathers which Black men sought to emulate.

Subtheme 1. Having absent fathers

In eight studies, Black fathers described experiences of having an absent father (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Fleck et al., 2013; Gordon et al., 2013; Henson, 2023; Leath, 2017; Murray & Hwang, 2015; Robinson, 2021; Welch et al., 2019). For some Black men, their fathers were not involved in their lives *"He actually lives in this city, and I never see him. I wouldn't know who he was if I walked by him."* (Fleck et al., 2013, p.235). For other fathers they experienced their fathers being physically present, however not actively or emotionally engaged in their lives, *"he was there but he wasn't there."* (Murray & Hwang, 2015, p.1196); and *"My dad was in the picture, but the effort or what I wanted as far as the attention and the time and energy that I expected wasn't there"* (Welch et al., 2019. P. 508). In describing the impact of this one father explained *"I was just angry. I lashed out from time to time. Carried a chip on my shoulder…Because I felt like . . . what was wrong with me? I got straight A's . . . I played sports . . . I was good looking. I didn't do the things that would label me a "bad kid," so I didn't understand why he didn't act like he loved me. There was a time in my life where I was down and depressed"* (Leath, 2017, p. 6). Reasons cited for their fathers not being around included incarceration, substance abuse or their fathers being killed (Henson, 2023; Leath 2017; Robinson, 2021; Welch et al., 2019). These experiences served

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as a catalyst for Black men to be better fathers to their own children*, "Growing up without a father has helped me shape and interact with my boys…I'm going to do things different. I'm going to be present, I'm going to be available, I'm going to be active, and I'm going to have influence in my son's life."* (Robinson, 2021, p. 832).

Subtheme 2. Positive experiences of fathers

In six studies, Black fathers shared experiences of positive relationships with their fathers which they used as models for their own fatherhood (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Gordon et al., 2013; Henson, 2023; Murray & Hwang, 2020; Perry & Lewis, 2016; Turner & Stenner, 2021). For these fathers they described that having a present father made them want to also be present for their children, a Black male described his father as "*my hero and I wanted to be just like him when I grew up*" an experience which "*makes me want to be there for my kids.*" (Murray & Hwang, 2020, p. 560). Black men described that they learned parenting practices from their fathers "*He taught me to love my family and love my kids. Play with them, spend time with them, eat with them, take interest in what they're interested in, teach them. That's what he taught me and that's what I'm trying to do. My principles stem from my father, he was my idol growing up.*" (Perry & Lewis, 2016, p.9).

Theme 6. Barriers to fatherhood

"*Fatherhood has so many challenges and obstacles that you have to go through, so in order to be a father you have to go through those challenges to experience fatherhood.*"

(Robinson, 2021, p.829)

A key theme identified across included studies, were Black fathers' experiences of barriers that posed challenges to fatherhood. These barriers included financial stresses,

experiences of an unjust system towards men and a difference between Black fathers' cultures of origin and the culture of the Global North.

Subtheme 1. Financial difficulties

In six studies, Black fathers cited economic and financial difficulties as barriers to them being the fathers they wanted to be (Hamm et al., 2018; Leath, 2017; Moore et al., 2018; Powe et al., 2023; Robinson, 2021; Threlfall et al., 2013). A father explained how these stresses impacted the relationship with his children "*Worry comes in with the bills. That takes away from the relationship because you are too busy focusing on that. So, you end up forgetting about the child.*" (Threlfall et al., 2013, p. 6). Fathers perceived these barriers to be related to wider systemic inequalities, "*The unfair treatment of us puts us in a financial, economical, and fiscal situation that denies us opportunities to have certain tools and also the confidence that prevents us from being true leaders.*" (Moore et al., 2018, p. 66). Fathers associated being able to provide financially as an important part of fatherhood and not being able to do so led to them feeling "*angry*" and "*not being able to be respected as a man.*" (Threlfall et al., 2013, p.6); as well as feeling "*embarrassed*" by not being "*able to do for him [son] like I wanted to.*" (Leath, 2017, p. 7).

Subtheme 2. Cultural mismatch

In the two included studies that were in the UK, fathers described a cultural mismatch of their own and the dominant culture which can be seen as a result of recent migration histories of Black people of African and Caribbean origin to the UK (Machaka, 2023; Turner & Stenner, 2021). Fathers described having more practical roles in raising their children in the UK than they would in Africa "*I had to accept that as a male parent and as a father, I had to change nappies. So I had to change it to maybe bath my daughter when she was*

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young, which is something I would never do in Zimbabwe" (Machaka, 2023, p. 12). This was

echoed by another father *"So it's just my wife and the kids, and so I had to take a massive*

role – more than I would have if I was still in Africa – a massive role in supporting my wife

and supporting the new child." (Turner & Stenner, 2021, p. 80). Fathers' increased caring

responsibilities, was seen as a result of a lack of community in the UK *"The challenge is that*

here is different from where I came from in Nigeria, in Africa. Once a mum gives birth, the

community, the immediate family, see it as their duty, their own duty, to make sure that the

mum is fully assisted and settled." (Turner & Stenner, 2021, p. 79).

Subtheme 3. Gender biased systems

In six studies, fathers described feeling that fatherhood was impacted by gender

biased systems that favoured mothers (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Fleck et al., 2013;

Machaka, 2023; Moore et al., 2018; Powe et al., 2023; Turner & Stenner, 2021). In particular,

fathers referenced the child support system which they felt unfairly targeted men and further

impacted their finances, *"Everything about child support is flat out stupid. You're blaming*

me for having sex with a person who had sex with me? We made that baby together, but I owe

you some money?" (Moore et al., 2018, p.66). Fathers felt that gender biases were prevalent

in healthcare systems with one describing feeling healthcare visits were focused on the

women *"as a woman health visitor, they tend to … because most of them are female, yeah,*

but they tend to defend the woman's opinions more, if you know, that makes a man feel

inadequate" (Turner & Stenner, 2021, p. 81). Fathers described not feeling valued *"Being a*

father is not validated. It's not equal. It's not valued the same as motherhood, regardless of

race" (Powe et al., 2023, p.7).

Theme 7. Experiences of co-parenting

"You gotta have a good help mate... It's hard to raise a child... But now if you pull together . . . you can get there with double the force"

(Doyle et al., 2014, p.380)

This main theme captures Black fathers' different experiences of co-parenting and the relationships with their children's mothers. Some fathers described difficult co-parenting circumstances which impacted their relationships with their children, whilst others had positive co-parenting relationships which was signified by unity. In both cases, Black fathers felt the relationships with the mother of their children were important contributors to their experiences of fatherhood.

Subtheme 1. Difficult co-parenting experiences

In six studies, fathers described *"difficult"* relationships with the mother of their children (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2014; Fleck et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2018; Perry et al., 2013; Powe et al., 2023). For these fathers, difficult relationships impacted access to their children *"So a lot of times I was at her mercy, you know, 'Well you not gonna see your son.' I didn't see my son for weeks at a time."* (Doyle et al., 2014; p.381); and they felt excluded from their children's lives *"I'll text her, she don't respond. How my daughter doing?...Nothing... It's sad man ... my daughter man, I want to be a part of that life too."* (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022, p 1908). A father described this as *"The biggest toxic stress that I've experienced with my children has been just fighting with their mother"* (Powe et al., 2023, p.7). These experiences led fathers to recognise the importance of being in a good relationship with the mothers of their children.

Subtheme 2. Successful co-parenting

In three studies, Black fathers described healthy co-parenting relationships which facilitated fatherhood through unified approaches to parenting (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Doyle et al., 2014; Perry et al., 2013). Successful co-parenting relationships allowed fathers to bring together their children from different relationships, *"even though I'm married now and had two other wives. . . everybody gets along. I mean I get [the kids] for the summer ...they have different mothers but it's like one family in one sense."* (Doyle et al., 2014, p.380). Some fathers felt that marriage could help avoid the difficulties of separation and co-parenting and saw fatherhood as the interconnection between different roles *"it was really important to be a man, husband, and father, I think that all three of those roles are interconnected, you know. It was important for the sake of stability for me to live with my children, to be there when they went to bed, to be there when they wake up."* (Perry et al., 2013, p. 129).

Discussion of findings

The findings of this meta-synthesis highlighted the lived experiences of Black fathers in the Global North. Black men highlighted shared experiences of racism, discrimination and inequalities that impacted the ways in which they experience, construct and enact Black fatherhood. This is consistent with literature positioning Black men as having unique experiences and being situated within a socio-political context, which impedes their ability to navigate their own and their children's circumstances (Lemmons & Johnson, 2022). The barriers that Black men face in their fatherhood disrupts their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their children and families. Given the well documented roles of fathers in contributing to the healthy development and positive outcomes of children, this has

implications for the wellbeing of Black families (Garcia et al., 2022). The intersection of being both Black and a male led to multiple layers of marginalisation through not only navigating racial biases but also gender biases in family systems which undervalue fatherhood. Black men learned to be a father from integrating knowledge gained from varied sources, from father figures to media influences. Black fathers' parenting practices were influenced by the gender of their children, living in a diasporic context, intergenerational linkages and history and a propensity for nurturing. Black fathers perceived their roles as multifaceted and often enacted traditional gender roles reflecting dominant social constructions of fatherhood (Connell, 2000). Experiences of being fathered influenced Black fathers' enactment of fatherhood and they imitated good experiences of their own fathers and compensated for experiences of absent fathers by creating better experiences for their children, which is consistent with theories of modelling and compensation (Daly, 1993). Relationships with the mothers of their children was both a facilitator and hinderance for fathers as this impacted their relationships with their children and their experience of being a father.

Conclusion

This review was the first of its kind to provide an overview of existing literature exploring the lived experiences of Black fathers in the Global North. The synthesis of a diverse range of Black fathers' views led to the development of key themes which represented shared and different experiences of fatherhood. An important strength of the included studies was the rich data gained from qualitative methodologies which highlight the voices of Black men who have been historically marginalised and under researched in academia, psychology, health, and social sciences. The reliance on Black fathers' direct quotations as first order constructs in this review supported the preservations of Black

fathers' voices through using their own language and narratives. The included studies focused on different lived contexts which captured the heterogeneity of Black fathers. The varied sample sizes, qualitative methodologies, and geographic locations of the studies, warrants caution in interpretation. The exclusion of quantitative studies although limited in in-depth data could be of value and had implications for the inclusion of relevant studies. As 92% of the included studies were in the USA, caution is warranted when applying these findings to the UK and other Black diasporic contexts as the lived experiences of Black fathers vary according to their location.

Rationale for current research

The dearth of research in the UK on Black fatherhood highlighted a gap in the literature which requires addressing, due to the nuances of Black fathers' experiences in the UK and the USA. The review also highlighted that parenting sons was a common focus in the literature, highlighting this as a key concern for Black fathers, especially in the USA. The absence of a focus in this area in the UK literature further highlights a gap, as well as understanding whether this is a concern for Black fathers in the UK. In recognition of the absence of current literature exploring Black fathers' experiences from a decolonial lens and employing participatory methods focused on social change, this is a significant priority for the current research project.

Aims of the current research project

1. To understand the experiences of Black fathers raising Black sons in the UK.

2. To work with Black fathers as co-researchers in order to give voice to a marginalised group whose views have been largely unheard.

3. To demonstrate the utility of emergent research methods that draw on decolonisation work and non-western epistemologies that embrace participation, liberation and social action.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, firstly I will position the research within guiding principles of African psychology and Participation Action Research (PAR). I will provide an overview of the qualitative research design, including the rationale and compatibility with the research aims and epistemological stance. I will provide a brief overview of alternative qualitative methodologies considered. The recruitment strategy and ethical considerations will be discussed. The current study will be presented in phases to outline how participation informed each stage of the research. The chapter will close with a quality appraisal of the current study.

African Psychology

The current inquiry will draw on principles of African psychology which informs the study of people of African descent, their experiences, culture and complexities (Nwoye, 2015). African psychology is rooted in decolonisation and utilises an African or Black centred frame of reference instead of comparison to Euro-centric norms and models (Nwoye, 2022). Studies rooted in African psychology in the Global North, seek to explore the psychological costs of being Black outside of Africa and correct dominant narratives of Black people (Cross, 2009). This research will be guided by four goals of African psychology (Nwoye, 2015):

- **Theory development:** understanding the reality of Black people in the diaspora.

- **Research and documentation:** a focus on qualitative research to generate and share data to address the psychosocial needs and issues faced by Black people.

- **Critical engagement:** critically engaging with existing knowledge, research and methodologies.

- **Clinical and professional practice:** improving the conditions that Black people live in through focusing on healing, collective and social action.

African psychology shares epistemology and ontology claims with social constructionism and champions context dependent approaches to knowledge and places emphasis on the social world (Gergen et al., 2015; Nwoye, 2022). A central tenet of African psychology is the endorsement of traditional African cultural beliefs of a connection to ancestry, and a dialectical synergy between individual and community that is captured in the concept of *Ubuntu* [11]; the belief that we are human through our relationship with others (Nwoye, 2015, 2022). Within this paradigm humanity is defined through collective existence and solidarity (Brooke, 2008). This research will focus on relationship and community building, collective social action and utilise a Black centred frame of a reference to understand Black fathers' lived experiences.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an orientation and methodological framework concerned with social justice and dismantling mainstream research methods through maximising the involvement of community members throughout each stage of the research process (MacDonald, 2012). PAR recognises the need for people to be meaningfully involved

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[11] Ubuntu is an African philosophy that denotes we are people because of other people. Humanity is defined in relation to others and is a fundamental ontological and epistemological category of the Bantu-speaking communities. Ubuntu originates from the Zulu expression 'Umuntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu', which denotes connectedness to others is central to the essence of being human (see Brooke, 2008).

in investigating and representing their own experiences and to generate solutions to problems that impact them; emphasising bottom-up research and equal researcher-researched relationships (MacDonald, 2012). Major influences on the development of PAR are Lewin (1946) who was interested in community-based research and its ability to lead to social change and Freire (1990) who emphasised the need for marginalised communities to be involved in knowledge production and leading change in their own communities. PAR embraces social constructionist assumptions viewing knowledge as relational and context dependent and the potential for discourse to produce social change (MacDonald, 2012). Social justice is embedded in the research process through elevating marginalised voices and focusing on social change to promote action (Grimwood, 2022). PAR has been widely used in the Global south with indigenous populations and underrepresented and marginalised communities (Bignante, 2010; Cornish et al., 2023). PAR fits with the ethos of the research in dismantling conventional approaches, elevating the voices of Black fathers, involving Black fathers in the telling of their stories and achieving social change. Despite the advantages of PAR among marginalised and diverse populations being well documented (e.g. Etowa et al., 2007; Gratton, 2020; Keating, 2021); there have been no publications of PAR with Black fathers in the UK. The pervasive findings of racial disparities faced by Black men coupled with a lack of social action to transform and change these findings warrants a praxis-orientated approach rooted in community empowerment (Wilson & Thompson, 2021).

Scholars note difficulties in adhering to the full principles of PAR due to the constrains of educational and academic establishments in resources, time and bureaucratic barriers which impose fixed and rigid criteria for research (Cook et al., 2017). However, scholars in the UK demonstrate examples of overcoming these barriers by using PAR as a guiding principle and maximising participation in all aspects of research even when a full PAR approach has not been implemented (Sallah, 2014; Templer, 2017). The Ladder of

Citizen Participation offers a conceptual model of public participation and is used to conceptualise PAR viewing participatory power on a continuum, with traditional research falling into the realm of non-participation and PAR aiming to achieve higher 'rungs' on the ladder associated with higher degrees of citizen power (Arnstein, 1969) (see Figure 2). The current study uses the ladder as a framework to monitor participation and orientate the research towards the highest rungs of the ladder which go beyond tokenistic consultation and maximises citizen power, agency and meaningful participation at each stage of research.

Figure 2.

The Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969)
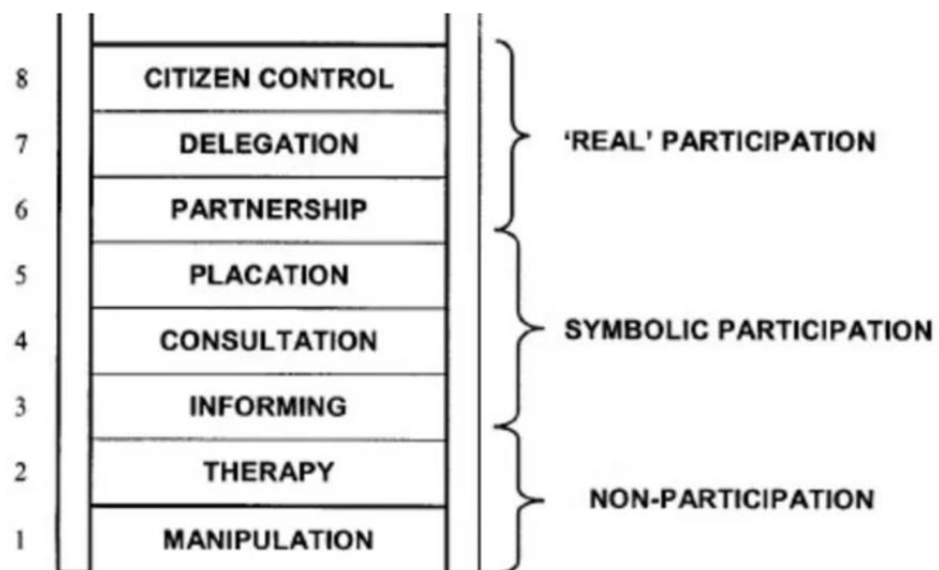
Qualitative Methodology

Rationale for qualitative methodology

Qualitative methodology was selected due to its compatibility with PAR, African psychology principles and research informed by CRT. As outlined previously in the introduction and demonstrated from results of the SLR there is a paucity of research on Black

father's experiences in the UK. Qualitative methodology is concerned with describing and understanding the lived experiences of individuals and groups, which can address the gap in the literature regarding Black father's experiences of raising sons in the UK, as well as a paucity of literature which aims to empower and elevate the voices of Black fathers and describe their experiences in their own words.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was selected due to its compatibility with the epistemology, guiding theoretical principles and research aims of the current study. RTA provides a flexible framework for systematically coding data to analyse and interpret patterns across a data set and goes beyond traditional thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2021). RTA supports social and psychological interpretations of data and is compatible with a wide range of theories (Braun & Clark, 2021). RTA has been critiqued for offering a loose framework that lacks clarity and its focus on similarities and cross case orientation that can omit contradictory data (Nowell et al., 2017). In response to critiques, the authors have provided a detailed outline of RTA and emphasise capturing contradictory accounts within themes (Braun & Clark, 2021). To address critiques that thematic analysis has limited interpretative power and lacks focus on researcher subjectivity which leaves the method prone to bias; RTA advocates for researcher subjectivity to be used as a resource and recommends engagement with theory to avoid un-reflexive analysis and enhance interpretative power (Braun & Clark, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017). RTA is orientated towards a social constructionist paradigm by acknowledging that researchers have an impact on the development of themes and sees knowledge as co-produced, situated and shaped by the research context (Braun & Clark, 2021). RTA is suitable for exploring Black fathers lived experiences, with attention to the social factors that shape their experiences and embracing the reflexive interpretations of the

researchers. RTA provides rich and complex qualitative data and has been used in PAR projects to produce collaborative data analysis due its accessibility and utility in integrating co-researcher's contributions to analysis (Braun & Clark, 2021; Templer, 2017).

Consideration of alternative Qualitative Methodologies

RTA was chosen due to the compatibility with the current study's research aims, guiding principles, epistemological stance and the author's position. In the initial stages of the research design the following two methodologies were considered.

Photo Voice

Photovoice is an approach frequently used in community-based PAR to generate social change and involves local communities capturing their lived experiences through photos (Sutton-Brown, 2014; Wang & Burris, 1994). This approach has been used to provide insight into under-represented communities such as exploring Black men's experiences of mental health in the UK (Keating, 2021); and research studies in the Global south guided by principles of African psychology (Nwoye, 2015). This approach was discussed with fathers in the consultation phase however they shared a preference for wanting to tell their stories through language and interactions with other Black fathers.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is concerned with how people use language in their social world and considers language as an action, which values social constructionist epistemologies (Potter et al., 1993). Discourse analysis seeks to understand how people speak about psychological matters based on the premise that language is used to create meaning (Potter & Wetherell, 2002). Discourse analysis could be useful in understanding 'how' Black fathers

construct their experiences of raising sons, however traditional uses of this approach favour analysing naturally occurring talk rather than talk generate from focus groups (Goodman, 2017). As the current research study was concerned with 'what' Black fathers lived experiences of raising Black sons were, this approach was deemed to be less suitable.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity was used as a means to understand how my position could influence the research. Bracketing was facilitated through reflective journaling and memo writing at each stage of the research, in which I engaged in in-depth reflection of my engagement with Black fathers and the discussions we had. As the Black fathers were co-researchers they were encouraged to also engage in self-reflection after each meeting and together we regularly shared our reflections on the impact *of* and how we were impacted *by* the research. Crotty (1998) advocates for reflexivity for all involved in research and this is also in line with the ethos of PAR where reflexivity supports continuous consideration of collaboration and reduction of power imbalances (Cornish et al., 2023).

Insider-Outsider researcher

The concept of insider or outsider research simplifies the diversity and complexity of identity as a dichotomous phenomenon, taking a dialectical approach I reflected on both my similarities and differences to Black fathers (Figure 3). I adopted the position of researching at the hyphen of insider-outsider identity or namely the space in between where reality lies (Chhabra, 2020). For example, reflecting on how my identity as a Black woman paradoxically represented both a sameness and difference to Black fathers. Being a Black woman I was part of the Black community however, I was also an outsider due to not being a parent, a male or a father. This distance promoted curiosity as I could not *'know'* the

experience of being a Black father, which is an advantage of having outsider membership through evoking curiosity and exploration (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). In considering power dynamics, I noticed a tension in my identity as a doctoral student *and* being part of the Black community, as initially I felt like more of a researcher. However, as I built a relationship with the fathers, I found myself feeling closer to the insider position. This metaphorically represented a 'loyalty tug' and the use of bracketing and collaboration with fathers helped me to manage any prior assumptions. I reflected on how my positionality was negotiated through the research process (see Appendix 4).

Figure 3.

Venn Diagram of Insider-Outsider Identities
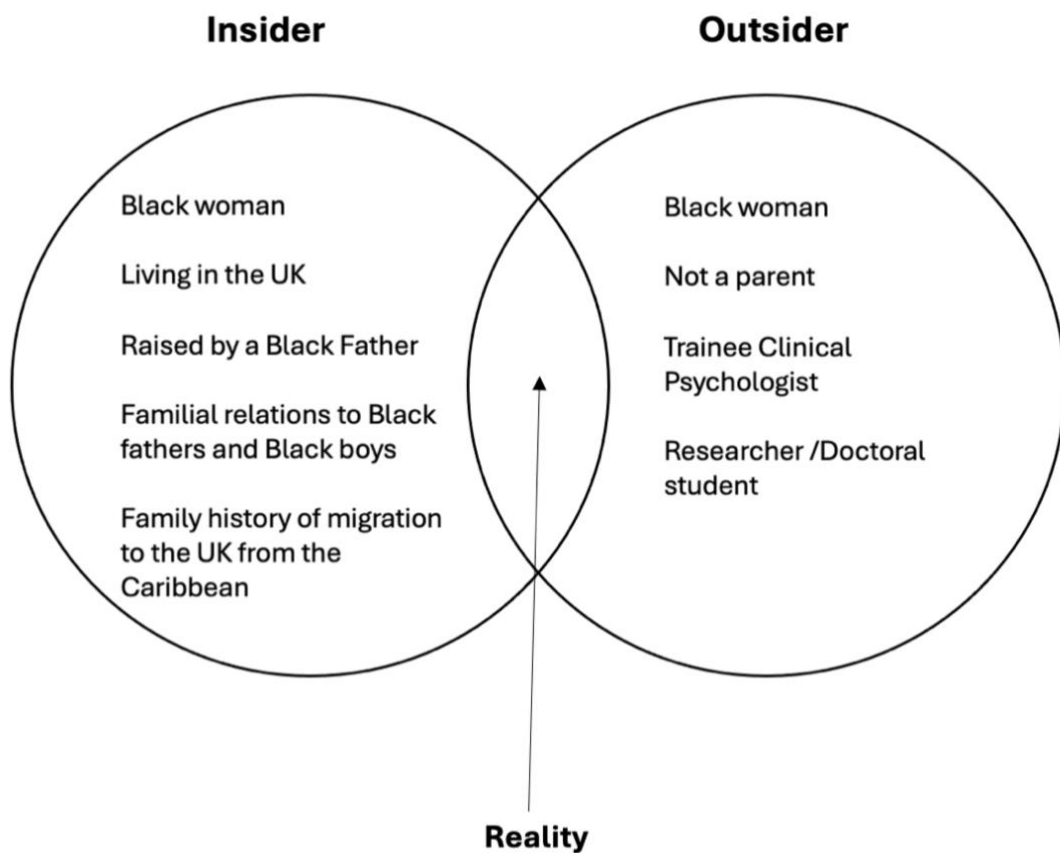
Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Hertfordshire Health and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (protocol number: LMS/PGR/UH/05439) (see Appendix 5). Participants were provided with an information sheet and a consent form which outlined key factors associated with human research ethics (BPS, 2021). The PAR nature of this research required further ethical approval to be sought to reflect changes that developed through discussions and research planning with co-researchers, these changes were reflected in updated information sheets and consent forms.

Informed Consent

Fathers who were interested in taking part in the study contacted the author via email and were provided with a participant information sheet which provided a detailed overview of the study (see Appendix 6). Some fathers asked to be contacted via telephone to discuss the research further and ask questions before consenting, which was facilitated by using an ethically approved research phone. Those who agreed to take part completed a consent form which outlined key ethical considerations (see Appendix 7). The participatory nature of this research meant that informed consent was a dynamic process and as the research developed through discussion and consensus among researchers, consent was continually sought and reflected in updated consent forms and ethical approval applications.

Right to withdraw

Co-researchers were informed of their right to withdraw from the study without disadvantage or having to provide a reason. Co-researchers were informed of when data analysis would begin and were asked to withdraw prior to this as data gathered through focus

group discussions could pose difficulty in omitting all contributions once the data was analysed and coded.

Confidentiality

Co-researchers chose their own pseudonyms which is associated with enhanced self-expression and increased participation (Allen & Wiles, 2016). Information gathered through the demographic questionnaire and transcripts of focus group discussions were pseudonymised to maintain confidentiality. Video recordings of focus group discussions were stored securely on an encrypted One drive and only accessible by the author. Co-researchers and researcher supervisors only had access to pseudonymised written transcripts. Personal identifying information were omitted from the transcripts. Co-researchers were asked to join focus groups in a confidential space and to maintain the confidentiality of others by not disclosing personal information discussed. Co-researchers were informed their information would be confidential unless there were any safeguarding concerns due to duty of care.

Data Protection

Data was collected and stored in line with the Data Protection Act (2018). Data storage procedures and length of data storage was outlined in the information sheet and consent form. In line with university guidelines, focus groups took place virtually via online platform MS Teams and were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and stored in a password protected folder on the authors encrypted One Drive which required multi-factor authentication and was only accessible by the author. Co-researchers agreed for anonymised transcripts to be shared with other co-researchers and the research supervision team for data analysis purposes. Co-researchers contact details were stored on a research phone separate to

the researcher's personal number, and only information related to the study was communicated.

Risk of psychological and physical harm

Risk assessment supported the identification and minimisation of potential harm (see Appendix 8). Physical harm was minimised as the focus group took place online and participants were informed of their right to take a break during the discussions to manage computer hazards. Psychological harm can occur in focus groups due to the psychological risk of disclosing personal views and discussing emotive topics in a group setting (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Prior to the first focus group discussion the group met to establish group norms and ground rules which aided the co-production of a psychologically safe space. In addition, it was agreed that the author would moderate the focus group discussions to manage any difficult group dynamics if they arose and validate expression of differences which are successful strategies for minimising psychological harm in focus groups (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). The author also agreed to offer a debrief space to manage any distress and the third sector organisation agreed to provide group members with resources and details of support services if necessary. The online nature of the research posed difficulties in monitoring emotional arousal due to limited cues online, however the author checked in with group members at the beginning and end of discussions to manage any difficult emotions that arose.

Remuneration

Paying co-researchers for their participation is in line with the principles of this research which is underpinned by social justice and equity (MacKinnon et al., 2021). Participants were remunerated a £10 gift voucher for each focus group discussion they attended, which was agreed as acceptable by the co-researchers.

Recruitment

Recruitment Strategy

The founder of a third sector organisation was contacted via email to develop a partnership to support the identification of co-researchers. The organisation provides support groups and workshops for Black men and encourages them to speak about their experiences. Partnerships with community organisations was identified as useful recruitment strategies in the SLR and facilitated access to Black fathers due to fostering safety and trust (Dill et al., 2015; Doyle et al., 2016; Murray & Hwang, 2015). A research flyer was shared via the organisation's social media accounts (Twitter and LinkedIn) and interested fathers were asked to contact the researcher for further details (see Appendix 9). Additionally, I presented the research idea at the organisation's annual conference, providing an overview of the research study and my contact details. Recruitment took place from September to November 2023. Purposive and snowball sampling was used to identify Black fathers who would be interested in taking part in the research study and met the inclusion criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Snowball sampling was the most successful strategy to identify additional Black fathers.

Selection criteria

The inclusion criteria included men who were over 18, self-identified as Black and who were a father to a son(s) under 18 years old to fulfil the criteria of fathers currently raising their sons due to parental responsibilities being perceived differently for children over the age of 18 (Probert et al., 2009) (see Table 7). This would also allow for recruitment of sons of different ages, which would provide diverse experiences due to different socialisation and parenting strategies implemented at different ages (Worthman et al., 2016). Participants were required to currently be residing in and raising their children in the UK, as living in a

different geographical location will have a different context. Fathers who had daughters as well as sons were included, as this would allow fathers to compare their experiences of raising their sons and daughters. Participants were required to speak English to aid communication between researchers and to be able to use the internet to join online meetings.

Table 7.

Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
An adult over 18 who self-identifies as a Black male	Only a father to daughters
Is a father to a son (a Black male under 18 years old)	Unable to use technology to join online meetings
Currently raising a son and living in the UK	Currently residing elsewhere than the UK
Can commit to meeting on multiple occasions	Cannot speak English
Access to internet/facilitates for MS Teams	

The Black Fathers

The study aimed to recruit a maximum of 10 Black fathers in line with the upper boundary limit of focus group members, suggested as an optimum number to balance diversity of opinions and facilitate adequate opportunity for group members to share (Bloor et al., 2001; Morgan, 1996). Ten fathers were recruited, four directly from the third sector organisation and six from snowballing strategies, salient information and demographics are shown in Table 8. Black fathers ages ranged from 26-50 years old and most fathers (n=7) had one son whose ages ranged from 5 months to 24 years old and half of the fathers also had daughters. All fathers lived in England and the majority of fathers self-identified as Black

British or of Black Caribbean background while one father was from a Black African family background.

Table 8.

Demographic characteristics of Black fathers

Pseudonym	Age	Racial Identity, Generation of migration, Country of origin	Demographics of sons (No. Age, ethnicity)	Other children
Ric	44	Black British 2nd generation Barbados St.Lucia	One son 7 years old Black British	No
Joey	31	Black 3rd generation Kenya / Nigeria	One son 5 months old Black British	No
Neilius	44	Black British 2nd generation Jamaica	One son 13 years old Black British	One daughter
Sketch	38	Black British / Caribbean 3rd generation Barbados	Two sons 1 and 3 years old Black British	No
Max	50	Afro Caribbean 2nd generation St Kitts & Nevis	One son 5 years old Afro Caribbean	One daughter
David	42	Black Caribbean 2nd generation Jamaica	Two sons 11 and 20 years old Black Caribbean	Two (one stepdaughter, one biological)
Kemar	33	Black Jamaican 1st generation	One son 2 years old	Two daughters

		Jamaica	Black Jamaican	
TM	43	Black British 3rd generation Dominica, Jamaica, Trinidad	One son 5 years old Black British	Four daughters (stepdaughter, two biological daughters, foster daughter)
Anthony	50	Black British 2nd generation Jamaica	Three sons 24, 17, & 11 years old Black British	No
JR	26	Black British 1st generation Antigua	One son 3 years old Black British	No

Note.

