ABSTRACT

MARTIN, DEMARCUS A.   B.S. SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY 2013

THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE ON AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH

Advisor: Dr. Corinne Warrener

Conceptual Paper dated May 2017

This paper investigates published literature that describes the effects of community violence on African American youth. Community violence is found to originate from the history of African Americans migrating from the rural south to northern urban cities. Because of the mass influx of African Americans in northern urban cities, White American migrated out of the urban cities, and with them, jobs, economic prosperity and resources left as well. Community violence is found to be a result of the lack in resources, economic opportunities and prosperity that was once seen in the communities when White Americans were present. A review of the literature indicates that there are possible negative outcomes for African American youth exposed to community violence such as mental health issues, PTSD, depression and aggression. This paper examines the implications for social work, which include the need for direct practice social workers to collaborate with organizations and communities.

THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE ON AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH

A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE

WHITNEY M. YOUNG, JR., SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

DEMARCUS AARON MARTIN

CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, giving honor to God who is the head of my life. Without Him, nothing is possible. An earnest appreciation is given to The Whitney M. Young Jr., School of Social Work, Dr. Corinne Warrener, Dr. Youseung Kim and Dr. Kenya Jones for challenging and guiding me through this scholarly endeavor. To my academic associate Ms. April Maria Daniels, you have been a direct source of encouragement throughout this educational journey. To my son De' Vaughn Martin, thank you for your unconditional love and belief in me. Lastly, thank you Mr. Oliver Campbell Jr, the events that led to your premature death will never go unnoticed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On July 30, 2015, at a South DeKalb gas station Oliver Campbell Jr. lost his short life due to what authorities have labeled as community violence. Oliver Campbell was only nineteen years of age and a teen father. Witnesses stated that they observed an African American male wearing a black hooded jacket approach the Dodge pickup truck that Mr. Campbell was occupying, firing two shots that struck Mr. Campbell in the neck and abdomen. Mr. Campbell was pronounced dead at Grady Memorial Hospital at 6:30 am. Unfortunately, Mr. Campbell was just one of the many young victims who saw their lives come to a sudden end during the violent summer of 2015 due to community violence and its dangerous grab on the African American community (Judd, 2015).

Across America children and youth have expressed a distressing rate of exposure to violence and victimization ('Black children exposed to violence," 2012). In fact, the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence reported that more than 60 percent of children from birth to 17 years' experience victimization and 38 percent witness violence sometime during childhood (Black children exposed to violence,"2012). It is important to note that throughout the course of their lifespan, nearly 71 percent of 14 through 17-year-olds suffer assault; 28 percent sexual victimization; 32 percent abuse or neglect, and 53 percent property victimization (Black children exposed to violence."2012). According to

the literature, African American youth are exposed to community violence at consistently higher rates than other youth (Gaylord-Harden, Cunningham & Zelencik, 2011). Other literature stated that inner city; low-income, African American youth excessively resided in neighborhoods that were portrayed by poverty, crime, and violence (Busby, Lambert & Ialongo, 2013).

Throughout America there have been countless of Oliver Campbell's. Studies have shown that not all African American youth lose their lives to community violence and that many of them are witnesses to community violence. In fact, many of these young people have developed what is called *posttraumatic stress disorder* (PTSD), which is a serious condition that can develop after a person has been a victim or witnessed a traumatic or life- altering event where serious physical harm take place (Keegan, 1997).

It is important to consider the death of Oliver Campbell and how it impacts his community. The death of Oliver Campbell had profound effects on his mother who lost her only child and his baby son who would never know his biological father. Lastly, the community is faced with the reality and constant fear of the continuous casualties of its' community members and the ever pressing fear of violence knocking on their door.

The purpose of this research paper is to evaluate the different ways that community violence affects African American youth and their overall outcomes. These outcomes include educational, mental health, juvenile justice and socioeconomic outcomes. The subtopics that will be discussed and evaluated in relation to community violence are social-emotional well-being, academic success, and juvenile justice outcomes.

Statement of the Study Issue

The senseless death of Oliver Campbell Jr. brought forth the pressing issue of community violence in the African American community. His death sheds light on the harsh realities and crucial truths on what specific outcomes community violence has for young African Americans. Community violence had its effects on Oliver Campbell Jr. and the suspect who pulled the trigger that ultimately ended his life. Now, one might ask, what are the effects of community violence which put these two individuals at opposing ends of the gun and why is community violence prevalent and relevant in regards to African American youth (Judd, 2015)

This paper will analyze and evaluate how academic success, mental health, juvenile justice outcomes, socioeconomic status and actual behavior are affected by community violence in regards to African American youth and how it could possibly lead to various outcomes in these specific youth such as either being victims of community violence such as Oliver Campbell Jr. or being further perpetrators of community violence such as his young killer.

