

Boys in Men's Clothing
*Racial Socialization and Neighborhood Safety
as Buffers to Hypervulnerability in
African American Adolescent Males*

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Being Black and male is surreal. You are desired and you are despised. You are hunted like fox or game and yet idolized for the development of the identity of others. That is, you are imaged as the thing to avoid, to reject, to “not be.” Or if you are liked, it is for the sake of having the “taboo” rub off, thus making the other’s identity that much more unique and authentic. Your rarity in certain mainstream contexts makes you a marketable commodity worthy of desire and loathing. You are assumed to be hostile and you are assumed to be ignorant. You are followed as often as you are left alone. You want what everybody else wants but it feels as if, when its you who wants it, the thing becomes dirty and undesirable. As Ralph Ellison once quipped, despite its advantages, “[invisibility] is most often wearing on the nerves. Then too, you are constantly being bumped against by those of poor vision. Or again, you doubt if you really exist. You wonder whether you are not simply a phantom in other people’s minds.” Too often, Black males try to run from police and fight back against these phantom images in themselves and in the “other,” sometimes to their own self-destruction. Surrealism then drops off the cliff of tragedy.

The struggle of African American identity or identities in the bodies, souls, and minds of male adolescents is a complex one that involves levels of personal and social vulnerability unprecedented in American human social interaction despite advances in civilization. Hypervulnerability, a term created to describe this intense experience of vulnerability, results

from the psychological and physical exposure of one's cognitions, feelings, and actions to annihilation and dehumanization by one's family, friends, neighborhood, society, and the various images that these social institutions blatantly and unwittingly promulgate and manufacture. The internalization of these negative images of black maleness by Black males is the primary motivator for feelings of hypervulnerability. The negative consequences of hypervulnerability include attachment to and acceptance of abusive relationships, failure to expect care or love from others, engagement in dangerous risk-taking behavior, willingness to risk incarceration to demonstrate one's existence, expectation of harm to come from relationships, and acts of hurting others emotionally or physically as a means of self-protection. While Black male youth are "becoming" and developing racial and gender identities, American society represents them in very static ways, and consequently they also present themselves in static ways. This typecasting is what Irving Goffman would call "presented identities," and, for African American males, these public identities are based on feelings of hypervulnerability.

The "Doing" of Black Male Identity

We live in a world where some American citizens are freer than others to express multiple identities. There are some contexts, however, that restrict free expression of identities. Researchers have found, for instance, that living in dangerous neighborhoods affects the emotional experiences of youth (Buka et al., 2001; Osofsky et al., 1993; Richters & Martinez, 1993). Social interactions within particular contexts push all humans, and Black male youth in this instance, to "BE," not "become," and to "DO," not just plan what to do. Black male youth are often pressured to present a static identity, not ambiguous or multidimensional, because the social interactions within a context often demand it. Spencer, Cunningham, and Swanson's (1995) work on reactive coping helps to illuminate this idea of "being" and "doing" as an integral part of one's identity.

Sometimes for poor Black boys, there are serious social and psychological costs to analyzing and critiquing one's existence. Negative images can take control of one's presented identity. As a result, one may face, if only momentarily, the perceptions of animalism and criminality from a Black male-phobic public as well as the abyss of nothingness or nihilism within themselves. To critique and change one's presented identity may require

some reflection on one's current subordinate status in society as well as one's future. It could also mean a diminution of social status among peers where a change in presentation could give them reason for distrust (Stevenson, 1997). Cunningham and Meunier (this volume) have found that when Black adolescent males are using exaggerated macho identity stances, they are, in fact, coping. This coping is essential in social and ecological environments where danger to personal and familial safety is high. Maintaining a stable identity presentation allows predictability among peers, gives one a set (albeit a limited set) of strategies to manage societal hostility (e.g., "cool pose" and "reactive coping"), and builds a fragile and temporary but demonstrably confident self in socially stressful contexts.

The angst of having to build such identities leaves many Black boys feeling "missed, dissed, and pissed" (Kunjufu, 1985; Stevenson, 1997; Wilson, 1990) or hypervulnerable. They feel "missed" in the sense of feeling misrepresented and misinterpreted, "dissed" in the sense of feeling disrespected and distorted, and "pissed" in the sense of feeling intense anger related to the devaluation experienced since early childhood from societal, familial, and interpersonal rejection. All three of these dynamics are key aspects to the visceral vulnerability or the hypervulnerability that many Black boys experience. Being missed, dissed, and pissed represents the struggle of constructing identity within a quicksand of false Black male images and is as vulnerable as one can get.