1st Generation (born outside of the UK)

2nd Generation (born in the UK and have at least one parent born outside of the UK)

3rd Generation (born in the UK and both parents born in the UK/grandchild of migrants)

Procedure

The procedure is illustrated in Figure 4. The procedure will be presented in phases to illustrate the organic nature of PAR and the acknowledgment of how the research developed through dynamic stages (see Table 9). The phases were not linear processes and action was intertwined throughout the phases, however they are presented separately for purposes of reader clarity.
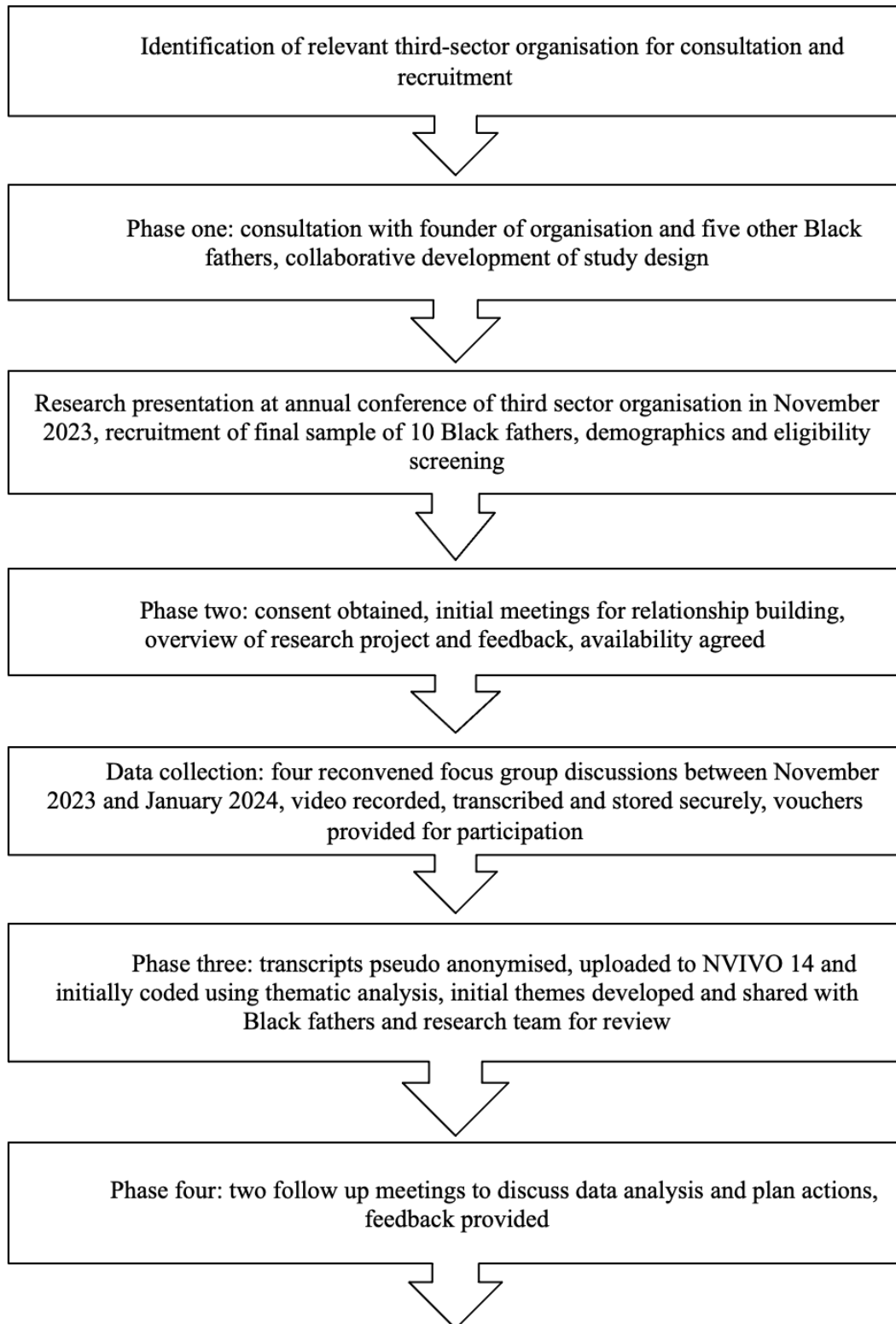
Figure 4.

Procedural flow chart

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Identification of relevant third-sector organisation for        │
│   consultation and recruitment                                    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Phase one: consultation with founder of organisation and five   │
│   other Black fathers, collaborative development of study design  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Research presentation at annual conference of third sector      │
│   organisation in November 2023, recruitment of final sample of   │
│   10 Black fathers, demographics and eligibility screening        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Phase two: consent obtained, initial meetings for relationship  │
│   building, overview of research project and feedback,            │
│   availability agreed                                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Data collection: four reconvened focus group discussions        │
│   between November 2023 and January 2024, video recorded,         │
│   transcribed and stored securely, vouchers provided for          │
│   participation                                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Phase three: transcripts pseudo anonymised, uploaded to NVIVO   │
│   14 and initially coded using thematic analysis, initial themes  │
│   developed and shared with Black fathers and research team for   │
│   review                                                          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Phase four: two follow up meetings to discuss data analysis     │
│   and plan actions, feedback provided                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
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Table 9.

Description of research phases

Phases	Description
Phase 1: Consultation	This phase included informal consultation with six Black fathers and eligibility was determined through completion of a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix 10). Consultation sessions involved gathering perspectives on pertinent topics that impact Black fathers and research design and planning (see Appendix 11). Consistent with the findings of the SLR, Black fathers shared that a topic of interest was raising their sons- as this was a priority for the community this informed the research focus in line with PAR (Cornish et al., 2023). Black fathers shared that safety and trust were integral to their participation and shared a preference for focus groups rather than interviews; which is consistent with previous literature where Black fathers highlight a preference for talking about their experiences in a group with other Black men (Powe et al., 2023). In line with social constructionist epistemology, principles of African psychology and PAR, focus groups support the in-depth understanding of multiple perspectives and topics underpinned by socio-political and cultural factors and has embedded processes of collective sense-making and action (Baden et al., 2022; Nwoye, 2022). Collaboratively we developed an initial focus group discussion guide to explore Black father's experiences more generally and to understand Black father's experiences of raising sons (see Appendix 12).
Phase 2: Data collection	After recruitment an initial meeting was held with the ten co-researchers to establish rapport and build trustworthy and collaborative relationships; in line with the PAR ethos of 'relationships first, research second' (Cornish et al., 2023). In this meeting I shared a detailed overview of the research which included my positionality to the research, principles of PAR, African psychology and CRT and gathered feedback on the proposed study. This transparency is associated with high quality PAR and supports the reduction of power dynamics, trust building and allows co-researchers to make informed choices about their participation (Jacobs et al., 2021). We established group rules and ways of working which emphasised creating a psychologically safe space and the fathers asked if I could moderate the focus group discussions. A poll was used to agree availability.
	In total, we reconvened on four occasions for focus group discussions which lasted an hour and a half to two hours and mostly took place fortnightly. Reconvened focus groups are an emergent method which involves a group meeting on multiple occasions (Baden et al., 2022; Bloor et al., 2001); and supports the development of connection, trust

and community in line with the ethos of PAR (Nind & Vinha, 2016). Drawing on principles of African psychology the first meeting opened with everyone introducing themselves with a recitation used in African centred groups [12] (Uguru, 2023). Black fathers shared that the exercise supported connection to their ancestry and to each other. Each focus group discussion started with reflections on the previous meeting, which allowed us to build on concepts and provided continuous feedback on the research process. The focus group discussion guide was loosely followed, and conversations naturally covered key points and fathers asked each other follow up questions to prompt further discussion. Despite the main limitations of reconvened groups noted as attrition (Bloor et al., 2001), the average attendance rate was 85% over the four meetings. A key reflection was how my positionality changed through each meeting (see Appendix 4).

Phase 3: Data analysis

Data gathered through focus groups were analysed through the six phases of RTA (see Table 10). Theoretical assumptions of RTA are situated within spectrums of essentialist/constructionist epistemology, experiential/critical orientation, inductive/deductive analysis, latent/semantic coding (Braun & Clark, 2021). The current research was situated in constructionist epistemologies viewing language as a social production to understand experience and a critical orientation examining the impact of the wider social context and mechanisms that inform meaning making. Both inductive and deductive analysis was utilised attempting to represent meaning as communicated by the fathers whilst understanding the analysis through the lens of CRT and African psychology. Both semantic (explicit) and latent (interpretive) coding was used to appreciate experiences constructed and communicated by Black fathers and the interpretation of these experiences by the author.

As agreed, the author transcribed and initially coded focus group discussions and generated initial themes and transcripts were reviewed with fathers to support theme development. Sharing transcripts are in line with a social constructionist stance and PAR and encourages shared ownership which emphasised fathers as co-constructors of knowledge and the importance of their voices in representing their experiences (Forbat & Henderson, 2005). The research supervisors also reviewed the initial analysis which led to further theme refinement, which was again reviewed by the fathers for further confirmation. Reflexive diary entries during the analysis process identified the pressure I felt to represent the Black fathers' voices accurately (see Appendix 13). The fathers generally agreed with the authors interpretations of discussions which I believe was due to the continuous process of feedback and

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[12] African psychology recitation invites group members to state their names, country of origin, ancestors and who they would like to honour in this space. This exercise is based on traditional African beliefs which affirm a sense of community and a connection to cultural and familial legacy as a foundation for understanding and exploring the self (see Uguru, 2023)

reflection on each focus group discussion, which deepened understanding.

Phase 4: Action   This phase outlines the actions that were generated throughout the research. Two follow up meetings were held in February to review data analysis and plan actions. Actions included creating a video to disseminate on social media which aimed to dispel the myths of Black fatherhood and provide insight into Black fathers' lived experiences. Actions beyond the scope of this research included setting up an annual Black Father's Day event to celebrate Black fatherhood, writing a book to highlight the stories of Black fathers and creating an organisation to support young Black men. I agreed to continue to collaborate with the group members on these actions and to support where possible. The far-reaching actions reflects the potential of PAR, where collaborative relationships typically extend beyond a research project and generate multiple actions in service to ongoing social change (Cornish et al., 2023).

Table 10.

Phases of Reflective Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021)

Phase	Description
1) **Dataset familiarisation**	Focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim. Video recordings and written transcripts of focus group discussions were repeatedly reviewed to support the process of data immersion.
2) **Data coding**	Initial codes were developed using NVIVO 14 which involved line by line reviewing of the transcripts and exploring repetition, similarities and differences (see Appendix 14 & 15 for an example). Coding was initially semantic before moving on to latent coding. This process was enhanced by reviewing notes taken during focus group discussions which supported initial coding.
3) **Initial theme generation**	Initial codes were grouped together that represented patterns of shared meaning across the dataset. This involved the identification of potential candidate themes and sub-themes.
4) **Theme development and review**	Initial themes were shared with the fathers, to support collaborative analysis and to enhance understanding and interpretation. This was a dynamic process with some themes being merged or discarded and ensuring themes were meaningful and answered the research questions. Collaboration with research supervisors offered an external perspective which supported the viability of themes.
5) **Theme refining, defining, naming**	Themes were refined which involved the renaming of themes and writing a brief synopsis of each theme. This process led to some earlier themes being grouped together under one central organising concept. The newly developed themes were shared with fathers to gather their perspectives and gain feedback on whether the themes represented their experiences.
6) **Writing up**	This involved writing up the analysis for the current study and selecting data extracts to coherently tell the story of each theme.

Assessment of quality of the current study

Assessing quality in qualitative research, requires consideration of the trustworthiness, credibility, validity and value of the research (Stenfors et al., 2020). As used to appraise the quality of qualitative research included in the SLR, the current study was evaluated using the CASP (2018) checklist (see Table 11). Braun and Clarke's (2021) 15-point checklist was used to asses good RTA (see Appendix 16). There is no current consensus on a quality assessment tool for PAR, instead frameworks have been developed which typically include evaluation of the process (i.e. level of community participation), effect (i.e. social action) and impact (i.e. value of the research) (Belmon et al., 2020). Using Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation to evaluate process, the maximisation of Black fathers' participation throughout the current study was in line with higher levels of citizen participation. However, the nature of this research for the authors academic work, positions this research at the 'Partnership' level of the ladder acknowledging the shared power between the author and the Black fathers, as opposed to Black fathers having total control (Arnstein, 1969). In evaluating effect, the research generated meaningful social action and the study itself was social action for the Black fathers involved. Impact can be evaluated both directly and prospectively; the research had a direct impact on group members and prospective actions have the potential to impact the wider community and other Black fathers (Kongats et al., 2018).

Reflexivity is an additional marker of quality in qualitative research and entails the continuous process of researchers considering their position and research practice (Stenfors et al., 2020). Reflexivity was embedded in the process of the current research and was achieved through ongoing reflexive journaling and reflexive discussion in regular research supervision which allowed the author to reflect on their assumptions, engagement with co-researchers, emotional responses and their impact on data analysis. Reflexivity was also enhanced by a

process of continuous feedback embedded in focus group discussions which ensured

collaboration, shared power and decision making (Cornish et al., 2023).

Table 11.

Quality appraisal of current study using CASP checklist

CASP Criteria	Assessment (Yes, No, Cannot Tell)	Evidence of meeting the CASP Criteria
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes	The research aims were clearly stated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. The aims of the research was to explore Black fathers lived experiences of raising Black sons using participatory research methods.
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes	A qualitative methodology was appropriate for the aims of the research and was in line with a social constructionist epistemology, PAR and CRT. A qualitative approach allowed for rich and detailed data to be collected.
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes	The research design allowed for the gap in research regarding Black fathers' experiences of raising sons in the UK to be addressed, as identified by the SLR. The study was guided the principles of PAR which addressed the research aims of including Black fathers as co-researchers and utilising non-conventional research methods focused on social action and participation.
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes	The current study used purposive and snowball sampling and partnered with a community organisation, which aids successful recruitment in under-researched communities.
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes	Participants collaboratively decided on the data collection method of focus group discussions which they highlighted would aid the sharing of their experiences. Data collection was clearly outlined and was informed by the principles of PAR.
6. Has the relationship between the researcher and participants been	Yes	Positionality was explicitly stated in chapter 1 and reflexivity through a process of bracketing, reflective journaling and memo writing was completed throughout the research. Reflexivity

	adequately considered?		was also achieved through explicit conversations with the Black fathers.
7.	**Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?**	Yes	Ethical issues were adequately considered, and approval was confirmed by the ethics committee. Amendments to ethics were completed when there were changes to the study.
8.	**Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?**	Yes	RTA offered a rigorous and systematic data analysis process which was outlined in the study. Rigour was also achieved through collaborative data analysis with the Black fathers where transparency was achieved through sharing transcripts and theme development and eliciting feedback.
9.	**Is there a clear statement of findings?**	Yes	Chapter 4 begins with a clear statement of findings and includes supporting evidence.
10.	**How valuable is the research?**	Yes	This is the first study to the authors knowledge in the UK to use PAR to understand Black fathers experience of raising Black sons. The study allowed for Black fathers to produce their own narrative of Black fatherhood and to be meaningfully involved in research. The research also has implications for professionals working in mental health settings with Black fathers and young Black boys, policy and service provisions and the development of supportive interventions for Black men. This research contributes to the evidence base of conducting research using a decolonisation approach and using PAR, CRT and African psychology as a framework.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Chapter Overview

In this chapter the findings from the current study will be presented. The analysis resulted in three overarching themes, ten themes and two subthemes as illustrated in the Thematic map (Figure 5). The themes will be presented with pseudo anonymised verbatim transcripts from focus group discussions. The results represent an inductive analysis, presenting meaning as communicated by the Black fathers.

Note on symbols:

(...) indicates words that have been omitted from the quote

(-) signifies pauses in speech

Figure 5.

Thematic Map of current study
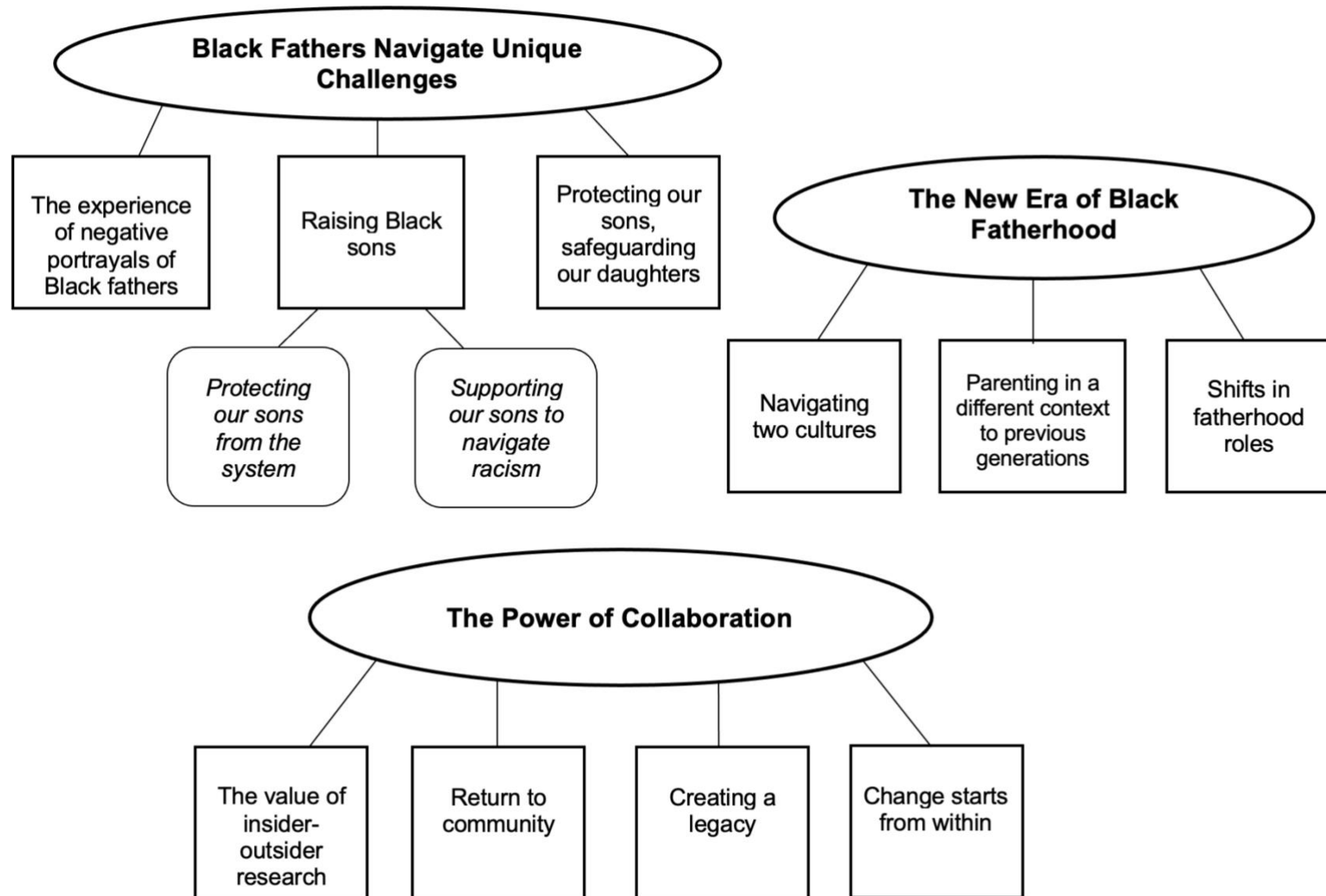
Black fathers navigate unique challenges

"Fatherhood is fatherhood, but the levels of pressure as a Black father is different to that as a white father" TM

This overarching theme represents the unique challenges that Black fathers navigate when raising their sons. Black fathers described their experiences of being portrayed negatively, specific challenges related to raising their sons and their reflections on how this experience differed to raising their daughters.

