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**Voices of the Village: Teenage Pregnancy
Prevention for African American Girls**

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Prevention for African American Girls**

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Report

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Dedication

This report is in dedication to my mother and the other instrumental members of my village who have supported me throughout my educational pursuits.

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I am grateful for the endless guidance, support and encouragement that I received from my supervisor, Keisha Bentley. I am also thankful for Leonard Moore who offered educational and spiritual support.

Abstract

Voices of the Village: Teenage Pregnancy Prevention for African American Girls

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With increasing teenage pregnancy rates among Blacks in the United States and the negative impact on families, it is important that practitioners and communities acknowledge the changes in society. According to the research, the influence of the media, entertainment industry and technology weigh heavily on the behavior and interactions of teens. Building on Erikson's Theory of Identity Development, sexual scripts which are drawn from hip-hop culture are utilized as points of entrance and tools for reeducating Black adolescents and preventing teenage pregnancy. Finally, intervention and prevention strategies that educate teenage girls around sexual scripts and utilize personal narratives are essential to reducing teen pregnancy are presented.

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INTRODUCTION

The African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child” is an acceptable norm for the way children are raised in Black culture. Throughout the United States, today’s modern villages take the form of small cities, neighborhoods, community centers, churches, and schools. Kaplan (1997) describes the village as including “community and connection” in which everyone pools their “emotional and economic resources” for the healthy growth of the children. It is essential that modern villages adapt to meet the needs of teenagers who are being bombarded with messages about their race, sexuality, potential, and worth. Communities should aim to remodel the holding environments which were effective in supporting the Black community in the past. These villages have been significantly impacted by changes in the community contributing to the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy and African American teenage girls are often over-represented in those affected groups. In light of pregnancy rates, it is imperative that the community utilize resources to impact the lives of children and adolescents through knowledge and self-determination.

Teenage pregnancy is a problem impacting a large number of young women and their families in the United States. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2010) reported a birth rate of 59.0 per 1,000 for Black teen girls in 2009. While the organization points out a 6% decline from 2008 to 2009 for non-Hispanic Black teen girls, the birth rate for non-Hispanic White teen girls was 25.6 per 1,000 in 2009. With the Black teen birth rate documented as more than double the rate for White teen girls, there is room for great improvement in teenage pregnancy prevention

efforts directed at Black teens. Adolescent pregnancy is costly and a social burden to the government and taxpayers (Hoffman, 2006). In 2006, pregnant teens between the ages 12-19 made more than 4.3 million trips to the hospital for exams or routine prenatal care (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2008). Teenage childbearing costs taxpayers approximately \$9.1 million annually through federal, state and local taxes (Hoffman, 2006).

Importantly, teenage pregnancy rates across all demographics appeared to be on the decline. Rates declined by more than one-third in the United States between 1991 and 2005; the decline is believed to be a result of effective pregnancy prevention programs (Hoffman, 2006). In 2006, rates began to increase. The 2006 CDC report documented the first increase in teenage pregnancies in 14 years (Black, 2009; CDC, 2008). A number of explanations have been suggested and include not using contraceptives and condoms, a partner's desire to have a child, the desire for love and attention, earlier puberty, poor communication of sexual information, lack of efficacy of abstinence-only education and the reduced social stigma associated with teenage pregnancy (Bryant, 2006; Mueller & Powers, 1990; Pinkleton, Austin, Cohen, Chen, & Fitzgerald, 2008). There is no clear explanation for the recent rise in teenage pregnancy rates. Trending increases and undiscovered influences require an innovative and effective teenage pregnancy intervention.

The National Center for Health Statistics reported an increase of 5% during 2006 for births to African American teenage girls ages 15-19 (CDC, 2008). This was the largest increase among all ethnic groups. These results are even more disturbing when

paired with the economic disadvantages which confront teenage mothers and their children. There are increased negative risks for most of the immediate relatives of teenage mothers. Different members of the family system are each confronted with unique risks and possible consequences. Changes within the family can perpetuate the cycle within a single family, while simultaneously increasing strain.

In understanding the impact of these interventions, a range of theories serve as useful frameworks. A variety of theories and literature, both recent and historic, are valuable resources in the advancement of these efforts. Specifically, Erikson's Theory of Identity Development highlights the importance of the environment and its impact on one's sexual identity and images (Stephens & Few, 2007). In working with teenage girls, this theory can be applied to the environmental factors which provided knowledge about sex and sexual cues. The messages children and teenagers receive are a component in the environment which will help solidify the identity. Stephens and Few (2007) explore the role of Erikson's theory in teenager's exposure to and adoption of sexual images. Different points of Erikson's theory can be synthesized with counseling theories to create an effective intervention program for teenage girls, building on the developmental tasks of interpreting environmental messages and cues. Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development (1950) highlights the challenge of adolescence which includes identity development with the unresolved stage leading to role confusion. Teens are met with the need to learn who they are, identify their role in the world, process what they have learned from the environment, and solidify their self-image. Exposure to innovative and healthy sexual scripts through interventions can provide teens with information from the

environment which they can easily access when working to build their self-image. Structured teen pregnancy interventions can create opportunities for teens to gain uplifting insights which can be integrated into a teen girl's self-image. Knowledge and skills will be valuable tools when teens began navigating intimate relationships.

The Role of Identity Development

The messages children receive about themselves, their environment, actions, and potential need to be discussed and evaluated. Children need support understanding how subtle and overt messages from the environment impact their identity, behavior, and potentially have negative consequences for the way young people feel about themselves. Adults can lead and support children with this process. Children can benefit from receiving mental and emotional support with this process. Community centers, which serve as part of the modern external village, can be important places to facilitate the dialogues and role modeling which are important for future development.

Dialogue is the cornerstone of any healthy and mutually beneficial relationship. Families are essentially unique with a myriad of interactions that formulate a combination of relationships. Time changes all interactions. The dynamics of communicating become increasingly important as children age and spend more time as active participants with their growing world perspective. Throughout the aging spectrum children receive messages from parents, the environment, peers, strangers, and the media. These messages become formative building blocks for choices, the development of a self-concept, and

blue-prints for future behaviors. Messages also translate into scripts for the way young people interact, including sexual behavior (Fingerson, 2005).

The Influence of Family

Insight into issues like commitment, love, jealousy, and infatuation are important for healthy sexual choices but they are often not discussed by parents and mothers in particular. These are the subjects teenage girls want to address with their mothers (Mueller & Powers, 1990). In reality, adolescent girls do not often initiate these conversations with their mothers. Hutchinson and Montgomery noted the power of parent-child communication to influence the sexual behavior and attitudes of teens (2007). Research also demonstrates teenage girls will associate meaning to the sexual images they learn about and are likely to adopt those images (Stephens & Fews, 2007). It is imperative that parents address the images along with relationship themes. The discussion can support young women in closely examining those negative images which may be related to increasing teenage pregnancy rates.

There are numerous research papers addressing adolescent pregnancy and various factors that are positively correlated with the event (Adolph, Ramos, Linton & Grimes, 1995; Davies, DiClemente, Wingwood, Harrington, Crosby & Sionean, 2003; O'Sullivan, Meyer-Bahlburg & Watkins, 2001). However, many of those factors seem disempowering, because in effect they discount a mother and father's influence on the outcomes with their teenagers. The factors contributing to the occurrence of teenage pregnancy are not easily changed. Those related variables include the mother's age at the

time of her first child's birth, the teen's self-esteem, a history of maltreatment, sexual education, socio-economic environments, and partner influence (Bryant, 2006; E. Herrenkohl, R. Herrenkohl, Egolf, & Russo, 1998; Lanctot & Smith, 2001).

