SO DAYI: PAN AFRICAN STUDIES STUDENT JOURNAL

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Pan African Psychological Wellbeing

Faculty Editor

Serie McDougal, III Ph.D.

For further information contact:

California State University, Los Angeles

Department of Pan African Studies

College of Ethnic Studies

King Hall C3095

5151 State University Drive

Los Angeles, CA 90032-8530

Phone (323) 343-2290 | Fax (323) 343 -5485

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Editorial

By Serie McDougal, III Ph.D.

On the front cover of this journal is a Dogon Kanaga mask, which represents the relationships between people and their ancestors. The long line of scholar-activists who contributed to the birth and growth of Pan African Studies have left it, but they gave the discipline an assignment: to live up to its identity. Pan African Studies is characterized by two key elements: its *purpose* and its unique *epistemology*, or *approach to knowledge*. The title of this new journal, "SO DAYI," speaks to this.

The Dogon people of Mali and Burkina Faso have a unique approach to knowing that includes several levels of knowledge and instruction. By level of importance, they are: *giri so*, *benne so*, *bolo so*, and *so dayi*. *Giri so*, or "the fore-word," is simplified knowledge that includes visible and modern material things. *Benne so*, or "the side-word," builds on *giri so* to add deeper explanation. *Bolo so*, or "the back-word," represents the fulfillment of *giri so* and *benne so* but does not reveal the deepest secrets of knowledge. *So dayi*, or "the clear-word," represents knowledge in all of its sacredness and ordered complexity. It is an African people's epistemological ideal: knowledge that is culturally congruent and serves collective advancement. The Dogon approach to knowledge reflects the philosophy of Pan African Studies. All the articles in this first volume were written by students enrolled in Pan African Studies classes in the spring



Serie McDougal, III is a professor of Pan African Studies at California State University Los Angeles

semester of 2020. Each article follows a similar methodological flow with a research question, a statement of purpose, a critical analysis, and a conclusion. The articles address needs, concerns, or challenges in the Black community and seek to produce the knowledge and understanding necessary to face them and resolve them.

In this volume, Bunmi Orunesajo, Destinee Stewart, & Jazmin Ennis explore one of the most important issues faced by Black students in U.S. higher education: the availability and accessibility of culturally relevant mental health services. Jade Sutton interrogates and explains the often-discussed but little-understood topic of Black father involvement in family life. Diana Bonilla examines the roles that parental involvement, racial socialization, and racial identity play in African American academic achievement levels and how achievement levels can be improved. Akeylah Lomax explains the many ways that Black people are uniquely affected, wounded, and fueled by parental mortality. Finally, Donovan Saddler describes the implementation of culturally relevant and effective forms of discipline and restoration for Black students.

The articles in this volume share the common theme of psychological wellbeing and examine how it can be nurtured and how it can be damaged. Anti-Black, oppressive, and culturally chauvinistic approaches to studying the lives of Black people can create a fog of conceptual confusion. The articles in this volume, however, take a Pan African Studies approach to produce relevant knowledge. Scholarship of this type has the potential to transform the consciousness of generations of learners, who will go on to use their agency to bring about a more just society, sweep away the fog of conceptual confusion, and bring us closer to the Dogon ideal of "the clear-word,"—*so dayi*.

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Introduction

By Nana Lawson Bush V Ph.D.

Without question, this inaugural issue of *So Dayi: Pan African Studies Student Journal* marks an important new beginning for the second oldest department of Black Studies in the nation. *So Dayi* will provide our students with a uniquely prestigious opportunity to develop erudite thinking and writing that will give them a tactical advantage in their pursuits of graduate degrees and various other aspirations as there are a paucity of situations for undergraduate students to publish their work. Yet, while the aforementioned academic benefits for our students are remarkably significant, especially considering that African undergraduate students have even fewer opportunities to publish their work than the general student population, this new journal must be placed in a larger context and on a particular continuum.

In my estimation, *So Dayi* represents the two following interrelated concepts: a) the continuation of the production and usage of divine words and b) the practice of writing as a means of resistance and resiliency. Our students are divine beings who innately have the capacity to produce divine words. Africans of Nile Valley civilizations called our divine writing *Mdw Ntr* which means the *word of the divine*. Our ancient ancestors use writing as an expression of their



Nana Lawson Bush, V, Ph.D. is Chair of Pan African Studies at California State University, Los Angeles and the former Director of the University California Irvine and Cal State Los Angeles Joint-Doctoral Program in Urban Educational Leadership.

identity as a divinity and to underscore and articulate who they were, that is, to *Know Thyself* as god. *So Dayi* provides the space for the continuation of the writing of *Mdw Ntr* with the purpose of knowing oneself and will serve as evidence of the cultural continuity of Africans from past to present.

In the tradition of David *Walker's Appeal,* penned in 1829 calling for enslaved Africans to revolt, there is a robust and dynamic history of Africans in the Americas using the written practice as a means of resistance and a demonstration of resiliency. Likewise, *So Dayi* is expected to uphold, and perhaps, expand this tradition. Yet, beyond the commonly espoused understanding of resistance and resiliency that positions these notions as a response to white inferiority[1], I see *So Dayi* as an opportunity to connect to an emerging perspective. We now see resistance and resiliency as an attempt to recover and reconnect to oneself rather than just as a means of coping or pushing back against a system of white inferiority. To connect the two concepts, writing as a form of resistance and resiliency is the way in which African people use divine words to strive to reconnect or to *Know Thyself*.

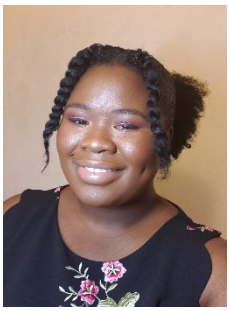
Welcome to *So Dayi: Pan African Studies Student Journal* at Cal State LA.

[1] I no longer use the term white supremacy as it implicitly reinforces the false notion of the superiority of whites.

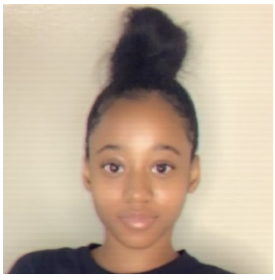
Mental Health Barriers and Black Students

By Bunmi Orunesajo, Destinee Stewart, & Jazmin Ennis

Many factors influence students' searches for help with their mental health. In general, students have a hard time admitting when they are having difficulties and need help. Difficulty reaching out for help is one barrier, and lack of access to the support they need can be another. Educational pressure (getting good grades, attending classes, and keeping up with peers) and parental pressure (especially for first-generation college students) are some of the difficulties students face daily. In a study conducted in 2007, researchers found that 37%–84% of students who screened positive for depression or anxiety had not received any services for these problems (Eisenberg, 2007). The researchers also found that lack of perceived need, lack of awareness of services, lack of insurance coverage, skepticism about treatment effectiveness, and low socioeconomic status contributed to students not making use of mental health services (MHS) (Eisenberg, 2007).



Ayomikun Orunesajo is a Public Health major with a minor in Pan-African Studies. Her career interest is in the area of public health.



Destinee Steward is a Social Work major with a minor in Pan African Studies. Her career interests are in the areas of child and family services and mental health.



Jazmin Ennis is a Social Work major. Her career interests are in child protective services and case management.

Black students are affected by many social disparities just due to their racial background. The social and historical struggles that they face influences how they take care of themselves and interact with MHS. In this paper we try to answer the question, "What barriers influence Black students' access to mental health services?" We identify and discuss three of the most significant barriers Black students face will be identified and discussed in this paper, and we analyze the four problems Black students have historically faced in higher education in relation to mental health barriers. Finally, we identify some ways Black students have found to be resilient in the face of mental health problems.

