

CENTER FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN RESEARCH & POLICY

BLACK IN AMERICA

A SCHOLARLY RESPONSE TO THE
CNN DOCUMENTARY



POLICY BRIEF SERIES

2010

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BLACK IN AMERICA:

A SCHOLARLY RESPONSE TO THE CNN DOCUMENTARY *POLICY BRIEF SERIES 2010*

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Omer Ari – College of Education, Georgia State University
Debbie Barrington – Department of Epidemiology, Columbia University
A. Kathleen Burlew – University of Cincinnati
Randi D. Burlew – Philliber Research Associates
Cedrick Dortch – Department of Psychology Georgia State University
Melanie L. Hayden, Ph. D. – Ohio University
Diane M. Howard, Ph.D. – Assistant Professor, Rush University
Joanne E. Howard, Ph.D. – Assistant Professor, Roosevelt University
David A. Huddleston – University of Cincinnati
Monika L. Hudson, DM – Assistant Professor, University of San Francisco
Candace S. Johnson – University of Cincinnati
Annice Kim – RTI International
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LaTrice Montgomery – University of Cincinnati
Bridgette J. Peteet – University of Cincinnati
Stephanie N. Smith – University of Cincinnati
Edith Williams – Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics, University of South Carolina
Rihana S. Williams, Ph.D. – Department of Psychology Georgia State University
Sacoby Wilson – Institute for Families in Society, University of South Carolina

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Foreword

By Dr. Boyce Watkins

When CNN decided to put Black America under the microscope, there was some degree of skepticism, especially in the African American community. The skepticism was well-deserved, as media has earned a reputation for only seeing African Americans in a low dimensional light, one that tends to focus on extravagant and shocking anecdotes over more accurate and honest reflections. The reality of being Black in America differs dramatically from glamorous media portrayals, in that African Americans are just as good, bad, strong, weak, intelligent and ignorant as the rest of America. In other words, we are diverse.

Media is controlled by White America, giving them monopolistic access to the way images are presented to the world. All the while, the Black Intelligencia is left to sit idly to the side, with a voice that is muted in critical social commentary. In order for us to fully embrace Black integration into the American family, it is important that White American media begin to accept us into the brotherhood and sisterhood of our great country's communications power structure. Our African American president should certainly be celebrated, but his personal success is not always correlated with the challenges experienced by rank and file African Americans.

I've done a great deal of work with CNN, and I've found myself both impressed and depressed, depending on what day my emotions are being surveyed. I am impressed when I see a diverse set of news anchors, and Black men such as Roland Martin and Tony Harris making appearances that go beyond the celebrity cameo. But I then find myself saddened when I see the latest African American gang rape or criminal trial being repeatedly featured on various news segments, presenting Black men as animals and habitual criminals beyond redemption.

African Americans are correct to be skeptical of media portrayals that show our community as being lazy, criminal and unethical. Unfortunately, we have an image problem throughout the world, largely due to the fact that a Black man is far more interesting in an orange jumpsuit than he might be in a three piece business suit. It is common to see him in a basketball uniform rather than a military uniform. It is time to move the Black male out of his social cubby hole and understand him a little bit better.

The Black woman's role in media has become as unflattering as that of the male, as one is hard pressed to find any Black female doing regular commentary on any national television network. According to my most recent survey of major media outlets, there is no major news show on any large network hosted by an African American female. African Americans are, in some instances, relegated to the task of providing entertainment, as the nation becomes fixated on one heinous crime after another or on the more ridiculous exploits of African American athletes.

The risk for CNN is that a special such as "Black in America," can simply become an exploitative voyeuristic venture into problems that bring real pain into the African American community. Such a special can appear to be entertainment for the rest of America, similar to a show on the Nature Channel analyzing the plight of the polar bear. As the series gives a tour of various problems within the Black community, Whites find themselves peering into our reality not with an empathetic eye, but with an eye of disdain and disappointment. CNN can and should be better than that, reaching its full potential by using the analysis of critical issues as an opportunity to break socio-intellectual bread with the Black community. It should be an opportunity for all of us to understand that, as members of the American family, the Black community cannot be left to suffer, nor should it be evaluated entirely on its short-comings. Finally, it is critical that we understand that these solutions must come from all of us, not just the Jesse Jacksons and Al Sharptons of the world. In fact, solutions to "Black problems" should not

just come from the African American community. All Americans should be fully invested in the idea that the very same government which played a role in creating the hurdles in front of us should also play a part in helping us jump over those hurdles.

It is time for an image management exercise on our national television networks. Rather than seeing African Americans almost solely as athletes, criminals, and entertainers, we must also see them as scholars, lawyers, doctors, painters, and factory workers. We must search for the beauty in unconventional Black family structures and realize that being different is not the same as being inferior. We must look at the non-traditional work of Black public intellectuals and applaud their vision instead of simply labeling them as “unscholarly.” It is time for America to learn to appreciate and respect the full humanity of the African American community.

These articles from the Center for African American Research and Policy (CAARP) are reflective of the next step mentioned above. Black scholars should not be sitting on the sidelines writing articles for journals that are only read by a few experts in their chosen fields. They should be on the front lines, engaged in the cross-disciplinary, action and results-oriented scholarship that created the world in which we live. We must become Black Einsteins, building realities for the people we love, using our expertise to benefit all humanity. The brain power of the Black scholar cannot be wasted, for this waste will not only cost African American lives, it will represent a dramatic failure by a great nation.

I applaud this work by the CAARP and it is my dream that CNN and other major media outlets will take the time to include perspectives from African American scholars in national debates. When there is a Hurricane Katrina, Black scholars should be analyzing the social, health and economic impacts on the people of New Orleans. When there is another Henry Louis Gates controversy, Black attorneys should be helping to determine if such a case truly represents racial profiling. If there is a Black athlete being presented to the world as public enemy number

one, Black men should be among the plethora of Sports Sociologists standing up to give the point of view of Black male athletes.

In other words, America must become more courageous, more thoughtful, more compassionate and more productive when it comes to finding ways to fulfill the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King. If we do not change our approach, we will continue to live in a virtual tornado of artificial and redundant controversies which serve no productive purpose. America can rise to the occasion, and these scholars know it; that is why we should all read this document carefully.

**Dr. Boyce Watkins is the Founder of the Your Black World Coalition
and Resident Scholar for AOL Black Voices*

Introduction to Black in America:
The Intersection of Media Examination versus Scholarly Examination

Chance W. Lewis, Ph.D. – Deputy Director of CAARP
Endowed Chair and Associate Professor of Urban Education
Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture
College of Education
Texas A&M University

In July 2008, the Cable News Network (CNN) released a ground-breaking documentary specifically focused on the major complexities of being Black in the United States of America. As a result of this documentary, a series of discussions, town hall meetings, and a plethora of other forms of discussion took place around the world, mainly centered on what it meant to be Black in America. This documentary, *Black in America*, for the first-time exposed many positive and negative issues that take place in the Black community across the United States on a daily basis. In other words, CNN aired our “laundry” to an international audience. The impact of this ground-breaking documentary was far-reaching; therefore, immediately after the initial airing, many in the Black community wanted to know the next series of action steps.

At the time of this writing, CNN has prepared and aired a sequel series entitled *Black in America 2*, due to the overwhelming popularity and high television ratings of the original series. As in the original series, CNN covered broadly some general issues that have an impact on the Black community such as: (a) education; (b) health; (c) substance abuse; (d) social issues; (e) family dynamics; (f) substance abuse and (g) a plethora of other issues as well. Unfortunately, for the Black community, a few months after the initial airing of the original CNN *Black in America* series, the rhetoric concerning action steps to take in moving the Black community forward began to silence while many returned to life as normal with no action steps taken, no policy changes recommended or implemented, and no positive enhancement to the many Black communities that are screaming out to the United States of America for positive “change.”

Given this unfortunate situation, we at the Center for African American Research and Policy (CAARP) felt it was essential to begin the process of influencing policy for the improvement of the Black community by commissioning a special issue of our *Policy Brief Series* entitled “Black in America: A Scholarly Response to the CNN Documentary.” This brief has informative empirical studies and policy recommendations from Black scholars across the United States that have examined a variety of issues addressed in the original documentary by

CNN. However, what makes this special issue timely is that these scholars have paved the way for us to examine existing policies and restructure, if necessary, the policies that are currently in place that impede the progress of the Black community. Also, we learn from this *brief* what new policy directions should be addressed in the future to positively impact the Black community.

Overview of this Policy Brief

The Center for African American Research and Policy is pleased to introduce the work of these scholars in this special issue of our *Policy Brief Series*, “Black in America: A Scholarly Response to the CNN Documentary.” This brief contains seven articles that inform our understanding of the potential policy issues that were raised in the CNN documentary and the recommendations that need to occur in these matters to uplift the Black community. In the first article, we find the work of Monika Hudson, “Dirty Laundry: An Examination of Self-Limiting Behaviors within African American Communities.” Hudson examines the social, ethnic and relative deprivation theories that serve as a foundation for critical discussion on the self-limiting behaviors currently occurring within Black communities. Utilizing these theories, an asset mapping-based research effort is used to contextualize policy implications and recommendations for the Black community.

In the second article, “Woman to Woman: Unintended Pregnancy in America,” Diane Howard and Joanne Howard examine the impact of unintended pregnancies on the Black community. This article is thought-provoking and significant, because it also examines the role the Black Church should take in addressing this crisis in the Black community. It is highly likely that this article will fill a major void in the scholarly literature and provide policy recommendations that will hopefully improve this major issue.

In the third article, “Black in America: A Commentary on Media, Genetics and Public Health” Sacoby Wilson, Annice Kim, Debbie Barrington and Edith Williams assert that CNN did an inadequate job of educating the public, particularly the Black community, on proper

media and scientific standards, specifically in the area of cardiovascular disease. Utilizing the Slave Hypothesis as their foundational rationale, these authors assert that the CNN documentary relied on non-public health experts to explain the burden of cardiovascular disease. This article is sure to be thought-provoking and a much needed addition to the scholarly literature.

In the fourth article, “A Scholarly Response to Shades of Black,” La’Trice Montgomery and David Huddleston explore issues of colorism, commonly known as preferential treatment of individuals with lighter shades of Black skin, which is commonly a controversial issue in the Black community. The authors assert that the CNN documentary only briefly addressed the topic directly; however, they felt this particular issue needs more intense scholarly attention and policy recommendations. Further, the authors posit that this article is properly positioned to provide a scholarly response to an issue that was clearly based on anecdotal evidence in the CNN documentary. It is clear that this article will add to our understanding of the impact of skin color and its resulting ramifications in the Black community.

In the fifth article, “What Evidence-Based Interventions are Available to Reduce Drug Use Among African American Adolescents?,” A. Kathleen Burlew, Randi Burlew, Bridgette Peteet, Candace Johnson, and Stephanie Smith addressed the issue of substance abuse that was a major focus of the CNN documentary. This article contributes to the scholarly literature by identifying, summarizing, and critiquing the available evidence-based treatments for Black adolescents that have battled substance abuse. More specifically, these authors promote the use of culturally-tailored interventions that have shown evidence to work better for Black adolescents. This article has important policy implications as to the proper approaches for Black adolescents to be treated for substance abuse.

In the sixth article, “African American High School Students’ Reading Comprehension Performance as a Function of Academic Enrichment Program Exposure,” Rhiana Williams examine a critical issue in the field of education that was also highlighted in the CNN

documentary. More specifically, these authors address the issue of low reading performance among Black disadvantaged youth and how certain enrichment programs to increase college enrollment may improve reading scores. The findings of this study reveal that the Upward Bound program had a positive influence on Black youth that were part of this sample. This research adds to our understanding as to what could work on a larger scale of Black students.

In the final article, “Black Parents in America: Examining Parental Influence among Black First Generation and Non-First Generation Students Attending Highly Selective Institutions,” Melanie Hayden explores the role of parental influence. This study explores the forms of capital transmitted by Black parents to their children who attend 28 of the most elite institutions in the United States. More specifically, Hayden examines data from 737 Black students who participated in the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen to examine the human, cultural and social capital transmitted to students by their parents. In this informative study, Hayden reveals that there are differences in the behaviors of parents based on the generational status (non-first vs. first generation) and gender of the students.

In conclusion, the Center for African American Research and Policy is pleased to publish this special issue of our *Policy Brief Series* to address from a scholarly perspective the popular CNN documentary *Black in America*. It is our hope that this brief will lead to policy changes that will positively impact the Black community. Further, as we turn our attention to the second CNN documentary, *Black in America 2*, examining issues in the Black community, we strongly urge scholars from all academic areas to inform the Black community and the scholarly literature on issues that are pertinent to the improvement of the various conditions that continue to plaque our communities.

Dirty Laundry: An Examination Of Self-Limiting Behaviors Within
African American Communities

Monika L. Hudson, DM
Assistant Professor
School of Business and Management
University of San Francisco

Abstract

In July 2008, a CNN special focused on economic, gender, and education issues currently affecting African American communities. Youth achievement gaps were specifically examined during the education segments. Interviews and voiceovers indicated that some youth turned their grades around after changing schools, leaving the impression that lack of motivation, rather than ability, caused their initial difficulties. In this paper, social and ethnic identity (Berry, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and relative deprivation theories (Dion, 2001) form the backdrop for a discussion of “self-limiting” behaviors within African American communities. These theories provide a framework for understanding more about the context and motivations behind particular behaviors in an effort to broaden community conversations about appropriate next steps.

“By 2000, African Americans... still lagged overall in education attainment compared to white or Asian Americans, with 14 percent with 4 year and 5 percent with advanced degrees, though it was higher than for other minorities. U.S. Census surveys showed that by 1998, 89 percent of African Americans age 25 to 29 had completed high school, less than whites or Asians, but more than Hispanics. Many policy makers have proposed that this gap can and will be eliminated through progressive policies such as affirmative action, desegregation, and multiculturalism.”

Public Information Office, U.S. Census Bureau. *High School Completions at All-Time High, Census Bureau Reports*

In the July 2008 CNN special, several young African American men reported that they had been doing poorly in traditionally under-resourced urban high schools. However, when they were removed from these environments and placed in different education settings, these same youth were able to raise formerly failing grades, providing evidence that their previous lack of achievement was related more to motivation than ability (retrieved February 25, 2009 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN_AOVWirzo).

Social and ethnic identity (Berry, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and relative deprivation theories (Dion, 2001) provide a framework to better understand “self-limiting” behaviors: the conscious or unconscious acts of non-cooperation and/or lower work effort portrayed in the CNN series’ education segments. Organizational behavior research has validated that self-limiting

behaviors can lead to observed misalignments between an individual's goals and behavior outcomes (Metayer, 2003), potentially resulting in lower performance. This paper examines the context and motivations behind such behaviors and suggests using an asset mapping approach to help broaden community discussions about appropriate next steps.

CNN Documentary Topic Addressed

In CNN's series on African Americans, education was a major focus; the series was subsequently discussed at an August 2008 chapter meeting among members of the Bay Area National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA). The general opinion among members was that the CNN program focused on education "deficits" with the exception of noting the academic achievements of students attending the James Baldwin or Urban Prep Academy schools. NFBPA members argued that CNN could have taken an asset mapping versus deficit approach to this subject, empowering the African American community as opposed to simply criticizing it.

"Asset mapping" is traditionally defined as "the process of cataloging the resources of a community" (DeBlois & LaPointe, 2003, p. 1). The authors of this approach, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), indicate that community asset mapping should be used as:

"...a capacity-focused way of looking at devastated communities. This positive approach is proposed as a substitute for the traditional deficit focus on a community's needs and problems. Using problems to formulate human service interventions targets resources to service providers rather than residents, fragments efforts to provide solutions, places reliance on outside resources and outside experts, and leads to a maintenance and survival mentality rather than to community development (Kretzmann et al., 1993, p. 11).

This paper reviews the literature associated with self-limiting behavior and finishes with a discussion about how an asset mapping approach can allow for a deeper understanding about why such behaviors occur. The intent is to broaden the conversation and empower the African American community to consider how it can better support self-affirming, rather than "limiting" behaviors, particularly in relationship to education.

Background

Researchers have stated that, as a result of institutional changes, “individual self-management is becoming increasingly important for success” (Renn, Allen, Fedor, & Davis, 2005, p. 659). While there is a growing body of literature that expands the understanding of self-management success, the research has been relatively modest when it comes to self-management failure. One aspect of self-management failure that has received attention is “production deviance” - situations under which an individual determines that it is rational to withhold effort, particularly within organizations (Bennett & Naumann, 2004). Researchers of production deviance note that the various forms this withholding takes differ in regard to (a) the performance context of the withholding effort and (b) an individual’s motivations for withholding effort (Bennett & Naumann, 2004, p. 114).

While the aforementioned literature focuses on the context of and motivations for withholding efforts within majority white situations, there is limited research about how these issues work within ethnic minority contexts. Various ethnic minority group researchers (Phinney, 1996; Sellers & Shelton, 2003) have noted that the “growth of psychological information about ethnic groups can help fill the gaps that have resulted from the focus of mainstream research on largely white, middle class samples” (Phinney, 1996, p. 918). The argument is that the historical focus on white samples implicitly establishes a “standard” against which ethnic minority populations are judged, resulting in a “deficit” perspective, whether intended or not.

A study of production deviance within African American communities begins to counter this process by addressing the dearth of information about the ways that individuals behave within their own ethnic environments. Correspondingly, this paper proposes to enhance understanding by (a) contextually examining self-limiting behaviors within the African American community and (b) identifying motivational factors that influence these behaviors both negatively (the deficit perspective) and positively (the asset mapping perspective).

Self-limiting Behavior Contexts in African American Communities

In beginning this discussion, it is important to understand something about the ways that “social identity” is hypothesized to impact behavior. Social identity theory (SIT) proposes that an individual’s self-concept is comprised of uniquely held attributes as well as characteristics of groups to which an individual might belong (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As such, the “self” is constructed in a relational context including external environmental influences as culture, population demographics, physical environment, and race and internal processes such as methods of interpersonal communication, consumption of media, and routine daily interactions (Adams, 1998). Given a common history, African Americans share many social identity characteristics and, since common behaviors are part of a social identity, they may behave in similar ways as a result of this common ethnic context.

Researchers including Bourdieu (1990), Fanon (1963), Friere (1970), and Marcuse (1969) have built upon SIT and theorized that ethnic group members may “limit” their potential range of behaviors both in ethnic minority and majority white situations as a reaction to daily prejudice and discrimination. These theorists suggest that this self-limiting behavior can be viewed as an “overreaction” or form of “punishment” meted out for perceived prejudice and discrimination, even if these factors are not immediately present in a given situation.

This displacement of anger is in line with various self-coping mechanisms identified by social scientists, who note that ethnic group members exhibit a “resiliency” in the face of perceived prejudice and discrimination because they externalize discriminatory behaviors as “not applying to themselves personally but to their ethnic group generally” (Dion, 2001, p. 3; Steele, 1997, p. 617). Thus, their individual egos are not negatively impacted by contact with the majority white culture’s prejudices and they subsequently perform in majority white environments in a manner that conforms with standards established for that context.