In regards to community violence and the effects it has had on African American youth, there are areas that are in need of further study such as, what causes one individual to remain resilient and successfully navigate through the experiences of being exposed to community violence and what causes other youth to be absorbed into the violence and continue the cycle of community violence. There is also a greater need for the understanding of how long-term exposure to community violence affects the mental health of African American youth and how this further affects the dynamics of African American families in low-income communities with high community violence rates. The

African American community is an important population to study in regards to this topic because of the fact that many low-income urban communities with high community violence rates are comprised of a mostly African American demographic within the United States. As mentioned in the literature, closely eighty-nine percent of all African American families live in urban sections, and these areas have discernible intense poverty (Nebbit, Williams, Lombe, McCoy & Stephens, 2014). According to Harris & Kearney (2014), the levels of imprisonment and crimes had an unequal impact on poor income and minority communities, which added to the social and economic demotion of the poor and disadvantaged. These individuals are at a disadvantage because of the social and economic inequalities within their communities which in turn had influences on the levels of community violence experienced by African American youth.

Purpose of the Study

The central and overall focus of this study will be on how community violence affects the academic success, mental health, behavior, juvenile justice and socioeconomic status of African American youth. This paper will examine the differences in resiliency against community violence amongst African American youth. Additionally, this paper will involve review and evaluation of literature material focusing on the prevalence of violence and the factors that contribute to community violence. This paper will address how community violence affects African American youth's academic success and achievement, social-emotional outcomes, and their outcomes in regards to the juvenile justice system. Finally, this study will examine social support systems and programs such as the Multiple Opportunities to Reach Excellence (MORE) Project, and how they either

help or are ineffective in alleviating the negative effects and experiences of being exposed to community violence amongst African American youth.

The research question that was asked in this literature review is how does community violence affect the academic success, social-emotional well-being and juvenile justice outcomes for African American youth? For instance, in the literature it stated that exposure to community violence and places of residence, created divides in academic outcomes between African American and Caucasian youth, with African American youth commonly underperforming in academic areas such as vocabulary, reading and math (NCES, 2000). Facts such as these demonstrated that exposure to community violence does have adverse effects on African American youth and further confirms why this particular population was targeted for this paper.

It is expected that the research findings will demonstrate that community violence negatively affected all of these mentioned areas relating to African American youth. The geographic locations that will be discussed in this paper will focus on inner city areas where African American youth reside. The age groups that is being targeted for this paper is African American youth. This age group is being targeted for this analysis because the literature mentions that as youth are shifting into adolescence, the exposure to peer influences and their community increases (McMahon, Coker, & Parnes, 2013). Also, the juvenile justice factor is relevant until the age of 18 when the individual is legally considered an adult and is subject to laws and punishments applicable to those aged 18 and above.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant and essential because it has acute implications for future social policies that target community violence and its' effects on African American youth. This paper will help social workers and other mental health professionals working within poor urban African American communities to understand how community violence affects the psychological well-being as well as the academic success and juvenile justice outcomes of African American youth. By understanding how community violence affects these issues regarding African American youth, it will help social workers, mental health professional, social scientist and policy makers to develop more effective interventions to help promote and encourage the healthy development and optimal outcomes for African American youth as well as other minorities exposed to community violence. This paper will contribute to bringing the issue of the adverse effects of community violence to the forefront and also bring exposure to the negative effects of community violence in regards to African American youth with the hopes of preventing future African American youth who were exposed to community violence, from looking at one another from opposing ends of a gun.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community violence did not appear randomly but has a historical background. It is vital to understand the historical implications in relation to community violence, and in order to discuss the future implications of community violence, origins of community violence in African American communities has to be understood. Once the history of African American community violence is discussed, a review of the literature in regards to community violence will be made. The purpose of this review of the literature is to investigate the relationship between the effects of community violence on African American youth. Add a sentence here about how you will discuss Afrocentric Perspective and your theoretical framework.

Historical Perspective

Earlier in this nation's history, inner city or urban communities flourished, which included thriving businesses, and cultural and social prospects (Rawles, 2010). The impact of industrialization along with the movement of African Americans from rural Southern areas to Northern and Midwestern cities had drastic implications on the transformation of these once booming urban communities (Rawles, 2010). The movement of Caucasians out of neighborhoods due to the influx of minorities changed

7

the racial makeup of these communities to mostly African American and Hispanic habitants. Social and economic opportunities unfortunately left many of these urban communities. The exodus of Caucasians further changed the outlook for urban communities (Rawles, 2010). According to the literature, these events have developed these communities into areas where there are no social or economic opportunities and where there are endless opportunities for violence to erupt and thrive.