Mental Health

Mental illness is one of the top burdens of disease not just in the United States, but worldwide. More than one billion people were affected by mental illnesses in 2016, which is 7%–19% of the total global burden of disease (Rehm, 2019). Understanding the reasons that non-Black students are reluctant to use MHS is important, but understanding why Black students underuse these services is critical. Awareness of the barriers to MHS Black students face would allow for changes in how services are offered and promoted in Black communities.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is not merely the absence of illness but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Individuals must care for their mental health because it affects their overall health. For Black students, mental health can be overlooked, and many are unaware of what mental illness is even though they experience it or know someone who does. The barriers to accessing MHS exacerbate health disparities, and studying the barriers Black students face to MHS could help society adjust MHS to be more culturally sensitive, appropriate, dynamic, or individualized.

Barriers to Mental Health

Race and ethnicity play a role in whether individuals seek MHS. Social attitudes have been shown to affect the pursuit of mental health (Chamberlain, 2000). People's race and ethnicity greatly affect their social attitudes and perceptions, the way they view and navigate the world, and this in turn affects whether they seek MHS and the results of their interactions with MHS. Other factors that affect MHS usage include cultural mistrust, differences in attitudes and knowledge, and differences in perspectives on seeking care.

Cultural mistrust. Bias on the part of healthcare practitioners toward African Americans has led to distrust within the African American community and has translated into their MHS usage. Historical patterns of abuse and exploitation of Black bodies and minds for scientific purposes have also contributed to this–events like the Tuskegee syphilis study, in which Black men were purposefully infected with syphilis to study the disease. Participants in that study received none of the readily available treatments and were unaware that they were even infected. Experiments were also conducted on African American patients at the Hospital for the Negro Insane (Crownsville State Hospital). These included insulin shock therapy, in which patients' blood glucose levels were dramatically reduced by injection with large doses of insulin (sometimes causing them to fall into a coma). They were then injected with glucose or salt solution to increase the levels back to normal. Lobotomy (removal of portions of the brain), hydrotherapy, and pneumoencephalography were also performed on patients. Hydrotherapy is a procedure in which patients are repeatedly given hot baths followed by cold baths. Pneumoencephalography causes the fluid that surrounds the brain to drain out through holes drilled in the skull (Elshabazz-Palmer, 2017), which was done to test the hypothesis that it would allow for better X-rays of the brain.

These are just a few examples of how the most vulnerable members of an already vulnerable population are exploited for scientific research, which creates distrust and skepticism in both the healthcare system and MHS.

Differences in attitudes and knowledge. African Americans are less likely to reach out for mental health care, and they show an unwillingness to use MHS. Culture has been suggested as a contributing factor in African Americans' attitudes toward and knowledge of MHS (Savage, 2006). The attitudes surrounding mental health and MHS in the Black community influence students from those communities. The importance of mental health is not always discussed and promoted in the Black community. Black children often grow up with the message that one should work hard and push past pain and difficulty, but with very few messages about how to take a break and deal with pain or trauma. This can create a stigma around mental illness and reduce African Americans' willingness to seek MHS (Savage, 2006).

Differences in perspective on seeking care. African Americans have been shown to have different perceptions and beliefs about mental health and illness. In African American communities, mental health is often overlooked as unimportant. Taking care of one's mental health is often viewed as unnecessary. Black students are less likely to have positive views about MHS and therefore less likely to use it due to the messages about mental health or illness that they are exposed to in their communities.

Relation to the Four Fundamental Challenges of Black Students

Moralized Contraption and Standardization of Exclusion

College years are a time to find one's identity. But Black students attending Black colleges and universities are supposed to act in a certain way. In society, they play this role to receive freedom

and get a good education. There is a model that demonstrates stress due to the interaction factors of race and social class can help create coping skills and resources (Conner, 2018). Black students at non-Black colleges and universities have low numbers. Society believes that Black people do not want to be successful, and more African American students are in the criminal justice system than in schools or academic settings. A handful of Black students attend diverse colleges and universities. At non-Black colleges and universities, Black students go through stress due to their race or to generational discrimination, poverty, and depression (Bennett & Miller, 2006; Hammack, 2003; Seaton et al., 2008; Conner, 2018).

The Normalized Mask of Whiteness and Ladder Altruism

Whiteness is the privilege of being White or having a lighter skin color. In society, the nature of whiteness crosses borders of race and ethnicity. Race and ethnicity play a massive role in whiteness. Exposure to whiteness at colleges and universities has taken a toll on Black students due to their having Black skin and wearing a white mask. “Racial salience” is a term that refers to the self-concept of the individual regarding his or her race and skin color (Mushonga & Henneberger, 2020). The mask of whiteness and the moralized contraption have something in common: controlling students and making them act a certain way to get by in college. “Racial ideology” refers to the way Black students respond while attending non-Black colleges or universities (Mushonga & Henneberger, 2020). The mask of whiteness has continued to grow on the basis of how society portrays ethnically underrepresented groups. Black campus activists have voiced concerns about Black students being removed academically, politically, and capitally from non-Black colleges and universities. They do not know if those are the right colleges for them and are unsure if they want to finish at those colleges or transfer. Black students experience more stress in classes due to being the only Black person in the classroom. Stress among racially

underrepresented groups is a known stressor that Black students face at non-Black colleges and universities (McClain et al., 2016).

Black Students' Resilience, Self-Determination, and Agency Through Struggles

Pursuing higher education has proven difficult, yet many Black students maintain the push to obtain degrees. Dealing with things like poverty and institutionalized racism is very common, and campuses that were made to cater to White people can easily become discouraging. While the odds are often against Black students, they have self-determination that gives them the strength to continue and overcome obstacles. Black high achievers in Hwang et al.'s study "noted that their academic choices and behaviors were motivated by the positive career, social, and societal outcomes that awaited them if they were academically successful. There is also some indication that Black students call upon their racial background as a source of motivation" (Griffin, 2016, p. 387).

Many Black students find the resilience to finish school by remembering how hard their ancestors fought so that they would have a fair chance to move up in life. Financial gain and betterment in society stay on many Black student's minds, though they also keep their communities in mind. Supporting their community while away from it can be difficult, as they are expected to give back and not let higher education change their beliefs and values. This pressure can often be overwhelming, yet it goes by unacknowledged by many.

How Black Students Overcome Mental Health Barriers

The best way Black students overcome mental health barriers is by seeking professional help to cope while attending a non-historically Black college. There are some coping strategies students use to keep from being depressed and overstressed. An understanding of the mental health

barriers Black students face can be promoted in the coping strategies they use (Conner, 2010). Another way to overcome these barriers is by connecting with students like oneself and by having support at non-Black colleges and universities. A support system can help Black students' mental health while they are attending college. In college, most Black students deal with a lot of mental health problems. Conner (2010) said that prayer and a relationship with God can help Black students' mental health and keep them sane while they are attending college (especially at a non-Black institution).

Conclusion

Many factors often get in the way of peace of mind for Black students. Whether because of instability in their communities of origin or feeling out of place on a college campus, many Black students feel they have no place where they truly belong. Experiencing racism firsthand and being taught to mellow down their Blackness and unique personalities can lead to traumatization. Being cast out by former peers from their neighborhoods can lead those who pursue higher education to feel they are "selling out." The pressure of being a first-generation student or an example of a family or community can lead to large amounts of stress. With all these factors, Black students still do not often seek therapy. Because of the assumption that it is not needed in Black communities, many Black students avoided it in past decades. In more recent years, however, the push for therapy for Black people has grown, but Black counselors and therapists are still few in number at many universities. This leaves many Black students still feeling that they have no one who will truly relate to what they are going through.

Black students have proven to be just as strong as their ancestors. Advocating for Black people on and off college campuses requires great dedication, especially while pursuing a degree.

