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Editorial

By Serie McDougal, III Ph.D.

This volume seeks to establish balance in our traditional pursuit of *So Dayi*, the "clear word." Mental health and healthy relationships are mutually reenforcing factors that the authors of these works explore in great detail. These factors support our optimal functioning, but, like a ship on the open sea facing waves and winds, the human condition presents them with obstacles and challenges. The central feature of ancient Egyptian philosophy is the concept of *Maat*, which represents levelness, evenness, and balance (Obenga, 2004). The student authors of this volume present their complex thoughts about issues related to Black mental health and familial relationships at the intersection of gender. Their papers originate from two Pan African Studies courses: "Psychology and African Americans" and "Black Manhood and Masculinity." In this volume, Ms. Natalee Knighten describes the importance and effectiveness of approaches to mental health treatment that are grounded in African deep thought. Ms. Heather Ford describes the role that African worldviews play in supporting optimal family functioning for people of African descent. Further, she explains the damaging impact of Eurocentric values on Black relationships and mental health. Ms. Destiny Rodriguez explores the history and multidimensionality of Black fathers' involvement in parenting while challenging the ways that it has been misunderstood. Mr. Prince Gumbi describes the importance of Afrocentric epistemology and of education as a tool to recenter African people in their own human narratives.



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Ms. Keiauna Ervin explores the impacts of contemporary forms of racial bias and how Black mental health is affirmed and protected in spite of such forms. Finally, Ms. Sady Guillen identifies the factors that precipitate suicide among Black boys and the culturally relevant forces that prevent suicidal ideation. Ultimately, in the spirit of Maat, these student scholars have combined a culturally aligned approach and a solution orientation to provide African people with the understanding needed to maintain mental and familial equilibrium and balance amidst the waves and winds of chaos.

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Introduction

By James Thomas, DPPD

As we consider all that has happened this year—from the deadly virus to the deadly coup attempt to Black Lives Matter, the largest social movement in history—our students appear to understand how to heal our world better than those who are elected and empowered to do so. The essays in this volume give direction and insight into the kind of thinking required for social innovation that is both effective and sustainable—if only we would listen. The essays outline the areas we need to consider as we seek to transform institutions, social policies, and systems that enable and promote white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Our students challenge us to consider the following: (1) Impacts of Afrocentric Therapy on the Mental Health of African American Substance Abuse Clients; (2) Collectivistic Cultures, Prosocial Behaviors, and Mental Health Among African American Families; (3) Black Father Engagement: Visible and Present from the Start; (4) Ideological Subject Formation of African American Students: African-Centered Education and Afrocentric Counter Narratives; (5) Effects of Racial Bias; and (6) African American/Black Boys and Mental Health. Our understanding of each of these areas and how we engage the work of these budding scholars can help to provide a blueprint for an economic and social agenda that promotes not only reimagining Black futures but also ensuring a better world for all. If there is any hope for a world without racism, where justice and peace prevail, it will take



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thinkers like these. In a world that seems so very dark, it is refreshing to find young scholars committed to shedding light on some of darkest places. These social justice innovators represent the best and brightest in the field of Pan African Studies. If you read their work, you will be inspired. You will be as persuaded as I am that our students have the capacity and ingenuity to end the devolution of society by working strategically and collectively for progress.

Impacts of Afrocentric Therapy on the Mental Health of African American Substance Abuse Clients

By Natalee Knighten

People of African descent have historically faced racial inequality and discrimination that have limited their economic, social, and political progress. Long-standing historical injustices have had adverse impacts on the mental health of many African Americans. Due to these challenges, African American youths are more likely to engage in substance abuse, which has further long-term effects on their mental health.

At the same time, people of color have been disproportionately excluded from receiving high-quality, culturally competent treatment for mental health and substance abuse problems. Most of the available treatment options do not consider the cultural values and worldviews of African Americans, or related issues. Therefore, the major problem is that despite increasing numbers of African Americans turning to substance abuse and developing mental health problems, they lack access to culturally competent treatment. One emerging treatment option for culturally competent therapy is the Afrocentric cultural approach. Although research into this topic remains ongoing, current evidence shows that taking an Afrocentric approach to treating African Americans improves their mental health outcomes and boosts their overall well-being (Hatcher et al., 2017).



Natalee Knighten is a Sociology major and a Psychology minor. Her career goal is to become a children's psychologist.

Therefore, research on the impact of the Afrocentric approach to therapy for mental illness and substance abuse is essential for determining the best way to provide culturally competent treatment to African Americans. The research question addressed in this paper is "What is the impact of Afrocentric therapy on the mental health of African American substance abuse clients?" The analysis presents an overview of Afrocentric therapy, its application to African Americans, and its impact on their overall mental health and well-being. Afrocentric therapy makes use of African American cultures, histories, and philosophies when examining their psychological and social issues, thus leading to positive mental health outcomes.

Afrocentric Therapy

The African American community has experienced a range of historical injustices that prevent them from achieving the best health outcomes. They are currently suffering from growing rates of mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety due to inequality (Toldson et al., 2008). Due to the low self-esteem caused by living in a highly exclusive environment, many African American adults and youths start abusing drugs. The United States has several treatment options for mental illness and drug abuse, but African Americans face a wide range of barriers to obtaining high-quality treatment for these problems. Although many of them shy away from seeking help due to fear of discrimination, the majority cannot receive culturally competent treatment that fits into their worldview. This has led to the emergence of Afrocentric therapy as an alternative approach to treatment, to remove this barrier and provide adequate drug abuse and mental illness treatment for African Americans.

An Afrocentric approach to treatment considers the values, beliefs, and worldviews of African American, and the cultural beliefs, values, and spirituality that affect people's emotions (Bent-Goodley et al., 2017). Treating clients requires understanding their deeper consciousness

and feelings, mainly those shaped by their culture. Therefore without first considering the worldview and culture that affect their emotions and feelings, it is difficult to provide culturally competent treatment to people of color. African-centered therapy entails a holistic approach to care that considers the client's cultural beliefs and values during treatment (Bent-Goodley et al., 2017). For example, it considers the client's spiritual beliefs and the worldviews regarding substance abuse and treatment. By viewing history, philosophy, and culture as a starting point when examining drug abuse as a social problem, the therapist can understand a broader picture of the cause of the problem.

Afrocentricity considers family, personal, and community matters when interpreting a client's major psychological and social problems. African Americans' current social and psychological issues have historical backgrounds that must be understood before one can provide therapy that best serves their needs. Whitehead (2018, p. 129) defined Afrocentric care as care that entails "a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of the African Americans' interests, values and perspectives predominate." As Black people continue to record high rates of depression and substance abuse due to poverty and racism, the need for therapists to take an African-centered approach to treatment for this population will come to further dominate research. Even though similarities exist among various ethnic groups, the fact that differences in culture exist should never be ignored in treatment because it influences the overall outcome of the process.

Application and Afrocentric Therapy on Mental Health

The application of Afrocentric therapy to treat substance abuse in African American clients can lead to positive mental health outcomes. A study by Jones et al. (2018) revealed that African-centered therapy for African Americans was significantly associated with improved overall mental health outcomes. Many researchers have agreed that the African-centered approach to behavioral

care incorporates clients' beliefs, values, and norms, thus enhancing their engagement and improving outcomes. Furthermore, getting deeper into the client's cultural beliefs is associated with increased adherence to treatment and better outcomes (Jones et al., 2018). For patients belonging to a community that has historically experienced health disparities due to a lack of culturally competent care, the Afrocentric approach to therapy stands as a promising strategy to provide care that recognizes and respects ethnic culture.

Afrocentrism as a Culturally Competent Approach

Culturally competent care consists of evidence-based practices for provide the best care and social services to clients. Many researchers would agree that culturally competent treatment options for drug abuse can improve a program's effectiveness for mental health. According to Bent-Goodley et al. (2017), social workers and psychologists must provide African-centered care to their clients to ensure that they receive services that are culturally relevant to their individual norms and values. Under this approach, psychiatrists consider culture the foundation for understanding the problems faced by African Americans. For example, it requires therapists working with African American drug abuse clients to first get into the cultural background of what led to the substance abuse. This analysis is followed by an examination of the norms and values of the client and how such factors affect their belief and emotions. From this perspective, the therapist can provide care that directly relates to the problems faced by the clients, increasing the effectiveness of the treatment process and positive mental health outcomes for Black clients, due to the consideration of their values and culture.

The Afrocentricity approach to therapy provides therapists with a deeper understanding of the consciousness of African Americans. Effective counseling of drug abuse clients requires understanding both their conscious and unconscious minds and how these affect their minds and

bodies. One significant factor in understanding people's beliefs about the connection between the mind and the body is spirituality (Hatcher et al., 2017). While other psychologists emphasize the need to understand the five senses, evidence suggests that cultural awareness of a client's spiritual beliefs facilitates effective outcomes. The reality of an individual's inner essence can be understood only through an examination and understanding of their cultural behaviors, including spirituality. Therefore, the African-centered approach to care plays a significant role in promoting the effectiveness of therapy services for African Americans and boosts their overall well-being. It makes them feel that their culture is appreciated and taken into consideration in their treatment.

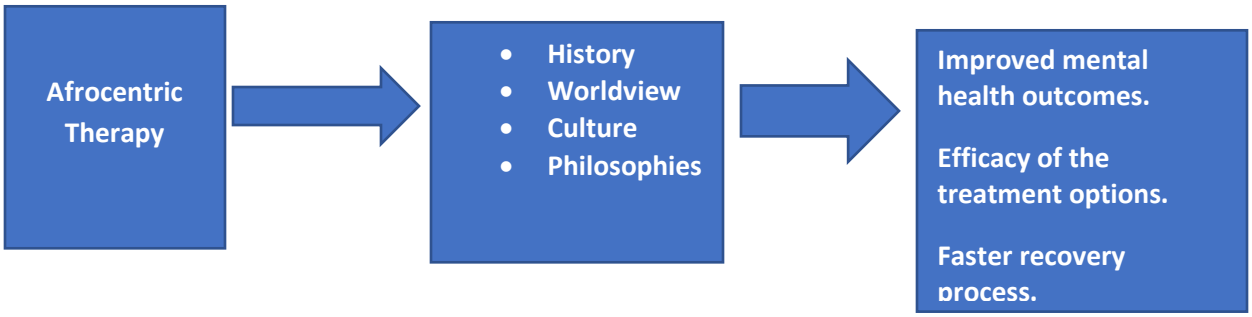
History, Philosophies, and Values

The Afrocentric approach to treatment involves seeing African Americans not as people operating within society, but as historical subjects. The long history of racism and discrimination toward people of color has given them a unique history that affects their views of events and their social and psychological issues (Byrdsong et al., 2013). When examining them from historical perspectives, therapists can connect deeply with these past issues and their impact on the current consciousness.