The important question to be asked is how did African Americans come to be in those urban communities in the first place? According to the literature, the migration of blacks from the south to northern urban cities was related to economic opportunities and the modernization of southern agriculture (Jong, 2003). As mentioned in the literature, beginning in the 1930s' white plantation owners started to replace African American workers with machines and cut back on their acres of crop due to government policies which compensated farm owners for leaving part of their land unfarmed (Jong, 2003).

During the 1950's new technological inventions replaced hand labor in cotton production, as mentioned in the literature between the years of 1930 and 1960, the number of African American farm workers had gone down seventy percent (Jong, 2003). The federal government further contributed the mass exodus of blacks from the south by passing a federal minimum wage law for farm workers in 1966 (Jong, 2003). African American farm workers in the south did not have many resources to rely on after being displaced from the plantations they worked on (Jong, 2003). The southern states during that time were poor and had overburdened welfare systems that could not support the mass number of people applying for aid due to the displacement of African American farm workers (Jong, 2003). According to the literature, many African Americans moved

north for better economic and social opportunities but were unfortunately met with harsh realities (Jong, 2003). Like previously stated, the modernization of the agricultural south and the growing economic opportunities in the north that influenced many African Americans to migrate to northern cities (Jong, 2003). The exodus of Caucasians out of urban communities along with economic and job opportunities had major impacts on the minorities who were left in these urban areas (Jong, 2003). Poverty, crime, and inadequate housing all resulted from the economic opportunities that disappeared from urban communities with the effects still being felt in the present time.

Impact of Community Violence on Mental Health

Being exposed to community violence as an adolescent in the inner city has many implications for the impact on inner-city communities and consequences that include being at risk for displaying aggressive behaviors. Research has indicated that communities that are filled with chronic violence are communities which are high in poverty and which consist of a mostly minority population (Jones, 2007). As mentioned in the literature, there has been a growing trend of community violence exposer among African American youth, and these growing trends have implications of having negative effects on African American youth such as aggression (Barroso, Peters Jr., Kelder, Conroy, Murray & Orpinas, 2008). It was stated in the literature that communities which have high levels of unsafe conditions are not healthy places for children because of the possible negative outcomes such as mental health issues, PTSD, depression and aggression (Jenkins, Wang & Turner, 2014).

A study evaluating aggression as a result of exposure to community violence found that African American youth's exposure to community violence was related to displays of aggressive and risky behaviors (Barroso et al., 2008). Other studies support this finding and one such study indicated that being exposed to community violence and violent events within the community increases one's chance of engaging in aggressive behaviors (Chaux, Arboleda & Rincon, 2012).

In one particular study, it was mentioned that community violence exposure was noted to lead African American youth to become aggressive as a coping mechanism and as a way to blend into their environment (Benhorin & McMahan, 2008). It was further mentioned in this study, that adolescents exposed to violence displayed aggressive behaviors in their homes, schools, and communities, supporting the belief that they used their aggressive behavior as a way to adapt to their communities and cope with their unsafe neighborhoods (Benhorin & McMahon, 2008).

It was stated in the literature that behavior is learned within one's social context (Ebesutani, Kim, & Young, 2014). Exposure to community violence was connected to youth's having hyperarousal feelings, which could be linked to aggression (Ebesutani, Kim, & Young, 2014). Youth who display early signs of aggressive behaviors across their life span, such as conduct disorder, antisocial behaviors, and legal issues. Researchers have found that extreme exposure to violence typically leads to outward behaviors like aggression (Ebesutani, Kim, & Young, 2014)

Academic Performance

Being exposed to violence within one's community can also affect one's ability to positivity perform academically. Recent studies have reported that compared to their

Caucasian counterparts, many African American students' overall fail in vocabulary,

reading, and mathematics (NCES, 200), and are not expected to even complete high

school (Chapman et al. 2011). In one particular study, it was mentioned that exposure to

crime and violence had been emphasized as one of the major reasons that many

disadvantaged neighborhoods have adverse effects on adolescents' academic development

(Sampson et al. 1997). In fact, African American adolescents' exposure to community

violence can lead to a range of symptoms and problems that diminish from learning and

lead to severe decreased academic functioning (Busby, Lambert, & laIongo,

2012).