Along with the hope of obtaining a degree, many Black students plan to continue giving back to the communities that helped them become who they are. Mental health barriers are still present for Black students, due to their often being overlooked in society, especially in institutions that were made to exclude them. With constant advocacy and pushing to ensure good mental health for Black students, progress can be expected, however, even if it is not offered by institutions without demands being set forward.

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An Analysis of Parental Involvement of Black Fathers

By Jade Sutton

The significance of Black fathers being actively involved in the lives of their children is very critical to the upbringing of their children because it can yield positive childhood development. Unfortunately, the social factors that interfere with Black fathers' ability to be involved with their children can hold them back from achieving this. Parental noninvolvement can have negative effects on children socially, economically, and psychologically. The problem needing to be addressed is looking at why social outlets, such as media platforms and academic discourse, lack positive narratives about Black fathers being present and active with their children. My research will provide clarity and a deeper understanding of the various social factors that either enable or inhibit Black men to be active, present, and involved with their children.

It is critical to recognize the historical facts that have shaped the Black family and kept Black people oppressed through generations, creating vicious cycles. Under American slavery, fathers were often separated from their families due to trading or death. In the years following the abolition of slavery, laws were created to segregate Blacks and Whites, which kept Black individuals poor and impoverished, unable to get jobs, and generally unable to progress in society.



Jade Sutton is a Sociology major and a Pan African Studies minor. Her career interest is in clinical social work.

Institutions such as the education system, the criminal justice system, economic and financial systems, and social systems such as intimate community relationships, interacted—and interact today—to create obstacles for Black men to thrive. I've analyzed six peer-reviewed articles and organized them by the category of the social factors discussed and how they relate to the prevalence of Black fathers being uninvolved with their children.

First, I analyzed the marital status of Black fathers and compared the levels of parental involvement of those who were married and those who were not. Next, I broke down the different factors working against fathers who cohabitate with their children's mothers and those who do not. The following are the primary explanations for why residing and non-residing fathers may or may not be involved. These factors include: having a criminal record, living in a low-income neighborhood, having child-support debt, and having mental health problems such as depression or chronic stressors.

A few terms that must first be understood are "parental involvement", "stressors", and "child support". Parental involvement is defined here as consistent presence with one's child, through social interaction, financial support, and positive upbringing behavior. Stressors in this context are social strains from the environment that negatively impact their mental health. Child support refers to court-ordered payments, which are inescapable unless the father is incarcerated or dead. In the case of incarceration, the father simply accumulates debt until it can be paid in full.

Parental Involvement by Married and Unmarried Black Fathers

For those whose fathers are involved in their lives, the quality of the relationship can vary depending on whether the father is married to the mother. Marriage in the Black community could

be the subject of an entirely separate article, but in short it is very rare to see. Unfortunately, this reality is harsh on the psyches of the children. Children raised by married Black parents are likely to have better outcomes than children raised by unmarried Black parents. Once it was accepted as a social norm to only have to live with one's partner and not marry them, this became wildly popular in the Black community. It has weakened the idea of absolutely having to be married before having children. The experiences that children with unmarried parents go through may be substandard to those who grow up with married parents.

Perry, Harmon, and Leeper (2012) analyzed the differences in outcomes between married and unmarried cohabiting fathers. Based on the results, fathers who were unmarried but cohabitating with their partners were involved more than fathers who were married to the mothers of their children. A wide range of outside factors, such as stress, work, and age, led to those results. The fathers who were not married tend to overcompensate with involvement in their children's lives. The fathers who were married tend to take their own presence for granted, which resulted in them being almost not present at all. The researchers also analyzed the effects of parental stress on fathers' levels of involvement. Highly stressed fathers, married or not, had lower levels of involvement.

All of this has both negative and positive effects on children. Kids raised in married households may lack substantial involvement from their fathers, while still receiving some involvement. Children raised in the household of cohabitating unmarried parents may experience more father involvement. Marriage is a critical determinant of the active involvement of a father in a child's life. Black fathers married to the mothers of their children both before and after birth, tend to have higher rates of parental involvement than those who remain unwed. A study conducted by Bellamy, Thullen, and Hans (2015) focused their research on the level of parental involvement

among unmarried fathers who were present at the birth of their children. As early as when the mother is pregnant, a direct link to long term involvement can be found among fathers who are involved with the pregnancy as well as show up to the birth. Cohabitation was also found to be a factor in high levels of involvement. The determinant found to be the most important, however, was the direct relationship between the mother and father. Those with positive healthy relationships, with plans to marry, were the most involved. External forces that can act against a Black father's involvement were also considered, such as the availability of resources, employment status, education, and, as mentioned, the quality of their relationship to the mother. Although being present at birth indicated increased involvement, this quickly diminished as the child aged. This may be due to the external forces aforementioned.

Both articles reached the conclusion that fathers who are married or engaged to their children's mothers in addition to living with her have the highest parental involvement. Unmarried fathers tend to have unfavorable relationships with the mothers, which can be due to other social factors and yields less involvement with children.

Involvement of Resident and Non-Resident Black Fathers

This section includes an analysis of the varying social factors that act against Black fathers who either reside or do not reside in the same household as their children. Fathers who do reside with their children may be physically present yet uninvolved. Fathers who do not reside with their children are not always entirely involved yet still find ways to be physically present for some time of the child's life, even if for a short period. The following are the factors involved.

The prevalence in which we find Black communities being located in low-income neighborhoods is quite alarming, yet it is a factor that affects parental involvement. Fathers in

low-income neighborhoods can have varying levels of involvement with their children, especially if they do not reside in the same households. In these contexts, it is common for the fathers and mothers to not be married, which can lead to a lack of involvement when they are also not cohabiting. But non-married yet cohabitating fathers are very involved. In a study of the predictors of this involvement, Coates and Phares (2014) found the numbers to be higher than expected. These men do not see their children daily but still make efforts to see the children monthly at the least. Being in low-income neighborhoods comes with lifestyle choices that may land the fathers in positions to be taken away from their children such as incarceration. As mentioned, positive involvement is less likely when a father is locked away. Social factors such as institutionalized racism and police practices in low-income neighborhoods can lead to non-involvement, and these are highly critical to understand because they are factors acting against Black men.

Father involvement has been shown to have more positive than negative results, so it is interesting to look at cases in which fathers are systematically removed from their children's lives. Black men in America are policed heavily and incarcerated at tremendously high rates. This removes them from their households and their children's lives. It does not necessarily rule them out of involvement forever. McLeoda and Tirmazib (2017)studied parental involvement among Black fathers with criminal records. "Incarceration, especially among Black fathers, has been associated with family dissolution and reduced financial well-being," (McLeoda and Tirmazib, 2017, p. 376).

Using this assessment as a basis for the analysis that is to follow, we can understand that removing a male from a household also potentially means removing financial security from the children's lives. That is one negative result of being a Black father with a criminal history. When Black men have unfortunate interactions with the criminal justice system, it brings many stressors

to their lives. A stressor found to be most prevalent for them could be limited job options. And those jobs which are available typically have lower wages, which prompts them to pursue working extra hours, resulting in less time and energy for their children. Financial insecurity may also lead to non-involvement because of the inability to provide care for their children.

Another article analyzed rates of involvement by fathers who were paying child support and provided interesting results regarding the factors in Black fathers' involvement. Low-income fathers who are burdened by the legally mandated financial drain of child support are often presented many social and economic challenges that restrict their presence in their children's lives. This particular source of non-involvement relies heavily on the father's background and relationship with the mother. The data collected by Turner and Waller (2017) are preceded with the note that "many nonresident fathers have low levels of involvement," (Turner and Waller, 2017, p. 24). Making a low-income father pay child support means ultimately placing him in debt. Acquiring debt can lead to mental insecurity regarding finances, self-esteem, and self-motivation. Studies have indicated that fathers with poor mental health, psychological distress, and depression have lower levels of involvement which causes them to be less present in their children's lives. Fathers' relationships with the mothers also indicate their levels of involvement. Non-resident fathers most often have children who reside with the mothers full time; and if the mother's relationship with the father is inadequate it can significantly reduce the father's involvement. A lack of positive interactions between mother and father creates tension and can drive a parent to remove themselves from the situation; most often, that parent is the father. Knowing this, it can help to understand that the mothers of children with non-resident fathers who pay child support often facilitate and control the involvement these fathers have in their children's lives.