In addition, African Americans see themselves from their own cultures and histories. An African-centered approach allows for the analysis of specific African American cultures and histories, which can then be applied to provide the most effective therapy for drug abuse. By understanding the history of prejudice for African Americans, the therapist can establish a relationship with clients to promote positive engagement and improve treatment outcomes. When a therapist is well studied or personally experienced in a subject like police brutality, they can provide better treatment a patient who has experienced or been traumatized by it and potentially help them better understand how their drug use began. In the end, the clients are more likely to

receive treatment that directly relates to their cultures, issues, and histories, and hence improved mental health outcomes (Byrdsong et al., 2013). The approach further allows for the provision of care and engagement in a respectful and non-judgmental manner, which boosts clients' self-esteem.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Worldview in Afrocentric Therapy

Understanding the client's worldview also plays a significant role in the practical outcome of the treatment process. The African-centered approach considers African Americans' worldviews in choosing treatment options (Whitehead, 2018). A worldview, as a set of beliefs, can influence an individual's perception and thinking. This approach enhances the mental health of the substance abuse client by taking a reflective approach to the political and cultural reality of people of color. It reveals worldviews that can be traced several years back but still affect the minds and actions of African Americans today. Through this approach, the therapist seeks to uncover beliefs stored in the unconscious mind which led to the current substance abuse. When the thoughts in their unconscious minds are disclosed, African Americans with drug abuse problems can appreciate their value and make informed decisions about drug use. The approach hence presents significant hope for people of color to realize positive results and improve their overall psychological stability. According to Whitehead (2018, p.130), Afrocentricity "has emerged as an

outcome of reconstructive efforts for many African Americans." Understanding worldviews results in understanding why African Americans act the way they do, and hence to finding a better solution to substance abuse problems.

African Americans have significant ties to culture and heritage, which affect their beliefs about treatment. Therefore, recognizing these cultures and experiences is vital to providing positive therapy to African American drug abusers. For example, understanding and recognizing the well-being of this population enhances their spiritual, physical, and mental well-being. Incorporating culture into treatment eliminates barriers and ensures that the clients can develop positive well-being (Hatcher et al., 2017). For example, when a child engages in marijuana use and aggressive behaviors, the therapist must understand the worldview of that child and any historical connection that could have led to such actions. This helps eliminate cultural barriers to care and boosts engagement and response to the treatment.

African Americans also have high rates of incarceration and recidivism, with most of the offenders being involved in substance abuse. According to Stepteau-Watson et al. (2014), at least 16% of imprisoned African Americans have recorded histories of substance abuse and mental health problems. However, they continue to face inadequate behavioral healthcare providers and to be left out of necessary services. Nonetheless, Toldson et al. (2008) supported the view that an African-centered approach to care can improve drug users' mental health and recovery. The Afrocentric system enhances the understanding of the balance between mind and body, resulting in self-awareness and harmony. For example, an Afrocentric substance abuse client might justify their use of drugs as a way to repress traumatic thoughts inflicted by historical injustices. Afrocentricity enhances an understanding of these conscious and unconscious thoughts, leading to a holistic behavioral treatment (Hatcher et al., 2017). The outcome is improved mental health and

more effective recovery from substance abuse.

Other studies have tended to contradict the Afrocentric approach, arguing that humans share a number of similarities that can be applied in any form of treatment, regardless of race or ethnicity. However, this view does not consider the role of culturally competent treatment on the effectiveness of the recovery process. Culture affects the perception of health, well-being, and treatment options. Hence, understanding what clients believe about treatment and recovery is the first step to devising the right treatment option.

Conclusion

This analysis demonstrates that an Afrocentric approach to therapy improves the mental health of drug abuse clients and the effectiveness of the recovery process. The findings of many researchers validate the role of African-centered therapy in improving the mental health of African Americans. The approach considers the histories, philosophies, and cultures of African Americans a starting point when interpreting the psychological and social problems faced by this group. It therefore leads to a healing process that incorporates an individual worldview, society, and family. These findings thus support the thesis and answer the research question.

These findings apply to African Americans with drug abuse problems; further research is needed to confirm their applicability to people recovering from domestic violence and other social problems. My own grandmother has been battling drug use, which has resulted in drug-induced schizophrenia, throughout my life. I've recently wondered what effects Afrocentric therapy might have had if it had been available to her at the height of her drug use. According to these findings, behavioral care organizations, social workers, and psychologists must incorporate an Afrocentric approach into their care to improve outcomes for African Americans. An African-centered approach has been shown to increase mental health and treatment efficacy. The results of this study

can be applied in pan-African studies to improve the understanding of African Americans and service delivery.

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Collectivistic Cultures, Prosocial Behaviors, and Mental Health among African American Families

By Heather Ford

Prosocial behaviors are linked to certain Afrocentric values, such as communal and collectivistic philosophies, which can lead to psychosocial health. For African Americans, these behaviors and collectivistic attributes and others have roots in Africa. Despite this, many African Americans live Western, individualistic lives and therefore do not benefit from these practices (Smith et al., 2019). Studies have revealed evidence that certain collectivistic values and behaviors improve development, mental health, and life outcomes in many individuals, especially from Black or African American groups. This paper outlines the benefits and other results of prosocial behaviors and how a collectivistic life can have positive outcomes, such as good mental health. The paper also analyzes the literature with the goal of answering the following question: What are the effects of a collectivistic culture on prosocial behaviors and mental health among African American families? To begin, I look at two studies of the association between collectivistic values and prosocial philosophies. Smith et al. (2019) analyzed the relationship between collectivistic values and prosocial behaviors in African American youths. Druery and Brooms (2019) looked at how Black males can thrive when they have a well-connected support network and practice proactive philosophies.



Heather Ford received a BA in Child and Family Studies from CSULA, and she is currently a graduate student pursuing her master's degree. Her career interest is in opening a program that will help children and their families get any assistance they may need.

The next studies I consider analyze the effects of collectivistic practices on mental health. To understand which Black values and practices promote health and manifest Black cultural strength, which has been hypothesized to predict psychosocial health, Johnson and Carter (2020) studied 486 Black American adults. Tsai and Kimel (2020) investigated collectivistic and individualistic cultures to determine which of their values were responsible for mental health benefits.

The final studies looked at different parenting styles and interventions in order to improve interventions and programs for Black and African American people by including Afrocentric values. These programs will be able to improve Black family units and interactions among Black people. Wong et al. (2019) examined the relationships among multiple aspects of parenting and prosocial behaviors to help parenting programs nurture healthy development in children. Gilbert et al. (2009) analyzed several Afrocentric interventions and programs, including those that infuse collectivist Afrocentric values, with the goal of enhancing Afrocentric interventions. Afrocentric values and philosophies, such as collectivism and prosocial behaviors, benefit people of all groups of African descent.

Collectivistic Values

Individuals belonging to collectivistic cultures strive to achieve the needs of the group they identify with (Belgrave & Allison, 2014), and this can be reflected in their commitment to family. The family has been defined as those who live in a common household and are bound by blood or marriage, and networks of extended members who provide expressive (nurturance and emotional support) and instrumental (physical needs) functions (Belgrave & Allison, 2014). This suggests that individuals must be interconnected to gain the best life outcomes. Culturally, African Americans are communalistic relative to other ethnic groups in the United States.

Because Africans were brought to America involuntarily, and because of the present climate and various forms of racism and racist infrastructures, Black families have been torn apart and individuals forced to make connections outside their families. With the groups they create through these new connections, Black people strive to advance as a whole through, for example, the creation of programs that provide new opportunities. Other ethnic groups in the United States hold the power to be racist and are not targeted systematically to the point that their families are consistently torn apart. The treatment that Mexican Americans receive today comes close to the treatment African Americans have been receiving since the 1800s, but they were not involuntarily torn from their homeland and their families there; no ethnic groups besides African Americans were. Despite all this and the influence of Eurocentric individualistic values, African Americans remain collectivistic and would benefit from embracing and practicing their collectivistic cultural values even more. In analyzing the relationship between collectivistic values and prosocial behaviors in African American youths and adult males, the following studies found just that.

Smith et al. (2019) received parental and child consent to have 302 children at 32 after-school program locations complete a survey on, among other things, youth cultural orientations. It was discovered that children in older grades were more collectivistic, and that collectivism was directly related to more prosocial behaviors and fewer categorized as problematic and delinquent (Smith et al., 2019). By contrast, individualism was related to higher rates of problematic and delinquent behaviors and less prosocial behaviors (Smith et al., 2019). Individuals living in the U.S., where there are many cultures, tend to adopt a mixture of individualistic and collectivistic cultural values, despite African Americans' cultural roots in collectivism. African American children were found to be more individualistic but to learn to become collectivistic during adolescence. Nonetheless, they should be raised collectivistically from birth so that there is no delay in their receiving the

benefits that come with living a collectivist life, such as good mental health, which is discussed later in this paper.

Studying how Black males in college settings can thrive, Druery and Brooms (2019) recruited men from Black male initiative (BMI) programs to go through three phases of a qualitative and mixed-methods study: in phase one, 25 students completing a survey; in phase two, 21 participated in one-on-one interviews; in phase three five participants completed a focus group interview. After analyzing the responses and feedback, the authors identified critical factors in students' participation and college status: (1) bonding between Black male peers, (2) opportunities to be interconnected with a support network, and (3) working on personal development. This paper focus on the first, which includes the collectivist function. Each participant stated that these programs were essential—both the experiences and the resources—to their being able to advance through college, because they gave them space to share with others from the same background. This improved their ability to bond over and work toward similar goals of being there for one another so they can all succeed. This program provided multiple opportunities for its members to experience important collectivism values, such as striving to meet the needs of the group.

Culture and Mental Health

There are aspects of being African American that either interfere with or support overall well-being and they ways individuals cope with and adapt to situations (Belgrave & Allison, 2014). Other studies have documented in depth the effects of specific life circumstances on the mental health of African Americans, as they seem to face adverse effects from events that other groups encounter or perceive differently. To understand these differences, the goal of both of the following studies was to identify values, practices, and aspects that predicted psychosocial and mental health. Johnson and Carter (2020) found evidence for a model of interdependent, strengths-based Black

cultural values that were positively and significantly associated with and strong predictors of Black cultural strength and psychosocial health. 486 self-identified Black participants completed a self-report questionnaire about demographics and responding to questions and statements compiled from different scales to create individual profiles in regard to Black cultural values. These values include, in order of strength, communalism, central-internalized racial identity, cultural spirituality, positive racial socialization, and effective racism-related coping. Johnson and Carter (2020) described these aspects as connectedness with other Black people, developing one's own racial identity, perceiving and coping with racism, and adapting racial socialization messages. Each of these aspects can be considered a critical, connected piece of Black cultural strength, and when the connections between them are strong, they manifest positive psychological functioning and overall life satisfaction (Johnson & Carter, 2020).

