THE NEED FOR OUTREACH PROGRAMS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN IN INNER CITY AREAS

BY

TARISHA SHOWERS

THESIS

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Adviser:

Professor Steven Petruzzello

ABSTRACT

This thesis sought to analyze the need for outreach programs for African-American males in inner city areas. This study identified societal issues that pose as potential barriers for African-American males. These included issues like unemployment, high school drop-out rates, lack of male role models, racial profiling, substance abuse, homicide rates, neighborhood violence, and high incarceration rates. The research focused on African American males from the Urbana-Champaign area (N=35, 17.0±2.1 yrs). The impact of these barriers on young African-American males was examined. A closer look was also taken at existing programs that target African American males in the area. This study revealed that in spite of selecting issues they believed African American men face, very few of the participants reported having received services to help deal with these issues. The results also revealed a perceived lack of effective services being available to African American men. Although the study had a relatively small sample, the findings support the need for action to take place, particularly in understanding barriers and facilitators for African American men seeking outreach services.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Endangered Species: The Black Man. Many believe that society has placed a negative stigma on African American men. We see it on the news, hear it on the radio, and read it in the newspapers. The headlines often read, "Black men are incarcerated, unemployed, deadbeat dads, drug dealers, and murderers". This appears to be especially true in our country's inner cities. Some studies show that finishing high school is the exception rather than the expectation. Legal employment is scarcer than ever and prison is almost routine. Incarceration rates for Blacks have been climbing even as urban crime rates have declined (Eckholm, 2006).

The fate of Black men is not as predetermined as some would lead us to believe. The faults and problems of African American men are often discussed, but the true task is to identify the factors that contribute to certain behaviors. Why do some Black men behave the way that they do? Why do they leave their mates and children? Why do they hurt each other? Why do they drop out of school? Why do they destroy their own communities? ". . . Most Black males are socialized with endangering traits, which results in self-defeating and self-destructive behaviors that compounds the external racial oppression that jeopardizes their lives." (Clay, 2012). If we take a deeper look at the environment that these young men grow up in it may explain, but not justify, certain behaviors. Some of these men grow up without fathers in the home, go to school where there are very few male teachers and role models, then walk the streets of a neighborhood plagued with drugs and violence. How do these issues affect their ability to function and progress in and contribute to society? A new term coined by Motivational Educational Entertainment (MEE), a company "that specializes in developing cost effective, cutting

1

edge and culturally relevant messages for hard-to-reach, low-income and underserved audiences" (About MEE) entitled *"Urban Trauma"* takes a deeper look at these issues. *Urban Trauma* speaks to the emotional trauma that underserved populations experience in their daily lives. A video developed by MEE entitled, *"Moving Beyond Survival Mode"* (2010), highlights "life challenges" that threaten the mental wellness and barriers that keep members of these communities from accessing existing mental health services and programs (MEE). It also discusses the effects of living every day in "survival mode". How does poor mental wellness affect decision-making? Beyond that, how does society gauge mental health? If poor mental health contributes to the mental health of the African American men, then providers should change the way they provide service.

Thesis

The main thesis of this project is there is a lack of efficient and effective mental wellness programs and resources available in inner city areas to combat the issues faced by African American males.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study is to illustrate the need for mental health services for African American males in inner city areas. This research attempted to illustrate the correlation between societal and environmental factors and life outcomes for African American men. Several issues were examined (e.g., fatherless homes, dropout rates, unemployment) to determine the effects that these particular life realities have on African American men. Although these issues alone do not dictate the entire outcome, an attempt was made to demonstrate that these factors have a strong influence. A connection between the availability of programs and services that provide assistance to deal with the

struggles listed previously was examined. While an abundance of social services are available, few of them are created to focus on mental wellness. Programs that are currently addressing the concerns of African American men were also examined for their effectiveness. This research stresses the need to take a proactive approach in terms of creating preventative services. At the conclusion of this study, hopefully a new dialogue can surface regarding new and improved mental wellness programs for African American men.

Need for Research

The self-concept of the African American man has been an intriguing topic for some time now. However, little progress has been made over the years. Black men in the United States face a far more dire situation than the one portrayed by common employment and education statistics. A flurry of new scholarly studies warn that this state has worsened in recent years even as an economic boom and a welfare overhaul have brought gains to Black women and other groups (Eckholm, 2006). The need for this research is to make mental wellness for African American men more visible in our communities. Mental wellness is the component of health that is often forgotten. The topic of mental health has been seen as a taboo topic in the African American community. The findings of this research will hopefully increase the level of awareness and lower the level of anxiety associated with mental health.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature has been provided to support the thesis and suggest that an increase in mental wellness programs should be created to deal with the unique needs of African American men. The information provided will illustrate how lifestyles plagued with stress and trauma can impact decision making for African American men. Researchers can agree that the state of African American men in the United States has not improved, but in fact has gotten worse. However, what is still debatable is how to address this problem. This review of the current literature will provide a context for the necessity to increase services that speak directly to the needs of African American men.