One might naturally question whether this “resiliency” works the same way within the confines of the individual’s ethnic group compared with its expression in the majority white culture. For example, “acting out” with physical violence or intimidation within one’s ethnic group may more properly be understood as a form of expressing “internalized oppression” and/or reaction displacement. In 1963, Fanon provided a graphic description of the historical violence enacted by the colonialists against the native population in his anthropological discussion of the Algerian revolution. He concluded that this tendency to respond violently toward one’s fellows rather than against the oppressor is not an uncommon occurrence, specifically noting that:

While the settler or policeman has the right the livelong day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to define his personality vis-à-vis his brother... (Fanon, 1963, p. 54)

Fanon’s narrative clearly contrasts ethnic members’ actions in majority versus ethnic minority environments, supporting the notion that self-limiting behaviors must be viewed through a contextual lens.

Self-limiting Behavior Motivators in African American Communities

Perceptions about prejudice and discrimination, ongoing racism, and the notion of internalized oppression combine to affect the self-esteem and performance success or failure of ethnic group persons, particularly African Americans, in majority white situations. The individual or cumulative impacts of these specific life “stressors” on ethnic group persons may, in turn, affect how they behave in other arenas. Ethnic identity research provides support for the notion that African Americans’ personal experiences of discrimination, hardiness, perceptions about group stereotypes/stereotype awareness, dis-identification, and displacement underpin particular behaviors. This has important implications when applied to the educational activities of youth portrayed in the CNN series.

Personal Experiences of Discrimination

Various researchers (Akbar, 1989; Berry, 1993; Dion, 2001; Phinney, 1996; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Smith, 1991) have stated that past discrimination experiences encourage African American students to self-limit their educational behaviors. In particular, Smith (1991) notes that ethnic minorities differ in the degree and manner in which they internalize psychological accommodations to discrimination. Dion (2001) extends Smith's work by positing that deprivation theory both frames and predicts when, why and how individual members of ethnic groups, such as African Americans, will respond to the disadvantages presented by discrimination. This framework is defined along two dimensions: (a) the focus of comparison and (b) the stress caused by perceived discrimination. The two aspects of deprivation theory provide a broader context for considering how historical experiences of discrimination might translate into self-limiting behaviors in the educational settings shown in the CNN series.

Using the comparison model framework, one would argue that what are called "fraternalistic" relative deprivation issues are primary when African Americans are in majority white situations but are significantly reduced when they are in their own ethnic settings. This is because the external pressure associated with discrimination is removed in the latter context.

Under these circumstances, African Americans only need to respond to their "in-group's" requirements. Then, what are called "egoistic" relative deprivation issues, driven by group members' needs to compare themselves to each other, come to the fore. Dion (2001) indicates that egoistic relative deprivation often leads to competition with other group members because external pressures, such as discrimination, that would normally require in-group cooperation are removed. Egoistic relative deprivation theory provides an explanation for the CNN portrayed phenomenon of isolated educational achievement among African American youth: in such situations, it's "every person for himself" and individuals are supported in viewing grades from a competitive rather than collective vantage point (Dion, 2001; Smith, 1991).

Hardiness

Dion (2001) also suggests that something he calls “hardiness” can temper expressions of self-limiting behaviors in African American contexts. In his study of discrimination-stress among Chinese-Canadians in Toronto, Dion posited that a strong sense of personal control will buffer stress due to discrimination if it is accompanied by “hardiness” - other societal experiences, such as education and/or occupations that facilitate coping (Dion, 2001, p. 6). In line with this theory, African American youth attending the charter schools shown in the CNN special would be less likely to engage in self-limiting behaviors, since as a result of the particular activities offered, these individuals now possess a greater range of life experiences and coping skills than their peers in more traditional urban educational institutions.

Perceptions about Stereotypes

Steele (1997) has been extensively cited for his study of “stereotype threat,” which describes the phenomenon where negative perceptions about African Americans are known and members fear being reduced to that perception, particularly within white majority contexts. He points out that in such situations, the consequent emotional reaction of the African American individual can directly interfere with his/her performance or behavior. Steele (1997) notes that counterintuitive behaviors can arise as a result of stereotype threat as individuals use dis-identification with the stereotype as a means of achieving positive self-esteem.

Dis-identification

Various researchers (Dion, 2001; Fanon, 1963; Friere, 1970; Metayer, 2003; Phinney, 1996; Smith, 1991; and Steele, 1997) indicate that SIT is “behaviorized” through displays of dis-identification - “the reconceptualization of one’s notion of self and values and the removal of a domain as a basis for self-identity and/or critical self-evaluation” (Steele, 1997, p. 614) that enable an individual to maintain positive self-esteem under circumstances of perceived discrimination (Phinney, 1990; Smith, 1991; Steele, 1997). The notion of dis-identification is

further supported by Akbar (1989), Devine (1995), Federico (2001), and Krysan (2000), who compare the performance of ethnic populations in majority white versus ethnic group cultures.

Collectively, these researchers posit that stereotype threat and dis-identification explain why persons who are in situations that might be considered “less stressful” may still behave in ways that reinforce ethnic stereotypes. With the pressure of conforming to the majority culture’s expectations removed, African Americans may still express or “claim” stereotypical behaviors with each other, knowing that they will not be “judged” by the majority white culture. This freedom to claim stereotypical behaviors provides a rationale for some of the counter-optimal behaviors discussed in the CNN special including lower educational achievement.

Reaction Displacement

Fanon (1963), Femi and Rothberg (1991), and Metayer (2003) have argued that reaction displacement may motivate behaviors expressed as a result of an individual’s integration of self-identity, discrimination, and stereotype awareness. In his study of Haitian organizations, Metayer described Haitian employees who internalized their individual experiences of stigmatization, stereotyping and structural limitations by expressing non-cooperative behaviors towards one another. These same employees subsequently discussed these behaviors “in a disassociated manner as if they were completely unrelated to either their own or other employees’ conscious thoughts and actions” (Metayer, 2003, p. 6).

In a similar vein, Soaries (2002) notes that, in both antebellum and modern times, some African Americans transformed their experiences of prejudice and discrimination into disassociated helplessness. Thus, Soaries’s present-day African American day laborer respondents shift the burden of responsibility for their own welfare from themselves to those they perceive as being providers or authority figures (Soaries, 2002, p. 19). Similar passages can be found in historical African American narratives where slaves reminisce about how things were under particular slave owners; an example of which can be found in the statement “nobody

knows my birthday, 'cause all my white folks is gone'" (Mellon, 1988, p. 371). In each of these situations, perceptions and feelings are "displaced" and transformed into self-limiting "helplessness" and attitudes of "non-responsibility" and the individuals' associated reactive behaviors are similarly limited.

Friere (1970) offers a dialectical analysis regarding the motivation behind this counterintuitive behavior, noting that:

... during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend ... to adopt an attitude of 'adhesion' to the oppressor ... their perception of themselves is sufficiently impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression...that they identify with its opposite pole." (Friere, 1970, p. 30)

Fanon (1963) further extrapolates upon the ways that the displacement phenomenon is expressed within ethnic contexts, concluding that:

We clearly discern the well-known behavioral patterns of avoidance...collective auto-destruction in a very concrete form is one of the ways in which the native's muscular tension is set free. (p. 54)

Proposed Actions

The preceding literature review validates the notion that individual self-management success or failure may be contextualized by virtue of being an ethnic minority group member and experiences of discrimination, concerns about stereotypes, hardiness, dis-identification, and reaction displacement may motivate such individuals to engage in behaviors in ethnic minority situations that are very different from those they would engage in in majority white ones. The operative words here from an asset mapping perspective are "different from" as opposed to the "less than" perspective that appeared to underlie CNN's portrayal of educational achievement among African American youth.

Given performance statistics, it is tempting to point out that CNN merely portrayed the reality of educational life in the African American community. The "push-back" is that social identity and production deviance researchers, most of whom are White, have tended to limit their

studies to majority White communities and their resulting analyses presume a behavior standard against which ethnic populations are usually negatively compared. It can be argued that the CNN series was grounded in a similar perspective and its selection of two “exceptional” schools served to further reinforce this type of comparison.

This researcher would posit that production deviance and self-management failure/success analyses need to be extended to a range of ethnic group communities. This extension would not presume a “standard”; rather, the emphasis would be on ascertaining what self-management behavioral differences exist because of contrasts in context and motivation between white and ethnic minority populations. The intent would be to both further examine this phenomenon and develop tools that can assist in consciously identifying and supporting self-management success behaviors. The fact is, when self-limiting behaviors are exhibited, particularly in the education arena, the African American community has diminished capacity with which to meet common goals and objectives. One would argue that African Americans are clear that they have a vested interest in supporting behavioral success over failure.

Towards that end, this conceptual paper argues that an asset mapping-based research effort should form the basis of future identity-related behavioral studies. The idea would be to educate and support appropriate motivational practices within ethnic communities rather than what some have construed as the “victim-bashing” approach taken in the CNN program. In line with this concept, African American community-based resources including faith, social service and fraternal organizations must take on the responsibility of identifying, analyzing and developing youth education action plans that inspire and motivate from an African American perspective. President Obama recently noted, “If you want to change the world, the change has to happen with you first.” By taking on this project, the African American community has a chance to address these concerns in its own ways rather than relying upon well-meaning but externally generated solutions.

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Black Unintended Pregnancy in America: A Commentary

Diane M. Howard, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Health Systems Management
Rush University

Joanne E. Howard, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Public Administration
Roosevelt University

Abstract

In 1965, the out-of-wedlock birthrate and the number of families headed by single mothers, both about 24 percent, pointed to dissolution of the social fabric of the black community (Moynihan, 1965). Today, 69 percent of black babies are born out of wedlock, while 45 percent of black households with children are headed by women (Gates, 2007). The article incorporates a qualitative analysis with data from thirty-two women; 22 black women who had unintended pregnancies and 10 black, Latino, and Hawaiian college students who have not had an unintended pregnancy. Secondary data from the Alan Guttmacher Institute and the U.S. Census Bureau frame the discussion. Interviews with a Baptist minister on the role of the black church in reducing unintended pregnancies and a New Jersey social worker on her observations of unintended pregnancy in her client caseload augment the discussion in this commentary.

Introduction

The Negro Family: The Case for National Action (1965), written by Daniel Patrick Moynihan when he was Assistant Secretary of Labor in both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, described the disintegration of the African American family. The report was written as an internal memorandum providing support for President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and asserted that a disturbing proportion of African American families suffered from instability and breakdown, and that this condition resulted in a cycle of joblessness and poverty. The root of the problem was the psychological and social damage caused by slavery (Gewertz, 2007; Wilson, 2007). However, the discussion on many college campuses at the time, particularly the historically Black college, was to dismiss the report as racist.

In 1965, the out-of-wedlock birthrate and the number of families headed by single mothers, both about 24 percent, pointed to dissolution of the social fabric of the Black community (Akerlof & Yellen, 2009; Gates, 2007; Wilson, 2008/2009). Today, 69 percent of Black babies are born out of wedlock, while 45 percent of Black households with children are headed by women (Gates, 2007).

In 2001, 49 percent of pregnancies in the United States were unintended (Finer & Henshaw, 2006). An unintended pregnancy is identified by the mother as either unwanted or

mistimed (occurring earlier than wanted) at the time of conception (Washington State Department of Health, 2002). The unintended pregnancy rate was 51 per 1,000 women aged 15-44, meaning 5 percent of this group had an unintended pregnancy. Between 1994 and 2001, the rate of unintended pregnancies declined among adolescents, college graduates and the wealthiest women, but increased among poor and less educated women (Finer & Henshaw, 2006).

CNN Documentary Topic Addressed

The CNN *Black in America* segment on “The Black Woman and Family” revealed the stress that African American women are under in being the head of fatherless households, yet unintended pregnancies continue to grow. Every woman interviewed in the segment who had children and was raising the children alone was experiencing financial, physical, social, and/or emotional difficulties.

Background

When “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” was published (Moynihan, 1965), unintended pregnancies were viewed as outliers in the African American community. Over the forty-year period, as the pregnancy rates have increased and female headed households have become the norm, there has been little conversation about family planning and controlling one’s reproductive future. Why do women become pregnant without the benefit of marriage? Are pregnancies without the benefit of marriage actually “unintended” or is there another phenomenon that better describes these pregnancies?

Inquiry Design

The article incorporates a qualitative analysis with data from thirty-two women; 22 Black women who had unintended pregnancies and 10 black, Latino, and Hawaiian college students who have not had an unintended pregnancy. The qualitative analysis incorporates questions from Brown and Eisenberg’s (1995) five core areas that address the reduction of unintended pregnancies including: (a) knowledge about contraception, unintended pregnancy, and

reproductive health; (b) access to contraception; (c) feelings, attitudes, and motivations in using contraception and avoiding unintended pregnancy; (d) how best contraceptive services should be organized in the Black community; and (e) understanding more fully the determinants and antecedents of unintended pregnancy. Data from the 22 Black women who had had unintended pregnancies were obtained through individual interviews; the data from the ten college seniors were obtained through a focus group. Data from the college students served as a comparison group for future study.

In addition, secondary data from the Alan Guttmacher Institute and the U.S. Census Bureau, along with extensive interviews with a Baptist minister on the role of the black church in reducing unintended pregnancies and a New Jersey social worker on her observations of unintended pregnancy in her client caseload, frame the discussion in this commentary.

What Exactly is an Unintended Pregnancy?

Unintended pregnancy is associated with adverse maternal behaviors such as delayed entry into prenatal care, poor maternal nutrition, cigarette smoking, and use of alcohol and other drugs (Earls, Brooks-Gunn, Raudenbush, & Sampson, 2002). Unintended consequences of unintended pregnancies, especially for young African American women, are the negative social outcomes such as reduced education and career attainments, increased welfare dependency, divorce, and domestic violence (Earls, et al 2002). This was the circumstance in the CNN segment *Black in America* (Section 2, “Black Family”) where the young woman was being visited by the father of her first child while she was pregnant with a second child by another man. The father of her first child was being interviewed and asked why he was not more involved with his child and with the mother of his child. There was this awkwardness between them which could have been explained by the fact that they were being observed by a reporter and camera crew.

Focus Group Findings

Sixteen of the women who participated in individual interviews were ages 18 to 23; 6 were over 40 years of age and had had unintended pregnancies. The women were forthright in their communication, but puzzled about why the researchers were interested in the issues of unintended pregnancy. They wanted to know the perspective of the interviewers before they would divulge intimate information. The researchers indicated that they wanted to learn from the women and had no opinions on the subject. The comments from the women supported the findings from the Alan Guttmacher Institute (2002) that they had not used birth control or used it intermittently. The women indicated that they had difficulty paying for birth control pills or that services were not accessible to them. The younger women indicated that they became far more intimate than they thought, did not expect to have sex, and reached the point of no return where they could not extricate themselves from the sexual act.

The focus group of Chicago college seniors was asked if birth control is so plentiful, why is it that young women become pregnant? The feelings were that young women view children as their personal dolls and a possession that no one can take away from them. For the most part, indigent women have little control over their destiny, but they can control their reproductive history. As the data indicate, most young women grew up in fatherless households so they do not know the role of a father (Barras, 2000). The college seniors thought that young women understand the risks of getting pregnant without the benefit of marriage, but they choose to ignore it because they want children. The young men in their lives are never a part of their long-term life equation. Because the men are temporary companions for these young women and the women are viewed as sexual objects to be loved and left by the young men, sex and children are bartered in this exchange relationship.

The interview with the New Jersey social worker, Wanda Gorham, supported the commentary from the Chicago focus group. The social worker with a client-base that spanned

thirty-years responded that she personally managed the case-load of over 1,000 women with children during her tenure with the New Jersey Department of Social Services. She commented that she sees numerous young women who become pregnant and do so to “get and keep a man,” so her response to the concept of unintended pregnancy is muted from what she has seen in the field. She further commented that she could not make a blanket statement because she was confident that there was such a thing. Gorham has also seen a disregard to plan for pregnancy or the fact that young women want a baby. So, she feels that the concept of an unintended pregnancy may be an excuse for poor planning.

The CNN *Black in America* segment reported that 45 percent of Black women in America have never been married compared with 23 percent of White women. The economic and social stressors were apparent for the CNN *Black in America* single mother who was working with five children. She had no one to share the household responsibilities. Her life circumstances were fragile because she had limited resources on which to depend. She was having problems with her car and was struggling to make economic ends meet. The question that the interviewer did not ask, but was on the mind of the authors of this analysis is: What were you thinking when you had five children without the benefit of a spouse or an economic safety-net?

The New Jersey social worker found this question to be compelling because she has seen a change in the perspective of her clientele and the social service community since she joined the New Jersey agency 34 years ago. She commented that twenty years ago people just threw up their hands. There was no condemnation about these young girls having babies. She has seen a change with this permissive attitude. Mothers want more for their children than to be saddled with children. They want their children to have a good education and to get more out of life. Tough economic times and the welfare-to-work philosophy ushered in during the Clinton administration had an impact in the black community on how it views unintended pregnancies.

Findings from the Black Church

During the 2008 presidential elections, the California Proposition 8 was a ballot initiative to define marriage as a union between a man and woman. The proposition was endorsed by 70 percent of the African American population based on religious convictions. These religious convictions can be translated to the pregnancy situation as well. There are 34,658,190 African Americans in the U.S. which represents 12.3 percent of the population (U.S. Census, 2000). Seventy-eight percent of the U.S. African American population indicate that they are Christian and 53 percent attend church regularly (U.S. Census, 2000). The religious teachings in the Black church serve as a guide to how unintended pregnancy is viewed.

In the 2008 presidential elections, the Republican vice-presidential candidate announced immediately prior to the Republican National Convention that her 17-year old daughter was pregnant. The *New Yorker* (2008) describes the situation that social conservatives in “red states” generally advocate abstinence-only education and denounce sex before marriage, but are relatively unruffled that the teen-ager becomes pregnant because she did *not* choose abortion. If the Black Democratic presidential candidate who has two daughters had announced to the public that one of his daughters was pregnant, it would have been met with condemnation. Condemnation from the political right because he is Black and it would compound the negative impressions the public has about out-of-wedlock Black births, and condemnation from the political left because an alternative to an out-of-wedlock birth was not pursued. Social liberals in the country’s “blue states” tend to support sex education and are not particularly troubled by the idea that many teenagers have sex before marriage, but would regard a teen-age daughter’s pregnancy as devastating news (Talbot, November 3, 2008). This blue-red orientation does not play out so neatly in the Black church. The Black church tends to shy away from sex-education for reasons of embarrassment, lack of education, a failure to acknowledge that a problem exists, and moral teachings that advocate no sex before marriage.

The vast majority of White evangelical adolescents – 74%- say that they believe in abstaining from sex before marriage (Rostosky, Regnerus, & Comer Wright, 2003; Miller & Gur, 2002). Only half of mainline Protestants, and a quarter of Jews, say that they believe in abstinence. Moreover, among the major religious groups, evangelical virgins are the least likely to anticipate that sex will be pleasurable, and the most likely to believe that having sex will cause their partners to lose respect for them. Jews most often cite pleasure as a reason to have sex, and say that an unplanned pregnancy would be an embarrassment. It has been reported that evangelical teenagers are more sexually active than Mormons, mainline Protestants, and Jews (Nonnemaker, McNeely, & Blum, 2003). On average, White evangelical Protestants make their “sexual debut” shortly after turning sixteen (Talbot, 2008). Among major religious groups, only black Protestants begin having sex earlier. Yet, the Black church offers minimal support and advice to young people who should be trying to prevent pregnancy.

The women interviewed for this article had their first sexual experience in their teens, used condoms as the primary source of contraception, and had been on and off birth control pills. They all reported that they had attended church as regular members or guests on religious holidays. None of the women could recall any religious guidance on sexuality other than disapproval of other single women who came to church while pregnant. When questioned if the church could play a role in sexuality education, they thought the concept would be interesting, but did not think it would be readily accepted in their church because of its conservative tradition.

