



State of Black Boys and Men:
Policy and Mental Health Recommendations

Prepared by:
APA Division 51 Racial and Ethnic Minority Special Interest Group

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Overview

The Racial Ethnic Minority Special Interest Group, of the Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity, is a group of psychologists and graduate students with research and practice interests that center on concerns facing boys and men of color. The group meets in person annually during the Convention of the American Psychological Association to discuss advances, strategies, and barriers to engaging in research and practice with particular interest in Black boys and men.

Statement of Task

During our annual meeting in 2014, a smaller group of psychologists and graduate students endeavored to create a brief document that could be accessed by our members as well as the public to bring awareness, knowledge, and to share some potential interventions. Since that meeting, there have been a number of police-related deaths involving men of color. As the reports of each new death of a Black male emerge, we feel deeply the pain inflicted upon us, and members of our greater community. Each case brings to our awareness how systemic racism, bias, and masculine norms may shape the behaviors of police and the responses of boys and men in our communities. Instead of a sole focus on police violence, we sought to provide more context to understand the experiences of Black boys and men. We also recognize that police-related deaths have impacted communities of color outside of our specific focus on Black boys and men. This report gives special attention to Black boys and men given the disproportionate number of violent acts against this group.

Evidence Base

In addition to providing clinical services to treat individuals, psychologists work as consultants to law enforcement, engage in the creation of policy, and work in school settings. We encourage psychologists to be ready and skilled to address the experiences of direct and vicarious race-based trauma and to integrate our theoretical and empirical knowledge to address structural inequities that promote disparities in academic opportunities, health and legal problems that are experienced by Black boys and men. This report draws upon theoretical and empirical knowledge from the psychological (i.e. clinical, counseling, social), criminal justice, and education literature.

This document is two-fold in that the first half presents current information on the state of Black boys and men in the United States: (1) provides a summary of public health, criminal justice, and education data on Black boys and men and (2) summarizes the scholarship on implicit bias as a way to explain recent race-based inequities. The second half of the document provides recommendations such as (1) promising strategies to stem the violence that Black boys and men face by law enforcement; (2) interventions with educators, counselors, and school administrators;

and (3) resources for psychologists and for parents and families.

Committee Composition

The committee consisted of four counseling psychologists and four doctoral students in counseling psychology. All committee members are concerned about the well-being of people of color and underserved communities.

Conflict of Interest and Bias

The authors of this report do not have any affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest in the subject matter or materials found in this report. After completion of this report, one author was awarded a fellowship through the American Psychological Association, and was subsequently placed in a U.S. Senate office. This report is not affiliated with the ideology of any member of the U.S. Congress.

Independent Review of Draft Report

The review committee consisted of the presidential trio (i.e. Past President, President, and President-Elect) and one member of the Society of the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity (SPSMM). The review committee was charged with the task of determining consistency between the report and the task of the committee and that the report was situated within a sound empirical base. The final report was approved by the full board of the SPSMM.

Summary of Disparities in Health, Legal, Education

Public Health

- According to a 2010 U.S. Census survey, the poverty rate for Black children is the highest rate of any race group—38.2% live below the U.S. average poverty rate (Feierman, 2014), while non-Hispanic Black children made up only 14% of the population.
- 61.5% of Black men ages 45-74 die from coronary heart disease compared to 41.5% of White men (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Office of the Director, CDC; 2011).
- 60.7% of Black men who die of stroke, died before age 75, compared to 31.1% of White men (CDC, 2011).
- Although African American and Caribbean men have shown lower lifetime prevalence of major depressive disorder, they exhibit greater chronicity and disability compared to their White counterparts. Comparatively, older Black men show higher rates of depressive symptoms compared to older White men (Ward & Mengesha, 2013 for a review).
- African American children displayed higher rates of polyvictimization (Finkelhor, Turner, Hamby & Ormrod, 2011).
- Although only 12.9 percent of the U.S. population is Black, nearly half of homicide

victims were Black in 2012, and the majority of homicide victims were Black men at 5,538 compared to White men at 4,093 and Black women at 915 (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2015).