Theme 1: The experience of negative portrayals of Black fathers

In referring to dominant depictions of Black men, fathers described themselves as *"someone in the spotlight"* who were often depicted negatively and not seen as fathers *"we're in the spotlight for many other things, apart from being a father"*.

JR describes how different facets of his identity were viewed negatively by society: *"So, I think the way that society views Black males as in general, also has a direct effect on how Black fathers are…they view us very, very negative, you being Black, but then put it on the top of that, you're a Black father. I think you just added fuel to the fire…It's tough…So for me, being a Black father in society is very hard."*

Black fathers felt that there was a negative narrative depicting them as absent fathers: *"Based upon the narratives they want to push out in society, you would never hear anybody talking about how great Black men are as nurturers and caregivers to their children… they prefer to push that narrative of absent fathers" (Anthony)*

For Ric, he felt this narrative was reinforced by the media:

"You see TV programmes you hear the comments, and they expect you to not be around, to have run away, to not be there"

Fathers shared that negative narratives impacted them psychologically with Max describing the experience as "*being bombarded by an idea or a philosophy that goes against us...it definitely has an impact on me every day.*" Other fathers shared that they had to *"fight"* against stereotypes as depicted by Sketch:

"People will have the stereotypical view of you and you're mentally fighting with that"

For Ric, he shared that societies' views did not match up with his perspective of Black men:

"We are unbelievably intelligent, unique, strong, powerful, fantastic. Lots of the great stuff, but society would have you believe that we're the complete opposite of that, so you are fighting against that just as a Black man…it's trying to go against that and literally prove them wrong"

For TM, he worried about the frustration of contending with dominant narratives leading to a confirmation of stereotypes:

"I can easily become the stereotype that people would want me to be, the angry Black man just frustrated by the fact that you feel like you're always having to try much harder to level up because of the societal norms around us."

These challenges were specific to the UK context as Kemar described his experience of migrating from Jamaica and experiencing racism for the first time:

"For me, I'm just here reflecting on the fact that I've only been in the UK coming on to 8 years... I'm coming in with no preconceived idea about what it means to be different, what it means to see race or to see colour... I start to get- become quite conscious of how society will perceive me…I recognised that just by being in this society you get more into your head…we start to overthink things sometimes causing us to become more alert... I'm just becoming so absorbed within the society expectation…. being a father here, I can see it's quite difficult"

In summary this theme captures Black fathers' awareness of negative narratives about Black men and fathers and the impact of contending with this whilst being a father.

Theme 2: Raising Black sons

This theme captures Black fathers' experiences of raising sons and the importance of their role in protecting their sons from systemic discrimination and supporting them to navigate racism in society.

Subtheme 1: Protecting our sons from the system

Black fathers shared concerns about the negative perceptions of young Black boys, which impacted how different systems perceived them. A particular concern was their sons experiences in school. For Kemar, he was concerned about his son *"going into the school system"* due to:

"*so much misunderstanding of what it means to be a Black boy…because we are not like a typical white child. We are not going to be speaking the same way, acting the same way, and then we're often misunderstood.*"

Fathers explained that the misunderstanding of young Black boys was influenced by cultural barriers in mainstream education systems and in drawing on his own experiences of school, Joey explained:

"*Speaking anecdotally, I feel as though there's a cultural barrier as well. So, I don't just mean, for example, white teachers teaching some of our Black kids, it's the location they're from as well. So, if I look back to when I was at school, you have most of the teachers- none of them have come from London…they have had very limited exposure to a multicultural setting...they don't know how to handle it and they are intimidated.*"

Similarly, Sketch explained that another cultural barrier was the lack of Black teachers in schools to act as role models for Black children and a cultural mismatch in teaching styles:

"*There's a lack of representation in the school for these Black kids to aspire to, like role models, there's none. And then it could be down to the way they are taught things and they just find it hard to connect.*"

Fathers spoke about the impact of systemic inequalities on young Black boys such as being suspended from school and the psychological impact such as trauma and internalisation of negative stereotypes which effect their aspirations and sense of self:

"Some of them are traumatised by the experience they've had with the system, the police, the school system, and the other sad thing is that every young man- almost all of them have been suspended from school… for them it's like a bereavement cause they- they've mourned the loss of themselves in those classrooms…some of them can become so aware of the barriers that is before them that it becomes an obstacle for them to achieve greater things because they start to say, well, I would never get that job, I can't get that opportunity, somebody's gonna be there that doesn't like me and they become so focused on the oppression that they don't see the opportunities that is before them." (Kemar)

Black fathers felt that their role was to *"protect our sons from the system"* to reduce a negative trajectory:

"Let's respond to it quickly, because if we don't respond to it as parents, then that's when the problems really arise, then, the system now responds to it, and then you find like parole and probation and court systems, police officers, social workers… you don't want this system to show up at your home." (David)

For Kemar, he stressed the importance of a father's involvement as an advocate for children:

"And that's why, as fathers, we have to be there for our children so that they understand that you know what, Daddy's gonna be here, Daddy is gonna represent, Daddy is gonna show up."

In summary this sub-theme captures Black fathers concerns about their sons experiencing systemic discrimination and the importance of their role in protecting their sons from being impacted negatively.

Subtheme 2: Supporting our sons to navigate racism

For Black fathers, racism felt like an inevitable experience for their sons, and they highlighted their role in talking to their sons about racism to prepare and equip them with coping strategies. As captured by Sketch and Joey:

"You've gotta make them aware of harsh realities and racism is one of them."(Sketch)

"Showing him the reality of what it is to be a young Black boy growing into a man, living in this country" (Joey)

The need to support their sons to navigate racism were driven by Black father's own traumatic experiences:

"I went through so much, I found growing up so stressful and was traumatised…. I didn't want another boy to go through this. I didn't think I would be able to protect a young boy from this" (Ric)

For Kemar, he felt traumatised by exposure to publicised deaths of Black men:

"Based on what we've been socialised through the media and also all the things that have happened with Black men especially since 2020... like seeing a Black man being killed all over social media...I was traumatised by that trauma. So, it had me thinking when I had a son...I had to be prepared to be the father that can support my child to navigate through these challenges."

Fathers discussed the importance of their sons not being *"naïve"* and educating their sons not only about overt racism but about micro-aggressions, as captured by Joey:

"I'm not only thinking about all of the overt racism that he's gonna face in the years to come, I'm thinking of all of the micro inequities that I think we all face…what I want to equip him with is not like when, for example, I face racism and my first thought is violence. I want him to be able to use words and just to use them to disarm… to have an understanding of how you should be treated and being brave enough and confident enough to question when you haven't."

Fathers negotiated what was an appropriate age to educate their sons about racism. For David, he thought it was important to wait until your son was a bit older:

"My son is 10 and I tell him about racism, I've explained to him what prejudice is. I think in a way when your son gets older it's OK to explain to them".

For Joey, he explained it was context dependent and related to his son's developmental stage:

"when he's old enough to realise that he's being treated different is when we should start having those conversations."

Whilst Black fathers felt it was important to educate their sons about racism it was also important to build their confidence by *"reinforcing their greatness"* which could act as a buffer against the negative impacts of racism:

"I guess it's understanding how to socialise a young Black man, to understand the challenges in the system, but also build that confidence in them to recognise that they

are still agents of change, and they can still break down some of the glass ceilings that

are there and unlock the greatness that is within them."(Kemar)

In summary this sub-theme captures the racial socialisation strategies Black fathers use when parenting their sons which were aimed at educating their sons about racism and developing coping strategies to navigate inequality and discrimination in society.

Theme 3. Protecting our sons, safeguarding our daughters

For Black fathers who also had daughters they contrasted this experience with raising their sons. Whereas when raising their sons they focused on protecting them from system, with their daughters the focus was on safeguarding them:

"*You gotta protect them from men. I think when I look at my girls like, alright, how do*

I safeguard her?" (David)

For Max he felt less worried about his daughter in comparison to his son, due to differences in how society perceived Black women which he suggested was less negative:

"I'm not sure if it's the same perception society has on Black women as Black men.

I'm not too much worried about my daughter."

For Ric who did not have a daughter he assumed raising a daughter would be easier, which was challenged by his friends and others in the group:

"I wanted to have a daughter because I was that worried about having a son and I

thought maybe, maybe wrongly, cause speaking to friends, now they go-whoa, it isn't

as easy as you think, and you know…I was wrong thinking that it was easy, it's

probably the same, but it's like definitely different. There's a whole nother' minefield that has to be navigated with young Black daughters."

Fathers also shared that they had a different approach to raising their daughters which reflected gender expectations:

"I find myself thinking about…how easy it is for you to take a more compassionate approach to your daughter while expecting your son or trying to grow your son with the mental script you have of what it means to be a man" (Kemar)

Overall, this theme captures how intersectionality effects Black fathers parenting styles and the different concerns in father-daughter relationships compared to father-son relationships.

The new era of Black Fatherhood

"So, us as the new, the new era of Black fathers, we are changing the legacy and creating a new legacy for our children's children and their children's children"

Anthony

This overarching theme captures fathers' descriptions of a new era of Black fatherhood which was characterised by navigating two cultures, parenting in different contexts to earlier generations and shifts in fatherhood roles.

Theme 1: Navigating two cultures

Black fathers reflected on their experiences of living in a diasporic context which involved bringing together two cultures, which Joey viewed positively:

"I kind of see it as one of the joys in bringing the best bits of my culture from back home, but also from here, and I get to give my son this blueprint." (Joey)

For TM he experienced a shift in culture due to migration:

"My culture has been split, so my culture, when my grandparents were back home in the West Indies was one thing, then my parents being raised in the UK, they've had to start adopting something else and there has been a shift in what the culture is"

He described an erosion of cultural values in Black communities due to exposure to an individualistic Euro-centric culture which had a detrimental impact on Black men:

"Black culture in parenting, I think is dissolving a bit and eradicating in some respects and hence why we have so much knife crime or young Black people being willing and thinking they can talk to an elder in the way that they do. So I think it's just a breakdown….There's a lack of togetherness in western cultures in the same way, so it does put an additional strain and I think that's where the mental health of Black men come into it and breaks down quite quickly, cause you're an island on your own and trying to be this rock, trying to navigate everything and you don't even know what your culture is saying anymore because there's such a dilution and such a twist to it."

This perspective was shared by other fathers, and Anthony expressed a desire to re-visit historical and cultural Caribbean practices:

"And pass things on from the Caribbean that's something we need to try and do and should do...we need to probably go back to how it was before, well research it and find out about it and, you know, try and implement some of those things because they are good."

In summary this theme captures Black fathers' experiences of the formation of a hybrid culture in the context of migration and the dissolving of traditional and historical cultural practices.

Theme 2: Parenting in a different context to previous generations

This theme highlights the importance Black fathers placed on parenting for the current context, which reflected differences in their own, their parents and grandparent's context:

"I can't train up my son in the way I was trained because obviously the family dynamics, the demographic we live in is a lot different… we're equipping them for today's age, not the way that we were brought up because we grew up in a very different environment" (JR)

Similarly for TM he shared that he was building a different culture:

"I'm building a culture which is different to what my parents had and their parents because I'm in a space that's different to what they were in and like from my grandparents, polar opposite."

There was an acknowledgment of how contextual factors like first generation migration and racism impacted fatherhood in previous generations and a sense it was harder for their parent's generation:

"The stresses that my father's generation went through coming to this country, fighting against some of the worst racism and working in some of the worst conditions, unfortunately some of them guys couldn't be around for their

children…Even though our time is tough, they were in a tougher time, but we've got to try and improve on what they've done." (Ric)

Fathers recognised that these factors could have led to previous generations being less emotionally present and available, in referring to his grandfather, Sketch explains:

"You know it's a typical situation where they're from Barbados came here to work and I think they had to deal with obviously racism as well...I think for his particular period of time he was just trying to get- make money, keep a roof over his head and support his family. And probably the last thing he was thinking about was nurturing my mum, and you know, showing affection and talking to her."

Overall, this theme captures generational differences in parenting and Black fathers reflected on how contextual factors influenced previous generations and their own experiences of parenting.

Theme 3: Shifts in fatherhood roles

Black fathers spoke about a shift in their conceptualisations of fatherhood sharing that fatherhood today went beyond traditional roles of being a provider, a realisation that was linked to their own reflections of how they were raised:

"It's only now we're really starting to realise how to do it because previously I thought I was just a provider...I thought that was my role you know…As I got older I became a much more responsible father and not just a provider, but being there, taking them to football, you know? No, so not me just going to work, which I saw my father do a lot...you start to figure out there's more too fatherhood there is love and there is tender and there is affection." (David)

Less emphasis on being a provider was influenced by more *"equal partnerships"* with women and the recognition that being a man and father was also associated with balanced caring roles:

"roles that we carry out as men in our household, present, loving our wives, you know, loving our children, praying, devotion of our children, all those things make us the man of our households." (David)

For Kemar, he reflected on how he was brought up and a need to unlearn gender norms representing shifts in conceptualisations of masculinity:

"So, I'm just mindful that I can't kind of keep the mind that I have of how I was brought up kind of like typical you know, very tough, don't cry, just man it up, that kind of mentality."

This also involved displaying more affection towards his son, through re-socialising himself to show emotions:

"I wasn't growing up with those things, it kind of feel weird. Like if you were to get a kiss from your son, my son he love to kiss, but I never had no man kissing me. So it feels weird, but now I have recognised actually it's something that I am psychologically not wired to do...being a father is also a re-socialising, reprogramming and looking at things differently ... it really can challenge some of your own beliefs and ideas that you had growing up"

Shifting perspectives of masculinity also required fathers to encourage their sons to express their emotions, to avoid detrimental effects of societal norms:

"being able to explore their full range of emotions and not have certain ones nurtured out of them because I feel as a society, we create something until we don't like it anymore. So what I mean by that is we won't allow our young boys to cry or be sad, we'll nurture that side out of them and maybe reward other masculine emotions until they then become a man and then you want them to be able to be in touch with that side of them, but they've never been able to explore it and they just don't know how and then it becomes a problem in later life." (Joey)

This theme captures Black fathers' expressions of a shift in fatherhood roles which reflected a loosening of traditional gender norms related to fatherhood and masculinity.

The power of collaboration

"You know, basically it's been beautiful for me. It's been a really beautiful experience." Max

Theme 1: The value of insider-outsider research

This theme conceptualises the negotiation of the authors insider and outsider status throughout the research. For most Black fathers my status as a Black woman supported their participation in the research, due to sharing the same racial group:

"I wouldn't have taken part of in this if it was a white woman" (Joey)

TM, explained that race was a point of connection which benefited the research process:

"The person that's facilitating a group needs to be able to understand or there has to be some point of connection and we've spoken about different things that are about

race, that a white person respectfully wouldn't get…I wouldn't have the emotional

capacity for it, so I definitely wouldn't be as open."

Additionally, my status as a Black woman supported the reduction in power

imbalances in research and fostered trust:

"...a white person hosting this kind of space- for me your sharing your views and

your opinions with someone who in society has always been right...your always

speaking to a person that's got the authority in the space… when you are

communicating things that are personal or things that are based on your perception…

it needs to be people that you can connect with, and you can trust." (TM)

In contrast, David had a different perspective:

"I think if it was a white woman. As long as she played the same role… I think I

would have been fine."

Specific benefits were attributed to also having outsider status as a woman, in

discussing female-male dynamics, Max shared:

"I've been emotional in this, I've not normally been emotional around guys in this

type of setting… does the presence of a Black female, bring a different dynamic?...

she's exploring this as a female she's exploring us and we're exploring ourselves."