As previously mentioned, other cultures practice collectivism, and the goals and benefits are similar. This next study analyzed collectivism among Chinese international students and yielded results that would also benefit Black and African American people. A longitudinal study was completed through an initial survey, two writing sessions, and a follow-up survey with 178 participants, to identify collectivistic processes that yielded mental health benefits. Tsai and Kimel (2020) found that some types of support but not others were related to greater life satisfaction through their influence on emotions over time. In addition, support for mental health looks different in different cultures because of individual and cultural values. For example, Tsai and Kimel (2020) described *face* as a core collectivistic attribute that operates when positive evaluations are received that promote social behaviors; it has shown to improve self-worth in collectivistic communities. So, "high in face concerns" describe people as worried about whether their actions are being judged; people low in face concerns are the opposite. Both situations will

greatly affect the individual's mental health, but being high in face concerns is positively linked to the promotion of maintaining face, which leads to greater life satisfaction. I believe that Black and African American people specifically also come from a collectivistic stance and would be considered high in face concerns. The results also showed benefits for those who give emotional support rather than instrumental support. Thus, African Americans may also benefit from emotional support giving, as it reflects their own positive mental health and provides evidence of greater life satisfaction.

Prosocial Behaviors

Belgrave and Allison (2014) defined prosocial behavior as voluntary action intended to benefit another individual or group of individuals. They listed several behaviors that fall into this category, such as community, civic, and political engagement. These behaviors are learned and thrive in social contexts and have become the foundations of many intervention programs. Following the theme of collectivism, prosocial behaviors also have collectivistic aspects that are carried out with the intention of benefiting someone other than oneself, even whole groups at times. The final studies examined prosocial behaviors in different settings to inform various types of intervention programs that can benefit all African Americans. Looking at the role of family in cultivating prosocial behaviors, Wong et al. (2019) focused on aspects of four parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, to find dissimilarities. A meta-analysis was completed using 132 studies that analyzed self-reported prosocial behaviors and children's and parents' self-reported parenting styles. Some studies showed inconsistent results regarding specific parenting styles and prosocial behaviors, overall the results showed that authoritative parenting was positively associated with prosocial behaviors consistently throughout development (infancy, childhood, and adolescence), but negatively associated with *altruistic* prosocial behaviors; by

contrast, authoritarian parenting yielded a negative association with prosocial behaviors (Wong et al., 2019). The prosocial behaviors that were analyzed included public, compliant, and emotional behaviors. Wong et al. (2019) also stated that collectivistic cultures emphasize social obligations and interconnectedness. I believe that this is what African Americans should practice due to its benefit of producing greater psychosocial well-being through the strong bonds and connections that are created in collectivistic societies. Therefore, authoritative parenting styles will be the most beneficial in collectivistic cultures that yield prosocial behaviors.

Finally, Gilbert et al. (2009) completed a systematic review of eight programs representative of current Africentric interventions to improve a future Africentric intervention that will develop collectivistic individuals who practice prosocial behaviors, as these features have been shown to lead to the best life outcomes. Detailing the impoverished and stressful past of African Americans, the authors argued that the long-lasting problems that remain today can best be addressed with Africentric interventions that examine individual and structural problems to promote overall well-being (Gilbert et al., 2009). Daily stressors build up and become layered risk factors that can harm African American youths' well-being. Thus, these programs are essential for buffering the effects of low prosocial behaviors and poor mental health. This allows individuals to get the help they need early, so that their current circumstances do not result in long-lasting trauma. The following interventions show evidence of positive results among African Americans. Family therapy benefits families whose home environments and communities are violent or impoverished. The various programs designed were to build self-esteem, enhance protective factors that instill cultural roots (racial identity, etc., as mentioned above), and social skills. Booster programs were designed to reinforce or strengthen skills and other traits. Many different interventions can be created from the Africentric worldview that would benefit African Americans.

Conclusion

Many studies have provided evidence that, as with other cultural and ethnic groups, African Americans who practice these collectivistic values and prosocial behaviors have better life outcomes and health benefits. In answer to the research question, the effects of a collectivistic culture on prosocial behaviors and mental health among African American families are all interconnected. Collectivism manifests in prosocial behaviors, which improve mental health. Among African Americans, the same is true, as collectivism is rooted in Black culture.

In this paper, I discussed collectivistic values that lead to prosocial behaviors, specifically to acting with the intention of benefiting one's own group. I then discussed how collectivism is related to prosocial behaviors by explaining how the intention behind collectivism aligns with the intentions of prosocial behavior. Finally, I finished by examining the relationships between multiple parenting styles and prosocial behaviors so that programs can nurture healthy collectivistic and prosocial development in children.

The knowledge and interventions discussed throughout this paper can be used to improve Black families. If Black individuals become aware of the benefits of collectivistic values and practices early, they can break the cycle, not only when starting families of their own but in professional and educational settings—for example, when parents and educators cooperate to instill collectivistic attributes and values in children as early as possible. This way, each individual's roots will be strong in this area, so that they will be able to grow and spread collectivistic knowledge and benefits. Especially in institutions and places where there are not many Black people, a space for Black people to connect and support one another has been shown to make a difference to their success. Research in this area is already moving in the direction of improving Black psychology and Black families. Future studies can continue to look at specific

collectivistic values and practices and their relationships to specific outcomes and benefits to address more particular needs. Because the studies discussed here have all shown positive results of collectivistic practices on psychosocial health and success in specific settings, continuing to look at these specific areas would further advance Black psychology, as research in this area does focus on how African Americans experience the world they live in.

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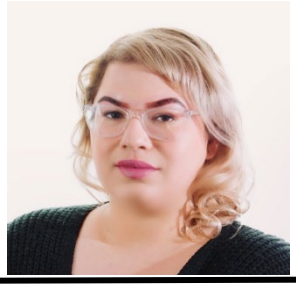
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Black Father Engagement: Visible and Present from the Start

By Destiny Rodriguez

This analysis focused on both African and African American fathers, particularly in their social contexts. Stereotypes of Black fathers as absent were introduced more than fifty years ago, and like other racial stereotypes are deeply entwined in traditional thinking. Further, African and African American men's roles as fathers have long been ignored in the social science literature. Franklin (2004) said that these experiences create a feeling of invisibility—that is, an inner struggle over feeling that oneself and one's talents, abilities, and personality are not valued or recognized because of prejudice and racism. Although the manner in which African and African American men father may differ traditional standards of fathering, their contribution is invaluable and has an impact on their children (Connor & White, 2007). Although it is clear the effects that stereotypes can have on a father's visibility, failure to look at other social conditions, such as social capital, racism, unemployment, and incarceration, and their effects on Black fathers and their roles as parents, only further stops community growth and success among Black families (Connor & White, 2007; Threlfall et al., 2013). This raises the question of how social conditions affect the engagement of Black fathers with their children. Answering this will show that even though social problems exist, Black fathers are and have been resilient and engaged, contrary to systemic racism. This also sheds light on inequalities and attempts to break these families apart.



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This paper is essential to the discussion of Black fathers because it provides evidence that the wide held stereotype is a misconception, and that African and African American fathers are as involved or more in their children's care and lives as fathers of other races (Jones & Mosher, 2013; Mcadoo, 1997; Reynolds, 2009; Connor & White, 2007; Threlfall et al., 2013). The evidence demonstrates a need for further research explicitly into Black men and their roles as fathers.

This paper explores cultural and historical influences of Black fathers' engagement, discuss how Eurocentric views discredit fathers, and looks at the effects of social capital, racism, and incarceration on Black men and their roles as fathers. It then compares beliefs about engagement of fathers and ends with a discussion of how the results could lead to social policies that fight oppression and discrimination among Black families.

Father Engagement: Cultural & Historical Influences

According to Reynolds (2013), attempts to explain Black men's fathering identities and practices should acknowledge their historical and cultural contexts. For instance, through extensive interviews with five Black fathers actively engaged with their families, Hutchinson (1995) highlighted the ways fathers enrich family life and support the happy development of their children by teaching the importance of education and values, and by guiding children through the temptations of sex, gangs, and drugs. They also taught conflict resolution skills within families and marriages.

The origins of Black extended family systems are culturally important and can be traced back to Africa before enslavement (Connor & White, 2007). This means that guiding children was not always a responsibility put solely on the biological parents; it was, rather, a community responsibility that included grandparents, aunts and uncles, and others. Historically, the rites of passage into adulthood for Black boys were one occasion when elders taught boys how to be men,

fathers, and providers for their families.

Madhavan and Roy (2011) used a comparative framework based on kin work to identify three common processes in the contexts both of fathers living in the home and not living in the home: negotiation between maternal and paternal kin, perifocal approaches, and flexible fathering. These enabled men and their kin networks to secure fathers' involvement in economically marginalized communities. This is important because flexible fathering meant that people other than the biological father could take on the role of fathering. Lastly, it is important to recognize how Black fathers provided for their families during slavery, because it shows how dedicated they were. For instance, fathers would risk their lives to sneak out at night and visit wives and children owned by other slaveowners, because families could be split up and sold separately at any time. They also were protectors, shielding women from punishment, and they provided for their families by performing extra labor for cash (Stephen, 2009)

Eurocentric Views of Fatherhood

The traditional Eurocentric view in the U.S. is of the family as an interdependent residential unit comprising a biological father and a biological mother who is not employed (Mcadoo & Mcadoo, 1997). This puts an emphasis on men being breadwinners to be effective fathers and takes it away from emotional and physical engagement in the daily lives of their children. This is a dilemma for Black fathers as they overcome barriers that keep them from obtaining employment to support their families (Connor & White, 2007). Especially in the U.S., the traditional view of families is also for the mother and father to be married.

These traditional definitions underestimate the role of Black fathers and do not capture the cultural and socioeconomical nuances that surround their role in the African American experience. In fact, Connor and White (2007) found that 64% of African American children were growing up

in one-parent households. However, this did not mean they were fatherless. Hutchinson (1995) found through interviews with five actively involved Black fathers that they were coparents, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, and older brothers providing the fatherly role. This challenged the traditional Eurocentric conception of the father, giving more flexibility to the definition of who is a father. Connor and White (2007) stressed the importance of a more inclusive term, for which they came up with "social fathers." This refers to extended family members who can step into the father role and be role models when the father is absent. They also noted that not living in the home does not mean fathers are absent from their children's lives. According to Reynolds (2009), there is variation in fatherhood experiences across races and within them, but Black fathers are categorized as deviant from White middle-class norms because most of them living outside the child's home, and some are brothers, uncles, older cousins, and so forth.

Social Factors

African and African American fathers' roles are marked by generations of racism, increasing rates of incarceration, and inequalities that keep them from obtaining social capital (Madhavan & Roy, 2012; Reynolds, 2009). In a study of low-income African American fathers Threlfall et al. (2013) found that they wanted to be responsible but saw themselves as limited by structural obstacles. Madhavan and Roy (2012) said that social inequalities stemming from racism undermine the ability to carry out fathering responsibilities.

