

CALIFORNIA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

**EXPLORING HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION ON
AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES**

by

Randall M. Howard

A thesis submitted to the
College of Behavioral and Social Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology

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DEDICATION

African-American narration is a subject that has been suppressed, reshaped, and reduced to fit what society thinks is going on in the realm of individuals of African descent. It is for these reasons that I hope this work may in some way contribute to the fragmented explanation provided and give a broader picture of what is really going on.

To my mother, Debra, who continues to be a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of graduate school and life. I am truly grateful to have such a wonderful mother in my life. I love you.

To Gregory Smith, Avery Dean, K'yon Dupree, Demetrius Merriwether, Marques Bryant, Jhalon Glass, Morgan McCaleb, Randy Coleman, Tyson Atlas, and all who have become victims to social disorganization. This thesis was solely developed from the hurt and pain that I have experienced because of the struggles you all have endured.

To the highest and most important, Jesus Christ. Thank you for blessing me with a sense of discernment. Thank you for allowing me to turn my anger into something constructive with hopes of helping the underserved.

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I would like to acknowledge my committee members who have supported me throughout this entire process.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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The state of communities in which African-American males live may be a crucial contributor to the inflated measures of criminality in urban areas. Crime and mortality rates are a serious epidemic among African-American men in the United States. After thoroughly examining the effects of historical trauma and social disorganization theory, the results acknowledged that the effects of historical trauma point out why there is a high rate of criminality, including homicides within urban areas. The effects of historical trauma include neighborhood disadvantage, environmental instability, low socioeconomic status, academic underachievement, and lack of parental monitoring. This study exhausts the existing literature

that has established the evidence that historical trauma and social disorganization explains various crimes within disadvantaged neighborhoods. These findings add essential awareness, construct understanding, and assist with creating prevention and intervention models that will effectively address the issues of mortality and criminality within this population.

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

For decades, there has been a disproportionate amount of oppression for African-American males in areas such as the criminal justice system, education, employment, and socioeconomic status. This leads to high rates of criminal activity and mortality in this population.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report (2007), African-American males were victims of approximately 805,000 violent crimes and approximately 8,000 homicides in 2005. African-American males have also constituted to about 13% of the United States population in 2005, but were victims to approximately 15% of violent crimes and about half of all homicides.

In 2016, prisoners that were sentenced to one year or more was approximately 1,352,684 male inmates, and of that, 486,900 were African-American males. African-American males made up almost half of the federal and state prison population in 2016 (Carson, 2016).

African-American males remain much more prone to victimization of crime and mortality than any other dominant group. The conditions in which African-American males live

compared to all other Americans is a crucial contributor to the inflated measures of criminality and mortality in urban areas.

Problem Statement

This research will explore existing contributors that have created such high levels of the disproportionate rates that correlate historical trauma and the implications it has on African-American males. It will also evaluate the link between historical trauma and social disorganization and the relationship to criminality and mortality for African-American males.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this comprehensive literature review is to (a) explore all research that acknowledges implications of historical trauma on African-American males and (b) explore all research that acknowledges social disorganization as it relates to criminality.

Research Questions/Objectives

1. How has historical trauma contributed to the African-American community and why has it been a problem?
2. What background information is needed to fully understand this problem?
3. In what ways are African-American males affected by social disorganization?

Delimitations

The study focused on historical trauma as related to criminality within the African-American male community. This study is interested in how historical trauma has affected this community in terms of high rates of criminality compared to the dominant group.

Assumptions

The following assumptions are made regarding this study:

1. The origin of historical trauma has contributed to the criminality rates of African-American men.
2. The implicating factors of historical trauma have contributed to criminality within the African-American community.

Definition of Key Terms

1. **Social disorganization:** the capability to regulate the performance and behavior of residents as the community becomes less organized (Cantillon, 2006).
2. **Victimization:** purposeful actions that are carried out by individuals who intend to cause harm on another (Fowler et al., 2009).
3. **Discrimination:** actions, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, that favor one group over others in the provision of goods, services, or opportunities ("Diversity and Social Justice," n.d).

4. **Dominant group:** the people whose cultural values, beliefs, and practices are assumed to be the most common and influential within a given society ("Diversity and Social Justice," n.d).
5. **Oppression:** the use of institutional power and privilege to benefit one person or group at the expense of another and the results thereof ("Diversity and Social Justice," n.d).
6. **Prejudice:** a preconceived judgment about a person or group of people; usually indicating negative bias ("Diversity and Social Justice," n.d).
7. **Racism:** prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in race/ethnicity; usually by white/European descent groups against persons of color ("Diversity and Social Justice," n.d).
8. **Stereotype:** blanket beliefs and expectations about members of certain groups that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment. They go beyond necessary and useful categorizations and generalizations in that they are typically negative, are based on little information, and are highly generalized ("Diversity and Social Justice," n.d).

9. **Socioeconomic status:** The social structure of the United States is a vague concept defined by several commonly used terms that, including educational attainment, income, and occupational prestige as the main determinants of class. While it is possible to create dozens of social classes within the confines of American society, most Americans employ a six or five class system ("Diversity and Social Justice," n.d).

a. **Lower Status:** This class includes the poor, alienated, and marginalized members of society. While most individuals in this class work, they commonly drift in and out of poverty throughout the year ("Diversity and Social Justice," n.d).

