

Intersectionality and Black Youth Mental Health

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Agenda

- Land Acknowledgement
- Social Determinants of Health
- Canada's History of Racism
- Intersectionality
- Black Youth Mental Health

Land Acknowledgement

- We are all located in different territories.
- I respectfully acknowledge that I am located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Sauteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community. vibrant community.
- Many of us, have come here as settlers, immigrants, newcomers in this generation or generations past
- I am mindful of broken covenants and strive to make this right, with the land and with each other.

Why Consider Intersections of Race: Canada's History of Racist Policy

- Canada's racist immigration policy: Section 38 of the Immigration Act of 1910 states:
 - "The Governor in Council may, by proclamation or order whenever he deems it necessary or expedient,
 - (c) prohibit for a stated period, or permanently, the landing in Canada, or the landing at any specified port of entry in Canada, of immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character."
- Order-in-Council P.C. 1324 was approved on 12 August 1911 by the Cabinet of Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier. "the Negro race...is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada."

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

- “For over a century, the central goals of Canada’s Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as “cultural genocide.”

United Nations Working Group of Expert Report (2017)

- “Despite the reputation for promoting multiculturalism and diversity and the positive measures taken by the national and provincial governments, referred to above, the Working Group is deeply concerned by the structural racism that lies at the core of many Canadian institutions and the systemic anti-Black racism that continues to have a negative impact on the human rights situation of African Canadians.”
- “Canada’s history of enslavement, racial segregation and marginalization of African Canadians has left a legacy of anti-Black racism and had a deleterious impact on people of African descent, which must be addressed in partnership with the affected communities.”
- Identified the need for race based data



What is Intersectionality

- Intersectionality is a theoretical perspective regarding the influence of diverse social locations—race, ethnicity, gender, class, and socioeconomic status—on a particular phenomenon, such as the experience of health and its outcomes.
- Intersectionality moves beyond first and second wave feminist perspective that essentializes the experiences of women.
- It conceives diverse social locations (including gender, race, class, etc) as fluid and independent.

Intersectionality and Health

- Intersectionality has been used by health researchers to examine health issues in Canada and globally.
- Intersectionality can help us understand how diverse social locations contribute to health inequities.
- An intersectional perspective recognizes how power and power relations across intersecting social locations are reproduced and how these power relations may contribute to health
- Intersectionality perspective can contribute to our understanding of social determinants of health in Canada (Hankivsky and Christoffersen, 2008).
- Social determinants of health cannot be reduced to one single determinant or marker of difference; rather diverse social determinants of health interact to contribute to population health in Canada.
- Intersectionality can help illuminate how diverse social inequities can interact to manifest in health inequities. For instance, by examining the interconnections between social relationships, dominance, and oppression, deeper insights may be revealed about a person's mental health status (Hankivsky, Reid, Cormier, et al., 2010).

Intersectional Research: Methodological Tenants (Misra et al., 2020; Collins and Bilge)

- Power
- Social Justice
- Oppression
- Relationality
- Complexity
- Context
- Deconstruction



HEALTH AND IMMIGRATION POLICIES
RESEARCH PROGRAM



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF NURSING

Youth-Led Participatory Action Research Project:

Mental Health of African, Black and Caribbean Youth in Alberta

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Research Questions

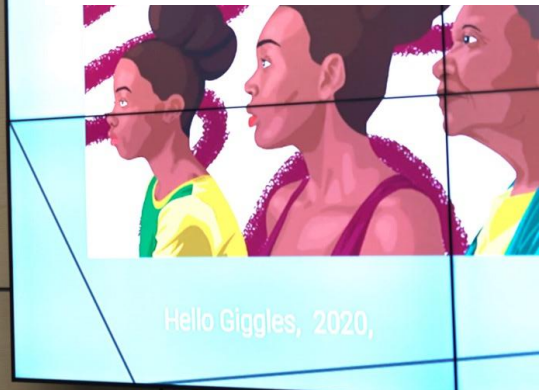
- What are the mental health needs of African, Black, and Caribbean youths in Alberta?
- What are the barriers to access to and use of mental health services for African, Black, and Caribbean youths in Alberta?
- What are culturally relevant and effective approaches to increasing access to and uptake of mental health supports by African, Black and Caribbean youths in Alberta?
- What potential exists to mobilize African, Black, and Caribbean youths to improve mental health outcomes and/or to build resilience and capitalize on their agency?