Community violence was linked to attentional impairment, decreases in cognitive

performance and school achievement (Bell & Jenkins, 1991). Researchers have

mentioned that community violence exposure may negatively affect children's

developing capacities for self- regulation and behavioral control, which could possibly

impact their academic performance (Schwartz & Gorman, 2003).

Afrocentric Perspective

The Afrocentric Perspective is a belief centered on struggles of African

Americans from Africa. For many African Americans, their sense of belonging, their

essence of who they are, and their right to assemble in collective and familial units is

judged by the color of their skins (Borum, 2007). As mentioned in the literature,

Afrocentrism was first suggested in the 80s and is the representation of reality from one's

own perspective (Reviere, 2001). The main benefit of utilizing an Afrocentric approach

as stated in the literature, it requires the researcher to confront the utilization of the

traditional Eurocentric criteria of research such as objectivity, reliability, and validity during the research process (Reviere, 2001).

According to the literature, the fundamental Afrocentric philosophies are that researchers must keep themselves liable for revealing unknown racist theories that could possibly be rooted in present methodologies (Reviere, 2001). According to the fundamental Afrocentric philosophies, researchers must strive to validate the significance of African principles and morals as an effective frame of reference for gathering and evaluating data (Reviere, 2001). Lastly, the third fundamental philosophy of Afrocentric methodology is that there must be maintenance of examinations that are entrenched in a firm understanding of place (Reviere, 2001). As stated in the literature, these philosophies are what sets the Afrocentric approach apart from the Eurocentric approach (Reviere, 2001).

In terms of how the Afrocentric Perspective can be related to community violence, in the literature it is mentioned that Afrocentricity is an influential instrument that can display how an emerging understanding of a society from the standpoint of that society, can very much alter the practice of social work in a positive manner (Borum, 2007). Looking at community violence through Afrocentric lenses ensures that the researcher is looking at the research with a fair analysis and evaluating how their own life experiences affect their interpretation of the data (Reviere, 2001). Also pertaining to community violence, according to the literature, Afrocentricity offers a structure from which to commence restructuring ways in which society, language, power, economics spirituality, family, and knowledge are sites for not only opportunity but oppression as well (Borum, 2007).

By utilizing the Afrocentric Perspective, a researcher can connect how all the aspects of society affect how or why certain communities are sites of either opportunity or oppression, and how violence is the norm for many urban minority communities (Reviere, 2001). As mentioned in the literature, when researching community violence, a researcher following an Afrocentric perspective must look within themselves and ask themselves how their own personal experiences throughout their life, shape their handling of the inquiry into community violence in African American communities (Reviere, 2001).

Theoretical Framework

Research has found that social behavior is learned in two ways, through direct conditioning and modeling of others' behavior (Akers et al, 1979). In addition, research has found that behavior is supported through positive reinforcement and/or negative reinforcement (Akers et al, 1979). In fact, these reinforcers can be either nonsocial or social. Many social scientists have stressed that responses are automatically and unconsciously strengthened by their immediate consequences (Bandura, 1971).

According to the social disorganization theory, the organizational settings of neighborhoods such as the amount of poverty, ethnic and racial makeup and housing instability, altogether affect the social interactions of the people within the community (Hipp, Tita & Greenbaum, 2009). As mentioned in the literature, the interactions within the community affect how individuals respond to violence within their community (Hipp, Tita & Greenbaum, 2009). As found in the research, communities that have more volatility, have less social organization that leads to more crime and violence (Hipp, Tita

& Greenbaum, 2009). It was stated in the literature that, communities where residents come together via networks and different organizations, gives them the opportunity to respond to problems as they surface which results in lower levels of crime within their community (Hipp, Tita & Greenbaum, 2009).

As mentioned in the literature, the social disorganization theory holds the perspective that those individuals who reside in areas that are at an economic disadvantage, and whose communities include: low-cost housing, poor upkeep of housing and a constant influx and exodus of residents are considered to be socially disorganized (Vowell & Howell, 1998). Consistent with the literature, institutions that assist in sustaining social structure consist of the family, religion, school, government and the media (Hesse & Hilal, 2009). A theory such as this focuses on how certain conditions of urban geographical areas contribute to the crime rates of the adolescents who reside within those communities (Hesse & Hilal, 2009).