Hypervulnerability among African American Boys

Several reasons account for the missed, dissed, and pissed experience of African American male adolescents and how social systems respond to them (Ferguson, 2000).

Racial profiling of Black males while they drive, walk, shop, talk, stand, and gather in groups has reached epidemic proportions (ACLU, 2000). Black males are twice as likely to be arrested and seven times more likely to be held in detention facilities as White youth (Children's Defense Fund, 2000). Black males consistently receive more severe and lengthy punishments than White males who commit the same offenses (Children's Defense Fund, 2000). Black males are over-represented at every level of the juvenile justice system, constituting 70 percent of all juveniles in American correctional facilities. Moreover, Black male young adults report

experiencing racial discrimination at higher levels than any other group (Children's Defense Fund, 2000).

The social system has failed to identify adequately the social and mental health needs of African American youth for several reasons. One reason can be found in the insidious nature of racism. Research shows that Black boys are often feared as criminalizing men or animals (Finkelman, 1992; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Sampson and Laub (1993) found through investigation of juvenile court proceedings and records that Black males are perceived as threatening members of society who need to be controlled. Romer, Jamieson, and de Coteau (1998) found that the percentage of crime committed by African Americans in a Northeastern city is significantly lower than the percentage of news coverage of African American crime on three major local news networks. As a result, one gets the impression that African Americans commit crime at higher levels than they actually do. Furthermore, African American males are often targeted as threats and menaces to society by social authority figures ranging from police to school teachers, and this social construction of Black males as "menace" has both public health and economic marketing implications (Gibbs, 1988; McIntyre & Pernell, 1985; Potts, 1997; Rowan, Pernell & Akers, 1996; Sampson & Laub, 1993).

When Anne Ferguson (2000) describes how eleven- and twelve-year-old Black boys are criminalized and expected to land in jail as a group, her findings become even more chilling when she reveals how this perception comes from within schools and from the personnel who run them. The rash of police shootings and killings of innocent, unarmed Black males, the subsequent media white-wash of the social implications of the loss of Black life compared to Whites (West, 1993), and the refusal of major institutions (police) to admit wrongdoing or change their practices in the face of overwhelming statistical or video evidence are just a few of examples of blatant racism that exists in our social structure (ACLU, 2000).

Cornel West discusses the problem of nihilism in poor, minority communities as a danger too often overlooked. Nihilism is defined here as the state of or fear of nothingness or nonexistence (West, 1993). I have observed this nihilism in African American boys who have a history of anger- and aggressive-laden social conflicts. The fear of nonexistence often underlies their actions and "presented identities." It is in these complex processes that I am most interested in the present study of hypervulnerability among African American males in high-risk urban contexts. Majors

and Billson (1992) have applied Goffman's (1959) notions of "impression management" to Black male identity strivings. They discuss the phenomenon of dramaturgy or the pressure to present and perform one's identity and the stress raised by this process. Unfortunately, false images of manhood perpetuate hypervulnerability.

The more one experiences pressures to "show oneself" and demonstrate masculine competency, the greater the hypervulnerability. The reason is that "showing off" one's manhood is an emotionally immature process. This manhood is insecure and is based on what one does rather than who one is. Insecure masculinity comprises a set of behaviors driven by fear to prove to the world that one's manhood isn't weak, yet these same behaviors can inadvertently increase the feelings of fear they are intended to eradicate. The problem with these dynamics and the drama that accompanies them is that African American boys and men internalize American society's ideas of insecure masculinity that resides in popular icons like the Marlboro Man and James Bond. These are men who are flawed and whose bravado and representation of power covers a multitude of sins. Unfortunately, the tragic reality is that *all* men in America fall short of the masculine images these characters depict. The goal of insecure masculinity is to "look good" regardless of one's internal reality. The fear of failure experienced by men of all ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds—evidenced by the power struggles of domestic violence, alcoholism, substance abuse, and child abandonment—only solidifies the futility of placing one's trust in insecure masculinity development (Oliver, 1984, 1989; Stevenson, 2003).

