

## Executive Summary

### Objectives

In alignment with our scope of work, this literature review investigates mental health supports for Black male youth who are high school students. The age parameters of “youth” were defined by our project sponsor as 14 to 24 years old. Our research was centered on evidence-based mental health practices that were holistic and preventative as opposed to clinical and related to crisis care. Finding culturally specific practices was prioritized, as much as possible.

### Methodology

We approached our research from three angles: state-wide, national, and global. In total, twenty studies were reviewed and ordered from most relevant to least relevant. Studies that are “most relevant” address all four markers of our scope (Black, male, youth, and students) while studies that are “least relevant” address only one marker. For ease of reference, we refer to the number a study is ordered in (example: “Article 10”) instead of providing its full title.

### Summary

After an assessment, we determined that the effective practices must be culturally relevant to the African American experience, explore and deconstruct masculinity, address specific issues that young people experience, and be ingrained in teaching practices and school culture. Evidence-based programs that were covered include RITES, Step Up, Boys Hope Girls Hope (BHG), RULER, RECAP-VN, and Boys to Men. Relevant findings to each of the four markers – Black, male, youth, and students, are listed below:

**Black:** The need for mental health supports for Black male youth are discussed in Articles 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, and 11. Black perceptions of mental health and the challenges of seeking formal support versus informal supports are covered in Articles 4, 10, and 12. Opportunities that are Africentric, identity affirming, asset-based, and future driven are explored in Articles 1, 7, 9, 11, and 17.

**Male:** The importance of unpacking constructs of masculinity is discussed in Articles 1 and 4. The impact of mentoring by caring adults, particularly Black male adults, on youth development is addressed in Articles 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 17, and 19 .

**Youth:** The critical period of identity formation that youth navigate is addressed in Article 20. Isolation and trauma experienced during the COVID 19 pandemic is illuminated in Articles 10 and 20. Bullying as a negative factor influencing mental health is discussed in Articles 14, 15, and 20. The unique impact of social media use is covered in Article 12. Resilience narratives that can undermine a culture of supportive mental health are outlined in Article 14. Some opportunities that exist include letting youth define mental health for themselves (Article 14), using entertainment media to stimulate conversations on mental health (Article 4), employing creative practices (Articles 1, 9, and 16), and empowering activism and reflection on social issues (Articles 7, 12, and 19).

**Students:** The potential of school settings to increase access to mental health supports and reduce stigma are highlighted in Articles 2, 5, 10, and 18 . How schools negatively affect student mental health is discussed in Articles 14. Opportunities that exist include implementing social-emotional curriculums (Articles 1, 13, and 18), safe spaces (Article 13, 14, 15, and 19), and improved teacher training to better care for student mental health (Articles 3, 15, and 18).

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## Relevance: 4 Markers

### Article #: 1

**Relevance:** Black, Male, Youth, Students

**Article Title:** African-American Males and the Rites of Passage Experience

**Citation:** Alford, K. A. (2007). African-American Males and the Rites of Passage Experience. In S. M. L. Logan, R. W. Denby, & P. A. Gibson (Eds.), *Mental Health Care in the African-American Community* (1st ed.). The Haworth Press.

**Reviewer:** Harsh Gagoomal

### Summary:

In this chapter, the relevancy and effectiveness of rites of passage (RITES) programming is explored. RITES programming is culturally specific to the African American experience and supports urban Black males through “Afrocentric teachings and skill acquisition.” RITES curriculums have been implemented in numerous settings, including schools, and have been found to have positive mental health outcomes. The 7 primary components of RITES programming include:

1. **Inclusion of Africentric values** - “values that support interconnectedness, mutual aid, spirituality, and cultural pride.” In RITES, feelings and emotions are taught to be valuable sources of knowledge. The beauty of a thriving collective is emphasized over the idea of “survival of the fittest.”
2. **Life skills training**, which can include “learning the basics of cooking, job interviewing, banking, budgeting, study habits, time management, hygiene maintenance, conflict resolution, and substance abuse prevention.” Masculinity and “discovery of what it means to be a man” is also an important part of curriculums. Use of the arts and creativity during trainings is important and encouraged.
3. **The Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles)**: Unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.
4. **“Acquiring an appreciation of one’s cultural heritage”** as a pathway to develop a “secure sense of self.” RITES emphasizes that it is important to go beyond the one month a year dedicated to Black history where familiar Black champions are recycled. Thorough teachings help adolescents to develop a greater understanding of the breadth of Black heroes in history and build racial pride.
5. **“Excursions to historical sites that promote the accomplishments and strengths of Black people.”**
6. **“Mentoring by elders and leaders”** who also serve as instructors and offer “paraprofessional counseling.” Mentors help facilitate relationship building so that youth participants leave with new relationships and support systems with peers and mentors.
7. **Rituals in the form of a public ceremony or event where rites of passage are celebrated.** This “sends a message to the youth that he is valued and his achievement

is monumental.” Celebratory events can renew family ties by virtue of people convening together in community.

RITES programming is appropriate to the project as it is a culturally specific, time-tested mental health support for Black male youth. It is a practice where the impact of racism is openly discussed and where learning about one’s Blackness is deemed critical for identity formation. In comparison to color-blind approaches, RITES shows that you cannot sever the tie between racial identity and the flourishing of one’s mental and emotional health. Even though the book was published in 2007, it is highly relevant to our scope of work and can be considered as a seminal text in the study of Black mental health. “[The National Rites of Passage Institute \(NROPI\)](#) has provided training on RITES implementation for over 30 years.

## Relevance: 3 Markers

### **Article #:** 2

**Relevance:** Black, Youth, Students

**Article Title:** The “New” Epidemic

**Citation:** Chapter 26: H., G. E. E., Jones, B. E., & Stewart, A. J. (2019). Chapter 26: The "New" Epidemic. In *Black Mental Health: Patients, providers, and systems* (pp. 297-308). essay, American Psychiatric Association Publishing.

**Reviewer:** Favian Gonzalez

### **Summary:**

Chapter 26 of *Black Mental Health* addresses the trauma among adolescents who live in poverty. Right off the bat we learn that there are about 16 million children ages 5 to 17 who live in poverty in the US, and of those, about 46% are black (p. 297). This statistic is followed by the finding that “youth’s prolonged exposure to stressful life conditions severely compromises the functioning and development of emerging brain and body systems that help regulate the body’s response to stress.” That said, the chapter describes trauma as the “new” epidemic. This is significant given that this book is from 2019. In summary, this chapter discusses trauma’s effect on urban adolescents in schools and how prolonged exposure to life stressors impacts overall health and well-being.