According to the literature, the sub-standard living conditions within urban areas such as poorly kept homes, minimal outside financial investment, and limited access to public assistance all contribute to the levels of social disorganization within these urban communities (Vowell & Howell, 1998). In line with the literature, adolescent delinquency is correlated with the characteristics of the environment in which adolescents reside such as poverty levels, non-conventional families, housing displacements and economic opportunities (Hesse & Hilal, 2009). These characteristics within urban communities are vital for understanding why there are high adolescent crime rates amongst African American youth within urban areas (Hesse & Hilal, 2009). Social Disorganization theory helps to put into perspective the factors that influence shape

juvenile delinquency within poor urban communities and, offers insight for future

research and policy changes which could work towards effectively targeting the factors

that contribute to high juvenile crime rates within urban communities (Hesse & Hilal,

2009).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this conceptual paper is to access the effects of community

violence on African American youth as it relates to the development of aggressive

behaviors and poor academic achievement. This chapter also seeks to introduce potential

limitations of the studies indicated in the literature review.

Methods of the Study

Numerous techniques were used to research the topic of the effects of community

violence on African American youth. A systematic review is the method utilized to

effectively portray the literature as statistics from several studies were linked to finding

relationships from the results.

The first method of research utilized was Galileo. This was used to pinpoint

useful articles using keywords such as community violence, community violence and

African American youth, and the effects of community violence on American youth.

Results yield greatly for articles on African American youth and exposure to community

violence. The most efficient statistics came from the Loyola University in Chicago from

the journal for social action in counseling and psychology.

Second, the researcher used the Google scholar search engine to search for topics relevant results of the effects of community violence on African American youth using keys words such as, "internalizing and externalizing behaviors in urban African American youth" or "urban children academic functioning" to yield effective results on my topic. It is important to note that numerous articles were unable to be retrieved by the Google Scholar search engine such as the Journal of Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes, Community Violence and Children on Chicago's Southside.

Limitations

This paper is based on the review of the literature on the topic of the effect of community violence on African American adolescents. In terms of understanding the gender differences in exposure to community violence, the literature revealed that there were not any gender differences in the connection between exposure to community violence and aggressive behaviors (Busby, Lambert, & Ialongo, 2013).

It was found that the research was inconsistent on the measurement of aggression and understanding aggression through different contexts in relation to exposure to community violence. Certain studies utilized the Social and Health Assessment such as the Gupta et al (2015) study and other studies such as the Busby, lambert & Ialongo (2013) utilized self-reports and teacher reports for assessments on the effects of community violence exposure.

A consistent limitation that was discovered amongst all of the reviewed literature was that there was a need for longitudinal studies to understand how these symptoms from exposure to community violence develop over time. One study indicated that in

order to fully understand the relationships between the variables, longitudinal research must be conducted (Benhorin & McMahan, 2008). In order to fully understand the effects of community violence on minority youth, a clear definition of the variables must be made along with a reliable measurement and assessment tool.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATIONS OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the relationship between African American youth and community violence. Based on the research, this chapter brings awareness to the issue of community violence as it relates to poor academic performance and severe mental health outcomes.

Impact of Community Violence on Mental Health

It is apparent that community violence has many critical implications and costs for African American adolescents (Jones, 2007). Adverse behaviors which include aggression and mental health problems have a high probability of emerging in African-American adolescents exposed to community violence (Barroso et al., 2008). Community violence stems from poverty and social conditions which stem from past histories of "White flight" and removal of economic opportunities from once thriving communities (Jong, 2003). These past history events connect to the current adverse conditions in many African American urban communities.

Research has shown that communities where there is a high level of violence and other unsafe conditions are unhealthy places for adolescents because of the risks of developing mental health issues such as PTSD, depression, and aggression (Jenkins,

Wang & Turner, 2014). According to the literature, it was found that African-American youth's exposure to community violence was linked to displays of aggressive and precarious behaviors (Barroso et al., 2008).

Other literature indicated that displays of aggressive behavior by African-American youth was the result of attempting to blend into the surrounding community where violence was prevalent (Benhorin & McMahon,2008). Aggressive behavior was stated to be a learned behavior which was the result of blending in with the environment and coping with the unsafe conditions in the community (Benhorin & McMahon,2008). Other literature supports the notion of displaying behaviors which are prevalent in one's environment by stating that behavior is learned within one's social context (Ebesutani, Kim, & Young, 2014).

As stated in the literature, displays of aggressive behaviors during adolescence can have adverse long-term effects and outcomes such as legal issues, conduct disorders and antisocial behaviors (Ebesutani, Kim, & Young, 2014). The results found in the literature were precise in that, the effects of community violence on African-American youth were stated in a concise manner.