One cannot expect boys to develop into men if the rituals, strategies, communications, and relationships are based upon a historically moribund, culturally enslaving, intergenerational dynamic of insecure masculinity. With the goal to "look good" and be "The Man," Black youth only add some "cool pose" flavor to the mix of insecure masculinity. However, Black youth do not change the basic nature of insecure masculinity. And yes, other boys and men are emulating these Black youth by buying rap music and borrowing their urban fashion strategies. But this amounts to no more than the blind leading the blind. They are all being led by the simple but life-polarizing mission of insecure masculinity. Here an ongoing identity struggle between life and death rears its ugly head. Childhood should be full of surprises, not solely choices between good and bad. We ask Black boys to become men without experiencing a childhood or shedding a tear and wonder why they die so young. Well, it's hard to be what

you don't see, but it's even harder for boys to be men before they finish living or doing boyhood.

For many of the Black male youth I work with, the best they can hope for is to fool most of the people most of the time. They have surmised this over time, often without adult feedback and supervision—but they are pondering how to cope in the world with blinders on, with only limited knowledge. The problem for African American young men is that their access to the tools and resources to look good are limited and, therefore, the cost of pretending is greater and requires greater imagination and ego-boosting psychological resources. To wear cool fashion and to make money by the quickest means possible is not original, individualistic, or entrepreneurial, if the jobs and occupations for Black youth are narrowly scripted. This presents what Stevenson and Davis (2003) have defined as a “Catch 33.” They are not “leading a charge” or “making their mark” so much as they are following a script that is not as developed and broad as the scripts that the rest of the adolescent and male world have to follow (Ferguson, 2000; Majors and Billson, 1992; Spencer et al., 1995).

Unfortunately, the script is designed within white society's projected fears of Black manhood, not the self-determined efforts, experiences, and potential of Black manhood. As such, this script is corrupt and any Black male who follows it or lives his life to reject it may be corrupted along with it. To do this script is to self-destruct in the most consistent historical fashion. The vulnerability that African American young males experience is overwhelming and it precipitates violence and negative social interactions. That is, vulnerability at multiple levels and the need to protect oneself from the reality, tragedy, or possibility of one's limitations takes precedence over social etiquette or civility.

The lack of access to the goals and means for men on the periphery of societal existence and on the outskirts of the mainstream experience has been written by sociologists for decades, but often without a contemporary focus on the cultural-ecological implications for Black boys and men. The struggle of African American identity in the bodies, souls, and minds of adolescent boys is unique. The outward appearances of Black male youth are limited and truncated compared to others, and while they can reshape these appearances, true freedom can only come if they recreate their image and redefine the questions for themselves. They must expend most, if not all, of this energy on their own perceptions, not the perceptions of others. History teaches us that it is a huge waste of time and talent to try and reshape the larger societal racist perception.

A lack of trust seems to continually perpetuate Black-on-Black violence. For many boys, the “homies” that they trust the most are ultimately not trustworthy (see Way, this volume). Again, another example of hypervulnerability is when you fear that the friends you “hang with” or your family could betray you. This reality fits with the finding that friend-acquaintance homicide is six times higher for Black youth than for Whites (Children’s Defense Fund, 2000). This is likely true for those youth who haven’t developed bonding relationships with homies beyond the superficial hanging together types of relationships. Of course, some friendships develop that are closer than family and that have long-lasting and life-supportive characteristics. But where the fear of betrayal or the withholding of trust predominates one’s best friend relationships, hypervulnerability is mediating this experience. Hypervulnerability is the flimsy crazy glue that holds this relationship together and fighting against the ultimate death is the cause celebre.

In summary, hypervulnerability is influenced by a lack of awareness of the basic societal structural barriers of racism, internalization of an insecure hypermasculinized social interaction, an overreliance on materialism as a statement of one’s identity, a lack of understanding and thus a failure to reject negative Black male imaging, a lack of supportive peer and family relationships, a sense that one is sole protector of emotional and physical existence, and a tendency to engage with peers who are not trustworthy. The fear of rejection in social interactions is a behavioral sign of this hypervulnerability.