The racism affecting the justice system is well documented. Men of color historically have been and continue to be locked up and taken away from their families more often and for longer periods than white men for the same crimes, and for other minor crimes such as possession of marijuana. According to Gramlich (2020), the Black imprisonment rate at the end of 2018 was nearly twice that of Hispanics and more than five times the rate among Whites. Reynolds (2009)

found research indicating that "more than 85% of Black children spend an average of five years without a father in the home such as from imprisonment" (p. 3). However, further research has shown incarcerated Black fathers' desire to be involved with their children, and some did so by writing letters and making phone calls home (Franklin, 2004).

Last, a common theme in the articles was social capital, or networks to help them provide for their families. According to McAdoo (1997), racism isolates Black fathers from the worlds of work and education. For example, Black men are often kept in low-paying service jobs with little social mobility or opportunity for promotion, and disadvantaged black students are often concentrated in segregated schools that differ in resource availability from middle class schools. Threlfall et al. (2013) stated that until men can provide financially sound and safe environments for their children, their ability to fulfill their desired roles is severely limited. However, Madhavan and Roy (2012) found that fathers and families find alternative ways to value men's contributions, beyond co-residence and provision. Although social inequalities such as lack of access to education, unfair imprisonment, and lack of employment keep Black men from obtaining social capital, they nonetheless want to provide if given the opportunity.

Common Misbeliefs

The belief that Black fathers are absent from their children's lives is still widely held (Jones & Mosher, 2013; Mcadoo, 1997; Reynolds, 2009; Connor & White, 2007; Threlfall et al., 2013; Madhavan & Roy, 2012). However, as the articles described above showed, this is not the case. A 2013 report by the CDC said that Black dads, whether living with their children or not, are more actively involved in their children's lives than fathers of other races, providing physical care to young children, helping with homework, talking to their children, and taking roles in sports they play (Jones & Mosher, 2013). According to Mcadoo (1997), to meet the developmental needs of

Black families, it is important to accurately assess the roles Black fathers do play, the pressures under which they function, and who they are in reality.

Roles Played by Black Fathers

In spite of the widespread view that Black fathers are absent or uninvolved, there is much research detailing the roles, traditional and non-traditional, that they play. In fact, 67% of Black coparenting fathers are actively engaged with their children, as compared to 32%, of Hispanic and 59% of White coparenting fathers. According to a data analysis of time spent with children, almost half of Black men (49%), talked with their children several times a week about their day; this compares with 22% of Hispanics and 30% of Whites (Livingston & Parker, 2007). Moreover, there are programs today with the same goals as historical rites of passage. For instance, former president Barack Obama launched My Brother's Keeper in 2014 to help young Black men reach their potential through mentoring and educational programs (Shear, 2014). This is an example of a social father, as discussed earlier, because it provides support the way a biological father would. These rites of passages and similar programs are also aimed at connecting youths to ancestral African rituals and are a source of resiliency and enculturation—the process of connecting people back to their culture of origin, or a renewed version of it (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2009).

Apart from such programs, it is important to acknowledge the roles of older brothers, uncles, cousins, and other extended family members who look out for younger Black men, providing some if not all aspects of the fatherly role. For instance, in the prison system older men sometimes look out for younger men and push them to do better or turn their lives around. One example of this in children the Scared Straight program.

Discussion

This paper has revealed that stereotypes ignore clear evidence that Black fathers are in fact

engaged in their children's lives (Jones & Mosher, 2013; Mcadoo, 1997; Reynolds, 2009; Connor & White, 2007; Threlfall et al., 2013; Madhavan & Roy, 2013). Moreover, the meaning of fatherhood and the roles played by fathers are flexible and differ among cultures, prompting the need for a more inclusive term (Connor & White, 2007). In the current research, there is a major discrepancy between the "absent father" images of Black men and the evidence of their actual fathering roles from lived experience. More research is needed showing how Black men are actively involved as fathers. However, the research also suggests that we need to be more aware of the intersections of class, race, sex, and culture (Mcadoo, 1997), and to account for social and environmental factors affecting each father, as they are all different. Policies and programs aimed at securing financial stability and higher education for black men are needed too.

Conclusion

The meaning of fatherhood is important. Cultural differences exist between all ethnic groups, and fathers engage with their children in many different ways. The disadvantages African and African American fathers face from systematic racism then make their jobs as fathers that much harder. The goal in this paper was to show how resilient and engaged Black fathers are in their children's lives despite pressures from their social conditions. The current research shows how racism creates stereotypes and negative perceptions, which shows the need for research that more accurately depicts Black fathers and what they do (Connor & White, 2007). This topic is important to pan-African studies because it sheds light on who Black fathers really are and can move the discussion on to more important issues such as fair access to higher education, employment, and housing, which will only help fathers obtain more social capital for themselves and future generations.

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Ideological Subject Formation of African American Students: African-Centered Education and Afrocentric Counter Narratives

by Prince Gumbi

African Americans exist in a society of imagined narratives. Narratives are stories and morals told by the rulers of a society. Some are broken into two parts: direct control and indirect control. Direct social control is also known as a "repressive state apparatus" (RSA) and uses force and violence to control either the whole population or a select group. During enslavement, African Americans lived under an RSA that not only used force but also false narratives to keep enslaved Africans underfoot.

The end of slavery saw the rise of more subtle, indirect methods of social control, known as "ideological state apparatus." Existing stereotypes about Africans were intensified in the media during this period. African people's spirituality continued to be hijacked. On religion, Althusser wrote in 1970, "Priests or Despots . . . 'forged' the beautiful Lies so that, in the belief that they were obeying God, men would obey the Priest and Despots" (Althusser, 2010, p. 700).



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Narratives are not bound by written discourse alone; when combined with images, the narrative develops a stronger effect. The image of the European Jesus, for example, causes African Americans to subconsciously worship Europeans as their literal gods. To African Americans, being against European Americans meant being against God. Similarly, the "beautiful Lies" or more aptly, "ugly lies" told to African Americans are tools used to maintain their prejudiced status. The "good" African American subject follows the forged narrative all by themselves; they rarely need to be coerced.

Carter Godwin Woodson wrote,

> He teaches the Negro that he has no worthwhile past, that his race has done nothing significant since the beginning of time . . . leads the Negro to believe this and thus control his thinking. If you can thereby determine what he will think, you will not need to worry about what he will do. You will not have to tell him to go to the back door. He will go without being told, and if there is no back door, he will have one cut for his special benefit. (Woodson, 1933, p. 88)

In 1933, Woodson observed that African American historical narratives had been deliberately stripped away and replaced with forged narratives that compelled them to submit willingly. The intense mental colonization involved can cause African people to fight the validity of their own history when they do encounter it. This colonization of the mind can manifest itself when African Americans begin to not only believe negative stereotypes about themselves, but to repeat and echo them.

According to Althusser, ideology is inescapable. He wrote, "This proposition might seem paradoxical. That an individual is always-already a subject, even before he is born, is nevertheless

the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not a paradox at all" (Althusser, 2010, p. 699). He meant that society is not a blank slate; that a child's birth is influenced by the ideological circumstances of their parents. During the slavery era, an African child born to an enslaved woman was also enslaved. Today, as before, an African American child is likely to inherit and be influenced the circumstances of their parents. James Baldwin wrote, "Negroes in this country—and Negroes do not, strictly or legally speaking, exist in any other—are taught really to despise themselves from the moment their eyes open on the world" (Baldwin, 1992, p. 36). Baldwin illustrated the hostile circumstances into which African American children are born. African American parents, as their first contacts, may teach their children to conform as a matter of survival.

Effects of Eurocentric Narratives on the African Subject

The psychodynamics of internalized Eurocentrism cause Africans to become disoriented, having black skin and yet thinking and acting White: "There is identification—that is, the young Negro subjectively adopts a white man's attitude. . . . Little by little, one can observe . . . the formation and crystallization of an attitude and way of thinking that are essentially white" (Fanon, 2010, p. 464). Fanon observed that identification is misoriented within the African: instead of identifying with other suffering underclasses of Africans, the child aspires to be among the upper class. Because there are few visible African role models, it is easy for young Africans to emulate the more visible Europeans, who control the narratives that Africans are forced to follow. The European way of thinking leads the African to essentially act like a European, and their attitude toward other Africans becomes like that of the European.

The effects of Eurocentric thinking on Africans also lead to Black-on-Black violence and self-hatred, which are fundamentally caused by cultural misorientation. The violence and

aggression that African Americans practice on each other are very similar to those practiced against them by Europeans (Wilson, 2014). This ideological stranglehold on African minds causes them to play an active part in their own destruction. The European no longer needs to coerce Africans to destroy themselves; most of the crimes are committed against other African Americans; for example, 88% of African Americans are killed by other African Americans (Reuters, 2020).

These crimes also feed the overgrown prison-industrial complex. The cost of housing an inmate can exceed $70,000, to which African Americans also contribute through taxes. A sharp break away from European ideology is warranted, as the above evidence has shown that Africans cannot be their truest selves if they continue to adopt corrupted ideologies.

Reclamation of Afrocentric Narratives

As Althusser has illustrated, ideology constantly shapes a subject's worldview. He writes, "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing" (Althusser, 2010, p. 699). Ideology is therefore inescapable; it shapes people's actions and thoughts without their realizing that it is acting upon them.

To change their cultural orientation, African Americans must discard European ideology and replace it with an Afrocentric ideology. Molefi Asante defines it thus:

> Afrocentricity is a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate. In regards to theory, it is the placing of African people in the center of any analysis of African phenomena. In terms of action and behavior, it is a devotion to the idea that what is in the be the interest of African consciousness is at the heart of ethical behavior. (Asante, 2003, p. 21)

Afrocentricity is ideological because it converts thoughts and actions. Afrocentric thought is derived from African philosophy, history, and lived experiences. The effort of Afrocentric scholars has been to retrieve lost history and document previously unwritten oral histories, philosophies, and languages. The Afrocentric world view is pro-African and fosters a positive self-image, and guides Africans towards actions that benefit other Africans. Afrocentric ideology also emphasizes action. It is not enough for people to think well of themselves; they must also act on what they believe. Because Afrocentric ideology is based on African issues and needs, the right acts would be those that alleviate the current sufferings of African people the world over. In the context of this essay, a narrative shift towards Afrocentricity in college students will train them to solve African problems. The college will no longer be a means to merely get a job, but to change one's life to an orientation that places African people at the center of any phenomena.

It is therefore important to introduce Afrocentric narratives and ideology to African children as early as possible, before their minds are "interpellated or hailed" by Eurocentric ideologies. In 1952, Fanon wrote, "It will have already been noticed that I should like nothing more nor less than the establishment of children's magazines especially for Negroes, the creation of songs for Negro children, and ultimately the publication of history texts especially for them" (Fanon, 2010, p. 466). Fanon realized that narratives have a great impact on children, and like many Africans before him, he advocated for a comprehensive African-centered education. When Fanon wrote about children's magazines and songs, he was taking this idea further, toward a change in media consumption. It is not enough to change the education system; work needs to be done to produce more African-centered media while being careful not to reproduce negative African American stereotypes. The advantage of media is its easy consumption; the imagination is guided by the images on paper or on a screen. More negative narratives of African images can

be challenged, and new images can be created.