The results found in the literature in relation to the effects of community violence on mental health have implications for social work practice. Social workers working to address the issues of community violence may need to get involved with large systems which include organizations and communities (Boyle, Hull, Mather, Smith & Farley, 2009). In regards to community violence and the effects it has on African American adolescents, direct practice is the primary intervention for addressing this issue. With using direct practice, social workers work with organizations and communities to address

the obstacles that obstruct the members of the community from being able to successfully meet their needs (Boyle et al., 2009). Per the literature, social workers who work in addressing community violence, may involve themselves with helping to eradicate the environmental blockades which prevent the people in the community from gaining access to critical resources and amenities needed to live successful lives (Boyle et al., 2009). In relating this intervention to African-American adolescents affected by community violence, using direct practice, a social worker would directly work with African American youth to help them deal with the barriers in their environment which impede on their healthy development and progress (Boyle et al., 2009). Once the barriers are identified, the social worker would have a clearer understanding of what services a certain youth would need to help them cope with or successfully navigate their environmental conditions (Boyle et al., 2009).

The results of this study can be universally applied on a multicultural level for the reason that community violence affects various populations where there is an abundant amount of poverty and social inequity. In fact, violence exposure is a major public health problem for youth who reside in urban inner-city neighborhoods (Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Osofsky, 1995). The effects of community violence are important because poverty and crime are universal issues which have implications for all members of society.

Academic Performance

Exposure to community violence has the capability of affecting an adolescent's ability to perform academically well. As mentioned in the literature, exposure to

community violence was found to be associated with declines in school achievement (Strickland, Quille, Griffin, Stuart, Bradshaw & Holden, 2009). According to the literature, African-American students fail in vocabulary, reading, and mathematics (NCES, 200). Other research indicated that African American students are not even expected to graduate from high school (Chapman et al. 2011).

According to Sampson et al. (1997), exposure to adverse conditions such as crime and violence are a major reason that many disadvantaged neighborhoods have negative effects on adolescents' academic performance. As mentioned in the literature, African-American adolescents' exposure to community violence which could lead to a variety of symptoms that diminish learning and lead to poor academic functioning (Busby, Lambert, & laIongo, 2012).

According to Harden, Cunningham & Zelencik (2011), African-American youth may be adequately served by community or school-based prevention programs that could target adolescents that are deemed at risk. It was found that prevention programs could be beneficial in helping African-American adolescents to find healthier ways to express themselves as a result of being exposed to violent conditions within their communities (Harden, Cunningham & Zelencik, 2011).

The results indicated in the literature, have implications from a multicultural standpoint. Adverse conditions can impact adolescents from different backgrounds who have the similarity of living in violent and tumultuous conditions and communities.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Oliver Campbell Jr. and his killer were brought together by a tragic fate and this life altering encounter can be played out repeatedly in low-income African American communities. Community violence has been acknowledged as a crucial major public health enigma (WHO, 2002). Research indicates that African American youth are at a greater risk of being subjected to community violence than any other people in the United States, which is one of the many reasons why a deeper understanding and evaluation of this issue is needed (Thomas et al., 2012). Exposure to community violence has been associated with lower grade point averages for African American youth (Bowen and Bowen, 1999; Hurt et al. 2001; Overstreet and Braun, 1999; Schwartz and Gorman, 2003).

Summary of the Study

In the earlier years of America's history, urban communities were thriving and successful places full of economic opportunity. According to the literature, the emergence of industrialization and the migration of African Americans from the agricultural south to urban northern cities, created a change in the landscape of northern cities (Rawles, 2010). Caucasians left the urban communities with the influx of minorities

and the economic and social opportunities left with them which devastated the communities and led to adverse conditions such as poverty and violence which were the result of social and economic deprivation (Rawles, 2010). The literature indicated that community violence has roots in American history and evolved and developed through fleeting opportunities that were once present in the communities when White Americans were present in the urban communities (Jong, 2003).

African American adolescents who are exposed to community violence were found to be at risk for developing and displaying aggressive behaviors (Jones, 2007). The research indicated that African American youth exposed to community violence are at risk for having negative outcomes such mental health problems which include PTSD, depression, and aggression (Jenkins, Wang & Turner, 2014). According to Barroso et al. (2008), risky and aggressive behaviors displayed by African American youth in urban community was related to community violence. The findings in the literature were consistent in that most of the literature reviewed, stated that exposure to community violence increases an individual's likelihood of engaging in aggressive behaviors. As stated in the literature, African American Adolescents who displayed aggressive behaviors in their communities, schools, and homes, did so as a way to adapt to their communities and cope with the unsafe conditions which surrounded them (Benhorin & McMahon, 2008). Long-term effects of exposure to community violence experienced by African American youth include risks for developing PTSD, conduct disorders and antisocial behaviors (Ebesutani, Kim, & Young, 2014).