High Incarceration Rates

The number of African American men currently incarcerated is staggering. There are 4,630 Black men in prison nationwide per 100,000 Black men in the population, whereas the rate for white men is 482 Human Rights Watch, 2000). One out of three young African American (ages 18 to 35) men in the United States is in prison or on some form of supervised release. With the number of African American men in prison growing, it is argued that the prison system has transformed into a form of modern day slavery. Author Michelle Alexander stated, "More African-American men are in prison or jail, on probation or parole than were enslaved in 1850, before the Civil War began." (Lu, 2011). Although you would have to take into account factors such as a population during both time eras, the large number of Black men currently in the system is alarming.

Going to jail has almost become a rites of passage for African American men former inmate discussed his views about serving prison time. "It's not just that we didn't fear jail," says Jeffrey, who now uses his experience to warn youngsters away from gangs

4

and prison, it was like a rite of passage. You needed to go to jail so you could have that badge of honor" (Young, 2012). Some will even brag about the ability to be able to serve time in prison, "Man I can do 20 months standing on my head". It is not uncommon to find a welcome home party for the recently released individual, where he is encouraged to share his experiences while incarcerated. Serving time in prison has become almost a "social norm" for African American men. If it is an acceptable life path for your peer group to go to prison, how does that affect one's abilities to set goals and make critical life choices?

Drug Sentence Disparities

The war on drugs created a demand that tougher sentences be handed down to offenders. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 (Weld, 1987) established, among other punishments for drug "crimes," a disparity of 100:1 between federal penalties for crack cocaine and powder cocaine. The act also instituted a five-year mandatory minimum sentence for first-time possession of five grams of crack cocaine. However, these stiffer sentences seemed to affect the African American community more than any other race of people, hitting African American men the hardest. Critics of the act have viewed the disparity as racially discriminatory because black drug offenders are more likely to be charged with crack cocaine possession and therefore serve longer prison terms than white offenders.

After many unsuccessful attempts, an amendment was made to the law on March 17, 2010 by unanimous consent (Public Law 111-220). Referred to as the "Fair Sentencing Act", on July 27, 2010 the House of Representatives by voice vote, passed the bill. The bill became Public Law 111-220 after being signed by President Barack Obama

on August 3, 2010. The Fair Sentencing Act amended the Controlled Substances Act by increasing the amount of crack cocaine needed to be imposed the mandatory minimum prison terms for trafficking. The Act also directed the U.S. Sentencing Commission to, among other things, "promulgate guidelines, policy statements, or amendments required by this act as soon as practicable, but not later than 90 days after the enactment of this act" The sentencing disparity for possessing crack is now 18:1 greater than for possessing powder cocaine, instead of the 100:1 it was previously. However, according to Judge Patti B. Saris of the Federal District Court in Boston, the average federal sentence for crack cocaine offenses is still around 127 months (Schwartz, 2011)., according to Judge Patti B. Saris of the Federal District Court in Boston." Although the amendment is believed by many to be a huge victory in reducing sentencing length, there are also many who are still protesting against any disparity between crack and powder cocaine.

Recidivism

Recidivism is defined by Webster dictionary as "a tendency to relapse into a previous condition or mode of behavior, especially criminal behavior" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Prison has become a revolving door to some of its inmates. The likelihood of Black males going to prison in their lifetime is 16%. After that, within 3 years, almost 7 out of 10 released males go back to prison. This is due directly to their social environment of peers, family, local law and politics. (Reed, 2010). Once inmates return home they are often met with resistance from employers who don't want to give them a job, real estate owner, who don't want to give them a place to live, and sometimes family members who do not want to give them a second chance. In her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010), Michelle Alexander,

6

describes how America's war on drugs has resulted in the mass incarceration of Black males, effectively undermining many of the civil rights battles won during the 1960s and 1970s. Once a person is convicted of a drug charge, it becomes very difficult to find a job once they have served their time. Present day job application processes call for disclosure of all felony and misdemeanor charges. In a competitive job market, employers can use this as a tool for "weeding" out candidates. This process makes it very difficult for former inmates to find employment. This is what often leads former inmates back to their old lives of crime. If a person has a felony charge, he can also lose his right to vote, he may lose his right to be treated fairly in the housing market, or his ability to apply for public assistance. If a person cannot find a job, a place to sleep and a way to provide for himself or his family, what options are left for him? Without adequate resources, African American men will find it difficult to assimilate back into society.

