

Your participation in the Family and Community Health Study (FACHS) since 1997 has helped us learn a lot about how stress affects the mental and physical health of Black youth and their parents and what protects them from harm. Here are some highlights of what we have learned.

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER



FACHS parents who were more involved with their children—paying attention to who their friends are, keeping an eye on their schoolwork and homework, and especially talking with their children—were much more likely to have children who don't use substances and who tended to stay out of trouble.

On the other hand, family adversity or neighborhood violence, and greater exposure to racial discrimination, led to distrust of others and had negative effects on health and risky behavior.

Fortunately, warm, supportive parenting reduced the probability that discrimination would lead to anger, distrust of others, and other negative outcomes for males. In addition a warm, positive, long-term romantic relationship in adulthood also countered generalized distrust, helping provide protective effects for both men and women in young adulthood.

FACHS researchers were among the first to highlight that religious participation and having a strong network of Black friends reduced chronic inflammation (a risk factor for chronic illness) and increases the abundance of a protein that guards against cancer.

IDENTITY MATTERS



Our study was also among the first to document that affirmation of Black identity is a key protective response by Black families. We found that Black parents who talked with their children about well-known and widely-admired African Americans, and about Black culture and Black history were less likely to have children who used substances or engaged in delinquent behavior.

Likewise, we found that racial pride and identity had many positive effects for Black youth. It was associated with better academic performance, more education, stronger social networks, and less delinquent behavior.

We were also among the first to show that stress from financial strain and discrimination were more powerful in predicting health than were traditional medical predictors like obesity, drinking, diet and exercise.

PUTTING OUR FINDINGS INTO ACTION

Using what we learned, we developed programs for families and youth that recognize the strength of Black families and how to use those to achieve healthy, positive outcomes. Programs like SAAF, SAAF-T, and more recently ProSAAF are now being offered in many cities around the US. They promote the protective processes we found in par-

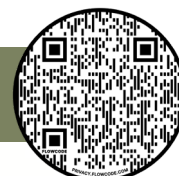
enting, marital relationships, and strengthening youth racial identity, optimism and coping, and our research has demonstrated that participation leads to better health for participants and greater protection from the negative effects of financial strain and discrimination.



WHAT'S AHEAD

It is important to better understand the impact of financial hardship, discrimination, and broader systems of oppression on Black families and youth development as a matter of public health. We will continue documenting these effects to provide a basis for better interventions in the future. You have been and continue to be the key to making FACHS a success. We hope you will join us as we continue this journey over the next decade.

Learn more at cfr.uga.edu



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Here's a little about what we learned