INTRODUCTION

This issue of CYF News features articles on the role of spirituality and religion as a source of resilience and strength in African American children, youth, and families.

African American children and youth as a group are often thought to be at risk for negative outcomes for a variety of reasons. They are more likely to live in single-parent households, more likely to be raised in poverty and in urban communities with exposure to violence. It has also been argued that due to racism and discrimination in this country, African American children and youth are at risk solely on their racial status (American Psychological Association (APA), 2008). Connection to spirituality and religion has served as a source of strength in the African American community. Following African values and traditions, spirituality is related to mind-body duality. Emphasis on the vital connection between spiritual, mental, and physical health is connected to harmony and communalism in relationships. African American spirituality has been associated with resilience and positive youth outcomes. Religiosity, the observance of religious beliefs and traditions (Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2008), has also been linked to civic engagement, positive self-concept, along with moral values.

African Americans are deeply spiritual and religious; about 80% of African Americans in survey research indicate that religion and spirituality are very important to them (Chatters, Taylor, & Lincoln, 1999). African American adolescents also report the importance of religion and attending religious services (Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2008). Traditionally, African Americans have utilized the church for spiritual and material resources. However, the role of
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the church has been declining in the African American community. And although many still seek clergy or ministry for psychological help, clergy are often not trained to adequately assess or provide services for their mental health concerns. Psychologists can play a critical role in helping to promote resilience and strength in African American children and youth by incorporating religion and spirituality in their work, and by fostering connections with religious institutions.

References:

PROMOTING RESILIENCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH THROUGH SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

Research on ethnic minority youth has been primarily focused on understanding risk factors and developing interventions to reduce risk. Recently, attention on African American youth has begun to address strengths and resilience (APA, 2009). Resilience is defined as a dynamic process (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Spencer, Harpalani, Cassidy, Jacobs, Donde & Goss, 2006) encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity (Luthar, et al., 2000). This process not only incorporates individual level processes, but entails contextual factors including family, community and environment that contribute to the daily living experience of youth. Spirituality, religion, and faith development are critical individual protective factors for African American children and youth. One important contextual influence of African American youth is the church. The church, spirituality, and religion can promote mental health in a number of ways, including building self-esteem and self-concept based on religious and cultural identity, building confidence through public speaking and participating in activities, teaching etiquette and manners and preparing children for social activities, etc. This paper summarizes the research on the role of spirituality, religion, and religiosity of African American children and youth.

Spirituality in families

Spiritual development of children

The family is one context in which children have their first opportunities to observe and practice values that are inherent in religion and spirituality (Mattis & Jagers, 2001). Spiritual beliefs and knowledge can be passed down from one generation to the next (Milner, 2006). “An awareness of the spirit is instilled from a very early age and reinforced through daily practices” (Wheeler, Ampadu, and Wangari, 2002, p.77). It should be noted that spiritual development does not operate in tandem with the Piagetian view of child development. Children as young as eight years of age have been found capable of adequately interpreting abstract material in Biblical teachings (Humphrey, Hughes, & Holmes, 2008). In an examination of the socialization practices of African American children, Haight (1998) found that Sunday school teachers reported that children were able to learn how to apply biblical lessons to their daily lives, and found the lessons relevant to the development of effective strategies for coping with stressors. Through counterstories, Norton (2008) found that Black and Latina/o children were able to articulate how spiritualities and spiritual practices serve as important factors in their lives. Such research suggests that religion and spirituality can be used to foster resilience competencies across several developmental areas. Wheeler et al. (2002) argue for the incorporation of an African-centered point of view with Western theories and placing spirituality at the center of human development so that researchers can
gain a better appreciation for its influence on cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Religion and positive youth outcomes

"Spirituality in African American culture is historically grounded in the quest for liberation from injustice" (Frame & Williams, 1996, p.17). It can be argued that through this quest an individual becomes equipped with the (resiliency) tools necessary to overcome adversity. Consequently, religion and spirituality has been associated with several positive youth outcomes. Spirituality and religion has been linked to positive health outcomes such as willingness to seek mental health services (Constantine, Lewis, Conner, & Sanchez, 2000); a model for healthy behavior (King, Burgess, Akinyela, Count-Spriggs, & Parker, 2005); a potential protective factor for suicidal behavior (Washington & Teague, 2005); and decreased prevalence of loneliness and depression (Gonnerman, Lutz, Yehieli, & Mesinger, 2008). Spiritual beliefs and religious behavior have also been found to be positively related to academic performance (Walker & Dixon, 2002), and in the case of Black boys, was a contributing factor to their academic achievement (Byfield, 2008). Ball, Armistead, and Austin (2003) found a relationship between religiosity, positive self-esteem, and psychological functioning in a sample of African American girls. Higher levels of religiosity are also associated with better sexual health and behavioral choices in girls (Ball, Armistead, & Austin, 2003; McCree, Wingood, DiClemente, Davies, & Harrington, 2003). Jeynes (2003) found that African American youth who lived in intact families with religious involvement had higher academic achievement.