The State of Afrocentric Education in the United States

African-centered education has a profound impact on African American college students. Studies have shown that counter-narratives found in African-centered education culturally reorient students' identities. Afrocentric worldviews are associated with improved academic attitudes and increased self-esteem.

Many African American students encounter African-centered education only at the college level because "Eurocentrically managed and oriented educational institutions have systematically worked to undermine growth and intellectual potential of African descended people" (Carroll & Jameson, 2011). These institutions need to keep control over narratives to maintain the status quo. Eurocentric institutions are not in the business of reducing the subjugation of African Americans; they are in the business of maintaining the social order as it is. Few serious efforts have been made by the mainstream education system to integrate all levels of education. California has made an effort, but the curriculum is trapped in bureaucratic limbo. An effort has been made to establish more African-centered schools, which begin early to situate "children within a meaningful and relevant cultural framework so that learning can proceed from a coherent center" (Merry & New, 2008). This model rejects the imposed narrative of racism as the center. Africans are centered in their history and lived experiences. Racism is an important topic to tackle, but African Americans are not defined by it.

Narrative and ideological transformations have become easier to share and disseminate. The rise of social media platforms and video conferencing has opened many vistas of possibility. The obvious danger with social media is the prevalence of unverified information. It is easy to spread hate speech, traumatic images of violence, and so forth. Viewing violent images has been

associated with post-traumatic stress disorder in recent findings (cite). African Americans are at even greater risk when viewing images of police shooting and killing other African Americans. These violent images function as a tool to induce fear in the African American community, similar to the whipping post during enslavement, where whole groups of enslaved Africans were made to watch brutal punishments. The goal was to induce fear in the plantation. Today, African Americans and other groups share these images with each other and unconsciously begin to fear the police.

Digital Frontiers for Afrocentric Ideological Dissemination

As dangerous and wild as social media is, it has opened many opportunities for African Americans to take firm control of their narratives. YouTube channels on African history and worldviews have exploded, though the viewer must do their due diligence sifting through the material to find credible resources. Many African American professors and independent scholars have made names for themselves in the social media space. For example, the underappreciated scholar Amos Wilson has outlined a way toward nation building and economic unity among Africans around the world; his profound lectures are available for free on YouTube. Social media has taken down the walls of the African American academic world and brought it to the masses. Despite very limited access to college, African Americans can now receive the best in the academy. The downside is the unguided nature of social media inquiry. But it shines light on the potential college professors have to share syllabuses and guide instruction in online courses, free or paid.

The online and technology worlds can reorient how discourse is shared and how students are taught. In a National Council for Black Studies Conference, Sureshi M. Jayawardene of San Deigo State University shared one potential impact of the digital humanities on Africana studies. Digital humanities is "an interdisciplinary movement . . . the result of a dynamic dialogue between humanistic exploration and digital means" (Wang, 2018). The DH movement can open space to

include technologies that people already use, and it can be a means not only for communication and business, but for social change. By using DH, Afro-descended people can expand the discourse of Afrofuturism. The interconnectedness of Africans around the world can bring to reality the much-awaited pan-African unity. The narrative-reorientation potential of DH has opened the opportunity for Africans around the world to share their lived experiences and speak for themselves. No longer will African people be confined to European discourse and media.

Conclusion

The potential for African people to change their narratives has never been better. African people have created a growing discourse of online material that can serve to reorient them away from Eurocentric ideologies, today and in the future. The digital world has become a sharing economy where discourses can be offered free of charge. Free access has been a boon for African people living under manufactured poverty. The disadvantages of undirected discourse can be mitigated by the students themselves through vigilance in selecting high-quality, research-based discourse.

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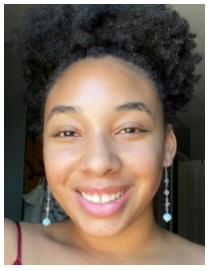
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The Effects of Racial Bias

By Keiauna Ervin

Racial bias is deeply engrained in America and has been in American society since its conception. In this paper, I look at how racial bias affects the way Black people are seen by non-Black people. As minority population numbers rise, the changes in demographics elicit the expression of implicit and explicit racial bias (Craig & Richeson, 2014). Being exposed more and more to diversity makes White people want to be around other White people more to feel comfortable. The Census Bureau projects that racial and ethnic minority groups will make up more than 50% of the United States population by the year 2042 (Craig & Richeson, 2014). White people perceive this change as a threat to their social status, which "suggests that rather than ushering in a more tolerant future, the increasing diversity of the nation may instead yield intergroup hostility." (Craig & Richeson, 2014, p. 1).

Looking at how racial bias is studied in psychological testing is important because knowing what is going on in the mind can help us understand each other. Showing people who actively participate in racial bias on a daily basis the ramifications of their actions could improve relationships between Black and White people. Racial tensions in the U.S. are currently high due



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to police brutality and racial profiling of Black people. This is not a new issue, but because of social media and the wider reach of people, it is being seen more, and people are speaking up against it more. As the Black Lives Matter movement fights against social and racial injustice and racial bias, understanding the movement is very important. In this paper, several topics are addressed, including tension between police and Black people, racial bias, and the effects of racial bias. Racial bias has implicit effects on the psyche and everyday life of Black people, and these effects are also generational.

By looking at the results of psychological testing, we can see what is going on with prejudice and racial bias. In one study that looked at implicit bias, it was found that "external, but not internal, motivation to control prejudice depended on Executive Function to reduce bias expression" (Ito et al., 2015, p. 7). Racial bias is not always expressed due to internal factors; sometimes outside factors influence people, and the response can cause expression of racial bias to decline. This does not necessarily mean that people do not still have racial bias, but rather that it may be internalized or covert. The same study also found that

> (a) measures of implicit bias were only weakly intercorrelated; (b) EF and estimates of automatic processes both predicted implicit bias and also interacted, such that the relation between automatic processes and bias expression was reduced at higher levels of EF; (c) specific facets of EF were differentially associated with overall task performance and controlled processing estimates across different bias tasks; (d) EF did not moderate associations between implicit and explicit measures of bias. (Ito et al., 2015, p. 7)

These are some of the reasons that looking into racial bias is important. People with racial bias affect social relationships with other racial and ethnic groups. People of African descent are among

those the most affected by this. African Americans are a numerical minority group in the U.S., making up only 13.4% of the population (Census, 2020), but they make up about 33% of the country's prison population (Gramlich, 2019). This is a product of racial bias, racial profiling, and prejudice. To know that you are walking around with a target on your back can affect your psyche and your relationships with people of other ethnicities. But even for non-Black people, viewing Black people according to stereotypes, as aggressors, or as generally bad because all the Black people they see in the media are portrayed this way, affects their relationships with Black people. The research question addressed in this paper is "What are the effects of racial bias in psychological testing on how Black people are viewed by non-Black people?"

Police Brutality

A study of the effects of police racial bias on Black families found that mental health consequences of negative encounters with law enforcement are felt by both the person directly invaded and their children (Miller & Vittrup, 2020). And it went a step further: the families actively prepared their children for interactions with law enforcement in order to secure the children's survival of such interactions (Miller & Vittrup, 2020). So not only do Black families have negative feelings and associations regarding the police, they have to prepare their children for the racial bias they might encounter when dealing with the police.

As Black children grow up, they learn that they have to act a certain way when the police come around. Black people are thus put into a position where they have to make sure that the police feel safe around them so that they themselves can leave the interaction with their life still intact. Being Black puts a target on your back, and you have to do everything possible to avoid being recognized and blamed for a crime you did not commit. Being a Black person in the wrong place in America can lead to your death. One traffic stop can lead to a family getting a call that a loved

one is dead. But "despite the negative and sometimes traumatic experiences, participants indicated that they found strength primarily in their faith and their families" (Miller & Vittrup, 2020). It is backwards for people to have to make sure the police feel safe, when the police are the ones who are supposed to be protecting and serving the community and making sure the people feel safe. "Black lives matter" is met with "Blue lives matter" or "All lives matter." By contrast, when "Stop Asian Hate" was broadcasted, it was answered with legislation, and it was understood that Asian lives were at risk and needed help. That was the proper response, unlike the way Black Lives Matter was met with opposition and resistance.

Effects of Racial Bias

Racial bias is also present in employment and the work environment, most prevalently with Black women and in regards to their hair. Because Black women do not fit into certain defined categories of race and sex, they often fall between the cracks in matters of both civil rights and grooming policies (Powell, 2018). In New York, a law was passed that made hair a subject of human rights protection—banning discrimination against kinky natural hair—because hair had been weaponized as a tool to maintain the status quo (Powell, 2018). It reached the point that the court system needed to acknowledge the demands regarding hairstyle and texture that are implicitly in employers' apprehension of Black women's natural hairstyles (Powell, 2018).

The military also followed discriminatory practices against natural hair until recently. Racial bias runs so deep that a Black woman wearing her natural hair in a professional work environment was seen as unprofessional. Women constantly have to worry about getting their hair cut and how it will be perceived (Ellis-Harvey et al., 2016). A new haircut will change how they are perceived, whether they look older or younger, or whether the haircut is too short or too long, and so forth.

This aversion to natural hair is not exclusive to Black women. Black men who have locs experience the same adversity, and Black boys do in school. Young Black girls are told to straighten or relax their hair rather than wearing their natural hair out, and this continues into adulthood. A study of the psychology of hair and self-perception found from surveys that there was "a slight but significant positive correlation between a higher internal locus of control and those who choose to wear their hair in a natural state" (Ellis-Harvey et al., 2016, p. 1).

Racial bias is more than just a personal thought system; it is implemented as institutional rules that negatively affect the workplace. Having insecurities about one's natural hair when going to work does not amount to a positive work environment. Having to constantly combat racial bias in every aspect of one's life is tiring, especially in a work environment that is already competitive. This is what Black people have to deal with on a daily basis. Work is no longer about completing your job and doing the best you can, but also about fighting racism and racial bias. researchers found that "top-performing funds led by Black managing partners" appeared to be the "most harmed by racial bias" (Walker, 1990, p. 1). No matter how high up you are or how amazing you perform at work, racial bias still has an effect.

Education is not exempt from racial bias, either. Education was not offered to slaves, and after slavery was abolished, education was still denied to Black people. You cannot look at the United States without addressing the racism and bias that are ingrained into every aspect of the country, from daily life to institutions. Education is affected by racial bias, because low-income neighborhoods get less funding for schools, and these neighborhoods are heavily populated by Black and brown people. Their schools cannot provide the same quality of education as predominantly White schools in higher-income neighborhoods. Research into the relationship between quality of education and socioeconomic status has shown that "growing up in a poor

neighborhood is associated with reduced educational attainment and lowered adult learnings" (Quillian, 2017, p. 1). Lack of high-quality education has lasting effects on the people living in low-income neighborhoods.