Methods for purposive data collection

Phase 1: Interviews with 30 Black youths of African, Black and Caribbean descent aged 16 to 30 years

Phase 2: Series of four conversation cafés with 99 youths

- Conversation cafés were an open forum for stimulating dialogue on relevant societal issues
- Combined smaller group breakout discussion sessions with larger groups sessions featuring mental health experts/guest speakers; all café sessions addressed themes related to our research questions



Intersectional Influences on Mental Health

- Racism
 - “I grew up with so much internalized anti-Blackness. God, I hated myself. I wanted to be white so bad. I wanted to have straight hair. I wanted to have lighter skin. You know, I wanted smaller lips. There was one time a girl told me... I was sleeping over at her house, and she was looking at me. I was like, “What?” And she’s like, “You have nigger lips.” Participant 9
- Race and Gender (Masculinity)
 - “In my community it’s very easy, because obviously the community understands the struggles that are out there. Outside my community there is, and I think I’ve subconsciously learned to do this, is to kind of um... I’m thinking of the word. Just kind of put... start out with the notion that I’m not going to rob you [Laughs], right? Or just kind of when I interact, especially just blatantly blank with white... especially when I interact with white people, just kind of the first thing that I have to attack is the preconceived notion that I am black, I’m a thug, or whatever”
 - “Because that toxic masculinity is not a black thing; it’s an everybody thing. It’s an every male thing. What separates us is we have an added thing called racism. Because now in terms of mental health, we are not taking, as men we’re not taking care of ourselves mentally, and now there’s this added... added factor of hate from another group of males who more or less have the same struggle as you.”
- Cultural Perceptions (“Strong Black woman”)
 - “There are some people that consider mental health problems as like a Caucasian problem. Like they’re like, “Oh, like it’s only like white people that have like this sort of issue,” when it’s not true. It’s found in a lot of different demographics. But like they don’t see it that way, because in their heads they’re just like, “Oh, yeah, we’re super tough. We can deal with anything life throws at us. Like nothing can get us down. We can deal with anything,” sort of mentality.”
- A sense of community
 - “Feeling like you have the community behind you is definitely something that helps me through kind of my anxious or whatever else episodes.”

Intersectional Influences on Access to Mental Health

- Income
 - “And so I know I’m not making as much. I’m making enough. And then when you contribute that on top to help out the family, there’s really not that much left sometimes to like go for services, to like for health services.”
- Income, Race and Lack of Black demographic representation
 - “First of all, there’s never any Black counselors. That’s the biggest problem. How am I going to tell a white person that... there’s no food in the fridge and you’re stressed, you’re crumbling, and you can’t do your homework, and your teacher thinks you’re a lazy piece of shit and you’re stupid, and you’re not going anywhere in life because all you like to do is play basketball, because that’s your outlet?”
 - “Oh, like I’m experiencing racism.” They’d be like, “What? Oh, what? Are you sure? Okay, let’s get you some like other strategies you can deal with like the workplace or something. But it’s like no [...] Someone who has not experienced that, or has any idea what it’s like, I just feel like it’d be really difficult for them to empathize and relate, and sort of just like advise you on what you can do, or strategies and things like that.”
- Intergenerational gap
 - “So the reason why they don’t address mental health in the Sudanese community is because like the parents never got to address. They don’t know mental health, because they’ve only known like civil war and like running away, and like you got to move on.”

Thank You