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Crime and high mortality rates are an epidemic among African-American men in the United States. According to the recent Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report (2007), African-American males were victims of approximately 805,000 violent crimes and approximately 8,000 homicides in 2005. African-American males constituted about 13% of the United States population in 2005 but were victims to approximately 15% of violent crimes and about half of all homicides. Black-on-black crime is a widespread occurrence, the contributing factors of which need to be further investigated.

Furthermore, reports collected from the U.S. Department of Justice (Carson, 2018) announced that by the end of 2016, United States federal and state correctional facilities housed approximately 1,505,397 inmates. Although that number is quite high, that was about a 4% decrease from 2006, when approximately 1,568,674 inmates were housed, and a about a 1% decrease from 2015, when 1,526,603 inmates were housed. In 2016, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) housed approximately 189,192 inmates, and in 2015, approximately 196,455. In 2016, 1,316,205 inmates were housed in state prisons, and in 2015, 1,330,148 were.

In 2016, prisoners who were sentenced to one year or more of time made up 97% of the federal and state prison population. Of that 97%, 1,352,684 were male inmates, and of the 1,352,684, 486,900 were African-American males. African-American males made up almost half of the federal and state prison population in 2016 (Carson, 2016).

Communities inhabited largely by African-Americans have high criminality rates. As stated by Dr. Amos Wilson, to understand black criminality and black-on-black violence is to understand that America was founded on violence. To face the harsh realities of how the world operates, nations and societies have to be examined to understand how they originated in theft, robbery, and murder. The birth of a nation becomes a part of the nation's character; just as an individual's origin (e.g., how and where they were raised, where they were raised) has a large impact on their adult character.

Historically speaking, America was founded on violence (Akbar, 1996).

There is a certain hesitation about dwelling on events of the past... But those who deny the lessons of the past are doomed to repeat them. Those who fail to recognize that the past is a shaper of the present, and the hand of yesterday continues to write on the

slate of today, leave themselves vulnerable by not realizing the impact of influences which do serve to shape their lives. (Akbar, 1996, p.v)

Slavery in America

Slavery in the United States occurred for over 300 years. The accounts from this period of time are brutal and invoke primitive emotions of anger and indignity (Akbar, 1996, p. v). "For the first 250 years of American history, dominant group landowners, predominantly from the South, enslaved millions of individuals of African descents." (Acharya, Blackwell & Sen, 2016, p.1).

Slavery in the United States began as early as August of 1619 when the first African slaves were exploited and brought over to North America to help assist in crop productions and to build the nation. Slavery then continued into the 17th and 18th centuries, when African-Americans went from being indentured servants to chattel slaves throughout the American colonies. Former slave Fredrick Douglass (1855) and historian Stern (2005) defined indentured servants as individuals who agreed to work in exchange for their freedom, food, and lodging, whereas chattel slaves were slaves who were considered profitable and denied human rights; "a thing, a piece of southern "property" (Douglass, 1855, p. 180; Kawashima, 2017).

European incomers believed that enslaving Africans was much more inexpensive than having them as indentured servants. There were roughly seven million African slaves brought over to America in the 1800s working on tobacco, rice, corn and indigo plantations/fields (Douglass, 1855).

What it meant to be an African slave was to come to the "New World" forced into lifelong labor. Although slaves were able to get married and have children of their own, they needed permission from their owners. At times, slave owners would allow their slaves to be free once they were able to make enough money.

The majority of slaves lived on farms and plantations. Slave owners owned no more than 50 slaves at a given time, which allowed the slave owners, also known as "masters," to condition their slaves to be dependent upon them. Slaves were not allowed to read and write and had to remain compliant and respectful to their master(s) or else they would be severely punished (Douglass, 1855).

According to Roland Oliver (1991), a Professor of African History, slaves had zero rights, and slave owners had full power over their slaves. Slaves could be punished for not working hard enough, socializing, using their native language, stealing, murdering a dominant group member, or even trying to run away.

Punishments included being put in shackles or contraptions, being badly beaten, being chained to the ground, being whipped (the number of lashes was exclusively contingent on the significance of the transgression), and being lynched and left to die (Douglass, 1855). Frederick Douglass wrote of his experience:

One of the first which I saw, and which greatly agitated me, was the whipping of a woman... The offense alleged against Nelly, was one of the commonest and most indefinite in the whole catalogue of offenses usually laid to the charge of slaves, viz: "impudence." ... My attention was called to the scene, by the noise, curses and screams that proceeded from it... Mr. Siever, the overseer, had hold of Nelly, when I caught sight of them; he was endeavoring to drag her toward a tree, which endeavor Nelly was sternly resisting; but to no purpose, except to retard the progress of the overseer's plans... There were numerous bloody marks on Mr. Sevier's face, when I first saw him, and they increased as the struggle went on. The imprints of Nelly's fingers were visible, and I was glad to see them... Amidst the wild screams of the children... a few bitter curses, mingled with threats, that "he would teach the d-d b-h how to give a white man impudence." ... The blood on

his (and her) face, attested her skill, as well as her courage and dexterity in using her nails. Maddened by her resistance, I expected to see Mr. Sevier level her to the ground by a stunning blow; but no; like a savage bull-dog—which he resembled both in temper and appearance—he maintained his grip, and steadily dragged his victim toward the tree, disregarding alike her blows, and the cries of the children for their mother's release. He would, doubtless, have knocked her down with his hickory stick, but that such act might have cost him his place. It is often deemed advisable to knock a man slave down, in order to tie him, but it is considered cowardly and inexcusable, in an overseer, thus to deal with a woman. He is expected to tie her up, and to give her what is called, in southern parlance, a "genteel flogging," without any very great outlay of strength or skill. I watched, with palpitating interest, the course of the preliminary struggle, and was saddened by every new advantage gained over her by the ruffian. There were times when she seemed likely to get the better of the brute, but he finally overpowered her, and succeeded in getting his rope around her arms, and in firmly tying her to the tree, at which he had been aiming. This done, and Nelly was at the mercy of his merciless