Numerous factors illustrate that much of what takes place is out of the control of the parent. Given that premise, it is important to provide parents and counselors with the skills allowing them to positively influence the choices of teenage girls. It is important to give parents a sense of efficacy by informing them about the things they can control in the lives of their teens. Mothers and fathers need to be empowered so they may enrich the lives of their teen girls with lessons offering knowledge, self-determination, and self-control as the personal objectives. When developing interventions for African American teenage girls it is imperative to highlight the unique factors that impact the population. African American and Latina teenagers are at higher risk when compared to their Caucasian counterparts partly because they are more likely to live in disadvantaged conditions or urban areas (O'Sullivan, Meyer-Bahlburg, & Watkins, 2001). Crane suggests that ghettos are not created by the disadvantaged conditions mentioned, only when social problems become epidemic. A critical point for a massive increase in social problems was suggested. Crane (1991) found that pregnancy rates for Black teen childbearing were negatively related to the percentage of high status workers, or managers and professionals, in communities. The probability of a Black teen's childbearing increases by more than one and one-half (from .082 to .124) as the number of high status neighborhood residents decreases from 31.2 to 5.6%. There are varying critical points for different races. According to this critical point theory Black youth

living in ghettos to are at elevated risk. Crane (1991) stated, “Just 1% of White teenagers lived in neighborhoods as bad as those inhabited by 5% of Black teens” (p. 1233). The increased risk and possible unmet needs of Black children in ghettos cannot be overlooked. Surroundings and messages must be taken into account.

Kaplan (1997) sought to learn about the unique narratives and central themes when working with a group of 32 teenage mothers within her study. The women’s ages ranged from 14 to 43. Of the participants, 17 were teen mothers at the time of the study. Kaplan’s work with the different age groups allowed her to gain short and long term perspectives of adolescent mothers. Kaplan describes the poor conditions affecting teenage girls in Oakland, California. The young mothers describe poor conditions including drugs, gangs, violence, and sexual harassment from males. One of the results of the draining surroundings were feelings of hopelessness in the teens. Participants confirmed their perceived limited options when discussing the types of roles models within their communities and the absence of belief in positive outcomes from education achievement. As a whole, Kaplan’s group lacked insight and needed information about the possibilities after high school. All young people need to be informed especially those with limited information and in poor living conditions, so that the messages received can be discussed and revised for all teens when appropriate.

Sex Education

Data suggests that healthy information about sex may be best received from an individual other than a parent (O’Sullivan, Meyer-Bahlburg, & Watkins, 2001). This

finding sheds light on the importance of community interventions to allow teenagers to interact with trusted sources of information from within the external community. Peers are also a source of information for teenagers (O'Sullivan, Meyer-Bahlburg, & Watkins, 2001), which may be inaccurate. Dialogue surrounding sexual messages is central to gaining insight into the impact of the messages girls are receiving. The exchanges between teens and trusted professionals provide opportunities to challenge and correct unhealthy beliefs. Research findings will be beneficial for identifying the needs of different communities, socio-economic, and ethnic groups. Findings also highlight the unique needs of the different groups involved in research studies and the differences which need to be taken into account when working within different groups.

It is critical to explore the theories in light of relationships, spiritual beliefs, values, sexual choices, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. In consideration of the above points, first the purpose of this paper is to critique and explore existing studies and interventions on the phenomenon of African American teenage pregnancy. Second, the goal is to utilize information for the development of an empirically based teenage pregnancy intervention targeting African American teen girls.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Recent statistics about the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy indicate an increase in teenage pregnancy. After a fourteen year decline, there was an overall increase in pregnancies for girls ages 15 to 19 at a rate of 3%. The largest increase was seen in African American girls at 5%, they were followed by Native American girls at 4%, 3% for non-Latina White girls, and Latinas at 2% (CDC, 2008; Black, 2009). African Americans saw the highest increase in teenage pregnancies. It is estimated that 750,000 girls between the ages of 15 and 19 became pregnant in 2006, of those an estimated 442,000 gave birth. Meaning 57% of teenage pregnancies resulted in births (Black, 2009). The numbers are startling, increasingly so when unplanned pregnancies are taken into account. It is believed that 82% of teenage pregnancies are unplanned (Black, 2009).

In light of the figures related to unplanned pregnancies, it is essential to involve young people in activities and experiences which can support the development of a sense of control, self-defined sexual roles, and future oriented narratives. Also important are the teens' thoughts surrounding their life goals and attitudes towards sexual health and pregnancy prevention.

IMPACT ON THE FAMILY

Literature demonstrates that a teenager's pregnancy can negatively influence her mother's expectations of the pregnant teen's siblings. Parents may begin to feel they have little control over their children's futures (East, 1999). There is potential for parents to give up on the possibility of positive outcomes in the future. Parents may become weighed down with the responsibilities of providing care as a grandparent.

Siblings of Teen Mothers

The added strain on the family system places siblings at a risk for decreased parental supervision. Grandparents are increasingly forced into the position to supervise their teenage children's children and often times may not have the capacity and energy to spend guiding their own children. This can place a teenage mother's siblings at risk for engaging in risky behavior. Conversely, grandparents may begin to believe that all teen child-bearing is not negative. They may become more accepting of teenagers having children, placing younger siblings at additional risk for adverse outcomes (East, 1999). According to pregnancy in the family can trigger changes in monitoring which reduce protective factors and cause younger siblings to be vulnerable to teenage pregnancy (East, 1999). In combination, the above mentioned problems can place families in a state of panic, negatively impacting cooperative living arrangements.

The opposite is also a possibility, parents can expect more of the younger children as a result of the older child's pregnancy (East, 1999). This may cause siblings to experience increased pressure from parents. Overall parents whose teens have never been

pregnant have higher levels of monitoring, higher expectations and less permissive attitudes (East, 1999). The strict response to teenage pregnancy seems more beneficial to family members in an immediate sense of allowing teens to maintain their current roles as children.

Children of Teen Mothers

From a long-term perspective there are specific risks for the offspring of teen mothers. The children of teenage mothers face specific risks. Children are at an increased risk for poverty. The poverty rate for the children who are born to teenage mothers is 78%, while the poverty rate is 9% for children born to women older than 20 who have graduated from high school (Black, 2009). The short term results can be seen early with teenage mothers who do not complete high school. In the long run, those who do not complete high school will have lower earning potential than mothers with high school degrees for the remainder of their work life. This low income for the durations of their work life impacts a mother's ability to provide for her children. Lowered earning potential can cause mothers and their offspring to remain dependent on government assistance programs. Beyond the risks caused by poverty, there are other concerns for children born to teen mothers. Infants may be abused or neglected leading to court-ordered foster care for the children (Black, 2009). It is important for teen mothers to be educated about proper nutrition, discipline practices, and preventing second pregnancies.

The problems present significant short and long-term risks for children and have the potential to create significant costs for tax payers (Black, 2009). Additional costs to

taxpayers increase dramatically when the risks for children born to teenage mothers and the generational cycles are taken into account. Daughters of teenage mothers are more likely to be teen mothers themselves. Sons of teenage mothers are more likely to have difficulties with law enforcement and spend time in prison (Black, 2009; Hoffman, 2006).

