

PLAYING WITH ANGER:
PROMOTING SELF-CONTROL THROUGH
MARTIAL ARTS AND BASKETBALL

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Can Physical Activity and Exercise Prevent Drug Abuse?

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Outline

1. What theories undergird intervention with Black boys?
 1. Black Boys as Problems or Coping with Stress
 2. What dynamics undergird Black male emotional life?
 1. Boys Not Men; Catch 33, Hypervulnerability & Hypermasculinity
2. What is the PLAAY Project?
 1. TEAM, MAAR, CPR, COPE, ROPE
3. What did we learn?
 1. Style Matters: Physical Activity as Threat or Coping?
4. How can we use physical activity for engaging the emotional lives of Black Boys?
 1. Physical activity promotes disclosure of emotional challenges and opportunities to intervene in the moment on those challenges
 2. Can teach self-eff through physical activity

Lion's Story

“The Lion’s Story will Never Be Known As Long as the Hunter is the One to Tell It”

African proverb



Theories that undergird culturally relevant interventions for black boys

Racial Socialization, Sociopolitical Empowerment,
Transactional Racism Stress Coping

Racism stress affects functioning

- Academic/emotional functioning
 - Research finds that Blacks cope by
 - Reducing racial/cultural distinctiveness to lessen stigma (Brown & Jones, 2004)
 - Ignoring or challenging the color blind politics
 - Inoculating children through racial socialization
 - Bonding with other Blacks similarly disposed
 - Schooling requires emotional buffering/preparation (Kellow & Jones, 2008)
 - Physical health Outcomes
 - Reid & Harrell (2002)
- Stress mediation (support & coping) Williams, 2003
 - Racism-related stress (Harrell, 2000)
- Parental RS/ES (Stevenson et al, 2002)
 - Family racism experiences associated with higher RS in youth
- Important role of teacher-student school climate relationships (Pianta)

Schools as Sites of Disproportionate Punishment,

Advancement Project, 2005; Serwatka et al., 1995; Skiba et al., 2002;

- ▣ Schools are still safest place for kids
- ▣ School districts team up with juvenile courts to “double-dose” punishments of 1st time offenders of childish misconduct
 - (pouring chocolate milk on student’s head as battery)
- ▣ Zero Tolerance applies “Broken Windows” Theory to reduce future crimes
- ▣ Result is 2 types of profiling
 - Zero-tolerance- targets small-time offenders
 - Racial- targets youth of color based on stereotypes
- ▣ Police are increasingly being hired by schools
- ▣ Disproportionate suspension and expulsion from preK-12
- ▣ Concern is not just about boys behavior but perceptions of Black boys by authority figures (teachers and police);

Schools and Classrooms as Threat

- Perceived discrimination influences student engagement and achievement (Nyborg & Curry, 2002)
- Emotional distress and anger (Arrington, Hall, & Stevenson, 2003; Brody et al., 2006; Brown & Jones, 2004; Mattision & Aber, 2007; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Smalls, White, Chavous & Sellers, 2007)
- Stereotype threat in school context
 - ▣ Nussbaum & Steele (2007)

Racial Socialization Revised

Stevenson, Bentley, & Adams, 2008

- Transmission and acquisition of agency through competencies in racial information, relations, identities, and styles toward the effective stress appraisal and coping with
 - the **macropolitical construction** of racial hierarchy as “normal” (dealing w/ whiteness) (public racial regard)
 - the intergenerational **relevance of the ways of knowing, being and doing** of one’s racial group (private racial regard)
 - Lion’s Story

The Importance of Racial Socialization

■ Racial socialization & Well being (Hughes et al, 2006)

■ Positive relationships with

- Self esteem (Davis & Stevenson, 2006)
- Overall resiliency (Miller, 1999)
- Academic achievement (Neblett et al., 2007; Sanders, 1997)

■ Inverse relationships with

- Fighting (Stevenson et al., 2002)
- Depression Symptoms (Davis & Stevenson, 2006)

■ Mediates the impact of

- racism experiences on adverse outcomes
 - Cognitive difficulties (Coard et al, In Progress)
 - Depressive symptoms (Coard et al, In Progress)
- Urban Stress (Miller, 1999)

Buffering rejection sensitivity in Black youth- *A Reason to Pause*

- What if a Black youth is rejection sensitive?
- What difference might racial socialization and physical activity make in
 - ▣ the ways they behave in schools?
 - ▣ The ways they manage stress or
 - ▣ The ways they respond to authority figures and
 - ▣ The ways teachers perceive them?

