TOWARD A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF FATHERING: FIVE AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHERS’ EXPERIENCES PARENTING THEIR CHILDREN WITH CHRONIC ILLNESSES

Symone Colquitt

Thesis submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
in
Human Development

Sandra M. Stith, Chairperson
Karen H. Rosen
Tammy L. Henderson
Jean U. Coleman

September 5, 2002
Falls Church, Virginia

Keywords: African American Men, Chronic Illness, Fathers, Paternal Involvement, Stress and Coping, Qualitative Study

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By
Symone Colquitt
Sandra Stith, Chairperson
Human Development Department

(ABSTRACT)

Five African American fathers participated in a qualitative study that examined how fathers experience their children who live with chronic illnesses. The examination of their strengths and resiliencies revealed 10 factors that enhanced involvement and were incorporated into fathers’ overall approaches to parenting: clear paternal definition; strong parenting alliance; gains experienced through father/child relationship; strong spiritual foundation; responsive social support systems; strategies for managing employment and illness demands; confidence in ability to navigate health care structure; attitude of self-sacrifice and flexibility; strategies for managing perceived disparities; and maintenance of future focus. In addition, fathers defined coping and advised professionals involved with families who have children diagnosed with chronic illness. In doing so, they revealed challenges to participation, potential constraints to involvement, and suggestions for productive encounters with systems of care and collaborative exchanges on behalf of children engaged in treatment.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks and appreciation to a phenomenal advisor, Sandra Stith. I have valued your patient guidance, and your willingness to lend an enormous amount of time, energy, and expertise not only to this project but to my personal growth and development.

Special thanks to Karen Rosen and Tammy Henderson for providing razor sharp advice and guidance as committee members. Thank you Jean Coleman and Eric McCollum for your refreshing insights and encouragements which continue to inspire.

Special acknowledgements and appreciations for the input of William Allen. During the preliminary stages of this project, your guidance on structuring interview questions was a tremendous help. Thank you for you commitment to research and readiness to lend assistance.

To my manifested miracles—Thank you James for the seeds that gave life to this project; for your profound commitment to an everlasting covenant; for your fortitude, wisdom, and willingness to grow with God that is awe inspiring; and, for your greatest idea yet—our children.

Elan and Asha thank you for being rivers of hope and gladness to me. You are awesome wonders and “dignified ladies,” too.

Mommy, my longest running supporter, thanks for going the distance and for every step made to encourage, nurture, inspire, motivate, and sustain. You’ve always reminded me to see the giants in my life for what they really are. Thanks Poppie for five smooth stones and a slingshot. I know you would be very proud.

Keenan, Marlon, Symeon, Jr., I treasure your voices. Thanks for reminding me of our shared legacy of love and strength. Your love for your children is a reminder of why this work is important.

I have been surrounded by awesome beacons of light that never fail to bring gifts of encouragement and strength. I am eternally grateful for all of you: Deborah L. Bailey—thanks for reminding me to go the distance; DeLoris Hunter—thanks for your guidance, advice and inspiration; Patricia Mead—thanks for your timely humor, quest for questions, and unique insights; April M. Pace—thanks for energizing this from the very beginning and for all you do; Alice Gray—thanks for your essential touches and your eye for details; Bernetta Davis—thanks for lending your time and talents unselfishly; Mildred Hunter—thanks for providing an ear and a never ending supply of support; my Rhema family—thank you for righteous prayers and eternal songs of praise. Thanks to my colleagues at Bowie Youth and Family Services – your commitment to families, systems work and endless reasons to celebrate has kept me going.
A special prayer of healing and hope to Teresa Daniels—thanks for being my own Sal Minuchin. Don’t you ever give up!

Deepest gratitude and appreciation for six African American fathers, their families, and their remarkable stories that instruct, inform, and inspire.
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