In support of some claims regarding the negative psychological states of fathers made by

Turner and Wallace, research by Baker (2013) focus on the limitations that stress and depression can place on fathers' involvement. "Depression," in these studies, refers to feelings of constant fatigue, ranging from overwhelming to subtle, but consistently involving sadness and withdrawal from emotions. Fathers dealing with depressive moods who are also involved with their children often engage in negative parenting, such as physical abuse. This may also cause emotional abuse due to the lack of emotional clarity the father has himself. Stress surrounding a father's involvement in the Black family creates a diminished satisfaction of family life due to the intense role of fathering and this results in disproportionate interaction with their children. Baker provided a wide range of sociodemographic variables that can also affect levels of involvement; these include income level, employment status, number of children, age of the father, number of mothers to the father's children, education level, the father's relationship status with his own father, and marital status (Baker, 2013). One factor she failed to mention was the location of the father. Living situations, including who he resides with and where, are also important to consider.

Conclusion

After analyzing various peer-reviewed studies, I conclude that Black fathers who do not reside with their children face social constraints that negatively affect their involvement. The lowest rates of involvement for Black men who are fathers tend to be among those who are unmarried, live in low-income neighborhoods, have a history of criminal activity, pay child support arrears, and are dealing with stress that can lead to depression.

Analysis of these findings suggest that residing in a low-income neighborhood lands fathers in social groups that do not value marriage, which promotes out-of-wedlock childbearing, which in turn can keep the father in a financial position to afford only low-income neighborhoods. This may lead to criminal behavior that can possibly result in his being unable to find sufficient

employment to pay child support. This result may be accumulated debt, which ultimately leads him to depression and chronic stress. These factors are not the final and sole factors that predict levels of involvement, but they are the most researched and discussed. However, more research is needed to explore how to create systems that help these men out of this lifestyle. Scholars of Black studies can use these findings to summarize and analyze what needs to be addressed directly to improve the current situation of Black fathers. This research can also be used to create positive narratives that actually have validity when reporting high rates of Black father involvement.

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Racial Socialization, Parental Involvement, and Racial Identity as Factors in High Academic Achievement by African American Students

By Diana Bonilla

A great deal of attention has been placed on academic performance and achievement among African American students in the United States. In American society, there is a common misconception that African American students have lower academic achievement in general than other racial groups. The achievement gap between African American and European American students has been said to arise early in their educational paths (Friend et al., 2011). Media attention and research have focused primarily on factors impeding African American students from high achievements in school. Although a great deal of research has been conducted on this topic, the focus has been on African American students in relation to other racial and ethnic groups, and African American students tend to have lower academic achievement and ability than White Americans. There have also been prominent academic disparities between African American students and other racial groups (Friend et al., 2011). But overall, the study of African American adolescent's academic achievements and outcomes has primarily provided comparisons between African American adolescents and those of other racial groups, such as European Americans and Asian Americans (Neblett et al., 2006).



Diana Bonilla is a Sociology major with a minor in Rehabilitation Services. Her career interests are in geriatric care management.

Although many studies have demonstrated that African American students tend to score low on standardized testing, little attention has been paid to the factors that predict positive academic outcomes among African American students (Neblett et al., 2006). Few studies have focused on the variation in academic achievement among African Americans because they have consistently compared them as a group to other groups. This is a problem because it creates the misconception that all African American students have low academic performance. There are many variables that can affect the academic achievements among African American students. This study addresses the question, "What strongest factors in improving academic outcomes among African American students?" Particular attention is paid to factors that lead to high academic achievement.

Not all African American students receive the same racial socialization messages or have similar racial identities, but these may be factors that lead to positive academic outcomes. Every individual is different, and groups should not be generalized as inferior in the education system. This study is meant to provide more information on factors that have a positive influence on African American students' academics. It will be significant for raising awareness of these factors and the variability among them. This topic is important to the lives of African American students because misconceptions and generalizations about their racial category as a whole may affect their educational and career paths. Research into this topic is necessary because the focus on the achievement gap between African Americans and White Americans often leads to researchers overlooking the fact that many African American students excel academically (Neblett et al., 2006). This topic is also significant for African American students of all ages because in the present system, a person's education level determines whether they will reach top-tier positions and

significantly affects their upward mobility and access to higher socioeconomic status (Friend et al., 2011).

This research may lead to early interventions that improve academic achievement and raise awareness of the fact that not all African American students perform poorly in academics. The field of Black studies can benefit from this report due to its emphasis on improved academic achievement among African Americans and on differentiation among them. This research is also significant for people of African descent because their children may be affected by stereotypes related to their intellectual capabilities.

In my analysis, I address the various factors that contribute to the academic success of African Americans and the benefits that racial socialization, parental involvement, and African American identity can have for their academic performance. School environment, school involvement, racial socialization, parental involvement, and racial identity have the greatest impacts.

Factors in Academic Success

Several factors are known to contribute to the academic success of African Americans. This is significant, given the focus on failure among these students. Studies have predominantly focused on at-risk African American students and emphasized the failures of those students. Stewart (2006), however, focused on the factors that contribute to their academic success. Stewart analyzed an ecological model that includes characteristics of individuals and their family environment that contribute to academic achievement. Stewart examined previous research and factors such as parental involvement, individual motivation, and the school environment, and adopted a theoretical model focused on factors that may contribute to academic success at three points in time: “Time 1” involves caregiver education, household education resources, family

income, caregiver school involvement, and 8th-grade achievement. Time 2 involves school environment, student motivation, and extracurricular involvement. Time 3 involves 12th-grade achievement. He then provided a figure documenting his hypotheses as to what factors contribute to which outcomes. For example, he proposed that caregiver education in Time 1 predicts students' perception of the school environment, motivation, and extracurricular involvement in Time 2. Stewart also used the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 for data collection. The three times he examined were 8th, 10th, and 12th grade. He path analysis to evaluate the theoretical hypotheses and then estimated the model using analysis of moment structures (AMOS). The most significant results he found were that household educational resources have a significant and direct effect on academic achievement. Many previous studies had shown that educational resources have a positive impact on students' grades and test scores (Stewart, 2006). Caregiver school involvement and caregiver education, however, also turned out to have indirect effects on 12th-grade achievement, which contrasted with previous research. Stewart remained certain however, on the basis of previous findings, that caregivers' involvement in their children's education improved the children's achievements in school.

It was also found that school environment was a predicator of academic achievement. When students feel that an instructor genuinely cares for them, praises them for their effort, and provides high-quality instruction, they are more likely to reach positive academic outcomes (Stewart, 2006). This suggests that despite differences such as gender, socioeconomic status, and giftedness, students' school environment is a significant predicator of their achievement. It was found, too that students' motivation and extracurricular involvement had direct effects on tehir 12th-grade results, which indicates that students who are heavily involved in school are more likely to succeed academically (Stewart, 2006).

This study showed the importance of examining variables that positively influence academic achievement among African American students. Studies should pay more attention to factors that improve students' academic achievement than on comparative literature, which consistently places African American lower than White Americans in performance. Such studies might help provide a balance among the factors that impede African Americans students' success and those that boost it.