Neighborhood Violence

For African American men, living in certain low-income neighborhoods, commonly referred to as "ghettos," comes with an expectation of some level of violence or even extreme violence. Gang violence is often the cause for many of the homicides in these areas. If a male is not in a gang, he is more of an exception than the rule. Whether a young man is in a gang or not, he can be subject to the violence that can comes from living in the inner city. African American men celebrate milestones like their 21st birthday, not because they can drink or are soon to be a college graduate, but because they actually lived to see 21. How can the constant threat of violence not have an influence on one's ability to make good decisions? Next we will discuss the impact that violence (or gangs) has on African American men.

Gangs

Where there are fatherless and sometimes even motherless homes, gangs often act as a substitute family. Gangs offer youngsters many desirable advantages—status, excitement, power, praise, profit, protection, mentoring, and the opportunity for advancement—healthy goals fulfilled in unhealthy ways. The origination of gangs and their purpose and functions will be discussed.

African American men join gangs or "organizations", as they are called by the members, for several reasons. There are some men who decide to join gang to a have sense of belonging. Most kids want to "fit in", and there is a myth that joining a gang will make them popular. Other young men join gangs for a sense of protection. With so many of the young men being in these neighborhood gangs, anyone who does not belong is subject to harassment. Another motivation to join may be money. More often than not, gangs are involved in some type of drug distribution. More often than not the majority of these young men are living at or below the poverty level. They see joining a gang as an opportunity to help their families' financial situations or to gain status within the community. Lastly, young men join gangs is for support. These young men see these gangs as the family they never had. They see the gangs and their leaders as their reason for living and are willing to lay down their lives for their organizations.

Homicide

While overall homicide levels in the United States have fluctuated minimally in recent years, those involving young victims and perpetrators—particularly young Black males—have surged. (Fox & Swatt, 2008) From 2002 to 2007, the number of homicides

8

involving Black male juveniles as victims rose by 31% and as perpetrators by 43% (Fox & Swatt, 2008).

Homicide is one of the most serious obstacles that African American men encounter in urban areas. "Young black males are nine times more likely to be murdered than their white counterparts, it was found in a study of murder rates in the city's 25 police district" (Dinges, 1990). Not only are Black men being murdered at high rates but Black men are often the perpetrators. Black men are destroying each other and their communities where their own families live and thrive. When an African American man is shot and killed in the streets, it is sad, but not shocking. The "get them before they get me" mentality has changed many neighborhoods into war zones. "Many young Blacks have become convinced that their lives don't matter and neither do those of the Black men around them," said the University of Pennsylvania sociologist Elijah Anderson, who has studied the effect of crime (Dinges, 1990).

Self-Medicating

Songs like *Tipsy* (J-Kwon, 2004) and *Sippin' on Some Syrup* (Three 6 Mafia, 2000) are two of many Hip Hop songs that glorify being intoxicated. Getting drunk and high has been become a favorite past time for many young men in inner city areas. Some get drunk and high to avoid dealing with the stress of their lives. Research has begun to ask questions regarding the reasons that African Americans indulge in these behaviors. High risk factors for substance abuse disorders for African Americans, particularly the youth population, include low self-esteem (Harvey & Coleman, 1997; Rodney, Mupier, & Crafter, 1996; US Dept of Health & Human Services, 1999), low levels of family pride (USDHHS, 1999), and deviant peer associations (Centers & Weist, 1998; USDHHS,

1999). The effects of alcohol and substance abuse can contribute to unemployment, lack of academic success, and dysfunctional personal relationships.

Crack Cocaine

Crack cocaine has devastated many African American communities; African Americans were not exempt from this epidemic. Crack is argued to be one of the most addictive drugs ever created. The addicts were so desperate to get the drugs they would do anything to get it. Addicts stole from their families, lost their jobs, sold their bodies, and even killed to satisfy their cravings. The highest percentage of crack users are African American men between the ages of 18 and 30 who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Fathers and husbands leave their families in pursuit of this drug. Many Black men have also been arrested for possession of crack, with the intent to either distribute or use.

Alcohol

It is said that a liquor store can be found on almost every corner in inner city areas. During morning rush hour while everyone is going to work, you can find a number of African American men of all ages, making their way to their local liquor store. Census tracts that are both low income and predominantly African American have substantially more liquor stores per capita than other census tracts. A family history of alcoholism has also been found to be a significant predictor of substance abuse for this population (Rodney et al., 1996; USDHHS, 1999). A study of African American males found that those classified as a child of an alcoholic (COA) were more likely to develop an alcohol dependency than men not classified as a COA, and that the dependency begins at an early age with alcohol consumption increasing over time (Rodney et al, 1996).