In 1997, the Reverend Dr. Carlton W. Veazey, pastor of the Fellowship Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., introduced The National Black Church Initiative under the auspices of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, a national interfaith organization founded in 1973. The purpose of the Initiative is to assist African American ministers and laity in addressing teen childbearing, sexuality education, unintended pregnancies, and other reproductive health issues in the context of African American culture and religion (RCRC, 2008). In extensive interviews

with Reverend Veazey, he acknowledged that African American pastors can be resistant to the introduction of sexuality education in the church. He became personally interested in reproductive health issues when he could see the deterioration in the African American community brought on by children-having-children and the concomitant incidence of drug addiction and imprisonment of black men.

Reverend Veazey's sexuality education program *Keeping It Real!* has introduced faith-based dialogues about sex and sexuality to over 800 churches and brought 10,000 youth and about 2,000 men and women through the program. As a pastor, he can challenge other pastors to acknowledge that a problem exists in their pews and that ignoring the fact that their parishioners are having sex and becoming pregnant without the benefit of marriage is a failure of their pastoral responsibilities and the church. He uses the Biblical text John 10:10 when Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and stated, "I am come that you may have life and have it more abundantly." The emphasis is on abundance. As Reverend Veazey readily acknowledges, teenage pregnancy is cyclical and repeats itself from one generation to the next. The cycle can be stopped through education. Reverend Veazey sees tremendous hope in the younger generation of ministers and has introduced a course in human sexuality and ministry for seminarians. He was also invited to introduce the Keeping It Real! program in South Africa, where it has been underway since 1991; 30,000 youth have graduated.

The Economic Outlook for African Americans

From the Fall of 2007 to October 2008, the share of 16- to 19-year-olds working fell by 8 percent, the largest decline of any age group, and the outlook for youths and low-skilled workers looks grim in the context of the economic downturn (Eckholm, 2008). The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 240,000 jobs were lost in October 2008, bringing the unemployment rate to 6.5 percent (Eckholm, 2008). The downturn in the economy presents the most challenges for the poor, particularly Black males, because they have the least education. As Eckholm reports,

the recession takes the largest tolls not only on the young but also in cyclical industries like construction, manufacturing of durable goods, retail trade, hotels and temporary agencies. If these industries are the ones youth get their foothold into the world of work, then the absence of these opportunities will present economic woes for the families who rely on this income. The unintended consequence of an unemployed population with limited resources portends more social ills for the low income community.

The Marriage Quotient

In 2000, there were more Black men between the ages of 25 – 29 in prison than in college (Butterfield, 2002). Of the African American male population between the ages of 25 – 29, 10.9 percent are incarcerated, which is 5 times the rate just 20 years earlier (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). This compares to 2.4 percent for Latino and 1.4 percent for White males between the same ages. In 2002, only 3 out of 10 women between 20 and 44 years of age were married compared to half of White and Latino women. If black men are not available for committed relationships, then will Black women look outside of their race for partners? The number of Black women married to White men in the U.S. was less than 100,000 in 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2006, the number had grown to 117,000; there were only 26,000 Black women with White husbands in 1960. While there has been a 17 percent increase in out-of-race couplings from 2000 to 2006, this does not seem to be an option for low-income women whose options may be limited to existing cultural norms. Anecdotally, it is the Black woman with education, income, and professional mobility who “marries out.” Low-income women do not have the same options because the radius of their choices is far more limited. With less education, they become restricted to low-income positions with limited professional mobility and a homogenous stratum of colleagues; most of whom share mutual concerns and economic limitations.

The women who participated in the interviews and focus groups hold regular or part-time jobs. Two of the 26 women or 8 percent continue to have an intimate relationship with their child's father. All acknowledge that working, trying to maintain order in their lives, and taking care of children created stress in their lives. Three indicated that if they had it to do over, they would have been more careful in their use of birth control. All agreed that contraceptive services should be better organized in the Black community, and that they had a better appreciation for preventing pregnancies now that they had children. When asked about the likelihood of marriage, most of the young women shrugged or laughed and thought their possibilities were limited if they remained in their current environment.

The world of work should introduce the worker to new horizons of opportunity and perspective, but when your worldview is limited to what you know and experience in the neighborhood, an opportunity to exit an existing worldview is limited. Solace to release emotions and network comes in the form of participation in the black church. The church choir, usher board, hospitality committee, community outreach, and Bible study among other organizational entities become all important venues to participate in a broader social structure. Leadership skills, morals, and values can be implanted. However, in some cases, the Black church can serve to limit the flight of young women because the church inculcates values that subject women to men through the use of Biblical text.

Other Findings

Title X is the only federal program that provides funding for family planning. During the Bush administration, the most recent family planning emphasis has been on abstinence (Lindberg & Singh, 2008). Proposed policies that promote abstinence until marriage are not realistic for African American women because they have a lower rate of marriage; in 2002, only 3 out of 10 women between ages 20 – 44 were married compared with half of white and Hispanic women (Lindberg & Singh, 2008). Title X accounts for 15 percent of U.S. funding or \$189 million

(Sonfield & Gold, 2005). The New Jersey social worker, Ms. Gorham, reported that her agency and those around the country triage women to family planning services such as Planned Parenthood. She reported that the large case loads at social service agencies limit the amount of oversight that can be provided when clients are referred for family planning counseling. Her client base preferred the use of birth control pills and depo provera as they are easier to manage. Her African American client base was disinclined to use condoms because the men in their lives disliked the feel of condoms during sex. Ms. Gorham thought more education was necessary to educate young women about birth control and that more services should be provided in the Black community, particularly in states and locales where public transportation was limited.

Proposed Action Plan for the African American Community

African Americans have only recently begun to speak frankly about internal issues that deal with community decay. The CNN *Black in America* program portrayed the spectrum of family types. The program introduced the viewer to the diversity of families across economics. What the program did not do was address what can be done about the social ills of poverty and unintended pregnancy. In 1995, the National Academy of Sciences published *The Best Intentions: Unintended Pregnancy and the Well-being of Children and Families*. The editors, Sarah Brown and Leon Eisenberg, proposed a campaign to reduce unintended pregnancy with five core goals including: (1) improve knowledge about contraception, unintended pregnancy, and reproductive health; (2) increase access to contraception; (3) explicitly address the major roles that feelings, attitudes, and motivation play in using contraception and avoiding unintended pregnancy; (4) develop and scrupulously evaluate a variety of local programs to reduce unintended pregnancy; and (5) (a) stimulate research to develop new contraceptive strategies, (b) answer important questions about how best to organize contraceptive services, and (c) understand more fully the determinants and antecedents of unintended pregnancy.

The authors of this paper support the aforementioned campaign and strongly recommend that the campaign be lead by representatives from the affected minority communities. The campaign should include the following eight initiatives.

Initiative 1: Scope of the problem

The African American community has to acknowledge that there is an alternative to underage pregnancy and pregnancy outside of marriage. The African American community simply ignores the fact that young people have unprotected sex and then excuses the fact that they become pregnant. This should no longer be accepted. While the nationwide pregnancy rate between 15 and 19 year olds fell by 40 percent, Illinois along with Texas, New York, and Florida had the highest number of teenage pregnancies (Guttmacher Institute, 2006).

Initiative 2: How is the problem perceived?

As we discussed previously, there was a human outcry about the Moynihan Report in 1968. At the time, this was the height of the Black Power movement and the expression that anything done by the group should be sanctioned. We did not hold each other responsible or accountable to the group so social norms of what was not acceptable were overlooked and excused. The statement “don’t air our dirty linen in public” was embraced. Even when we knew that every innocent African American is painted with the same negative brush when bad things happen, we excused the growth in the unintended pregnancy rate.

When actor, activist, and comedian Bill Cosby commented at the NAACP 50th anniversary meeting that lower economic people are not holding up their end in the deal and that they are not parenting; his comments received broad media attention. While his comments were publicly criticized, there were many who embraced his comments of social responsibility. His lecture was followed by presidential candidate Barack Obama that we must teach our daughters to never allow images on television to tell them what they are worth; teaching our sons to treat women with respect, and to realize responsibility does not end at conception; that what makes a

man is not the ability to have a child but to raise one. While his comments were also criticized, the majority recognized that these messages have to be sent to the broader African American community.

Initiative 3: Quantify the problem

Each year, almost 750,000 teenage women age 15 to 19 become pregnant (Guttmacher Institute, 2006). The teenage pregnancy rate is at its lowest level in 30 years, down 36 percent since its peak in 1990. But is this decline adequate and can it be reduced more dramatically? The Guttmacher Institute (2006) reported that teenage birthrates were highest in Mississippi, Texas, Arizona, Arkansas and New Mexico. In general, states with the largest numbers of teenagers also have the greatest number of teenage pregnancies. Further, the Guttmacher Institute report indicated that among Black teenagers age 15 to 19, pregnancy rates were highest in New Jersey (209 per 1,000) and in Wisconsin, Delaware, Pennsylvania and Oregon (161 – 177 per 1,000). If each community can quantify this issue, then it can start being addressed.

Initiative 4: Determine strategies that communities can use to prevent unintended pregnancies.

As the Reverend Carlton Veazey has done with the National Black Church Initiative, more needs to be done in the Black church to educate young men and women to prevent unintended pregnancies. There are 69,738 Black churches in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). While the movement he initiated incorporates 800 churches, this represents 1 percent of Black churches in the U.S. In addition to recruiting Black churches into the sexuality initiative, large organizational initiatives that attract young men and women as participants need to be recruited into the sexuality initiative. Clearly, households, schools, and social networking sites have to be solicited to get the message out that unintended pregnancy is a choice and that other life-options are preferable.

Young people have to be reached through the medium that is prominent at the moment. This can come by way of new media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, My Space, or You Tube.

Two-thirds of Americans between 18 and 29 use social networking sites (Pew Research, 2008). BlackPlanet.com, the social networking site owned by Radio One, has over 16 million subscribers. Radio One owns 53 stations in 16 urban markets and should be solicited to get the message out that social responsibility by way of one's sexuality is critical to long-term African American advancement.

Initiative 5: Identify community groups as vehicles to relay the message that unintended pregnancies can be prevented.

The public schools, health care clinics, libraries, community colleges, private physician offices, religious organizations, social clubs such as Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, and YWCA can be avenues to constructively introduce "a responsibility movement."

Initiative 6: Reduce the unintended pregnancy rate by a given percentage.

The unintended pregnancy rate of 51 per 1,000 or 5 percent should be targeted. But what is an acceptable target? This needs to be determined by each community based on population, age and habits, and community resources to respond to the issue.

Initiative 7: Identify the strategies that work with teens?

In discussing the issue of unintended pregnancy with young adults, they readily admit that their personal experiences in avoiding pregnancy related to having supportive parents, being motivated by the fear of disappointing one's family and the physical pain of bearing a child, having opportunities other than motherhood presented as an option, having healthy interactions with peers, having a school that employs teachers who motivate and encourage, and residing in a strong community with cultural norms that disapprove of unintended pregnancy.

The young adult focus group commented that school-based sex education classes should focus on the facts and discussing sex in intellectually honest ways. The anatomy and physiology of sexual organs should not be the only part of sex education. What the focus group found most helpful were the purpose and use of condoms, explanations of STDs and birth control techniques

including the birth control pill, IUD, cervical cap, foam, and gel. Sex education should not conclude by frightening students with the trauma of a video that introduces the birth of a baby. Sex education should extend to include a discussion of the unintended consequences of having a baby with limited education, no employment, and minimal social supports.

Initiative 8: Identify model strategies and pilot them in specific areas.

If unintended pregnancy is going to be reduced, then African American women need role models. They need examples of what they should aspire to be. The expectation is that Michelle Obama, the First Lady of the United States, can be that role model. Allison Samuels (2008) wrote in *Newsweek* “What Michelle Means to Us” that “she has the power to change the way African Americans see ourselves, our lives and our possibilities.” With two daughters, hopefully, she will speak out on issues affecting young women – unintended pregnancies, specifically.

There are 22 states where Blacks are the largest minority and so consequently the unintended pregnancy rate would be higher. Why not target these states and introduce an intense educational program to change the mindset on pregnancy prevention? Why not recruit young men and women from historically Black colleges and universities to lead the charge? While Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin do not have HBCUs in the state, there are 15 other states with large Black populations that do. Could Black college students be role models for the black community? Educating college students of their role in “uplifting the race” and working with alumni groups and fraternities and sororities would sustain the initiative.

Is There Such a Thing as an Unintended Pregnancy?

In 2009, young women have so many choices and so many resources at their disposal to prevent an unintended pregnancy. So, then, why is the unintended pregnancy rate increasing for young women in poverty? We return to the Chicago interviews and focus group. Their response focuses on female perceptions of themselves, personal aspirations, role models and cultural

norms in the community, authority and discipline, and most importantly individual motivation. These women think the term unintended pregnancy is a misnomer and that the 5 percent rate of births that are designated as unintended are misclassified. They think young women who have unprotected sex think things will go their way. They have to be given alternatives – employment, careers, and a life free of economic struggles. It has to be presented and reinforced that women have choices. There also has to be consequences for those who have children without the benefit of marriage. The African American community has to make pregnancy in the absence of a committed relationship an outlier that must be reduced.

Conclusion

Black in America was a window into the varied lives of African Americans. As a group, many African Americans have advanced educationally, professionally, socially, and economically; and, as a group, it is understandably elated about the recent election of Barack Obama as President. However, as a group, it should not be lulled into a false sense of security. The downturn in the economy has left many out of work, some homeless, and many under stressful circumstances that can only have a negative impact on health, spirituality, and home life. What does this portend for women with children and young women of child bearing age? The Chicago interviews with women contextualized what is not reported in journals – that young Black women want more for themselves and their children; they just need family and community supports. The young women with children under five years of age are concerned about their future and that of their children. They realize the vulnerable financial position in which they reside. They also want female role models for themselves and their children.

As Dr. Carlton Veazey commented, there is a role for the Black church in educating young women and men about their sexuality. In addition to the Black church, the authors call for historically Black colleges to get involved in the African American community to address the unintended pregnancy issue through educational programming and to have its students serve as

role models. It is incumbent upon the African American community to begin to holistically address the expectation that children will be brought into a stable environment where they can thrive. The authors are not condemning female-headed households; however, the data supports the value of adult engagement with children and the opportunity for children to identify with a committed and balanced parent. A committed and balanced parent is secure when he or she can provide the appropriate necessities to a child as he or she grows into adulthood. The African American community must confront the issue of unintended pregnancy and the dissolution of family values. Strategies to combat unintended pregnancies must be developed, but first the African American community must acknowledge that it has a problem.

Table 1: Interviews from the Front Line of Unintended Pregnancies

Baby Drama

DD's Story

DD is the product of a female headed household. Her mother became pregnant at 19 and never married the young man she became pregnant by although they maintained a relationship after DD's birth. DD is an only child and she finished high school and college. However, before her senior year in college, she too became pregnant and decided to bring the baby to term. She has struggled since graduating from college with trying to raise a child alone, maintain a job and an apartment, and continue to advance her career. She is one of the lucky young mother's we interviewed due to her resourcefulness.

P's Story

P was born in the South and the product of parents who never married. In fact, her father was married to someone else across town. P grew up feeling resentful that she did not have a father image in her household. P was accepted to a prestigious college in the Northeast and completed 2 years. When she was 20, she became pregnant by her boyfriend and did not return to complete her college degree. She did not marry her son's father but married 2 other men before eventually marrying her son's father. That marriage lasted 3 years before P eventually divorced him. P is bright, attractive, resourceful, and independent. Her romantic life is complicated because she did not have the example of a strong father in the home upon which she could pattern her adult relationships.

DH's Story

DH grew up on the south side of Chicago. She recognized when she was an adult that the man who was married to her mother and she acknowledged as her biological father was not her father. DH's mother had had a long term affair with a married man who she more closely resembled. At 18, DH became pregnant and did not marry her child's father. While she struggled to make ends meet for herself and her daughter, she always maintained a job and a positive mental attitude. Years later before turning 40 years old, she met her ideal mate and married him. They now live happily in their home on the south side.

SM's Story

SM had her son when she was in her teens. She did not marry her son's father although they maintained contact over the years and the son visits his father over the holidays and during the summer. SM works at an area law firm. When her first son was 14, SM became pregnant with her second child. SM did not marry this child's father either and decided to bring the child to term. SM made ends meet by working two jobs and taking consulting jobs. Luckily for SM she always had employers who were sympathetic to her plight and provided overtime and additional work for her to increase her income.

TC's Story

TC is the product of a broken home. In fact, her mother was married 3 times before her untimely death from cancer. TC bright, engaging, and talented completed college and law school before the age of 25.

She was a student leader in high school, college, and law school and took a job in the entertainment industry. She became pregnant after law school and married her boyfriend. After 10 years of marriage, the marriage ended. Her thinking was “well, my mother was married three times so perhaps I will be also.”

JW’s Story

JW is the product of a broken home. Her father was a substance abuser and contracted HIV as a result of this abuse. JW struggled with a weight problem and feelings of inferiority throughout her teen years. In her late 20’s, gainfully employed, and deriving success on her job, she met R. After several months in what she thought was a satisfying relationship, she became pregnant. Shortly after the birth of her first child, she became pregnant again by R. Now, she has two children. She and R maintain a friendship but without the benefit of marriage and additional income. JW continues to struggle to make ends meet.

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Black in America and Public Health:
A Commentary on the Media's Role in Educating the Public

Sacoby Wilson

Institute for Families in Society
University of South Carolina

Debbie Barrington

Department of Epidemiology
Columbia University

Annice Kim

Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International

Edith Williams

Dept. of Epidemiology & Biostatistics
University of South Carolina

Abstract

The CNN documentary “Black in America” presented information on the diverse experiences of Black people in America. We contend that the documentary did a poor job of educating the public about the burden of cardiovascular disease among African Americans by relying heavily on a non-public health expert’s explanation of the Slavery Hypothesis, which has been widely discounted by public health researchers for decades. We will detail the problems with this genetic hypothesis in regards to public health education and discuss how media outlets should follow proper journalistic and scientific standards when reporting on public health issues particularly cardiovascular disease.

Introduction

The ways issues are covered in the news media have profound effects on how Americans understand and relate to social problems and solutions for change. The media is a powerful political agent that shapes what the public thinks and how they think about these issues (Iyengar & Kinder, 1989; McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Shaw, 1972), especially in areas of uncertainty (Beaudoin, 2007). Public perceptions about social problems are influenced by how the media frames these issues in the public discourse. The media frames issues and helps construct meaning to a social problem by diagnosing its causes, raising moral evaluations, recommending solutions, and motivating support for resolution (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). Media coverage can help guide or repress public discourse about a given topic, making news media powerful agenda-setters (Shah, 2004).