In the seemingly troubled circumstances there are resources which will allow professionals to intervene. The various attitudes of those who are never pregnant, expecting and parenting teenagers have potential to provide insight for making changes in teenage pregnancy intervention programs to meet the needs of teens. Explanations for the recent increases have been inconsistent, and the additional information from pregnant and parenting teens may hold meaning.

ROLE OF FAMILY

Family is an important vehicle for the education of children. Experiences within the world are filtered through the family unit, and the socialization of Black teen girls leaves them with information about their sexuality which is based on their race and gender (Stephens & Phillips, 2005). As a result of the basis of gender and race the information is often negative and tainted with racist and sexist information. Today many immediate families are not intact, while consistency and support remain important for educating children. Different home environments offer unique messages which may be inadequate for preventing teen pregnancy. Parental figures may require additional education and support for beginning these conversations with their children.

Acknowledging the importance of the family's values is the first step towards integrating their potential within the intervention and opening the lines of communication. History documents trends of teenage pregnancy among families. If a adolescent girl's sister is pregnant, she is more likely to become pregnant herself (East, 1999). It is important to note this trend does not indicate the absence of morals or values within the family. Relatives often adapt when a teen becomes pregnant, providing care or filling the gap for absent fathers. As circumstances change families adapt, and definitions of adulthood and acceptable circumstances may evolve to include the teen parent and their child. This flexibility supports the survival of many Black families in the face of economic and social obstacles.

Parents of Teen Girls

History documents the breakdown of the Black family and the negative portrayal of Black women (Dixon, 2009; Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Teenage girls from homes headed by single mothers need to have a picture of what a healthy intimate relationship looks like. This can be impacted not only by examples, but through the nature of communication that takes place. Many qualitative studies have documented the messages of fear and religious requirements in mother-daughter sexual education (O'Sullivan, Meyer-Bahlburg, & Watkins, 2001). Kaplan's (1997) study was no exception within the group there was a focus on fear, while failing to address physical and emotional development of the adolescents. She found that many of the teens she interviewed were not familiar with their menstrual cycle or the male and female reproductive systems. While their mothers asked about the regular occurrence of their menstrual cycles, they did not communicate with their daughters about sex or birth control. Many mothers reported passing on messages from their mothers. Four of the mothers who spoke with their daughters were misinformed by their own mothers and passed on the half-truths to their daughters. The inaccurate information and talks with mothers did not prevent teens from engaging in sex or becoming pregnant. The discussion of both positive and negative information is imperative for a complete picture, setting the tone for future conversations.

Other studies have examined relationships between girls and their fathers. Miller, Forehand and Kotchick (2000) learned the importance of fathers' approval in a qualitative study. The group of girls described their fathers' disapproval as influential and impacting their decisions relative to delaying sexual actions and not identifying with

sexual scripts. If both mother and father are present in a healthy relationship they are available to model and demonstrate those scripts. Kaplan (1997) notes that parents can benefit from strengthening their alliance during the time of adolescence; it is beneficial to young people when parents make decisions and establish boundaries for teens. Kaplan notes that the father is the only authority figure respected outside of the family. This is of paramount importance when girls begin to interact with and date boys. The finding about the importance of fathers is promising, although for many teenage girls communication with fathers may be limited.

If fathers are absent, interactions with mothers may be necessary to fill in the social cognitive shortfalls. Mothers have a responsibility to fill in gaps in information about men. Communication with mothers has been cited as having positive impacts on teenage girls' actions. Fingerson (2005) highlighted the importance of mother-daughter dyads in her research. The attitudes and intentions of adolescents will directly impact their actions. Mother's beliefs have the potential to influence the intentions of teenage girls. In Kaplan's (1997) work absent fathers emerged as a theme within the group of teenage mothers. Kaplan found a pattern within her sample, 23 of the 32 teen mothers in the group were raised by a single mother. Kaplan suggested that girls who were unable to establish solid trusting relationships with their fathers had difficulties establishing similar relationships with others in their lives. This presents a hurdle for sexual education and the potential positive influence of the mother-daughter relationship. Awareness of the teens' difficulties in establishing relationships can support mothers in understanding tension can stem from the father's absence. This knowledge allows mothers and daughters to put the

emotional pain and voids on the table, so daughters know they do not have to deal with their feelings alone. This understanding can provide mothers and daughters with a starting place in the adolescent relationship.

If a mother and her teenage daughter have a solid bond, the mother's beliefs are likely to positively impact her teenager's behavior. Girls care what their mothers and fathers think about their behavior and the way they carry themselves. Early communication is important so that parents have opportunities to share with their children, enabling parents' opinions to be heard early enough for children to determine the value of their parents' beliefs.

Views about Black Teen Mothers

Researchers present different viewpoints about the occurrence of teenage pregnancy within the Black community. Reasons supporting teenage pregnancy describe the event as a protective factor, mitigating health problems which generally strike earlier in Black women. Studies of Black women indicate the risk of having a baby born at a low birth is lowest for those mothers giving birth in their mid to late teens. Social mobility is also suggested as an incentive for Whites to delay child bearing, while Blacks may not feel they have equal opportunities to transcend societal barriers with or without children (Geronimus, 2003). This view isolates the problem within the thought processes and bodies of Black women. The Black woman's health problems are center of the issue, along with her way of thinking about motherhood. In this view the stress that adolescent pregnancy can bring to the lives of teenage mothers is not thoroughly evaluated, along

with the negative potential it presents for the health of Black teen mothers. The larger social issues are overlooked by this view of Black teen pregnancies.

The historical legacy can provide lessons to develop an approach for work with today's population of African American teenage girls. Inherent in the sexual scripts presented by Stephens and Phillips are stories and mechanisms for discussion with different types of learners. The scripts presented by the authors provide both a written and visual element. Both components can be discussed for an understanding of the historical legacy of Black women.

HISTORICAL IMAGES OF BLACK WOMEN

Among African Americans, history highlights the complex messages which have been passed on to teenage girls and their ancestors. Those historical factors continue to combine with the modern issues impacting adolescents today, creating the unique experiences of teenagers. Throughout history the founding images of Black women emerged including the Jezebel, Mammy, Matriarch, and Welfare Mother (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). These scripts and negative stereotypes have withstood time and education. They have become the basis of modern and more sexualized scripts. The scripts guide behavior and evolve into sexual norms, becoming acceptable ways of being to those people who have learned to embody such images. The sexual images will potentially lead teen's expectations for the ways others behave towards them (Stephens & Few, 2007).

The Jezebel

The image of the Jezebel is rooted in the Bible. She is a woman who uses sex to deceive men and gain access to the things she wants. This image was pushed forward by plantation owners to justify the rape and brutalization of enslaved African women, thus implying that the sexual affronts and ensuing pregnancies were due to the seduction and desires of Black women.

When beautiful Black women began to appear in television and movies they often filled roles continuing this image. Jezebels were portrayed as being over sexed with insatiable sexual appetites (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). In modern times, Jezebels appear

in television shows, movies, and music videos. Hip-hop culture is built on this image and the sexual nature of the Jezebel is the basis for several modern sexual scripts. The current portrayal in music videos in particular highlights the casual and easygoing attitude that allows a Black woman to be sexy at the whims of Black men while often failing to show the consequences of such behavior, including unplanned pregnancy.