Others substances

Marijuana is often referred to as a "gateway drug," meaning that users of marijuana are more likely to go on to try harder drugs. This statement is quite controversial and has not in fact been proven. Some studies show that marijuana is not addictive and can be used for medicinal purposes. In fact, in some states marijuana is legal and can be purchased with a prescription. Yet, in other states, the illegal use of marijuana continues to impact the lives of many African American males. In spite of legal status, other studies have shown that marijuana use in on the rise.

Racial Profiling

There is currently an adversarial undercurrent between law enforcement and some neighborhood residents, particularly involving African American men. There is growing sentiment among those in urban areas that police are no longer there to protect and serve, but to make an already bad situation worse. This is largely due to racial profiling and police brutality. Racial profiling and police brutality are topics that are hard to measure, but are impossible to ignore. Practically every African American man has a story of their individual experience of racial profiling and/or police brutality. It has been suggested that for a man to continue living he will experience one of the above, if not both.

In reviewing various definitions of racial profiling, a report by the Minnesota House of Representatives determined that a broad definition would include situations where the "police routinely use race as a factor that, along with an accumulation of other factors, causes an officer to react with suspicion and take action." (Minnesota. House of Representatives, 2000, p. 6).

11

African American men almost expect to be randomly stopped. Racial profiling goes beyond gold teeth, hoodies, and baggy pants. Any African American man in the wrong place at the wrong time is susceptible to racial profiling. Black men randomly stopped for crimes wonder if the same thing happens in predominantly white neighborhoods.

Law enforcement is not the only group of people that participate in racial profiling. There are cases like the tragedy of Trayvon Martin. He was shot and killed by a neighborhood watch member who believed that Trayvon was a possible offender based solely on his appearance. Members of society, including other African Americans, make blanket judgments against African American men based on generalizations and not the individual. However, some will argue that African American men feed into the very stereotypes that they are fighting to change. "When some young Blacks turned to gangs, guns and drugs and terrorized their communities that seemed to confirm their (Whites') worst fears. The explosion of gangsta' rap and the spate of Hollywood violence-themed ghetto films have convinced even more Americans that the thug lifestyle is the Black lifestyle" (Hutchinson, 2003).

Manhood Defined

With some many African American young men growing up in single-parent homes, often lead by women, many struggle with their sense of identity. Young boys are often told as they grow up to "be a man". What do you do if you don't' know what that means, if do not have an example to follow? If the father is absent from the home and sometimes even absent from their lives and there are no surrogate male role models, where do young men and boys get that information? "Many of these men grew up

fatherless, and they never had strong, positive role models," said Mr. Jones, who overcame addiction and prison time. "No one around them knows how to navigate through mainstream society." (Eckholm, 2006).

What if the examples a young man has to follow are less than desirable to mainstream society? Growing up without a male role model gives young black males the wrong idea of the meaning of manhood. "Boys left searching for models of manhood often turn to their peers, and the results can be devastating, said clinical psychologist Na'im Akbar, who teaches at Florida State University (quoted in Loury, 2000). "Black men identify with fairly immature and superficial definitions of manhood because they're learning it from superficial and immature people," Akbar said (Loury 2000).

"Swag" is a term coined in urban areas used to describe one's sense of style and overall cool attitude. In the absence of a car, home, and job it is often that "swag" that an African American male clings to for validation and self-worth. It is believed that "swag" is often confused with manhood. Where working a 9-5 job is "lame" or uncool, objectifying women is acceptable, it's not o.k. to cry, and defying authority is the norm, how is manhood defined in the eyes of African American men?

High School Rates

Dropout rates for African American men are at an all-time high, according to the calculations used in this report, in 2001. Only 50% of all Black students, 51% of Native American students, and 53% of all Hispanic students graduated from high school. Black, Native American, and Hispanic males fare even worse: 43%, 47%, and 48% respectively. (Orfield, Losen, Wald & Swanson, 2004; see Table 1).

Table 1

National Graduation Rates By Race and Gender

Race/Ethnicity	Nation	Female	Male
American Indian/Alaska Native	51.1	51.4†	47.0†
Asian/Pacific Islander	76.8	80.0†	72.6†
Hispanic	53.2	58.5	48.0
Black	50.2	56.2	42.8
White	74.9	77.0	70.8
All Students	68.0	72.0	64.1

Immediate Gratification

With low unemployment rates and high homicides rates, some African American men decide that school is not a viable option for them. The fast life of quick money, clothes, and cars are often intoxicating for a young man coming from a poverty stricken neighborhood. Once they start using drugs, they may begin selling drugs and then they just quit school. Sometimes the kids get involved with drugs because they have serious family problems. Sometimes they have to get a job, but too often they just get messed up with drugs. If a young African American man has doubts about living past age of 25 and no real evidence that he can have a successful career, what would be his motivation to stay in school?

