Chapter 5

Promoting Social and Academic Wellness Among African American Adolescent Males:
Culturally Responsive Approaches

Carole Rene' Collins Ayanlaja
Eastern Illinois University, USA

Catherine Lenna Polydore
Eastern Illinois University, USA

Danielle Anita Beamon
Eastern Illinois University, USA

ABSTRACT

African American adolescent males are at increasing risk for mental health challenges. Statistics indicate that depression and anxiety are of primary concern. Historical and social conditions, including institutionalized racism, produce stressors for Black males and propel negative public attitudes. The responses of healthcare professionals and school personnel to the mental health needs of Black adolescent males are generalized with limited focus on this specific population and effective interventions. The authors identify and describe predominant mental health conditions in Black male adolescents and describe the current landscape of emotional health impacting this population. They identify determinant factors that lead to poor mental health. Activating a social-constructivist approach, the authors recommend culturally responsive approaches to address the problem and improve outcomes, along with future directions.

INTRODUCTION

Positive mental health has become a greater focus in recent decades because of its strengths and capacities which enable people to thrive (Lopez, Pedrotti, & Snyder, 2018). Yet, some of the most vulnerable of our population are experiencing mental health challenges. One group of particular interest to the authors is Black/African American males. The professional challenge this chapter addresses is due to a set of conditions this group is experiencing. While the researchers, who identify as Black/African American, recognize that Black males are not a monolithic group, they also recognize that as a whole, young Black men are not fully experiencing the benefits of positive mental health. Due to several socio-cultural factors, they are disproportionately affected by multiple correlates, which may impact mental health (Grant, et al., 2005; U.S Department of Health and Human services, 2001; National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities [NIMHD], n.d.).

Mental illness exists in America society today. It impacts all segments of society, including Black male adolescents. However, the ways in which they experience mental health issues cannot be unilaterally defined. For African American males, unhealthy behaviors are not the catalyst for depression and anxiety. Though there may be a perception of prevalence of substance abuse among Black males, the research indicates that non-Hispanic Blacks have less substance abuse issues than Whites (Merikangas et al., 2010). Instead, for Black males, unhealthy behaviors are often used to cope with and decrease mental health challenges (Jackson, Knight, & Rafferty, 2010; Mezuk et al., 2010). Yet, when they adopt these damaging habits as protective mechanisms, these habits become the catalyst to more unhealthy outcomes that compound mental disease and disorders such as anxiety and depression. Over time, African American males experience more intense depressive related outcomes than other groups, including higher chronicity and disability (Ward & Mengesha, 2013).

There is an intersectionality among race, gender, and social context which exists that molds the African American male experience. Multiple identities are intertwined, interdependent, and mutually integral (Howard & Reynolds, 2013). The multiple identity of being a Black male in American society shapes stress in their lives (Griffith, Ellis, & Allen, 2013). This pervasive social stress puts Black males at risk for enduring health challenges (Mezuk et al., 2013). Over the past 125 years, there have been approximately 120 studies on depression that included African American males in the sample pool, but only 19 of those studies focused on how these subjects experienced the disease (Ward & Mengesha, 2013). Nonetheless, because Black people and the male gender are factors negatively associated with the use of mental health services (Broman, 2012), African American males are a critical population who often suffer in silence.

Given the reality of the social impacts on Black males throughout their lives and the ravishes of mental and physical illness, a focus on how these factors interplay is necessary. Most specifically, a lens on adolescent African American males is needed because of the significance on both development and social experience during the adolescent period. Black adolescents are influenced by three worlds: school, family, and peers in society. The influence each has is instrumental, but the impact on adolescents may be mutually supportive, ambivalent, or hostile (Phelan & Link, 1998).

The types of mental illness that most affect African American males and the impact of these illnesses must be situated in the probable causes from a sociological aspect. Further, the responses to their condition from schools is important because observational studies exist that find that positive mental health is correlated with academic achievement over time and concurrently (Adelman & Taylor, 2008; Keyes et al., 2012). Given the significance of school in the lives of all children and the way in which schools

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/promoting-social-and-academic-wellness-among-african-american-adolescent-males/255528

Related Content

Technology Capacity Building for Preservice Teachers through Methods Courses: Taking Science as an Example
George Zhouand Judy Xu (2011). *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design (pp. 50-62).*
www.irma-international.org/article/technology-capacity-building-preservice-teachers/55547

To Flip Or Not To Flip? That's Not The Question: Exploring Flipped Instruction in Technology Supported Language Learning Environments
Joy Egbert, David Hermanand Aichia Chang (2015). *Curriculum Design and Classroom Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1561-1571).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/to-flip-or-not-to-flip-thats-not-the-question/126772

Application of an Instructional Design Model for Industry Training: From Theory to Practice
Elizabeth Hanlis (2004). *Instructional Design in the Real World: A View from the Trenches (pp. 29-52).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/application-instructional-design-model-industry/23933

Challenging Traditional Programs for Providing International Educational Opportunities in Higher Education
Barbara B. Howardand Natalia Ilyashenko (2021). *Handbook of Research on Innovations in Non-Traditional Educational Practices (pp. 287-310).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/challenging-traditional-programs-for-providing-international-educational-opportunities-in-higher-education/266521

Expanding Learning Opportunities for Graduate Students with HyFlex Course Design
Mariam Mouse Matta Abdelmalakand Julia Lynn Parra (2016). *International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design (pp. 19-37).*
www.irma-international.org/article/expanding-learning-opportunities-for-graduate-students-with-hyflex-course-design/162681