Racial Socialization

Racial socialization is a culturally specific practice in which African American parents instruct their children about the attitudes, perceptions, values, and behaviors appropriate for their ethnic group (Friend et al., 2011). Neblett et al. (2006) defined racial socialization as "the transmission of parents' world views about race and ethnicity to children by way of subtle, overt, deliberate, and unintended mechanisms" (p. 202). Racial socialization includes teaching children awareness and skills they will need to manage challenges that arise due to their racial group. The awareness and skills that children internalize help them achieve positive outcomes despite the barriers they may face in the education system.

Racial socialization has been correlated with positive academic outcomes among African Americans. Negative effects of macrosystem-level factors on African American students' achievement have been prominent in several studies (Neblett et al., 2006). Neblett et al. found that the achievement gap that is emphasized in most studies has concealed the diversity in academic outcomes among African Americans. This neglect leads people to believe that all African American students are deficient in academic performance. But that is not the case, and Nesbitt et al. examined this variability, focusing on the limitations of current research and examining race-related risk factors and various protective factors that may predict academic outcomes for African

American adolescents.

Few studies have examined individual variation among these students. The worldviews that parents impose on their children have previously been seen as a protective factor, moderating the impact of stressful experiences (Neblett et al., 2006). Racial socialization thus benefits African American children and helps them overcome discrimination, bias, and adversity they face due to their racial group. Neblett et al. found that parental racial socialization was also related to academic curiosity, persistence, and performance (via students' self-reported GPA). Neblett et al. conducted their study with 548 self-identified African American students (225 males and 323 females) from seventh to tenth grade over three academic school years. Parental consent was required. Participants were sorted into groups of five to ten and completed written questionnaires that asked about racial discrimination, experiences with racial socialization, academic attitudes, and academic performance. To analyze the results Neblett et al. used the Child Socialization Scale, which includes subscales of racial pride, self-development, racial barrier, egalitarianism, behavior, self-worth, and negative messages. They measured racial discrimination experiences using the Perceived Discrimination Scale. For academic curiosity, they used the Wellborn 29-item scale of behavioral engagement.

They concluded that the significance of parental racial socialization made it an imperative compensatory factor in the achievement of African American adolescents (Neblett et al., 2006). The authors analyzed self-worth as one of the racial socialization messages given to African American adolescents by their parents. They found that these messages were associated with higher academic curiosity and persistence. The study also found that socialization behaviors certainly and reliably predicted all three academic outcomes used.

The researchers also examined racial socialization and its relation to experiences of

discrimination among African American adolescents and found that racial socialization did not directly lessen the negative impact of discrimination experiences on academic outcomes. Nonetheless, Neblett et al. (2006) emphasized the possibility that parental socialization messages and behaviors in relation to race could still be deemed protective factors for other academic outcomes, such as academic values and academic beliefs. Neblett et al.'s (2006) study demonstrated a correlation between racial socialization and positive academic outcomes.

The impact of racial socialization on academic achievement has been an area of focus not only regarding adolescents; in more recent years, it has extended to research on African American college students. Previous research has demonstrated that racial socialization is consistently correlated with positive academic outcomes among adolescents (Banerjee et al., 2017). A study by Banerjee et al. focused primarily on academic achievement among African Americans at the college level. Considerable research has been conducted on academic performance among adolescents and the factors that influence it. This study provided new information about a subgroup of African American students that had been less prevalent in research.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the roles played by racial-ethnic socialization and academic engagement in the academic achievement of African American young adults (Banerjee et al., 2017). The study examined African American students at a predominantly White college. Two hundred and twenty-six participants provided survey data and were asked to complete a racial socialization questionnaire. To assess academic engagement, the researchers used the National Survey of Student Engagement. The results indicated that African American college students who had received messages about their culture and race reported higher levels of engagement in the college setting, and this engagement translated into academic achievement. According to this study, African American students who received more cultural socialization in

their upbringing may have simultaneously received messages about the significance of education (Banerjee et al., 2017).

This study revealed that socialization messages do have a positive impact on African American students and lead to greater engagement in academics, which results in better college grades. Some studies have found little evidence of racial socialization influencing academic achievement (Friend et al., 2011), but a great many have supported a positive relation between the two.

Although Banerjee et al.'s (2017) results support the idea that racial socialization messages have a positive impact on African American students, previous studies have indicated that socialization messages related to barriers result in lower academic performance. Banerjee et al. discussed a study by Marshall (1995) which found that African American students who received barrier-related messages reported lower reading achievement scores. However, this means only that a particular type of socialization message was correlated with negative academic outcomes. This study was also done about two decades before Banerjee et al.'s research, and many other studies of the impact of racial socialization have shown a positive relationship to academic outcomes. For instance, Sanders (1997) found that African American youths who received discrimination-related messages were the highest achievers (Banerjee et al., 2017). Bowman and Howard (1985) also found that racial barrier messages were related to higher school grades (Neblett et al., 2006).

A study by Friend et al. (2011) examined the correlation between parental racial socialization and children's academic achievement. Using a cultural ecological perspective, Friend et al. investigated the culturally specific parenting practices that could help African American children succeed in the education system. Successful academic careers are essential for future

economic, social, and emotional well-being (Friend et al., 2011). Because the educational system seems to be oppressive toward African American children, the racial socialization they receive from their families helps them succeed academically and improve their overall well-being.

In terms of racial socialization, Friend et al. (2011) focused on two aspects, preparation for bias and pride development. The participants in the study were 132 African American 5th-grade children and their mothers. Participants had to complete face-to-face interviews and questionnaires, with the mothers and children completing them separately.

The researchers used the Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status, the Parents' Experience of Racial Socialization Scale, and grade point averages to measure the results. They found that parental racial socialization was ultimately not a significant predictor of academic achievement, but that gender did moderate the association between preparation for bias and academic achievement. They also found that preparation for bias was positively correlated with GPA for boys (Friend et al., 2011). Although this study did not find a correlation between racial socialization and academic achievement among African American students, I believe that it was necessary research because it focused on other possible mediators, such as socio-economic status and gender. The study did not prove that racial socialization has a positive impact on academic achievement, but it opened the door for further research to be conducted.

Limitations of this study included its small sample size and potential third variables, such as ethnic identity, child-teacher relationships, and parent involvement, which might be more closely related to children's academic competencies and suggest that further research is needed on the role of racial socialization in academic achievement. This study also focused mainly on racial socialization messages given by mothers rather than by both parents. Finally, Friend et al. (2011) also noted that they did not incorporate information on the type and frequency of racial

socialization messages received, or on how they were received or internalized by the children. I believe that racial socialization can have a positive impact on the education of African American students due to the many researchers conducting studies on this topic. Although this study did not confirm the hypothesis, I believe that it is essential to do further research on the topic.

Parental Involvement

The link between parental involvement and academic outcomes has received great attention. Parental involvement has been viewed as significant to children's education. Jeynes (2016) provided a meta-analysis focused on the influence of parental involvement on academic achievement and behavior among African American students. He reported that there had been no previous meta-analyses focused on this topic and hoped to contribute to our knowledge of which aspects of parental involvement are beneficial to African American students in their education. Jeynes addressed four research questions: (1) Is parental involvement with African American students associated with better academic and behavioral outcomes? (2) Are there any differences in the effects of parental involvement by the student's grade level? (3) Are school-based parental involvement programs helpful for African American students? (4) What forms of parental involvement help students the most? The meta-analysis statistically combined multiple studies to determine the effects of parental involvement on children from pre-kindergarten through the first year of college. Jeynes took an analytical approach, addressing each research question to determine whether the relationships mentioned in the four hypotheses were statistically significant (Jeynes, 2016).

The article is divided into sections on data collection methods, statistical methods, study quality, effect size, and definitions of variables. The data collection method was coding and rater reliability. On research questions 1 and 2, the results indicated that parental involvement is related

to positive outcomes among African American youths (Jeynes, 2016); the difference was greater with academic outcomes than with behavioral outcomes. The effects of parental involvement at elementary and middle school levels were very similar.