Spirituality is also a protective factor against the psychological effects of oppression. For example, Utsey, Bolden, Williams, Lee, Lanier, & Newsome (2007) found spiritual well-being to be a mediator of culture-specific coping on quality of life issues for African Americans. And in the case of African American youth Biblical teachings and lessons can be relevant to the development of effective strategies for coping with stressors (Haight, 1998).

Racial and spiritual socialization

Research in the area of racial socialization continues to grow; however the research is somewhat silent when it comes to the process of how individuals develop spiritually and navigate within a spiritual and religious context. Racial socialization messages from African American parents frequently emphasize the importance of religion, the use of prayer and scriptures/sayings, and a higher power as a form of coping (Stevenson, Cameron, Herrera-Taylor, & Davis, 2002; Thomas & Speight, 1999). Mattis and Jagers (2001) argue that religious and spiritual socialization operates in a broad relational context. Therefore it is important to understand how religion and spirituality intersect with race and culture in all ecological domains. The church has been found to act as a protective factor for African American children and youth. On the macrosystem level, African American youth are operating in a society that can be oppressive and one in which they may not feel like they belong. The Black church can provide a “primary context for an affirming interpersonal environment, and it is in this context that the ability to belong to other groups or subgroups is anchored, even if these other groups are hostile at times” (Thompson & McRae, 2001, p.49).

Conclusion

Spirituality, religion, and church participation can serve as a source of resilience and strength for African American children. Psychologists should assess and incorporate into services spirituality and religious practices in their work with African American children, youth, and families. More research is needed on the nature of spiritual and faith development of African American youth, and the role that both parental/family and church socialization play in these processes. While recent research has focused on the power of spirituality and religion in healthy psychological and physical outcomes for adults, less attention has been given to the role of spirituality in positive youth outcomes. Given the important cultural and historical significance of spirituality in African Americans, more attention is warranted in this area.
PROMOTING RESILIENCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN AND YOUTH THROUGH SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

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COMMUNITY APPROACHES TO FOSTERING RESILIENCE: THE NCAASI INITIATIVE

Institutions deeply shape the development of children and youth. While schools play a major role in this development, they cannot be solely responsible for the success of society’s children. With awareness towards the challenges in America’s public school system, several churches have built meaningful partnerships with schools in order to better educate and support the development of young people, particularly children of color. The National Church Adopt-A-School Initiative (NCAASI) is one hopeful example of churches being active and involved in educational initiatives in their communities.

NCAASI is an outreach program through the Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship Church in Dallas, TX. Using the model of Project Turn Around (Project Turn Around Facts, n.d.), NCAASI builds the capacity of churches and faith-based organizations in order to provide holistic, long-term solutions that positively affect neighborhoods and communities. Within the last several years, the program has expanded by training, equipping, and preparing other churches, pastors and community leaders to do school outreach, mentoring, tutoring, and other family support services within the community.

Bill Collins, the program’s vice president, attributes the development of the church-initiated program to startling statistics regarding public schools in urban America. According to these statistics, approximately 5 out of 10 American teenagers either do not graduate from high school at all or within four years. In addition, those who do not graduate high school on time read well below their grade level; many of them read at 7th and 8th grade levels.

Children of color make up the majority of students in the urban schools of the Dallas and Houston area. For instance, in the Dallas independent school district, the racial make-up of the population is about 60% Latino and 30% African American. They face economic, racial, and social inequalities which adversely impact their education. Teachers must now address an array of societal challenges, acting as teachers and social workers by helping children first deal with the behavioral and emotional problems they bring to school before they are prepared to learn.

In this context, NCAASI is extremely crucial to the community. NCAASI provides needed social services, which assist teachers in properly fulfilling their roles as educators. According to Mr. Collins, "Since there is a church in every community in America and since there are schools in every community in America we think that church and school partnerships are natural match-ups. If you think about it, the church has the largest volunteer force in America. The people that sit in pews week in and week out represent a volunteer opportunity that can be utilized by the church and local public schools to provide mentoring, tutoring, and a multiplicity of support services.”

Beyond helping teachers, NCAASI’s purpose is to meet the spiritual, psychological, and emotional needs of children. Mr. Collins explained that the church provides a moral framework for society and possesses a critical mass of volunteers to meet community needs. Reading to children once or twice a week or providing backpacks full of food so that they can eat over the weekend are just a few examples of the multitude of services a church can provide. These actions aim to facilitate the learning process of students. In addition, the church’s role in addressing the emotional and psychological needs stemming from social problems is to better prepare children to learn, grow, and achieve empowerment.

NCAASI attempts to meet the needs of all children, but particularly focuses on the needs of African American children. According to Mr. Collins, 7 out of
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10 African American children are born into single-parent homes, leaving a high percentage of African American children in Dallas growing up in fatherless homes. The majority of these single-parent households live below the poverty line. NCAASI’s motto is "rebuilding communities from the inside out," and Mr. Collins suggests this starts with the rebuilding of families.

NCAASI’s program includes the following major goals:

1. Lowering the truancy rate and keeping children in school,
2. Lowering the teen pregnancy rate,
3. Minimizing gang activity in the work and school environment,
4. Providing families with food and better nutrition through the food pantry,
5. Providing parenting classes, and
6. Providing adult literacy classes (both in English and English as a second language).