Quinn, studying the effects of racial bias on education, examined "bias by teachers' own race, gender, and the racial makeup of the schools where they teach," and found "larger bias in grading by white and female teachers, who were less likely to rate the Black child's writing as being on grade level compared to the white child's writing" (Quinn, 2021, p. 1). Being graded more harshly by White teachers makes Black children's educational careers hard from the start. They already face hurdles due to racial bias, which is difficult for a child to deal with and sets the tone for their future. This simply discourages some children from trying, because they have to try harder than other students. Part of the "American dream" is that the country is a land of opportunity rich with education and prosperity. This is true for cis White Americans, but for minorities and people who don't fit that mold, the American dream is just that: a dream. It is used to lure people in and make the country out to be something it is not. Some people are exceptions and are able to make the dream a reality, but for the majority, that is not the case. For Black people particularly, that is not the America they know, mainly due to racism and racial bias. In educational institutions, Black people are still treated like cattle, as property, the way they were under slavery.

Research is a powerful tool that can make a difference and contribute to the greater good. For example, wearing a mask has proven to slow the spread of covid-19, and during the global pandemic doing so was found to lower infections, deaths, and hospitalization rates by 37.7% (Zhang, 2020). This is based on 75% of the population wearing a mask; if the whole population did so and followed stay-at-home mandates, the high rates of the disease we see now would not have arisen, we would have a better handle on case spikes, and hospital capacities would not be at

0%. In this same study, a controlled outbreak was conducted; the attack rate was reduced to below 1%, and 33% of symptomatic and asymptomatic infections were isolated and identified (Zhang, 2020). If we had the same kind of research to back up the positive effects of eliminating racial bias, then we would have a map of solutions. It could be that we need better education on race relations starting in childhood, when the brain is still developing and children can learn easily. Or we might need better training for the workplace, not just sexual harassment training PowerPoints that no one really pays attention to. More effective ways are needed to reach adults so that they will open their minds and work on stopping their own racial bias. There is a test people can take to see what their racial bias is, if any; that could also be important for finding solutions, because then people would know that they have a racial bias and not be able to act as if they don't know about it. Being proactive is the best way to combat the psychological, physical, and emotional ramifications that Black people experience due to racial bias.

Conclusion

Racial bias is present in every aspect of life. Black people experience the consequences of racial bias constantly. From childhood to adulthood, there is no escaping its ramifications. With current racial tensions, the results of racial bias are very visible in the media and in what's going on in society daily. But racial bias does not affect only the relationships between Black and White people; it also affects relationships between other ethnic groups. Imperialism and colonization thrive on pitting minority groups against each other. One way of doing this is using racial bias to spread the idea that one ethnic group is above another. This allows other ethnic groups to turn against one another instead of banding together to fight oppression and gain equality and equity for all.

Looking further into the ramifications of racial bias could improve not only the lives of

Black people, but of other ethnicities and races as well. It could also improve the relationships between ethnic groups, and lower racial tensions by devising solutions to the problem. It has been proven that by using research, you can solve problems.

Racial bias is ingrained in every part of American society, and it heavily affects the lives and psyches of Black people from childhood to adulthood. No matter how good of a student, employee, or productive member of society that a Black person is, they are still affected by racial bias. They are judged harsher, seen in a more negative light, and have a harder time in institutions than White people. Racial bias affects the relationships between different ethnic groups and the relationship between Black and White people. We see this play out in the news frequently when a social injustice occurs. It is seen in schools, the workplace, and everyday life. It is seen when Black people go to the store, are pulled over by police, go for a walk in a neighborhood, it can be seen in any aspect of Black people's lives. Racial bias has implicit effects on the psyche and everyday life of Black people. Being secure in one's racial identity is one way to also combat the effects of racial bias. Having a positive relationship with one's own racial identity leaves little room for outside stereotypes to affect how you see yourself. There is also anti-racism training in place at most professional workplaces to combat racial bias. Combating racial bias and its effects is an effort for individuals and society as a whole.

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African American/Black Boys & Mental Health

By Sady Guillen

Mental health is a crucial component of children's development, learning, and overall health. Healthy development requires promotion of mental health and treatment of mental illnesses (U.S. Public Health Service, 2000). The World Health Organization (2018) defined mental health as "a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively. . . and is able to make a contribution to her or his community."

Structural racism and the increasing suicide rates among Black children have raised concern about the healthy development and well-being of Black youths. The cumulative effects of systemic oppression and various forms of racism include damage to children's development (physical and psychological and future conditions, and to the collective well-being and development of Black communities. The healthy psychosocial development and wellness of Black children do not depend exclusively on individual action. They also depend on the social structures and individuals that contribute to psychopathology and suicide. The American Psychological Association (APA) acknowledged a need for systemic change due to the adverse effects of systemic racism on the physical, psychological, and mental health of African Americans, and that this requires "taking a hard look at how the field has overlooked—and even perpetuated—racial injustice in the past" (Abrams, 2020).



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Ethnic disparities in suicide rates indicate mental health problems among Black youths, since they have the fastest growing rates even while other ethnic groups report declines (The Congressional Black Caucus – Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health, 2019). The Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated a 73% increase in self-reported suicide attempts in African American or Black adolescents between 1991 and 2017 (Lindsey et al., 2019According to Bridge et al. (2015) and Bridge et al. (2018) data from 1993−97 and 2008−12 show that the suicide rate increased among African American and Black children aged 5 to 11 from 1.36 per million to 2.54 per million. For White children, however, the rate declined from 1.14 to 0.77 per million, a significant shift away from past trends. Between January 1, 2001 and December 31, 2015, a total of 1,661 Black children between the ages of 5 and 17 committed suicide: 1,225 boys (73.8%) and 436 girls (23.2%). Therefore, mental well-being, disease, and suicide prevention require social reforms to improve the lives, futures, and well-being of African American and Black children.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory perspective could indicate events within the environment that prompt the increasing suicide rate among Black youths, particularly for boys ages 5 to 11. Therefore, to answer the research questions—What are the factors disrupting Black boys and adolescents' mental well-being, how can mental well-being be promoted, and what preventative measures exist?—the first step is to review suicide and mental health data for Black boys and adolescents. This will be followed by a discussion of the risk factors influencing mental health, and then of the factors that promote mental well-being and Black males' identity.

Mental Health and Suicide

The increased suicide rate among Black boys between ages 5 and 11 is a phenomenon that demands attention, as they are among the youngest age groups of children. Suicide in elementary

schoolchildren is uncommon and understudied (Shefthall et al., 2016).

Traditionally, Black adolescent boys have had lower suicide rates than their Latino and White peers. The ethnic disparities and higher suicide incidences in Black 5- to 12-year-olds are thus significant, as their suicide rates are about twice as high as their White counterparts' (Lindsey et al., 2019; Sheftahall et al., 2016; Congressional Black Caucus – Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health, 2019). However, the data also show that these disparities decrease with age. Suicide rates for the Black youths decrease between ages 13 and 17 to about 50% below those of White youths (Bridge et al., 2018). Among older Black adolescent boys who attempted suicide, there was an increase in injury rates of up to 122%, showing a greater lethality in the methods used to attempt suicide. Black boys who attempt suicide are at risk for death, given the rise in injuries related to methods like hanging and suffocation (Lindsey et al., 2019; Congressional Black Caucus – Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health, 2019). There are a lot of open questions about Black boys' mental health, as many reports are based on cross-sectional studies that do not explain etiology. Little information is available on suicide among Black male children. Because of that limitation, this paper uses information on Black male adolescents to attempt to understand the mental health of Black boys between 5−12, isolate their stressors, and promote their well-being.

The Centers for Disease Control youth risk behavior surveillance report from 2011, showed that Black adolescent boys in high school reported lower levels of depression and anxiety than Black females. In addition, their anxiety and depression levels were similar to those of boys from other ethnic groups, and they had higher ratings of self-esteem and self-worth than Black girls or boys from other ethnic groups (Eaton et al., 2012). In 2009, the suicide rates among Black youths were lower than today, but they did report higher rates of suicide attempts than White adolescents.

In addition, Black adolescent girls showed a 10.4% prevalence of suicide attempts, and Black adolescent males just 5.4%. The 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that Black adolescent girls reported higher rates of sadness or hopelessness, at (33.9%), than Black male adolescents, at (17.6%). Black adolescent males also reported lower rates of sadness and hopelessness than all other ethnic groups. Black adolescent girls also report higher rates for suicide plans at (17.3%) and Black adolescent male (10.6%). Suicide attempts were higher for Black female 10.2% than Black male youth at (7.2%), but Black adolescent boys had higher rates for suicide attempts amongst boys, Hispanic male adolescents at (7.6%) and White male adolescents at (3.7%) (Kann et al., 2016). The same survey in 2019 found that African American youths had the highest prevalence of suicide attempts among ethnic groups. Attempts had increased for both girls (23.7%) and boys (10.7%). Black male youth reported the lowest suicide ideation rates but showed an increase in rates of medical assistance for injuries related to suicide attempts (Ivey-Stephenson et al., 2020). These trends indicate that the mental health of Black children requires prioritization, strategies for support, and mental health awareness.

Suicide Precipitants

Shefthall et al. (2016) conducted a study using data from the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) to find the leading suicide precipitants in children from 17 U.S. states. They analyzed suicide deaths from 2003−12 and compared children ages 5–11 and 12–14 years old. Black deaths made up 36.8% of elementary school-age deaths and 11.6% among adolescents. The suicide precipitants for Black children included relationship problems with family and friends (51.6%), a recent crisis (48.4%), and school problems 25.8%. For Black adolescents, school problems were the main precipitant of suicide (45%); by contrast, for non-Black adolescents, the most common main precipitator was relationship problems. The second reason for Black

adolescents was relationship problems, including with friends and family (38.3%), and the third was a recent crisis (38.3%).

Suicide is commonly associated with mental health disorders like depression and anxiety, traumatic events, and environmental variables. According to Shefthall et al. (2016), the causes of suicide in elementary school-age children are not well known, but adolescents who die by suicide have higher levels of depression than children do, and older adolescents display more depressive mental conditions. They reported that children up to 14 years of age undergo periods of stress before suicide; major suicide precipitants are familial issues, school-related issues, and changes in their environments.

According to Brady et al. (2014), disadvantaged community environments, households, and schools can exacerbate mental health problems. Economic disadvantages are associated with increased depressive symptoms, externalizing behaviors, frustration, and aggression. For instance, Black boys in economically disadvantaged communities may be exposed to race-based stress through teachers, school disciplinary practices, and police violence. Communities may lack grocery stores, parks, hospitals, and other important resources. Poverty and its economic conditions are associated with poor availability of jobs and unemployment due to discrimination and may expose some children to parental stress, which can be higher in single-parent households. The problem lies not with the families and communities of lower socio-economic status, though, but with the inequities and limited access to resources. Black boys living in economically disadvantaged communities can thrive when provided the resources and opportunities. Research in Black communities of lower socio-economic status is overrepresented, and the experiences of these children do not account for those of Black boys in other socio-economic conditions.