Similarly, Anthony shared:

"because of her position as a Black female looking at it from a different perspective

…we've got utmost respect for a female. Like the mother, so to speak… so we are

literally gonna make ourselves vulnerable to get her over that finish line."

In elaborating, TM explained his perspective on if the facilitator was a Black male and the sense his participation would have been different, highlighting the impact of gender:

"I don't think everyone would have been as humble and as engaged as if a man was hosting them. I find personally men puff up their feathers a lot and even when hosting or facilitating something he wants to be the big I am. You see the ego creeping in and there's been no ego."

Despite TM placing value on the author being a Black woman he also expressed a desire for Black men to lead on research about Black fathers:

"I felt a bit embarrassed because I'm like, why does- Why does it have to be a woman that has to lead a story about Black fathers?"

This perspective was shared by David, highlighting that Black fathers also desired to lead on research:

"We're the ones with the real-life experience…It looks really good when Black men are actually leading on these agendas."

Reflexivity was especially essential during analysis, as this theme required me to analyse discussions about my role in the research (see Appendix 12).

In summary this theme reflects Black fathers' views on the author's insider and outsider status and the impact of this on the research process and their desires to take part in research led by the Black community.

Theme 2: Return to community

Black fathers emphasised the meaningfulness of the research process which enabled the creation of a space for Black men to converse, connect and learn from each other:

"Being in a space that people talk about Fatherhood and like even having this conversation, I'm learning a lot because I'm hearing different perspectives." (Kemar)

Joey described learning from other fathers' perspectives about parenting approaches and strategies that could be beneficial for his young son:

"I find it super beneficial because my son is still only six months old, so I'm getting a lot of wisdom from people that have been doing this for many years and it's shaping how I'll approach certain things and how I want to raise my son."

This highlighted how the values of community embedded in the research process generated social change for the fathers involved. Anthony described the research process as:

"Creating a friendship that we've never had before"

The sense of community created was described as returning to the cultural practices of their ancestors:

"I think when you say go back and implement the things they used to do I think we are doing it now." (Anthony)

This was echoed by TM, who shared that men coming together was a common practice in the Caribbean:

"If you were in the West Indies, you'll be sitting down with your brothers at different periods of time, and you then connect and then relate."

Both Anthony and David shared that Black men need spaces to be vulnerable and speak with other Black men, which were not normative cultural and gender practices:

"*Because what this space does it shows vulnerability and within our culture it's about the ego. We don't wanna show our vulnerabilities because obviously it shows that stereotype of weakness. This is about having an open and honest conversation about our experiences...we've shrugged off our egos…So the mask that you want to wear you can no longer in places like this, and this is the reason why me personally, I feel like a lot of these things need to happen" (Anthony)*

David also indicated that talking could improve Black men's mental health and despite stereotypes they were motivated to share their experiences in the right circumstances:

"Black men need spaces like this. you know, men can't be alone in their own thoughts…we think about all type of stuff, crazy stuff sometimes, you know…We showed a lot of vulnerability, something that men are not described to do...it's about changing the narrative when people say men are not vulnerable…but that's not true, we are, but in the right setting in a safe space and talking about things that we are passionate about, and we are passionate about our children."

In summary, Black fathers connected with each other through the research process and this facilitated learning, sharing experiences and created a sense of community.

Theme 3: Creating a legacy

This theme captured Black fathers' reflections on the actions created throughout the research process which included creating a video to share Black father's experiences and

actions which extended beyond the research project such as writing a book, creating an organisation that supports fathers and creating an annual Black fathers day event. In summing up the research David shared:

> *"We're thinking positive, We're thinking about change, We're thinking about legacy and it's forward thinking."*

For Joey, the generation of actions exceeded his expectations:

> *"I didn't really have much expectations coming into this. I have been surprised with some of the actions that have come out. I didn't really see us doing like tangible things…seeing how this conversation has transitioned to some of the actions that were taken. I can't compute that we would be setting up like a Black Father's Day."*

Anthony described the potential the actions have in generating wider change in the Black community and positively impacting younger generations:

> *"It's a legacy in itself…when I say prevent knife crime or Black against Black crime, it's trying to spin that narrative of that Black-on-Black violence and all of that stuff. So, if we create this organisation supporting young men, rather young men and young Black fathers, as they're growing up, with the aim to reduce crime in the long run, so that is the ultimate goal…that's my experience of why we should do this and how the impact can, how us just doing that [Black father's day event] could impact the community in a positive way."*

In summary Black fathers described the research as a legacy and shared the prospects of action orientated research in leading to social change.

Theme 4: Change starts from within

In discussing the type of social change Black fathers desired they focused on changes within themselves, and their community as opposed to changes in wider society.   TM, shared that to manage racism it was necessary to work on yourself and change starts from within:

"Bob Marley came to mind, 'emancipate yourself from mental slavery' and I think as a society, as Black people, we need to identify what chains are still binding us and to deal with those and start unlocking some of that…Because the work starts from within, even though, yeah, there's racism, there's all of the isms… I think to even try and tackle any of that, even if you tackle it, you don't come out strong if you haven't dealt with what's going on within you."

As a facilitator, I reflected to the fathers that when speaking about social change they focused on internal as opposed to external changes, in explaining this Sketch shared:

"There's always gonna be people having perceptions about a certain culture just because they're different and, yeah, it's very difficult to try and find a way of tackling that, I think it can be just life, just the way life is sometimes… I think we probably didn't mention what needs to change outwardly because we can control the situation when we talk about ourselves…it's more peace of mind if you can just concentrate on what you can change and have control of."

This perspective was related to Black fathers' feelings that racism in society was difficult to change as it benefits the majority, as explained by Max. Similar to TM, Max quoted an influential Black figure in his life which influenced his understanding of change:

"Malcolm X plays a huge part in my life and how he saw the way going forward. And he said something quite interesting in his one of his quotes is 'so long as you wait

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around here waiting for the white man to undo what he's done, you'll be waiting

another 1000 years'... When you say what society has got to do, yeah, society has to

do something. But that change in my understanding, that change is not gonna come

about because it's a formula that works for them as with any majority."

For Kemar, he shared the importance of change within the Black community describing Black father's participation in the research as action itself and the need for Black men to overcome stereotypes and restricted expectations:

"I think we can help to promote that kind of change within our community just by

doing this research and kind of sharing our wisdom. It's really hoping that there can

be a wider culture shift in our community...So, like my son who's very young can see

Black men who are striving for excellence, who have ambitions to excel academically,

who are not just given the ideology of being someone that is in music or in sports or

something, but they can see a wider scope of possibility. I'm thinking wider than just

what I can add to my son, I'm looking at our society, our community as Black men,

those are some of things I would like to see."

Overall, this theme captures Black fathers' perspectives on social change which was focused on changing themselves, as for fathers changes in society were perceived as less attainable.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Chapter overview

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings of the research project in line with the research aims. The key findings will be discussed deductively drawing on existing theory, literature, and principles of African psychology as a frame of reference. Using the central tenets of Critical Race Theory Black fathers' experiences will be considered through the recognition of race, racism and intersectionality, interdisciplinary theories, an emphasis on counternarratives and a focus on Black fathers' experiential knowledge and social justice. The current study will be critically evaluated in terms of strengths and limitations. Clinical implications will be shared and directions for future research will be suggested. This thesis will conclude with my final reflections on the project.

Summary of findings

Black fathers characterised their experiences of raising their Black sons as one of challenge due to having to navigate a myriad of social factors due to the unique social position of Black men and Black boys. Whilst raising their sons, Black fathers contended with negative societal portrayals situated in dominant narratives as a result of racialised and gendered experiences which negatively impacted themselves and their sons on a systemic and psychological level. Black fatherhood was conceptualised as a dynamic concept which was influenced by generational, social-cultural and contextual factors, which led to a new era of Black fatherhood. Black fathers' reflections on the research project highlighted the value of research rooted in community, participation and action which led to meaningful change and elevated their voices.

Black fathers navigate unique challenges when raising their sons

Consistent with Black fathers' accounts in previous research, the current study highlights the unique position of Black men and Black boys and the distinct experiences of Black fatherhood and raising Black sons (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Lemmons & Johnson, 2022). In the current study Black fathers shared contending with negative social constructions and narratives of Black fathers and men, which aligns with studies in the SLR (e.g. Doyle et al., 2014; Fleck et al., 2013; Powe et al., 2023; Turner & Stenner, 2021). This highlighted the permeance of dominant narratives, showing little has changed in the majority imagination despite counter evidence demonstrating Black fathers are present and involved in their children's lives (Fagan, 2024).

The impact of negative narratives was consistent with the concept of Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) that posits race related interactions such as encountering negative stereotypes, result in psychological and physiological stress through evoking chronic biopsychosocial stress responses (Smith et al., 2020). RBF was developed to understand the consequences of gendered anti-blackness for Black men and boys and posits that both actual and perceived racism can lead to disparate physical health and mental health outcomes (Smith et al., 2006). This impacts Black fatherhood as Black fathers expend energy on dealing with race related stress which depletes the psychological and physiological resources available to devote to raising their children and self-actualisation (Smith et al., 2020). Additionally, Black fathers living in the Global South where they are the racial majority may be shielded from the impact of racism, as the meaning and salience of Blackness differs in the Global North (Ojuronjbe, 2023). Being exposed to an environment which negatively views Blackness has implications for migrant Black fathers' mental health and self-concept, in addition to the process of migration and acculturation (Ojuronjbe, 2023).

Black fathers in the current study described experiences consistent with the concept of Stereotype Threat which refers to the cognitive load associated with the risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one's group which results in anxiety and impaired performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Despite Stereotype Threat being associated with eliciting self-fulfilling prophecies and confirming stereotypes, Black fathers' desires to prove stereotypes wrong are found to increase their involvement with their children which serves the dual purpose of supporting Black children's development and resisting dominant narratives (Cooper et al., 2021). Moreover, awareness of stereotypes can serve as a catalyst for the development of a positive identity as negative stereotypes are rarely consistent with how Black men see themselves (Smith et al., 2020). Black fathers in the current study highlighted their positive attributes in the face of negative stereotypes which reflects the notion of double consciousness of how the majority sees them and how they see themselves (DuBois, 1903). Focusing on positive attributes can buffer against the internalisation of negative portrayals through constructing a counter-stereotypic identity, underpinned by Social Identity Theory and the drive to maintain a positive image of one's social group, which enhances self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Consistent with findings of the SLR and prior literature, Black fathers perceived society as posing a threat to their sons and shared a need to protect and support them from racism (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Gordon et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2020). Black fathers' specific concerns about their sons experiencing systemic discrimination in schools, reflects findings of institutional racism towards Black boys in schools in the UK (Demie, 2021). This was more relevant to the UK context, as although Black parents in the USA shared concerns about their son's schooling experiences, typically they focus on protecting their sons from police encounters (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022). The traumatic nature of schooling experiences is depicted by Dumas (2014) who describes school as a 'site of suffering' for Black boys due

to the reproduction and exaggeration of existing inequalities. Black fathers frequent referral to the 'misunderstanding of Black Boys' reflects the socially constructed nature of childhood where white childhood is positioned as normative and Black childhood as unimaginable and deviant, historically and in present times (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). The education system is imbued with Euro-centric ideologies and Black children are confronted with teaching styles and a curriculum which is anti-Black, epistemically violent and culturally incongruent (Carey, 2020); as well as teachers who replicate societal norms and reproduce gendered and racist views (Dumas & Nelson, 2016).

Understanding Black boy's experiences requires a lens of gendered anti-blackness, as inequality has differential impacts on Black boys and girls (Gilmore & Bettis, 2021). Social constructions of Black boys as 'problematic', 'bad' and 'unteachable' has implications for their experiences in systems (Gilmore & Bettis, 2021). In both school and society Black boys are frequently adultified, with findings showing they are viewed as less innocent than white boys (Dancy, 2014); more culpable for their actions (Goff et al., 2014); disproportionately blamed for academic shortcomings (Dumas, 2014); and deemed threatening when they engage in play (Bryan, 2020). Similarly to Black men, Black boys experience stereotype threat which impacts their academic and social performance (Hines Shelvin et al., 2014); and are subject to self-policing, altered self-esteem, decreased confidence and aspirations (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Gilmore & Bettis, 2021). This has implications for the mental health of young Black boys and renders their experiences as distinct from other childhoods as they are not afforded the opportunity of innocence and play as other groups (Gilmore & Bettis, 2021).

The current study supports previous literature showing that racial socialisation is a key parenting strategy of Black fathers as they are tasked with supporting their son's socio-emotional development and survival in a society where they are prone to threat and inequality (Cooper et al., 2020). Racial socialisation is the process by which children develop a sense of

their individual and group identity based on their racial group, this involves parents teaching cultural history, emphasising racial pride and talking about racism to prepare children to manage discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006). Similarly to Black fathers in the SLR and prior studies, socialisation strategies differed based on their child's gender (Dilworth-Bart et al., 2022; Gordon et al., 2013; Hughes et al., 2006; Roy et al., 2023). Black parents socialisation strategies with their sons emphasise managing racism whereas with their girls they focus on racial pride and gender socialisation; highlighting the key concerns parents have for their sons (Brown et al., 2010). Consistent with existing literature, racial socialisation is significant in Black father-son relationships as Black fathers have experience of navigating a similar context and pass on knowledge of coping strategies to their sons (Johnson et al., 2020). Additionally, fathers report increased closeness and relatedness to their sons, highlighting the impact of gender on parenting (Brotherson et al., 2003). Racial socialisation is associated with positive outcomes in Black boys such as increased self-esteem, resilience, assertive coping skills, pro-active problem-solving, academic achievement and fewer internalising and externalising behaviours (Hughes et al., 2006; Neblett et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2020). However, racial socialisation could also promote mistrust and anticipation of barriers which could be detrimental to positive identity development, and similarly to the Black fathers in the current study, existing literature highlights the importance of emphasising racial pride and positive individual and group attitudes (Hughes et al., 2006). Black fathers elsewhere also tailored racial socialisation strategies to their child's developmental competencies and experiences of racism (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Due to the social position of Black boys, father-son relationships in the Black community are particularly influential in supporting the development of Black boys through role modelling, transmission of strength and positive coping in a difficult society (Doyle et al., 2016).

The new era of Black fatherhood

Black fathers described the integration of the cultural values of their home countries and the UK, which aligns with the process of forming a new cultural identity in successive migration generations (Bhandari, 2020). Their experiences reflected processes of acculturation and assimilation which conceptualises the psychosocial and behavioural changes associated with immigrants adopting the beliefs of the dominant culture and is associated with reducing cultural conflict and increasing a sense of belonging (Berry, 2005). However, Black fathers also described cultural bereavement (loss of one's culture and social structures) and deculturation (loss of cultural identity) which can lead to significant distress (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Consistent with existing literature on migration, in the current study Black fathers described the lack of social support, alienation and isolation that individuals migrating from collectivistic cultures to individualistic cultures can experience (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Traditional Afro-centric beliefs emphasise collectivistic identities and community support and has historically been a strength of Black families and supported fathers to focus on gaining resources for their families (Jemmott, 2015). The loss of community experienced in the diaspora has implications for Black fathers' mental health and their families, as in present times Black fathers contend with supporting their families with less social support than they had in previous generations (Turner & Stenner, 2021). Black fathers expressed a desire to re-visit their home cultures and values; longing and nostalgia is commonly experienced in the Black diaspora where consciousness and attachment to home cultures is central to identity (Hall, 2015). African psychology advocates for revisiting ancestral traditions to support Black people in the diaspora (Nwoye, 2015).

Black fathers acknowledged the generational and contextual differences in parenting, which were consistent with findings that first generation Black migrants experience greater racial trauma, higher acculturative stress and increased social exclusion which had implications for family life (Adams, 2019; Hall, 2015). Migration during the Windrush era was characterised by harsher working conditions due to lack of legislation against racism and inequality leading to limited job opportunities, housing and social support (Gentleman, 2019). Black fathers described how these stressors impacted their fathers and grandfathers parenting practices, which is consistent with findings that contextual factors shape the enactment of fatherhood (Adams, 2019). Consistent with the modelling and compensating hypothesis (Daly, 1993), Black fathers in the current study modelled positive experiences of their fathers and compensated for negative experiences of being parented as shared by Black fathers in previous studies, highlighting their desire to shift generational patterns to achieve better outcomes for their children (Murray & Hwang, 2020; Leath, 2017; Perry & Lewis, 2016; Robinson, 2021).