Unemployment

Without a high school education, it is almost impossible to find viable employment. By 2004, 50% of Black men in their 20's who lacked a college education were jobless, as were 72 percent of high school dropouts, according to data compiled by Bruce Western, a sociologist at Princeton (2006). However, with today's economy being

14

so competitive, having a high school diploma still puts you at the bottom of the totem pole for employment. Years ago, it was not hard to find a good paying job with a high school diploma; this is no longer the case. The good blue-collar jobs that men with high school diplomas (or less) could expect to get a generation ago, such as Ford plant workers, post office workers, police officers, bus drivers, retail jobs, sanitation workers and other jobs in manufacturing and other sectors, have either disappeared or pay much less than before. The education and skills required for these same jobs or higher-paying jobs have clearly risen. Unemployment rates for African American men are only going to decline with the increase in education requirements and skill training.

Tunnel Vision

Many young African American boys grow up with aspirations to be an athlete or entertainer. Based on a study done by Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society, Clay (2012) cites the work of Anderson that two-thirds of all African American males between the ages of 13 and 18 believe that they can earn a living as professional athletes. (Anderson, 2005). Most believe that they will be the next Kobe Bryant or Jay-Z, yet very few realize the likelihood of those dreams becoming a reality is nearly impossible. Citing data from the Children's Defense Fund, Anderson notes a Black boy has less than a 1 in 4,600 chance of becoming an NBA player. They have a greater chance, 1 in 2000, of getting a PhD. in mathematics, engineering, or the physical sciences; a 1 in 548 chance of becoming a doctor; a 1 in 195 chance of becoming a lawyer; and a 1 in 53 chance of becoming a teacher (Anderson, 2005). The goal is not to discourage young African American men to abandon their dreams; it is to open their eyes to other possibilities.

Racial Barriers

There is certainly evidence that many employers will not hire young black males because of racial fears and ignorance. However, there is also evidence that through some of their own actions, young Blacks feed that fear and ignorance. Studies often make only passing mention of that. "The urban riots of the 1990s reinforced White fears that all young Black males are inherent drive-by-shooters, gang bangers, drug dealers, are lazy, have foul attitudes, are chronic underachievers and eternal menaces to society" (Hutchinson, 2006).

Criminal History

Once an ex-offender returns to his community from prison he may find it difficult to find employment, particularly if he carries a felony charge. Again, with the job marker being so competitive, the "have you ever committed a crime question" is an easy way to weed out applicants. "First, the high rate of incarceration and the attendant flood of former offenders into neighborhoods have become major impediments. Men with criminal records tend to be shunned by employers, and young blacks with clean records suffer by association, studies have found." (Eckholm, 2006).

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The survey for the present study was designed to gauge opinions regarding the effectiveness of available outreach programs in Champaign-Urbana. The survey was administered to African American males in the Champaign-Urbana area between May and June 2002. Participants were recruited from four different sites: Centennial and Central High School; (2) Columbia Center and Redding, Alternative Program; (3) Juvenile Detention Center; and (4) Community Members (non-students).

The study was approved by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board Office. Participants were not required to provide any information that would disclose their identity and all collected data were kept confidential. Participants were aware of the confidentiality measures; all signed approved consent forms.

Participants (Recipient of Service)

The survey was administered 100 African American males (ages 13-21 yrs) in the Champaign-Urbana area. This age range was selected because of the issues and stereotypes surrounding African American men in this age group. Also, this is the age group that is considered an "at risk" group. The survey asked the males to express their opinions of the outreach programs for African American males in the Champaign-Urbana area. Participants were recruited from six specific locations; the two neighborhood high schools (Central, Centennial), two alternative programs (Columbia Center and Redding), the juvenile detention center, and other young men throughout the Champaign-Urbana area. These locations were selected to try to sample a wide range of African American males.

Selection Process

High School Recruitment

     In order to recruit for students for this study, a proposal was given to the local high school principals at Centennial High School and Central High School. Official permission was obtained to enter the school and administer the survey. There was also a request within the proposal for the principal to identify a central location and time for all students to complete the survey. Once permission was granted, a memo was provided for all homeroom teachers to read to the students during the division period to inform them of research project. As an incentive (pizza and beverages) to get students to come out to complete the survey was provided. The researcher established a set up area in the cafeteria areas during homeroom time to allow students to come and complete the survey.