African American students generally underperform in vocabulary, reading, and math (NCES 2000). In fact, many African American students are less likely to complete

high school compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Chapman et al. 2011). Many

Social Scientist argues that African American youth who are exposed to higher rates of

crime and violence may be expected have shorter life expectancy and poor academic

achievement (Cause et al. 2011; Fitzpatrick 1993; Meyers and Miller 2004).

Implications for Social Work

A course of action that can be taken to address the issues of community violence

and the effects it has on African American adolescents, can first evaluate the factors in

the community that contribute to the occurrences of violence in the community. Future

courses of action can be to create programs which could bring social and economic

opportunities to poverty stricken environments which could possibly lead to the decrease

in occurrences of crime in urban communities. Programs can be created to provide

interventions to African American adolescents at risk for developing negative symptoms

from being exposed to community violence. Future research can evaluate the age onset of

adverse behaviors resulting from exposure to community violence in order to determine

the appropriate age to target for intervention and preventative measures.

The information presented in this paper can be used to understand the factors that

lead to community violence developing in urban areas. This paper can help policy makers

determine the best courses of action to take in creating effective policies which can assist

poverty stricken communities in creating social and economic opportunities. Policies

need to be implemented nationwide because multiple communities all over the nation are

affected by poverty and harsh economic and social conditions. Interventions could be

created to help African-American adolescents find healthy ways to cope with their

environments. Future research can study effective interventions for maintaining academic success under stressful conditions with African-American adolescents. By understanding the conditions which led to the violence in minority urban communities, future research, policies and interventions can more effectively create strategies that will decrease the level of crime and violence within communities, because it is vital to first target the variable that leads to adverse behaviors in African-American adolescents which if targeted, can prevent the occurrence of negative behaviors being expressed.

Future research needs to cover all populations affected by community violence to further understand the racial differences in how adolescents react and respond to living in violent and poverty stricken communities. Resiliency factors should be studied to evaluate why certain individuals are more resilient to negative factors in their surrounding environments than others. Implementing policies, programs, and interventions nationwide all communities and people benefit from the change.

Based on the results of the literature, future expectations for interventions are that there will be policies which help to address adverse conditions in communities with high violence rates. Future intervention programs could target adolescents at a young age to help give them the tools and skills which could help them find healthy ways to cope with the conditions in their environments.

REFERENCES

Akers, R. L., Krohn, M. D., Kaduce, L., & Radosevich, M. (1979). Social Learning and

Deviant Behavior: A Specific Test of a General Theory. *American Sociological*

Review, 636-655.

Bandura, A. (1971). *Social Learning Theory*. General Learning Corporation, 1-46.

Bell, C. C., & Jenkins, E. J. (1991). Traumatic stress and children. Journal of Health Care

for the Poor and Underserved, 175-188.

Barreto, S., & McManus, M, (1997). Casting the net for "depression" among ethnic

minority children from high-risk urban communities. *Clinical Psychology Review,*

17, 823-845.

Benhorin, S., & McMahon, S. D. (2008). Exposure to violence and aggression: Protective

roles of social support among urban African American youth. *Journal of*

Community Psychology, 723-743.

Bowen, N. K., & Bowen, G. L. (1999). Effects of crime and violence in neighborhoods

and schools on the school behavior and performance of adolescents. *Journal of*

Adolescent Research, 14, 319-342.

Borum, V. (2007). Why We Can't Wait! An Afrocentric Approach in Working with

African American Families. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social*

Environment, 117-135.

Boyle, S.W. (2009). Direct practice in social work. Boston:Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

Busby, D. R., Lambert, S. F., & Ialongo, N. S. (2013). Psychological Symptoms Linking Exposure to Community Violence and Academic Functioning in African American Adolescents. *Journal of Youth Adolescence,* 250-262.

Cauca, A., Cruz, R., Corona, M., & Conger, R. (2011). The face of the future: Risk and resilience in minority youth. Health disparities in youth and families: Research and applications (pp.13-32).

Chapman, C., Laird, J., & Kwela Armani, A. (2011). *Trends in high school dropout rates in the United States: 1972-2009, Compendium Report.* Washington, D.C: National Centre for Education Statistics.

Chaux, E., Arboleda, J., & Rincon, C. (2016). Community violence and reactive and proactive aggression: The mediating role of cognitive and emotional variables. *Revista Colombiana de Psicoloqiu,* 233-251.

Conroy, J., Murray, N., & Orpinas, P. (2008). Youth exposure to community violence: Violence association with aggression, victimization and risk behavior. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma,* 141-155.