Criminal Justice

- African Americans comprise 13% of the population, but 40% of the national incarceration population (Sakala, 2014).
- Black men are 6 times as likely to be incarcerated in federal, state, and local prisons and jails compared to White men (Drake, 2013).
- Across the country, police departments are 10x more likely to arrest Black men than White men (Heath, 2014) .
- Although there are no substantial differences in drug use between Blacks and Whites (SAMHSA, 2014), Blacks are disproportionately more likely to be arrested and convicted of drug related offenses (US Sentencing Commission, 2015) .
- In 2007, 18 percent of Whites and 24 percent of Blacks and Latinos had force used against them by law enforcement officials (Krupunski et al., 2009).
- Although Blacks made up only 27.8 percent of arrests from 2003-2009, they made up 31.8 percent of deaths during an arrest, with most causes being homicide by law enforcement (Burch, 2011).
- Black and Hispanic drivers are searched or frisked at higher rates than White drivers. In 2011, a greater percentage of Black drivers were stopped (13%) compared to White (10%) or Hispanic (10%) drivers. And White drivers were searched and ticketed less frequently than Black or Hispanic drivers (Department of Justice (DOJ), 2013).
- Regardless of the reason for the stop, only 67% of Black drivers and 74% of Hispanic drivers believe traffic stops are legitimate, as compared to 84 percent of White drivers (DOJ, 2013).

Education

- The estimated U.S. national high school graduation rate for Black males in 2012-13 was 59% (Beaudry & The Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University, 2015).
- In 35 states and the District of Columbia (out of 48 states in which data were collected), Black males have the lowest graduation rates among Black, Latino, and White, non-Latino male and female students (Beaudry & The Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University, 2015).
- The 12th-grade reading scores of African American males were significantly lower than those for young men and women across every other racial and ethnic group (Thompson, 2014).
- Black children report higher rates of grade-level retention, disciplinary referrals,

expulsions, suspensions, and school dropouts than other groups (Feierman, 2014; NAACP, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

- Although Black children represent 18% of preschool enrollment, they account for nearly half of those receiving more than one out-of-school suspension (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).
- Disciplinary referrals and school dropout can increase the likelihood for boys of color to fall into the school to prison pipeline, which describes estimates that 1 in 3 Black boys are predicted to become incarcerated at least once in their lifetime (Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Gregory et al., 2010).

Implicit Bias and Disparities

Biological, psychological, and social factors all contribute to health and well-being, which necessitates the use of interventions at multiple levels. For instance, research on violence, trauma, low socioeconomic status, and being raised in single-parent households has demonstrated that direct and indirect exposure to adverse experiences in early childhood is associated with negative physiological health outcomes, disruptive behaviors, and restricted coping strategies (Burchinal et al., 2011; Solberg et al., 2007). In short, social factors shape brain development in profound ways that, in turn, result in behavioral and psychological problems of youth and adults. When behavior and/or emotion regulation are not understood in a social and biological context, children (and not their context) are seen as the problem. For instance, educators who do not understand the impact of trauma may view student problems with behavior, memory, learning, attention, and emotion regulation as a function of race, culture, gender, or family and not larger social issues.

Interventions focused solely on psychological determinants of health or behavior are needed but place full responsibility on the individual to adapt to a social system that also is in need of change. As an example, work to reduce disciplinary referrals or efforts to help Black boys achieve academically without addressing teachers' biases may produce positive changes but with less magnitude than addressing both the responses of Black boys and the attitudes, assumptions, and skills that are held by some educators.

Below, we provide a brief overview of *implicit bias* with the acknowledgement that educators, police officers, and mental health professionals are capable, with training and awareness, of understanding bias and altering behavior. Psychological research on implicit bias explains how social-cognitive processes operate to influence behavior at an unconscious level for all people (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Implicit bias poses a challenge to practice because law enforcement, educators, mental health professionals, and most people in general believe themselves to be guided by their explicit race-neutral or color-blind racial attitudes and beliefs. Research suggests that implicit biases influence behavior in ways that contradicts a person's endorsed beliefs or principles (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Research also suggests that people tend to favor their own in-group (i.e., people that are like them). We have summarized a select body of research that indicates that implicit bias shapes behavior and may play a role in explaining racial disparities in law enforcement, education, and in health care.

Law Enforcement

- Suspicion is a critical element in the exploration of race-based decision-making of police officers (Novak & Chamlin, 2012). In a study that tested the effects of unconscious racial stereotypes, police officers and probation officers who had been racially primed gave the hypothetical delinquents (Black citizens) negative-trait ratings related to violence and bad character and judged them to be deserving of harsher treatment.
- Police officers' use of physical violence against Black males has been linked to dehumanization of Black men and boys (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014).