The Mammy

In contrast to the Jezebel, the Mammy was often portrayed as an overweight Black woman who was asexual. She could often be seen caring for or meeting the needs of members of a White family. The Mammy served as proof of the Black woman's contentment serving as the caretaker of Whites during the period of slavery (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Some images depict a Black woman who is meeting the needs of a White woman and her family. The Black woman often appears to have a larger-than-life smile on her face. She is portrayed as fulfilled in her helping role. In modern times this image is somewhat outdated. The Mammy might be a working woman who is also responsible for meeting the needs of her own family, at the expense of her own needs. The Mammy script emerged when Thomas, Witherspoon and Speight (2004) validated the Stereotypic Roles for Black Women Scale (SRBWS) against the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scales and the Racial Identity Attitude Scale. The researchers discovered a negative correlation between internalization of the Mammy script and self-esteem. The authors indicate that those identifying with the Mammy may put their own needs second while caring for others and defining themselves through those relationships. This has negative

implications for self-esteem which is directly impacted by the actions of others, rather than being rooted in the personal experiences and reflections.

The Matriarch

While the Mammy meets the needs of a White family, the emasculating Matriarch provides for her own children and family in the absence of the Black man (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). She is the only hope for her family. While she is portrayed as being capable of heading the household, this image is detrimental to the way Black men are viewed in society. The Matriarch is often head of the house because a Black man has failed to provide for his family, as a financial contributor and an emotional anchor (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The modern Matriarch is the single mother and the sole bread winner for her family. She continues to be the glue that binds her family.

The Welfare Mother

Like the Mammy, the Welfare Mother is responsible for children, and she is portrayed as taking advantage of government assistance in order to avoid work while marginally providing for her family (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The media portrays her as a woman who could find a job if she desired one. There are assumptions that the Welfare Mother would prefer to remain home while collecting payments. Like the other images, the Welfare Mother reflects the negative portrayal of the Black woman. This script depicts the anticipated consequence many people expect for Black teen mothers. The statistics related to the living circumstances of teens and their children reinforce this image, with teen mothers being more likely to participate in welfare programs.

Lasting Negative Depictions

The founding images described depict Black women in a negative light, presenting Black females in contrast to their White and minority counterparts. The depiction of Black women validates the virtue of White women at the expense of Black women (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The portrayals place Black women who choose to fight the scripts in the middle of a mental war zone as they attempt to resist the stereotypes and negative categorization by Black men along with men and women from other racial and ethnic groups.

The modern portrayal of Black women follows in line with the historical images. In the entertainment industry, music is tied to lyrics and videos which continue to degrade women and portray them in a negative way. Media and music have continued to align the current messages with the negative orientation of those original images.

IMPACT OF THE MEDIA

Historically, television has emerged as an influential source of information about Black and Whites (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Television has become another important source for teenagers to get information about sex and themselves. Blacks are currently in a position to define themselves and their group, but based on history there is no shortage of racism and sexism from which to draw (Stephens & Phillips, 2003).

Television Program Selection

The role of media in the education of teenagers cannot be ignored. A national study revealed minimal gender differences while racial differences in viewing practices were distinct. On average Black teenagers are watching 2 more hours of television per day than their White peers (Brown & Pardun, 2004). There were also major racial differences for the types of programming which adolescents are viewing. Research has demonstrated that Black teens and White teens are not watching the same television programs. Black youth are watching television programs which feature Black actors and actresses. Researchers have demonstrated that people like to spend time watching others who look like themselves; Black teenagers are no exception (Brown & Pardun, 2004). Many of the shows Black teens are watching reinforce the negative stereotypes about Black women. Those stereotypes are illustrated through the unhealthy sexual scripts presented by Stephens and Few to articulate the images readily available to Black women.

Music Videos

In addition to those programming differences, Black teenagers are watching more music video programs. Music videos are another example of a program reinforcing stereotypes and maintaining scripts through the use of sexual images (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Stephens and Phillips (2005) cite music videos as a popular television genre. Music videos feature short films, dance scenes, and often choreography which accompany music. These music videos often feature sexually suggestive, male dominated interactions, and intimate moments. These situations are often portrayed in music videos which are less than five minutes long. The suggestions from the videos are strong; some people have described music videos as “soft porn” because of the images shown. Miller-Young (2008) documents the blending of pornography and hip-hop into what is referred to as hip-hop porn ranging from soft-core to hard-core porn. The results of this convergence have become mainstream entertainment. As a result, the messages implied by the images have also become readily available within the media. Miller-Young (2008) highlights the Black “video ho” as a woman who is not easily overlooked, with the flexibility to represent what is termed multiple crises or negative stereotypical roles of a Black woman (2008). The multiple crises of the Black “video ho” presented by Miller-Young overlap with the sexual scripts presented by Stephens and Phillips. This negative depiction of the Black women is a common theme in the different interpretations of hip-hop; also common are the negative impacts of the exposure to such images.

Sexual attractiveness is emphasized, and there is no shortage of Black women in music videos. Black women are seen in minimal clothing, glistening under bright or low

lights, moving their hips, and dangling on the arms of men. Zhang, Miller and Harrison (2008) cited several studies which illustrate 40 to 75% of music videos feature sexual images. The research which was cited for this information was conducted more than 15 years ago. There have likely been increases in the occurrence of sexual images in these videos as viewers have become accustomed to seeing those images, and images are probably more explicit.

Consequences of Viewing Music Videos

Music videos are accessible via television, computers and cell phones (Zhang, Miller & Harrison, 2008). It is important to explore what can be learned from music videos. There are sexually explicit images and innuendos, with women appearing in revealing clothing as the arm candy and sexual objects of men. These videos may include love scenes which depict intimate moments and often provided little or no information about the existence of a relationship between the individuals engaging in those activities, often because the nature of the relationship is of little importance to the sexual acts.

This has implications for the young viewers of music videos. The negative impacts of watching pornography have been cited in several studies. Viewing pornographic images may lead boys to objectify women, and develop unrealistic expectations for appearance and behavior of females. For girls seeing the explicit images impacts their sexual agency and leads them to believe women are sexual objects (Zhang, Miller & Harrison, 2008). This can negatively impact a female's ability to speak up and

act on her beliefs and preferred behavior. This objectification is important because objects are simply used, void of opinions, and easily discarded or replaced.

Teenage girls need to have the information to ground them as active participants in their lives, recognizing their different dimension and needs, and inspiring action. Some needs may include emotional, spiritual, health, mental, and physical. As a result of viewing sexually explicit content, girls may begin to develop permissive attitudes, expecting and requiring less commitment in relationships (Zhang, Miller & Harrison, 2008). Links between sexual intimacy and the emotional consequences of intimate behaviors moments may be underestimated. Teenage girls may expect to be disconnected from the effect of their actions. As a result of a teenage girl's repeated viewing of sexually explicit images, sexual intercourse may also take place earlier in relationships (Brown & L'Engle, 2009). Exposure to sexually explicit content can create sexual expectations within both males and females. The expectations which are based on explicit media are detrimental to a teen's self-care, sense of agency and self-image. This can directly impact a teen's future with risk taking behavior, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases and infections, and increasing risk of pregnancy. Sexual intercourse may be taking place outside of an emotionally safe or securely developed relationship.

Brown and L'Engle (2009) documented links between the exposure to sexually explicit media during early adolescence to early oral sex and sexual intercourse for males and females. For males the exposure is also related to the perpetration of sexual harassment (Brown & L'Engle, 2009). Again, this puts girls at a significant risk of harm. Black women who are often represented in music videos are particularly at risk when

viewing such images. Brown and L'Engle (2009) found that being a Black male or female from a lower socio-economic status with lower educated parents is related to more exposure to sexually explicit media, which may represent insufficient parental monitoring.