Alternative Program Recruitment

     In order to recruit African American male participants from the alternative programs, Columbia Center and Redding, a proposal was given to the staff at each site to obtain permission. A request was also submitted for a central time and location to administer the survey. The researcher provided the teachers with a memo to read to the students, requesting that African American students complete the survey. As with the high schools, an incentive (pizza and beverages) was offered to encourage participation.

     The students at Columbia Center and Alternative School were encouraged to participate in the survey through an incentive program as well. They were given points that could be used toward gaining extra privileges in their classrooms. It was proposed to the staff members of the alternative schools that extra points be rewarded to students that

participated in the survey process. However, the offering of extra points for completing the survey was left up to the discretion of each individual teacher.

Juvenile Detention Center Recruitment

In order to interact with the residents at the Detention Center, the researcher was required to complete a volunteer training session. The one-day training explained conduct expectations while volunteering with inmates. After training was completed, the researcher interacted with the young men at the Center in an attempt to develop a rapport with them. The staff of the Detention Center was given a proposal that explained the purpose of the research. Staff was also given a sample of the survey with the disclaimer sheet attached. The residents at the Detention Center worked on a point system. Each level carried a certain amount of privileges, so the higher the level a resident reached, the more privileges he/she would have. The staff was requested to give all African American males who participated in the survey a certain amount of points. It was felt this would encourage residents to participate in the study. The offering of extra points to inmates for completing survey was left up to the discretion of the Juvenile Detention staff members.

Neighborhood Dropouts Recruitment

Male recruitment within the Urbana-Champaign neighborhood proved to be the most difficult piece. This group of participants included students who had dropped out or who had been expelled from school. The researcher took a tour of the Champaign-Urbana community to talk to the youth. It was important to out go out during school hours to distinguish them from the students who were in school during school hours. Once students were identified as dropouts, the young men were approached to establish formal introduction. The researcher explained the purpose of the survey and if they were

interested in completing the survey. To encourage the young men to complete the survey, they were offered a gift certificate to a variety of department stores. Students from the University of Illinois were asked to donate $5 or $10 gifts cards for the purposes of the study. We were able to obtain (7) $10 gifts cards and (11) $5 gifts cards, for a total of 18 cards. The investigator purposed the remaining 7 cards for a total of 25 cards.

Measurement

Qualitative Data

In order to gather qualitative data, all participants were asked to complete the Program Outreach Survey (see Appendix A). The survey asked participants about the impact of societal issues on their lives. The surveys also requested participants to gauge the impact of outreach in Champaign-Urbana. The surveys included questions such as:

1) What year were you born?

2) What issues do you feel African American males have to deal with in society? *(Circle all that apply)*

    a. Gangs 01

    b. Homicide rates 02

    c. Drugs...03

    d. Racism...04

    e. Police Brutality 05

    f. Fatherless Home..06

    g. Early Parenthood...07

3) Do you feel there are outreach program available in the Champaign-Urbana community to deal with these issues?

4) Have you participated in any outreach programs offered in the community?

5) If you have not participated in any type outreach program, why?

6) If you have participated in any type of outreach program, do you feel they met the needs of African American men?

Data Collection Time Frame

The time frame for the collection of data ranged from 2 to 4 months. The time frame varied for each recruitment group, depending on the date that was given to the researcher. The data collection for neighborhood recruitment required the most time due various trips taken to different neighborhoods in both Urbana and Champaign.

Limitations

Limitations in the selection process. The researcher was able to identify several limitations to the selection process. The study only included African American men ages 13-21. In order to create a holistic program, men outside of this age range would need to be included. All participants were offered an incentive to participant in the survey. Participants from the two high schools were offered refreshments for their participation.

Participants from the two alternative programs and Juvenile Detention Center were offered points toward privileges in school. Participants from the Urbana-Champaign neighborhood were offered gifts cards to department stores. It is unknown whether information that was provided was accurate or whether participants were only interested in receiving incentives.

The study was limited to those individuals who were not only willing to participate, but also available. Attempting to get the survey completed at Central and Centennial at the close of the day limited the pool to those who were in that section of the school at that particular time. It was also limited to students who had free time and were not committed to other obligations, such as a job, school club or activity. At the alternative program in the Columbia Center and Redding, students who had behavior issues were not allowed to participate. Also excluded from the study were any students who had to attend in-house and out of school suspension. Potential participants were also eliminated based on behavior at the Detention Center. Lastly, neighborhood recruitment was a process that was the most random effort. Many participants were excluded based on the limited knowledge of places to search.