Education

- Researchers have found that implicit prejudices and negative teacher expectations were correlated with poor test scores in students of color (Bergh et al., 2010).
- The findings also support the conclusion that teachers with negative prejudiced attitudes appeared more predisposed to evaluate their ethnic minority students as being less intelligent and having less promising outcomes for their school careers (Bergh et al., 2010).
- Teachers rate their relationships with White students more positively compared to Black students. When teachers viewed their relationships with children and parents less positively, they also rated children less academically competent (Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2006).
- Students perceive and internalize the differential treatment they receive. The more children perceive teachers treating high and low achieving students differently, the stronger the predictive relationship between teacher expectations and year-end achievement (Kuklinski & Weinstein, 2001).
- Students may perceive cues about what the teacher expects and achieve at a level consistent with the perceived expectation, (e.g., if the expectation is perceived to be low, the achievement is low; Brophy & Good, 1970; Darley & Fazio, 1980; Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979).

Health Care

- Chapman, Kaatz, and Carnes (2013) found consistent evidence suggesting that implicit biases held by medical professionals influences the type of care provided to Black patients. These biases may contribute to health disparities.

Recommendations

With our holistic and systemic understanding of human behavior, group dynamics, and interpersonal relationships, psychologists can partner with lawmakers, law enforcement, and educators to promote public health, public safety, and reduce gaps in academic opportunities and outcomes.

For Policy Makers

Public Health

- Support and introduce legislation that creates feasible and accessible health care options in communities largely populated by Black boys and men.
- Ensure that events hosted by your office or agency are attended by representatives from organizations that advocate and promote the positive well-being of Black boys and men.
- Encourage federal agencies to disseminate information to educate communities largely populated by Black boys and men about signs, symptoms, and risk factors of negative health outcomes.
- Support and introduce legislation that incentivizes health service providers, with a specific focus on how Black masculinity, to participate in cultural competence training

Public Safety

- Publically acknowledge the history of racism within the judicial system in the U.S.
- Support and introduce legislation that includes, but not limited to the following:
 - Requires the implementation of routine racial justice and implicit bias training for police officers and officers of the court
 - Increases community oversight of police practices (e.g., body cameras, community review board)
 - Conducts analysis of sentencing practices and enlist the support of Psychologists with relative expertise
 - Implements racially diverse police work groups
 - Increases funding to collect data to monitor racial disparities
 - Prioritizes collaborative outreach efforts to build relationships and trust between law enforcement and community members
- Utilize the “End Racial and Religious Profiling Act (S. 411)” as a guide for enforcing equal protection of the laws by eliminating racial profiling through changing the policies and procedures underlying the practice and promoting best practices in community based law enforcement.

Education

- Encourage Congress in partnership with the Department of Education to reexamine how funding is allocated for incarceration and consider reallocating funds for education and prevention
- Support and introduce legislation that includes, but not limited to the following:
 - Implements culturally sensitive assessments to identify children in need of counseling to prevent behavioral problems and to promote growth.
 - Develops culturally sensitive assessment tools to appropriately identify Black boys in need of special education services to address the over identification of Black boys receiving special education services.
 - Incorporates culturally enriched curricula across all grade levels and intentionally increases a focus on the past and present societal contributions of Black men.
 - Incentivizes teachers and administrators across all grade levels to participate in cultural competence training.

Behavioral Health

- Support and introduce legislation that incentivizes clinicians to participate in training that encompasses cultural awareness, disparate diagnosis, and treatment planning.
- Support and introduce legislation that promotes contextualized analysis of systemic and historical racism when advocating for or, when appropriate, providing treatment to Black boys and men

For Law Enforcement

Accountability and Data Collection

- Develop a national and local comprehensive data gathering mechanism to better understand disparities in stops, searches, arrests, and police violence (Harris, 1997; Lundman & Kaufman, 2003; Rojek, Rosenfeld, & Decker, 2012; Smith & Holmes, 2014).
- Develop and implement clear policies that precincts, law enforcement agencies, and police officers must adhere to in order to eliminate racial profiling as well as consequences for the violation of such policies.
- Reward precincts, law enforcement agencies, and police officers for their positive engagement with the communities they serve.
- As previously stated, The End Racial Profiling Act (S. 1056/H.R. 1933) addresses some of the recommendations presented in this section.

Training in Law Enforcement

- Promote stronger awareness of officer's own implicit biases (Correll et al., 2007).
- Specifically, provide training to officers on how suspicion, implicit bias, and stereotype incongruence may impact their police work (Rich & Grey, 2005; Smith & Alpert, 2007; Tillyer & Engel, 2013).
- Integrate diversity and racial justice into all aspects of police training.
- Work with the established entities with a similar focus to develop evidence-based approaches to policing.