Communication studies have found that the media plays a critical role in framing issues that affect racial-ethnic minority communities (Entman, 2007; Gandy 1996; Gandy et al., 1997). To date, the majority of the research on media and race has been in the areas of athleticized depictions (Niven, 2005), affirmative action (Bliech, 2002; Clawson, 2003; Entman, 1997; Gandy, 1996; Platt & Fraser, 1998; Richardson & Lancendorfer, 2004; Sizemore & Milner, 2004), and crime (Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001). These studies suggest that news coverage of racial issues reinforce stereotypes through provocative images, story omissions, and lack of

sufficient context. News coverage of racial disparity tend to blame victims for their status (Gandy et al., 1997) and to distort the issue as Whites against Blacks, which decreases White support for governmental programs that are framed as beneficial for Blacks (Bobo et al., 1993; Shoemaker, 1997). Kingdon (1984) argues that stories that are most persuasive and most likely to be placed on the main agenda are those that portray the cause of an issue as the result of deliberate individual action, rather than the result of natural, unintentional consequences external to the individual. Gandy et al. (1997) states that the general public is more inclined to support programs designed to eliminate racial disparities if that inequality is: (a) seen as substantial and (b) not described in terms of individual responsibility, but with some indication of structural causes beyond individual control. As such, some argue that in news there is more attention to crime without context, poverty without any real explanation, and less attention is given to the complicated histories and institutional practices that provide advantages to Whites and disparately impacts Blacks (Entman & Rojecki, 2000).

Ultimately, reducing complex issues such as racial disparities into succinct news stories requires a series of framing decisions that are influenced by characteristics of newspaper editors and their audiences (e.g., racial/ethnic composition and ideological/political orientations), as well as journalistic norms and practices, pressure of interest groups, and market norms (Gandy et al., 1997; Richardson & Lancendorfer, 2004; Shoemaker, 1997). Covering issues that disproportionately affect racial/ethnic communities is an important journalistic pursuit, but the market pressure and professional norms of having to translate highly technical information into provocative, interesting, and newsworthy stories to large audiences may lead to inadvertent racial categorizing and victim-blaming (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). While science journalists may not be equipped with extensive scientific training to accurately interpret study findings and limitations and to put these in the context of other existing data, most journalist associations (American Society of Newspaper Editors and National Association of Science Writers) (ASNE,

2008; NASW, 2006) abide by a code of ethics that includes responsibility, accuracy, and integrity in reporting. To meet these basic codes of conduct, science journalists should be able to, at the minimum, identify credible sources in the fields of Medicine and Public Health that are respected by their peers for the quality of their research.

Media frames of racial/ethnic health disparities, however, can be just as misguided, as demonstrated by the following analysis of the media coverage of African American health issues within CNN's *Black in America* documentary series.

Commentary on Black in America's Coverage of Public Health Issues

In CNN's *Black in America*, efforts were made to discuss two very important health problems that impact African Americans — heart disease and HIV/AIDS. In Part I of the documentary, medical access and public health issues were covered for approximately 45 minutes with over five minutes of coverage dedicated to cardiovascular disease (CVD) and seven minutes to HIV/AIDS. Both diseases are in the top ten leading causes of death for African Americans. With the importance of CVD-related health disparities in the African American community, CNN should have spent a similar amount of time discussing CVD as it did on HIV/AIDS. In this commentary, we focus our critique of CNN's coverage of CVD, notably their over-reliance on genetic determinism to explain CVD disparities and the use of non-public health experts to discuss the topic.

Cardiovascular Disease: Definition and Statistics

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death within the U.S., accounting for approximately 800,000 deaths annually (NCHS, 2007). CVD affects an estimated 80 million American adults and includes conditions such as high blood pressure, hypertension, heart attacks, myocardial infarction, chest pain, angina pectoris, heart failure, congenital heart defects, and stroke (Lloyd-Jones et al., 2008). Although Whites have a higher prevalence of heart disease than African Americans (11.4% and 10.2%, respectively), African Americans are 30% more

likely to die from CVD than Whites (CDC, 2007). African Americans are 1.4 times more likely to have hypertension than Whites (NCHS, 2007), 1.7 times more likely than Whites to have a stroke (NCHS, 2007), and develop high blood pressure at younger ages (Cruickshank et al., 2005). To date, majority of the research on CVD causes has focused on individual factors (e.g., genetics, age, family history, smoking, diet, and physical activity patterns). However, there is growing evidence that larger social conditions may better explain why certain populations bear a disproportionate burden of CVD than others. For instance, limited access to health care, social and economic conditions such as low educational attainment, psychosocial stressors, poverty, and institutional racism have been shown to contribute to CVD disparities (Lloyd-Jones et al., 2008, Minor et al., 2008, Johnson et al., 2007, Wyatt et al., 2003, Sowers et al., 2002, Rutledge & Hogan, 2002).

CNN's Use of Expert Opinion on Cardiovascular Disease

In the documentary, CNN provided two main explanations for why CVD rates are higher among Blacks: social conditions and genetic and historical predisposition for salt sensitivity. Dr. Iselma Fergus, Head of Cardiology at the Harlem Hospital Center, explained that social conditions — stress, poverty, access to medical care, trust issues, and discrimination due to language and socioeconomic status — were reasons why CVD rates were higher among Blacks than whites. Her solution for achieving health equity included grassroots community work such as health fairs that bring health professionals to the community “where they live, work and play.” Discussion with Dr. Fergus lasts for one minute. In comparison, more than double this time was spent on the salt sensitivity (slavery) hypothesis, a hypothesis which points to selective salt retention ability among surviving slaves of the slave trade’s Middle Passage as the cause of excess rates of hypertension, coronary heart disease and related health outcomes among their descendants.

Dr. Roland Fryer, a Harvard economist, was the expert used in the documentary to discuss the salt-sensitivity hypothesis. Dr. Fryer explained:

I was in Switzerland and I'm reading this history book. And there's this beautiful illustration of a slave trader licking the cheek of a potential slave to get on the boat. And I thought for a minute, what the heck is he doing? And then it occurred to me that he might actually be trying to check the saltiness of the potential slave's skin to see if he could actually make the voyage across the Middle Passage...If you're very salt-sensitive, it means you hold on to your salt and you can live in conditions very hot, very humid, little water. So being salt-sensitive is great for long boat rides in horrible conditions, absolutely terrible for hypertension. And that's the irony of this.

Soledad O'Brien, *Black in America's* moderator, raises the point that this theory has been refuted by health researchers:

Many doctors and researchers say the problem with the salt sensitivity theory is that there isn't any medical proof to support it, arguing that chronic diseases like hypertension and heart disease are just too complicated to write off to genetic predisposition..... What he's [Fryer] saying is that Blacks in America may actually be biologically different than Whites. It's a controversial idea to say the least.

However, Fryer believes there is a powerful genetic link between slavery and hypertension in African Americans and moreover that he has the empirical evidence — using economic statistical models — to prove it. Roland Fryer denounces the controversial nature of the theory and instead concludes that if his empirical evidence supports the theory, this should drive our solutions for CVD:

I don't care what the answer looks like. If it's salt sensitivity and I can show that we eliminated salt sensitivity...if I can show that, and I can decrease life expectancy gap by half, I don't care if the answer makes people uncomfortable.

When asked by O'Brien whether he worries about “rubbing people the wrong way, angering people, maybe saying things that aren't particularly politically correct?,” Fryer responds with a definitive “absolutely not.” Dr. Fryer, neither trained in public health or cardiovascular medicine, bases his expert opinion on the unproven and heavily refuted published work of Blaustein and Grim (1991) who state that:

Helmer (1967) was the first to suggest that the high prevalence of hypertension and suppressed plasma rennin activity levels in African Americans stems from the evolutionary adaptation to the severe demands on sodium conservation in the Western African environment, because blacks originated from hot and humid environments, they might possess innate capacities for sodium retention that would prove maladaptive in other settings.

Fryer's Argument for the Salt-Slavery Hypothesis

In an unpublished, non-peer reviewed paper, Fryer and colleagues use economic statistical models to conclude that Blacks have higher rates of death from cardiovascular disease stroke, diabetes and kidney disease than Whites due to a selective genetic predisposition for salt-sensitivity (Cutler, Fryer, & Glaser, 2005). The authors estimate that salt sensitivity accounts for: (a) 45% of the overall racial mortality gap (six year difference in life expectancy between Blacks and Whites); and (b) 78% of the racial mortality difference in cardiovascular-related diseases (Cutler, Fryer, & Glaser, 2005).

Evidence Against Genetics and the Slavery Hypothesis

The Slavery Hypothesis can be considered as three distinct sub-hypotheses (Curtin, 1992). The first hypothesis concerns the ancestral experience in Africa, emphasizing the possible genetic consequences of a low-salt diet over many centuries. The second focuses on genetic changes caused by the trauma of crossing the Middle Passage from Africa to America during the slave trade. Finally, the third hypothesis explores the genetic consequences of life during slavery where under merciless conditions high death rates and hence genetic change occurred among slave descendants. All three hypotheses have been refuted by scholars throughout the scientific literature.

The work of Gleibermann (1973) was used by Blaustein and Grim (1991) to support the first slavery sub-hypothesis, where her comparisons of blood pressure rates for 27 distinct populations around the world including Africa found that African American and African-Caribbean populations had higher blood pressure rates than Whites. However, removed from

Gleibermann's analysis were blood pressure rates from Liberia and Nigeria, countries that were chief suppliers of slaves to the New World. These populations have lower blood pressure rates than white population samples (Curtin, 1992). Moreover, health surveys in the early 1960s indicated that blood pressures in Africa were not similarly elevated to those of African Americans (Kaufman & Hall, 2003). Other research has consistently shown Africans to have much lower rates of hypertension than US Blacks, African-Caribbeans, U.S. Whites and Europeans (Cooper et al., 2003; Cooper & Rotimi, 1997; Cooper et al. 1997; Cooper et al., 2000), further refuting the first sub-hypothesis of salt-sensitivity hypothesis.

The second sub-hypothesis on genetic changes or selection resulting from the severely adverse conditions of the Middle Passage of the slave trade is based on Wilson's and Grim's claim that salt depletion during forced migration across the Middle Passage would have caused seasickness, salt and water-depletive diseases and death. One study contests these claims stating that there is little evidence supporting the theory of selective survival, where the brutality of the Middle Passage left a surviving genetic stock differing from that of the population that remained in Africa (Shaper & Whincup, 1997). Additional research asserts that seasickness, an acute condition could not lead to a genetic selection of salt-sensitivity in slave descendants more than two centuries later, and there is no evidence that West Africans in the 18th century had a special ability to conserve salt or that salt was in low supply on shore or on the slave ships (Curtin 1992).

Limitations of Genetic Explanations

Our proclivity to distinguish socially and culturally constructed racial/ethnic groups through genetic differences without apprehension in medicine, science, and the media has led to the popularity of the slavery hypothesis as an explanation for hypertension and heart disease in African Americans (Kaufman & Hall, 2003). This also includes other strange theories for hypertension and heart disease such as relating the dysregulation of blood pressure directly to skin pigmentation or to abnormal testosterone levels present in African American men (Kaufman

& Hall, 2003). Care and caution must be taken when giving attribution only to genetic determinants for complex disease conditions. It would be naïve to assume that sodium retention and excretion are both controlled by the same genetic mechanism (Weder & Schork, 1994), but the Slave Hypothesis does not rely on biological plausibility or scientifically valid mechanisms. For example, one study found that for several hypertension gene candidates that have been identified, African Americans do not exhibit the restricted allele frequencies relative to Africans that would be predicted by the Slavery Hypothesis (Cooper & Rotimi, 1997).

Additional research found that genetic factors play a significant role in determining the distribution of blood pressure levels and the prevalence of hypertension within a specific population, but genetic factors seem to have little to do with differences between populations (Shaper & Whincup, 1997). On this point, one study presented results that lend support to an environmental hypothesis of Black hypertension that indicates the prevalence rate of Black hypertension is related more to social factors than genetic factors (Cooper et al., 1997). The results of this study emphasize the importance of understanding the relationships between biology and sociology, early life exposures, and gene-environment interactions (Minor et al., 2008). Additionally, the methodological difficulties of modeling differential dose-response relationships across populations and the effects of individual genes being small and inconsistent across groups makes cross-ethnic comparisons of hypertension more imprecise and inconclusive (Cooper et al., 1997). This means that scientific rigor and the proper methodologies must be used when attempting to understand racial/ethnic differences in hypertension and heart disease and any results must be interpreted with the proper analytical lens.

Fryer gives legitimacy to refuted and inconclusive genetic theories, making them medical fact in the minds of African Americans with or without disease through CNN's *Black in America* series. Even with all of the evidence against this genetic determinism of the Slavery Hypothesis, as described earlier in this paper, Fryer and his colleagues still wrote an unpublished, non-peer-

reviewed piece full of unscientific and inaccurate information akin to scientific folklore. Fryer's attempt to understand racial/ethnic disparities in cardiovascular disease is commendable, but the paper does not meet the minimum standards of academic research. He has successfully employed sophisticated economic models in his work on understanding the education gap between Blacks and Whites (Fryer & Levitt, 2004, 2005). However, the use of this analytical hammer is not appropriate for explaining complex health problems such as cardiovascular disease. Fryer should have used appropriate epidemiologic methods and scientific standards to examine the reasons for the burden of cardiovascular disease in African Americans and the contribution of CVD to excess mortality in African Americans. In this commentary, we are not stating that genetic factors and socio-historical processes do not play a role in conditions such as hypertension and heart disease, but we believe that when discussing these issues in the media, we should use the best available scientific evidence and maximize beneficence for populations consuming the information.

How Did CNN Fail in its CVD Coverage?

Due to irresponsible media practices in covering health issues such as heart disease based on refuted or unsupported medical theories, we may see the development of negative health beliefs in African Americans. The hypertension/cardiovascular disease discussion in CNN's *Black in America* was problematic because it relied significantly on Dr. Roland Fryer, an economist not trained in public health, as a primary expert in the documentary's discussion of cardiovascular disease. His use of the Slavery Hypothesis as the main reason for high rates of cardiovascular disease and related illnesses in African Americans was sensationalized in CNN's *Black in America*.

Fryer has no published peer-reviewed papers on cardiovascular disease or related health outcomes. He presents his rationale and evidence for a genetic basis for cardiovascular disease in African Americans in an unpublished paper. Dr. Fryer's paper is comprised of information on

the salt-sensitivity hypothesis from scholars such as Grim and Wilson whose theories have been shown to have little merit or legitimacy in previously published and peer-reviewed scientific literature such as Curtin's 1992 paper in the *American Journal of Public Health*, Jay Kaufman's 2003 article in *Epidemiology*, and Richard Cooper's work on CVD burden across different population groups that make up the African Diaspora.

Nevertheless, CNN decided to rely primarily on Dr. Roland Fryer as the public health expert on the topic without having an opposing opinion on the topic. In a normal scientific debate, multiple voices would have been heard on the topic of cardiovascular disease with evidence on the contribution of genetic, social, environmental, biological, and lifestyle determinants of cardiovascular disease and related health disparities. Instead, CNN preferred to sensationalize the topic and misinform the public instead of utilizing rigorous scientific information and qualified experts who are faculty members at various Schools of Public Health, particularly Harvard, Michigan and Johns Hopkins. In fact, we learned via a public health listserv (spirit of 1848) that CNN did in fact interview Professor Jay Kaufmann, an epidemiologist who disproves the salt-sensitivity hypothesis in a recent *Epidemiology* journal article, but chose to delete his commentary in the final version. We hypothesize that CNN chose to highlight Dr. Fryer and the salt sensitivity hypothesis for several reasons: (a) to package news that is controversial; and (b) to use a Black Harvard economist to validate a theory that most White scholars (or journalists) would not or could not raise without being accused of racism. CNN's coverage may also be a function of society's over-reliance on the power of economic theories and models to explain a wide range of social conditions and behaviors (e.g., Black-White achievement gap, incentivizing health behaviors, and socioeconomic patterns of naming children) that are more complex and have been studied for decades by researchers in the field, and cannot be simply explained by applying economic models.

Furthermore, CNN did not use the same template for discussing HIV/AIDS as it did when discussing cardiovascular disease. In the case of HIV/AIDS, it used actual statistics from the CDC and not just summary statements, employed multiple medical/public health experts, and multiple community voices and advocates who talked about various upstream and downstream determinants of HIV/AIDS.

This pattern of media misinformation on the subject of CVD disparities goes beyond CNN. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in April and December 2007 had segments on CVD that gave attribution to slavery and the salt-sensitivity hypothesis for the burden of heart disease in African Americans. Oprah did not have a public health expert talking about these issues on her behalf, but a celebrity doctor named Dr. Oz. These broadcasts did not mention the wealth of literature on cardiovascular disease epidemiology which discusses various upstream social and environmental determinants of health. This is problematic because *The Oprah Winfrey Show* reaches a greater proportion of the public than peer-reviewed publications and therefore has a responsibility to accurately inform the public on health topics than it did in the case of salt-sensitivity and heart disease in African Americans. Media outlets such as CNN and *The Oprah Winfrey Show* use of misinformation and racialized science may do irrevocable harm to public health's efforts to reduce and prevent disease through social policies and lifestyle interventions.

Problems with Genetic Determinism, Medicine, and the Media

When science is racialized or used to make opinions that socially constructed racial groups are innately or biologically different, negative stereotypes can emerge, whether it be stereotypes about how different racial/ethnic groups commit crimes, utilize safety net programs, academic achievement, or parental responsibilities. We have seen science used to discriminate during the time when eugenics dominated different scientific disciplines. African Americans were thought to be inferior and this opinion was the foundation of dominant medical approaches which led to the sterilization of African American women and incidents such as the Tuskegee

Experiment. In contemporary times, books such as the *Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) and comments by DNA pioneer James Watson that people of African descent are less intelligent and inferior to Whites because of biology and genes reveal the undercurrent of discrimination and scientific racism that still permeates the way we frame medical and health issues that concern African Americans.

Currently, with the new wave of genetic determinism research such as the Human Genome Project and other research projects searching for genetic answers to racial/ethnic health disparities, the scourge of eugenics potentially has a new more politically correct face. There has been a series of gene discoveries that have been suggested as the reason for the high rates of violence, obesity, and other social ills in the Black community. However, caution must be taken in stating that genes are the cause for many diseases and the gaps in health and life expectancy between Blacks and Whites. Dr. Ken Olden, former head of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) states that “Genetics are the gun and environment the trigger.” There are very few genetic diseases that are monotonic. We must examine the complexities of both gene-environment and gene-environment-environment interactions using a multi-level approach to understand causality and what factors, whether genetic, environmental, social, or lifestyle, contribute to disease or different social problems.

In the case of medicine, the notion of using high scientific rigor to understand how different factors beyond genes contribute to diseases like hypertension and cardiovascular disease seems to be missing. Kaufman and Hall write that in the peer-reviewed medical literature, the Slavery Hypothesis continues to be cited frequently as a paradigm for justifying the proposition of innate biological difference in cardiovascular disease risk and treatment efficacy (2003), even though, the evidence for the different components of the hypothesis have been refuted (Curtin, 1992; Cooper et al., 2000) or deemed faulty at best.

The love affair that medicine has with unsubstantiated hypotheses such as the Slavery Hypothesis may be a representation of the inherent flaws of medicine as a field whose biomedical focus on reductionism and determinism, primarily an individual level focus, sets the field up for failure when it does not rely on evidence from other more holistic fields such as Public Health or does not take into account more upstream social and environmental determinants of health. For instance, there is a growing body of population health research that details the contribution of social and environmental determinants of health and health disparities (Bullard, Mohai, & Saha, 2007; Collins & Williams, 1999; Diez-Roux et al., 2001; Jackson et al., 2000; Krieger, 2001; LaVeist, 2003; Morello-Frosch & Lopez, 2006; Morland, Wing, & Diez Roux, 2002; Sampson et al., 1999) that is missing from the determinism conversation. In a bizarre way, medicine's focus on individual-level determinants could be its own internalization of the individual ethic for success and happiness in the U.S. that is presented as a reality, while socio-historical conditions and racial/ethnic privilege is discounted or ignored in the American individualism equation. This individualistic approach to success indicated by the amount of wealth and material items that Americans own, leads to an internalization of "external goods" for those who are healthy both economically and medically and "external ills" for those who are unhealthy both economically and medically.