Mr. Collins sees psychologists as essential to addressing and mitigating the problems within these communities, “People have been damaged and come with all sort of problems and feel that they are trapped in a ditch, we not only need to help people get out of the ditch but also need to give them access to educational, financial, and social opportunities and resources that will help in the long-run.” In this respect, psychologists offer a wide variety of expertise and services that can help people overcome the social, emotional, and psychological issues they may be experiencing during difficult times.

The vision for the National Church Adopt-A-School Initiative is to have every church in America adopt at least one public school. According to Mr. Collins, “the ratio of churches to schools is 12 to 1, so churches literally could adopt a school 12 times if every church were to get involved.” In this way, Collins and NCAASI envision churches and schools working together to build healthier families and equip children for success.

Psychologists can be vitally involved in programs such as NCAASI. First, psychologists can work with churches and schools in best addressing mental health needs of children, youth, and families, whether this is in providing clinical services, psychoeducational programs, or testing and assessment. Second, psychologists can conduct research on the effectiveness of such programs on youth outcomes. Such research can help with program evaluation and design. Research can also inform policymakers on the importance of such community oriented programs to increase further research and service delivery. As the APA Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents states, psychologists can help to develop policies that strengthen family, school, and community (i.e., churches) partnerships that promote resilience, support prevention programs, and reward schools (APA, 2008). Finally, psychologists can be effective in helping to design and implement culturally sensitive services that effectively incorporate spirituality (Fukuyama & Sevig, 1999).

References:


Gihane E. Jérémie-Brink is a Master’s student in Community Counseling at Loyola University Chicago and is researching racial socialization and the “Obama Effect” on academic achievement and civic engagement of African American youth.

Bill Collins is Vice-President of the National Church Adopt-A-School Initiative. Since its inception, NCAASI has conducted numerous training conferences with more than 700 pastors, church and community leaders participating.
The cultural significance of a connection with a supreme being permeates the lives of many African Americans. Data specific to the African American adolescent population suggests 56% of African American high school seniors believe religion is important (Bachman, Johnston, & O’Malley, 2005); while a study of eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade African Americans found that 78% believe religion to be important and 72% pray, weekly (Smith, Faris, Denton, & Regnerus, 2003). Overall, the self-reported rates of religious activities and beliefs are higher for African American adolescents than for their non–African American peers (Bachman, Johnston, & O’Malley, 2005; Smith, Faris, Denton, & Regnerus, 2003). Data on African American adolescents’ religiosity and spirituality may also prove significant given that higher religious involvement is inversely related to drug and alcohol use, early sexual activity, and stress; and positively correlated with prosocial behavior, overall well-being, resiliency, and self regulatory and coping skills (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Bridges & Moore, 2002; Cook, 2000; Sink & Richmond, 2004).

Given these relationships and the importance of religion and spirituality in the lives of many African American adolescents, implications for practice emerge. To this end, this article opens with a discussion of spirituality as a developmental construct, continues with a consideration of potentially salient cultural factors, and closes with implications for mental health professionals working with African American adolescents and their families.

**Spirituality as a Developmental Construct**

Much work of mental health professionals is grounded in developmental frameworks. While developmental trajectories can prove controversial and may not be relevant for the understanding of a particular individual, some general knowledge of developmental theories of spirituality and religiosity is warranted.

“Spiritual development” and “faith development” are often used interchangeably although the terms are not synonymous. While spirituality involves a search for meaning and purpose through an inner drive for a relationship with God or a supreme being, faith is the process by which that work is done (Love, 2001). Spiritual development can be conceptualized as a process of faith development.

Fowler (1981), a foundational theorist in the study of faith development, offered a six stage model. During Fowler’s Intuitive-Projective Faith stage, children become aware of faith taboos, (e.g. what parents and guardians do and do not believe or do). Older children focus on religious symbols and systems in the Mythic-Literal Faith stage. During the Synthetic-Conventional Faith stage, adolescents engage in non-critical evaluation of faith. This is followed by Individuative-Reflective Faith, a stage which challenges older adolescents and adults to deconstruct religious myths and critically evaluate spiritual paths. The Conjunctive Faith stage is reached by adults who are able to appreciate faith systems without being bound by them; and Universalizing Faith, Fowler’s final stage, is characterized by transcendent moral and religious actions. For the purposes of this article, the two adolescent stages warrant further discussion.

In Fowler’s Synthetic-Conventional Faith stage adolescents synthesize their values and behaviors non-critically. Generally adolescents in this stage align themselves with a particular faith perspective and its rituals and characterize those with different perspectives as “other”. At the same time, adolescents’ movement toward relationships beyond family is in many ways repeated in their desire to be in relationship with God or a supreme being. In late adolescence, individuals may move to the Individuative-Reflective stage during which they differentiate their views from those of others; they
evaluate religious rituals, symbols, and beliefs in an effort to identify a personally satisfying, distinct, spiritual identity. Consideration of other models of faith development can be found elsewhere (see Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Parks, 2000). Of course, issues of development must be examined within a framework which is responsive to complex, environmental interactions. For spiritual and religious African American adolescents, the realities of African American culture must be acknowledged. The next section briefly discusses four critical cultural factors which may provide contextual significance.