On research question 3, the study showed that school-based parental involvement programs have a positive relationship with academic achievement among African American youths (Jeynes, 2016). On research question 4, regarding specific components of parental involvement, the study showed that parental expectations, style, and participation were correlated with higher academic achievement (Jeynes, 2016). Overall, multiple research sources on parental involvement and academic achievement among African American youths show a correlation, and that this involvement leads to better academic outcomes.

African Identity

African identity provides African Americans with a sense of being that originates from their culture and upbringing. In the education system, African Americans have been scoring lower than White Americans. Although this is the focus of most studies, it is important to consider attributes that contribute to success in academics for African Americans. According to Robinson and Biran (2006), before African American students can excel in one environment, they need to have a sense of who they are, or a cultural sense of being. Having an identity provides them with a sense of purpose, and with resources to help them on their journey. A cultural identity ties a person to their roots and is important for maintaining motivation to succeed. This sense of identity connects them to their history and ancestors.

The variables Robinson and Biran (2006) examined include academic achievement, investment in academics, African identity, and commitment to the Black community. The purpose of the study was to examine these variables as motivators of academic effort. According to the

literature reviewed by Robinson and Biran (2006), high levels of African self-consciousness provided benefits that motivated individuals to strive for academic excellence. A study was done of 96 African Americans: 40 high school graduates and 56 college graduates and current students. The participants received an information form and four questionnaires: the Academic Efforts Questionnaire (AEQ), the Community Values Questionnaire (CVQ), and the African Self-Consciousness Scale (ASCS), and a background questionnaire on basic information about their personal lives (e.g., family income, health status, self-reported GPA).

One significant findings of this study was that a sense of collective identity was positively correlated with academic achievement among African American students. The study also found that relationships may exist between African self-consciousness and GPA score, that a direct relationship exists between level of self-consciousness and level of responsibility for the welfare of the African American community, and that feeling a sense of responsibility for one's own community was related to effort made to perform well in education (Robinson & Biran, 2006). According to the researchers, these results reflect the fact that an individual's African identity is linked to their academic performance. Their study also reflected a factor in the lives of African American students that positively affects their academic achievement.

Due to negative stereotypes, low expectations, and a mismatch between African American culture and the dominant culture, African American students are believed to be incapable of high academic achievement. Perkins (1991) theorized that academic achievement may not be a realistic goal for African American students because they do not become full participants in the school system (Robinson & Biran, 2006). Research by Guterman (1972) and Spence (1983) has also demonstrated that African American students are not overachievers in academics (Robinson & Biran, 2006). This suggests that African American students are incapable of high academic

achievement and that it is not reasonable for them to try to do well in academics. Due to their culture not coinciding with the dominant culture, these students are believed to not have the capacity to succeed academically.

Despite African Americans being portrayed as unable to succeed academically, studies have demonstrated that every student has the ability to succeed. There are African American students who excel due to factors of racial pride and sense of purpose that are related to their culture (Robinson & Biran 2006). Robinson and Biran also discussed Kambon's (1992) idea that African Americans who are aware of their identity strive for African affirmation, empowerment, and preservation, and have self-determination. It has been proven that African American identity can positively influence academic outcomes and that African American students have the ability to achieve despite living in a social system that works against them. African American students can thrive in this environment, but they need a sense of who they are and where they come from. Cultural identity helps guide students toward the right path.

Conclusion

These studies illustrated factors that could improve African Americans' academic achievements. Previous research has focused on factors that hurt African American students, and many studies focus on African American students' academic achievements in comparison to those of White Americans. This paper introduced factors that promote academic achievement among African American students. Academic environment, school involvement, racial socialization, parental involvement, and racial identity all contribute to better academic outcomes among these students.

A wide range of grade levels were assessed in this research. These data provide a reasonable explanation as well, as these factors deal with culture, family, and intrinsic motivation,

which lead to academic success in other groups . From the research studies discussed above, one can conclude that school environment, school involvement, racial socialization, parental involvement, and racial identity can have great positive impacts on African American students. Each factor plays a significant role in these students' academic outcomes, and this is significant due to society's focus on their inability to perform well in school.

This study can raise awareness of factors in academic success for these students. Although not every study conducted on each of these factors has proven it to improve academic outcomes, a great deal of research has found such support. Some studies have found uncertainty in these factors' correlations with positive academic outcomes, but further research must be conducted in this area to provide greater understanding.

Future studies could focus on factors in academic success and discover other influences on academic outcomes. Researchers should incorporate discussions of the variation in African American students academic success as well. Future studies should identify things parents, teachers, and administrators can do to improve African American students academic outcomes.
The findings of this paper are significant for improving the well-being of Black families because, it can make them aware of factors that can improve academic outcomes so they can ensure these factors are present in their own children's educations. Racial socialization, parental involvement, and racial identity come from parents' cooperation and involvement in their children's lives and educations. This work will also raise awareness that African American students can be academically successful and should not all be considered low performers on the basis of misconceptions. The knowledge provided by this research can be used in Pan-African studies because it involves education, one of the most important aspects of a person's life. Failure to acknowledge these findings could result in continued stereotypes and misconceptions about

African Americans and could hurt African Americans students, because they might not receive the attention they need. Educational outcomes lead to upward mobility and help people achieve their occupational goals.

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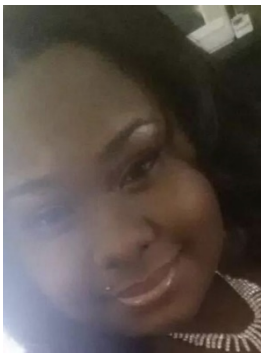
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The Effect of Parents' Death on Young African Americans

By Akeylah Lomax

In developed countries, approximately 3% to 4% of children lose a parent before reaching 18 years of age (Bergman et al., 2017). The death of a parent is associated with a higher susceptibility to poor mental health among young adults, both from a short- and a long-term perspective. Numerous studies have shown an increased risk of mental health problems, physical illness, traumatic grief, and perceived lack of control over their lives (Boyd-Franklin, 2013; Umberson & Chen, 1994; Van & Meleis, 2010). However, the effects of parental death on young African Americans are of great interest due to unique aspects of their culture and experiences. A chief element of that experience is the elevated mortality rate in the African American community. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the effects of parents' deaths on young African Americans. This may reveal gaps that have not been addressed by other studies and enhance Pan-African literature. The research question is "What are the negative and positive outcomes of parents' deaths on young adult African Americans?" Several topics are addressed, including the mortality rate of African American parents, family ties, African American beliefs about death, negative outcomes (mental problems, traumatic grief, physical illness), positive outcomes (mental stability, growth in



Akeylah Lomax is a Sociology major. Her career interest is in the area of social work.

responsibility), and how health professionals can use cultural and family information while treating young African Americans. The death of parents results in mental and physical problems in some African Americans while increasing mental stability in others. The paper concludes with a summary of the findings and questions for future research.

Parental Death and Family Ties

It is well established that young African Americans experience tremendous pain after the loss of a parents in comparison to White Americans. The difference is rooted in higher death rates and strong family connections among African Americans. In the African American community, families are tightly organized into social units, which by historical account originated from the institution of slavery (Jones, 2012). These ties are well explained by the attachment theory, which describes family connections as lasting and deep emotional attachments that connect individuals across space and time. Although this connection does not have to be reciprocal, African Americans exhibit such mutual connections even after death. As a result, African American parents remain a vital resource to their children from early adulthood into middle and late adulthood, regardless of how vertical family structures have become.