Instead of pointing to external social or environmental factors or conditions as the primary reasons for negative health outcomes such as the burden of cardiovascular disease in African Americans, popular discussions of scientific evidence on genes may lead to beliefs that many health problems are due to genes and only genes. Victims of the negligent use of medical science and the media's sensationalization of genetic discoveries [that are moved from conjecture, speculation, hypothetical, theoretical, truth, to normative without following the ethical rules and quality control/assurance standards that guide most scientific pursuits] suffer tremendously from the negative effects of sensationalized pseudo-science.

For some of those impacted by these health problems and indoctrinated about these popular health beliefs, genetic misinformation may lead them to blame themselves for their health outcomes, believe that there is something innately wrong with them, and undergo a process of internalized pathogenesis. This internalized pathogenesis is similar to the process of internalized racism. Internalized pathogenesis refers to an individual's health status while racism refers more to their social status. Both are due the race/ethnicity of the individual with the internalization, but one refers to a biological inferiority, while the other refers to a social inferiority.

This internalized pathogenesis may lead to many African Americans burdened by cardiovascular disease to not address their own lifestyles and behaviors or request societal interventions in regards to access to medical care, changes in the food environment and neighborhood resources, and positive changes in community planning and development to help reduce heart disease and related chronic conditions that burden people of color and disadvantaged populations. Nelkin and Lindee (1995) argue that genetic explanations provide a biological excuse for individual and collective societal responsibility to address health disparities. Instead, genes are the drivers of our destiny and individuals, the mere victims of their genetic heredity. The notion of being circumscribed by one's ancestral past may be particularly salient for a group whose historical connection to African origin and the epoch of Atlantic slavery are central components of ethnic affiliation (Kaufman & Hall, 2003). However, the myth of genetic determinism cuts both ways, for although it absolves the individual from responsibility, it also absolves the society at large. "Deterministic biological explanations ('it's in my genes') — much like theological explanations ('the devil made me do it') — locate problems (and, therefore, solutions) within individuals" (Kaufman & Hall, 2003, p. 116).

As stated previously, genetic determinism parallels American individual determinism and is problematic for members of groups who have been historically disadvantaged, marginalized,

and disenfranchised. As seen in American beliefs about African American drug use, parental responsibilities, teen pregnancy, use of social nets, crime and violence, and academic achievement that infer that there is something wrong with African Americans biologically or a genetic predisposition that leads to the aforementioned lifestyles, behaviors, practices, or conditions, there is a similar perspective growing in regards to African American health. Unfortunately, this perspective does not take into account the contribution of upstream and fundamental social, environmental, and economic determinants of health and quality of life, which may have negative long-term consequences for African American health beliefs and participation in health promotion and prevention activities.

Conclusion

CNN failed to adequately identify (or did and decided to omit) qualified scientists with peer-reviewed published research in respected medical and public health journals in the areas of cardiovascular disease. And in so doing, they failed to meet the basic standards of journalistic ethics, and grossly miseducated the public by perpetuating a manufactured theory of historical biologic determinism that has been long-refuted by the scientific community.

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A Scholarly Response to Shades of Black

David A. Huddleston
University of Cincinnati

LaTrice Montgomery
University of Cincinnati

Abstract

Colorism, or preferential treatment of individuals based on skin tone, is often a taboo topic among African Americans. Some members of the African American community openly discuss this issue, while others do not acknowledge it as a problem. The CNN documentary *Black in America* briefly addressed this issue, but did not elaborate on its negative effects. The current review of the literature is designed to fully address colorism in the African American community by providing a scholarly response to what seems to be based largely on anecdotal evidence. Implications and suggestions for future research on colorism are also provided.

The CNN documentary *Black in America* highlighted the continuing struggle of African Americans in the United States. Although it covered many issues within the African American community, the influence that different shades of skin tone has on perceptions among African Americans was only briefly discussed. Perhaps the limited coverage of this issue in the documentary is representative of how it is addressed within the African American community. Dr. Michael Eric Dyson and his brother, Everett, touched on this issue very briefly during their interview in “The Black Man” section of this series. Dyson suggested that he and his brother were not offered some of the same opportunities growing up because of their different skin tones, possibly contributing to their different paths in life. Dyson is a Sociology professor at Georgetown University and his brother is incarcerated with a life sentence. Dyson (2008) nicely summarized this issue in his commentary on the *Black in America* series:

Besides the choices we made, Everett and I are also examples of an ugly trait that persists in black communities: the ruin of color consciousness. I am a light-skinned brother; Everett is a deep chocolate black man.

I am not suggesting that the mere difference in shade has led to his brutal circumstances and my rise. I am arguing, however, that the persistence of colorism -- a sometimes subtle hierarchy of social standing historically dictated in part by darkness or lightness of one's skin, measuring the proximity to, or distance from, the vaunted white ideal -- affected how he was viewed as a developing youth, impacting the view of what gifts he might possess while shaping the presence or absence of social opportunities open to him.

It is true that many darker-skinned blacks prosper, and that lighter-skinned blacks suffer. But their relative successes and failures are often unconsciously molded in a

crucible of race that assigns higher value to the physical features and cultural traits that reflect those of the dominant society.

Similar to Dr. Dyson's story, there has been discussion within the African American¹ community on the influence of different shades or variations of Black skin tones. Some believe that lighter-skinned Blacks receive more privileges and are evaluated more favorably than darker-skinned Blacks; however, others do not acknowledge this distinction. This skin tone debate has largely been based on anecdotal evidence. Therefore, this review is designed to provide a scholarly perspective on how skin tone, or shades of Black, influences outcomes for African Americans. This review focuses on research that supports the existence of colorism because a great majority of the literature suggests that the racial divide between light-skinned and dark-skinned Blacks is deeper than that between Blacks and Whites (Maddox & Chase, 2004). However, this is not to suggest that there is no evidence supporting its non-existence. Given the greater number of studies that support its existence, those studies were chosen for this review.

It is important to note that the authors are not suggesting that all of the issues within the African American community are rooted in colorism. However, the authors do suggest that this is a problem that must be acknowledged and discussed when it does happen, just as racism experienced from other groups is addressed.

This paper is divided into three major sections: (a) the history of skin tone issues, (b) the influence of skin tone on variables such as self esteem and social perception and (c) implications and suggestions for future research. Although there have been some influential studies (e.g., Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Mcadoo, 1988; Neal & Wilson, 1989) prior to the year 2000 on skin tone, the main goal of this review is to discuss recently published literature in this area.

The History of Skin Tone in the African American Community

Due to sexual relationships between European slave owners and African slaves, there are many different shades of Black within the African American community. When European and African American individuals had offspring, they were called mulattos (mixed-race children). Europeans favored mulattos because of their light skin. They often received more privileges, such as being assigned as house servants rather than field workers, than their darker-skinned counterparts (Gullickson, 2005). In addition, during the antebellum period, lighter-skinned freeborn Blacks were taller than darker-skinned freeborn Blacks, which suggests that lighter-skinned individuals had greater health resources in their childhood (Bodenhorn, 2002). As a result, mulattos were highly overrepresented among the skilled free Blacks in the United States by the end of the slavery period (Gullickson, 2005).

The racial divide between lighter and darker-skinned Blacks, which has its origin in slavery, has led to what is known as “colorism,” in which there is a widespread preference for Blacks with a lighter skin tone, even among African Americans (Okazawa-Rey, Robinson & Ward, 1987). Blacks who displayed colorism were often referred to as “color-struck” or as having a “color complex.” Although the theory of colorism is not widely discussed within the African American community, it is important to realize how divisive this notion is. For example, Kerr (2005) stated “the brown paper bag test” was used at a popular historically Black college by requiring students to submit photographs of themselves for comparison to the color of a brown paper bag. The school only accepted students who were the same color or lighter than the bag. In addition, Kerr suggested that the “comb test” was used to test the coarseness of hair and the “flashlight test” was used to make sure that individuals’ phenotypic features matched those of the European race. Therefore, the notion that lighter skin color, often in conjunction with European phenotypic features, is preferred over dark skin color and non-European phenotypic features is the basis of colorism.

Although slave-owners helped to create the racial divide by favoring lighter skin over darker skin, research (Hill, 2000) suggests that the privileges received by lighter-skinned Blacks only accounts for a small amount of the skin tone discrepancy within the African American community. Hill found that although lighter-skinned Blacks came from advantaged households, household differences in literacy, parental occupation and family structure only explained 20% of the socioeconomic gap between lighter-skinned and darker-skinned African Americans in a longitudinal study conducted from 1910 to 1920. This finding suggests that there are other factors aside from class that contribute to the manifestation of colorism. One possible explanation for the manifestation of the racial divide between lighter-skinned and darker-skinned Blacks is an internalized value that Blacks place on skin tone. For example, some darker-skinned African Americans may accuse lighter-skinned African Americans of not being “Black enough.” Harvey, LaBeach, Prigden and Gocial (2005) argued that intragroup skin tone stigma is a structural/political and psychosocial dilemma for Black Americans. Regardless of whether the stigma comes from within or outside of the African American community, understanding colorism is essential because of the influence it has on such variables as self-esteem and mental health. It is also important to explore this issue scientifically in order to dispel stereotypes that some Whites and Blacks and other races may believe, such as lighter-skinned Blacks are more intelligent than darker-skinned Blacks.

The Influence of Skin Tone in the African American Community

Early research on the relationship between skin tone and intelligence among Blacks was reviewed in 1966 by Shuey (Lynn, 2002). Shuey reviewed findings from 18 studies and concluded that an association between lightness of skin and intelligence was found in 16 of the studies. Considering the social climate of this time period, it is not surprising that research supported higher intelligence among Blacks with lighter skin. However, Lynn (2002) recently published research suggesting that the level of intelligence in African Americans is significantly

determined by the proportion of Caucasian genes that they possess. Lynn used data from a National Opinion Research Center (NORC) survey that was conducted in 1982. The survey asked respondents if they described themselves as Black, White or other and also asked individuals who reported that they were Black to identify themselves as very dark, dark brown, medium brown, light brown or very light brown. Data were also collected from a vocabulary test that consisted of 10 words whose meaning had to be given. Lynn found that Whites ($M = 6.18$, $SD = 2.06$) scored significantly higher than Blacks ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 2.08$). In addition, he found that Blacks with light brown skin ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 2.16$) had significantly higher scores than Blacks with dark brown skin ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.76$). Lynn concluded that these results confirmed the genetic hypothesis and that the proportion of Caucasian genes that Blacks had influenced their level of intelligence.

Lynn's (2002) results were very controversial and received significant criticism. For instance, Hill (2002) published research suggesting that Lynn's results were flawed because he only used bivariate statistics in his analysis and he did not consider the influence of childhood environmental factors. Hill also argued that Lynn erroneously reported that Blacks had to self-identify their skin tone. Hill stated that this was not true because trained African American interviewers assigned skin tone to those individuals who reported that they were Black. Hill used multivariate statistics and controlled for education and other childhood background characteristics when re-analyzing the dataset that Lynn used. He argued that because lighter-skinned African Americans are more likely to be born into higher status families than their darker counterparts, their childhood environments and educational backgrounds are more conducive to the development of cognitive skills. He found that the association between skin color and test scores was fully explained by educational and other childhood advantages enjoyed by Blacks with lighter-skin. Hill concluded that the data does not support the genetic hypothesis

and that the privilege that lighter-skinned African Americans received was responsible for the intelligence gap between lighter-skinned and darker-skinned African Americans.

These studies illustrate the complexities of skin tone research and highlight the influence of skin tone on issues directly related to quality of life, such as intelligence. A great majority of the literature focuses on the intelligence gap between Blacks and Whites. Therefore, more research is needed on intragroup differences among Blacks and intelligence (Averhart & Bigler, 1997). Results from this research have huge implications for the skin tone hierarchy in the African American community. Despite the gap in the literature on intragroup skin tone differences in African Americans and intelligence, there has been a considerable amount of research that focuses on other variables, such as individual's perceptions of the skin tone hierarchy and self-esteem among lighter and darker skinned African Americans.

Maddox and Gray (2002) recently investigated how skin tone affects the perception and representation of Blacks. This study was based upon the idea that categorizing people is one of the factors that contribute to stereotypes. The goal of this study was to investigate how lighter-skinned and darker-skinned Blacks were categorized and if it contributed to stereotypes about the two groups. In the first study conducted by Maddox and Gray, Black and White participants viewed a group discussion in which either the race or the skin tone of the six discussants varied. They were told to form an impression of the discussants based on the statements that they made during the discussion. After viewing this discussion, participants were asked to match certain statements, which were related to what activities the group should participate in (i.e., "We should do something outside since it's nice," "Let's find out what's playing at the movie theater"), with the photographs of the discussant that they thought made the statement. Results revealed that participants used skin tone as an organizing principle in social perception. For example, when individuals observed a discussion between light-skinned and dark-skinned Blacks, within-category errors were more frequent than between-category errors in a statement matching task.

Based on this finding, Maddox and Gray conducted a second study to determine if these errors in categorization lead to stereotypes about light-skinned and dark-skinned Blacks.

In the second study (Maddox & Gray, 2000), participants from study 1 were asked to fill out a trait questionnaire that was designed to measure their cultural and personal beliefs about dark-skinned Black women and men and light-skinned Black women and men. Results revealed that Blacks and Whites were more likely to attribute traits such as tough/aggressive, uneducated, and unintelligent to dark-skinned men and women than light-skinned men and women. These results suggest that the same stereotypes that occur between Blacks and Whites are also evident among light-skinned and dark-skinned African Americans. These results support an intragroup stigmatization that occurs in the African American community. There is also research to support the notion that intragroup stigmatization in the Black community is moderated by other variables, such as racial context.

Harvey, LaBeach, Prigden and Gocial (2005) argued that skin tone stigma is heavily influenced by its context because an attribute can be stigmatizing in one context and empowering in another. Harvey et al. recruited Black participants from predominately White and predominately Black universities and asked them to complete surveys on their attitudes and experiences. They were also asked to fill out a Skin-Tone Picture scale, a Likert type measure of skin tone, racial identity, self-esteem, racial self-esteem, perceived peer-group acceptance, and skin-color importance. One of the major findings was that participants who attended the predominately Black school placed significantly more importance on skin tone than those who attended the predominately White school. Skin tone was strongly associated with perceived acceptance from peers within the predominately Black context but not in the predominately White context. These results support the idea of an intragroup stigmatization among African Americans. Skin tone variation was more salient in the predominately Black context. Other research suggests that context is not the only variable that influences skin tone bias outcomes.

Thompson and Keith (2001) found that gender influences the relationship between skin tone and evaluations of self-worth and self-competence. Using data from the National Survey of Black Americans, Thompson and Keith gathered data collected on self-esteem, self-efficacy, and skin tone. They found that skin tone influences self-efficacy for both men and women. African American men and women who had lighter skin had significantly higher feelings of perceived mastery, or self-efficacy. However, the skin tone effect on self-efficacy was much stronger for men. Interestingly, the results on self-esteem seem to reflect opposite results. Skin tone influences self-esteem for women, but not for men. Women with lighter skin had significantly higher self-esteem levels than women with darker skin. These results suggest that skin tone plays a huge role in areas that are most relevant to individuals' role in societies. For example, men are expected to display masculine characteristics (i.e., competence, or self-efficacy) and women are expected to display feminine characteristics (i.e., nurturing and receiving their value from others, or self-esteem). Therefore, self-efficacy is more relevant for men and self-esteem is more relevant for women. Skin tone influences this relationship based on stereotypes that exist about light skin and dark skin tones in the African American community. For example, darker-skinned men are often seen as more dangerous and threatening to the society than lighter-skinned men. As a result, darker-skinned men have a harder time displaying potential competencies because they are excluded from certain employment opportunities. Research also supports the notion that skin color influences how physically attractive African Americans are perceived to be.

Frisby (2006) argued that beauty is equated with lighter-skinned African Americans. This idea is supported by the common use of light-skinned Black models to advertise products, such as Revlon cosmetics. In addition, research suggests that skin color is highly correlated with other phenotypic features, such as eye color, hair texture, broadness of nose and fullness of lips (Thompson & Keith, 2001). In order to test her hypothesis, Frisby told participants that the purpose of her experiment was to help a local advertising agency select the right endorser, a

woman between the ages of 18-25, for a health campaign about exercise and nutrition. Frisby manipulated the real picture of four models by keeping their facial features the same, but changing their skin tone. After participants viewed these pictures, they were asked to rate the attractiveness of the model. Results revealed that participants found the light brown images of Black women to be more attractive than the darker brown images of Black women. Unfortunately, this idea is also reflected in African American women's use of skin lighteners and other products, such as the use of the straightening comb to straighten kinky hair. Our society seems to support lighter skin, straighter hair, smaller noses and other European phenotypic features (Glenn, 2008).

The research presented in this section is only a small glimpse of the research conducted in this area. Other references for studies on skin tone bias in the African American community are listed in the "Additional Readings" section.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Research in this review reveals the importance of colorism within the African American community. These findings have implications for all areas of life. For example, it would be important for a therapist to know that lighter-skinned women are more likely to have a higher self-esteem than darker-skinned women. This finding will influence their treatment plan because the therapist might have to address the presenting problem, as well as skin tone issues that influence self-esteem. In addition, these results can spark much debate around the selection of models, the use of skin lighteners in the United States and other issues that have been found to be influenced by the skin tone hierarchy in the African American community. Given the huge implications that these types of studies have, future research should continue to not only include studies of how and why skin tone influences outcomes for African Americans but also discuss ways to eliminate the stereotypes and stigmatization that exist. African Americans cannot stand against racism from other racial groups until they stand against colorism from each other.

Interestingly, African Americans often discuss how the “White man,” for example, keeps them down because of their skin color. Although this may have its grains of truth, African Americans also play a role in discrimination by stigmatizing people of their own race based on the color of their skin. Therefore, more research should focus on the importance of eliminating these intragroup stereotypes that keep African Americans divided. Even though this issue is not discussed as openly as it should be in the African American community, colorism is apparent consciously and unconsciously via words and actions of some African Americans (and other races), as evidenced by the research presented above. This issue is so embedded in our society that one would have to wonder, if Barack Obama was a darker-skinned Black man, would he have won the presidential election? If everyone agreed that he was well qualified for the job, would society still have supported him if he were a darker-skinned Black? Although the answer is up for debate, the research seems to suggest that he may have not been elected or have gained as much respect if he were of a darker complexion. What role does science play in this debate? How can we stop colorism? Although this is a sensitive topic, it needs to be discussed more within the African American community and the field of Psychology because colorism has similar, if not worse, effects than racism.

¹ The terms African American and Black are used interchangeably.

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What Evidence-Based Interventions are Available to Reduce Drug Use Among African American Adolescents?

A Kathleen Burlew, Ph.D.
University of Cincinnati

Randi D. Burlew, Ph.D.
Philliber Research Associates

Candace S. Johnson
University of Cincinnati

Bridgette J. Peteet
University of Cincinnati

Stephanie N. Smith
University of Cincinnati

Abstract

The CNN documentary, *Black in America*, illustrated the negative impact of drugs in the lives of African American adolescents. This paper complements that documentary by addressing several issues essential to combating drug use among African American adolescents. The first issue is the need for interventions with demonstrated efficacy for African American adolescents specifically. The second issue is to recognize the lessons learned from the available research. These lessons are discussed in sections on the promise and challenges of family- and school-based interventions and a section on the curriculum appropriate for various age groups. The final section discusses three issues to consider in a future culturally sensitive research agenda. These include the need for more culturally-tailored interventions, the development of interventions that target known risk and protective factors for African American adolescents, and the need for new approaches to the recruitment and retention of African American adolescents in clinical trials.