What is PLAAY?

- Using physical activity
 - to understand and intervene with emotional, identity, and sociopolitical conflicts
 - to build therapeutic relationships with the boys

PLAAY - Preventing Long-term Anger and Aggression in Youth

- TEAM - Basketball
 - Teaching Empowerment through Athletic Movement
- CPR- Cultural Pride Reinforcement
 - Anti-Violence Cultural Socialization Curriculum
- MAAR- Martial Arts Anger Reduction
 - Escapist martial arts to promote self-control
- COPE -Community Outreach through Parent Empowerment
- ROPE- Rites of Passage Empowerment

CPR-Cultural Pride Reinforcement

- 12 one-hour weekly sessions
- Cultural Socialization focus
 - Teaching, Acting, Talking
- Teaching culturally relevant critical consciousness through
 - music, video, hip-hop, role-play, current events
- Violence alternative, cultural socialization curriculum
- Culturally relevant atmosphere
 - Black barbershop passion and argument/debate
- Teaching Targets
 - cultural and historical knowledge
 - academic and educational stress management
 - stigma identification and healthy rebuttal

MAAR-Key aspects

- 12 one-hour sessions
- Self-defense (physical and mental)
- “Testing Limitations” increases frustration tolerance
- Internal self- & anger-awareness & control
- Awareness of body control & balance
- “Heart” - courage to face oneself (Bell, 1998)
- Focus, breathing, moving meditation

TEAM- Basketball

Play as the medium of expression

- Basketball is cultural pop game of identity expression
- African psychology view of movement (Boykin & Toms, 1985)
- During “play,” frustration tolerance can be expanded
- Stressful when one can’t meet manhood demands
- We want to be there before, during and after conflicts occur between kids

In-the-moment skills

- Cultural Relevance
 - Engages with and integrates cultural style, movement, & communication during “in-the-moment” interventions on court, hallway, etc
 - Uses own personal style to influence others
 - Black barbershop passionate argument-style to CPR sessions
 - Target cultural knowledge & academic stress management
 - How physical activity leads to spontaneous, unexpected expressions & disclosure of emotional/relational dynamics

What did we learn about Black male perspectives of emotional coping?

Qualitative Findings

Boys not Men, Helper Fatigue, Hypervulnerability, Style Matters

- **Boys not Men** Adolescent development rarely applied to black male behavior in schools (Spencer)
 - **Wonderment**-Full range of childhood desires, strivings, expressions- ***“feeling aroused by something strange and surprising”***
- *Helpers are paralyzed by stereotype, “helper fatigue,” and stay distant from Black “boys”*
 - Health stats are depressing and promote helper apathy
- Boys show **Hypervulnerability through Hypermasculinity**
 - Hypervulnerability requires Affection, Protection, & Correction (Cassidy & Stevenson, 2005)

Major Qualitative Findings of PLAAAY-Missed, Dissed & Pissed, pt 2

- **Black Boys Styles Matter (Ferguson, 2003; Neal et al., 2003)**
 - ▣ require unique self-efficacy skills (how to not curse out cops and teachers)
 - ▣ Patrol and Control strategies are costly
 - Distrust of Boys toward Authorities is strong but modifiable
 - Cycle of anxiety sensitivity within context of low expectations, disengaged teachers, and contexts of “corrections”

Hypervulnerability Assumptions

(Stevenson et al., 2003)

- Sole Survivor
 - ▣ Can't trust friends/family, only self; lonely/sad
 - Sole responsibility to protect one's emotions
- Self-image driven by exaggerated, materialistic consumption
 - ▣ Interferes with living/surviving in mainstream worlds
 - ▣ Compulsion to demonstrate strength/glamour
 - ▣ Exaggeration or Devaluation of one's self image
 - ▣ Internalizes dehumanized identity/stereotype threat
 - ▣ Fear of Public Humiliation
- Experiencing post-traumatic stress/depression symptoms
 - ▣ Witnessing violence, loss, and trauma
- Lack of racial socialization skills