Racial Socialization as a Buffer to Hypervulnerability

Racial socialization involves the deliberate and indirect communications and interactions toward others about the importance of one’s history, cultural values, and behaviors and about how other persons, social groups, and institutions perceive, challenge, or appreciate one’s history, values, and behaviors. Adolescents’ experiences of racial socialization have been related to various prosocial behaviors and emotions including academic success (Bowman & Howard, 1985), self-esteem in home, school, and peer contexts reduced anger experience and increased anger control (Stevenson, Herrero-Taylor & Cameron, in press), and reduced fighting behavior (Herrero-Taylor, Mitchell & Stevenson, in press; Stevenson et al., 2002a). In light of these findings, it is conceivable that the socialization of cultural

empowerment and social oppression dynamics may be associated with less hypervulnerability or the fear of rejection among Black male youth.

In this study, I ask two basic questions. The first examines whether hypervulnerability (i.e., the experiences of rejection sensitivity) is influenced by neighborhood safety. The second question examines whether racial socialization buffers the experience of hypervulnerability.

Method

Participants and Setting

Participants in this study were 167 African American male adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15 (mean age of 14.1) who had a history of anger and aggression and who were enrolled in a disciplinary school in a Northeastern city in the United States. The boys' referral to the school was based on one or both of the following offenses: weapon violations or a series of aggressive assaults on school personnel or classmates.

Measures

HYPERVULNERABILITY

In order to assess levels of hypervulnerability, I assessed a core component of this concept, namely, rejection sensitivity. The measure of rejection sensitivity that I used is the Children's Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (CRSQ) which is based on the work by Downey et al. (1998). The CRSQ measures the extent to which youth anxiously or angrily *expect rejection before* or *react to rejection after* an ambiguously intentioned rejection. The CRSQ has two parts on *rejection expectation* and *rejection reaction*. Part One presents youth with twelve hypothetical interpersonal situations. Six situations pertain to peers and six to teachers. Each vignette presents scenarios, which may be perceived as benign or rejecting, but which have not been resolved. The participant reads (or listens to) the unfinished scenarios and imagines what the characters' motives and scenario outcomes may be.

Each scenario is followed by two questions regarding one's anxiety and anger at the *expectation* of being rejected by the peer or teacher in the scenario. The anxiety and anger responses range from 1, "not nervous" or "not mad," to 6, "very, very nervous" or "very, very mad" and yield scores for anxious expectation and angry expectation. High scores in these two

areas represent the anxious or angry expectation of rejection, and low scores indicate the expectation of acceptance. A third question asks how likely it is for rejection to occur in the scenario. Here, the participant indicates the likelihood that the other person will accept or reject them (e.g., "Do you think they were saying bad things about you?"), on a scale ranging from 1, "YES!!!" to 6, "NO!!!" This expectation of rejection is labeled either "Rejection Expectation Anxiety" or "Rejection Expectation Anger" in the remainder of the chapter.

Part Two of the CRSQ restates two of the vignettes from Part One and focuses on the participants' *reaction* to an ambiguously intentioned rejection. Specifically, a measure of the extent to which youth show angry feelings, thoughts, and behavior in *reaction* to rejection was used in this study. In assessing participants' angry reactions to rejection, participants answered how they would respond to scenarios in which a teacher or peer treated them in ways that may be perceived as rejecting. For example, in one scenario, the youth needs help picking up his spilled groceries from the ground. When he sees fellow classmates walking by, he asks them for help. They walk quickly by, as if they don't see him. The respondents are then asked to answer the question, "If this happened to you, how would you feel?" The participants are asked to indicate the degree to which each statement applies to them by answering on a three-point Likert scale ranging from ("Very True," "Sort of True," or "Not True"). Examples of possible angry reactions to perceived rejection included the following: "I would feel like hitting those kids," "I would remember their faces, and next time I see them, I'll find a way to get back at them," and "I would feel mad at those kids because they should have stayed to help me." Given that an angry reaction to rejection involves an emotional reaction and a behavioral plan to respond, it is labeled "Rejection Reaction Anger" for the remainder of this chapter. Downey and colleagues (1998) found that the CRSQ yielded alpha reliability coefficients of 0.72 and above, has strong test-retest reliability, and is reliable for use with urban, low-income, ethnic minority adolescent populations.

RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

A measure of racial socialization (Teenage Experience of Racial Socialization) was used to assess adolescent responses about the frequency of parental racial socialization strategies (Stevenson et al., 2002b). The items assess, on a three-point scale, the frequency of various behaviors. As a result of a factor analysis, five factors were identified. Factor 1 is

called *Cultural Coping with Antagonism* (CCA) and includes items that represent messages about the importance of coping with racial hostilities and the role that spirituality and religion play in that coping. Factor 2 includes items that assess exposure to positive attitudes about and knowledge of African American culture and is entitled *Cultural Pride Reinforcement* (CPR). Factor 3 is called *Cultural Legacy Appreciation* (CLA) and includes items about cultural heritage issues such as enslavement and knowing about the history of African Americans. Factor 4 is called *Cultural Alertness to Discrimination* (CAD) and includes exposure to messages that teach youth to be aware of the barriers of racism in society and the multiple race relation challenges between Blacks and Whites. Factor 5 is called *Cultural Endorsement of the Mainstream* (CEM) and represents messages about the relative importance of majority culture institutions and values and the affective and educational benefits that African Americans can receive by being involved in those institutions.

The mean and standard deviation for the total scale was 85.9 ($SD = 14.9$), and the Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.91 ($n = 260$). The reliability for each of the five factors is good and above an alpha of 0.71. The combination of these five factors makes up a racial socialization scale that appreciates the interrelationship of these varied experiences. A well-rounded understanding of the politics of race and its effects on life, identity, and character requires a knowledge of each of these areas.

For this study, a cluster analytic procedure was conducted using all five factors as key variables. Four meaningful racial socialization clusters were developed: (1) very prepared for coping with the external world, (2) moderately prepared for coping with the external world, (3) underprepared for dealing with the external world, and (4) unprepared. These names were subsequently changed to lots, some, little, and very little experience with racial socialization, respectively, for easier interpretation of results. The cluster identified as "lots" includes individuals who scored high on all five factors, while the "very little" cluster includes individuals with the lowest mean scores on all five factors. For more information on the cluster strategy and analyses, see Stevenson (2002).

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

One question asked "How safe do you feel living on your neighborhood block?" The responses were reduced into groups of three ("Less Than Safe," "Somewhat Safe," and "Safe") or two ("Safe" versus "Less Than Safe") depending upon the type of analysis conducted.

Data Analyses

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to assess the effects of either neighborhood safety or racial socialization experiences (RSE) on hypervulnerability (i.e., rejection sensitivity), and a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVAs) was conducted to assess the joint effects of neighborhood safety and RSE on hypervulnerability.

Results

Findings from a one-way ANOVA indicate that participants who reported living in “safe” neighborhoods showed significantly lower levels of rejection sensitivity (i.e., Rejection Expectation Anxiety and Rejection Expectation Anger) than boys who lived in either “less than safe” or “somewhat safe” neighborhoods (see Figure 3.1). The association between neighborhood safety and Rejection Reaction Anger was not significant.

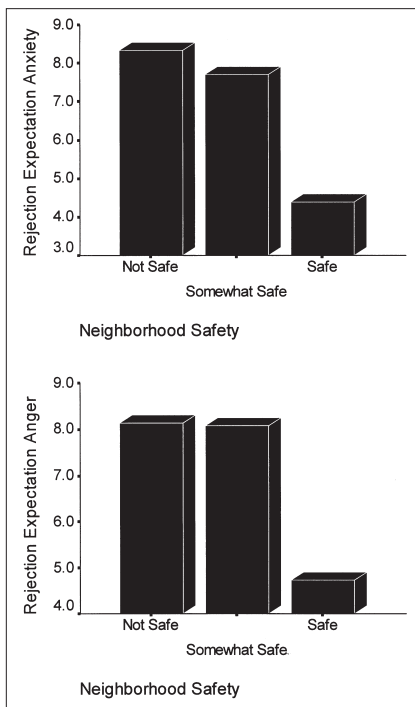


Figure 3.1. Association between Neighborhood Safety and Rejection Expectation Anxiety or Rejection Expectation Anger