Puberty is also a period of physical and psychosocial development (Dervic et al., 2008).

Suicide rates generally increase, possibly in connection with the onset of depression and drug use. Entering puberty at an early age can have adverse consequences for physical and mental health, and research has shown that Black boys may experience puberty early (Ge et al., 2006). Herman-Giddens et al. (2012) found that African American male children reached some stages of pubertal development about six months to two years before White and Hispanic male children, including the development of secondary sexual characteristics such as genital growth and pubic hair. According to (Ge et al., 2006), African American boys who experience puberty early report symptoms associated with mood and behavioral disorders, including social anxiety disorder (SAD), generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), major depression, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The researchers suggested that early puberty in Black boys is associated with increased externalizing symptoms than in Black girls, conduct disorder, behavioral problems at school, and drug use. These findings are crucial because Shefthall et al. (2016) reported that Black adolescent children were more likely to exhibit a depressed mood before death. In addition, they found ADD/ADHD to be the leading mental health disorder among the children in their sample, who had higher rates of ADHD than adolescents. They proposed that children react impulsively to social relationship problems. For Black boys, this raises questions about whether identity and cultural suppression are contributing to mental health stressors. Understanding how Black boys display symptoms of mental health problems and express their culture can be helpful for the children themselves and their schools, which can modify disciplinary practices and provide counseling and resources rather than punishing them. Black boys may enter puberty early due to stress, and social support and coping strategies can reduce the adverse effects. Single-gender schooling, intervention, and mentoring programs (e.g., rite-of-passage programs) can provide a sense of community and support their well-being during puberty.

Dervic et al. (2008) and Shefthall et al. (2016) suggested that individual characteristics related to impulsivity, age, cognitive immaturity, psychosocial stressors, and the availability of methods can influence a child's chances of attempting suicide. However, there were some limitations with this study in observing the causes of suicide in Black children. To suggest that Black boys between 5 and 12 commit suicide due to age-related impulsivity is dubious, as it implies that Black boys have become significantly more impulsive than in previous generations. There is also the possibility that Black children suffer adverse effects of the pathologizing of their expressions of African culture. Another limitation is the lack of gender breakdown in the observations of what precipitated suicide attempts, which is especially significant because Black boys and girls may not share the same experiences or stressors. This lack of distinction is a problem because it does not specify the stressors, making it harder to establish correlations for etiology.

The data also group relationship problems with family members and friends together, confounding attempts to determine which environment precipitates suicide. For instance, family relationship problems could be related to the home environment, but relationship problems with friends could be associated with school or church. However, given that Black adolescents have the highest rates of school problems as precipitants of suicide, it might be argued that Black boys and adolescents share a particular , connecting experience in facing anti-Black, male-gendered racism in schools specifically. In addition, because ethnic differences exist, not all the data on non-Black children is generalizable, given the unique experiences related to ethnicity such as Black male-gendered racism and historical oppression.

The Real Risk Factors

Environmental Factors

Black boys can encounter pathologizing and negative evaluations of themselves and their

environments from a Eurocentric perspective, which may perceive them as culturally disadvantaged and deficient (Boykin, 1986). They may also experience behavioral and mental pathologizing and disciplinary actions due to the cultural incompetence of adults (Reynolds, 2010; Shillingford et al., 2020). Black boys may have preferences for learning styles associated with African cultures, such as *verve, rhythm,* and *orality.* These preferences can be pathologized as attention deficit disorder (ADHD) or oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) (Carter et al., 2008; Cunningham & Boykin, 2001; Grace, 2004). Behavioral and mental health conditions in Black boys, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, can be attributed to "violent" neighborhoods as a result of racialized ideologies. Stereotypes may attribute violence to Black communities rather than to inequitable structural conditions like over-policing, police violence, and the justice system that perpetuate the conditions. These practices then obscure people's ability to see other problematic factors, like resource availability, and possible solutions.

Regardless of intentions, school policies and treatments can be factors in the deterioration of Black boys' mental health and academic achievements and can expose them to the justice system. The data on suicide precipitants and the experiences of Black boys who commit suicide indicate that schools can be significant environmental risk factors to the mental wellness of Black boys. Black boys experience exclusionary disciplinary practices at disproportionate rates. Racial inequalities and experiences of discrimination may lead them to feel isolated from their school environments, and the combination of these factors contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline (Blake et al., 2010; Fenning & Rose 2007).

Negative relationships with teachers and other school personnel are a risk factor for Black boys that needs analyzing when one is looking at suicide rates in children, as research has found that adults working with children have stereotypical anti-Black male views about Black boys.

According to Priest et al. (2018), in a national survey of white adults working with children, respondents held stereotypical negative attitudes toward ethnic groups, predominantly Black people, such as the perception that Black teens and children are lazier and more violence prone, or that Black children under 8 years old are more violence prone and less intelligent than white children the same age. Teachers discriminate against Black male students and have lower academic expectations of them, and they are overrepresented in special education (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Gopalan & Nelson, 2019; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Papageorge et al., 2020; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). The anti-Black male-gendered perceptions that non-Black adults have put Black boys at a disadvantage and even at risk, which raises concerns because adolescent Black boys are more likely to be absent from school due to feeling unprotected and unsafe within their school environments (Eaton et al., 2008; Kann et al. 2018). Black boys who fear for their safety or require help from school administrators may lack protection due to prejudices or stereotypes of them as not requiring protection the way other boys do. This implies that Black boys are not safe on campuses because of adults' biased perceptions of them as less innocent than other children (Goff et al., 2014; Priest et al., 2018).

Black boys and adolescents may also mask their depressive symptoms and externalize mental health problems so that they manifest as irritability or behavioral or discipline issues, leading to them being about three times as likely to be suspended as other students (Lindsey et al., 2017). School suspensions are not beneficial, and the emphasis for Black children should be on mental health. If people who work with Black boys understand how they might express symptoms differently from other boys, they can get them mental health resources and social support. A support system can improve health and academic outcomes and reduce suicide. Schools need to promote mental health well-being for Black children, but institutions and the people within them

must also recognize how they themselves might be contributing to mental health deterioration and suicide. Individual and collective efforts are needed to learn and practice culturally competent and sensitive approaches. Students can be punished and criminalized instead of receiving mental health treatment due to misinterpretations of their symptoms and behavior.

Bullying

Black boys and adolescents may display warning signs of distress in school before making suicide attempts. News reports detailing the abuse of Black boys and adolescents in schools are part of the historical context of anti-Black male-gendered racism and inaction to protect these boys (e.g., by administrators or teachers) because of stereotypes that they are aggressors and not possible victims. Suicide rates and precipitators and gendered racism in schools support this claim.

Some Black boys who died by suicide have had their stories narrated: Nigel Shelby, a 14-year-old, reported bullying to his principal numerous times and was repeatedly ignored. The principal even asked him to dance to Black people's music once. The mother of Gabriel Taye, an 8-year-old boy, reported his being bullied two months before his death; the school covered up and withheld information about his physical attacks. Jamari Evans, an 11-year-old, was taken out of his school by his mother due to bullying, but his special education teacher at his new school physically and verbally abused him. These stories demonstrate that neglect and failure to protect Black boys can be fatal, and it is a disregard of their humanity.

Effects of Anti-Black Male-Gendered Racism

Experiments on implicit cognitive biases have demonstrated that adults hold stereotypical views of Black male threats in children as young as five (Todd et al., 2016). Known mental-health stressors for Black males are associated with experiences of racism and discrimination. Perceived discrimination can have long-term effects on Black adolescent boys, mental health, lasting into

adulthood (Assir et al., 2017).

According to Seaton et al. (2008), discrimination is one contributor to depression and anxiety. For Black adolescent boys, perceived discrimination was associated with self-esteem, depressive symptomology, and life satisfaction. Older boys reported higher rates of discrimination, which the researchers pointed out was probably associated with age and experience: younger boys might simply not have perceived discrimination, due to their stage of ethnic identity development (Belgrave & Brevard, 2015). These results are of interest due to the previous conceptualization of ethnic identity development models. Perhaps the argument can be made that children conceptualize race and discrimination much younger than previously thought, possibly in connection with globalization and internet access (e.g., social media). Technology and internet access might affect mental health due to constant media messages and priming and programming of Eurocentric values (e.g., materialism and individualism) that previous generations did not have.

A longitudinal study that followed 681 African American or Black high school children for 18 years, starting around age 15, revealed gender differences in the effects of perceived racial discrimination. The researchers concluded that boys have a high vulnerability to long-term psychological effects; discrimination was a stronger predictor of depressive symptoms in early adulthood development for them than for Black females (Assari et al., 2017). School environments require particular attention because suicide statistics on Black males between 5 and 11 years old and adolescent found relationship problems with friends and school problems to be major precipitators of suicide. Black boys and adolescents spend long periods without parental supervision in these environments and often encounter conscious or unconscious anti-Black male-gendered racism.

Another factor to consider regarding the health of Black boys is mental health disparities

that result in lower treatment and care rates. Those could be causes of suicide attempts in Black youth due to lower treatment usage than White youth (Shefthall et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Another belief is that Black adolescents do not seek treatment due to fear of being perceived as weak, not wanting to acknowledge mental illness, or medical distrust, which could explain why some seek support from family and peers instead. Social factors may also influence racial discrimination, childhood trauma, and poverty (Shefthall et al., 2016; Dervic et al., 2008).

In most children, regardless of ethnicity or gender, another factor in suicide is bullying, as it contributes to depression and suicide ideation. Children in the child welfare systems are at particular risk, and for boys this includes a higher rate of psychiatric hospitalization. They are also at risk of violent victimization, which is concerning given that 45% of children in foster care and 40% of youths in the justice system are African American (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Historical Context of Anti−Black Male Culture

Anti-Black male-gendered racism is a byproduct of colonialism and its analog neo-colonialism; it is an assault on the physical and mental psyches of Black men and a form of intergenerational trauma. Films like *Birth of a Nation* exemplify the attack on the cultural and ethnic identity and image of Black males, portraying them as aggressive, unintelligent, and hypersexual. There is a history of psychological terrorism ranging back through the lynchings of adolescent boys like Jesse Washington and Emmet Till by physically violent torture. The oppression of Black male children has evolved through conscious and unconscious practices, and it begins early for boys through contact with government institutions and the school-to-prison pipeline. The disparities documented in schools, including harsher disciplinary procedures,

expulsions, and suspensions for Black boys, are oppressive. The labeling (e.g., aggressive, special ed, low I.Q.), pathologizing, and lack of referrals for mental health support also hurt Black children. Medical racism by mental health providers contributes to over-pathologizing of behavior and misdiagnosis of schizophrenia and attention deficit disorders due to racism and cultural misunderstandings. Anti-Black male-gendered racism exists in covert and overt forms, and conscious and unconscious ones; race-based stress has cumulative adverse effects on mental and physical health. A positive African American male ethnic identity must be instilled early and "racial" socialization provided to establish coping practices and resilience.