**Cultural Factors**

**Hope and liberation.** African American spirituality is often contextualized by an awareness of social conditions marked by oppression and discrimination (Wheeler, Ampadu, & Wangari, 2002). Historically, spirituality offered a sense of hope, liberation, and comfort for an enslaved people. More recently African Americans have endured other hardships including institutional racism and social and educational inequities (e.g., overrepresentation in special education, disparities in academic achievement). Although today’s adolescents are far removed from the reality of slavery and may not have direct experience with current cultural hardships, cultural memory and a cultural collectivist value orientation influence spirituality and imbue youngsters with enduring themes of hope and freedom.

**Survival and coping resources**

Along with the sense of spirituality as a vehicle for hope, spirituality has traditionally been a coping resource for African Americans (Spencer, Fegley, & Harpalani, 2003). Religious teachings urge African Americans to hold fast to their spirituality to make a “way out of no way,” and to “keep on keeping on.” These statements and others frequently uttered by religious African Americans suggest a reliance on spirituality to provide comfort, supply needs, raise self-efficacy, bolster self-esteem, and guide decision making processes (Newlin, Knafl, & Melkus, 2002). Indeed, African American culture links spirituality to one’s very ability to survive.

Work with African American adolescents for whom faith and race are salient provides mental health professionals opportunities to facilitate and deepen their clients’ understandings of self. More specifically, careful consideration of the core principles of faith development theory in the context of key African American cultural factors may lead to innovative culturally competent counseling interventions and approaches. While work in this area is in its infancy, some important implications for practice follow.

**Implications for practice**

In order to enhance spiritual and religious cultural competence related to the needs of African American adolescents, it is important for mental health professionals to consider:

- Increasing awareness of their own spiritual and religious development through readings, reflection, and experiences;
- Working to understand African American faith history, possible stressors (e.g., social isolation, prejudice, discrimination, oppression), and implications for counseling through course work and clinical consultation;
- Exploring the influence, resources and supports, and protective elements of cultural factors and concepts such as the Black church, community, hope, and survival on the spiritual development of African American adolescents;
- Understanding the specific ways spirituality and religion may affect African American adolescents’ academic, career and personal/social development and decision making through consultation and collaboration with school-based personnel;
- And, assuming multiple helping roles including that of advisor, consultant, and advocate based on the needs of African American adolescents (Atkinson, Thompson, & Grant, 1993).

Appropriate counseling of African American adolescents requires the consideration of the implications and issues discussed. Work with religious and spiritual African American adolescents demands culturally relevant application of theories and approaches which acknowledge and respect the significance of spirituality and religion in the lives of young people.
AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS’ RELIGIOSITY AND SPIRITUALITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

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Cook, K. (2000). You have to have somebody watching your back, and if that’s God, then that’s mighty big: The church’s role in the resilience of inner city youth. Adolescence, 35, 717-730.


THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE MODERN DAY FATHER

Efua Andoh—Manager, CYFO Programs

The modern day father comes in various forms. Today’s father is no longer always the traditional married breadwinner and disciplinarian in the family. He can be single or married; externally employed or stay-at home; gay or straight; an adoptive or step-parent; and a more than capable caregiver to children facing physical or psychological challenges. Psychological research across families from all ethnic backgrounds suggests that fathers’ affection and increased family involvement help promote children’s social and emotional development.

What has brought this change in roles for men as fathers?

Economic Trends

Two to three centuries ago, fathers’ roles were primarily to serve as breadwinners and the conveyers of moral values and religious education to their children. However, with the advent of industrialization and urbanization and as factories emerged as major sources of employment, fathers became distanced from the household and their families. Growing rates of abandonment and illegitimacy led to the development of welfare programs to assist widowed or unmarried women in supporting their children.

In more recent decades, the changing economic role of women has greatly impacted the role of fathers. Between 1948 and 2001, the percentage of working-age women employed or looking for work nearly doubled—from less than 33 percent to more than 60 percent. Their increase in financial power made paternal financial support less necessary for some families. In tandem with the growing autonomy of women, related trends such as declining fertility, increasing rates of divorce and remarriage, and childbirth outside of marriage have resulted in a transition from traditional to multiple undefined roles for many fathers. Today’s fathers have started to take on roles vastly different from fathers of previous generations.

Changes in caregiving roles

Historically, research on child development has focused more on the sensitivity of mothers to fulfilling their children’s needs. However, in the last 20 to 30 years, research has increasingly focused on fathers. This is due to the growing role modern day fathers play in caregiving.
A study conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) found that fathers tended to be more involved in caregiving when:

- they worked fewer hours than other fathers;
- they had positive psychological adjustment characteristics (e.g., high self esteem, lower levels of depression and hostility, and coping well with the major tasks of adulthood);
- mothers worked more hours than other mothers;
- mothers reported greater marital intimacy; and
- when children were boys.

Other research on the role of fathers suggests that the influence of father love on children’s development is as great as the influence of a mother’s love. Fatherly love helps children develop a sense of their place in the world, which helps their social, emotional and cognitive development and functioning. Moreover, children who receive more love from their fathers are less likely to struggle with behavioral or substance abuse problems.