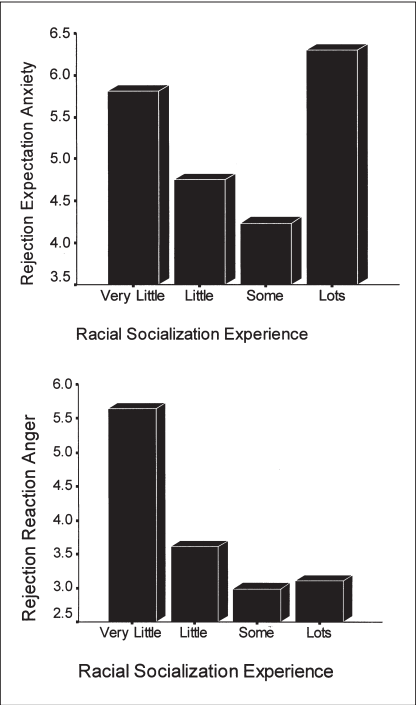


Figure 3.2. Association between Racial Socialization and Rejection Expectation Anxiety or Rejection Reaction Anger

A one-way ANOVA also revealed that higher levels of racial socialization messages were significantly associated with lower levels of Rejection Reaction Anger (see Figure 3.2). It appears that the more parents talk to their children about coping with antagonism, managing mainstream values, and having pride in their cultural legacy, the less boys will feel angry when rejected and perhaps the less likely they will find themselves in self-destructive situations. However, it was also found that those boys who reported the highest levels of racial socialization reported the highest levels of Rejection Expectation Anxiety. This could be a result of a greater level of awareness of the historical, cultural, and complex societal challenges to Black culture, life, and manhood. The association between racial socialization and Rejection Expectation Anger was not significant.

Results from a multivariate analysis of variance analysis¹ indicate in Figure 3.3 that boys with “very little” racial socialization from “less than safe” neighborhoods show significantly higher levels of rejection sensitivity (i.e., Rejection Expectation Anxiety and Rejection Reaction Anger)

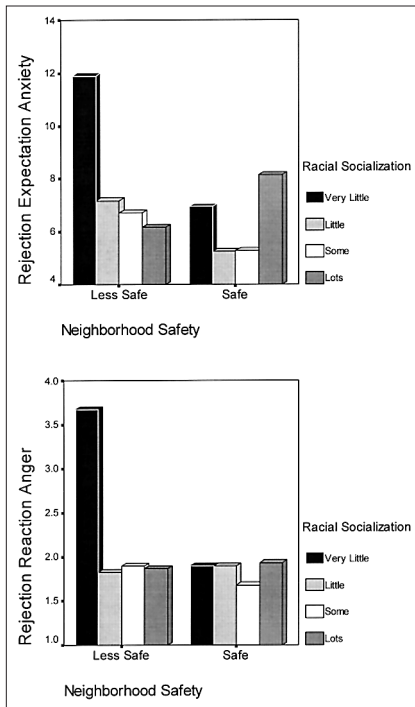


Figure 3.3. Association between Neighborhood Safety and Racial Socialization and Rejection Expectation Anxiety or Rejection Reaction Anger

compared to boys with more racial socialization experience in safe neighborhoods. Figure 3.3 also reveals that boys from safe neighborhoods who receive lots of racial socialization also have slightly elevated levels of Rejection Expectation Anxiety.

Discussion

This study explored the hypervulnerability, as defined by their sensitivity to rejection, of African American boys with a history of anger and aggression. Findings suggested that neighborhood safety was associated with lower levels of anxiety and anger when expecting rejection from peers and teachers. It appears that rejection sensitivity is influenced by residential security. Youth who feel safer in their neighborhoods may be less likely to expect rejection because the systemic dangers that can trigger one's hypervulnerability (e.g., having to fight to prove masculinity, negotiating bullies

more frequently, and the increased danger of loss of life) are minimized. In addition, racial socialization was associated with lower levels of anger when rejection episodes occurred. Racial socialization may help youth cognitively and emotionally manage the complexity of negative male images, overmasculinized identity development, and the internalization of insecure masculinity and racist stereotypes. Findings, however, also indicated that those who experience a lot of racial socialization from their families report high anxiety levels in anticipation of rejection. Future research needs to explore why this may be the case. Racial socialization may enhance their awareness of potential rejection and this may increase their anxiety while at the same time decrease their level of anger in response to episodes of rejection.