Black fathers' emphasis of going beyond socially constrained constructions of fatherhood roles is consistent with findings in the SLR, where Black fathers emphasise being physically and emotionally involved fathers (e.g. Dill et al., 2016; Hamm et al., 2018; Henson, 2023; Wallace, 2023; Welch et al., 2019).   This also aligns with the construction of the modern, involved father in the dominant culture who is actively involved in caregiving (Valiquette-Tessier et al., 2019). However, there is evidence that historically Black fathers have always enacted egalitarian gender roles in parenting and have been active nurturers (McAdoo, 1993). Additionally, in viewing Black masculinity as distinct from other masculinities, Black men often derive their sense of manhood not only from being providers but by caring for their partners and their families, which was shared by a Black father in the current study (Young, 2021). In the current study Black fathers accounts of going against

traditional gender and masculinity norms, can enable their sons to develop positive coping strategies and reduce the emotional strain of navigating a challenging society by showing their sons love, being affectionate and encouraging emotional expressivity, which are particularly beneficial for young Black boys (Young, 2021).

The power of collaboration

Black fathers' reflections on the benefits of the author being a Black woman aligns with the benefits of racial solidarity in supporting connection in research and therapeutic relationships and facilitating trust and increased access to communities (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Insider-research may be particularly valuable for Black communities, where there are cultural beliefs about not sharing family and community matters with outsiders (Bauer et al., 2020). Given the paucity of research involving Black fathers as well as their experiences of gendered and racialised harm in academia; insider-researchers and participatory approaches that prioritise empowering Black men are more ethical and valuable (Bridges, 2017).

Black fathers reflected that they would have felt unsafe and sceptical to participate in the research if the author was from a different racial background, which is supported by findings that outsider-researchers and traditional research approaches reinforce existing power structures and are experienced as unsafe (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Black fathers' opinions that a complete insider membership researcher- a Black man- could have disadvantages, aligns with gender performance theories where men are more likely to perform stereotypically masculine behaviours in research environments when being interviewed by men, such as avoiding emotions and competing for dominance (Jachyra et al., 2014; Mac an Ghaill et al., 2013). In the current study Black fathers' perspectives towards the female author, reflects existing literature that women researching men can be advantageous, such that men view women researchers as more emotional, compassionate and nurturing

which subsequently facilitates a non-threatening research environment and gives men permission to participate in socially constructed 'feminine' behaviours such as talking and expressing emotions (Lefkowich, 2019; Mac an Ghaill et al., 2013). These factors are a result of dominant social constructions of gender and gender role expectations of females, and the reproduction of gendered behaviour in research environments (Fine, 2013).

Culturally in Black communities, Black women's roles are rooted in community mothering, and they are typically respected figures in the community, this was reflected in the current study where a Black father likened his respect for the author as a mother (Edwards, 2000). This highlighted the value of Black women conducting research with Black men, where intersectionality may strengthen the research process as having a point of similarity yet also a point of difference can challenge assumptions, reduce overidentification and facilitate curiosity, which can be issues in complete insider membership research (Chhabra, 2020). Paradoxically, it must also be noted that the Black fathers expressed a desire for Black men to lead on research, which supports findings from another PAR study where Black men wanted to be in charge of their own journeys and author their own stories (Keating, 2021). Black fathers desire to participate in research counters dominant narratives that Black are 'hard to engage' and similarly to Black fathers in previous studies they are motivated to participate in research that is empowering, Black led and where they are collaborators and leaders (Bonevski et al., 2014; Dodzro, 2023).

This creation of community in the current study was cultivated by embedding principles of African psychology (Nwoye, 2022). The benefits of returning to community shared by Black fathers in the current study aligns with the benefits of collective identity and communal practices in traditional African cultural values, which historically had benefits for Black men and their families (Jemmott 2015). Consistent with studies in the SLR, Black fathers in the current study learn valuable insights about fatherhood by talking with other

Black fathers (e.g. Gordon et al., 2013; Leath, 2017; Murray & Hwang, 2020; Welch et al., 2019). This aligns with research consistently showing that Black men derive their social support from other Black men, which provides a sense of brotherhood, collective identity and unity through shared experiences (Brooms & Davis, 2017). Social Identity Theory explains how being part of a group can lead to connection and cultivate a positive social identity, which is a requisite for meaningful social action for a group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the current study, the Black fathers cultivated a positive shared identity which supported engagement with the research and the creation of actions.

This tension Black fathers described of being vulnerable and going against gender roles in the research process is supported by the concept of Gender Role Strain Theory that describes the psychological stress associated with going against culturally and socially constructed gender norms, which can impair help-seeking for men (Pleck, 1995). For Black men not displaying vulnerability or emotions in public or to a majority audience has been understood as the 'frontstage', where they conceal their true feelings and downplay feelings of frustration to avoid being perceived as weak or confirming negative stereotypes (Goffman, 1959; Jackson, 2018). Emotional expressivity may go against stereotypes of Black men having a 'cool pose' and displaying 'aloofness', which may be a survival strategy where Black men wear 'armour' to protect themselves against societal challenges (Young, 2021). The 'backstage' is described as dropping a front and is the place where Black men are able to vent their true feelings, be themselves, gain support and learn strategies to help them navigate society (Goffman, 1959; Jackson, 2018). A Black father in the current study described the research process as 'dropping the mask', which is consistent with findings that when Black men are together, they access 'the backstage' where they show emotional vulnerability, speak freely, and seek advice which can support them to cope with the shared experiences of gendered anti-blackness (Jackson, 2018). Although Black men may acquiesce to dominant

models of masculinity, traditionally Afro-centric models of masculinity emphasise

community, brotherhood and emotionally intimate relationships with men, which fathers in

the current study were cognisant of (Hunter & Davis, 1994; McClure, 2006). This also

challenges stereotypes that Black men do not talk about emotions and highlight that they do

but this may be more likely with other men with similar experiences.

Black fathers in Perry & Lewis's (2016) study emphasised the importance of leaving a

positive paternal legacy to achieve long-term benefits for their families and the Black

community, which was highlighted as a key interest for Black fathers in the current study.

The interconnectedness of community and younger and older generations are emphasised in

traditional African cultural values and Black communities are found to be more invested in

strengthening generational linkages and in the needs of their community (Nwoye, 2022). In

the current study, the generated actions could positively impact younger generations and the

Black community more widely, which is consistent with the impact of PAR being described

as having 'ripple' effects, which endorses an ecological perspective highlighting the

interdependence of systems, such that change in one part of a system affects change in

another part (Trickett & Beehler, 2017).

Black fathers' perspectives on change reflects the permeance of racism and

stereotypes in the UK, which are difficult to change due to racial ideologies being embedded

in societal structures and the tendency of humans to interpret social information in a way that

maintains stereotypes (Wigboldus et al., 2003). Conversely, Black fathers focus on changing

themselves aligns with an internal locus of control as opposed to leaving their fate in the

hands of external societal forces (Rotter, 1996). Having an internal locus of control is

associated with adaptive coping strategies and better mental health outcomes (Parkes, 1984).

Consistent with previous findings, Black fathers in the current study focused on cultivating a

positive identity and self-concept which can protect Black fathers from internalising racism

and negative stereotypes by devoting energy to resilience and self-actualisation (Smith et al., 2020). Privileging Black fathers' knowledge as experts emphasises that meaningful change should be defined by the community, and for these Black fathers changing their own perspectives, engaging in critical reflection and focusing on change within their community as opposed to changing wider societal structures represented significant social change.

Clinical implications

Supporting Black fathers

Consistent with previous literature, Black men shared that gendered and racialised experiences impacted their daily lives, mental wellbeing and how they parented their sons (Wallace, 2023). Despite this, race and racism are frequently overlooked in interventions which aim to support individuals who experience race-based inequalities (Maharaj et al., 2021). The Black Mental Health Manifesto (2024) emphasises that in order to support the Black community it is integral to take into account the impact structural racism has on the mental health outcomes of Black people. Moreover, Black fathers have unique experiences based on the cumulative impact of their social position as Black and male, and interventions rarely take into account how identities intersect to create specific ontological experiences (PettyJohn et al., 2019). This has implications for clinical psychologists, organisations and policy initiatives supporting Black men. In order to fully address the needs of Black men interventions must take into account their gendered and racialised experiences and appreciate Black fatherhood and Black manhood as a distinct and unique ontology.

Black fathers in the current study express a desire for support that is rooted in collectivist cultural values and connection with other Black men to improve their mental health; this has implications for the development of relevant interventions. The BPS and NHS endorse frameworks of anti-racist practice which typically focus on organisational level

change and individual level training for clinicians, which results in gaps in implementation and little change for communities affected by racism (BPS, 2020; NHS England, 2023); due to anti-racist policies rarely going beyond tokenistic consultation and co-production (Hassen et al., 2021). Moreover, these policies assume that Black men want to access mainstream support services and that cultural humility and competence is sufficient to make services that are based on Euro-centric models relevant to Black fathers' needs (Gopal et al., 2022; Russell, 2023). In recognising the limits of the NHS, which aims to provide care for all and has limited resources to provide culturally relevant, meaningful and nuanced care, collaboration and the provision of equitable funding opportunities for third sector and grassroots organisations will be paramount to support Black fathers (Russell, 2023). In quoting Audre Lorde (2007) *"The Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's House"*, which acknowledges that in order to support Black men they require interventions rooted in their own African and Black cultural traditions which centres on their unique experiences. For example, Emotional Emancipation Circles focused on collective healing and Afrocentric cultural values have shown promise in supporting the mental health of young Black boys and men (Grills et al., 2016). To support Black fathers, it will be integral to create safe spaces for them to connect with other Black men, to share their daily struggles, to seek advice and learn how to cope with a society that invalidates their ontological reality. Given Black fathers have a fundamental role in their families, supporting their wellbeing will have ripple effects and improve the outcomes for Black families.

Supporting young Black boys

The unique position of Black men begins in their introduction to the world as Black boys. Shared by Black fathers was their own and their son's experiences of growing up in the UK, which was characterised as traumatic, difficult and stressful. This has implications for

supporting the mental health of young Black boys who grow up in a society which poses an existential threat to their wellbeing (Curry, 2017). There is a need to consider the gendered and racialised aspects of young Black boys' experiences which precedes systemic racism and has consequences for their mental health, life aspirations and trajectories as fathers (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). Addressing systemic racism in schools and wider institutions will be paramount to ensuring Black boys are afforded the same level of support, care, nurturing and life opportunities as other children, to allow them to reach their full potential (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). Given that Black men emphasise the need to be supported by culturally and gender relevant services, this highlights the need for the development of services that are focused on the needs of Black boys and elevate their voices to enable them to lead changes in their own communities. PAR approaches have developed to empower youths which positions young people as having agency and the importance of them being leaders and experts in their own experiences (Templer, 2017).

The need for collaborative research

Black men and boys are continually denied the opportunity to be meaningfully involved in generating and producing their visions for social change which is reinforced by dominant research traditions and clinical practices which fail to empower them as knowledge makers and experts (Curry, 2017). In the words of Freire (1990) *"No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed…The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption"*. In line with Black fathers' desires to author their own stories and lead change for themselves, Black fathers should be provided with the resources to investigate their own experiences. The need for Black led research was emphasised which has the power to address gaps in knowledge, to correct distorted narratives and to drive meaningful social change in line with principles of African psychology (Nwoye, 2015). The

desire to look back to their ancestors, highlights the value of Afrocentric approaches which posits that solutions for Black people living in the diaspora are located in revisiting their traditional cultural values and practices (Nwoye, 2022). This highlights the need to privilege research emanating from the Global South, which focuses on indigenous knowledge that contains valuable and meaningful teachings for the present (Nwoye, 2022). Given the preferences of Black fathers wanting to take part in research led by people of the same racial group this has implications for research that centres on the perspectives of the communities being explored and emphasises privileging their desires as opposed to imposing traditional research approaches. Insider research for white researchers, researching white populations have not been subject to same level of critique as Black-led research, which reflects dominant norms of which knowledge and research traditions are privileged (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Black fathers are experts on their own lives and their voices will be the closest to the solution to improve their experiences.

Critical Evaluation of the study

Strengths

This study is believed to be the first of its kind to use PAR approaches to explore Black fathers' experiences of raising Black sons in the UK, which highlights its empirical value in addressing a gap in the literature and in demonstrating the utility of PAR. Working collaboratively with Black fathers elevated their voices which produced meaningful insights and directions for supporting Black fathers and their Black sons. The use of a CRT lens supported a social justice framework and focused attention to the centrality of race and racism which were key factors that impacted Black fathers' experiences. Contrary to stereotypes that Black men are 'hard to reach', ten Black fathers were recruited and took part extensively in the research process, which supports the notion that Black men have *"never*

been hard to reach, just easy to ignore" (Dodzro, 2023). The Black fathers were diverse in age, number and gender of children as well as generation of migration which captured a range of diverse experiences of Black fatherhood in the UK. The reconvened focus group design allowed Black fathers to provide rich and detailed insights into their lived experiences and the use of RTA allowed for an in-depth collaborative analysis which focused on reflexivity as a resource. Black fathers' involvement in the analysis aided theme development and refinement, this went beyond simply member checking and fathers engaged in a dialogical process of collaborative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Reflexivity was used throughout which supported reflection on my role in the research and helped to ensure maximum collaboration was achieved throughout.

Limitations

Of the ten Black fathers, nine self-identified as Black Caribbean which has implications for the generalisability of the findings as there is significant variation and heterogeneity of experiences within the Black community. Although partnership with community organisations supported the recruitment of Black fathers, this could have led to recruitment and self-selection bias. Due to the research topic, it is possible that Black fathers who have good relationships with their children and who are involved fathers were more likely to be interested in the research. The study relied on Black fathers who could speak English and could access internet and video-conferencing facilities, which could have excluded some Black fathers from participating. All fathers resided in England which warrants caution when applying findings to Black fathers who reside elsewhere in the UK, who may have different experiences.

A full PAR methodology could not be implemented due to time constraints and the status of the project as doctoral research. This current study can be positioned as a 'partnership' as opposed to the highest level of participation conferring 'total citizen control' which could have fully empowered Black fathers (Arnstein, 1969). Although Black fathers contributed to analysis this was mostly consultative as the author generated initial codes and themes. A full PAR approach without time and resource constraints would have supported Black fathers to complete their own analyses. Additionally, the thesis was written by the author which did not give Black fathers full control over representing their own experiences.

Dissemination

The research is underpinned by social action and dissemination is a key priority. The research will be written up for publication and Black fathers will be involved in reviewing the research report and we agreed to publish the study in a research journal which amplifies research based on the Black community. The research will be presented at the University of Hertfordshire, Life of Medical Sciences 2024 research conference. Ongoing collaboration with the third sector organisation will support the dissemination of the key findings. Black fathers will be creating a video which aims to correct dominant narratives and dispel myths of Black fatherhood which will be shared by the Black fathers and the third-sector organisation. Additionally, a key action was to create an annual Black Father's Day and we are in ongoing conversations to present the findings of the study on that date.

Invitations for future research

This research highlights the value of PAR methodologies in producing meaningful collaboration with Black men. As a full PAR project was not achieved, future research not constrained by time, resources and academic bureaucracy would be helpful to further

empower Black fathers and Black boys to achieve social change and justice for their communities and go beyond partnership to allow them to have full control over research. Although Black fathers in the current study did not have a preference for creative methodologies such as photovoice, creative exploration of stories could be useful for other Black fathers and young Black boys to capture their lived experiences. Future research could also evaluate the outcomes of social actions stemming from PAR to contribute to demonstrating the value of participatory methodologies.

All recruited fathers were heterosexual and fathers of Black sons. Future research could explore the nuances of fatherhood for Black fathers who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, as their experiences continue to be underrepresented and under theorised (Johnson & Young, 2016). Future research could explore Black fathers of sons who are interracial, as this could provide a nuanced understanding of the diversity within Black fatherhood and existing studies highlight different parenting practices with interracial sons (Edwards, 2017). Additionally, whilst focusing on their experiences of raising their sons, Black fathers compared their different experiences of raising their daughters. Future research could benefit from studying these phenomena alongside each other as Black fathers' different perspectives are gleaned from contrasting their father-son and father-daughter relationships, highlighting their interconnected nature.

Future research could also appreciate the intersectionality of class, economic status, ability, age, spirituality and geographical location which could impact Black fathers' experiences and their relationships with their sons. This will help to reduce essentialising Black fathers' experiences and emphasise the heterogeneity of their experiences which may confer to different perspectives and priorities within sub-groups of Black fathers.

Final Reflections

Being able to listen to Black fathers lived experiences and being trusted to share their stories was a privilege. Researching a topic that has personal relevance to my community led to me putting pressure on myself to do the Black fathers justice and I was worried about representing their stories in the 'right' way. Throughout the research I was confronted with my own biases which led me to challenge my beliefs about men and masculinity. Being a Black female, we are often told that we have it the 'hardest' due to sexism and racism. However, this research allowed me to fully appreciate the challenges that Black men face, the uniqueness of their experiences and how their voices have been unheard. Throughout the research I was confronted with the reality of racism and negative stereotypical views of Black men which led me to feel frustrated at the lack of social justice. In some ways I felt hopeless as I noticed little has changed, however seeing the actions that had been generated through the study and the Black fathers' stories of strength, resilience and joy in the face of challenges inspired hope. This research left me thinking of what it would be like to raise a Black son in the UK, and I hope to take some of the learnings shared by Black fathers to support me when I have children one day. Using an African psychology frame of reference allowed me to re-connect with the traditional values and knowledge of my ancestors and reminded me that there are different models to the Euro-centric perspectives that have dominated my training and professional career.