**Non-residential fathers**

Research on the impact of absent and non-residential fathers on the lives of children illuminates how crucial their role is. Theoretical models of fatherhood have outlined four major tasks involved in “responsible fatherhood”:

- providing financial support;
- providing care;
- providing emotional support; and
- establishing legal paternity.

As of 2006, 38% of all births were to unmarried women - a more than six-fold increase since 1960. Non-marital birth rates are highest for Hispanic women followed by African American women. Rates for non-Hispanic white and Asian or Pacific Islander women are much lower. However, crude stereotypes about minority fathers in particular overlook the complex economic, psychological, cultural, and relational issues that affect their fathering behaviors. There are cultural variations in fathers’ caregiving practices that counter several negative stereotypes.

- Low-income, minority, and non-residential fathers who have jobs and education are more likely to be involved with their children.
- Research has found that African American men are more likely to physically care for, feed and prepare meals for their infants than either white or Hispanic fathers.
- Emerging research on cultural influences on parenting beliefs in the African American community show family and community pressure on unmarried non-residential fathers to provide financial and child-care support at marginally higher rates than their white and Hispanic counterparts.
- Some ethnographic data has emerged that significant amounts of paternal financial support (both cash and in-kind aid) may go unreported in formal systems.
- Many unemployed fathers may have access to their children restricted by the child’s mother/family members or may even remove themselves due to their own shame resulting from inability to provide financial support.
- Even incarcerated fathers can play a role in the rearing of their children by regularly communicating with and making parenting decisions with their spouses and other family members.
- Even in cases where biological fathers are completely absent, maternal partners, step-fathers, grandparents, or other relatives may serve as father figures.

The status of the father’s relationship with his child’s mother serves an important influence on father involvement. Non-residential fathers are at high risk for becoming disconnected from their children over time. Lacking a minimally close relationship, as is the case when couples become acquaintances, is likely to result in lower levels of paternal engagement of children.

**Divorced and step-fathers**

In cases of divorce, it is often difficult if not impossible for fathers to maintain the same types of parenting roles with their biological children. Indeed,
children of divorce—and later, remarriage—are twice as likely to academically, behaviorally and socially struggle as children of first-marriage families. Most divorced fathers do not receive full custody of their children. As a result, maintaining their roles as parents can be difficult due to the reduction in time spent with their children. Fortunately, visitation of fathers post-divorce has increased over the past two decades. However, it is not the frequency of contact between father and child, but rather the quality of the visits that contributes to the child’s well-being. Research has found that the key factors that contribute to healthy adjustment for children post-divorce include:

- appropriate parenting (i.e., providing emotional support, monitoring children’s activities, disciplining authoritatively, and maintaining age-appropriate expectations),
- enough access to the non-residential parent,
- suitable custody arrangements, (joint legal custody often results in shared decision making, more father-child visits, regular child support payments, and more satisfied and better adjusted children)
- low parental conflict, and
- parents who are psychologically healthy.

It is estimated that one in three Americans is part of a step-family. Step-fathers can encounter many difficulties in their new parenting roles. They must strike a balance between maintaining healthy relationships with their ex-spouses in order to benefit their biological children without alienating their new partners. In addition, it may take years before they are accepted as "real" parents by their step-children. Research has found that the type of step-family with best outcomes for children consists of parents who form a solid, committed partnership so they can not only nurture their marriage, but also effectively raise their children. These parents don’t follow unrealistic expectations of what the family should be like.

**Gay fathers**

As more and more gay men are able to live their lives openly and to establish long-term, supportive and loving relationships, like heterosexual couples, they are beginning to start families. With the growing numbers of gay fathers in our society, research suggests that they are likely to divide the work involved in child care relatively evenly and that they are happy with their couple relationships. In fact, research findings suggest that gay parents are as likely as heterosexual parents to provide supportive home environments for children.

Research has found no evidence to support the following concerns with regard to foster care and adoption by gay fathers:

- the belief that gay men are mentally ill, and
- the belief that gay men’s relationships with sexual partners leave little time for ongoing parent-child interactions

Extensive research over the last three decades shows that homosexuality is not a mental disorder; there is no reliable evidence that it impairs psychological functioning, although the discrimination and prejudice gay men face can often cause acute distress. Likewise, beliefs that gay men are not fit parents have no empirical foundation.

**Stay-at-home fathers**

While still a relatively small proportion of all fathers (an estimated 159,000 out of the nation’s 64 million), the emergence of the “stay-at-home” father demonstrates a new type of patriarch who is primarily charged with caregiving in the context of his family. In fact, the number of stay-at-home dads is growing at a rapid pace, having increased by 50% between 2003 and 2006. For many fathers, the decision to stay home with their children stems from:

- their spouse’s strong earning potential;
- their own desire to serve as the primary caregiver; and
- a shared reluctance along with their spouse to allow someone else to raise their children.