Limitations in the data collection process. The size of the sample from which the data was obtained for this study is small. Of the 6 sites selected, and the total sample size ended up being 37. The goal was to administer 100 surveys total, 25 for each group (Central/Centennial, Columbia Center, Detention Center, and Neighborhood). Such limitations should be kept in mind when considering the results.

Data Analysis

      Qualitative data were assessed to identify common themes taken from the comments of the young African American males. These data were then analyzed to take an in depth look at the views of the young males regarding the availability and efficiency of outreach programs accessible to them.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the availability and effectiveness of outreach programs for African American males in the cities of Urbana and Champaign in east central Illinois. From this sample of young men, the following research questions were evaluated:

1. What are the issues affecting African-American males

2. What is the availability of outreach programs

3. What is the likelihood of participation in outreach programs

4. What are the reasons for the lack of participation in outreach programs

5. Are the outreach programs meeting the needs of African-American males

Participants

The sample was comprised of 35 males ranging in age from 13-21 yrs (mean age = 17.0 ± 2.1 yrs). Of these participants, 26% (n=9) were between the ages of 13-15 years of age, 51% (n=18) were between the ages of 16-18 years, and 23% (n=8) were between the ages of 19-21 years.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: *Issues Affecting African-American Males.* Participants were asked to identify issues they believed affected African-American males in society. A list of 12 issues were provided: drugs, early fatherhood, early parenthood, fatherless homes, gangs, high school dropout rates, homicide rates, incarceration rates, police brutality, racism, substance abuse, and unemployment rates. Participants were asked to circle any issues they believed affected African-American males. As shown in Table 2, five of the issues were selected by at least 60% of the sample (police brutality = 91%;

drugs $= 80\%$; gangs $= 77\%$; incarceration rates $= 66\%$; unemployment $= 60\%$). The only

issue selected by less than 10% of the respondents was racism (9%).

Table 2

Societal Issues Dealt with by African American Males

Issue	# of Respondents ($N = 35$)	Percentage (%) of Respondents
Gangs	27	77
Homicide rates	9	26
Drugs	28	80
Racism	3	9
Police Brutality	32	91
Fatherless Home	17	49
Early Parenthood	12	34
Incarceration rates	23	66
Early Fatherhood	12	34
Unemployment rates	21	60
Substance abuse	14	40
High School dropout rates	11	31

Research Question 2: *Availability of Outreach Programs*. Participants were

asked whether they believed there were outreach programs available in the Champaign-

Urbana community that addressed the issues identified in Research Question 1. Only

27% (*n*=9) of the respondents believed that such outreach programs were available to them. In contrast, 73% (*n*=26) of respondents did not perceive such outreach services were available to them.

Relatedly, 15 participants felt that such outreach programs addressed the needs of African-American males while 17 felt that such programs did not addressed their needs. Of the 15 participants who felt such outreach programs met their needs, all were presently in school and actively involved in after-school programs. The remaining 17 participants were either not presently in school or had been in some type of trouble with the law.

Research Question 3: *Participation in Outreach Programs.* Participants were asked if they had ever participated in an outreach program offered in the community. In spite of only 27% of the participants believing that outreach programs were available, 31% (*n*=11) of the respondents indicated they had participated in an outreach program offered in the community. The percentage of respondents who had not participated in an outreach program in their community was 69% (*n*=24). This reflects an obvious (although not terribly large) disconnect between Question #2, where 27% of participants did not believe outreach programs were available to them, yet 31% of the respondents indicated they had indeed participated in some type of outreach program. This raises the question of whether perceived program availability is the issue or whether it is more an issue of choice to participate in such programs.

Research Question 4: *Choice Not to Participate in Outreach Programs.* As a follow-up to the previous question, only the participants who responded "No" to participating in an outreach program were asked why had not participated. Of the 24

(69%) respondents answering "No", 54% (*n*=13) stated that they did not feel they needed an outreach program, 21% (*n*=5) indicated they did not have time to participate in an outreach program, and 25% (*n*=6) were not interested participating in an outreach program.

Research Question 5: *Did Outreach Programs Meet Needs.* The final question asked only the respondents who had participated in an outreach program if they believed the program met the needs of African-American males. Of the 11 respondents, four (36%) felt that the programs they participated in did meet the needs of African-American males, while the remaining seven (64%) did not feel the program met their needs.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The state of the African American male has been an area of great concern in the United States. Many believe that African American males are becoming increasingly disconnected from mainstream society. According to Ronald B. Miney, Professor of social work at Columbia University and editor of Black Males Left Behind, "There's something very different happening with young Black men, and it's something we can no longer ignore (Urban Institute Press, 2006; quoted by Eckholm in *The New York Times*, March 20, 2006). An analysis by Wolfers, Leonhardt and Quealy (2015) showed that more than one in every six black men in the 24-to-54 year old age group has disappeared from civic life, mainly because they died young or were locked away in prison. It is my belief that African American males have a desire to function in mainstream society, but there is a lack of tangible facilitators to assist in this effort.

