

Invisibility Syndrome: A Clinical Model of the Effects of Racism on African-American Males

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Adaptive behavior and psychological well-being of African Americans can be affected by prejudice and discrimination. Encountering repeated racial slights can create "psychological invisibility." The invisibility syndrome is presented as a conceptual model for understanding the inner evaluative processes and adaptive behavior of African Americans in managing experiences of racism.

This paper proposes that adaptive behavior and psychological well-being of African Americans can be affected by repeated experiences of racism.

Approximately 30% of young black males are involved with the judicial system (*Butterfield, 1995; Cullen, 1988; Taylor, 1995*). Many lack marketable

The inner vigilance for racial slights, maintained throughout life (*Franklin, 1993*), is considered among African Americans to be a "sixth sense." Its activation depends on the way in which individuals interpret a racial encounter and relate it to their

Relationship to Prejudice and Discrimination

The psychological struggle for acceptance by African Americans is as long as their history in the United States. Their original experience of being brought over as slaves had

men that their recognition and treatment are based on the needs of whites, they must often suppress those at-

quently leads African-American men to exercise caution in being assertive, lest the assertiveness be misinterpreted as aggression in cross-racial dyads.

Black men are often intuitively mindful of how correspondence biases work. This awareness makes them self-conscious and, thus, inclined to learn adaptive behavior that lessens their influence, while protecting their own well-being. Countering these stereotypes and racial slights can be a strain on one's emotional equilibrium, however, and

jects, respectively. Results from the independent rating of judges, as well as subjects' ratings of their own mood and interviewer friendliness, supported the prediction that subtle negative behavior toward a recipient can induce commensurate negative behavioral outcomes. Those white subjects treated as blacks had been were judged as less competent, exhibiting greater distance, and making more speech errors in the interviews.

Jones (1991) concluded that these results exemplify the kind of negative consequences that

...few women became part of the individual's in ... prices from long term failure to fulfill male roles:

[REDACTED]

pects of that relationship, which, for African Americans, is largely shaped by racism. An alternative sought by the individual is adopting the comfort with that visibility. The ultimate resolution caught by the individual is adopting the

An enduring climate of prejudice and discrimination, however, allows stereotypes to thrive and racial slights to be carriers of a societal disposition toward African Americans. As represented in FIGURE 1 invisibility evolves out of society's racism

psychological process for many African Americans. Tennis star Arthur Ashe, in response to an inquiry suggesting that his medical condition must be his greatest burden, observed: "Race has always been my biggest burden. Having to live as a mi-

Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?"

Defiance as adaptation. Defying invisibility through self-empowerment is an important facet of adaptive behavior for African Americans. This an

others, and becomes a part of a protective mechanism shielding the individual from the effects of racism.

Therapeutic support groups. As a conceptual model, the invisibility syndrome can be instrumental

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