MODERN VILLAGES

Modern villages are charged with the task of evolving in ways which support teens in making healthy choices. Today, villages are faced with the need to adapt to the current struggles presented partly because of the ease of access to media. Exposure to media and images is important for the development of roles and scripts which will govern the lives of children. As technology and entertainment evolve, so must the resources and tools utilized to support teens.

The Black Families Decline

Over time there has been an increase in divorce rates, and the Black family has not been exempt from those changes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Although W.E.B. DuBois and other scholars have argued the Black family did not have a solid foundation due to slavery (as cited in Jones et al., 2010), fatherhood is further complicated by the large percentage of Black men who are incarcerated (Jones et al., 2010). Dixon (2009) notes Blacks are likely to marry later than Whites, least likely to marry and most likely to divorce. With the breakdown of the Black family it is important to create holding environments where Black children can be nurtured and fed ideas and knowledge that will support them towards self-improvement and achievement.

Protecting Teens from Modern Influences

It is important to equip teens with the skills which will allow them to act independently of stereotypes and to take care of themselves. While supporting teens in

skill development, it is imperative to remain relevant to the current struggles and social expectations. In the United States people are encouraged to be individuals. This is further complicated by sex and ethnicity. The standard is not the same for women, who are often expected to meet the needs and desires of men.

With influence from the media the expectations of men have evolved to include being provocative and overtly sexual. These expectations are at the expense of teenage girls and women, who are subjected to the same images which men see within the media. The images do not afford women the opportunity to protect themselves and ensure their physical health and emotional well-being. Kaplan (1997) makes several suggestions to ensure children are raised within a supportive village. She suggests guiding girls before the age of fifteen, researching the needs of preadolescent girls, providing a support system for girls during their adolescent years, charging girls and boys with rethinking their definitions of femininity and masculinity, and helping girls to see the consequences of upholding masculine views. It is important for girls to have their own expectations. It is also essential that the values and needs of women be reflected in order to ensure the maintenance of healthy identities and positive self-esteem.

MODERN IMAGES OF BLACK WOMEN

The images that children and teenagers are exposed to are key to understanding the options they believe are viable to themselves. Several studies have explored the images which exist for Black women in the United States (Martyn & Hutchinson, 2001; Stephens & Few, 2007; Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The scripts young people are exposed to will influence how teenagers decide what they should and must do. Messages put girls at risk when they try to align themselves with the negative scripts (Martyn & Hutchinson, 2001). The images which have become fixed in our society are important for understanding the figures which are at the forefront at Black teenage girls' minds as options. In the development process it is important for girls to understand their identity and how it relates to the images they see as well as the messages they receive (Stephens & Few, 2007).

Stephens and Few (2007) highlighted the sexual scripts of African American women in a qualitative study. The sexual images which were derived from the Hip-hop culture described include: the Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke, Gangster Bitch, Sister Savior, Earth Mother and Baby Momma. These sexual figures highlight men's feelings and women's judgments about the women depicted. Stephens and Phillips (2003) raise an important question: "what roles do the scripts make available to Black teenage girls?". An examination of the various scripts is crucial for the introspection which will be helpful as teen girls navigate their sexual roles.

The Diva

First, the Diva, she is the woman who is physically in alignment with the Western standard of beauty. She has long straight hair, European features, a slender build, and light skin. She is viewed as desirable by men. Men might see her as sexually pure, and she is seen as free from sexually transmitted diseases (Stephens & Few, 2007). Divas are tempting, well-groomed, and invest money in self which will allow them to be noticed by men. The Diva seeks a partner who can support her financially and enhance what she already has. The script of the Diva is founded in the Jezebel (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). This script poses a threat to both men and women's physical health because men consider her a safe partner for unprotected sex. Unprotected sexual intercourse puts both individuals at risk for sexual transmitted infections. The female is also at risk for pregnancy. The script also emphasizes worldly possessions and status of a man without regard for components of a healthy relationship.

The Gold Digger

Second, the Gold Digger, she exchanges sex for money because money is valued by society. She is not viewed as successful in other areas of life and a man appeals to her as long as he can support the woman in getting her needs met (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). She may not be as attractive or as successful as the Diva. This script is unhealthy, conveying messages that sex is currency; if a male spends money you will be sexually indebted to him. Again, this script disregards the existence of healthy interactions between the sexes. It acknowledges the importance of a man's monetary contributions,

while disregarding the diverse needs of both men and women. The script recreates mistrust between men and women. Both parties in the relationship actively use the other for gains, the woman for money and the man for sexual satisfaction. It misleads both men and women, ignoring the complexities of satisfying relationships, and disregarding emotions. The script of the Gold Digger does not allow men or women to understand the depth and needs of either partner. This can potentially cause women to underestimate the global impact of a sexual relationship on her being, losing sight of the connections between mind, body and spirit. Once women have lost site of the connections the information is no longer available for women to share with their daughters when the time arrives, feeding into the generational reoccurrence of teen pregnancy. The different components of a healthy relationship are overlooked, although the importance of money is prevalent in the scripts of the Diva and Gold Digger.

The Freak

Third is the Freak, she is the woman who has sex without the financial gain. She is portrayed as an uninhibited woman who loves to have sex without a need for emotional attachment. The Freak gains attention and sexual satisfaction from her interaction with men (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). For young women this script can translate into reasoning there are no emotional consequences for sexual intercourse. This has the potential to cause sexual acting out with the expectations of gaining control over sexual partners, while disregarding the inherent emotional and health risks.

The Dyke

Next is the Dyke. While The Freak will have sex with other women and allow a man's involvement; the Dyke will not allow a man to be involved in her sexual encounters with other women. There is the belief that Dykes gain pleasure by acting out against men (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). This script does not empower young women to choose their own sexual preferences. The Dyke takes away a teen girl's right to be informed and choose not to be sexually intimate for a period in her life. Sexual inactivity with males is polarized towards lesbianism, taking away a girl's choice to act based on her own personal desires and for her personal well being. The script is turned into a decision about men rather than an expression of the self and sexual orientation.

The Gangster Bitch

Unlike the Dyke, the Gangster Bitch does not challenge men. The Gangster Bitch accepts her partner and his lifestyle; she will both struggle with her partner and have sex with him (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The Gangster Bitch is expected to have sex with other men if necessary to advance her partner. In addition, she may be on the receiving end of partner violence. Within her relationship the Gangster Bitch may be the protected or the victim (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). For young girls this script has the potential to illustrate love is pain. It can create expectations that intimate partners will cycle through helping and harming. There is no room for a healthy relationship or positive partner expectations. According to this script, teenage girls should expect to take the bad with the good, although the good within the script is minimal.

For teen girls without active fathers, information about male-female relationships may already be to the girl's detriment. Many Black teen girls are well acquainted with life's difficulties. Therefore the tolerance of life's struggles and partner's abuse, self-harming expectations, and being an unequal partner are not things which need to be taught. Teen girls need to be informed of the healthy traits of loving relationship, and how to safely exit harmful relationships like the one portrayed by the Gangster Bitch's interactions with her man. The script of the Gangster Bitch is for the sole benefit of the man involved in the relationship and at the woman's expense.