Stay-at-home fathers are routinely confronted with stigma due to their flouting of the social norms surrounding masculine behavior. Most of these fathers do not feel bound to these norms and are comfortable being affectionate and nurturing with
their children, characteristics which are traditionally thought of as feminine. In addition, despite their increasing numbers their relative rarity can isolate them from other full-time parents. Some fathers report being shunned from playgroups and eyed suspiciously at the playground by stay-at-home mothers.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the modern day father can contribute to his children's health and well-being by maintaining a healthy relationship with the other parent even in cases of divorce; providing emotional and financial support, appropriate monitoring and discipline; and most importantly by remaining a permanent and loving presence in their lives.

**Sources:**


**Resources:**

APA Help Center


APA Children’s Books

Do You Sing Twinkle? A Story about Remarriage and New Family - [www.maginationpress.com/4418033.html](http://www.maginationpress.com/4418033.html)

I Don't Want To Talk About It: A Story about Divorce for Young Children - [www.maginationpress.com/4416649.html](http://www.maginationpress.com/4416649.html)

My Mom and Dad Don’t Live Together Anymore: A Drawing Book for Children of Separated or Divorced Parents - [www.maginationpress.com/4418358.html](http://www.maginationpress.com/4418358.html)
On May 7, 2009, in honor of National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day, Goldie Hawn was the keynote speaker at a Congressional briefing on investment in the educational future of children with mental health needs, a population at high risk of school dropout and poor academic performance. The briefing was jointly hosted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Mental Health America, the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, and the National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health (National Federation).

Howard Muscott, director of the New Hampshire Center for Effective Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and Kathryn Power, director of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), presented positive outcomes data from CMHS grant sites across the country. The data shows that effective children’s mental health programs promote positive youth development, recovery, and increased resiliency, allowing children with mental health needs to thrive in their communities.

The briefing also highlighted the need for congressional support for Positive Behavior for Effective Schools Act and the Mental Health in Schools Act, legislation that recognizes the partnership that must be established between schools and communities to ensure that children with mental health needs are identified and linked with effective services and supports.

Ms. Hawn is a child advocate and the founder of The Hawn Foundation, which developed a program for grades K-7 that improves children’s emotional and cognitive skills to help them understand and manage their own emotions, moods and behaviors; reduce stress and anxiety; sharpen concentration; increase empathy; and improve their performance in school.

"Children represent a fraction of our population, but 100% of our future. One in ten suffers from serious mental health disorders, and most aren’t getting the help they need. We need to address this crisis before it’s too late," Hawn said.

Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), and Tim Murphy (D-CA) also attended the briefing and voiced their support for legislation that will seek better outcomes for children’s mental health and well being.

The Public Interest Government Relations Office (PI-GRO) (www.apa.org/ppo/pi) engages in federal advocacy on behalf of APA Public Interest Directorate priorities. Since the beginning of the year, PI-GRO has worked at the federal level to address many CYF issues in the areas of national Health Care Reform, juvenile justice, elementary and secondary education, children’s mental health, child abuse, and many others. What follows are two highlights of these 2009 activities.

**APA Urges Caution in FDA Consideration of Psychotropic Drugs for Minors**

In a June 9 public statement, APA urged an FDA panel to proceed with caution in considering applications by Astra Zeneca, Eli Lilly, and Pfizer to approve the atypical antipsychotic medications Seroquel, Zyprexa, and Geodon, respectively, for the treatment of childhood mental disorders. APA’s statement,
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

delivered by Ronald Brown, PhD, outlined concerns related to the agency’s possible approval of three additional atypical antipsychotics to treat bipolar disorders and schizophrenia in children and adolescents. PI-GRO coordinated the participation of Dr. Brown, who chaired APA’s Working Group on Psychotropic Medications, and the Working Group’s report provided the background for the statement. Dr. Brown presented information on the need for more long-term effectiveness and safety data on the use of psychotropic medications in children, both generally and specifically with regard to the three drugs in question—Geodon, Seroquel, and Zyprexa. The panel considering the applications, the Psychopharmacologic Drug Advisory Committee, ultimately voted to approve the three applications. While the FDA is not obligated to follow this decision, it frequently follows the recommendations of its advisory committees.

House Passes Postpartum Depression Bill

On March 30, the House overwhelmingly passed the Melanie Blocker Stokes MOTHERS Act (H.R. 20), which would increase research, education, and services for those suffering from postpartum depression and psychosis. H.R. 20 is now ready to be considered by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. As part of PI-GRO’s leading advocacy efforts on this critical legislation, our office organized a sign-on letter of almost 20 organizations, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Psychiatric Association, and the National Organization of Women, urging for passage of this important legislation that would impact countless families.

Get Involved

To receive regular updates on PI-GRO activities, please sign-up for the APA Public Interest Directorate e-Newsletter, In the Public Interest (www.apa.org/pi). We also encourage you to sign up for the APA’s Public Policy Action Network (www.apa.org/ppo/ppan/aboutppan.html) to receive legislative updates and participate in coordinated outreach to your federal legislators.

ANNETTE URSO RICKEL DISSERTATION AWARD

The American Psychological Foundation (APF) provides financial support for innovative research and programs that enhance the power of psychology to elevate the human condition and advance human potential both now and in generations to come.