lash; and now, what followed, I have no heart to describe. The cowardly creature made good his every threat; and wielded the lash with all the hot zest of furious revenge. The cries of the woman, while undergoing the terrible infliction, were mingled with those of the children, sounds which I hope the reader may never be called upon to hear. When Nelly was untied, her back was covered with blood. The red stripes were all over her shoulders. She was whipped—severely whipped; but she was not subdued, for she continued to denounce the overseer, and to call him every vile name. He had bruised her flesh, but had left her invincible spirit undaunted. (Douglass, 1855, p.47-49)

The treatment of slaves was conventionally inhumane and violent. Beyond the physical violence toward both male and female slaves that left physical scars, there were large amounts of obligatorily sexual abuse and other vicious treatments that left long lasting psychological effects.

Emancipated without Freedom

During the last days of his term, President Abraham Lincoln focused on pushing forward the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution. The 13th Amendment declared that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime

whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (Kawashima, 2017, p.60).

The amendment was passed by Congress on January 31, 1865 and became valid on December 6, 1865; Lincoln issued an executive order declaring the freedom of all slaves from the Confederate States of America. The 13th Amendment emancipated and abolished slavery for over four million African-Americans (Kawashima, 2017). Although the outcomes of abolishing slavery did not take effect immediately (approximately a century), it was a first step in prohibiting "involuntary servitude as a widespread form of labor relations" (Rutherglen, 2012, p.1552).

On July 7, 1868, the first Civil Rights Act, the 14th Amendment, was adopted. The 14th Amendment was a federal law declaring that:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due

process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

(Kawashima, 2017, p. 61)

On February 2, 1870, the 15th Amendment was established, warranting the right to vote. The 15th Amendment says:

Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Section 2: The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation. (Kawashima, 2017, p. 61)

The term "Freedmen" (Kawashima, 2017, p. 61) placed pressure on the Southern and Northern states to position change upon the Constitution.

While these civil rights laws were being established, an unfulfilled promise of "40 acres and a mule" was given to individuals who were freed from slavery. The Union Army's commander, William Tecumseh Sherman, put the unfulfilled promise into practice in parts of South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia. This unfulfilled promise gave individuals a belief that they would reach economic independence. Commander Sherman's order was

parallel to the Homestead Act of 1862, which allowed settlers to "cultivate the soil themselves in a public land ownership scheme" (Kawashima, 2017, p. 62).

On March 3, 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau was founded as a part of the Union's Department of War. This department implemented Commander Sherman's orders and immediately applied it in the Southern states. This order allowed former plantations to be rented and then given at no cost to about 10,000 homes of approximately 40,000 freedmen. Nevertheless, as President Johnson came into office, he vetoed it and reverted the plantations back to the plantation owners. This left the freedmen landless sharecroppers with the sanction of not being acknowledged as former slaves (Kawashima, 2017).

After being liberated from slavery, African-American families were reunited and given access to such basic rights such as schooling, child custody, marriage, and freedom to move around. Nonetheless, they were unable to become economically independent due to the oppression of landlords. It is quite evident that the elimination of slavery was insignificant, as slaves were simply "promoted" to sharecroppers. However, they were no longer owned as property.

After slavery was abolished, African-Americans did not

receive much protection under the civil rights legislation (Cell, 1982; Liberato et al., 2008; Raper, 1969). White supremacy and the belief that African-Americans were inferior to the dominant group were still present (Ginzburg, 1996; Raper, 1969; Woodward, 1955). African-Americans were discouraged from voting and making change.

From Slavery to Segregation

African-Americans still suffered for years post-slavery. Jim Crow laws involving segregation, or discrimination within separation, were established in the 1870s, right after slavery was abolished (Kawashima, 2017, p.65). Southern states implemented rules, laws, and ordinances that allowed segregation by race to remain as long as the facilities allowed equality. However, railroad companies did not follow such guidelines. Due to their belief in profit deficiency, first-class tickets were not sold to people of color.

Homer Plessy, an African-American male, was influential in attempting to demolish the notion of separate but equal. Plessy claimed that such guidelines from businesses is a violation of the 14th Amendment, which mandates equal protection. This led to the ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. The Supreme Court ruled against Plessy, claiming that separate but equal did not violate the 13th or 14th Amendments. After the *Plessy vs. Ferguson*

ruling, segregation of race was more encouraged. In practice, separate but equal was really separate and unequal. African-Americans vigilantly censored their behaviors, which prevented them from being complete members of humanity (Liberato et al., 2008). It was not until the ruling of *Brown v. Education* in 1954 that segregation was overturned (Kawashima, 2017).