Cooley-Strickland, M., Quilled, T. J., Griffin, R.S., Stuart, E. A., Bradshaw, C. P., & Fur-Holden, D. (2009). Community violence and youth: Affect, behavior, substance use, and academics. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 12*(2), 127-156.

Ebesutani, C., Kim, E., & Young, J. (2014). The role of violence exposure and negative affect in understanding the child and adolescent aggression. Child Psychiatry and Human Development , 736-745.

Fitzpatrick, K. M. (1993). Exposure to violence and presence of depression among low-income, African-American youth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61(3)*, 528-531.

Gaylord-Harden, N. K., Cunningham, J. A., & Zelenicik, B. (2011). Effects of Exposure to Community Violence on Internalizing Symptoms: Does Desensitization to Violence Occur in African American Youth? *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 711-719.

Gorman-Smith, D., & Tolan, P. (1998). The role of exposure to community violence and developmental problems among inner-city youth. Development and Psychopathology, 10, 101-116.

Gupta, S. L., Lindblad, F., Stickley, A., Stone, M., & Ruchkin, V. (2015). Community violence exposure and severe posttraumatic stress in suburban American youth: risk and protective factors. *Journal of Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 539-547.

Hipp, J. R., Tita, G. E., & Greenbaum, R. T. (2009). Drive-bys and Trade-ups: Examining the Directionality of Crime and Residential Instability Relationship. Social Forces, 1777-1809.

Hurt, H., Malmud, E., Brodsky, N. L., & Giannetta, J. (2011). Exposure to violence: Psychological and academic performance correlate in child witnesses. Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent *Medicine, 155(12)*, 1351-1356.

Jenkins, E. J., Wang, E., & Turner, L. (2014). Beyond Community Violence: Loss and Traumatic grief in African American elementary school children. Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma, 27-36.

Jones, M. J. (2007). Exposure to chronic community violence: Resilience in African American children. Journal of Black Psychology, 125-149.

Jong, G. D. (2003). Staying in Place: Black migration, the civil rights movement, and the war on poverty in the rural south. The Journal of African American History, 387-409.

Keegan, J. (1997). What is PTSD? *American Journal of Psychiatry,* 143.

Meyers, S.A., & Miller, C. (2004). Direct, mediated, moderated, and cumulative relations between neighborhood characteristics and adolescent outcomes. *Journal of Youth Adolescence, 39*(153), 121-144.

McMahon, S. D., Coker, C., & Parnes, A. L. (2013). Environmental Stressors, Social Support, and Internalizing Symptoms Among African American Youth. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 615-630.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); (2000). *Monitoring quality: An indicators report.* Washington DC: National Center for Educational Statistics.

Nebbit, V. E., Williams, J. H., Lombe, M., McCoy, H., & Stephens, J. (2014). Descriptive Analysis of Individual and Community Factors among African American Youths in Urban Public Housing. *National Association of Social Workers*, 231-241.

Overstreet, S., & Braun, S. (1999). A preliminary examination of the relationship between exposure to community violence and academic functioning. School of Psychology Quarterly, 14(4), 380-396.

Osofsky, J. D. (1995). The effects of exposure to violence on young children. American Psychologist, 50, 782-788.

Rawles, P. D. (2010). The link between poverty the proliferation of violence and the development of traumatic stress among urban youth in the United States to school violence: A trauma-informed social justice approach to school violence. Forum on Public Policy.

Reviere, R. (2001). Toward An Afrocentric Research Methodology. Journal of Black Studies, 709-728

Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A Multilevel study of collective efficacy. Science, 277, 918-924.

Schwartz, D., & Gorman, A. (2003). Community violence exposure and children's academic functioning. Journal of Educational Psychology, 163-173.

The National Center for Victims of Crime. (2012). *Action Partnership on Interventions for Black Children Exposed to Violence and Victimization.* Retrieved February 22, 2016, from Victims of Crime:http://victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/other-projects/youth-initiative/interventions-for-black-children's-exposure-to-violence/black-children-exposed-to-violence

The Unequal Burden of Crime and Incarceration on America's Poor. (2014, April 28). Retrieved February 22, 2016, from Brookings: www.brookings.edu

Thomas, A. J., Carey, D., Prewitt, K. R., Romero, E., Richards, M., & Velsor-Friedrich, B. (2012). African-American youth and exposure to community violence: Supporting change from the inside. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling Psychology*, 54-68.

Thomas, A. J., Carey, D., Prewitt, K. -R., Romero, E., Richards, M., & Velsor-Friedrich, B. (2012). African-American youth and exposure to community violence:

Supporting change from the inside. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling Psychology*, 54-68.