Despite the happiness that comes from strong family ties, young African Americans are likely to experience disruption due to death. Since the 1980s, young African Americans have been three times as likely as others to experience a mother's death and twice as likely to experience a father's death (Umberson et al., 2017). Rather than moving on with their lives, they are also more likely to preserve ties with the dead and remain bothered by the loss. This is a sign of the resilience of family ties among African Americans. Due to this resilience, young African Americans, especially men, avoid talking about parental loss in both personal and professional contexts. The silence is associated with cultural values that distinguish strong young men from weak ones.

However, such values lead to more intense grief and severe negative outcomes in the long term.

Parental Death and Cultural Traits

Due to their strong family ties, African American youths may commit suicide or intentional get involved in accidents, hoping to reunite with their parents. However, the motivation to reunite with their parents is influenced not only by family connections but by cultural traits. Among African Americans, life is perceived as cyclical rather than linear. This belief originates from slavery, when masters prohibited slaves from participating in the funerals of their loved ones. As a result, African Americans started perceiving death as a form of freedom rather than punishment or suffering (Parkes, 2015). After death, people live in a spirit world where they receive bodies that have supernatural powers. Therefore, becoming a spirit or a supernatural being is an enviable objective of every African American. However, African Americans believe that the status of a spirit can be attained only if an individual lives a fulfilling life or has his life cut short by an accident (Parkes, 2015). Therefore, African American youths may willingly subject themselves to harm, hoping to die and be reunited with their parents.

Negative Outcomes

a. Mental problems

The few scholars who have evaluated the effect of parent loss and mental problems in young African Americans have established that parental death leads to mental problems. Young African Americans view the loss of a parent as the worst event in their lives, a loss like no other and one for which they are unprepared. Afterward, mental problems arise when these youths express feelings of vulnerability, shock, guilt, and self-blame. Even though other races experience these feelings too, they are especially prevalent in young African Americans, as the loss continues to resonate through their lives. According to Boyd-Franklin (2013), short-term consequences may

disappear after two or three years. This is the soonest the bereaved can resume normal activities; it is much longer than the thirteen months required by Caucasian young adults to overcome mental problems related to parental loss.

The escalation of mental problems in young African Americans after parental loss is also influenced by the realities of their daily lives. In lower-income families, the mental states of young adults may be severely affected by thoughts about burial expenses and living arrangements. The mental states of young adults who work may also be affected by poor working conditions, loss of employment, and insufficient time to mourn the deceased. Furthermore, research projects, college assignments, and class attendance may worsen the psychological states of African American students. According to Umberson and Chen (1994), the psychological states of African American students are more vulnerable after the deaths of parents because they are required to act normally yet are susceptible to racial profiling.

Failure to effectively deal with early mental problems can result in long-term problems that seriously affect the functioning of the brain. In young African Americans, the total collapse of the brain occurs when various negative factors combine just after the death of a parent. According to Van and Meleis (2010), total mental breakdown in African American young women mostly occurs when the remaining parent fails to recover from the loss of his or her partner. When the surviving parent is overwhelmed by grief, it significantly amplifies the grief experienced by the young adult. If not addressed quickly, this mental state may push the youth to commit suicide or run away from home.

In addition, severe mental problems suffered by young African Americans may be explained by strong family ties in their communities. These ties provide some protection and identity, especially to young adults. However, when these young adults witness cruel events that

lead to their parents' death, they experience traumatic grief and eventually mental breakdown. Traumatic grief is experienced by all individuals, irrespective of race or nationality. However, the strong ties in African American families evoke the desire to reunite with the dead rather than accept the loss. As a result, young African Americans are likely to have intrusive thoughts of their deceased parents and to see them everywhere they look. If the parent's death is related to historical events such as slavery and racial profiling, the mental problems may manifest in the form of stuttering and eventually the loss of reasoning capacity (Lobar et al., 2014).

b. Physical illness

When mourning the loss of parents, young African Americans tend to experience numerous physical illnesses, ranging from fatigue and muscle aches to headaches, vision problems, and chest pain. Physical illnesses are prevalent because young African Americans tend to interpret physical symptoms as threatening immediately after experiencing parental loss. In other young adults, grief over parental loss activates and amplifies physical pain related to historical events such as racial profiling and slavery. Umberson and Chen (1994) found that coping mechanisms such as alcohol intake were also prevalent among young African Americans, even though this increased their physical pain. For instance, a father's death leads to escalated alcohol intake for three years, which increases physical pain due to fights and bruises. The phenomenon is worse for when the father or mother was violent and drank heavily.

Although it is widely acknowledged that parental loss results in physical illness, Rafuls (1998) found no relationship between grief over parent death and general physical illness. According to Rafuls' research, African American cultural values treat physical illnesses such as headache and muscle ache as a sign of weakness, not an indicator of general health. What other studies consider illness is thus just a physical symptom and nothing serious. Rafuls' describes how

young African Americans cope with physical illness. Some may seek medical help with the physical illness, which implies that it is influenced by parental death. But others may ignore their medical needs, which suggests it is related to cultural values and traditions.

Positive Outcomes

a. Increased mental stability

In general, African Americans occupy a rare niche in the modern family setting and history of America. The legacy of racial profiling and slavery continues to affect their economic and social position, and the mental health of young African Americans can be appreciated only within this historical context. Since the 1800s, strong family connections and resilience have enabled many African Americans to maintain good mental health, which is helpful for overcoming many adversities, including the death of parents. In a study of survivors of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Mancini et al. (2017) found that a group of African Americans who lost their parents had high levels of depression before the attack but substantially less afterward. This increased mentality stability was attributed to improved relationships with the surviving parent and close connections overall with other family members.

However, Bonanno (2007) refuted the claim that the mental states of young African Americans can improve after a parents' death. Bonanno argued that any reasonable person, regardless of historical or family considerations, experiences mental problems after losing a parents. As a result, studies arguing that young African Americans are resilient ignore social factors; this implies that young African Americans experience mental problems but behave normally because of the extensive support they receive from family members and friends. This doesn't mean that they don't experience mental problems such as depression and anxiety.

b. Increased responsibility

The death a parent significantly increases the responsibilities of young people, regardless of race or nationality. In African American families, however, this phenomenon is especially prevalent because young adults are more likely to live with a single mother than in other communities (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 2015). As a result, when the mother dies, the young adult assumes the responsibility of caring for his or her siblings. Although this increased responsibility may be difficult immediately after the death of the parent, such young adults end up being responsible citizens.

How health professionals can use African American culture in the treatment of mental illness in young African Americans

According to the U.S. Department of Human and Health Services (n.d), African Americans are 10% more likely to suffer from serious mental disorders. The high rate of mental illness among African Americans is a result of disparities in education, healthcare access, and economic status. When parental death is added to the mix, rates of mental illness become extremely high. Despite this, some African Americans report no signs of mental illness because they perceive it as a sign of weaknesses or punishment from God. Others are reluctant to talk about mental illness because of stigma and shame connected to such conditions. In some cases, African Americans turn to spiritual beliefs and family support rather than medical help.

Therefore, psychologists must comprehend the culture, values, beliefs, and norms of African Americans before attending to their mental health needs. In health care, this is referred to as "cultural competence" and encompasses understanding and recognition of the role culture plays in the treatment of mental disorders. Culturally adapted, evidence-based interventions are more effective than non-adapted ones, and minority patients prefer to be treated by psychologists of their own ethnicity and culture (Huang & Zane, 2016). Therefore, young African Americans suffering

from mental illness should be treated by Black psychologists who recognize the importance of family ties, spiritual beliefs, and the desire to reconnect with the deceased.

Conclusion

The death of a parent can subject young African Americans to serious health problems, such as mental and physical illness. However, some research has indicated that parental loss may increase mental stability. Although the grief of young African Americans is similar to that of other young adults, factors such as discrimination, slavery, economic shortcomings, family structures, and cultural values and traditions also affect the experience of grief in this group.