Chronic Stressors

The extremely cruel acts of the historical marginalization have inflicted long-lasting "severe psychological and social shock" (Akbar, 1996, p.3), and "has included lingering psychological and emotional injuries..." (Wilkins, Whiting, Watson, Russon & Moncrief, 2013) on generations of African-Americans. To this day, African-American men continue to endure oppression, racism, and discrimination, all of which are chronic stressors in their lives (Elligan & Utsey, 1999). The after-effects of "persistent stress of societal racism and oppression" (Elligan & Utsey, 1999, p.157) on African-American males' behavioral and psychological health can be understood by observing the behavior of the "contemporary African-American male" (Elligan & Utsey, 1999, p. 157; Akbar, 1996).

According to Elligan and Utsey (1999) there was an alteration in the personality of the African-American during slavery from "proud and cultured" to the "American Negro" (p.

157). Though slavery was abolished over 150 years ago, the ranking and importance of the African-American male are similar to what they were during chattel slavery. Although executive orders declaring freedom of slaves were issued in 1863 and slavery was abolished in 1865, "the focus of White society on maintaining rigid control" (p. 158) over African-American men was undiminished. One may argue that the laws imposing segregation (Jim Crow laws) simply applied enforcement upon men and women. However, Jim Crow served to be more indifferent and insensitive toward the black man (Elligan & Utsey, 1999).

Unfortunately, African-American men today are at a higher risk for psychological issues associated with stressful life events such as direct and indirect racism and oppression (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002; McCord & Freeman, 1990; Nazroo, 2003; Thoits, 1991; Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hook, & Stanard, 2008; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). Psychosocial stressors that African-American men face due to racism and oppression include unemployment, poor education and poor academic performance, discrimination in the judicial system and incarceration, homelessness, poverty and homicide. These stressors are associated with high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, cirrhosis, stroke, antisocial behavior, substance abuse, lower self-esteem, and suicide (Utsey,

Giesbrecht, Hook, & Stanard, 2008;

Unfortunately, in the domain of psychology, the outcomes and consequences that slavery, oppression, discrimination and racism have had on African-American men have been disregarded. Because they have been overlooked and discounted, the needs of African-American men are not identifiable and remained unknown (Elligan & Utsey, 1999). While African-American men are not a monolithic group, there is a collective experience of discrimination, prejudice, and oppression (Elligan & Utsey, 1999; Rich, 2001).

African-Americans males have fewer resources within their communities, which puts them at higher risk for misconduct behavior (Lopez-Tamayo, Robinson, Lambert, Jason, & Ialongo, 2016). In recent debates regarding African-American males and crime, the media and research has focused on variety of ways that disparities are existing that construct marginalization from systems that disproportionately affect African-American men (McRoy, 2008).

Social Disorganization

An individual's physical and social environments are strong predictors of the individual's behavior choices. The research on social disorganization that was included in this review has made clear that organization is needed for community stability to

reduce criminality. Social disorganization suggests that an individual's residential location is more of a factor of criminality than their personal characteristics (Emerick, Curry, Collins, & Rodriguez, 2014).

Social disorganization tends to occur wherever there are low-income communities, environment instability, and great diversity (Cantillon, 2006). Due to the lack of resources within the community and the proliferation of single-parent homes, less energy and time are devoted to the youth, which increases the likelihood of criminal behavior. In comparison, social organization is defined by stable and organized communities that have institutions and organizations that create safe and healthy environments. There are a number of social aspects that help create social organization, including sense of community, networking, community participation, social control, and the likeness of the neighborhood (Cantillon, 2006, p. 112).

In order for social order to occur and for criminality to be reduced, community cohesion is needed. Community cohesion is the ability of residents to form networks within their community (Cantillon, 2006). Cohesion of the community does not imply that all members are obligated to agree on the same belief system. However, members of the community should maintain greater networks, which will lead to greater communication between the

different demographic groups (Cantillon, 2006).

Another aspect of social disorganization that is associated with criminality is neighborhood stability. Neighborhood stability plays a significant role in delinquency rates. Communities with stability have lower delinquency rates, and communities with less stability have higher delinquency rates and behaviors. Neighborhood stability consists of social control, community, and social networks. The higher a neighborhood turnover rate, is the higher the instability because high turnover rates interrupt social networks (Boggess & Hipp, 2010; Cantillon, 2006). Understanding and identifying what contributes to criminality allows for law enforcement, city officials, social services, and community members to extensively target those factors and provide resources to prevent and eliminate such transgressions.

African-American Males and Victimization

According to Lai and Tov (2004), adolescents in minority groups tend to experience more victimization than those in the dominant group the dominant group (Seaton, Neblett, Cole, & Prinstein, 2013). Victimization is an act that inflicts harm in ways of physical and sexual violence, mental or emotional abuse, and abandonment (Perron, Gotham, & Cho, 2008, p.67). A survey conducted by the National Institute of Justice (2003) found that

17% of adolescents experienced some form of physical violence, and an additional 39% of adolescents have witnessed violence. Furthermore, adolescents between the age of 12-24 years old are at a higher risk of becoming victims of violent crimes than any other age group (Paxton, Robinson, Shah, & Schoeny, 2004).

Victimization rates among African-American adolescents are conspicuously high (Perron, Gotham, & Cho, 2008). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2014), homicide is the leading cause of death for black males between the ages of 15 and 34. In comparison, it is the third-leading cause of death among dominant -group males of the same age.

Roughly one-third of African-American adolescents live in economically and socially deprived neighborhoods, which results in more exposure to violence and victimization (Blake & Darling, 1994; Paxton et al. 2004; Perron et al., 2008). This leads to emotional distress leading to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to Rich (2001), younger individuals who reside in urban areas are much more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD since they are conditioned to be hypervigilant. Young men who have been victimized feel the need to retaliate against their intimidator or oppressor to demonstrate masculinity and/or strength in order to prevent future victimization (Rich & Stone, 2013).