The chapter finds that not only might urban adolescents who live in poverty engage in risky behavior, but these may also face more chronic health problems later in life (p. 298). Similar to chapter 20, this chapter also breaks up into clear sections that are easy to read and understand. For our particular project with Milwaukee Succeeds, a section that is helpful is the one on trauma-informed approaches to working with youth. This approach replaces the lens of a deficit model to one that is more empathetic and understanding. Rather than asking youth “what is wrong with you?” the question becomes “what happened to you?” This shift allows us to better respond to the youth’s specific needs. This section highlights the importance of connections and of community. In particular, students need to feel connected to their teachers and feel like they belong.

The next section that this chapter presents is the one on evidence-based interventions. This section highlights that the strongest evidence exists for cognitive-behavioral interventions. These should include psychoeducation on trauma, training in emotion regulation, exposure, cognitive processing and/or problem solving. Setting is important, as findings show students would more likely participate in an intervention done in school as opposed to a clinic. Three specific interventions are presented in this chapter: Trauma-focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools Program, and Multimodality Trauma Treatment. Ultimately, the key findings in this chapter are the following:

- Stable and responsive relationships with caring adults can protect youth from damage done by toxic stress and promote resiliency
- Adopting a trauma-informed approach and implementing evidence-based clinical interventions provide behavioral health support to students affected by trauma
- Collaborations with universities can provide critical resources to promote academic, social-emotional, and behavioral development

### **Article #: 3**

**Relevance:** Black, Youth, Students

**Article Title:** Breaking the Cycle of Silence Around Black Mental Health

**Citation:** Tutt, P. (2021) Breaking the Cycle of Silence Around Black Mental Health. *Edutopia*; <https://www.edutopia.org/article/breaking-cycle-silence-around-black-mental-health>

**Reviewer:** Stefan Dostanic

#### **Summary:**

This article highlights the lack of specialized mental health services for black youth, as well as their reluctance to seek it. One of the main reasons for this is “normalization of trauma and ongoing stigma towards mental health in black communities.” The authors emphasize the ongoing theme in this type of research that providers of mental health care must consider and “recognize the unique cultural and social barriers the students face, both within their communities and within K-12 schools.” The most relevant component of the article to this project is the emphasis on the importance of partnerships with non-profit organizations and the definitive benefits of the same.

Another important point the authors make is the need for requiring school teachers, as well as non instructional staff, to complete diversity and implicit bias training so that they can provide mental health support to black students with a trauma-informed restorative lens. The article highlights success of the RULER Program, that promotes emotional and social learning by guiding educators and students through the process of developing five key emotional skills: Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions.

The final key points of the article involve the benefit of using culturally sensitive language when providing mental health services and fostering the inherent value of the same. Milwaukee schools stand to benefit by implementing the valuable practices and recommendations of this article.

**Article #: 4****Relevance:** Black, Male, Youth**Article Title:** Understandings of Mental Health and Support for Black Male Adolescents Living in the UK**Citation:** Meechan, Hannah, Mary John, and Paul Hanna. 2021. "Understandings of Mental Health and Support for Black Male Adolescents Living in the UK." *Children and Youth Services Review* 129 (October). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2021.106192>**Reviewer:** Harsh Gagoomal**Summary:**

This study examined "the way in which young Black males in the UK make sense of mental health and associated systems of support." Ten interviews were conducted with "males aged 16-18 from a South London school." The three main themes that emerged were: "1) Understandings of mental health; 2) Understandings of formal support [for mental health]; 3) Understandings of informal support [for mental health]." The difficulties surrounding seeking support from formal "professionals" and the complexity of informal support networks were discussed.

Participants of the study associated mental health challenges with "not being at peace," "not being able to cope," "not being stable," and "not being in control." Results from the interviews indicated how masculinity - "being in control and strong" - influenced an individual's understanding of mental health and their willingness to seek support. The act of speaking about one's emotions was associated with vulnerability, weakness, and to an extent, a feminine privilege. Seeking formal support was viewed as a last resort option to be taken in only the direst moments when there is a complete inability to cope and an inability to function - essentially when a man can no longer easily mask his own mental health problems.

Formal support systems were understood to be "often unkind and discriminatory to Black males." The participants shared that it is difficult to open up to someone who is not of their own race and background – someone who they cannot relate to and does not have a grasp on "Black people problems." Seeing a mental health professional was also a source of anxiety as participants expressed a fear of diagnoses that could lead to debilitating labels such as "mental health patient." Having a mental health problem was likened to having a disability, which "can lead to a loss of a constructed identity and agency." Mental health being a disability suggested a condition of "permanent status as opposed to something that is recovered from."

Informal support systems, such as speaking to family and friends, were felt to be more accessible for young Black men; however, there was still a persistent fear of being judged negatively for expressing weakness. One participant shared that he and his friends are more likely to debate the actions of characters in a Netflix show and discuss strategies to use in hypothetical scenarios rather than discuss their own personal feelings. This "seemed [to be] a more accessible and safer way to discuss distress and avoid disclosing personal difficulties to

peers.” To this end, schools may want to investigate how television shows and media can be used to stimulate discussions on mental health, relationships, and behavior.

Another finding of the study was the need of vulnerable male mentoring figures for Black boys. Research highlighted the dilemma of one participant - “although his dad is one of his closest relationships, how can he possibly speak to him about his emotions because this is not something that [his dad] does.” Participants suggested that Black males who share stories of “their own mental health struggles within schools and within the media could help to begin to untangle [the] silencing and identity” conflicts Black students experience, “especially as they transition to young adulthood.” The success of campaigns such as [MIND](#) and [Black Men On The Couch](#) were referenced.

In terms of our project scope, the participant demographics in this study aligned with the race, gender, and age range that Milwaukee Succeeds aims to serve. Black boys in the United States and the United Kingdom both experience far different mental health realities than their white counterparts. In the UK, “from the age of 11 years old, Black African Caribbean boys are already many times more likely to suffer with a diagnosable mental health condition than their White peers.” Navigating Blackness in White-dominant societies are a common thread between the experiences of Black people in the United States and the United Kingdom.

One criticism of the study is that it does not offer much evidence-based practices for mental health but rather suggestions on what could be helpful. One final suggestion was for education in schools “to normalize feeling a range of emotions, as opposed to a more rigid view that you are either okay, or completely out of control and need a hospital.”