Using PAR methodology for the first time, I became acutely aware of how disempowering and unethical traditional research methods are. In doing research *with* Black fathers, I recognised that clinical psychologists are not the experts and in order to truly represent the voices of the people we desire to help we must share power and put them at the forefront of decision making. I have been left feeling critical of traditional research methods

and sources of knowledge production and as a clinician I aim to maximise participation and collaboration in all of my encounters. This research also demonstrated that despite barriers to implementing a full PAR study, it is possible to strive to empowering and inclusive research.

Final conclusions

This research project used PAR principles to elevate the voices of ten Black fathers and their experiences of raising Black sons in the UK. In doing so, this research provided a counter narrative to dominant depictions of Black men as 'uninvolved' and 'absent' fathers and highlighted the passion they have for their children. Working collaboratively with Black fathers produced meaningful social change, by focusing attention to their lived experiences and empowering them to be involved in investigating and representing their lived realities. Using an African Psychology frame of reference, highlights the utility in not privileging Euro-centric models which lead to other cultures being viewed in comparison to a socially constructed norm. Through a CRT lens, the social construction of Blackness and maleness results in gendered and racialised experiences that are embedded in social structures and results in cultural, systemic and institutional racism which pose significant challenges for the mental health, aspirations and lived reality of Black fathers and their Black sons. In order to support Black fathers and young Black boys, interventions need to be rooted in community, togetherness, be relevant to their cultural values and led by themselves and members of their communities. The research provides clinical recommendations to support Black fathers and their Black sons as well as further research suggestions to continue to elevate Black fathers' voices and generate social change.

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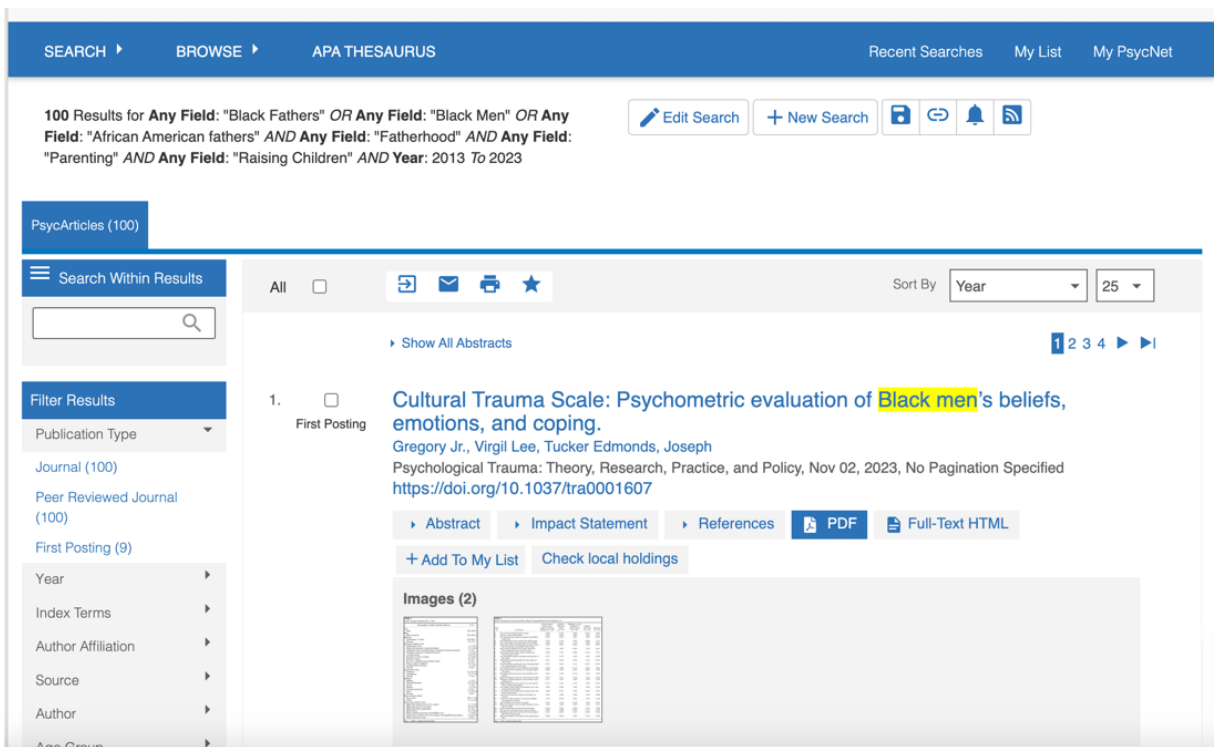
APPENDICIES

Appendix 1 PICo review strategy

Full review question	
What are Black father's experiences of raising children in Global North?	
Population	**Black Fathers**
	Black/African/Caribbean/Afro-Caribbean/African American
	Fathers/Men/Male/Man/Dad
Interest	**Parenting/Raising children**
	Raising/Rearing/Bringing up/Parenting/Fatherhood
	Children/Kids/Youth/Sons/Daughters
Context	**Qualitative research in the Global North**
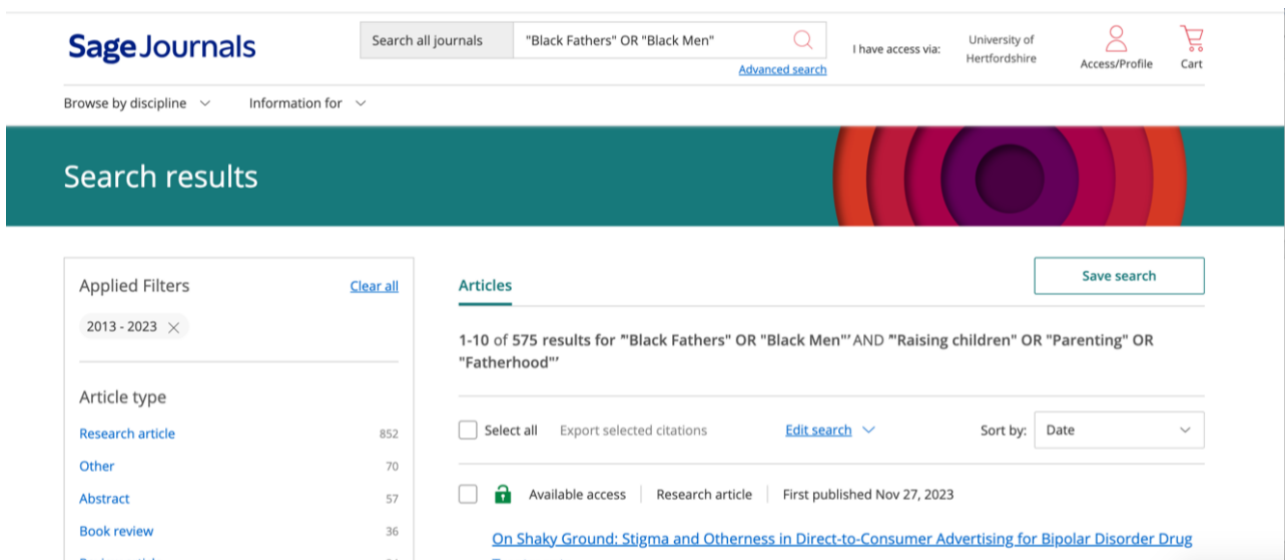
Appendix 2 Key search terms used in each database

PsycArticles search terms:

Sage Journals search terms:

SCOPUS search terms:

Appendix 3 Reflective diary entry SLR

25.09.2023

I am finding it really triggering to read the literature about Black fathers. They constantly refer to Black fathers as 'deadbeat' and 'absent' and depict them in a negative light. Most of these papers lack any reflexivity or awareness of alternative narratives and seem to be pushing a negative agenda. Are they doing this on purpose? It's hard to even include these papers and I find it quite draining to read. Barely any papers look at Black fathers' strengths or the fathers who are actively involved in their children's lives. If anyone read all of this literature, they would develop a negative assumption about Black men it seems so unfair. I think I need to take a step back today and come back to this later.

24.10.2023

I found a really great paper today; it explained how I have been feeling reading all the negative narratives about Black men. It critiqued existing literature and situated biases in academia within racialised and gendered prejudices. The paper I read today actually celebrated Black fathers' strengths, which was one of few I have seen. I need to get better at reading papers objectively and try to put my personal feelings to the side. It's ok that there is existence of different narratives of Black fathers, and I can critique existing research without disregarding it completely. I noticed my emotions were because my narrative doesn't fit with the narrative of some of the research I have read, so it made it difficult to digest. I feel better when I see a paper written with a positive narrative that fits best with mine. I'm realising that this is my own bias and I need to be able to put that to the side and still critically appraise the research in front of me. I almost felt bad for rating a paper as high quality even though it perpetuated a negative narrative, but actually it was a well thought out research project and I needed to put my feelings to the side. I am getting better at this!

Appendix 4 Reflective diary entries positionality

09.11.2023 – Initial meeting

Wow. Just had the initial meeting with the 10 Black fathers. It was so nerve wracking to meet them all but great the same time. I got to share my passion for the research project and my position both personally and as a researcher and I noticed this helped to build trust as the fathers asked questions and I could alleviate their concerns. It felt like we were already building a community. Every time they asked me a question, I posed it back to them instead of imposing my views, I don't know how it felt for them but for me it felt like I didn't have the power and I was involving them in the decision making. It helped me to feel less like a researcher and more like I was part of the group and was also figuring things out. I have no idea how this project is going to go, that's something I am still coming to terms with when doing a PAR project. It feels great to relinquish power and not have to make decisions but also scary at the same time, I am used to having so much control in research.

24.11.2023 – First focus group discussion

Had such a good focus group discussion today, but I noticed no matter how hard I try they still see me as a researcher and themselves as participants! I wondered about my position and do they see me as an outsider or insider. I asked them at the end of the group for feedback and they asked me questions 'like I hope we answered the questions usefully' and 'did you get what you needed for your thesis?'. I had to remind them that this was not my research project that this was ours, there was not right or wrong and that this was not about what I wanted from them. I wondered if they are saying what they think I want to hear or what they should say rather than their true feelings. How do I make them feel like co-researchers and highlight that this is about them not me!

07.12.2023 – Second focus group discussion

Ah! Today was so much better, they seemed more relaxed, and the conversation flowed so much better. At the beginning I reiterated that this was about their stories, and they had control over what we discussed and shared, I also encouraged them to ask questions to each other. It was so much better I took a back seat and just moderated checking if someone wanted to speak or had been missed. They were also so engaged and interested I wondered if it was because they all knew each other now. They even brough up data analysis and shared that they all wanted to be involved, it was so great, I wasn't the researcher it felt like we were all the researchers today. I resonated so much with stories today, we touched upon themes in the Black community and today I felt like a Black woman, a community insider, not a doctoral researcher. I think stepping back a bit helped them to take more control and to feel like they were exploring themselves and each other.

Appendix 5 Ethical approval

University of Hertfordshire UH

HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO	Sade-Louise Fergus
CC	Dr Abigail Taiwo
FROM	Dr Simon Trainis, Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA Chair
DATE	14/08/2023

Protocol number: **LMS/PGR/UH/05439**

Title of study: Raising Black sons in the UK: The unheard voices of the Black fathers

Your application for ethics approval has been accepted and approved with the following conditions by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

Dr Isaac Akande (external secondary supervisor)

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: 01/10/2023

To: 01/02/2024

Appendix 6 Participant Information Sheet

Participant information sheet
UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ('ETHICS COMMITTEE')

FORM EC6: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1   **Title of study**

Raising Black sons in the UK: The unheard voices of Black fathers

2   **Introduction**

You are being invited to take part in a study. Before you decide whether to do so, it is important that you understand the study that is being undertaken and what your involvement will include. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do not hesitate to ask us anything that is not clear or for any further information you would like to help you make your decision. Please take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part in this study. For further information, the University's regulation, UPR RE01, 'Studies Involving the Use of Human Participants' can be accessed via this link:

https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/governance/university-policies-and-regulations-uprs/uprs
(after accessing this website, scroll down to Letter S where you will find the regulation)

Thank you for reading this.

3   **What is the purpose of this study?**

In the UK there has been a lack of research with Black fathers and limited insight into their experiences. This aim of the study is to explore the experiences of Black fathers raising Black sons in the UK and to investigate this in a way that maximises input and participation from Black fathers. The historical prevalence of the marginalisation and demonisation of Black men in clinical psychology and academia provides a rationale for non-conventional approaches that disrupt traditional notions of research by including Black men in the design, data collection, analysis and dissemination of the research.

4   **Do I have to take part?**

It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. Agreeing to join the study does not mean that you have to complete it. You have the right to withdraw from the study, without disadvantage or having to provide a reason. As information for

the study will be gathered through focus group discussions, it will be difficult to omit all of your contributions and comments once you have taken part as the transcript will be anonymised after data collection.

5   **Are there any age or other restrictions that may prevent me from participating?**

You must be over 18.

6   **How long will my part in the study take?**

Each focus group discussion will take approximately 1hr 30mins-2 hours and it is anticipated that there will be no more than 5 meetings. Outside of focus group discussions you are welcome to take part in other roles in the study, and this will be entirely voluntary and your choice. The other roles are:

Co-analysts:
Your role will involve attending training on thematic analysis (approx. 2 hours) and supporting the analysis of the data collected which involves reviewing transcripts and organising the data into themes. It cannot be estimated how long this will take; however, your participation and time you contribute is entirely voluntary.

7   **What will happen if I take part in the study?**

Firstly, you will be contacted to complete a brief online survey lasting 5-10 minutes on online   platform Qualtrics, to gather relevant demographic information and to confirm your eligibility for the study. Group members will then meet to agree on a time/date and schedule the focus groups, which will take place online via MS Teams. These will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. With the researcher, you will decide on a pseudonym to ensure that your responses are confidential. If you are a co-analyst, you will attend training on thematic analysis and will analyse focus groups transcripts with the researcher. This will entail coding the data and organising the data into themes. The study will be written up by the researcher and shared with you. You will be invited to check and review the reports for accuracy of representation. You will not be identifiable from the data and your confidentiality will be respected.

8   **What are the possible disadvantages, risks or side effects of taking part?**

The questions asked in the focus groups will be regarding your understanding of and experiences of Black fatherhood and raising your son(s). It is not anticipated that there will be any harm caused from taking part, however it is possible there could be mild emotional distress experienced during the focus groups and analysis if this brings up any emotive topics. The focus groups will be co-facilitated by the researcher and support will be offered after if you require. The focus groups will take part online via MS Teams and there will be a low risk of computer hazards, you will be allowed to take a break if you experience screen fatigue.

9 **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The study provides the opportunity for you to be a co-researcher in a project that represents an under researched community through Black fathers coming together and discussing their shared experiences of raising a son in the UK. The study aims to achieve social action through co-creating a space for Black men to share their collective experiences in a way that feels meaningful for the community.

10 **How will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Participants in the study will be assigned an agreed pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Your responses will be anonymised and stored on a secure One Drive where no person other than the researcher and research supervisors have access to the data or any recordings of focus groups. Any data obtained will be securely destroyed after the duration and write up of the study which will be 24.06.2029. Co-analysts will have access to anonymized written transcripts.

11 **Audio-visual material**

The focus groups will be video and audio recorded via MS teams, to support transcription of the data. The recording will be securely stored on an encrypted one drive and will only be accessible to the main researcher. Written transcripts will be available to co-analysts. The recording and written transcript of data collected in the study will be stored securely for 5 years after the study until approximately 30.09.2029.

12 **What will happen to the data collected within this study?**

- Data collected from the online survey will be downloaded from Qualtrics and stored securely on the UH One Drive.

- Focus group interviews will be recorded on MS teams and uploaded securely on to the UH one drive. The data collected will be stored electronically, in a password-protected folder.

- The data will be anonymised prior to storage. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings and the co-researchers will support the analysis of written verbatim transcripts. Only excerpts of the recordings will be used in the written report of the study and this will be anonymised.

- Recordings will be stored on the secure UH one drive until 30.09.2029, for publication and verification processes. Data collected will be securely destroyed on 30.09.2029.

13   **Will the data be required for use in further studies?**

- The results of the study and/or the data collected (in anonymised form) will be deposited in an open access repository.
- This research will be published in an open access research journal and you will be provided with the details to access this if you so desire.

14   **Who has reviewed this study?**

This study has been reviewed by:

The University of Hertfordshire Department of psychology, Sport & Geography/School of Life and Medical Science

15   **Factors that might put others at risk**

Please note that if, during the study, any medical conditions or non-medical circumstances such as unlawful activity become apparent that might or had put others at risk, the University may refer the matter to the appropriate authorities and, under such circumstances, you will be withdrawn from the study.

16   **Who can I contact if I have any questions?**

If you would like further information or would like to discuss any details personally, please get in touch with me, in writing, by phone or by email: ***s.fergus2@herts.ac.uk***

Although we hope it is not the case, if you have any complaints or concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please write to the University's Secretary and Registrar at the following address:

Secretary and Registrar
University of Hertfordshire
College Lane
Hatfield
Herts
AL10 9AB

Thank you very much for reading this information and giving consideration to taking part in this study.