The impact of drugs on the lives on African Americans was vividly illustrated in the recent CNN documentary, *Black in America*. Drugs touched the lives of Kenneth Roy Allen and Jaymee Warren at a young age. Their paths to drug- related problems were very different and reflect the heterogeneity within the African American community. Kenneth Roy Allen began to use drugs prior to becoming a teenager. Later, his promising start as a standout high school athlete spiraled downward until he found himself incarcerated. Butch Warren, Jaymee's father, grew up in the same inner city neighborhood as Kenneth Roy Allen. However, Butch managed to avoid pressures in his neighborhood to use drugs. In fact, he eventually became a successful professional who could provide an affluent suburban lifestyle for his three sons. Yet, one of his sons, Jaymee, was arrested for an incident that occurred at a drug house.

Unfortunately, the stories of Kenneth and Jaymee are far too common and they illustrate the negative impact of drugs on the development of African American adolescents. It is noteworthy that the Monitoring the Future (MFP) survey of nearly 50,000 youth revealed that African American adolescents engage in less licit and illicit drug use than White adolescents (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2007). However, as the CNN documentary accurately portrayed, the negative consequences associated with drug use such as the risk of HIV

transmission (CDC, 2008; Galea & Rudenstein, 2005), the negative health and social consequences (Strycker, Duncan & Pickering, 2003), and substance abuse-related legal involvement (Shillington & Clapp, 2003) are more severe among African Americans. Moreover, as described in the CNN documentary, drug-related crimes account for a disproportionate number of the African Americans who become incarcerated, especially among males (Iguchi, 2005).

In the CNN documentary, Kenneth Roy Allen began to experiment with drugs even before he became a teenager. Experimentation with drugs and alcohol occurs early for too many youth. Abbey, Jacques, Hayman, and Sobeck (2006) found that 50% of their sample of both urban (primarily African American) and suburban (White) adolescents had experimented with alcohol by the end of the sixth grade. Our own work supports this same pattern. We recently followed a group of African American adolescents during these vulnerable years. Our study only included those who self-reported no prior use of alcohol or any other drugs when they enrolled in the study during the 6th grade. However, by the 7th and 8th grades, 55 and 60 percent, respectively, of these same adolescents who earlier self-reported abstinence were reporting some experimentation with drugs or alcohol (Burlew, Johnson, Flowers et al., in press).

Ideally, evidence-based interventions would eliminate drug use in the next generation altogether. However, the available research suggests that even the less ambitious goal of delaying the onset of drug use has very positive benefits for adolescents. For example, a study by Flory, Brown, Lynam et al. (2006) illustrates that delaying the onset of alcohol use from even the 6th to the 9th grades can substantially reduce the amount of alcohol use in early adulthood. Moreover, Horton (2007) reported that the amount of alcohol use by the 8th graders was 3.5 times higher among African American adolescents who experimented with alcohol before the 6th grade than among those who did not.

This paper addresses the issue of drug use as portrayed in the CNN documentary. The paper has several objectives. The first objective is to describe evidence-based prevention and treatment interventions that are currently available for African American adolescents. The second objective is to provide a brief critique of the lessons learned from a review of these studies of evidence-based interventions. The final objective is to discuss issues that must be considered in future research in order to address drug use among African American adolescents effectively.

*What Evidence-Based Interventions are Available to Reduce
Drug Use Among African American Adolescents?*

Kenneth Roy Allen's battle with drugs was lengthy. There was no indication in the documentary that he participated in any effective treatment along the way. Eventually, however, he seemed to have overcome the addiction on his own and turned his life into something quite positive. If effective prevention or treatment had been available to him during his adolescence, perhaps his journey would have been very different. Before discussing the current set of effective treatments for African American adolescents, the method of inquiry used to locate and select the effective interventions is described.

Mode of Inquiry

The mode of inquiry included a search of both the *PsychINFO* and/or PubMed databases. The keyword "African American" was included in all searches. However, the terms added to the keyword "African American" included "substance use", "drug use", "treatment", and "prevention." We also used four recent reviews by Huey and Polo (2008), Office of Substance Abuse Services (2003), Szapocznik, Prado, Burlew, Williams, and Santisteban (2007), and Waldron and Turner (2008) as sources.

We used the selection criteria for inclusion in this paper that were previously established by Nathan and Gorman (2002) to identify evidence-based treatments. Nathan and

Gorman categorize treatment outcome studies into six types based on the level of research rigor. Type 1 studies are the most rigorous and include the commonly accepted components of a strong research design such as random assignment to a treatment or comparison group, strong measurement, and clearly described statistical measurement. Type 2 studies are also strong but may not meet one of the Type 1 criteria. However, the limitation to the design cannot be considered a fatal flaw. The other four categories in the Nathan and Gorman system are weaker designs. We are limiting this review to treatment outcome studies that meet the requirements for a Type 1 or Type 2 study in the Nathan and Gorman system. We added two other criteria to tailor the studies to our topic. First, only those interventions that demonstrated a reduction in drug use or other drug related variables (e.g., drug attitudes) were included. Second, we added an additional criterion to identify studies with demonstrated efficacy specifically for African Americans. This criterion is consistent with the concern of the American Psychological Association (APA) Presidential Task Force on Evidence-Based Practice (2006). That APA Task Force stressed the importance of determining which interventions work for which clients. The same Task Force argued that ethnicity is one of the characteristics that should be considered when determining whether an intervention is evidence-based. We used the guidelines established by Huey and Polo (2008) to determine whether an intervention met this criterion. That team proposed that a study with demonstrated efficacy is considered effective with African Americans if it meets any one of the following three conditions: (1) sample must be at least 75% African American or (2) separate analyses were conducted specifically on the African American subsample or (3) analyses were conducted to indicate that ethnicity did not moderate the relationship between treatment type and outcomes.

Evidence-based Interventions

The evidence-based interventions for African American adolescents that meet the criteria described earlier are presented in Table 1. Six of the seven interventions were identified earlier in

Szapocznik, Prado, Burlew, Williams, & Santisteban (2007). The seven interventions include six prevention interventions (Strong African American Families [SAAF]), Strengthening Families Program (SFP), Life Skills Training (LST), the Family School Partnership (FSP) and Classroom Centered (CC) interventions for first graders¹, Multidimensional Family Prevention (MDFP), School-based health center (SBHC) but only one treatment intervention, Multisystemic Therapy (MST).

Prevention.

The six prevention interventions differed in their target age groups. The target group was younger elementary school children for the FSP and CC programs. The School Based Health Center (SBHC) was designed for older adolescents in the 9th grade and beyond. The remaining programs served adolescents age 10-12 making the transition from elementary to junior high or middle school. The curriculum or program components of the programs serving these various age groups had some important differences.

The intervention for first graders was actually two separate programs---Classroom Centered (CC) and Family School Partnerships (FSP). Neither program addressed drug use directly. Instead, both targeted factors demonstrated to increase (risk factors) or decrease (protective) the risk of future drug use. Only children and their teachers participated in the Classroom Centered (CC) program. That intervention emphasized behavioral management and included training on constructive approaches to social problem solving. The FSP program was a family program intended to strengthen the family-school bond. The intervention included teacher training aimed at increasing the involvement of the parent in the child's academic life, home-school collaborative activities, and workshops for parents. The sustainability of the outcomes for both programs was especially impressive. Relative to a comparison group of children, children

¹ This study actually included two separate interventions: Family School Partnership and Classroom Centered interventions.

who participated in either of these programs demonstrated lower rates of tobacco use up to six years later.

The mean age for the second group of interventions was 10.5 for the SFP participants (with a range of 10-14) and 12.5 for the MDFP intervention.. The majority of these interventions were family interventions. Typically, the curriculum included separate sessions for adolescents and their parents along with joint discussion sessions. The separate sessions for adolescents included activities directly related to the onset of drug use (e.g., resisting peer pressure) as well as training in racial socialization or general life skills. The separate parent sessions included training in adolescent development, discipline, and monitoring of their adolescent child. One of the family programs, MDFP, included an extra-familial component aimed at building stronger collaborations with the social systems involved in the adolescent's life (e.g., school, recreational center). The number of family sessions varied from a low of 6 (SFP 10-14) to a high of 15-25 (MDFP) weekly sessions. In addition to a reduction in drug use, the outcomes included the reduction of risk factors such as the extent to which participating adolescents engaged in other problem behaviors (SAAF, SFP 10-14) or associated with an antisocial peer group (MDFP). The outcomes also included an increase in protective factors such as positive parenting or family relations (SAAF, MDFP, SFP 10-14), and school bonding (MDFP). Several of these interventions only assessed the outcomes at the end of the intervention (SFP 10-14, MDFP). However, for other interventions, the positive outcomes were assessed and remained evident 29 months after enrollment (SAAF).

Life Skills Training (LST), the one program for the middle age group that was not a family program, was a school-based program. The intervention included 12 classroom sessions focusing on resistance skills as well as general life skills. The outcomes included less use of tobacco and more knowledge of the adverse consequences associated with tobacco use. These positive outcomes were still evident during a two year follow-up.

The intervention for the oldest age group (14-18+) was a School Based Health Center (SBHC). The services were substantially different from the services for the children and younger adolescents. The SBHC integrated classroom education and individual counseling on alcohol and drug prevention with routine physical and mental health assessments. Outreach was a key component. The students in participating schools reported less drug use six months after initiation of the program.

Treatment.

The options available for prevention greatly outnumber the options for treatment programs with demonstrated efficacy for African American adolescents. In fact, only one of the seven evidence-based interventions provided treatment, whereas the others were prevention. An emphasis on prevention is more consistent with a public health approach. Nevertheless, this imbalance suggests the need for more evidence-based treatments for African American adolescents. The one evidence-based treatment, Multisystemic therapy (MST), differed in some fundamental ways from the prevention programs described above. First, the prevention programs served any child or adolescent living in a target neighborhood or attending a target school. However, MST served adolescents with more severe behavioral problems. The participants were juvenile offenders at imminent risk of out-of-home placement. Even though no solid information was presented on whether these adolescents were already using drugs or alcohol, both the number of drug related offenses as well as the fact that the control group was acknowledging significantly more alcohol and marijuana use at the posttest evaluation than the MST group both suggest that many of these youth were already involved in alcohol and marijuana use. Second, even though this intervention was family-based, it differed from the family-based prevention programs in several important ways. The therapist worked with an individual family rather than with a group of families. The family therapy sessions were directed at reducing dysfunctional family interactions and other negative systemic factors assumed to be contributing substantially

to the adolescent's maladaptive behaviors. Moreover, based on the assumption that the same family dynamics that may be adversely affecting the adolescent's behavior often serve as a barrier for providing services to these families, the family therapy sessions could be provided in the home to increase the likelihood of family involvement. The mean age for the MST group (15.1) was similar to the oldest age group for the prevention programs. The outcomes of the MST program were positive. Specifically, MST participants reported less alcohol and marijuana use at the end of treatment than the control group.

It should be mentioned that Jose Szapocznik and colleagues recently completed the data collection for a national multi-site study funded by the NIDA Clinical Trials Network (CTN) to evaluate the efficacy of an alternative family treatment intervention, Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT). Even though the findings are not yet available, the preliminary results for African Americans look promising (Robbins & Feaster, 2009). The BSFT intervention is similar to MST in that the therapist is trained to diagnose and then address dysfunctional family interactions. BSFT therapy sessions frequently happen in the family home as well. BSFT has already been demonstrated to be effective in a study of Hispanic adolescents (Santisteban, Coatsworth, Perez-Vidal et al., 2003) and in another study that did not differentiate the outcomes for African American and Hispanic adolescents (Santisteban, Coatsworth, Perez-Vidal, et al., 1997). Fortunately, the CTN study includes sufficient numbers of African Americans to look at the outcomes specifically within that group.

Lessons Learned

Several conclusions can be drawn from this review of the available interventions. Two specific conclusions focus on the two intervention types that dominate the current set of evidence-based interventions: (1) family-based and (2) school-based interventions. The third conclusion is a more general one regarding the types of interventions that are appropriate for different age groups.

(1) The promise of family-based programs

The available evidence makes a strong case for involving the family in the intervention. The outcomes of the prevention programs suggest that it is feasible to design prevention programs to work with multiple families together. However, for troubled adolescents or adolescents already involved in drug use, it appears important to work with individual families using a family therapy approach. Moreover, it may even be advantageous or necessary to take the therapy to the home setting for this group.

(2) The potential and limitations of school-based programs

Even though family-based programs offer great promise, it is not feasible to engage every family in an intervention. For that reason, it is fortunate that effective school-based models are available at the younger elementary (CC), middle age group (LST), and high school (SBHC) ages. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the school-based programs at this point only included prevention and not treatment. Consequently, alternatives to family treatment for troubled African American adolescents who may already have been significantly involved in drug use are needed.

(3) Appropriate curriculum varies according to the age of the adolescent

The interventions demonstrated the value of having prevention interventions from younger elementary school age children to older adolescents. However, the curriculum for the various age groups varied in some meaningful ways. The curriculum varied from general social skills and effective parenting skills for younger elementary school children to peer resistance skills, racial socialization, and training in parental monitoring for middle school age adolescents to integrating prevention with comprehensive health services for older adolescents.

A Culturally Sensitive Research Agenda: Future Directions

The need for an effective research agenda for designing additional evidence-based interventions for African American adolescents is clear. Several factors are worthy of consideration in the development of such an intervention. These include the available

information on the impact of culturally tailored programs, risk and protective factors, and the challenges of recruiting and retaining African American adolescents in research and clinical services. Each is discussed below.

Culturally Tailored Interventions

The case for the development of culturally tailored interventions is strong. Heron, Twomey, Jacobs, and Kaslow (1997) report that ethnic minorities frequently report that helping professionals appear insensitive to the impact of race and cultural contexts on the problems ethnic minorities bring to treatment and to other aspects of their lives. This perceived lack of cultural competency in helping professionals likely impacts the effectiveness of interventions. For that reason, it is not surprising that culturally tailored interventions have been demonstrated to be effective across a number of areas such as improving health behaviors (Resnicow, Soler, Braithwaite, Ahluwalia, & Butler, 2000), reducing risky sexual behaviors (Walls, Lauby, Lavelle, Derby & Bond, 1998), and even improving academic outcomes (Tucker & Herman, 2002). The same advantages of culturally tailored interventions apparent in other areas appear to be present in drug prevention (Botvin, Batson, Witts-Vitale, Bess, Baker, & Dusenbury, 1989; Brody, Murry, Kogan, Gerrard, & Gibbons, 2006) and treatment (Lipkus et al., 1999; Longshore & Grills, 2000; Voorhees, 1996) interventions. No clear consensus exists on the best way to ensure that a program is culturally tailored. However, the reader is referred to two discussions on this topic by Resnicow et al. (2000) and Bernal, Bonilla, & Bellido (1995).

The list of evidence-based interventions includes both culturally tailored versions of generic interventions and actual generic versions of interventions. SAAF, SFP, and LST were all adapted from generic programs but culturally tailored to be more effective with African American adolescents. However, the generic versions of the other programs (FSP and CC, MFP, and MST) have been demonstrated to be effective for African American adolescents.

Risk and Protective Factors

One important approach to designing a culturally tailored program is to target the risk and protective factors demonstrated to be associated with drug use among African American adolescents. Hawkins and colleagues (1992) identified 17 risk factors for drug use for all adolescents. These risk factors might be classified as either individual (early and persistent problems behaviors, academic failure, low school commitment, peer rejection, association with drug using peers, alienation and rebelliousness, attitudes favorable to drug use, early onset of drug use, physiological factors), familial (family alcohol/drug behavior and attitudes, poor or inconsistent family management, family conflict, low family bonding) or contextual (laws and norms favorable to drug use, drug availability, economic deprivation) factors. Using Hawkins' set of risk factors, Wallace and Muroff (2002) searched for literature that addressed the following two questions: (a) Do African American and White adolescents differ in the exposure to these risk factors? and (b) Do African American and White adolescents differ in vulnerability (i.e., the extent to which these factors are associated with drug use) to these risk factors? Their findings revealed several interesting differences. The research suggests that African Americans are exposed to more economic deprivation, availability of drugs, and academic problems. However, White youth appear more vulnerable to these particular risk factors than African Americans. Wallace and Muroff did not examine whether experiencing multiple risk factors increases the risks exponentially. However, as Kenneth Roy Allen demonstrated in the CNN documentary, drug use frequently does not occur in isolation but often is one of a constellation of problem behaviors. Given that reality, it may be useful to develop interventions that assess and address co-occurring risk factors.

Previous research on drug use among African American adolescents has focused on risk factors and does not appear to have given adequate attention to protective factors. This shortcoming is a barrier to the incorporation of protective factors in the development of effective

prevention and treatment interventions. The limited available information suggests several potential protective factors. Spirituality and religion may serve an important protective role for avoiding drug use (Strada & Donohue, 2006). It is noteworthy that religion played an essential role in Ken Roy Allen's eventual triumph over drug addiction in the CNN documentary. In addition, social support from involvement in the community, and resiliency may also be important protective factors for reducing vulnerability to drug abuse among African American adolescents (Strada & Donohue, 2006).

Brody, McBride Murry, and Gerrard et al. (2006) found that regulated, communicative parenting is a protective factor for African American adolescents. In their research, regulated, communicative parenting includes high levels of monitoring and control, clearly communicated expectations about alcohol, communication about sex, and racial socialization.

The importance of racial socialization highlighted by Brody et al. (2006) is related to a broader issue of the extent to which racial factors may be either risk or protective factors in preventing drug use among African American adolescents. The activities in the Brody et al. intervention for implementing racial socialization involve communicating racial pride as well as equipping the youth with tools for the realistic challenges they will face as they interact in a world in which African Americans may experience devaluation. Other researchers have found that ethnic pride (Gil, Wagner, & Tubman ;2004) as well as positive attitudes about being African American (Belgrave 2002; Belgrave et al.,1997; Caldwell et al., 2006; Resnicow et al., 1999) are associated with more anti-drug attitudes and less drug use. However, exposure to discrimination has the opposite effect. Perceived discrimination was a forerunner to the legal problems that both Kenneth Ray Allen and Breland Smith² experienced in the CNN documentary. Similarly, a connection between discrimination and both alcohol and marijuana use has been

² Breland Smith was the young man in the CNN documentary whose response to what he perceived as police discrimination led to his arrest and later criminal charges.

demonstrated in previous research (Gil, Wagner, & Tubman, 2004). While risk factors associated with race have certainly been studied, research on racial identity as a protective factor would further contribute to the design of effective culturally tailored interventions.

*Recruiting and Retaining African American Adolescents
in Treatment and Treatment Research*

The underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in clinical trials is a barrier to developing effective interventions for African Americans and other ethnic groups. This gap led the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop a set of *Guidelines for the Inclusion of Women and Minorities as Subjects in Clinical Research*. Recruitment and retention are both important components for achieving inclusion.

Recruitment.