The APF Annette Urso Rickel Foundation Dissertation Award for Public Policy supports dissertation research on public policy, which has the potential to improve services for children and families facing psychosocial issues. Examples of eligible topics include but are not limited to issues with at-risk populations, prevention of child abuse, services for youth in the criminal justice system, effectiveness of school programs for children with psychological issues, using psychology in public policy to improve math and science education, and promoting healthy parenting.

Amount:

The scholarship amount is $1,000.

Goals of the Program:

- Encourage talented psychology students to focus on public policy issues
- Encourage work that has the potential to improve children and family services

Eligibility:

Applicants must be graduate students in psychology enrolled full time and in good standing in a graduate program in psychology at a regionally-accredited university or college located in the United States or Canada. Applicants must also have:

- Approval of dissertation proposal by the dissertation committee prior to application;
- No record of having received either an APA or APF dissertation award

APF encourages applications from individuals who represent diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation.

To Apply:

Submit a dissertation summary, including a brief description of the research design and budget (three-page limit, font size no smaller than 11); letter of recommendation from a faculty advisor; and a current CV online at http://forms.apa.org/apf/grants/ by November 1, 2009. For more information, visit www.apa.org/apf.

Questions about this program should be directed to Kim Rowsome, Program Officer, at krowsome@apa.org.
**CYF 2010 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

The Committee on Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) is anticipating two vacancies in 2010. CYF welcomes nominations from individuals interested in linking research and policy for children and families within APA and the profession. The Committee is particularly interested in candidates with substantial expertise and demonstrated experience in applying psychological knowledge to the well being and optimal development of children, youth, and families; and in issues advancing psychology as a science and profession in the area of promoting health and human welfare. Candidates are sought who have particular expertise in contemporary issues facing children, youth, and families in the context of their socioemotional and cognitive development and mental health. Candidates who have particular interest in culturally and linguistically diverse, understudied, underserved and diverse populations are particularly encouraged to apply.

Members are expected to participate in a targeted project directly related to CYF’s work and mission and to APA as a whole. The project is to be completed during their three-year term on the Committee. Some examples of projects previously implemented by the Committee include immigrant children, youth, and families; school drop-out prevention; sexuality education; social practices that induce violence; psychological implications of disasters; early mental health interventions; violence against children in the family and community; training psychologists to work in the public sector; cultural competence; day care; testing; the mental health needs of children and adolescents in the juvenile justice system; bullying and violence in videogames and interactive media. Areas of interest to the Committee at present include rural children’s mental health, mental health disparities, and cultural diversity.

Potential candidates are encouraged to visit the CYF website (www.apa.org/pi/cyf/ccyf) to learn more about CYF’s mission and prior initiatives.

The Committee places a priority on maintaining representation within the Committee's membership that reflects the diversity of psychology and society (e.g., ethnicity, culture, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, geographic location, and those who are employed less than full time). The candidates selected to serve on the Committee will serve for three years and will be required to attend two Committee meetings a year in Washington, DC, with expenses reimbursed by APA, and to participate in conference calls. The successful candidate is expected to attend, if possible, the informal CYF meeting held during the APA convention at the member's own expense. In addition, members are expected to work on projects and Committee business between meetings.

Each candidate is asked to submit:

1. a letter indicating his/her willingness to serve;
2. a brief statement describing the applicants expertise and interest in one or two contemporary issues facing children, adolescents and families that they would bring to the Committee; and
3. a current curriculum vita.

Nomination material including a letter from the candidate indicating a willingness to serve, issues statement, and a current CV must be received by **Monday, August 24, 2009.** Nomination material received after August 24 will be held for consideration the following year. Although it is not required, candidates are encouraged to have letters (not more than three) supporting their nomination submitted to the Committee. Material may be sent to CYF Nominations, c/o Amani Chatman, CYF Administrative Coordinator, Public Interest Directorate, American Psychological Association, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC, 20002-4242, by email achatman@apa.org or fax (202) 336-6040.
The Committee on Children, Youth, and Families met in March 2009. The various Committee projects that are under way this year include:

- Resilience and spirituality in African American youth (the theme of this issue of CYF News);
- Homelessness and youth (part of the 2009 Presidential Task Force on Homelessness);
- Health care reform priorities;
- Immigrant children, youth, and families; and
- Barriers to implementation of evidence-based practices for children and youth.

The Committee anticipates two vacancies in 2010. If you are interested in applying, please see pg. 15.

The APA Task Force on the Psychosocial Effects of War on Children and Families Who are Refugees from Armed Conflicts Residing in the United States, is charged with:

- Reviewing the research on the psychosocial effects of war on children and families;
- Identifying areas of needed culturally and developmentally appropriate research; and
- Developing recommendations for culturally and developmentally appropriate practice and programs

The Task Force met in November 2008 and drafted a heavily annotated outline for a scholarly review document, a 2009 Convention symposium proposal, a set of recommendations for a public policy briefing sheet, and a list of experts to serve as external reviewers. The task force completed its first draft of the report in May 2009, which is currently under external review. The task force anticipates release of its products in 2010. For more detail on the Convention symposium, please see pg. 17.

Please visit our website: WWW.APA.ORG/PI/CYF to see other products by past APA task forces and working groups.