Implications for Nurturing Boys, Not Men

Professionals and researchers often remain clueless about the social and cultural contexts of Black males, about the functionality of violent behavior, and about how to translate these contexts and experiences into intervention. Ignoring how hypervulnerability reflects a heightened sense of gender and racial identity confusion for boys will only exacerbate the problem of Black male stigmatization. Training professionals to respond to the invisibility of Black male youth is helpful but can't fully address the problem of modern racism. True intervention in this conundrum of "missed, dissed, and pissed" Black youth requires that Black families start the training at home. To expect the mental health establishment to appreciate these larger societal machinations is overly optimistic. Schools are also major socializing agents, but without explicit discussions of the politics of race and gender for Black males, these contexts are unlikely to be safe environments for Black males to find a healthy emotional and cultural identity.

Traditional strategies of psychoeducation, psychotherapy, and intervention are not effective for Black male youth who live in a different world than the one that created these strategies (Lurie, 1999). It is not to say that Black male youth cannot be insightful, cannot appreciate discussing their emotional pain, or cannot learn how to increase self-control through therapeutic challenge of cognitive distortions. On the contrary, African American boys are still boys who desire affection, protection, *and* correction (Stevenson, Davis & Abdul-Kabir, 2001) and this study suggests that when neighborhood dangers are not a threat, they can ponder the deeper mean-

ings of structural racism. However, traditional intervention and research strategies have missed the mark of what is psychologically and dynamically going on for Black boys. Consequently, not only are different and culturally relevant intervention strategies necessary, but without them, traditional approaches are likely to continue to perpetuate the perception that Black male youth require “patrol and control,” not caring and prevention.

Given the detrimental effects of societal and institutional racism on Black male youth, culturally relevant interventions must emphasize racial socialization and be relationship-centered. A greater appreciation by the professionals of the real and perceived dangers in the residential and social neighborhoods of Black youth must be developed, yet the structural and invisible dangers of race and gender must not be overlooked as we attempt to “clean up the neighborhoods.” Black males must learn that they are not a lost generation. They deserve to be touched emotionally, physically, and intellectually and are capable of learning about and critically outmaneuvering the subtleties of American racism. They need what all boys need—care and compassion.

One project, PLAAY (Preventing Long-term Anger and Aggression in Youth) attempts to address these issues through the novel integration of athletic movement and racial socialization (Stevenson, Hassan, et al., 2001). This project attempts to engage boys in athletic activities such as basketball and martial arts or drama, all activities where the goal is to influence emotional functioning during intense physical activities. The basketball component, TEAM (Teaching Emotional Empowerment during Athletic Movement), allows for multiple interpersonal conflicts within which staff can intervene to maintain the athletic interactions as safe contexts for emotional and physical expression by the boys. Basically, manhood can be challenged and developed “in-the-moment” of vulnerability when insecure masculine tactics are likely to be used by boys unaware of the deeper gender and racial politics. Racial socialization strategies are more directly taught during CPR (Cultural Pride Reinforcement) psychoeducational group therapy sessions where the cultural relevant style of “barbershop debating” is one of several mechanisms to get the boys to think and feel about their racial and gender status in the world. CPR is given such a name because of its importance to life and limb for Black males but it is also the place where strategies to combat insecure masculinity and the internalization of racial stereotyping can be learned. Several other components accompany TEAM and CPR, including parent empowerment sessions (Community Outreach through Parent Empowerment)

where parents also receive racial socialization strategies in addition to emotional support for their marginalized positions in society.

It is critical to challenge the exoticization of Black males with a variety of histories and experiences and begin to focus on nurturing strategies instead. This study suggests that context, not image, explains more of their emotional responses within a world still intent on seeing them as something other than who they really are—boys.

NOTE

1. A MANOVA involving the three factors of the rejection sensitivity measure (rejection sensitive anger, rejection sensitive anxiety, and rejection reactive anger) showed significant results for racial socialization experience (Wilks's lambda = 0.82, Multivariate $F(3,115) = 2.22$, $p < .02$) and for neighborhood safety by racial socialization experience (Wilks's lambda = 0.94, (3,119) Multivariate; $F = 2.62$, $p < .01$). No main effect was found for rejection sensitive anger in any of the analyses involving racial socialization.

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