Study Implications

The implications of this study are that current that programs and services available to African American males are not perceived as being effective in treating the issues that they face in society. One could argue that either current programming is ineffective, programming has yet to be created to address these issues, or the perceptions of these programs needs to be addressed. While the present study did not evaluate the current programming for African American males directly, it did allow those who have participated in programming to provide their experience. It was the goal of this study to raise awareness of the lack of effective programming for African American males and began the discussion to create more relevant services. Creating relevant programming is vital in giving African American males the tools they need to create an avenue to

28

reintegrate themselves back into society. An example of such program for trying to engage African American males in health promotion and research programs is the "Men of Color Health Awareness (MOCHA)" project. ". . . MOCHA is a grassroots, community-driven initiative that has developed a number of innovative outreach strategies" (Graham, Scott, Lopeyk, Douglas, Gubrium & Buchanan, 2018, p. 1307). Programming ideas designed that are created specifically for African American men are vital. "MOCHA addresses individual, social, and environmental barriers to health by (a) implementing targeted culturally relevant sessions on topics specific to the concerns of men of color, (b) generating social support, and (c) providing a physical space for meetings and fitness activities"(Graham et al., 2018, p. 1310). There is not currently enough data to support the lack of utilization of outreach programs for African American men. Although this study had a small participant sample, it does speak to the potential need for services.

Limitations

There were limitations associated with the participant selection process of this study and the method of data collection outlined in Chapter 3. These included the limited age range of the participants. In order to get an accurate depiction of the view of the African American male, additional data will need to be obtained from a broader age range. The impact of the incentive offered during recruitment could have affected influenced the random selection process. The participants at Central High school, Centennial High School and the Columbia Center were offered pizza to participate in the study. Participants from the detention center were offered additional recreational time in exchange for their contributions. The participants from Urbana-Champaign community

29

were offered a gift card. We trust that our participants were as truthful as possible, but it has to be acknowledged that this recruitment method may have attracted participants who were interested in receiving incentives. "The worry is that people with limited resources are more susceptible to inducements to act against their own best interests, or that, worse, they could be targeted for recruitment because they are easier to influence with smaller sums of money." (Williams & Walters, 2015).

There was also the limitation of the relatively small subject pool; more participants would potentially provide a more encompassing perspective.

Summary

The results from this study identified a number of issues that plague African America men in society (e.g., gangs, homicide, drugs, racism, police brutality, fatherless homes, early parenthood, incarceration rates, substance abuse, and dropout rates). Although many participants selected issues that they believed African American men face, very few of them have received services to help deal with these issues. The study showed a lack of effective services available to African American men. Only 31% of the participants had participated in some type of outreach program, and of that 31%, only 36% felt the services were effective. This study, due to the relatively small sample, does not necessarily accurately depict the state of the African American man in the United States it does support current discussion of the need for some action to take place. An important step is understanding barriers and facilitators for African American men seeking outreach services. In order to effectively address these issues, African American men will need to be brought to the table of these discussions in greater numbers. "One way to address these disparities is to include African-American men in health research, to

elicit their perspectives on health risks and protective factors. These can then inform interventions aimed at reducing health disparities" (Randolph, Coakley & Shears, 2018, p. 8).

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Please circle your answers:

(1) What year were you born…………………………………………………….19_ _

(2) What issues do you feel African American males have to deal with in society?
(Circle all that apply)

Gangs..**01**	
Homicide rates...**02**	
Drugs **03**	
Racism..**04**	
Police Brutality **05**	
Fatherless Home **06**	
Early Parenthood...**07**	
Incarceration rates..**08**	
Early Fatherhood...**09**	
Unemployment rates...**10**	
Substance abuse..**11**	
High School dropout rates **12**	

(3) Do you feel there are outreach program available in the Champaign-Urbana community to deal with these issues?

No..**01**
Yes...**02**

(4) Have you participated in any outreach programs offered in the community?

Yes...**01**
No..**02**

(5) If you have not participated in any type outreach program, why?

Feel that you do not need it? **01**
Don't have time? **02**
Not interested..**04**
Other (Please Specify)_____ **05**

(6) If you have participated in any type of outreach program, do you feel they met the needs of African American men?

Yes...**01**
No..**02**
Not sure **03**