Cultural Pride Reinforcement: A Protective Factor for Urban African American Youth Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

In adolescence significant psychosocial challenges threaten mental health

Urban minority adolescents especially at-risk:
- Youth mental health need nationally 17%-26%
- Youth mental health need in inner-city 24%-40%

Low rates of service use among this group

Increased need & less service use create a critical need to identify protective factors

BACKGROUND

Models of risk & resilience provide a framework for examining contextual factors & individual variations in mental health

Risk factors can be held constant & individual differences related to youth mental health can be examined

Child Mental Health Risk Factors

- Community violence exposure
- Drug use
- Victimization & death of family members/friends

Child Mental Health Protective factors

- Two-adult households
- Positive parent mental health
- Parent involvement/supervision
- Family support

Cultural Pride Reinforcement

Minority parents/caregiver explicit & implicit messages of racial esteem & uniqueness
- Positive racial identity help children cope with racism
- Little examination as protective factor in mental health literature
- Ironic, theorists predict enhance psychological well-being

Presented at the 17th Annual RTC Conference, Tampa FL, 2/29 – 3/3 2004. For more information, contact William Bannon: wb2005@columbia.edu
**OBJECTIVES**

1. Describe the relationship between risk factors & protective factors, including cultural pride reinforcement, in relation to youth mental health
2. Examine the influence of cultural pride reinforcement as a unique protective factor
3. Discuss implications for child mental health service delivery

**METHODS**

**Study Design**
- Cross-sectional study
- In Large mid-western city in 1997-1999
- Randomly selected from larger longitudinal study of a sample of African American youth & their families living in a community with many threats to youth
- Data gathered from parent & one child
- All interviews conducted by trained community members
- Informed consent/IRB approval obtained

**Sample**
- N = 140 African American youth & their adult caregivers
- 92% of adult caregivers were female
- 77% of adult caregivers were unmarried
- 68% of adult caregivers unemployed
- 71% of were supported by public assistance
- Average annual income between $5,000-$9,000
- 80% high school/GED, 20% beyond high school
- Children 9-15 years (M = 11.8; SD = 1.22)
- 60% of youth were female

**Measures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Parent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family demographics</strong></td>
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<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Child risk factors</strong></td>
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<td>Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Family Stress Scale (Tolan, 1987)</td>
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<td>- e.g., experienced friend's death (0-10 events)</td>
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<td><strong>Parent depression</strong></td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<td>- Symptom Checklist—90 (Derogatis, 1973)</td>
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<td>- e.g., how much were you bothered in the past week by- Feeling Blue (alpha=.86)</td>
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**Measures (cont.)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Parent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within family support</strong></td>
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<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Family Assessment Measure (Tolan, 1994)</td>
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<td>- e.g., I listen to what other family members say even when I disagree (alpha=.88)</td>
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<td><strong>Involvement/Supervision</strong></td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<td>- Parenting Skills Questionnaire (Tolan, 1991)</td>
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<td>- e.g., my child is not allowed to have other children over when I am not at home (alpha=.75)</td>
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**Measures (cont.)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural pride reinforcement</strong></td>
<td>Parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Scale of Racial Socialization for African American Adolescents (Stevenson, 1995)</td>
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<td>- e.g., teachers should display signs of Black culture for children in the classroom (alpha=.71)</td>
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<td><strong>Child mental health</strong></td>
<td>Child</td>
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<td>- State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1973)</td>
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<td>- e.g., Right now I feel- cheerful (alpha=.83)</td>
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METHODS

Data Analysis:
1. Examine differences in child mental health by demographic characteristics
2. Determine independent variables associated at bivariate level (p<.05)
3. Hierarchical OLS regression used to examine multiple influences on youth mental health outcome

METHODS (cont.)
- Variables entered by “blocks”: Risk factors, Protective factors, & Cultural pride reinforcement
- Cultural pride reinforcement third step to test unique influences
- SES (i.e., income) controlled for
- Checks for multicollinearity conducted

RESULTS

Child Mental Health did not differ by:
- Child age, t(100) = .47, p = .64
- Child gender, t(111) = -1.07, p = .34
- Parent education, t(133) = .51, p = .61
- Parent employed, t(131) = -1.8, p = .86
- Public assistance, t(132) = -1.11, p = .91

RESULTS (cont.)
- Out of the 10 stressful events the average child experienced three exposures (range=0-8; SD =1.64)
  - 16% (n = 20) at least one event
  - 60% (n = 72) two or three events
  - 26% (n = 33) four or more events

RESULTS

Child Mental Health Protective factors
- 23% (n=23) two adult household
- Low parent depression
  (M=20.5; SD=7.54; Range=13-56)
- High levels involvement & supervision
  (M=60.6; SD=5.58; Range=41-68)
- High levels within family support
  (M=20.3; SD=3.90; Range=6-24)

RESULTS (cont.)
- High cultural pride reinforcement
  (M = 23; SD = 2.70; range = 17-28)
- Cultural Pride Reinforcement
- Positive child mental health state
  (M = 53.4; SD = 5.53; range = 28-63)
RESULTS

Table 1

Intercorrelations Between Subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2(23*)</th>
<th>3(20*)</th>
<th>4(20*)</th>
<th>5(26**)</th>
<th>6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Child Mental Health</td>
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<td>2. Parent Depression</td>
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<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>3. Involvement/Supervision</td>
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<td>-.12</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>4. Within Family Support</td>
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<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.02</td>
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<td>5. Child Risk Factors</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Cultural Pride Reinforcement</td>
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* p < .05, ** p < .01

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DISCUSSION

- Added to understanding beyond risk & protective factors suggesting a unique protective factor for African American youth
- Finding link youth mental health to parents’ efforts to instill a positive racial identity & teach strategies to cope with racism

Cultural Pride Reinforcement accounted for an additional 8% of the variance, beyond the 19% accounted for by risk factors (8%) & protective factors (11%)

Implications that intervention designs be broadened to include strengthening protective factors such as cultural pride reinforcement

Cultural pride reinforcement warrants further study as part of broader approach to influencing African American youth mental health

Possible construct of importance that has not been considered in studies of this population

DISCUSSION

- Single informant reports:
  - No youth/parent interaction effect testing
  - No testing of youth reports with outcomes
  - No test of how well child internalized messages

- Relatively small sample

Limitations

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CONCLUSION

- Cultural pride teaching may be a unique & influential protective factor for urban African American youth mental health

- Additional research is necessary