#### **Article #: 5**

**Relevance:** Black, Youth, Students

**Article Title:** How Schools Can Address Black Students’ Unmet Mental Health Needs

**Citation:** Davis, G. (2021) How Schools Can Address Black Students’ Unmet Mental Health Needs. *Teach for America*;

<https://www.teachforamerica.org/one-day/ideas-and-solutions/how-schools-can-address-black-students-unmet-mental-health-needs>

**Reviewer:** Stefan Dostanic

#### **Summary:**

This article highlights the urgency to address the mental health needs of black students, which has been amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the racial reckoning for social justice following the murder of George Floyd. Suicide rates of black youth continue to trend upward, according to the study conducted by the Michael A. Lindsey, Executive Director of the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research at New York University. The article outlines many of the challenges facing black youth, as well as potential solutions to this growing crisis.

The author highlights that families are twenty times more likely to use school-based mental health services than they are to use services in the community. School setting is proximal

to the challenges that kids are experiencing. Therefore, inviting community partners to the school to provide alternative mental health services is very effective.

One of the key takeaway ideas from this article that can be applied to the project is that the school building should be open to the community beyond the actual school day and thus provide opportunities for families to come after work to be involved in those services in support of their child's mental health. The article confirms this by referencing a study from the Journal of Adolescent Health, which found that the Black kids are more likely to be connected to school-based mental health services if their family members supported them and their emotional and psychological health.

The second key idea relevant to the project is the importance of mentorship programs. The benefits of mentoring cannot be overstated as it exposes kids to the experience outside of their purview or outside of their community and helps families to understand and appreciate many different things that mentoring experiences can offer.

#### **Article #: 6**

**Relevance:** Black, Youth, Students

**Article Title:** A Multilevel Analysis of Statewide Disproportionality in Exclusionary Discipline and the Identification of Emotional Disturbance

**Citation:** Bal, A., Betters-Bubon, J., & Fish, R. E. (2017). A multilevel analysis of statewide disproportionality in exclusionary discipline and the identification of emotional disturbance. *Education and Urban Society*, 51(2), 247–268. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517716260>

**Reviewer:** Favian Gonzalez

#### **Summary:**

This article examines the “extent and predictors of racial disproportionality in behavioral outcomes in the state of Wisconsin. History shows that in the United States, Black, Latino and Native American students are disproportionately suspended and expelled more frequently for more subjective reasons. However, this article tells us that the concept of racial disproportionality is very complex, and we have yet to understand it fully.

The research presented four methodological limitations (1. Nationally representative data sets also mask within-state differences. 2. The studies using nationally representative samples often lack sufficient numbers of cases of populations of interest. 3. The prior studies analyzed the special education placement and school discipline separately. 4. The majority of disproportionality studies used single- level models analyzing either student or school characteristics.) These limitations lead to three questions that were addressed with a multilevel analysis: To what extent are minority students represented in special education placement for ED? To what extent are minority students represented in exclusionary discipline? To what extent is risk of exclusionary discipline and ED placement predicted by student- and school-level variables?

The analysis “included academic variables and identified a strong relationship between students’ academic and behavior outcomes.” Youth from racial minority backgrounds are much

more likely to receive inferior educational opportunities. This is what the article calls an opportunity gap. “Disproportionality may exacerbate the historical marginalization of students of color by deepening the opportunity gap at the intersection of race, class, language, and disability.” Because exclusionary discipline and the Emotional Disturbance (ED) label have negative consequences such as academic failure, stigma, delinquency, and limited access to higher education, the authors describe collaboration as key in identifying ways to prevent and intervene.

### **Article #: 7**

**Relevance:** Black, Youth, Students

**Article Title:** Predicting Contribution in High Achieving Black and Latinx Youth: The Role of Critical Reflection, Hope, and Mentoring

**Citation:** Bowers, E. P., Bolding, C. W., Rapa, L. J., & Sandoval, A. M. (2021, July 7).

*Predicting contribution in high achieving black and latinx youth: The role of critical reflection, hope, and mentoring.* Frontiers. Retrieved October 29, 2022, from

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.681574/full>

**Reviewer:** Favian Gonzalez

### **Summary:**

This article dives into a study done with primarily Black and Latinx students residing in urban settings. The participants in this study were part of an afterschool, college prep program for high achieving students. The Boys Hope Girls Hope (BHG) program “provides holistic poverty intervention for motivated youth with demonstrated need.” 72% of the youth in the program came from households where the income was below the American poverty line. Additionally, the youth in this sample came from different BHG sites across the country. As these youth often become leaders in their communities, this study wanted to look at all that was contributing to their success from a holistic perspective.

The first key finding presented by the article was that “when youth within marginalizing systems critically reflect on social inequities, they are more likely to engage in critical action, civic activities, or political actions.” The second attribute linked with high achieving youth is having hopeful future expectations. “These results provide evidence of the potential shared function of hope across ethnic-racial identity groups, socioeconomic status, and context.” The third of these was mentorship. Positive youth-adult relationships were linked to academic success. However, something that stood out was that “only Black youth exhibited significant relations between the youth assets of critical reflection, hopeful future expectations, and mentoring relationship quality and youth contribution.

One of the main limitations to this study was the sample size, given that it was only about 177 students. The other limitation was that this was a cross-sectional study and that though the hypothesis was that youth strengths and resources predicted levels of youth contribution, it could also be that “through participating in acts of contribution, youth may be engaged to participate in experiences that promote critical reflection, hopeful expectations, and connections with adults.”

Another limitation is that this study looked at high achieving students of color in a very specific program that required a lot of them. The article cautions readers to consider the validity of the findings based on the last statement.

The article concludes, however, that “nurturing the strengths of critical reflection and hopeful future expectations and connecting youth to caring and concerned mentors will support youth developing to their full potential and becoming agents of social change.” This study has identified the power of individual strengths and of resources as tools that promote positive youth outcomes.

**Article #:** 8

**Relevance:** Black, Male, Youth

**Article Title:** Promoting Positive Social Development among African American Boys

**Citation:** Brown, K. D. (2017). Promoting Positive Social Development among African American Boys [ProQuest LLC]. In *ProQuest LLC*.

[https://indigo.uic.edu/articles/thesis/Promoting\\_Positive\\_Social\\_Development\\_among\\_African\\_American\\_Boys/10784720](https://indigo.uic.edu/articles/thesis/Promoting_Positive_Social_Development_among_African_American_Boys/10784720)

**Reviewer:** Harsh Gagoomal

**Summary:**

This paper discusses the social, academic, and mental impact that fraternal organizations can have on youth through mentorship programs. The author conducted a study of one particular mentorship program, Boys to Men, which has been led by the Fraternal Order of Men for more than 60 years. Participants meet “every second and third Saturday of each month of the program year (September through June) from 9am to 12 noon” for mentoring sessions; they also attend “community service projects, conferences, social outings, and awards banquet[s].” At the time of the study, ten fraternity members served as mentors to 30 mentees who ranged in age from 12 to 18 years old. All mentors and mentees identified as African American. Four interviews, a focus group, and “a total of 13 observations [were conducted] between March and June.”