Building Better Relationships between Community and Law Enforcement

- Create spaces for police officers to express and improve their individual relationship with the communities and neighborhoods they serve (e.g., a confidential consultation session or group).
- Offer incentives for police officers who live in the communities and neighborhoods where they serve, particularly in urban communities, and make intentional efforts to improve community relations through their residency.
- Establish a guide with action steps stating how law enforcement can enhance community engagement and crime prevention.

For Educators

Building Better Relationships

- Help teachers understand how and when to communicate high expectations while also

assuring students of their potential to achieve them (Yeager et al., 2014).

- Teachers can increase student compliance by being trustworthy, communicating high expectations and expressing an authoritative style of teaching (Gregory et al., 2010).
- Principals should incorporate restorative practices to resolve problems with behavior and to promote a more positive environment.

Training and Practice

- Integrate diversity into all on-going professional development opportunities for all school-based staff including, teachers, administrators, school counselors/school psychologists, and education specialists.
- Provide information on how to support social-emotional development within the classroom environment to help students cope and grow from adverse childhood experiences.
- Provide diversity and multicultural organizational development training for administrators.
- Educate teachers on how implicit biases may lead to low expectations and have been linked to students' in-class behaviors that further leads to disciplinary referrals.
- Teachers should be provided training to maintain high expectations and demonstrate care so that students feel that they matter. This may create conditions for success and compliance.
- School counselors' work should focus on providing culturally sensitive prevention and mental health support.

For Psychologists

- Psychological assessment tools should be administered by psychologists who are culturally competent.
- Psychologists should identify and/or develop measures that are free of bias against Black boys and men.
- Establish levels to categorize evidence-based treatment (EBT) including *well established*, *probably efficacious*, or *possibly efficacious* (Association of Black Psychologists, 2011).
- Establish criteria to assess the effectiveness of specific treatments with specific groups (i.e., at least 75% of sample, conduct separate analysis for that group, or confirm that race/ethnicity is not a moderating variable between treatment and outcomes) (Association of Black Psychologists, 2011)
- Incorporate *Practice Based Evidence* (i.e., a range of treatment approaches that are derived from positive cultural attributes of the local society and accepted as effective by the local community) and *Community Defined Evidence* (i.e., a set of practices that communities have used and determined yield positive results through community consensus over time) in any effort to use EBTs with racial/ethnic minorities (Association of Black Psychologists, 2011).
- Utilize the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (2014), which catalogs best practices in behavioral health interventions for African Americans.
- Identify strengths and protective factors among Black youth as opposed to relying on

deficit models and thinking (see Solberg et al., 2007).

- Assess resilience (i.e., flexibility, communalism, active engagement, critical mindedness) and strength using guidelines by APA Task Force Report (2008) on Resilience and Strength in African American Children and Adolescents, including four components for optimal functioning for Black youth: critical mindedness, active engagement, flexibility, and communalism.
- Help build resilience among parents and teacher using APA Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers.

Resources

Web-based

- [The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males](#)
- [Kelly Report 2015: Health Disparities in America](#)
- [HHS Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities](#)
- [Social and Behavioral Sciences Team 2015 Annual Report](#)
- [National Center for Cultural Competence](#)
- [Taking Action Against Racism in Higher Education and the Media](#)
- [Teaching about Ferguson](#)
- [Teaching privilege](#)

Publications

- The New Jim Crow, by M. Alexander
- Starve the Racist Prison Beast, by P. Street
- The Vicious Circle: Race, Prison, Jobs, and Community in Chicago, IL and the Nation, by P. Street
- 11 Recent Sociological Findings on Race and Criminal Justice System, by American Sociological Association
- 41 Shots and Counting: What Amadou Diallo's Story Teaches us about Policing, Race, and Justice, by B. Roy
- "We Believe it was Murder": Mobilizing Black resistance to police brutality in Champaign, IL, by S. Cha-Jua
- Racial Attitudes of Police Recruits in the United States Midwest Police Academy: A Quantitative Examination, by M. Schlosser
- Above the law: Police and Excessive Use of Force, by J. Skolnick and J. Fyfe
- Black Man Emerging: Facing the past and seizing a future in America by J. White and J. H. Cones III
- From Brotherhood to Manhood: How Black men rescue their relationships and dreams from the invisibility syndrome by A. J. Franklin
- We Real Cool: Black men and masculinity by b. hooks
- Cool pose: The dilemma of Black manhood in America by J. M. Billson
- Enhancing critical consciousness in young African American men: A psychoeducational approach by R. J. Watts, J. K. Abdul-Adil, and T. Pratt

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