Appendix 7 Consent form

**UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
('ETHICS COMMITTEE')**

**FORM EC3
CONSENT FORM FOR STUDIES INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS**

I, the undersigned *[please give your name here*, *in BLOCK CAPITALS]*

………………………………………………………………………………………………….…
of *[please give contact details here, sufficient to enable the investigator to get in touch with you, such as a postal or email address]*

…..…………………………………………………………………………………………………
hereby freely agree to take part in the study entitled *[insert name of stu*dy *here]*

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

(UH Protocol number …………………………………………)

1   I confirm that I have been given a Participant Information Sheet (a copy of which is attached to this form) giving particulars of the study, including its aim(s), methods and design, the names and contact details of key people and, as appropriate, the risks and potential benefits, how the information collected will be stored and for how long, and any plans for follow-up studies that might involve further approaches to participants. I have also been informed of how my personal information on this form will be stored and for how long. I have been given details of my involvement in the study. I have been told that in the event of any significant change to the aim(s) or design of the study I will be informed, and asked to renew my consent to participate in it.

2   I have been assured that I may withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage or having to give a reason. I also understand that if I withdraw from the study more than 2 weeks after commencing the first focus group it may not be possible for my contributions to be excluded from the analysis.

3   In giving my consent to participate in this study, I understand that voice, video or photo-recording will take place and I have been informed of how/whether this recording will be transmitted/displayed.

4   I have been told how information relating to me (data obtained in the course of the study, and data provided by me about myself) will be handled: how it will be kept secure, who will have access to it, and how it will or may be used, including the possibility of anonymised data being deposited in a repository with open access (freely available).

5   I understand that if there is any revelation of unlawful activity or any indication of non-medical circumstances that would or has put others at risk, the University may refer the matter to the appropriate authorities.

6   I have been told that I may at some time in the future be contacted again in connection with this or another study.

7   I give consent to be contacted by telephone and to receive information related to the study by telephone.

Signature of participant……………………………………….……Date…………………………

Signature of (principal)
investigator……………………………………………………Date…………………………

Name of (principal) investigator *[in BLOCK CAPITALS please]*

……SADE-LOUISE FERGUS

Appendix 8 Risk Assessment

SCHOOL OF LIFE AND MEDICAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

Ref No.	
Date	
Review Date	
	OFFICE USE ONLY

<u>Life and Medical Sciences Risk Assessment</u>

The completion of this is an integral part of the preparation for your work, it is not just a form to be completed, but is designed to alert you to potential hazards so you can identify the

measures you will need to put into place to control them. You will need a copy on you when you carry out your work

General Information					
Name	Sade-Louise Fergus	Email address	▮▮▮▮▮	Contact number	▮▮▮▮▮
Supervisor's name (if student)	Dr Abigail Taiwo	Supervisor's e-mail address	▮▮▮▮▮	Supervisor's contact number	

Activity	
Title of activity	Major Research Project for Doctoral Thesis: Raising Black sons in the UK: The unheard voices of the Black fathers
Brief description of activity	The proposed study aims to explore the views of Black fathers raising Black sons in the UK. The proposed study will use focus groups as a method of data collection to allow an in depth understanding of social issues, multiple perspectives, and complex personal experiences (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). A reconvened focus group design will be employed, which will entail one group of Black fathers meeting on several occasions to explore their experiences until thematic

	saturation. Focus groups will be recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Data from focus group discussions will be analysed using thematic analysis. The study aims to embed the principles of Participatory Action Research in which participants will be co-researchers, supporting the data collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination of the research. Participants will be able to choose their roles and their level of participation; in line with the principles of Participatory Action Research (Baum et al., 2006). Attached is a semi-structured interview schedule (appendix 1).
Location of activity	Virtually - via Microsoft Teams
Who will be taking part in this activity	Researcher. The participants / co-researchers will be Black fathers who have Black sons. Participants will be recruited by collaborating with the founder of a movement called Speak Black Man. Speak Black Man has a mailing list of Black men and the founder delivers conferences and workshops and has a following on social media. Recruitment will entail delivering a presentation to provide participant information and gather interest. The founder has agreed access to their mailing list to support recruitment, in order for study information to also be emailed to their contacts.

Types of Hazards likely to be encountered				
☐ Computers and other display screen	☐ Falling objects	☐ Farm machinery	☐ Fire	☐ Cuts
☐ Falls from heights	☐ Manual handling	☐ Hot or cold extremes	☐ Repetitive handling	☐ Severe weather
☐ Slips/trips/falls	☐ Stress	☐ Travel	☐ Vehicles	☐ Workshop machinery
☐ Psychological distress (to interviewer or interviewee)	☐ Aggressive response, physical or verbal	☐	☐	☐
Other hazards not listed above	Managing data			

Risk Control Measures
List the activities in the order in which they occur, indicating your perception of the risks associated with each one and the probability of occurrence, together with the relevant safety measures. Describe the activities involved. *Consider the risks to participants, research team, security, maintenance, members of the public – is there anyone else who could be harmed?* *In respect of any equipment to be used read manufacturer's instructions and note any hazards that arise, particularly from incorrect use.*

Identify hazards	Who could be harmed? *e.g. participants, research team, security, maintenance, members of the public, other people at the location, the owner / manager / workers at the location etc.*	How could they be harmed?	Control Measures – what precautions are currently in place? *Are there standard operating procedures or rules for the premises. Are there any other local codes of practice/local rules which you are following, eg Local Rules for the SHE labs? Have there been agreed levels of supervision of the study? Will trained medical staff be present? Etc*	What is the residual level of risk after the control measures have been put into place? *Low Medium or High*	Are there any risks that are not controlled or not adequately controlled?	Is more action needed to reduce/manage the risk? *for example, provision of support/aftercare, precautions to be put in place to avoid or minimise risk or adverse effects*
Computers and other display screen	Participants and Researcher	Screen fatigue	Ensuring focus group meetings are less than 2 hours and in line with participant's preferences. Researcher will be using DSE guidelines.	Low	N/A	Participants will be informed of their right to have a break during focus group discussions.
Psychological distress (to interviewer or interviewee)	Participants and Researcher	Mild emotional distress	Support from research supervisor for researcher. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time and will be encouraged to only share if they feel able to.	Low	No	Creating a co-produced psychologically safe space with participants to enable them to share their experiences through co-production. Directing participants to appropriate organisations if further support is required. The partnership with Speak Black Man will also provide the participants with resources/details of relevant services for further support if necessary.
Aggressive response, physical or verbal	Participants and Researcher	Recipient of aggressive verbal responses	Ground rules will be set before the focus group which will involve being respectful of others' opinions, not interrupting others, participants expressing their opinions without judgement.	Low	No	The researcher will be present in each focus group to manage any difficult dynamics if they do arise. Debrief spaces will be offered if necessary to manage any between participant difficulties.

Managing data	Participants and Researcher	Issues of confidentiality	Data will be stored on UH One Drive Any identifiable information such as demographic information, contact details and signatures on consent forms will be stored on a password protected document on UH One Drive.	Low	No	Follow protocols re. storing and managing data.
List any other documents relevant to this application						

Signatures					
Assessor name	Sade-Louise Fergus	Assessor signature		Date	06/07/2023
Supervisor, if Assessor is a student	Dr Abigail O Taiwo	Supervisor signature	A.O. Taiwo	Date	06/07/2023
Local Health and Safety Advisor/ Lab	███████	Local Health and Safety Advisor/ Lab Manager	███████	Date	7th July 2023

Appendix 9 Research flyer

Appendix 10 Demographic questionnaire

1. What is your ethnicity?

2. What is your age?

3. Do you have a biological son? How many sons do you have? What is the ethnicity of your son(s)? What age(s) are you son(s)?

4. Do you have any other children?

5. Are you a single parent?

6. Migration (1st, 2nd, 3rd generation, country of origin, what year they migrated)

7. Do you live with your child(ren)?

8. What is your relationship with your child(ren) mother?

9. What was your relationship like with your parents?

10. Did you grow up with a father/father figure?

11. Who did you live with when growing up?

12. What is your current marital status?

Appendix 11 Consultation guide

1. **Purpose of meeting:** Introduce the idea I have for a thesis project. Black fatherhood, voices of fathers, including Black men in all stages of the research.

   Clarify role: deciding what capacity you are here one off or start of something ongoing?

2. **Black fatherhood:** In thinking about Black fatherhood, what challenges, opportunities or pertinent topics come up for you that you think would be important to focus on within the research project?

3. **Being a black father:** What do you have to navigate as a Black father? How is this similar/different to other Black fathers? What might explain some of the similarities and differences? Is there a particular group of fathers whose experiences it might be particularly useful to highlight/explore?

4. **Research focus:** Raising children: In your experience (or from your experience of other Black fathers), what are some of the differences between raising daughters, sons and non-binary children? Or Black fathers raising children with dual and multi-heritage? What would be the pros and cons of looking at these experiences separately or together?

5. **Research Method:** Discuss methods (e.g PAR, Photovoice) – individual or focus groups? Pros and cons? Maybe ask for perspectives on the use of photovoice: Views on doing individual interviews, focus groups or a combination? Any thoughts on venue or modality (e.g., face-to-face, video/community spaces, university site) What would help Black men tell their stories? Payment/vouchers?

6. **Recruitment:** Gather ideas on recruitment (where to recruit from and how to recruit to have the best chance of reaching recruitment target, a representative enough sample) Any other suggestions re where to recruit from / how to reach Black fathers?; and what might enable black fathers to want to take part and come forward for the study?

   If connected to a charity: would his charity support the project, i.e., will he share study information for people connected to the charity? If so, how do they communicate – mailing list, social media, gatherings?

7. **Dissemination:** thoughts on how best to share findings within the community to ensure it has implications on how we understand Black fatherhood and support Black fathers.

Appendix 12 Focus group discussion guide

Black fatherhood:

- What stories do people hold about being a father?
- What influenced your ideas about being a father?
- What do people think society says about being a Black male/Black father?
- What does your culture say about being a Black male/Black father?
- What messages did/do you get about what it means to be a good father?
- How do you think these messages influenced who you are today?

Raising sons:

- What role do you think a Black father has in raising a Black son/s?
- What messages did people get about raising their son/s? Where did these come from?
- What ideas/teachings do you/would you like to pass on to your son/s?
- What contributed to your understanding of what a fathering relationship should or should not be?
- What was your experience of the relationship with your father? Or other parent (e.g. mother?)
- How were you parented and how did that influence your understanding of being a parent?

Black Father's needs:

- What is a 'good father'?
- What does this mean to you?
- Based on your personal experiences, what do people believe it takes a raise a Black son in the UK today?
- Is there anything that people believe impacts their ability to be a father?
- What hinders your ability?
- What facilitates your ability?
- What changes would need to happen in society to enable you to be a 'good father'?
- What changes does this community want to see?
- What sources of support do you draw on to be a father?

Appendix 13 Reflective diary entry on data analysis

20.01.2024 - Transcribing

It's so interesting transcribing and reading back on all the rich conversations that took place. I really forgot how much we covered; it makes me quite emotional re- remembering conversations. I recalled coming away from the focus groups where we had discussed racism and feeling so heavy. I couldn't believe how much challenges Black men have to navigate in their daily lives and how much I did not know about their experiences. But listening back to the conversations they were laughing, connecting, there was joy, they spoke of resilience and Black fatherhood being a joyful and positive experience despite what they navigate. I was reminded of that, it wasn't all doom and gloom. Maybe it felt heavy for me but actually for the Black fathers they felt OK discussing these things, it's their reality and probably wasn't new to any of them. How am I going to be able to capture all of this data? Am I going to do them justice? How am I going to represent their stories accurately? I feel so much pressure, they deserve to have their voices heard.

01.02.2024 – Theme generation

When I listen back to the focus group it seems some were really on the fence about whether a Black woman should be leading this research. My perspective changes each time I reanalyse these discussions initially I felt yes being a Black woman really helped. I have to look at this objectively and some found the presence of a woman helpful but actually I can see and hear that they would like to see a Black man lead on these topics, that's still the undertone. I really felt like I was part of the group, but actually was I always an outsider because of my gender? And is that OK? And would I want a Black male leading topics about Black women?

29.02.2024 – Theme refinement

So, we had a discussion about the themes today. The fathers really found it strange to read the transcripts, they had so many judgements. I also shared my feelings on reading the discussions back and felt like I stumbled on my words a lot, I think it helped to share that it can be different seeing your spoken words in written form. They agreed with most of themes which is great! I was so scared I had misrepresented their stories, so this was good to see that I did not. I don't understand how I did research before; it must have been so far from the participants voices as I did not include them at all previously, that feels so strange now. How much could I have missed? How disempowered must they have felt? Traditional research feels so unethical to me now, I can't help but imagine how awful it must feel for someone to tell a story about you and not even include your voice. I am so glad I did my project in this way.

Appendix 14 Example of NVIVO initial coding

Appendix 15 Example of initial coding of a transcript

Transcript	Codes	Theme
TM: "I like that analogy of being in the spotlight, but when I was thinking of it as a Black father, I think actually we're in the spotlight for many other things, apart from being a father, so people are surprised that you're doing things with your kids. I had a guy on the tube, say to me you're really good dad. What do you mean? I'm reading a book to my son, and I think it's, I wondered if because we're not in the spotlight, not seen with our children often, or the perception is we're not with our children or Black fathers are absent, that the pressure comes from that having to act up your many different levels."	*Being in the spotlight* *Not being seen as a father* *People having low expectations of Black fathers* *There's a perception Black fathers are absent* *Pressure to not be a stereotype*	The experience of negative portrayals of Black fathers
Ric: "But the general consensus.. Ohh, I'm just guessing, I don't know the stats, but you see TV programmes, you heard, you hear the comments and they expect you to not be around to have run away, not be there umm. And yeah, it's trying to go against that and literally prove them wrong."	*There's a perception we are not around for our children* *Trying to prove society wrong*	The experience of negative portrayals of Black fathers
JR: "I think how people look at Black people, especially Black males coming from [area in London] is that we're never gonna be overachieving, we'll hit the ceiling and that's it…So, we'll go to school, we might pass, we might not. Probably end up in police and stuff like that, so put in the Black fatherhood and top of that now is that adding is adding fuel to the fire. So, I think the way that society views black males as in general, also has a direct effect on how black	*Low expectations of Black men* *Being a Black man and a Black father is an additional challenge*	

fathers are, are actually viewed because obviously it's one of these things that you're trying to achieve in life, but everything because of the colour of your skin, you can't. There's certain things you can't do, because people well not necessarily that you can't do but let's be honest, we're all Black people here they'd rather pick someone else, that's that looks the part rather than yourself, because that's how it is, but that's how society views are. So, I think its the way it is in society, they view us is very, very negative so much as you know you're being Black, but then put it on the top of that. You're black, father. I think you just added fuel to the fire…It's tough, like you can't, it's you either make it out or you don't that's how I see it. You have to make it out or You don't. So for me, being a Black father in society is very hard." **Anthony:** "They start blanketing, painting us with the same brush. Because it appears that Black fathers aren't active within their children's life. That's a lot of BS because we are and research shows that, but you never see any of them picking up all those things and picking up any of that literature or any of that information from the Internet. Cause it's free to portray that because it's always that one narrative. And it's a narrative where it keeps us suppressed, that they're happy for that."	*Negative stereotypes of Black fathers* *There's so many different barriers against us* *Trying to prove society wrong* *Society views Black men negatively* *Being a Black father is hard* *Negative portrayal of Black fathers* *They are pushing a narrative*	The experience of negative portrayals of Black fathers

Appendix 16 Checklist of good Reflective Thematic Analysis

No	Process	Criteria
1	*Transcript*	The data has been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail; all transcripts have been checked against the original recordings for 'accuracy'.
2.	*Coding and theme development*	Each data item has been given thorough and repeated attention in the coding process.
3		The coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive; themes have not been developed from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach).
		All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.
4.		Candidate themes have been checked against coded data and back to the original dataset.
5.		Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive; each theme contains a well-defined central organising concept; any subthemes share the central organising concept of the theme.
6.		
7.	*Analysis and interpretation – in the written report*	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just summarised, described or paraphrased.
8.		Analysis and data match each other – the extracts evidence the analytic claims.
9.		Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic; analysis addresses the research question.
		An appropriate balance between analytic narrative and data extracts is provided.
10.		

11.	*Overall*	Enough time has been allocated to complete all the phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase, or giving it a once-over-lightly (including returning to earlier phases or redoing the analysis if need be)
12.	*Written report*	The specific approach to thematic analysis, and the particulars of the approach, including theoretical positions and assumptions, are clearly explicated.
13.		There is a good fit between what was claimed, and what was done – i.e., the described method and reported analysis are consistent.
14.		The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the ontological and epistemological positions of the analysis.
15.		The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'

Note.

Adapted from Braun & Clark (2021)