Racial Discrimination and Relation to Violence

As of today, there are not many studies that have suggested or examined if social disorganization and community violence are correlated with the experience of racism within the United States. However, an article by Reed, Silverman, Ickovics, Gupta, Welles, Santana, and Raj (2010) found that the racial discrimination experiences of African-American men are associated with involvement in neighborhood violence, specifically street violence and gang involvement.

Neighborhood Attachment

Numerous of studies have suggested that individuals who live in an urban environment are less likely to be keen of their community and less interested in forming social connections (Woldoff, 2002). Further studies have hypothesized that the conditions of an impoverished neighborhood reduce an individual's commitment to that neighborhood (Sustin & Baba 1990; Taylor, 1996; Woldoff, 2002).

When looking at neighborhood attachment, the first concern is the lack of social relationships and lack of community sensibility (Lyon, 1989). Research shows that operable and or organized communities provide a safe haven for individuals committed to providing a positive quality of life and networking with their neighbors (Woldoff, 2002). Previous research

regarding neighborhood attachment has not been well appreciated because it only focuses on at the most two forms of attachments within the community (Austin & Baba, 1990; Connerly, 1985). Woldoff (2002) analyzed three dimensions of neighborhood attachment: attitudinal attachment, neighboring behavioral attachment, and problem-solving behavioral attachment.

Attitudinal attachment is the first form of neighborhood attachment. According to research, this dimension of attachment is branched into two segments (sentiment and evaluation) because how people feel about their neighborhoods is different from how they receive contentment with their quality of life (Hunter, 1978; Guest & Lee, 1983; Woldoff, 2002).

Behavioral attachment through neighboring refers to socially interacting with members of the community (Woldoff, 2002). Neighboring is considered a healthy way of living as it facilitates support, trust, friendliness, and shared sense of community (Lee & Campbell, 1997; Samson et al., 1988).

The last dimension of the multidimensional neighborhood attachment is behavioral attachment through problem solving. This dimension focuses on the residents' expression of problem solving to neighborhood stressors. Research suggests that in order for one's community to remain meaningful, neighbors must

be involved in maintaining it (Woldoff, 2002). Further research states that residents within the community tend to protect each other from circumstances that threaten the neighborhood. Problem solving skills may occur unknowingly in situations of need, for instance absentee landlords or vandalism (Woldoff, 2002, p.91). Problem solving skills tend to occur when there is a responsibility to local stressors within the community (Connerly, 1985; Sampson et al., 1989; Skogan 1990; Taylor, 1995).

Academic Outcomes

Research has shown that although African-Americans' high school graduation rate has increased within the last decade, they are still at a higher risk for academic underachievement. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015) 75% of African-American students graduated on time in the 2014-2015 school year. Among the 75%, however, African-Americans were four times as likely as their dominant-group classmates to drop out (Losen & Martinez, 2013; Lopez-Tamayo, Robinson, Lambert, Jason, & Ialongo, 2016). African-American males are two and a half to three times as likely to be suspended from school as dominant-group students with the same wrongdoing (Losen, 2011 Smith-McKeever & Gao, 2010). They are also more likely to be

expelled than any other racial group (Bickel & Qualls, 1980; Costenbader & Markson, 1994; Moody, 1987). Given the alarming rate of suspensions given to African-Americans, it is crucial to analyze the factors that contribute to school suspensions among this population (Lopez-Tamayo et al., 2016). According to the literature, there are many consequences that are correlated with school suspension, including academic underachievement, dropouts, poor wellbeing and health, and legal system involvement (Costenbader & Markson 1994, 1998; Diem, 1988; Haight, Kayama, & Gibson, 2016; Johnston, 1989; Mendez & Sanders, 1981; Safer, 1986; Velez, 1989). Further research done by Mendez and Sanders (1981) found that students who are suspended are at a higher risk of being involved with the criminal justice system.

The direction of the correlation between school suspensions and criminal justice involvement has yet to be determined. However, research does indicate that students who have been suspended are isolated from their peers and school, which then translates into their lives outside of school (Costenbader & Markson, 1998). One of the biggest reasons why African-American males are being suspended at a higher rate is because of physical aggression (Rodney, Crafter, Rodney, & Mupier, 1999).

According to Rodney, Crafter, Rodney, and Mupier (1999), African-American boys have lower test scores, end up in special education, and are retained more than their Caucasian peers. Furthermore, African-American students are overrepresented in special education (Costenbader & Markson, 1998). By the time an African-American adolescent reaches the 10th grade or graduates high school, their reading and writing skills are below par (Blake & Darling, 1994; Staples, 1987). Approximately 44% of all African-American males are "functional illiterates" (Blake & Darling, 1994, p.45).

Parental Monitoring

According to Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2011) and Smetana (2008), parental monitoring has shown to be effective in reducing problem behaviors, which are correlated to academic achievement (Hayes, 2012; Hill et al., 2004). Parental monitoring involves tracking the child's whereabouts, activities, and adaptations (Dishion & McMahon, 1998, p.61). Parents who monitor their children have an inclination to be involved with their child's school, their peers, and their after-school activities (Spencer et al., 1996). Monitoring a child's day-to-day recreations and peer relationships allows likely risk factors to be reduced (Cottrell et al., 2003; Hamza & Willoughby, 2011; Spencer, Dupree, Swanson, & Cunningham,

1996, 1998). There is a large amount of research that suggests that parental monitoring can reduce problem behaviors (Hinshaw, 1987; Liu, 2004). Individuals who lack parental monitoring are at a higher risk of appropriating those problem behaviors (Anderson, 2000; Stewart & Simons, 2010).