Products released in 2008 include:

Resilience in African American Children and Adolescents: A Vision for Optimal Development

In this report, the Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents encourages a paradigm shift from an emphasis on risk to exploring the complex interactive process of resilience in African American youth. The task force offers a bold new vision of thriving optimal development in African American youth. The report also offers recommendations to the field on how to transform its approach to African American children and youth in the areas of research, practice, education, and policy.

It is available online at www.apa.org/pi/cyf/resilience.html.

Disseminating Evidence-Based Practice for Children and Adolescents: A Systems Approach to Enhancing Care

This report addresses the unique challenges for practitioners in developing, strengthening, and disseminating evidence-based practice (EBP) for children, adolescents, and their families. The report covers:

- a brief history and the key assumptions of EBP
- developmental considerations for children and adolescents
- the critical issues affecting the dissemination and implementation of EBP
- an approach to practice that consists of observation, inquiry, and evaluation
- recommendations for research, education, practice, and policy

The report is available online at www.apa.org/pi/cyf/evidence.html.

Presidential Task Force on PTSD and Trauma in Children and Adolescents

This presidential task force identified the key contributions of psychological science’s understanding of PTSD and trauma in youth, to identify “what we know” and “what we need to know” regarding the development and treatment of PTSD in youth following trauma. It also made recommendations that will help to guide future research, practice, and public policy on this issue.

The task force products include:

- Children and Trauma: Update for Mental Health Professionals
- Children and Trauma: Tips for Mental Health Professionals
- Children and Trauma: PowerPoint presentation
- Policy Briefing Sheet: Trauma and PTSD in Children and Adolescents

The products of the Presidential Task Force on PTSD and Trauma in Children and Adolescents are available online at: www.apa.org/pi/cyf/child-trauma.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, August 6,</td>
<td><strong>Roundtable Discussion</strong></td>
<td>Metro Toronto Convention Centre, North Bldg, Room 206F</td>
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<td>2:00–2:50 p.m.</td>
<td>Facilitating Literacy and Learning in Young Children (1237)</td>
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<td>Chair: John W. Hagen, PhD, University of Michigan - Ann Arbor</td>
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<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Faith Lamb-Parker, PhD, Columbia University;</td>
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<td>Fred Morrison, PhD, University of Michigan - Ann Arbor;</td>
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<td>Steve Pacynski, MA, Society for Research in Child Development</td>
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<td><strong>Location:</strong> Metro Toronto</td>
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<td>Convention Centre, North Bldg, Room 206F</td>
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<td>Friday, August 7,</td>
<td><strong>Symposium</strong></td>
<td>Metro Toronto Convention Centre, South Bldg, Room 810</td>
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<td>10:00–11:50 a.m.</td>
<td>War-Affected Refugee Youth in America: Challenges and New Directions (2131)</td>
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<td>Chair: Katherine Porterfield, PhD, Bellevue/ New York University Program for Survivors of Torture</td>
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<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Adeyinka Akinsulure-Smith, PhD, Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture;</td>
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<td>Theresa S. Betancourt, ScD, Harvard University School of Public Health;</td>
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<td>Maryam Kia-Keating, PhD, University of California, Santa Barbara</td>
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<td>Friday, August 7,</td>
<td><strong>Symposium</strong></td>
<td>Metro Toronto Convention Centre, South Bldg, Room 712</td>
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<td>12:00–1:50 p.m.</td>
<td>Innovations in Reducing Incarceration and Recidivism: Working with Diverse Groups (2187)</td>
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<td>Chair: Thema S. Bryant-Davis, PhD, Pepperdine University</td>
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<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Stephanie Covington, PhD, Center for Gender and Justice;</td>
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<td>Jae Sevelius, PhD, University of California, San Francisco;</td>
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<td>James Bonta, PhD, Public Safety Canada;</td>
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<td>Patricia Ironshell Hill, PhD</td>
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<td><strong>Discussant:</strong> Joel A. Dvoskin, PhD, ABPP, University of Arizona College of Medicine</td>
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<td>Friday, August 7,</td>
<td><strong>Invited Address</strong></td>
<td>Metro Toronto Convention Centre, North Bldg, Room 206C</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00–5:50 p.m.</td>
<td>Nicholas Hobbs Award and Distinguished Contribution to Child Advocacy Award (2392)</td>
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<td><strong>Participants:</strong> Donald Wertlieb, PhD, Tufts University: Nicholas Hobbs Award</td>
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<td>Olivia Golden, PhD, Urban Institute, Washington, DC: Distinguished Contribution to Child Advocacy Award</td>
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<td>Mary Campbell, APA Office of Children Youth, and Families: Division Exemplary Service Award</td>
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<td>Friday, August 7,</td>
<td><strong>Social Hour</strong></td>
<td>Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Quebec Room</td>
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<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Networking Together to Advance Children's Mental Health (2400)</td>
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<td><strong>Co-sponsors:</strong> Division 37, Division 43, APA Committee on Children, Youth, and Families</td>
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Society for Child and Family Policy and Practice (Division 37),

Society for Family Psychology (Division 43),

& APA Committee on Children, Youth, and Families

cordially invite you to

Networking Together to Advance Children’s Mental Health

Friday, August 7, 2009

6:00 PM

Fairmont Royal York Hotel

Quebec Room