African-Centered Conceptualization of Mental Illness

The transatlantic trade or *Maafa* of people of African descent disrupted their African belief systems and consciousness. Continuity has remained in African culture's deep structure, but there has also been an influence of Eurocentric views against the African self and values. Numerous African-centered scholars have postulated that acculturation and distancing from an African consciousness are associated with mental and behavioral problems, including suicide, drug use, and violence (Akbar, 2004; Azibo, 2017; Fanon, 1963; Kambon & Bowen-Reid, 2009).

From an African-centered perspective, Azibo (1989) postulated that mental health is attained when psychological and behavioral functioning are in order and in congruence with the natural order, universal forces, and God. He focused on the self (the communal self) and the significance of African cultural values in interpreting mental health. He offered an alternative to mental disorder or *psychological misorientation*. According to Azibos's nosology, psychological misorientation arises when a person experiences cognitive misorientation as a result of the distancing from African worldviews. Some dimensions of the African worldview are based on James Jones's (1991) interpretation; these include spirituality based on the belief that spirit is the

fundamental element of reality in the universe, that it is not material, and that it is interwoven into people's daily activities. *Collectivism* places high priority and value on communalism and loyalty to the welfare of the group and the individual wellbeing, and the group is tied together. The *time orientation* is based more on human readiness and preparedness than strict adherence to clocks. It is not linear, but circular, and the past is also important to the present. *Orality* is the emphasis placed on speech and cultural expression, passing down stories and proverbs through generations and a preference for oral forms of communication. *Verve* and *rhythm* include behavior that's rhythmic, creative, and expressive, is receptive to levels of stimulation, and emphasizes spontaneity and creativity. *Metaphysical epistemology* the nature of knowledge, determining what is real and how knowledge is constructed. This method of knowing and understanding reality accepts the spirit as a legitimate way of knowing and accepting knowledge. (This is taken from lecture notes I took last semester.)

One way to counter to these effects on African consciousness is African-centricity. According to Asante (2003), African-centricity postulates a humanistic way of thinking that emphasizes African interests and worldviews and locates African people in the center of any African phenomena, seeing them as people, not objects. Afrocentricity endorses protective factors for the well-being, consciousness, and agency of people of African descent.

Afrocentricity theory has been met with criticism and taken out of context. Various research findings have supported the claim that African-centered beliefs contribute to well-being. Given the historical trauma of anti−Black male culture, Black boys need a positive ethnic identity to protect their cultural heritage. Because specific experiences of anti-Black male-gendered racism occur in places like schools, a grounded ethnic and cultural identity can be a protective factor for the psyche and African self-concept. Rites of passage may help develop the positive ethnic identity

necessary for Black male children and adolescents. Rites of passage promote a positive self-image and mental well-being and prepare them for a society where anti-Black male messages exist.

Factors Protecting and Promoting Mental Well-Being

Some researchers have argued that a family structure with a father in the household promotes well-being in Black boys, but this may be associated simply with greater parental supervision and having a male figure to emulate (Belgrave & Brevard, 2015). According to Mandara and Murray (2000), family structure and parents' marital status were associated with higher self-esteem in Black adolescent boys, despite their economic backgrounds, but not in girls. Conversely, higher self-esteem was associated with family relationships for Black adolescent girls but not boys. The researchers suggested that Black adolescent boys with unmarried parents were at a higher risk of lower self-esteem than those with married parents. They indicated that girls might not be as affected by the absence of a father due to having maternal figures to model themselves after. They also suggested that a way to buffer the effects on Black boys would be to provide structured and supervised environments.

Parental monitoring is also associated with protective factors for Black boys, possibly because, as Richards et al. (2004) found, boys receive less supervision than girls, but when both parents monitor them, this facilitates protective factors and deters or moderates risky and problem behaviors, such as engagement in sex. Consequently, familial involvement is necessary for promoting positive mental well-being. Many children grow up in single-family households, and these findings do not automatically indicate any pathologizing.

"Racial" Socialization

Racial socialization involves the way parents teach and give messages (directly or indirectly) to their children about their "race" and others. Black boys with access to the internet

can see messages at any time devaluing Black male identities. Parents should take an active approach to racial socialization to support the development of a positive African American male identity. Racial socialization promotes protective factors because it can provide awareness of and coping skills for racism (Evans et al., 2012). Active racial socialization messages, which include cultural socialization, preparation for bias, self-worth, and egalitarianism, support positive development and well-being. The authors reported that more positive outcomes in "competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring" were associated with and supported by racial socialization. These practices have protective effects and promote resiliency against racism and discrimination (Neblett et al., 2012). Neblett et al. (2009) found that racial socialization predicted academic performance and persistence for African American boys from grades 7 to 11. They also suggested that racial socialization is associated with better educational outcomes in contexts of racial discrimination. Henry et al. (2015) found that maternal racial socialization provided protective effects against behavioral aggression and depressive symptoms in African American youths with exposure to community violence. Cultural pride diminished the impact of exposure to violence on aggressive behaviors, and cultural appreciation decreased depressive symptoms.

Mentoring

The connection between school environments and mental health in Black boys needs to be emphasized to promote their mental well-being. Dervic et al. (2008) reported that protective factors against suicide included feelings of belonging in school, and that positive relationships with teachers who care could improve students' experiences and mental well-being. Klopfenstein (2005) stated that Black students benefit from Black teachers because they are more likely to take up mentorship roles with Black students, advocate for them, and serve as role models and surrogate parents. Their experiences with the educational system can also help other Black students navigate

and even influence their class choices. Hurd and Zimmerman (2010) found that mentoring is also associated with protective effects that promote well-being for African American adolescent boys. Having access to a mentor other than one's parents was associated with decreases in depressive symptoms and risky sexual behaviors. They also found that boys with mentors had greater decreases in depressive symptoms than girls. Black boys might also benefit from mentoring programs, and their current availability shows that more are needed to recruit Black male mentors.

Rites of Passage

Rite-of-passage programs have been designed to promote healthy development in Black male youths (Washington et al., 2017). They provide skills that can guide boys through their development to gain self-determination and coping skills and transition into young adulthood. Black boys receive mentorship relevant to their needs and experiences as Black males, so educational lessons include race, culture, manhood and masculinity, and family. The programs provide safe spaces for psychosocial development and skill strengthening, and the boys establish rapport with their mentors, peers, and wider community (Washington et al., 2017; Watson et al., 2015).

Rite-of-passage practice that are culturally specific for African American and Black boys draw inspiration from African rituals. They involve taking the boys on retreats and various culmination practices. The programs are designed to be culturally sensitive and center on the African worldview. Rites practices aim to reconnect boys with the cultural, African-centric male identity to promote a positive ethnic identity. They support communalism and collective group identity rather than the individual and counteract alien values of individualism, materialism, and youth worship (Altman & Holmes, 2005) that are not natural to the African identity. They promote a natural order with African-centered cultural values, interdependence, spirituality, and respect for

elders (Washington et al., 2017). The programs can incorporate African-centered belief systems like *The Nguzo Saba* (Seven Principles) by Karenga that support Black boys' development. These principles are "*Umoja* (Unity), *Kujicihagulia* (Self-Determination), *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), *Nia* (Purpose), *Kuumba* (Creativity), and *Imani* (Faith)" (Washington et al., 2017).

Ethnic Identity

In African philosophy, the concepts of knowing oneself and self-identity are essential and foundational aspects of African American and Black people in psychology (Belgrave & Allison, 2018). Research has found that positive ethnic identity is associated with positive psychological and behavioral functioning for Black people, and an ethnic identity is essential to developing a positive self-concept (Belgrave & Allison, 2018). The most significant phases of psychosocial development during adolescence encompass the development of an ethnic identity necessary for self-esteem, self-concept, and psychosocial adjustment (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Critical aspects of identity development are related to ethnic self-identification (how a person labels and identifies themselves and other groups), ethnic attitudes (feelings about oneself and other groups), and self-awareness (understanding one's group membership and other groups; Phinney, 1992).

Another significant part of the development of ethnic identity development is ethnic identity affirmation: positive regard and feelings for the ethnic group (Brittian et al., 2013; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Identity achievement and affirmations are also predictors of psychological well-being in adolescents (Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997). Therefore, having an ethnic identity and an ethnic group to identify with are necessary conditions for feeling inclusiveness or belongingness within society, due to culture's antagonizing of Black males. Because stronger positive ethnic identity

affirmation (belonging and pride) for Black people predicts better mental health, ethnic identity affirmation is also vital for Black males who report experiences of prejudice and discrimination, due to its protective factors (Brittian et al., 2013; Phinney, 1992).

Ethnic identities are also associated with practicing and holding onto one's cultural heritage (Cokley, 2005). Tajfel and Turner (1979) posited that group membership provides individuals with self-esteem, a social identity, and feelings of belonging. Therefore, from the perspective of social identity theory, belonging to an ethnic-cultural group, having an ethnic identity, and making affirmations can be argued to be necessary for Black boys and adolescents. They are necessary for healthy psychosocial development and mental wellness, and group membership is important because it can provide Black boys with a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and ethnic identity affirmation.

Low levels of ethnic identity, achievement, and affirmation were found to be related to poorer mental health (Phinney, 1992). People with negative associations and who do not strongly identify with their ethnic groups generally show poorer mental well-being (Cokley, 2002). Adolescents who did not practice identity exploration and introspection were found to have more distress and less positive self-concepts than others (Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997). This is a possible factor when Black male adolescents lack Black male peers, a sense of community, and especially when they encounter discrimination. In addition, if they lack a positive Black male ethnic identity or cannot freely exercise one, it may lead to frustration.

Conclusion

The mental health of Black boys can deteriorate due to a number of factors in society. Suicide rates in younger children point to the need for active approaches to promoting healthy development in Black boys at a young age. Research in lower socioeconomic communities is

overrepresented and does not offer many solutions. The problems of many Black boys in the African community are due not to cultural deficiencies but to racism and lack of resources. To counter some of the adverse effects of racism, this paper has included practices that are known to promote mental well-being in Black boys. A positive Black ethnic identity can protect their consciousness in an oppressive society. Many factors can promote their well-being, including an African-centered identity, familial support, supportive teachers and mentors, and programs.

Research, psychology, and counseling can only do so much, and society places the burden on Black male children and adolescents to treat the problems that it keeps perpetuating. The suicide phenomenon cannot be attributed exclusively to the individual children. Funding must be allocated to services that children and their communities need, and research on Black boys should be carried out with their interests in mind. Such research should improve their lives and help liberate them from the mental ills resulting from systemic racism. The purpose of this research was to place Black boys and their mental well-being at the forefront and emphasize underprivileged communities, as research has not always centered on their interests. Much information about the causes of suicide in Black boys is still unknown, and research into their mental health is needed since that has not consistently been prioritized. The suicide rates in Black boys are a cause for concern about the future of African American communities, because Black boys will one day be Black men. The future of their community will depend on them, and this is best summarized by the African proverb “I am because we are, and because we are, I am.”

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