Shared life experiences were a key driver behind the program’s success. As African American men who grew up in similar neighborhoods, “mentors were able to use their life experiences to relate to some of the experiences the mentees [were] dealing with.” Mentors discussed topics such as “growing up in single-parent homes,” “struggling to find a positive role model,” “being bullied and ways they overcame it,” and coping with the negative outcomes of certain choices that family members and friends had made. This was balanced with positive experiences such as “being encouraged by African American male teachers in school,” participating in extra-curricular activities that taught them discipline, setting goals, and finding community in their neighborhoods. The mentors helped to counter “negative perceptions” [and stereotypes] of African American males accepted by society” by expressing “genuine care about the well-being of their younger counterparts,” sharing the value of education, and modeling a range of career paths. Results of the study revealed that:

- 92% of mentees agreed that the Boys to Men program has helped them gain self-confidence.
- “92% of the mentees agreed that the mentors were supportive.”
- “69% agreed that they could talk to the fraternity members about anything.”
- “92% of the mentees felt that they were able to do things as well as most people and also agreed that they have much to be proud of.”
- “92% of the mentees feel comfortable interacting with new people.”
- “85% agreed that the participants in the mentoring program accepted them for who they are.”
- The median raw score from the Mentee Attitude Scale was 84/100, which reflects high self-esteem among participants.
- Mentees' outlooks on their future were changed; they now see college as a viable option.
- “Parent participation [had] improved as well. They attend[ed] parent meetings and fund raisers [as well as] provide[d] food for mentoring sessions and transport[ed] mentees to events.”

Mentoring programs like Boys to Men help Black male youth find support while navigating school systems that feel alienating and discriminatory – systems in which they receive harsh punishments and are “held to lower academic regard.” Furthermore, having the opportunity to connect with positive Black male figures who are invested in their success is critical when considering that “72% of African American children are being raised in a single-parent household” and may be “longing for a male presence in their lives.” The study noted that for mentoring programs to be effective, mentoring relationships should last at least a year. Early termination of a relationship has the potential to “cause more harm than good” and lead to a deflation of student self-worth. Large disparities in class and race may also “lead to early termination.” This is useful to keep in mind as Milwaukee Succeeds and its stakeholders explore potential partnerships with various mentoring programs. After contemplating the effectiveness of the Boys to Men program, one future line of inquiry to pursue may be: How can it be replicated in a school setting?

### **Article #: 9**

**Relevance:** Black, Youth, Students

**Article Title:** Stress, Coping, and Depression among Black Urban Adolescents: Implications for School Counseling.

**Citation:** Conner, Latoya C., and Christine J. Yeh (2018) “Stress, Coping, and Depression among Black Urban Adolescents: Implications for School Counseling.” *Journal of School Counseling*, vol. 16, no. 15. EBSCOhost,

<https://0-web-s-ebscohost-com.libus.csd.mu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=13&sid=8ecef6e-73de-47fa-8beb-f5f21428dada%40redis>

**Reviewer:** Stefan Dostanic

### **Summary:**

The authors of this article provide an overview of a study that examined “the stress and coping experiences of Black-identified high school students living in an urban setting.” Similar to other research on the subject, the authors pointed out a great deal of evidence for correlation between “school outcomes and future life experiences.” Additionally, they highlight that “culture and context have a profound impact on the help-seeking behaviors of youth of color” and advise that the schools can play a major role in helping youth see and obtain mental health counseling and treatment. It is profoundly important when it comes to youth counseling that culture and lived experiences be considered and incorporated in all efforts involving black student’s mental health.

For the purpose of this project, the main value this article provides is the methods by which the mental health counseling gap can be addressed, given the unique lived experience of black high school youth. The authors stress that “culturally congruent ways of coping significantly impact the social-emotional and academic success of black adolescents.” The study referenced in this article explores coping techniques through “the lens of African-centered world view.” It includes, “spiritual beliefs or practices, collective group resources (e.g. family and peers), and creative activities (e.g. dancing, listening to music, writing poetry).”

Based on the study results, the authors conclude that creative practices – such as dance, music, drama, and humor – proved to be the most effective means of coping by high school aged black adolescents. The study showed that “African American storytelling can be used as a narrative and performance-based strategy of resistance, healing, and coping for the narrator as well spectators.” Using these coping strategies should most certainly be considered as part of the recommendations involving this project. An asset map that is part of this project will include several entities that Milwaukee area school could partner with to provide these effective coping resources.

## **Relevance: 2 Markers**

### **Article #: 10**

**Relevance:** Black, Students

**Article Title:** Schools and Black Students’ Mental Health: The Kids Aren’t Alright

**Citation:** Pottiger, M. (2022) Schools and Black Students’ Mental Health: The Kids Aren’t Alright. *Word in Black*; <https://wordinblack.com/2022/05/schools-black-students-mental-health>

**Reviewer:** Stefan Dostanic

### **Summary:**

The article highlights the increasing need for mental health services among black teens and outlines the data supporting that claim. It highlights the fact that black students often rely on mental health support in schools rather than outside of it. The exact reason is unknown, “but it is most likely due to stigma, lack of health insurance, or ease of access.” The authors indicate that black teens are 600 times more likely to get help in academic settings compared to other options

than their counterparts. This point is important for the project as it again highlights that while black male high school students are in great need of mental health support that is not clinical in nature, they do not necessarily need to leave the school to get it.

This article rightly points out that no matter how comprehensive and accessible the school based mental health approach is, it is not nearly enough to ensure a holistic approach to mental health. “Support systems outside of the school must be established to ensure the greatest level of effectiveness and success.” This is especially demonstrated by the Covid-19 pandemic that uprooted the mental health support systems provided in the school setting. The article also highlights the need for culturally responsive mental health, including the importance of having diverse mental health providers.

Finally, the author posits that it should be the school’s responsibility to help families find mental health resources within the community. She states that “by utilizing school-based counselors, schools can connect families with community based mental health resources that can be utilized both during the school year and during summer and winter breaks.” An argument for this model can and should be introduced in schools throughout the City of Milwaukee.

### **Article #: 11**

**Relevance:** Black, Youth

**Article Title:** Culturally Grounded Stress Reduction and Suicide Prevention for African American Adolescents

**Citation:** ROBINSON, W. L. *et al.* (2016) Culturally grounded stress reduction and suicide prevention for African American adolescents. *Practice Innovations*, [s. l.], v. 1, n. 2, p. 117–128. <http://0-search-ebscohost-com.libus.csd.mu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2016-30474-002&site=eds-live&scope=site>

**Reviewer:** Stefan Dostanic

**Summary:**

While this article deals with suicide, one of the most severe consequences of poor mental health, the stress reduction measures aimed at African American adolescents may prove quite useful to the stakeholders, clients, and partners that Milwaukee Succeeds serves.

