black-ish: Exploring the Intersectionality Between Race and Socioeconomic Status
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Goals of the Presentation
• Gain a greater understanding of the interplay between race and socioeconomic status
• Critically explore how systemic issues persist for Black Americans, regardless of socioeconomic status
• Reflect on the impact of race-related stress on physical health
• Discuss the counselor’s role in working with clients through these issues

About the Presenters
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“What is intersectionality?”

• The study and critique of how multiple social systems intersect to produce and sustain complex inequalities (Grzanka, Santos, & Moradi, 2017)
• The theory that the overlap of various social identities, as race, gender, sexuality, and class, contributes to the specific type of systemic oppression and discrimination experienced by an individual (from dictionary.com)

“Triple Quandry & Code Switching”

• Black Americans have to integrate three distinct identities (Boykin & Toms, 1985):
  • Mainstream American
  • Minority
  • Black identity
• Code switching—a practice in which individuals alter their behavior to conform to their current environment (Celious & Oyserman, 2001)
Experiences in Housing

- There continue to be high levels of residential segregation between Black and White Americans, although the numbers have declined since the 1970s (Malega & Stallings, 2016)
- Housing discrimination persists through the use of “racial steering” towards non-White communities
- Studies have found that middle-class/affluent Black Americans tend to live in “lower quality” neighborhoods
  - Quality is based on median family income, housing value, educational attainment of residents, etc.
- Choice of housing has implications on health, education, and employment

Experiences in Education

- Limited studies on the experiences of children in middle class families and their experiences in school
  - Of the studies identified, the focus was on the experiences of Black males at suburban schools
- One study that included middle class fathers and sons found that both reported experiences with racial microaggressions in school (Allen, 2012)
  - Assumption of inferiority
  - Assumption of criminality
  - Racial profiling
- In response to these microaggressions, fathers used social capital and navigational capital to mitigate the issues

Assumption of Criminality

Parenting

Race, Class, and Gender

- Strong Black Woman (SBW) vs. Welfare Queen (WQ) stereotypes (Dow, 2015)
  - SBW-emotionally resilient providers who need no assistance
  - WQ-stay-at-home mothers who are content being unemployed and collecting welfare
- Middle- and upper-middle class woman must manage the stereotypes that they are poor, single, and on welfare
- Angry Black Woman (ABW) (Ashley, 2014)
  - Stereotype that Black women are “aggressive, ill-tempered, illogical, overbearing, hostile, and ignorant without provocation”

Gendered Microaggressions
Black Americans & Physical Health

- Studies have found that a higher socioeconomic status typically leads to better cardiovascular disease outcomes among White Americans, but not in Black Americans.
- Waldstein et al., 2016 found that Black Americans not living in poverty had a higher body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference than Black Americans living in poverty.

Black Americans and Mental Health

- In Black men, health-promoting behaviors have been found to positively correlate with mental health, but race-related stress has been found to have a negative correlation with mental health (Sellers, Bonham, Neighbors, & Amell, 2009).
- Black women may exhibit more internalizing symptoms (e.g., anxiety and depression) in response to stressful situations than Black men.

Implications for Counselors

- Counselors should explore identity issues in the context of counseling and approach these topics with acceptance and openness.
- Integrative care is important—working with medical providers may increase the likelihood of Black Americans seeking mental health care.
- Collaborations with Black civic, social, and religious organizations to provide additional support, especially in communities with fewer numbers of Black Americans.
- School counselors should create targeted interventions to ensure Black students have equitable access to a high-quality education.

Implications for Counselor Educators

- Attend to the Learning Environment
  - Establish safety in midst of discomfort
  - Strive for classroom to reflect future client populations
- Culture and diversity concepts should be infused throughout curriculum
- Offer courses in specialized populations
  - Immigrant/refugee, sexual identity, transgender, etc.
- Instructors should emphasize their own attributes
  - Biculturalism, flexible role, and link class interactions

Questions
References