Sister Savior

The next two images are not believed to be defined by the male dominated hip-hop culture; they include the Sister Savior and Earth Mother (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The image of Sister Savior is rooted in the Black church. Moral issues remove the place for sexuality with this image. The Sister Savior is not educated about sexual decision making and she is often informed with fear evoking information (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). It is important to note that although this script is not documented as having been defined by males, men are the founders of the church. With the script's roots in the church male influence cannot be avoided or overlooked. With that in mind, this script leaves no room for a woman's sexual education. There is a belief that a woman's sexuality is reflected and amplified in all aspects of the woman, including her appearance (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). A woman cannot own her sexuality, and sex should be confined to the union of marriage. The church tries to avoid creating allowances for sins,

including sex; this results in the omission of sexual education and lessons in agency. In alignment with the Sister Savior script, information about contraceptives and condoms is unnecessary. A woman's attempt to be proactive about her sexual health is linked to unclean and un-ladylike behavior. Plans to safeguard her health require the anticipation of sexual intimacy as a possibility; this expectation of unmarried sexual intimacy directly conflicts with the expectations of the church and can create dissonance for women who align with the Sister Savior script. Within this script a woman is not empowered to make an educated decision about her actions or sexual health.

The Earth Mother

In contrast, the Earth Mother has a strong sense of self and self-identity. Earth Mothers celebrate the natural diversity that exists within the Black race. There is a celebration of the variations in skins color, natural hair, different sizes and body types (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Traditional views of beauty are challenged by Earth Mothers. She is conscious and her level of understanding is often intimidating to men. She does not fall victim to the damaging sexism and scripts which are available to her. This script leaves room for the unique differences of teen girls (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The Earth Mother celebrates awareness and knowledge about self. Self knowledge will be helpful for defining boundaries in relationships with others. The Earth Mother's sexuality is connected to her spirit and nationality, and there is an inherent flexibility within this script (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Although, her views and beliefs are intimidating to men she is not at the mercy of a man's definition.

The Baby Mama

Lastly, the Baby Mama is viewed as the possible outcome for all of the previously mentioned scripts. The script comes into play once a child is born. It centers on the female's responsibility to mother her child. The woman becomes a Baby Mama and the man's sexual skill is confirmed once his child has been born. A man is assumed to have unrestricted access to the mother of his children, when the same is not true for the mother who is expected to sacrifice her own needs for him and their children (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). This assumption reflects the importance of the man's desires while the mother's needs are disregarded. The attitudes reflect assumptions that the woman got pregnant intentionally to maintain an emotional or financial relationship with the man (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Again this script fails to acknowledge the diverse needs of the woman involved, including the emotional and physical needs as a woman and mother.

Freedom of Movement

In the discussion of the scripts it is important to mention that women have the freedom to move between the scripts, but the task of categorizing Black teenage girls remains in the hands of Black males and non-Blacks (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Adolescent girls need to be informed about the existing scripts and their freedom to move between the scripts and define their own future. This is especially important considering the scripts' foundations. Scripts are mediated by racism and sexism, which leave little room for positive input from teenage girls (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Many theories surrounding adolescent pregnancy have failed Black teenage girls by overlooking the

outside factors that weigh heavily on young people and the scripts which become internal messages. These theories typically focus solely on individual responsibility, without examining the social forces that influence the identity or scripts that engender the pregnancies. The scripts become tools for navigating relationships and provide guidelines for behaviors (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). The images mentioned provide a foundation for poor emotional and health outcomes for those teens who accept the scripts.

Self-Determination through Change

Traditional beliefs are not the goal of teenage pregnancy interventions. Self-determination and innovative thinking are the goals which will serve teenage girls as they embark on their futures. The community's role is to dispute the racist and sexist categorical representations which exist for Black women. The challenge is to make Black women more than sexual objects. Images must reflect more than the desires of men and must demonstrate the teenage girls' feelings about themselves (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Adolescents can benefit from structured opportunities to redefine the scripts for themselves and separate the male viewpoint. Black teen girls need opportunities to gain support in finding discrepancies between the scripts and themselves. This can be done both in the community and within the home environment.

The relationships with mothers and others who impart messages to teenagers are possible points of entry for facilitating essential discussions. Families need support sifting through the messages they have received and can potentially pass on to teens. Additional assistance can provide parents with the skills to consciously pass messages on to their

teenage girls. A community figure can also provide teenage girls with support, facilitating discussions about the unique factors impacting the legacies and lives of young people.

THEORY

Several theories can contribute to teenage pregnancy prevention programming targeting Black teen girls. Erikson's identity development theory is promising, providing insight into the messages children receive. Youth receive messages about the ways they should behave and what is expected of them. As children age they will begin to receive messages about themselves and others and they will begin to learn about their sexual organs. They will continue interpreting messages from their environment, peers, parents, and the media.

Identity Development Theory

Based on their knowledge and exposure, children will begin to develop sexual boundaries. Children will see themselves as sexual beings; as a result they will desire information about what sexual behavior is expected or inappropriate for them. On a daily basis the environment will provide young people with information about what may or may not be appropriate. They will begin to construct their own stories based on the information received from the environment. Based on the building of sexual appropriateness, a teen's surroundings are a central component of the development process.

The presence, absence, and involvement of fathers is critical to the identity development process. In Kaplan's (1997) study the importance of fathers in identity development was brought to the forefront when participants spoke about their fathers. The teen girls denied the need for their fathers. Oftentimes the teens had limited

information about their fathers and may have experienced pain as a result of losing contact. Kaplan suggests that daughters may have felt abandoned by the person very instrumental in solidifying their identities, their fathers. The girls often said they did not know what to expect of their fathers, but they all knew exactly the kind of father any girl deserved to have while growing up. They appeared to accept their fathers' behaviors and longed for their involvement, while rejecting their mothers' choices, behavior, and attempts to connect. The teenage mothers often differentiate between the sources of love, giving more important to the love from a male. The relationships with fathers can translate directly into the dating environment. When approaching dating teen girls bring a longing for male love, fear of abandonment, and familiarity with the shortcomings of males. The teen girls potentially enter adolescence with a high tolerance for poor treatment and low expectations for a loving relationship. Later babies born to teen mothers take the role of filling emotional voids of the teens' fathers. The identity development of children is a prime entry point to provide information about emotional voids and self-care which can insulate teens against teenage pregnancy.

Afro-Centric Approach

For African American teens an Afro-Centric approach to counseling becomes important for acknowledging the importance of community and a support network. This approach negates the sexual scripts that cause discord and lead Black preadolescent girls to believe they cannot uplift each other and relate to one another in positive ways (Stephens & Few, 2007). The resulting tension between girls was familiar to a separate

group of boys within the qualitative study. The boys expressed that girls would use the images to make decisions about befriending or excluding girls. Boys mentioned that girls would be jealous of sexualized or attractive images. This is a small scale example of the familiar struggles within female circles which prevent positive connections between females. Disconnects need to be corrected for the sake of member self-improvement. Community centers can provide spaces where Black teenage girls can uplift each other. This Afro-Centric approach has the potential to become a protective factor for teenage girls as their beliefs and attitudes evolve.

PAST RESEARCH

Research has sought to examine the relationship between teenage pregnancy and factors impacting attitudes including age (CDC, 2010; Tabi, 2002), family contexts (East, 1999; Usher-Seriki, Bynum & Callands, 2008), socio economic status (Martyn & Hutchinson, 2001; Tabi, 2002), ethnicity (Black, 2009), neighborhood (Crane, 1991), and exposure to media (Brown & L'Engle, 2009). Much of the research which has been done in the past can be characterized as qualitative, with focus groups and transcripts of the exercises conducted with participants.