“African American adolescents are three times more likely to live and grow up in resource poor neighborhoods than any other ethnic group in this country.” Yet the majority of the literature examining adolescent suicide prevention is dominated by studies of adolescents of European American descent, “despite the evidence that factors associated with adolescent suicidal behavior differ according to cultural and ethnic diversities.” There is growing empirical and theoretical support for the importance of cultural integration to promote good intervention outcomes, and this is particularly true for African American adolescents.

Managing stress in an environment of limited external resources, one that many African American adolescents face, is very important for development. The article highlights evidence that “African American adolescents are exceptionally responsive to cognitive-behavioral therapy” but more importantly that culturally sensitive cognitive-behavioral stress-reduction

methods yield best results. “Stress-reduction interventions have been found to promote the use of adaptive coping skills, thereby reducing impulsive behaviors and increasing help-seeking behaviors in adolescents.” Unfortunately, few stress-reduction interventions that are “culturally grounded and contextually relevant are available to urban African American adolescents.”

The authors suggest that stress coping techniques need to incorporate culturally and environmentally sensitive topics. Those include: “(a) language—language and names changed to reflect common vernacular of African American youth; (b) persons—open discussions about differences between facilitators and participants; (c) metaphors—African American drawings, icons, and cartoons replaced European cartoons; (d) content—utilized material relevant to African American heritage, culture, and values; (e) concepts—didactics incorporated commonly held African American values and beliefs; (f) goals—goals were adjusted to be culturally congruent; (g) methods—trainings focused on strategies to help youth collaborate with peers, parents, and mentors (e.g., teachers, pastors, etc.) to cope with stress reflecting the African American value of collaboration and (h) context—discussions focused on characteristics of the community contexts where adolescents lived (e.g., racism, community violence, poverty).” Authors highlight that students themselves were consulted in determining these crucial adaptations.

The conclusions of this article, involving the need for incorporating culturally sensitive elements into cognitive therapy, is useful to the project goal of identifying the optimal sources of mental health care for black male high school students.

## **Article #: 12**

**Relevance:** Black, Youth

**Article Title:** Addressing the Mental Health Needs of African American Youth in the New Millennium

**Citation:** Chapter 20: H., G. E. E., Jones, B. E., & Stewart, A. J. (2019). Chapter 20: Addressing the Mental Health Needs of African American Youth in the New Millennium. In *Black Mental Health: Patients, providers, and systems* (pp. 219-230). essay, American Psychiatric Association Publishing.

**Reviewer:** Favian Gonzalez

**Summary:**

In Chapter 26 of the book, *Black Mental Health*, Dr. Raquel E. Reid looks at the needs of African American youth in today’s world. The chapter begins by sharing some stats, describing who Millennials and post-Millenials are. One notable stat is that 51% of black individuals in the US belong to the Millennial and post-Millennial generations. In other words, 51% of the African American population is 35 years old or younger. The number is significant, and as such, it is imperative to understand their perspective on the world in order to “address their mental health needs in the coming decades” (p. 220). Ultimately, this chapter’s aim is to “evaluate social media use, bring insight to their (young African Americans) voiced concerns via social media

about the world around them, and explore mechanisms for bridging gaps and providing perceptively delivered mental health care.”

The remainder of the chapter is separated into sections. The first three sections look at social media. One looks at social media and youth. The second, Blackness and social media. The third looks at mental illness and social networking sites. Per a survey from 2012, 90% of teens and young adults reported the use of a social media site. One key finding is that “depressed teens engage in more frequent Internet usage than those without the diagnosis.” Of these, one study showed that when feeling more depressed, teens looked to social media to make connections for creative release, and for distraction/entertainment. Another great finding is that teenagers and young adults also use social media to understand the world around them. As much as it is used for entertainment or for connection, African American youth conversations on social media are also about social justice. “Namely, they discuss their general distrust in the idea that those in power look out for their well-being”(p. 222).

A study done by the Black Youth Project discovered that “millennials in particular discuss feeling empowered to advocate for their own health, education, and safety. However, they are perceived as nonchalant by politicians and older generations, despite being the most politically active of all millennial racial groups” (p. 223). Another key finding in this same study is that the stigma of psychiatry remains, and “many within the black community still struggle with the belief that mental illness is not real and diagnosable.” The findings show a pattern of young African Americans feeling unsafe when it comes to seeing mental health practitioners, and often this is posted on social media.

With 72% of teens and young adults reporting social media use, this chapter shares that adolescents feel more comfortable disclosing personal information online than they do in person, and that sometimes their connections online are “deeper” than those they have in real life. Even more notably, this chapter shares that “depressed individuals tend to have more emotional connections with users who are not known to them personally” (p. 225).

The chapter’s last section before the conclusion is titled “Engagement of Black Youth.” In this section the author makes the point that practitioners “must acknowledge that millennials are politically active and engaged in their communities more than young people of any other race, and are actively seeking out avenues for activism. The idea of OPPORTUNITY seems to be a big one in this chapter and in the other articles. I think this chapter and book overall is a great asset that should be looked at more. It gives the learner tools such as questions to ask youth related to their use of social media.

### **Article #: 13**

**Relevance:** Youth, Students

**Article Title:** Integrating positive youth development and clinical care to enhance high school achievement for young people of color

**Citation:** Parchment, Tyrone Morris, et al. (2016) “Integrating Positive Youth Development and Clinical Care to Enhance High School Achievement for Young People of Color.” *Journal of*

*Public Mental Health*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2016, pp. 50–62. EBSCOhost,  
<https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1108/JPMH-08-2015-0038>

**Reviewer:** Stefan Dostanic

**Summary:**

This research article highlights the statistics indicating that young men of color encounter serious disparities in the areas of education, employment and mental health. It posits that there is a significant correlation between good mental health, academic success, and overall well-being. “Building paths to successful futures for youth of color requires new and progressive approaches to overcome the challenges associated with poverty, substance abuse, community violence, institutional racism and systematic oppression in education.” Programs that emphasize psychological well-being, self-esteem and racial identity can mitigate the effects of discrimination among adolescents that impedes them from doing well in school.

Therefore, a positive youth development and mental health promotion program called Step Up can and has addressed the disparities. Step-Up is an after-school high school-based mental health service delivery program that utilizes a positive youth development framework developed to bolster key school, family and youth processes related to student’s mental health and development. The program is currently integrated in five school settings across three boroughs in the New York City area and its successes could very well be replicated in Milwaukee.