This research offers significant implications for Pan-African studies. It shows that the parent-child relationship is significant for evaluating the well-being of African American young adults. The study also shows that mental disorders in young African Americans should be handled by culturally competent psychologists. However, the mixed impact of parental loss on the well-being of young adults of African American ancestry requires an in-depth examination of parent-child relationships and how the death of parents affects the child's physical and mental condition. As a result, I encourage other researchers to evaluate the influence of the death of parents on African American boys and girls, and the impact of children's death on African American parents.

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Transforming School Discipline for the Sake of Black Students

By Donovan Saddler

Restorative justice is a necessary alternative form of discipline in schools for Black students. Much of Black identity in society is associated with crime. Black people have been the victims of racist stigmas about criminality since their arrival in colonial America (Mancini, 2015). Black children are not spared from being attached to criminality, either. This results in Black students being disciplined in school more often and more harshly. This practice needs to be transformed in a way that has a more positive affect on students. Restorative justice practices are a better alternative to the current school discipline system.

Everyone has implicit biases (McNutt, 2016), and school administrators' biases are often directed at Black students. Due to the disproportionate number of Black students disciplined in schools (Bach, 2019), transforming school discipline should be a priority. My research examines what restorative justice in schools can look like, and how it can serve Black students. Restorative justices can give Black students the soft skills they need to help improve their mental health and steer them away from the traumatic experiences that schools' current punitive practices cause.



Donovan Saddler is a masters student in Interdisciplinary Studies. His career interest is in the area of education.

Restorative Justice Practices

Schools have used punitive practices to discipline students throughout history (Payne, 2010). Recently, though a new approach to discipline has developed, which is called restorative justice. Restorative justice is aimed restoring community, addressing the harm that has occurred, and readmitting violators into the community (Lustick, 2017).

In this research, I examine the relationship between students and restorative justice educators and how this relationship is influenced by restorative justice practices. Because these are healthier practices for school discipline, they let Black students improve their mental health. I find that restorative justice practices greatly improve relationships between students and educators, despite moments of conflict; dealing with conflict actually nourishes the relationship. New types of relationships are needed for Black students to have a healthier experience in school (Mansfield, 2018).

Restorative justice allows students and educators to see each other through a more humanistic lens, in terms of roles and social hierarchy. In the urban schools and demographic groups my study participants worked with, students were motivated less by grades than by their relationship with the instructor (Pavelka, 2013). They wanted to do better in classes where they had positive relationships with the teacher; they didn't want to disappoint the teacher by doing poorly. When no relationship was established, however, the students were less motivated. Many students don't connect the grades they receive in class with their personal success.

When conflicts arise, discussions occur with members of the community. The teacher is included, in order to be a member of the community and not someone outside it. This contributes to relationship building between students and teachers, which in turn increases the students' motivation to do well in class. When teachers function as community members, students can to

relate to and humanize them more, and teachers are not seen just as people who are paid to be there (Lustick, 2017).

I address several main points about restorative justice throughout; it involves a consistent idea of what restoration is, and has common goals and intentions. The general principles include addressing the harm done, not the rules broken; promoting healthy, caring communication; and nurturing an environment that fosters relationships. Restorative justice prioritizes students' social intelligence over social control. In this way, the offenders, the offended, and other members of the school community can learn conflict-resolution skills, deepen their understanding of nuance, and promote personal responsibility and accountability for one's actions. In punitive practices, the offender and offended are often not involved (Barnes, 2018). Others simply decide what rule was violated and what the punishment will be, and even the offended person often has no influence over what happens. Hence, restorative justice has two goals: greatly increase the involvement of the offender and the offended; and focus on restoration, not punishment.

Changing the disciplinary system is a way to let Black students have healthier interactions with school. To make a significant change to schools for Black students, we must change how discipline affects Black students. Waiting for teachers to change their own biases and the way they view Black children through the lens of Black criminality will be a long process, and other changes must be made to help Black students. If we anticipate the racist practices of instructors, we can transform the tools they use to discipline Black students.

Research has shown that race plays a large role in discipline. Black students are on the receiving end of a disproportionate amount of discipline, whether restorative or punitive (Barnes, 2018). Restorative practices do reduce school suspension rates, but only for White students. Black students who attend urban restorative schools are not as likely to be suspended, but they are more

likely to receive restorative discipline than their White counterparts (Lustick, 2017). Even though Black students are regularly overrepresented in expulsions and suspensions, there are no data indicating that Black students behave worse than White students. However, Black students are subject to harsher discipline practices (Payne, 2015). Instead of trying to change the way administrators see Black students so that they aren't disciplined as much, we can transform the discipline they are exposed to.

Functions and Institution

Institutions have the purpose of serving those in power. Schools are such an institution and thus a means to serve those in power. Schools in general are used to socialize people and control their behavior (Vaandering, 2014). Black students in education institutions are therefore set up to function in society as they have been intended to since the formation of this country: as a labor force. The prison system force currently functions as a cheap source of labor. Because schools work to maintain the status quo by creating working and managing classes, they also function to funnel Black students into the prison system, where they will be used for cheap labor.

The phrase "school-to-prison pipeline" implies that schools are the reason students go to prison, instead of its being merely a correlation. There are many variables in the way the pipeline works. There is a sort of domino effect. A great deal of punitive discipline, such as detention, involves exclusion from other students and from learning. This exclusion leads to reduced engagement in school and reduced educational opportunities—for instance, less access to information in the classroom or field trips. This leads students to view school as a place they don't want to be, and that increases truancy and risky behavior. The data link school discipline to involvement with the juvenile justice system in a causal manner rather than a correlational manner in some cases (Mansfield, 2018).

People's motivations for implementing restorative justice are not all the same. Some want to close the racial equity gap in school discipline. Some want to change how discipline happens, and others want to change who discipline is aimed at (Vaandering, 2014).

Researchers have shown repeatedly that punitive measures don't work. The evidence has been accumulating for hundreds of years, since the beginning of this country. From 1974 to 2000, the number of students suspended from school increased from 1.7 million to 3.1 million. (Gonzalez, 2012). Punitive discipline has been used in the U.S. judicial system since the country's founding, and crime continues to increase. The number of prisoners also continues to increase (Barnes, 2018). The country is not safer, nor are the schools.

Other Perspectives

Many researchers in the field share perspectives. Most of the research is new, and not much debate has been had. There is still little information on the relationships between administrators and students. One element of restorative justice is the intent to develop relationships and create a stronger school community. But I have found no research on whether these relationships change or not.

People's cognitive biases can get in the way of their wanting to support restorative justice practices. Belief in Black criminality can lead people to believe that discipline practices aren't worth changing because Black students are inherently criminal, or that it's not worth changing systems that disproportionately affect them.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings in this project were unsurprising. I learned that acknowledging students and giving them ownership in the discipline process can lead to more desirable behavior and improved people skills. The skills learned by participants in restorative justice can be used in all areas of

their lives, from home to work and school. This means that we can equip Black students with soft tools that will help them with their mental health.

A lot of work needs to be done before conflicts arise, through relationship building. Educators must build relationships with students before problems occur for restorative justice practices to be the most effective. With any technique, students won't participate productively if they don't trust the adults involved.

The execution of restorative justice looks different in different places, and unfortunately it is not all of the same quality. Some places claim to do restorative justice but lack important components of it. When this happens, the desired outcome tends not to be reached, and people may conclude that restorative justice doesn't work. Restorative justice should include community building, restorative dialogues, and conflict resolution.

Pan-African studies is known as the intellectual arm of the revolution. It is home to courses in which Black students can learn about history and the present through a pan-African–centered curriculum. They also can learn how to transform the destiny of Black people across the diaspora. If education houses Pan-African Studies as the intellectual arm of the revolution, then restorative justice practices can be the emotional arm of the revolution within education.

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