Female Interactions

Studies have examined how the sexual images play into interactions and friendships between women. Stephens and Few (2007) documented fears and jealousy related to the different images in their qualitative research. Participants examine pictures of different people, and identified those they thought their partners would potentially cheat with, and they noted Sister Savior as the only image who would be “easy to make friends with”. The images described do not leave room for healthy platonic relationships between females (Stephens & Few, 2007). The prevalence of the sexual scripts can potentially limit the friendship circles of Black teens in a dramatic way, causing jealousy and fear to take precedence in the choice to build friendships. Teen girls need to discuss the sexual images and their feelings surrounding the daily impact of scripts in their lives. Discussions of the images can increase the comfort of teenagers when talking about

sexual topics it can also empower them to make decisions about their own identities (Stephens & Few, 2007).

Unique Cultural Aspects

The sexual scripts present a unique cultural piece which needs to be addressed in teenage pregnancy interventions. When preparing to work with any group it is important to know which areas an interventions should address to increase opportunities for positive changes in beliefs and behavior. For teenage girls studied by Martyn and Hutchinson (2001), recognition of negative scripts was the first step towards rewriting the negative scripts. The awareness of positive alternatives to scripts is also important.

The second step noted was introspection during which the teenage girls reflect about the images they see and the meaning of those images. They appraised their own lives and the lives of others in their environments. With that knowledge the girls were able to see the negative scripts were not for them (Martyn & Hutchinson, 2001). The girls in the study were described as having a strong sense of self-worth, right and wrong, personal responsibility, and future orientation (Martyn & Hutchinson, 2001). Dixon, Schoonmaker and Philliber (2000) demonstrated programs instilling a sense of pride and self-determination were effective in delaying the initiation of sexual intercourse among Black teenage girls.

According to recent studies numerous factors are correlated with the occurrence of teenage pregnancy and can be addressed through intervention programs (E. Herrenkohl, R. Herrenkohl, Egolf, & Russo, 1998). Goals and aspirations have been

documented as protective factors for adolescent girls. An Afro-Centric approach to teenage pregnancy intervention has been used by researchers in order to give participants a feeling of inclusion, importance, and self-determination through education (Dixon, Schoonmaker, & Philliber, 2000). As a result of that information it becomes important to fuel the positive thought processes of Black teenage girls.

The nature of the problem centers on dialogue. If communication is not taking place within the home, sexual education conversations need to occur elsewhere. Research has indicated that information may be best received from a source other than a parent. Communication from mothers may inadequately address all of interests of importance to the health of teen girls. Participants expressed a reluctance to talk about sex with their mothers due to shame, fear and guilt. Girls described withholding information from their mothers and more willingness to approach others for information about sex and boys (O'Sullivan, Meyer-Bahlburg, & Watkins, 2001). As a result of those findings the preferred source of information may be the village.

PROMISING AREAS FOR RESEARCH

Community agencies are a source of information for Black teenage girls in the face of missing and misinformation in the home and negative messages from the media. Role models and resources may exist within community agencies' staff and networks. It is important to create an environment where teens feel safe asking questions.

Community Support

The intervention, *A Journey Towards Womanhood* (2000), has several important components. First, facilitators seek to provide participants with knowledge of culture and self in order to instill a sense of pride in participants. Second, facilitators emphasize independence. Third, participants in the program practice active learning. Fourth, groups are kept small to facilitate bonding between the participants and the adult mentor. Fifth, the program takes place for a period of time long enough to have an effect. Lastly, the program ends with a rite of passage ceremony and includes monthly follow up meetings to reinforce learning (Dixon, Schoonmaker, & Philliber, 2000). This program aligns with Erikson's stage and highlights the role of rites of passage ceremonies in confirming the transition to adulthood. The ceremonies offer participants a momentous occasion which is linked to their successful transition into a responsible teen with a sense of agency and a strong sense of self.

Tabi's (2002) qualitative study highlighted the need to enhance the self-esteem and self-concept of teenage girls within community interventions. Teenagers identified a great need for parental involvement in educational and social development (Tabi, 2002).

In the study adolescents highlighted the importance of parent-child communication; love, affection, and sex education at home in preventing pregnancy (Tabi, 2002). Parental involvement within a community setting can create a safe place to facilitate mother-daughter interactions. In Tabi's (2002) study the majority of the teenagers did not think education after high school was an option. Tabi's group of teens illustrates the importance of providing experiences which will motivate teens, increase awareness of opportunities, and foster a sense of control. Without information about sexual health and opportunities for success teens are left unaware and unmotivated to successfully avoid pregnancy.

Support within a community setting may be beneficial to the ways teenagers respond in the environment after having opportunities to rewrite their stories. Dialogue will allow females to get answers to their questions, and to know the problems and challenges they see in others are not innate within themselves. They need to know the difficulties others face are partly based on choices, and with the proper information and support they can make healthy choices.

Dialogue

Girls need a safe place to discuss the scripts they see in the media and understand that they have the freedom to move between the scripts (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). This information is essential to making healthy choices which benefit females in the future. Young women need to embrace their ability to author their own futures. In a community setting girls need to feel included and supported. They need to be encouraged to interact

in ways opposing the themes of sexual scripts. Communication and role play will allow girls to strengthen their skill sets. Kaplan (1997) documented the results of boys flirting and making sexual advances towards girls who were physically maturing. The young girls were unprepared to handle the advances of the young men. Although some of the teens had sexual education, they did not possess the skills for sexual decision making. Teenage girls need to gain familiarity with what may be expected of them. It is essential that adolescent girls become comfortable with their responsibilities to themselves.

Dialogue surrounding the scripts will allow familiarity and recognition of the negative expectations. New found knowledge will allow teenage girls to counter the racist and sexist categorizations which exist. The challenge is to make adolescents understand that they are more than sexual objects. This understanding will ideally transform Black girls into the authors of their own futures. For a healthy self-concept, their ideas of themselves must reflect more than the desires of men. Females need to be equipped with the skills which will allow them to conduct a healthy appraisal of their abilities and potential.

Music

Listening to music also provides opportunities for discussion about lyrics and messages within the music. Both positive and negative music can effectively connect with the listeners and provide moments for education. Music videos can provide educational moments for teenagers as well. Participants can watch music videos without the sound, and facilitators can narrate the viewing with a discussion about the messages

within the music video. Ideally, the silence will allow girls to process the images, while circumventing auditory input. The experiences can lead to critical thinking beyond the walls of community agencies and surface into conversations in classrooms, churches, and workplaces.

Rap Sessions

Agencies can arrange “rap sessions” as a way to educate both males and females and facilitate dialogue that allows girls to tell their stories. Mentor programs can provide a connection with a successful person and an opportunity for a role model. Communities can also invite special guests from the neighborhood to provide girls with information and proof of alternate realities to counter some of the negative beliefs they may have. It also presents teenage girls with more optimistic and challenging futures.

Revision Support

Girls need to be supported in creating their goals and the necessary plan of action. Images may need to be created by women themselves. Girls may need information about life after high school, undergraduate degrees, and advanced degrees. Prosperity and success through self-improvement and goal-setting need to be introduced as options. Those scripts can be presented by bringing speakers in from the community to provide information about different degree paths and careers.