Step-Up provides high school age urban youth with multiple opportunities toward enhancing academic and social-emotional learning. This is done through participation in life skills groups and more importantly “one-on-one” counseling and mentoring. “The program offers group counseling that involves experienced and supportive facilitators providing the participants an opportunity to examine and resolve interpersonal issues.” The presence of positive adult relationships in the lives of youth is a crucial component of the program.

A youth collaborative board is utilized to inform the program on aspects of its curriculum, and this collaboration promotes ownership of the overall membership in the program. “Topics in the curriculum include effective communication, coping and stress management, relationships (friends, family, partners), race and racism, health and wellness, drugs and alcohol, sex and sexuality, the cycle of violence, to name a few.” An important aspect of this program is that the curriculum takes into consideration the history, values, and challenges that youth of color navigate during adolescence. The groups focus primarily on creating a safe space for members, building empathy and practicing non-judgment. Program coordinators are licensed social workers and mental health providers who model positive adult relationships and foster caring and creative environments where youth discuss topics relevant to their lives.

**Article #:** 14

**Relevance:** Youth, Students

**Article Title:** ‘Push on through’: Children’s perspectives on the narratives of resilience in schools identified for intensive mental health promotion

**Citation:** Brown, C., & Dixon, J. (2020). ‘Push on through’: Children’s perspectives on the narratives of resilience in schools identified for intensive mental health promotion. *British Educational Research Journal*, 46(2), 379–398. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3583>

**Reviewer:** Harsh Gagoomal

**Summary:**

This study took place in the South of England and aimed to explore “student perspectives of mental health interventions in school.” High school students were asked to use a mobile/web app to provide photo representations of how they interpret mental health concepts such as “resilience,” “wellbeing,” and “mental health problems.” These “photo representations of mental health were [then] collected and used [as flash cards] to stimulate focus group discussions with 65 students aged 12–14, across seven schools.”

Students identified mental health problems as feelings of being: trapped, stuck, angry, stressed, out of control, unsafe, and confused, as well as lacking confidence and over-thinking situations. They also conveyed the paradox that “anti-social behavior [can be] both a trigger for [and a] consequence of mental health problems.” Furthermore, students assessed current school strategies to address bullying as being inadequate and shared that addressing bullying should be a key component to an effective school approach to supporting mental health. “Bullying was seen to both exacerbate existing mental health problems for children, as well as to trigger lower-level issues such as anxiety and depression.”

Regarding the concept of resilience, students had negative or skeptical associations with the term and viewed a school’s emphasis on “push[ing]-on-through” as a deterrent to seeking support for their mental health. Resilience ideologies were believed to direct students towards prioritizing academic success, even over their well-being. One student touched on the irony of being asked to persist despite having a broken ankle and said that, whether it’s a broken ankle or one’s mental health - “it’s not that simple.” Resilience conjured up images “of a fort or a balloon” and was described as a “mask” or a “wall” that hid people’s true feelings. Youth participants challenged the idea that resilience is “solely attributable to individual effort” and can involve “the giving and receiving of help from others.”

In lieu of resilience teachings, students advocated for having “safe spaces within schools” and better mental health education. Three of the schools covered in the study “offered a dedicated open-access room, which was deeply valued by students in order to process feelings or simply to ‘get out of the class’.” A safe space was defined as a place where students can go to seek privacy, comfort, and relaxation, without judgement. Students also recommended that it would be beneficial to hear “testimonials of mental health survivors, especially older peers who would ‘know where you’re coming from’.”

The benefits of this study are a rethinking of overemphasizing “resilience” in school settings, which can have a detrimental effect on adolescent mental health. The study allowed for students to self-define mental health and reflect on how it should be promoted in school. Youth-recommended alternatives to “resilience” strategies should be considered, especially “safe spaces,” which has been successfully implemented in a few schools covered in this UK study.

A large limitation of this study is that it does not mention race at all. The United Kingdom is also a country where resilience and mental health narratives neglect socio-economic issues and instead focus on individuals. This lack of acknowledgement of structural forces hamstrings the UK's efforts to serve its diverse youth population.

### **Article #: 15**

**Relevance:** Youth, Students

**Article Title:** A qualitative exploration of 14 to 17-year old adolescents' views of early and preventative mental health support in schools

**Citation:** Spencer, L., McGovern, R., & Kaner, E. (2022). A qualitative exploration of 14 to 17-year old adolescents' views of early and preventative mental health support in schools. *Journal of Public Health*, 44(2), 363–369.

<https://0-doi-org.libus.csd.mu.edu/10.1093/pubmed/fdaa214>

**Reviewer:** Harsh Gagoomal

#### **Summary:**

In North East England, a qualitative study took place to assess adolescent perspectives on the types of preventative mental health support needed in schools. The study identified four key themes - “mental health literacy, risk factors for wellbeing decline, experiences of school-based support and recommendations for future support.”

Young people, aged 14-17, were recruited from “a variety of backgrounds and localities” though all identified as “White British.” In total, there were 12 participants – 6 male-identifying and 6 female-identifying. Four participants came from schools qualified as having a high level of deprivation, two came from schools qualified as having a medium level of deprivation, and four came from schools identified as having low levels of deprivation. The factors that constitute “deprivation” were undefined.

Results from the study indicated that the primary stresses on mental health included the initial transition to secondary school (high school), bullying, and academic concerns. When assessing current supports and ideal supports, participants conveyed:

- School wide assemblies were seen to be sporadic, ineffective ways about addressing mental health.
- Teachers who have a solid understanding of mental health and “whom [a student] shared a positive and trusting relationship, could often provide sufficient early support by listening to and legitimizing their feelings.” Students also “expressed the need for school staff to receive better mental health training.”
- “Availability of support should be better advertised, therefore normalizing help-seeking.” Effective communication/advertising efforts in schools are paramount to students actively seeking and using mental health supports.
- “...a desire for a physical space in schools, where young people could go if they were struggling with their emotions to relax, be in private and feel safe. Participants felt this would create an opportunity for staff to approach them and offer support.”

In connection to the Milwaukee Succeeds' project, the main benefit of the study is that it solicited high-school-aged students from various socioeconomic backgrounds to identify preventative mental health supports needed in a school-specific context. The importance of staff mental health training, clear communication of school mental health supports, and a physical safe space for students to retreat was emphasized. The ineffectiveness of school assemblies as a gathering place to discuss mental health was also highlighted.

The main limitation of the study is that race is not mentioned as a factor relevant to mental health and that only the perspectives of White students were gathered. The study also does not provide any analysis on the success of preexisting mental health supports but rather voices student feedback and wants.