Family Functioning Theory

It is imperative to understand the consequences of being raised in a single-parent home on the development of African-American adolescents. According to Mandara, Murray, and Joyner (2005), African-American boys who are raised in a father-absent home have less masculine attributes and tend to be passive compared to those who were raised in a father-present home.

According to Gutman and Eccles (1999) and Spencer et al., (1996), when there is only one parent in the household, parental monitoring becomes a challenge. This does not insinuate that single-parent homes cannot implement more parental monitoring; however, it suggests that it becomes more difficult when there are other circumstances for single parents to consider, such as finances, support, and time (Cunningham, Mars, & Burns, 2012; McLoyd, 1998).

Research by Mandara and Murray (2000) demonstrated significant changes that have occurred in African-American

families over the last few decades. In 1950, approximately 78% of African-American couples were married. In 1996, that percentage dropped to about 34%. The divorce rate among African-Americans was once 78 per 1000 couples in 1960. However, in 1990, that rate jumped up to 358 per 1000 marriages. Furthermore, the article expected that 75% of African-American children born to married parents would experience their parents' divorce before the age of 16.

Understanding how these trends affect the wellbeing/self-esteem of African-American youth is imperative. There is a large amount of literature that suggests the possible effects these shortcomings of family dynamics have on African-American adolescents. The majority of that information comes from three main perspectives: (1) family structure perspective, (2) family income perspective, and (3) family functioning perspective.

Family Structure Perspective The family structure perspective demonstrates that a two-parent home environment is better for an adolescent's well-being than a single-family home. Children who come from a two-parent homes are less likely to drop out of school and engage in violent behaviors and are more likely to have positive relationships, high self-esteem, and better grades (Mandara & Murray, 2000).

Family Income Perspective. The family income perspective

demonstrates that economic deprivation is typical for single-parent households, particularly single-mother households. African-Americans living in single-parent households are more likely to live below poverty line. Children may experience feelings of inadequacy and parental rejection when parents experience income loss (Mandara & Murray, 2000).

Family Functioning Perspective. The family functioning perspective looks at the effects of gender on parent-child relationships. Fathers were seen as more controlling and of their sons than their daughters. They were also seen as stricter than mothers (Mandara & Murray, 2000).

Self Esteem. Self-esteem is one's negative or positive value of one's own attributes. Research has found that African-American boys raised in single-mother households exhibited lower self-esteem because of the lack of a male role model. In addition, the strictness of fathers compared to mothers is associated with children having more confidence in their abilities. The absence of the father is therefore associated with less confidence (Mandara & Murray, 2000).

Externalizing Behaviors

African-American adolescents living in urban areas that lack resources are at higher risk for displaying externalizing

behaviors (Breslau, Miller, Breslau, Bohnert, Lucia, & Schweitzer, 2009; Lopez-Tamayo, Robinson, Lambert, Jason, & Ialongo, 2016; Tobin, & Sugai, 1999). Externalizing behaviors are problem behaviors such as rebellion and delinquency (Brook, Brook, Rubenstone, Zhang, & Saar, 2011).

Gang Involvement

Children living within inner cities began to shift toward gang involvement around their elementary school years. As they move on to middle school, the risk of being involved with gangs drastically rises (Cadwallader & Cairns, 2002). At as young as the age of 5, inner-city children have experienced some degree of gang activity within their communities (Bell & Jenkins, 1993). Early exposure to gang involvement does not predict future gang involvement, however, it does if there are low levels of parental monitoring. Male gang members are responsible for more criminal acts than their female counterparts (Cadwallader & Cairns, 2002, p. 247).

Summary

Crime and mortality rates are high amongst African-Americans in the United States. African-American men in particular are disproportionately victims of violent crime and are disproportionately represented in state and federal prisons.

The historical trauma of slavery, segregation, and social disorganization are associated with a lifetime of chronic stressors. These factors have contributed to a culture of criminality and black-on-black crime.

Next, it is important to explore how historical trauma truly affects the psychology of the black man. When an individual has been oppressed and acted violently upon, they then turn to their oppressors to react (Wilson, 2011).

Chapter 3

DISCUSSION

The present literature review examined the implicating factors that have contributed to black-on-black criminality among African-American males. Those implicating factors include slavery, Jim Crow laws, victimization, lack of parental monitoring, academic underachievement, neighborhood attachments, and family functioning.

The rates of crime and mortality rates are at its all-time high among African-American men the United States. Why is it that the marginalization of African-Americans must continue long after slavery and Jim Crow laws? To understand black-on-black violence, the need to recognize the creation of the United States of America is essential.