The inclusion of African Americans in clinical trials may require intentional strategies not only because of the potential distrust of medical researchers in the community, but also because of socioeconomic barriers to participation (e.g., lack of transportation, need for child care, competing family responsibilities) (Yancey et al., 2006). Discussions of effective approaches to recruiting African American adolescents are beyond the scope of this paper. However, the reader is referred to several models for the effective recruitment of African Americans into clinical trials. One model is a clinic-based recruitment approach described by Alvarez et al. (2006). Another by Packett et al. (1996) includes a set of strategies for selecting the community, introducing the project to the community, removing barriers to participation, and for providing monetary and non-monetary incentives to encourage participation. Finally, Gubrium and Brown (2006) recently published an article titled *Lessons Learned from Taking Data Collection to the 'Hood'*. The article describes several specific strategies for improving community response to academic research.

Retention.

Shillington and Clapp (2003) report that African American youth are more likely to withdraw from treatment prematurely and to express greater dissatisfaction in the treatment they receive. Several recent studies provide useful information on retaining African American adolescents in treatment. First, Robbins et al. (under review) found that engagement and retention rates were higher for African American adolescents in family than individual treatment. Second, Robbins et al. (2006) reported that a successful therapeutic alliance between the therapist and the adolescent and between the therapist and the parent in family therapy both increased the likelihood of treatment completion. That finding suggests the need to incorporate activities aimed at strengthening these alliances early in the intervention. Jackson-Gilfort et al. (2001) found that discussing cultural themes (e.g., anger, alienation, respect, transition from boyhood to manhood) enhanced the therapist-adolescent alliance and engagement of African American adolescent males.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper contributes to the available work by identifying, summarizing, and critiquing the available evidence-based treatments for African American adolescents. Those interventions include both prevention and treatment interventions. However, we note that despite the effectiveness of both models more prevention options are available than treatment options. This review provides evidence for the usefulness of culturally tailored family and school-based interventions. Prevention activities have demonstrated utility throughout childhood and adolescence, although the appropriate curriculum for the younger elementary school children is markedly different than the curriculum for the middle age and older age groups. This paper also contributes to the existing literature by articulating an agenda for future research that includes the consideration of the advantages of culturally tailored interventions, the incorporation of a focus on those risk and protective factors demonstrated to be associated with drug use specifically

among African American adolescents, and a plan to address issues of recruitment and retention for research studies. The design and utilization of culturally tailored interventions would be an important step in ameliorating the impact of drug use in African American communities. As a result, there might be fewer stories like those of Kenneth Roy Allen and Jaymee Warren in the future.

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Table 1: Summary of Evidence Based Interventions for African American Adolescents

Program/Citation/ Description	Number of Participants/ Age/ Number of Sessions/ Outcomes
Prevention Interventions	
<p>Strengthening African American Families Program (SAAF)</p> <p>Brody, McBride, Murry, Gerrard, et al., 2006a Brody, McBride Murry, Kogan, et al., 2006b</p> <p>Description: The Strong African American Families (SAAF) includes separate concurrent sessions for adolescents and parents but each is followed by a joint session. Parents receive training in vigilant parenting and strategies for communicating about racial socialization, sex, and expectations about alcohol use. The adolescent sessions emphasize the importance of family relationships, racial identity, resisting peer pressure, and compliance with household rules.</p>	<p>N: 332 families</p> <p>Age: <u>M</u>=11</p> <p>Number of Sessions: 7</p> <p>Outcomes: Parents rated higher on positive parenting behaviors and in regulated, communicative parenting. Adolescents rated lower in risky behaviors, less likely to initiate alcohol use, and demonstrated slower increases in use over time.</p>
<p>Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14 (SFP 10-14).</p> <p>Spoth, Guyll, Chao, & Molgaard, 2003</p> <p>Description: This program was adapted from the Strengthening Families Program to be more appropriate for African American adolescents between the ages of 10-14. Each session has an adolescent, parent, and family component. The sessions emphasize both risk and protective factors.</p>	<p>N: 85 families</p> <p>Age: <u>M</u>= 10.5</p> <p>Number of Sessions: 6</p> <p>Outcomes: Adolescents engaged in more positive behaviors.</p>
<p>Life Skills Training (LST)</p> <p>Botvin, Batson, Witts-Vitale et al., 1989</p> <p>Description: The intervention was adapted from the generic Life Skills Program to be more</p>	<p>N: 608 students</p> <p>Grade Level: Junior High</p> <p>Number of Sessions: 12</p>

<p>appropriate for African American adolescents. The school based sessions were intended to prevent smoking by emphasizing resistance skills and general life skills.</p>	<p>Outcomes: LST group was less likely than the control condition to initiate smoking and more aware of the negative consequences associated with smoking.</p>
<p>Classroom Centered (CC) and Family School Partnership (FSP)</p> <p>Storr, Ialonga, Kellam, & Anthony, 2002</p> <p>Description: The intervention included either a classroom centered (CC) component or a family school partnership (FSP) to address behavior management issues. CC included a curriculum in critical thinking, composition and curriculum on behavior management practices utilized Good Behavior Game (GBG), a group game that promotes child social problem The FSP included training for teachers on partnering with parents and training for parents on increasing home-school learning and effective discipline strategies.</p>	<p>N: 678 students</p> <p>Age: M= 6.2</p> <p>Number of Sessions: 7 (Parent Workshop)</p> <p>Outcomes: A six year follow up revealed that students receiving either intervention were less likely to use tobacco than the controls.</p>
<p>Multidimensional Family Prevention (MDFP)</p> <p>Hogue, Liddle, Becker & Johnson-Leckrone, 2002</p> <p>Description: Initial sessions focus on family assessment across seven risk/protective domains. Counseling includes both adolescent, parent and interactional modules. An extrafamilial module focuses on collaborations with the social systems involved in the adolescent's life (e.g., school, recreational center).</p>	<p>N: 124 families</p> <p>Age: M= 12.5</p> <p>Number of Sessions: 15-25</p> <p>Outcomes: Participants in the family prevention counseling demonstrated improvements in global self-worth, family cohesion, school bonding , and a decrease in antisocial behavior.</p>
<p>School Based Health Clinic (SBHC).</p> <p>Robinson, Harper, & Schoeny (2003)</p> <p>Description: The intervention included the availability of a school-based Health Center (SBHC). The SBHC provided routine physical</p>	<p>N: 2114 students</p> <p>Age: 14 to 18+</p> <p>Outcomes: 11th graders in SBCH self reported less tobacco and marijuana use than 11th graders in non SBCH schools.</p>

<p>and mental health assessment. In addition, the intervention included outreach and group services, individual counseling, and receipt of medication. Classroom education and individual counseling on alcohol and drug prevention were both included.</p>	
<p>Therapy Intervention</p>	
<p>Multisystemic Therapy (MST).</p> <p>Henggeler, Borduin, Melton et al., 1991</p> <p>Description: This home-based family therapy is aimed at reducing dysfunctional family interactions and other negative systemic factors in the youth's social environment.</p>	<p>N: 47 families</p> <p>Age: M= 15.1</p> <p>Number of Sessions: N.A.</p> <p>Outcomes: Adolescents receiving MST reported less alcohol and marijuana use.</p>

African American High School Students' Reading Comprehension
Performance as a Function of Academic Enrichment Program Exposure

Rihana S. Williams, Ph.D.

Department of Psychology
Georgia State University

Omer Ari

Department of Psychology
Georgia State University

Cedrick Dortch

College of Education
Georgia State University

Abstract

Low reading performance among African American disadvantaged youth has persisted nationally (NAEP, 2005); however, certain enrichment programs designed to increase college enrollment may improve reading scores. This study compared the performance of two groups of African American high school students on measures of reading comprehension and reading rate as a function of their exposure to Upward Bound. Students in Group A ($n=19$) were new to the Upward Bound program while Group B ($n=10$) previously attended for at least one academic year. Results indicated that prior exposure to the program reinforces students' response to program components. While both groups achieved similarly at the beginning of the summer Upward Bound program, students in Group B outperformed students in Group A on all reading measures at the conclusion of the program. Positive implications for African American youth's exposure to Upward Bound are discussed.

Statistics and stigmas that reinforce the idea that African American adolescents, particularly males, are "fruitless" and "doomed to failure" because of education insufficiency, drug addictions, crime, etc. are continuously perpetuated by many outlets of the media (Stinson, 2006) and were reiterated by the recent media coverage by the Cable News Network (CNN) documentary *Black in America*. The documentary highlighted research evidence that demonstrates that growing up in disadvantaged backgrounds has negative effects on academic achievement very early in development and continues its influence into adolescence and adulthood. In general, disadvantaged families have increased risk factors due to their family demographic factors including ethnicity, poverty level, mother's education, and household structure. Children who live in low-income households and/or with a parent with limited formal education generally participate in fewer home literacy activities than children in households with higher levels of income and/or parental education (Nord, Lennon, Liu, & Chandler, 2000).

Black in America also reinforced knowledge about the state of education for African American students. The documentary chose to highlight various examples of African American youth who either struggled with obtaining secondary education resulting in failure or who had struggled with secondary education but succeeded because they took advantage of a special program aimed at solving their educational challenges. One example involved the participation

of an African American male in a program sponsored by a grassroots organization that goes into homes to bring students back to school with the purpose of reducing soaring high school dropout rates. This youth initially returned to school; however, he later dropped out of school again. A second example involved several youth who enrolled in magnet schools and later successfully enrolled into a postsecondary institution.

From the examples offered by the documentary, several existing education solutions for African American youth became apparent. First, it is unclear from the documentary how effective the grassroots efforts are at curbing the dropout rate in African American males. Enrollment in magnet schools was also portrayed as a solution for educational success. Magnet schools are designed to create racial/ethnic diversity in a public school setting while emphasizing a particular academic or social theme (Dalton, Sable, & Hoffman, 2006). There is scant research on the effects of attending magnet schools on minority students' academic achievement and the extant research is unclear (Blank, 1990; Dentler, 1990a). Some early data reveal superior reading and mathematics scores in students attending a magnet school over regular public school students (Blank, 1990). In addition, magnet school students were found to graduate at higher rates, complete an academically demanding college prep course and take the SAT at greater percentages, and score higher on the SAT (Hill, Foster, & Gendler, 1990). However, the analyses from all of these studies were conducted at the level of school but not at the level of student characteristic. Therefore, it is hard to gauge the impact of attending a magnet school as a solution for reforming the academic outcomes of African American students.

The documentary also focused on the academic achievement gap, which is also known as the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006). One way in which this achievement gap was illustrated was through the statistics regarding the low reading performance among African American disadvantaged youth. African American 8th-grade students scored 27 points lower than their white counterparts on the NAEP reading assessment (National Center for Educational

Statistics, 2001). An experimental approach to narrowing the education debt was offered by a Harvard economist, Roland Fryer. His solution to narrowing the education debt among minority youth and majority youth was the use of an incentive-based program. The aim of this type of program is to motivate and increase academic performance among grade-school students. Fryer has received much negative criticism for this approach and there is little quantifiable evidence to support this approach.

National evaluations of federally funded academic enrichment programs are a preliminary step in providing empirically-based evidence for incentive-based or reinforcer-based programs. Within the portfolio of federally funded programs, there have been several different types of incentives or reinforcers used. For example, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) provides children ages 6 through 18 with the secondary reinforcer of access to a mentor in a professionally supported one-to-one setting. This provides the youth with a primary reinforcer of attention. In a national study (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995) children who were mentored as part of BBBS were more likely to improve their confidence about their school work and were less likely to skip school.

A second example, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (Gear Up), is a federally funded program designed to better prepare low performing high poverty middle and high school students for college by providing academic preparation programs and information about college entry through partnerships with universities, businesses, and community based agencies. GEAR UP has been in existence since the late nineties. A national report indicated that GEAR UP students enroll in more rigorous courses than non-GEAR UP students. Nevertheless, GEAR-UP students do not seem to achieve higher GPAs or show a greater tendency for school attendance in middle school (Gullatt & Jan, 2003). These data suggest the need to investigate academic behaviors in high school and other measures of academic achievement.

A third example, Upward Bound, was inaugurated in the 1960's as a program to increase completion of high school and entry into college for students who come from low-income backgrounds or who were not exposed to adequate secondary education. Upward Bound offers academic enrichment through a variety of mechanisms during the academic year and summer. In particular, tutoring is provided to the program participants for high school coursework, and participants take advantage of individual assistance and guidance in preparing for college entrance examinations. In addition, Upward Bound students participate in cultural activities such as attending plays, visiting museums and touring college campuses. Moreover, a secondary reinforcer in the form of a stipend is provided to Upward Bound participants to encourage their participation.

Participation in Upward Bound has been shown to be effective in increasing school attendance, graduation rates and course enrollment, and curbing drop-out rates (DesRoches, 2007; Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Myers, Olsen, Seftor, Young, & Tuttle, 2003; Myers & Schirm, 1999). These studies have compared the academic and motivation outcomes of students attending Upward Bound to control groups of students from similar backgrounds. The academic outcomes that have been used in past evaluations are variables such as high school grade point average, high school attendance rates, college enrollment rates and college graduation rates. Despite gains in these general high school performance variables, there is no indication to date that any of these aforementioned enrichment programs improve core academic skills such as reading, science, and mathematics.

The purpose of the current study was to examine the ability of federally funded academic enrichment programs to improve *core academic skills*, particularly reading among African American high school students. We focused on Upward Bound because the type of reinforcer that it provides to its participants is similar to the program that was proposed as a solution by the CNN documentary. The current study compared the performance of two groups of African

American students attending Upward Bound programs on measures of reading achievement. We hypothesized that length of exposure to Upward Bound would facilitate growth in reading skills during the summer component of the program. To test this hypothesis, we compared the growth achieved by newly enrolled students (Group A) to that achieved by a group of students who had attended Upward Bound for at least one year (Group B).

Method Participants

Testing was initiated with 48 African American high school students and their caregivers were recruited from two Upward Bound programs in a major metropolitan city in the Southeast. The Upward Bound programs incorporated educational classes modeled to tutor and teach students information needed for the upcoming academic year with classes in Science, Mathematics, English, and a foreign language. A total of 19 students with their caregivers were remained to form Group A. A total of 10 students ,along with their caregivers, remained to form Group B. Groups A and B differed in their exposure to Upward Bound and age but were similar in their family backgrounds (e.g., household income, caregiver level of education, number of adults in the household, and number of kids in the household).

Group A- Participants in Group A were new to the Upward Bound program and thus had no prior exposure to Upward Bound. Participants in Group A were on average 14. 68 years of age ($SD=.95$).

Group B- Participants in Group B had attended Upward Bound for at least one academic year and thus had prior exposure to the program. The program exposure among the participants ranged from one to three years. Participants in Group B were on average 15. 70 years of age ($SD=1.06$).

Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension subtest of the Nelson-Denny (Form H; Brown, Fishco, & Hanna, 1993) was used to assess reading comprehension skill. This assessment requires participants to read 7 passages with 38 comprehension questions which are evenly split between literal and inferential question types. Participants were given 20 minutes to complete this subtest. The technical manual reported adequate reliability ($KR=.81$) and validity ($r=.5$) for this subtest.

Silent Reading Rate

The Reading Rate subtest of the Nelson-Denny (Brown et al., 1993) was used to measure silent reading rate. This measured the number of words students read silently to themselves in one minute.

Background Measures

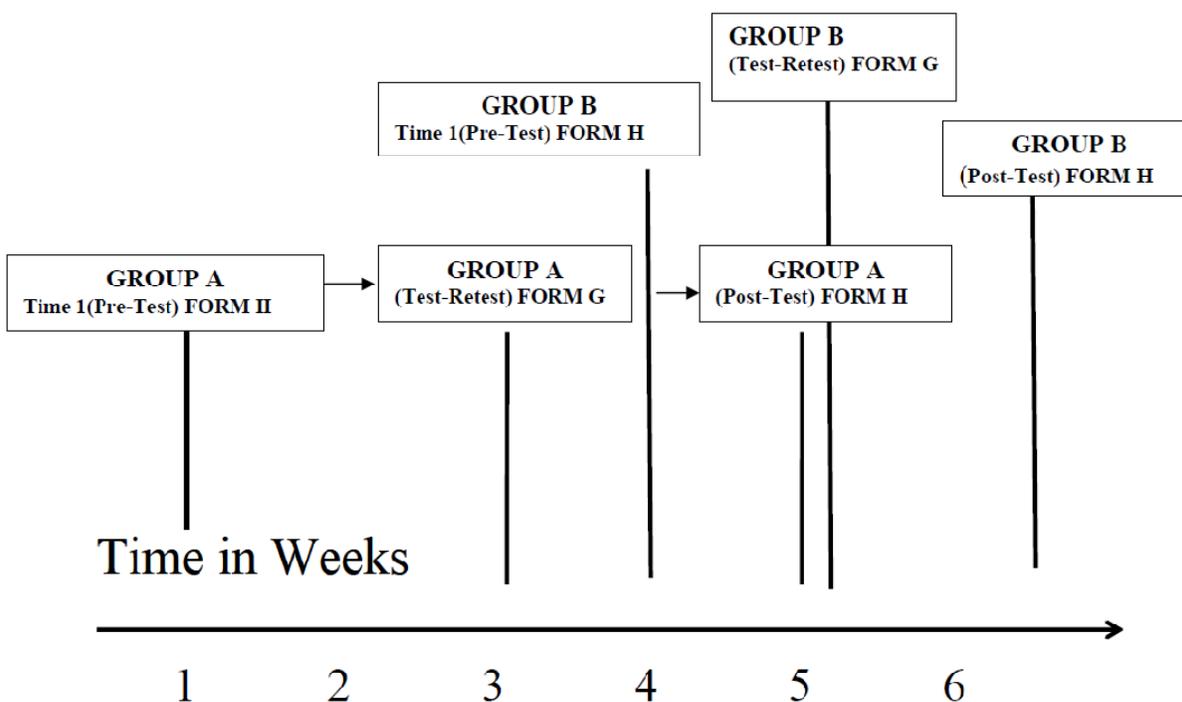
Verbal Ability. The vocabulary subtest of the NelsonDenny (Form H; Brown et al., 1993) was used as a measure of verbal ability for our participants. The vocabulary subtest consisted of 80 items, each with five answer choices. Participants were given 15 minutes to complete the test.

Family Background Variables. Caregivers of participants completed a brief questionnaire from which family demographic information was ascertained. Caregivers answered multiple choice survey questions about their income level and educational background.

Procedure and Setting

Participants in Groups A and B were tested at three time points. Figure 1 depicts the sequence of time points across the Upward Bound summer session for both groups. Group A completed surveys and reading measures on the first day of Upward Bound to ensure that data was collected before they were exposed to program components. Students in Group B completed reading measures during the fourth week of their Upward Bound summer session. All students were re-administered reading measures twice: a) Time 2 (test-retest reliability) and b) Time 3 (post-test).

Figure 1.



Results

Family Background Characteristics

Participants in both groups were equivalent in income and their caregiver's educational background. The average household income for participants in both Groups A and B fell within the category of \$20,000-\$30,000. The caregivers of participants in Group A were stratified across educational levels as follows: 16.7% with high school diploma, 66.7% with some college, and 16.7% with graduate education or beyond. The caregivers of participants in Group B were stratified across educational levels as follows: 22.2% with high school diploma, 55.6% with some college, and 22.2% with a bachelor's degree.

Age and Verbal Ability.