It is worth noting that the United Kingdom education system differs from the United States' in two key ways: 1) Mental health curriculums were deemed by the UK government to be mandatory in all schools (from Fall 2020 onwards), and 2) From age 18 onward in the UK, young people are not required to remain in education.

#### **Article #: 16**

**Relevance:** Black, Youth

**Article Title:** Community-Based Referential Music Making with Limited-Resource Adolescents: A Pilot Study

**Citation:** Thomas, N. (2020) Community-Based Referential Music Making with Limited-Resource Adolescents: A Pilot Study. *Music Therapy Perspectives*.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/mtp/miaa016>

**Reviewer:** Stefan Dostanic

#### **Summary:**

This article outlines the study of a successful music therapy program involving adolescents with limited resources, implemented in the City of New Orleans and with all participants identifying as Black or African American. "Music has historically served as a unique and valuable outlet for African Americans and for adolescents to explore and define their own feelings and needs." Therefore, community engaged resources such as group music therapy, that are equally unique in creating "culturally responsive opportunities for limited-resource adolescents to engage socially with peers and experience meaningful success in a safe and supportive environment," is warranted.

The research suggests this work is worth the effort, with the potential to greatly enhance the participants' quality of life by providing opportunities for them to be engaged within culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining methods. "These impacts can extend well beyond the limited interaction within the therapeutic relationship, while still feeding and uplifting communities of origin in authentic and profoundly meaningful ways.

The authors recognize the challenge of having a low percentage of Black music therapists and therefore "the existing clinicians will need to do additional work to process through their

own unconscious biases about their clients, the communities they come from, and their preferred music.”

Given the apparent efficacy of the music therapy program outlined in this article, a similar one implemented in Milwaukee has great potential to provide mental health benefits to Black youth.

## Relevance: 1 Marker

### **Article #: 17**

#### **Relevance:** Youth

**Article Title:** Educationally-Based, Culturally-Sensitive, Theory-Driven Mentorship Intervention with At-risk Native American Youth in South Dakota: A Narrative Review

**Citation:** Aschenbrener, C., & Johnson, S. (2016). Educationally-based, culturally-sensitive, theory-driven mentorship intervention with at-risk Native American youth in South Dakota: A narrative review. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 26(1), 14–27.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0537-z>

**Reviewer:** Favian Gonzalez

#### **Summary:**

As the title states, this article looks at Native American Youth and their struggle with many social issues as a result of historical trauma and current living conditions. In particular, it is a narrative review that highlights the benefits of two theoretical frameworks: strengths perspective and social learning theory. This narrative review ultimately concludes that “a culturally-sensitive, educationally-based mentorship intervention has potential to support at-risk Native American youth.” More importantly to our bigger project, the frameworks used can be applied to working with other youth as well.

The article starts off by listing some of the problems and issues Native American youth face in their lives like poverty, teen pregnancy and high, high school dropout rates, amongst others. It then dives into the concept of historical traumas and how they leave emotional scars that still exist. After speaking about the issues, the article turns its attention to solutions and approaches. The first is the idea of strengths perspective, which is a holistic approach that focuses on strengths and positive attributes rather than on the problems. This approach is future driven and does not encourage to dwell on the past. “The strengths perspective does not dismiss the harsh influence of historical trauma on the Native American youth, yet challenges program developers to explore what strengths are possible with the youth’s environment as the strengths perspective would propose that all environments have strengths.” Upon expressing this and the many more benefits of strengths perspective coupled with support, the article backs up their claims with research before diving into the next framework which is the Social Learning Theory.

In summary, the Social Learning Theory utilizes role models and their behavior to support the learner. “The use of young, successful role models can function as relevant

observational targets and demonstrate the positive reinforcement associated with educational engagement.” After explaining the benefits of the Social Learning Theory, the authors once again presented research to support the theory. This was followed with a section that presented the benefits of youth mentoring programs and mentorship in general. One key takeaway is that “the more the youth felt that their mentors had not let them down or broken their trust, the more their scholastic competence increased over time.” Another important factor noted is that it often takes multiple programs working in collaboration to make a difference. “This narrative review concluded that more research on mentorship programs is needed, as they vary and are complex in terms of their development, implementation, and outcomes.” And lastly, something that was highly emphasized in this article is that “when mentors understand the youths’ strengths, they can focus on the youths’ sense of self-efficacy as then they can better utilize their educational strengths and meet their learning needs.” The two frameworks help recognize that youths’ strengths include environments: their culture, their family and support systems, and other available programs.

**Article #:** 18

**Relevance:** Students

**Article Title:** Vietnam as a Case Example of School-Based Mental Health Services in Low and Middle Income Countries: Efficacy and Effects of Risk Status

**Citation:** Dang, H.-M., Weiss, B., Nguyen, C. M., Tran, N., & Pollack, A. (2017). Vietnam as a Case Example of School-Based Mental Health Services in Low and Middle Income Countries: Efficacy and Effects of Risk Status. *School Psychology International*, 38(1), 22–41.

**Reviewer:** Harsh Gagoomal

**Summary:**

“RECAP-VN is a [form] of the RECAP (Reaching Educators, Children, and Parents) program,” specifically adapted for schooling in Vietnam. The RECAP-VN approach consists of a curriculum focused on “social skills and adaptive problem solving,” which is implemented by teachers working in tandem with a RECAP-VN consultant twice a week, over the course of an academic year. A key component of the system is positive reinforcement via praise and the use of a token system. The main benefit of the program is the development of social skills and the improvement of mental health outcomes for youth. In Vietnam, “mental health problems were the single largest risk factor for life functional impairment, with behavioral mental health problems associated with a 250% increase in school impairment.”

Data was collected from 443 second grade students over the course of an academic year. The second grade was selected because it is less academically intensive relative to other grades and provides “more time to focus on non-academic topics such as mental health.” The benefit of a school-based program included: “(a) early identification of children with mental health problems; (b) direct access to children (i.e., working with children in the schools is not dependent on parents bringing them to a clinic); (c) direct access to one of children’s most

important environments, the school; and (d) reduced stigma (i.e., children do not need to go to a ‘mental’ health clinic).”

Teachers received thorough initial training and ongoing, tailored support throughout the academic year. Topics in the training included: “(a) symptoms of some common mental problems in children; (b) understanding reasons for children’s behavior (i.e., what factors are reinforcing the behavior); (c) establishing effective classroom expectations and structure; (d) importance of and techniques for reinforcement of positive student behavior; (e) use of consistent and effective discipline to reduce negative behavior; (f) adaptive communication skills; and (g) modeling adaptive problem-solving in naturally occurring situations.”