As Dr. Amos Wilson (2011) states:

Well-meaning sociologists and criminologists would have us think that it is unemployment, lack of adequate education and job skills, broken homes, drug addiction, learning disabilities, lack of government commitment, Black male irresponsibility, capitalism, which are among the major causes of Black criminality and Black-on-Black violence. The dominant group community would have us think that increased police

surveillance, apprehension and punishment, increased investment in police weaponry and manpower, increased prison construction..., longer and harsher sentences, containment of the Black community, "just say no to drugs," "a war on drugs," "a war on poverty," and the like, would curtail or prevent self-destructive violence, criminality, and social deterioration so prevalent in the African American community. (p.xiv)

Such explanations have yet to investigate the leading factor in black criminality and black-on-black violence: white supremacy. White supremacy was established and shaped on domination, harassment, and the idea that the dominant group was superior over African people. With that foundation comes oppression and subordination, including violence (Wilson, 2011).

Black-on-black violence refers to criminal behaviors that are performed out by blacks against blacks. (Wilson, 2011). When the oppressed has experienced violence, they then turn to their oppressors and act violently. Unfortunately, when the violently oppressed cannot direct that violence toward their oppressors, in turn they react, retaliate, or defend themselves violently against those within their community (Wilson, 2011).

Clarifying African-American oppression in terms of racism has been a disparaging and unhelpful path to defeating racism.

Racism only exists when people are empowered to enforce it. African-Americans must form a sense of awareness, social and economic factors, social skills, education, and cultural standards for themselves and their children so that acts of racism and/or oppression are not accepted (Wilson, 2011).

As specified in the literature, poverty, lack of education, unemployment, and lack of parental monitoring, are all closely related to black-on-black violence. However, all these factors are secondary effects of racist policies and practices (Wilson, 2011). Black-on-black crime is a protective mask to replace the feelings of "helplessness and vulnerability" (Wilson, 2011, p. xviii). In socially disorganized areas, young men tend to think that violence or aggressive behaviors toward others who are equally disadvantaged and underprivileged is a significant achievement when social importance cannot be obtained (Coser, 1967; Wilson, 2011).

Coser (1967) stated:

Since negroes are assigned the lowest position in all three dimensions of the American status system - ethnicity, class, and education - and since their mobility chances are nil in the first and minimal in the second and third, it stands to reason that achievement in the area of interpersonal violence

might be seen as a channel leading to self-regard and self-enhancement - at least as long as conflict with the dominant white majority seems socially unavailable as a means of collective action. (p.80)

In order to control black-on-black violence, dismissing the notion that blacks are solely responsible. These perceptions only intensify the problem at hand (Wilson, 2011, p. xx). The narrative of "more police = more crime, more judges = more convicts; more prisons = more inmates; more laws = more criminals; more white repressive violence = more black reactive violence; more white violence against black minds = more black violence against white (and black) bodies" has to be rewritten (Wilson, 2011, p.xx).

Criminality in the black community is a mirror image of the social system looks like. However, institutions manage to rationalize and detach the connection between criminality and a racist society. The political and economic conditions have created domination and authority over blacks. This very establishment has created probation, parole, juvenile and adult court systems, and uncertain sentencing, which have reinforced the power over the poor (Wilson, 2011).

The formation and establishment of one's personal or group identity is important for survival. If individuals and/or groups

are to survive and thrive, then the formation and establishment of their identity is essential. Identity is established through the control of one's own story, environment, social experiences, and interactions. Cultural symbols are utilized to help construct, maintain, and regulate the identity and behavior of the constituents of a cultural group to advance their individual group and cultural interest and successfully defend themselves against those who would exploit, dominate, abuse or destroy them. All human societies act on the basis of some kind of shared identity, sense of commonality, or shared fate. When the identity of the individual or group is manipulated by an alien entity, then that manipulated individual's or group's identity rests in hands other than its own. That individual's and/or the group's lot in life then moves beyond his or its self-control. Anytime an alienated individual or group is required to meet the needs of those who control and define their identity, then that individual or group tends to feel compelled, pushed by fate, to engage in self-alienating, self-abnegating, and self-destructive behaviors (Wilson, 2011, p. 27).

Black-on-black violence and criminality exist because their identity has been in the hands of the dominant group. Their ability to control oneself especially in difficult situations, and the ability to decide their own destiny has been given up to

the dominant group (Wilson, 2011). To move past the sanction of the black criminal, is to understand their identity was embedded in them by Europeans to destruct the humanity, home, and community of African-Americans. Coming to terms with the notion that blacks' idea of their wants and needs were also embedded in them for their definitive failure and destruction (Wilson, 2011). Also understand that Europeans and their so-called civilizations, behaviors, attitudes, and relations represent the most destructive factors existent in the universe today. To identify with them is to identify with a self-destructive spirit within oneself, a spirit that makes one's own existence pointless and meaningless. It has to be understood that one can only achieve authentic honor, fulfillment, love, respect, security, belongingness, and distinction through self and group empowerment. Blacks can gain transcendence only through the full acceptance of their African identity, the reclamation of their birthrights, economic and cultural self-determination, love for self and others, and recognition that their mission, in conjunction with the world's other peoples, is to bring into being a New World Order. It must not be a "colored" version of the old and present Eurocentric order, which has inspired their criminalization and the dehumanization of mankind, but one

inspired by their own remembrance and full psychic integration (Wilson, 2011, p. 28-29).

According to the dominant group's community, black Americans show a greater acceptance of crime and justify criminal behavior. This belief about the African-American community is neglectful and disregards the narrative that African-Americans are oppressed and victimized far beyond of what the dominant group have experienced. Is an example of reactance theory. Reactance theory says that individuals experience reactance when they feel their sense of power and control are being taken away from them, threatened or limited, and they will attempt to take it back in the manifestation of anger, irritation, hostility or refusal and avoidance of the request (Brehm, 1966; Mirick, 2016).