Girls also need to be able to define their own sexuality. This will include an understanding of the images they see and the messages they receive. The important information includes sexual boundaries, emotional and physical needs, morals, and

sexual health. A definition of a healthy loving relationship is important for having interactions with others and establishing boundaries.

Messages about commitment are important to counteract the impact of media. Girls need to be provided with the information and opportunities to see themselves as people who deserve commitment. Young women need to know they can commit to themselves through their dreams and educational pursuits rather than committing to the whims of another person. Answers are not in the media; community agencies provide a supportive environment for the re-education of Black teenage girls.

FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

Previous research has yielded a variety of qualitative studies. Moving forward it will be important to approach the subjects of scripts and communication about sexual intercourse from a quantitative standpoint. Other shortcomings within this area of research include small sample sizes and school wide groups of participants. Current research needs to explore the long-term impacts of viewing sexually explicit media through longitudinal research. More information about teenage girls from single parent homes will be important. The 2000 United States Census (2003) reported that more than 12% of Black women have been divorced while almost 40% of have never married. Many of the divorced and unmarried women are mothers, so it is essential that the needs of their children are addressed in research.

Quantitative Research

For teenage girls, it will be important to continue exploring the impact of the existing scripts through quantitative research. Some promising areas of research include the scripts which exist within other cultures or racial groups. Thomas, Witherspoon and Speight (2004) note the different patterns of sexual risk taking between racial groups. The authors also note the importance of racial attitudes and buy-in to stereotypic beliefs as important factors impacting a Black woman's identity. The same beliefs and attitudes should also be important to other women of color. They are not free from the stresses of oppression, sexism and racism. That is why it will also be beneficial to explore the existence of scripts within the Latina population. There are unique Hispanic cultural

components which honor motherhood and equate mothering with adulthood (Doğan-Ateş & Carrión-Basham, 2007). Investigation of scripts related to Latinas has the potential to offer enlightening information to professionals, especially when combined with current teenage pregnancy statistics for Latina teens. Black (2009) states during their teenage years it is “more likely than not” that 53% of Latinas will become pregnant at least once. The likelihood of pregnancy is 51% for African American teens. Girls from racially diverse backgrounds are bombarded with negative messages. It is essential that professionals be aware of the specific scripts which are unique to girls from different cultural groups.

Narrative Theory

Narrative therapy provides a medium that is respectful of cultural differences and capable of facilitating changes within individuals (Erickson, 1984). Narrative is important for externalizing the problems which Black teenage girls may see as innate within themselves. The Narrative process is respectful, allowing participants to bring the difficult social messages and dilemmas confronting them (Erickson, 1984). With support teens can author new stories reflecting their realities. Teenage pregnancy is preventable. Black teenage girls need to be placed in an environment where they have opportunities to tell their stories, experience emotions, hear the stories of other teenage girls, listen for themes, and rewrite their stories. Telling stories aloud allows girls an opportunity to share their dreams and goals with others, and expand the options for young women who have not been exposed to the possibility of positive outcomes. Throughout the sharing process

the other girls may be exposed to exceptions that force them to reexamine their negative beliefs. This shared experience creates memories from which girls can pull for inspiration in the future. The positive exchange has the potential to contribute to a sense of community within groups.

Protective Factors

It will also be important to explore the protective factors of teen pregnancy. The role of parental communication provides another promising avenue for research. Researchers reported daughters are less likely to be sexually active when they believe their relationship with their mother is healthy and positive (Usher,-Seriki, Bynum, & Callands, 2008). Premises regarding the dynamic of the mother-daughter relationships are similar for African Americans from both advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Usher,-Seriki, Bynum, & Callands, 2008). Detailed findings about communication can prove to be important in the creation of future interventions and training for parents, providing them with instruction for speaking with their teenage girls or community contacts. Although the findings about mother-daughter relationships have been similar, research can address the varying styles of communication within the different socio-economic groups. Definitive research is limited and needs to include large samples. Participants should also come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and a wide age range in order to be representative of a wider group of teens.

Narratives of Pregnant and Parenting Teens

It may be important to utilize pregnant and parenting teens as informants that can help teens who have not become sexually active or are not pregnant. The knowledge of the young women who may be considered statistics by the general population may hold nuggets of truth for teenage pregnancy prevention in the future. For example, Kaplan's (1997) work indicates sexual abuse was theme in the narratives of many of the young women she interviewed, although research investigating the relationship between teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse has been ambiguous (E. Herrenkohl, R. Herrenkohl, Egolf & Russo, 1998). From Kaplan's (1997) findings she suggests the experience of sexual abuse may lead the teens to feel vulnerable. The sexual trauma undermines the teens' attempts at independence and steals emotion energy for school and other pursuits. Kaplan's findings are strengthened by the lack of sexual tone and suggest the teens' complicated personal needs and paternal voids. While unsettling, this information may have the potential to be used for prevention programs, especially intervention programs targeting victims of sexual trauma and preadolescents.

CONCLUSION

After a fifteen-year decline in teenage pregnancy rates, the United States is once again seeing an increase. Many families of teenage parents are working to adapt to their changing circumstances, and this is taking a toll on the immediate family and the children of teen parents. The family, or the modern village, is charged with the task of adapting to changes in society before a teenage pregnancy occurs. Examinations of existing sexual education programs should acknowledge the lack of efficacy within abstinence only instruction and the negative impact on teenage pregnancy rates. Practices need to reach beyond the act of sexual intercourse to examine the thoughts and behaviors of teens; this includes but is not limited to sexual scripts, life expectations, and self-selecting strategies for their futures.

The images and sexual scripts governing the actions of women are not novel, they are based on historical images which have withstood time and been modernized. Those images are salient to hip-hop culture, and with technological advances and explicit media the sexualized images are more readily available to teens. It is becoming increasingly important for practitioners to reassess approaches to teenage pregnancy prevention by taking into account how media can be used as a tool to engender critiques of sexual scripts and self-reflection.

Erikson's adolescent task of identity is coupled with the culturally relevant interventions which are necessary to compete with and counteract the negative effects of media. Past research documents the existence of scripts and the role the images play in

the lives of teens, along with the importance of recognizing positive alternatives for the future. The findings will prove important when facilitating dialogue within community settings. Interventions need to continually contribute timely information and inspire critical thinking in the lives of young women and men. Research supports the development of an intervention approach which creates an Afro-Centric environment (Stephens & Few, 2007), challenges stereotypes (Martyn & Hutchinson, 2001), facilitates critical thinking (Martyn & Hutchinson, 2001; Stephens & Few, 2007; Townsend, Thomas, Neilands & Jackson, 2010), and increases sexual agency (Martyn & Hutchinson, 2001; Stephens & Few, 2007). Current teenage pregnancy statistics document the need for such innovative techniques.

Moving forward, it is important to engage these young women in their element when professionals make attempts to step in, educate, and intervene. Villages include the explicit media and images described. The impact of hip-hop can be overlooked no more than the sexualized images females see. As a result of the salience of the images, it is imperative to educate girls about the images they are being exposed to along with the consequences of internalizing such scripts. It is to the disadvantage of teens and communities to pretend that there are no costs resulting from being subjected to the negative ways-of-being. Images and the resulting messages should be addressed directly with teens so that critical thinking skills are fresh on the minds and readily available to teens as tools to insulate them against self-sabotage and open them up to future possibilities.

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