In the RECAP-VN program, students were assessed using a “Student Behavior Questionnaire.” One part of the questionnaire provides students with a 1-4 scale to measure how they internalize emotional problems and how problems manifest in their behaviors. Examples of prompts included “I am sad and unhappy” and “I talk back and argue with people.” The second part of the questionnaire helped to assess student social skills under six categories, each measured from a 1-3 scale: Assertion, Self-Control, Empathy, Cooperation, Externalizing, and Internalizing.

There are several benefits of the RECAP-VN program. Firstly, since the program takes place in a classroom setting, it can affect many students at once. This is especially helpful when considering certain locations – United States’ public schools or low-to-middle-income countries – where there may exist a lack of resources that can be devoted to out-of-classroom mental health initiatives. Secondly, a classroom setting that integrates mental health activities as part of the weekly curriculum can effectively reduce the stigma of mental health problems. Lastly, the social skills component of the program is “similar in appearance to ‘life skills’ training programs,” which can create easier buy-in from school administration, teachers, and parents. This was proven to be the case in Vietnam where there was “high program acceptance rates.”

While the RECAP-VN program did report “significant effects” on students’ social skills and mental health, there were limitations. “In the current version of RECAP-VN, the social skills training is not highly individualized, in that it is presented to the entire class which makes student-specific training difficult.” The authors of the study suggest “the social skills component could be provided in the classroom to all the students” but that students who struggle with the material or fall into the “high-risk” category “could also participate in a ‘practice’ group where they could receive more individualized support and feedback.” It should be noted that this study solely relied on student feedback and did not gather perspectives from teachers or parents.

Even though this study focused on an age range that fell outside the 14-24 marker provided by Milwaukee Succeeds, I do believe that the process and successes of the RECAP-VN program could be replicated in the United States. To integrate the RECAP-VN approach in the United States it is worth asking: How do mental health services change and scale accordingly to the academic demands placed on students as they progress through high school? For instance, how are mental health supports adapted for Juniors – who are often faced with higher level testing and college/job applications – as opposed to Freshmen, who are just starting their high

school education? How can curriculums be adapted by consultants working alongside teachers to be culturally relevant for different schools in the United States?

Here is an example of a [RECAP training slidedeck](#).

**Article #: 19**

**Relevance:** Youth

**Article Title:** Our Seat at the Table: Mentorship, Advocacy, & Youth Leadership in Qualitative Research

**Citation:** Pk, S. (2018). Our seat at the table: Mentorship, advocacy, & youth leadership in qualitative research. *Journal of Family Violence*, 33(8), 579–585.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-018-9983-2>

**Reviewer:** Favian Gonzalez

**Summary:**

In this article Sydney Pk comments on her experience utilizing the Youth of Color Needs Assessment tool in their research project that aimed to elevate the voices and experiences of youth of color who had experienced or were at risk of homelessness. Though the research focused on homelessness in this population, the methods and strategies used to conduct their qualitative research showed to be impactful beyond the research. Taking on a participatory, community-based approach, The Youth of Color Needs Assessment examined the overrepresentation of youth of color among housed young people in King County, Washington.

The article continues by discussing the approach to the study, their experiences through this project and their findings. Their approach was to establish partnerships and relationships with community members and, more importantly, with youth leaders. Ultimately, a group of eight youth leaders joined and brought diversity in age and cultural backgrounds. Sydney explains that her role in all of this was to ensure that the youth leaders were looked out for so they would be successful in the project. The youth leaders were compensated monetarily and were provided with safe spaces where they could use their gifts and could also ask questions. Keeping it real, empowering with training and good listening, were key in ensuring the success of these youth leaders.

One of the major findings is this quote from Sydney as she states that “youth seek spaces to safely discuss and learn from choices (especially mistakes) with a caring adult... This kind of comprehensive care takes time and resources, but it was essential to building an effective team in a short time and created lasting, trusting relationships.” Sydney learned alongside the youth leaders and built trust with them through the way they gave them a voice and a role to play in making their communities better. Ultimately, Sydney believes youth will follow suit when given opportunities to grow and to lead.

**Article #: 20**

**Relevance:** Youth

**Article Title:** Characterization of Wellbeing and its Relationship with Exposure to Violence in Mexican and Chilean Early and Late Adolescents during the COVID-19 Pandemic

**Citation:** Bravo-Sanzana, M., Oriol, X., & Miranda, R. (2022). Characterization of Wellbeing and its Relationship with Exposure to Violence in Mexican and Chilean Early and Late Adolescents during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Child Indicators Research*, 15(2), 553–578.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-021-09905-1>

**Reviewer:** Harsh Gagoomal

**Summary:**

This global study assessed the wellbeing of adolescents from Mexico and Chile during the lockdown phase of the COVID-19 pandemic from June to September 2020. Data from 3,275 adolescents was collected via surveys - “1,186 were from Mexico and 2,089 from Chile.” The age of participants ranged from 10 to 18 years; in Mexico, the mean age of participants was 15.26 and, in Chile, the mean age was 13.62. Survey measures addressed exposure to violence during the pandemic and student wellbeing.

Chile and Mexico mirror the United States in two salient ways. “Chile, for example, is one of the countries with the highest GDP per capita in the region, but remains one of the countries with the most unequal income distribution... which has led to long lockdowns and delays in the return of children and adolescents to school.” On the other end, “Mexico is one of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with high levels of structural violence in its society,” especially due to the “machismo” that perpetuates violence directed at women and those who identify as LGBTQ+.

Repercussions of confinement at home during pandemic included bullying – traditionally and through electronic means, social isolation, and domestic abuse. Confinement meant that adolescents had little contact with friends and peers. The study notes that “social identity develops during adolescence as a product of interaction with the peer group, and therefore lack of contact with peers may have serious repercussions on the mental health of adolescents.” In both Chile and Mexico, the groups who had the least contact with friends during lockdown were identified as late adolescent males. “All groups [in the study] reported having exposure to at least one form of violence during lockdown” with “late adolescents report[ing] the highest percentage of violence exposure experienced (52.9%).” Adolescents that identified as non-binary experienced the highest exposure to violence.

Though late adolescent men did experience incidents of physical violence, the most common types of violence experienced were largely “relational and psychological.” This included social exclusion and victimization by being “called names,” “left out,” “teased,” and being the subject of rumors.

In keeping in line with Milwaukee Succeeds’ request to identify the effects of the COVID-19 effect on adolescents, this study provided a baseline assessment. The real effects of the pandemic on adolescents are certainly made clearer and indicate a need for additional support services for youth. However, a limitation of the study is that it does not offer insights into how to

best re-socialize students in schools and respond to adolescent mental health challenges that have been caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.