White Americans, who are by far significantly less affected by black "street crime," project themselves as its most frequent victims and create the perception of their communities being the most threatened by violent Black criminals. The stereotypical public image of "street crime" is one of a black culprit and white victim (Wilson, 2011, p. 29). This tool has been used to repress black Americans to deny the reality of African-Americans (Wilson, 2011). Nearly 90% of crimes committed against whites are committed by whites. The white-dominated

entertainment industry profits greatly from the representation of blacks as criminals and malefactors of all types (Wilson, 2011, p. 30).

The countless methods of oppression towards African-Americans consist of police misconduct that ultimately lead to high statistics of brutality, unequal sentencing, unfair treatment through the judicial system, victimization of Black males, high rates of incarceration, and the constructing and sustaining of harsh economic circumstances and environments that manufactured African-American criminality and black-on-black crime (Wilson, 2011). Holding onto the oppressive stereotype of the black American criminal supports the dominant group's belief in its superiority and their high sense of self. As Wilson says, "White America's self-appreciation is enhanced as it insatiably feeds on overblown reports about Black criminality while denying its own incomparable criminal record, and its own racist-imperialist incubation and giving birth to the very same criminal forces which now threaten to destroy it" (Wilson, 2011, p. 37). To cease the dominant group power and domination, African-Americans would have to decide to take charge and to terminate force to their true oppressors.

Conclusions

In conclusion, exploring the belief that historical trauma has influenced the minds and behaviors of the African-American community is to be appropriate and acceptable.

It has been understood that black-on-black violence and criminality have existed because black identity has been given to the hands of the dominant group. The perception held by the dominant group is that African-Americans show a greater acceptance of crime and justification of criminal behavior. This notion is simply held as a means for the dominant group to maintain its power and control (Brehm, 1966; Mirick, 2016).

Recommendations

The resilience of African-American males who have experienced historical and traumatic events should be investigated. According to Connor and Davidson (2003), resilience is "an umbrella term encompassing the ability individuals have to overcome risk or adversity and experience positive outcomes" (Coates, Phares, & Dedrick, 2013; Connor & Davidson, 2003). Research has indicated that psychological distress is negatively correlated with resiliency among African-Americans (Baldwin, Jackson, Okoh, & Cannon, 2011). However, spirituality has been a noticeable factor of resilience amongst African-Americans (Coates, Phares, & Dedrick, 2013; Utsey,

Bolden, Lanier, & Williams, 2007). Spiritual African-American men therefore have lower levels of depression, anxiety and psychological distress because they have higher levels of resilience (Coates, Phares, & Dedrick, 2013). Furthermore, a combination of home factors, school factors, and community factors promote resilience in African-American men (Williams & Bryan, 2013).

Home factors consist of parenting practices. Encouragement from parents and/or guardians plays a key role in keeping the child focused in school and away from distractions that go on within the community (evictions, gangs, crime, lack of resources). Setting high but realistic expectations has proven to serve as a foundation of motivation (Williams & Bryan, 2013). Additional parenting practices that are correlated with resilience are personal stories, of hardship, positive mother-child relationships and extended family networks. Personal stories about consequences of not completing school from parents or extended members of the family gave the child reminders of the significance of completing school. Positive relationships between the child and mother gave a sense of nurturing. This too was a motivation to do well in life. Family networks had a positive impact on performance because they serve as a support system for the child to rely on (Williams & Bryan, 2013).

School factors include positive peer culture, good teaching, and extracurricular activities. Having a mentor or someone who simply cares about the child at school encourages to succeed. Supportive relationships are marked by concern, openness, understanding, and warmth. These types of relationships foster realistic expectations and help the child make decisions that will assist with their education and career goals (Williams & Bryan, 2013). Good teaching encourages the child to participate more, expand their minds, and connecting the curriculum to their personal lives (Williams & Bryan, 2013). Extracurricular activities consist of clubs, sports, and social organizations, which expose children to different people who come from different walks of life. They are able to learn from others from different communities but who have succeeded under same conditions (Williams & Bryan, 2013).

Lastly, community factors involve social support, which provides additional encouragement and motivation. These additional sources of social support include churches and community organizations.

All these factors together work as a supportive resource to promote resilience among black men. The availability of these resources to African-American men will have positive outcomes.

Limitations

Although this literature review achieved its goals, it is not without its unavoidable limitations. First, as is common with most cause and effect theory research, prior research was not readily available. Prior research would have allowed for a better understanding of black-on-black crime. Because of the lack of available research, this literature review was more exploratory than explanatory.

Second, the majority of prior studies have not assessed how the psychological effects of slavery, segregation victimization, and racial discrimination and how they have directly impacted black-on-black violence, despite the fact that those contributing factors are what make criminality within the African-American community so prevalent in the first place.

Future Research

Future research should consider examining the effect of long-term stressors resulting from racial discrimination. There is long noted history of racial discrimination for blacks that needs to be acknowledged because of the drastic after-effects. Future research should also examine what resources could be put in place to reduce criminality within this population.

Perhaps future studies on social disorganization and criminality can include ways to prevent such transgressions.

There is a large amount of research that explains why criminality is an issue because of social disorganization, however, an understanding of the resources to prevent such acts would be highly beneficial for law enforcement, city officials, social services, and community members. Lastly, it is important to explore criminality at a finer level to affirm the pain and hurt that this race of people has endured in order to finally make a change within this population.

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