Chronological age in years and months was compared between the two groups. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) indicated that Group B was older than Group A, $F(1, 27) = 6.97, p = .01, \eta^2 = .21$. Raw scores (number of questions correct) on the vocabulary subtest of

the Nelson Denny were used to compare participants' verbal ability. There was not a significant difference between groups in verbal ability, $F(1, 27) = 3.28, p = .08, \eta^2 = .11$. There was non-significant, relation between age and Time 1 verbal ability ($r = -.11, p = .56$). Of the two, only verbal ability was a strong and significant correlate of reading comprehension ($r = .70, p < .0001$; $r = .04, p < .83$, respectively). As a result, neither age nor verbal ability was considered as covariates.

Reading Comprehension and Reading Rate

Raw scores (number of questions correct \times 2) on the reading comprehension subtest and raw scores on the reading rate subtest (number of words read silently per minute; WPM) were used in analyses of exposure to Upward Bound. Due to the nature of our quasi-experimental non-equivalent group design (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002), we analyzed participants reading comprehension and reading rate using a reliability corrected Repeated Measures Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) adjusting for Time 1 means on each outcome measure. Trochim (2006) suggests that reliability correction will correct for pretest measurement error. We used test-retest reliability coefficients that were generated from comparisons between group performance on Forms G and H of the Nelson-Denny.

Repeated Measures ANCOVA on reading comprehension scores detected significant main effects of *time point*, $F(1,26) = 11.724, p = .002$, partial eta squared = .311, and *program exposure*, $F(1,26) = 9.241, p = .005$, partial eta squared = .262, and a significant interaction between *time point* and *program exposure*, $F(1,26) = 34.845, p < .001$, partial eta squared = .57. Both Group A and B achieved similar reading comprehension at the start of the summer Upward Bound program (i.e., *Time 1*). Although the pre-test adjusted means were not statistically different, Group A answered about six questions more than Group B (41.36 vs. 35.41). At *Time 2*, however, the difference between the groups was significantly large by a factor of about 19

questions in favor of Group B (51.29 vs. 31.85). Within-groups analyses revealed a gain of about 16 questions for Group B and a loss of about ten questions for Group A (15.87 vs. 9.51).

A similar pattern was observed for silent reading rate. Repeated Measures ANCOVA detected a significant main effect of *program exposure*, $F(1,26)= 12.86$, $p=.001$, partial eta squared = .331, and a significant interaction effect between *time point* and *program exposure* on the reading rate measure, $F(1,26)= 5.538$; $p = .026$, partial eta squared = .176. While Group A read at a higher adjusted reading rate at *Time 1* with 207.5 wpm, Group B read at 151.3 wpm. Although Group A demonstrated an advantage of an average of 56.2 words per minute over the Group B at *Time 1*, they gained only 7.4 wpm at *Time 2*. Group B, on the other hand, gained an average of 51.5 wpm at *Time 2*.

Discussion

The fact that there was a significant difference in the groups' reading achievement at *Time 2* but not at *Time 1* suggests that having been in Upward Bound at least one year positively influences high school students' academic achievement, particularly in the core area of reading comprehension. Students who were exposed to Upward Bound for at least one academic year had higher reading comprehension accuracy scores and faster silent reading rates at the conclusion of the program. On the other hand, the students who were newly enrolled in Upward Bound tended to answer fewer comprehension questions correctly at the end of the summer-long program. Despite this loss, the newly enrolled students maintained their reading rate throughout the program and added a non-significant 7.4 words over their *Time 1* reading rate.

These results are reminiscent of the Matthew Effects articulated by Stanovich (1986). According to the Matthew Effects, "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer." That is, students with prior exposure are more likely to demonstrate gains than those without prior exposure. With respect to Upward Bound students, this means that high exposure students respond better to the components of an intervention program like Upward Bound. These findings, therefore, provide

initial evidence that programs that provide secondary reinforcers (e.g., mentoring and a stipend) influence academic achievement among African American youth.

There are a few noteworthy limitations to the current study, however. First, we compared two groups of African American students only. We were unable to compare the performance of African American students with majority students. The percentile rankings give us some indication of where these students fall in comparison to a nationally normative sample. On both reading measures participants in Groups A and B performed below the 50th percentile. While this percentile ranking is low, a control group of majority students from the same demographic backgrounds as our participants would allow one to examine the precise amount of narrowing in the reading achievement gap as a function of Upward Bound exposure.

Second, future research should unpack the program components of Upward Bound to examine which of the secondary reinforcers, (e.g., the stipend, access to cultural activities, or other components) were related to the positive academic gains that were demonstrated in this study. Third, further research is also needed to see if Upward Bound exposure extends to other academic areas such as science and mathematics. Finally, for a stronger design, age should be held constant across the participants; the groups studied should differ only in exposure to program. Due to the timing of data collection, it was not possible to follow a cohort of high school students of similar age but was not involved in summer activities. Perhaps, this sort of rigorous design would magnify the effect observed in the current study.

The CNN documentary left viewers with an optimistic hope that grassroots efforts, attending magnet schools, and participating in incentive-based programs are progressing the nation towards educational reform and narrowing the achievement gap between African American and majority youth. By extending the research on the effectiveness of existing federally funded programs, we provide an alternate solution to those posed by the CNN documentary. Participating in Upward Bound during a political initiative like *No Child Left*

Behind (NCLB, 2000) may help African American youth improve their standing on national assessments of reading comprehension. We urge educators and researchers to further investigate the effectiveness of academic enrichment programs (e.g., Upward Bound and GEAR UP!) in order to demonstrate positive outcomes for African American students in ways that have not been established by prior national evaluations. Larger cohorts of students may benefit from the creation and continued funding of similar programs proven to be effective in improving the academic achievement of the participants.

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Black Parents in America:
Examining Parental Influence Among Black First Generation and
Non-First Generation Students Attending Highly Selective Institutions

Melanie L. Hayden, Ph.D.
Ohio University

Abstract

Parents represent one of the most powerful influences on students' development and educational aspirations (Gandara, 1995; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; McDonough & Antonio, 1996). Social science researchers operationalize parental influence as the transmission of various forms of capital (Becker, 1993; Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1988). This study explores the forms of capital transmitted by Black parents to their children who attend 28 of the most elite institutions in the United States. Data from 737 Black students who participated in the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF) were used to examine the human, cultural, and social capital transmitted to students by their parents. The results reveal interesting differences in the behaviors of parents based on the generational status (non-first vs. first generation) and gender of the students.

Parents represent one of the most powerful influences on students' development and educational aspirations (Brumage & Peltier, 2005; Gandara, 1995; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler & Stage, 1992; McDonough & Antonio, 1996; Perna, 2000). Social science researchers operationalize parental influence as the transmission of various forms of capital (Becker, 1993; Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1988). When parents are able to increase their transmissions of capital, they increase the likelihood that their children will have a variety of life experiences and possess higher educational aspirations (McDonough, 1997).

In the Black community, it is not uncommon for parents to also transmit their beliefs and values about education. Historically, education has become a means of freedom and opportunity in Black culture (Billingsley, 1992). Although federal higher education legislation has made it possible for increasing numbers of Black students who possess academic ability to enroll in elite institutions, the rate of Black high school students who attain their undergraduate degrees is projected to decline (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Callan, 2001; Eaton, 1997; Freeman, 2005). A further examination of the national education trends for undergraduates reveal that Black students are underrepresented in graduate education in the U.S. first-generation students are also among these

Black students who are slowly disappearing from the higher education landscape (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

The limited enrollment of Black students in undergraduate education in general, and at highly selective institutions in particular, has serious implications for the future of higher education and society as a whole. First, their enrollment patterns impinge upon the overall numbers of Black students who earn bachelor's degrees. Second, the scarcity of Black students earning bachelor's degrees impacts the number of students who can compete for admission to graduate degree programs (Marshall & Glover, 1996; Zusman, 1999).

In the recent CNN documentary, *Black in America*, the statistics about Blacks in education were rather discouraging and highlighted those factors that hinder academic achievement and the positive development of Black students in elementary and secondary schools. Minimal attention was given, however, to the role that Black parents and forms of capital play in the lives of Black college students who have been successful in gaining access to the nation's most elite higher education institutions. It is this topic about Black parents and the family that this study addressed.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the various forms of capital Black parents transmit to their children who attend highly selective institutions. Equally important to the purpose of this study is to examine if any differences exist in parental capital based on generation (non-first vs. first) status and gender. For the purposes of this study, *first generation* refers to students from homes where neither parent has earned a bachelor's degree (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996) and *non-first generation* refers to those students whose parents have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Also, three dimensions of parental capital are explored in this study: (a) human, (b) cultural, and (c) social capital.

This study is guided by three research questions: (a) Do forms of human, cultural, and social capital differ among Black parents of first generation and non-first generation students attending highly selective institutions? (b) Do forms of human, cultural, and social capital differ among Black parents by gender of non-first generation students? (c) Do forms of human, cultural, and social capital differ among Black parents by gender of first generation students?

Inquiry Design

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the premise that children and youth are strongly influenced by their environments and the individuals they interact with who are in these environments. Using ecology theory, Bronfenbrenner (1986) developed the most widely adopted theoretical framework to understand the influences of these interactions on development. Bronfenbrenner contends that the complexity of these nested systems or contextual levels of the environment and the interaction of these levels, i.e. family, culture and environment, impacts the stages of individual development from infancy into adulthood (Chibucos & Leite, 2005; Salkind, 2004).

In this ecological model, there are four nested systems or levels. The first level, the *microsystem*, is associated with the daily environments that individuals find themselves in including the space, people, and interactions of these entities with the individual. The *mesosystem* is the second level and relates to how the microsystems interact with each other. In the third level, the *exosystem*, there are environments or networks that indirectly impact the activities in the microsystem. The fourth level, the *macrosystem*, takes into account the overarching economic and political forces that impact the previously mentioned levels (Salkind, 2004).

Data Source

Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF) (Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fischer, 2003) was used for this study. The NLSF was administered by the Office of Population Research at Princeton University. This instrument was designed to collect data that would be used to test competing theories related to underachievement among racial and ethnic minority students participating in higher education (Massey et al., 2003). Among these was the theory of stereotype threat posed by Steele (1988, 1998), proposing that individuals from underrepresented populations may “underperform academically because of an unconscious fear of living up to negative stereotypes about their group’s intellectual capacity” (Massey et al., 2003, p. 10). Another was the theory of oppositional culture by Ogbu (1978, 1991) that relates to the negative feelings, values and beliefs held by racial and ethnic minorities about mainstream education and knowledge acquisition resulting from historical and institutional oppression. Additionally, Tinto’s (1993) theory of academic and social integration of students into college life was incorporated into the design. These theories, along with others related to attachment, peer influence, and capital deficiency, established the framework for the purpose and design of the NLSF study (Massey et al., 2003).

Data for the NLSF was collected over six waves (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004). The total sample for NLSF included 3,924 students.

Instrumentation

The present study used data from the base line survey conducted in 1999. This survey consisted of four main sections, 37 sub-sections and 155 items. The items included on the survey elicited information about the respondents’ family background, peers, school quality, academic preparation, neighborhood environment, and their perspectives on a variety of societal issues

including race relations. The survey items used in this study relate to parental behaviors when respondents were ages six, 13, and in their senior year of high school.

Parental behavior was measured by examining responses from survey items related to the cultivation of human, cultural, and social capital. Students were asked to use a 5-point scale (1 = Never to 5 = Always) to express how often their parents engaged in certain types of behaviors. For example, parents' cultivation of human capital was measured by taking an average of the responses from 22 survey items. Students were asked questions that included how often their parents helped them with their homework, read to them as children, and read the Sunday newspaper or other types of news magazines. There were 11 items on the instrument related to the cultivation of cultural capital. These items included how often parents took their children to activities outside of the home such as plays, concerts, and trips to foreign countries. The last dimension of capital, social, was measured using four items including whether parents knew their children's friends and how often they talked with these friends.

The dependent variable, graduate school aspirations, was constructed using the average of the composite score for two items in the survey related to the students' educational plans after earning their undergraduate degree. The first question was intended to determine what was the likelihood that the students would go on for more education after college and the second question was to determine what was the likelihood that they would complete a graduate or professional degree. Students were asked to use a 10-point scale (0 = Extremely Unlikely to 10 = Extremely Likely) to answer both questions. These and other survey items used in this study are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 (continued)

Factor and Variable	Response Range
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respondent's Ethnicity 	0 = Asian 1 = Black/African American
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent's Education 	
Highest level of schooling achieved by mother	1 = Grade School 2 = Some High School 3 = High School 4 = Some College 5 = College Graduate 6 = Some Post-Graduate 7 = Graduate or Professional Degree
Highest level of schooling achieved by father	1 = Grade School 2 = Some High School 3 = High School 4 = Some College 5 = College Graduate 6 = Some Post-Graduate 7 = Graduate or Professional Degree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Household annual income during senior year of high school 	0 = Under \$3,000 1 = \$3,000-\$3,999 2 = \$4,000-\$4,999 3 = \$5,000-\$5,999 4 = \$6,000-\$6,999 5 = \$7,000-\$7,999 6 = \$8,000-\$8,999 7 = \$9,000-\$14,999 8 = \$15,000-\$19,999 9 = \$20,000-\$24,999 10 = \$25,000-\$34,999 11 = \$35,000-\$49,999 12 = \$50,000-\$74,999 13 = \$75,000-More

Sampling

The sample used in this study included a group of highly selective institutions that participated in the NLSF. More specifically, 28 highly selective colleges and universities that were identified in the *College and Beyond Survey* by Bowen and Bok (1998) and two additional institutions, the University of California at Berkeley and Howard University. Additionally, the data for this study was obtained from Black, first-year students enrolled at these institutions who responded to those variables included in the study.

Data Analysis

To address the research questions posed in the study, the researcher conducted descriptive statistics, such as measures of central tendency, frequencies, and univariate analyses. Also, it was necessary to use multiple regression to answer the final research question about the relationship between parental capital and graduate school aspirations. This regression analysis included control variables that had been used in other studies related to first generation students and parental influence (Terenzini et al., 1996). These variables included SAT score (*SAT*) and household income during the student's senior year of high school (*Hincome*). Since these factors are known to influence educational aspirations, as discussed in the literature review, it was important to control for them in this study.

Findings

The first research question was intended to determine if forms of human, cultural, and social capital transmitted by Black parents differ between first generation and non-first generation students attending highly selective institutions. The analysis revealed significant differences in mean scores for two forms of capital. Non-first generation students reported higher mean scores (2.28) for human capital transmissions than their first generation counterparts (2.02). Additionally, these non-first generation students reported were higher scores overall (1.06) on cultural capital for non-first generation students than first generation students (.67). Finally, although the observed mean values for social capital were different between non-first generation students (2.66) and first generation students (2.59) in this sample, these values were not significantly different (see Table 2).

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation for Parental Capital

Demo graphic	First generation Sample (N = 51) Mean (SD)	Non-First generation Sample (N = 686) Mean (SD)
Human Capital	2.02* (.50)	2.28* (.52)
Cultural Capital	.67* (.57)	1.06* (.68)
Social Capital	2.60 (.84)	2.66 (.81)

The second research question asked if forms of human, cultural, and social capital transmitted by Black parents differ by gender of these students. In the non-first generation group, results revealed significant differences in mean scores for human and cultural capital. Non-first generation female students reported higher mean scores (2.22) for human capital transmissions than their male counterparts (2.30). For cultural capital, female students tended to report higher mean scores than males (.91). There was no significant difference between these groups when examining the cultivation of social capital. Table 3 highlights these results in more detail.

Table 3
Mean and Standard Deviation for Parental Capital for Non-First Generation Students

Demographic	Male Sample (N = 231) Mean (SD)	Female Sample (N = 455) Mean (SD)
Human Capital	2.22* (.46)	2.30* (.53)
Cultural Capital	.91* (.60)	1.14* (.71)
Social Capital	2.60 (.79)	2.66 (.81)

*p ≤ .05

The third research question was intended to determine whether forms of human, cultural, and social capital differ among Black parents by gender of first generation students. First generation females also reported significantly higher scores (2.14) on human capital when compared to male students (1.87). Although female students reported higher scores (.71) on cultural capital than males (.61), this difference was not significant. Finally, there was a significant difference in social capital for female (2.83) and male (2.29) students (see Table 4).

Table 4
Mean and Standard Deviation for Parental Capital for First Generation Students

Demographic	Male Sample (N = 23) Mean (SD)	Female Sample (N = 28) Mean (SD)
Human Capital	1.87* (.51)	2.14* (.45)
Cultural Capital	.61 (.62)	.71 (.52)
Social Capital	2.29* (.91)	2.83* (.70)

* $p \leq .05$

Proposed Actions

This section outlines several strategies for Black parents and other stakeholders who are committed to the progress of the Black family. The proposed actions may not dramatically change the relationships between Black parents and their children or increase the number of Black children and youth in our educational system. Instead, these recommendations offer options to parents and educators who are seeking ways to keep Black children engaged in activities that promote positive development and access to increased opportunities. Ultimately, these actions have the ability to strengthen educational aspirations among Black children.

First, it is important for educators and those who work with Black students and their families to recognize that even though Black students attend highly selective institutions, the Black families and homes that they come from do not operate homogeneously. The results of this study revealed significant differences in the cultivation of human and cultural capital between non-first generation and first generation students. This trend is consistent with research conducted by Choy (2001) on first generation students suggesting that college educated parents are able to cultivate more capital than parents who have not attended college. Therefore, these findings may be useful to administrators who work with retention of Black students at highly selective institutions. Recruitment and retention efforts must work in concert. As these institutions strive to diversify their campuses by enrolling Black students, retention programs should include academic and social support services that will benefit these students.

Second, parents are strongly encouraged to be aware of differences in the treatment of male and female children and to consider how this differential treatment could impact their development. The results of this study reveal that male students in the non-first generation and first generation groups reported lower levels of parental capital than female students. These inequities do exist in the cultivation of human, cultural, and social capital among these students. The high school dropout rate among young Black teenagers and the decline of Black men in postsecondary education is startling. Mentoring opportunities for Black males attending highly selective institutions may increase the likelihood of retaining these students (Freeman, 2005).

Third, parents must be (more) involved in the lives of their children (e.g., encouraging offspring to excel academically, attending school events, and assisting with homework). Although some would argue that parents can be too involved, it seems as though Black parents tend to be less involved in their children's lives (Howe & Strauss, 2000). For parents who want

to be instrumental in the lives of their children, but are challenged given the demands that life places upon them (e.g., work schedules and the need for babysitters), strategies must be developed to assist them. Specifically, partnerships with schools and community-based organizations could create “parent friendly” activities that can assist parents in transmitting forms of capital.

Fourth, it would be worthwhile to engage in further quantitative and qualitative research on Black students who attend highly selective institutions to explore their experiences. This research might examine the intricacies of their lives at home, schools and in their communities and in turn, reveal other factors that may influence their educational aspirations. Also, perhaps an inquiry into the dynamics of social class (Lamont & Lareau, 1988) and how it impacts the Black family will help to explain some of the differences that exist among parental behaviors.

Conclusion

In summary, this study explores forms of human, cultural, and social capital transmitted to Black students by their parents. The results reveal that there are differences in the transmission of parental capital based on generational status (non-first generation vs. first generation). There were also differences in the parental behaviors when examining the students’ responses by gender.

A significant portion of the CNN documentary *Black in America* focused on the adversity that Black individuals face in this society. However, previous generations of Black Americans including Black parents have been successful in minimizing the struggles and improving social conditions for their children. This research highlights the efforts of these families and parents. As this research demonstrates, however, even within these families that may be considered successful, differences exist that add to the level of complexity within the Black family. Clearly,

more research is needed to explore the dynamics of the Black family and how future research and practice can support the positive development and educational aspirations of the next generation of Black youth in America.

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