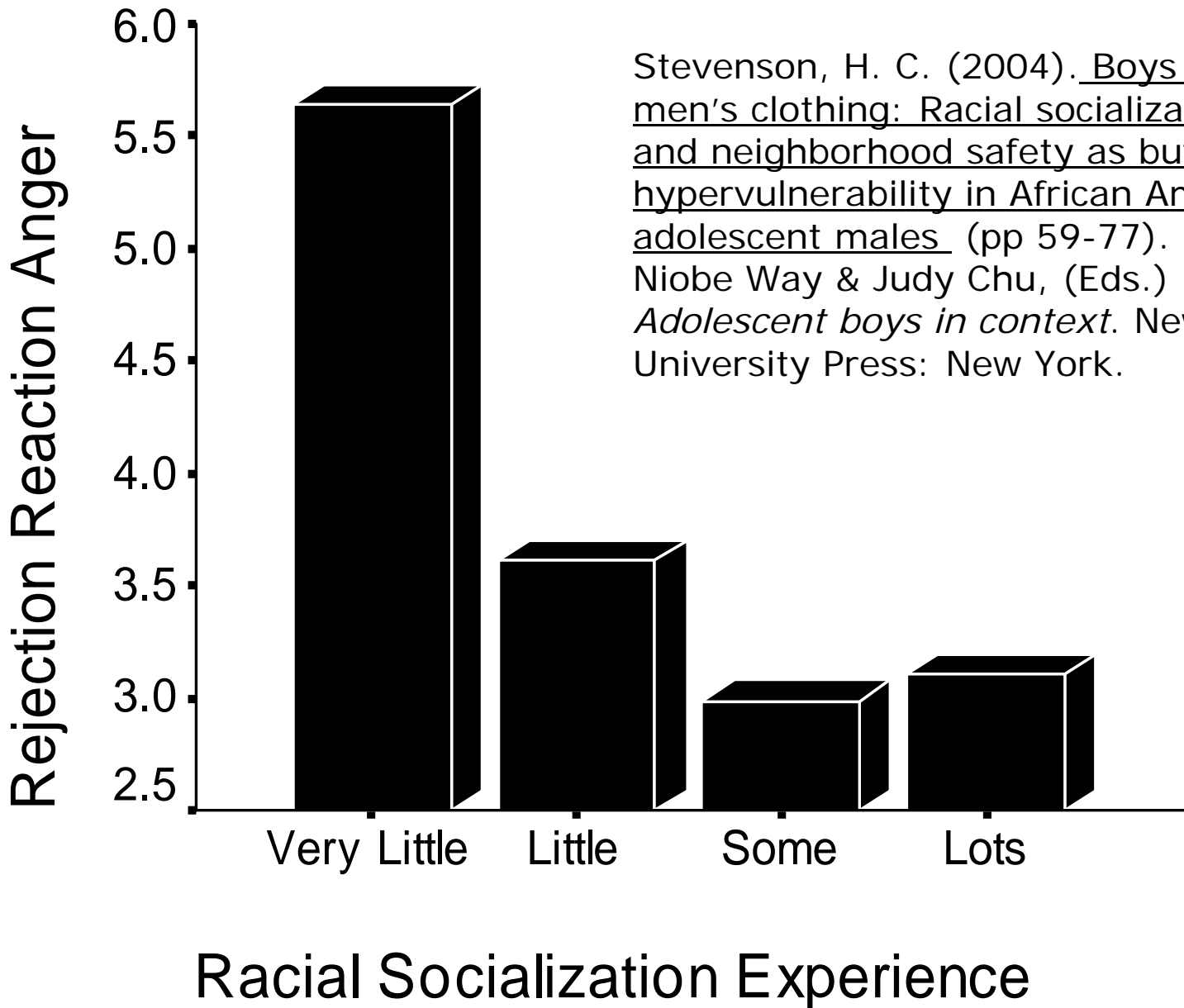
“Style Matters”

How do teachers, authority figures, & society react to Black cultural style?

Developing knowledge of and appreciation for Black cultural style (Neal et al., 2003)

□ **Style or stylings:**

- “conscious or unconscious manipulation of language or mannerisms to influence favorably the hearers of a message” (Asante, 1987; p. 39).
- “... those crucial therapeutic moments when African Americans display and look for signs from the therapist that the therapeutic context provides a safe environment that allows for full cultural expression of emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and movements. It is therapists’ ability to understand the significance of African American culture, history, and experience that provide meaning and context for clients’ behaviors and interactions.” (Stevenson, et al., 2005; p. 4)



Stevenson, H. C. (2004). Boys in men's clothing: Racial socialization and neighborhood safety as buffers to hypervulnerability in African American adolescent males (pp 59-77). In Niobe Way & Judy Chu, (Eds.) *Adolescent boys in context*. New York University Press: New York.

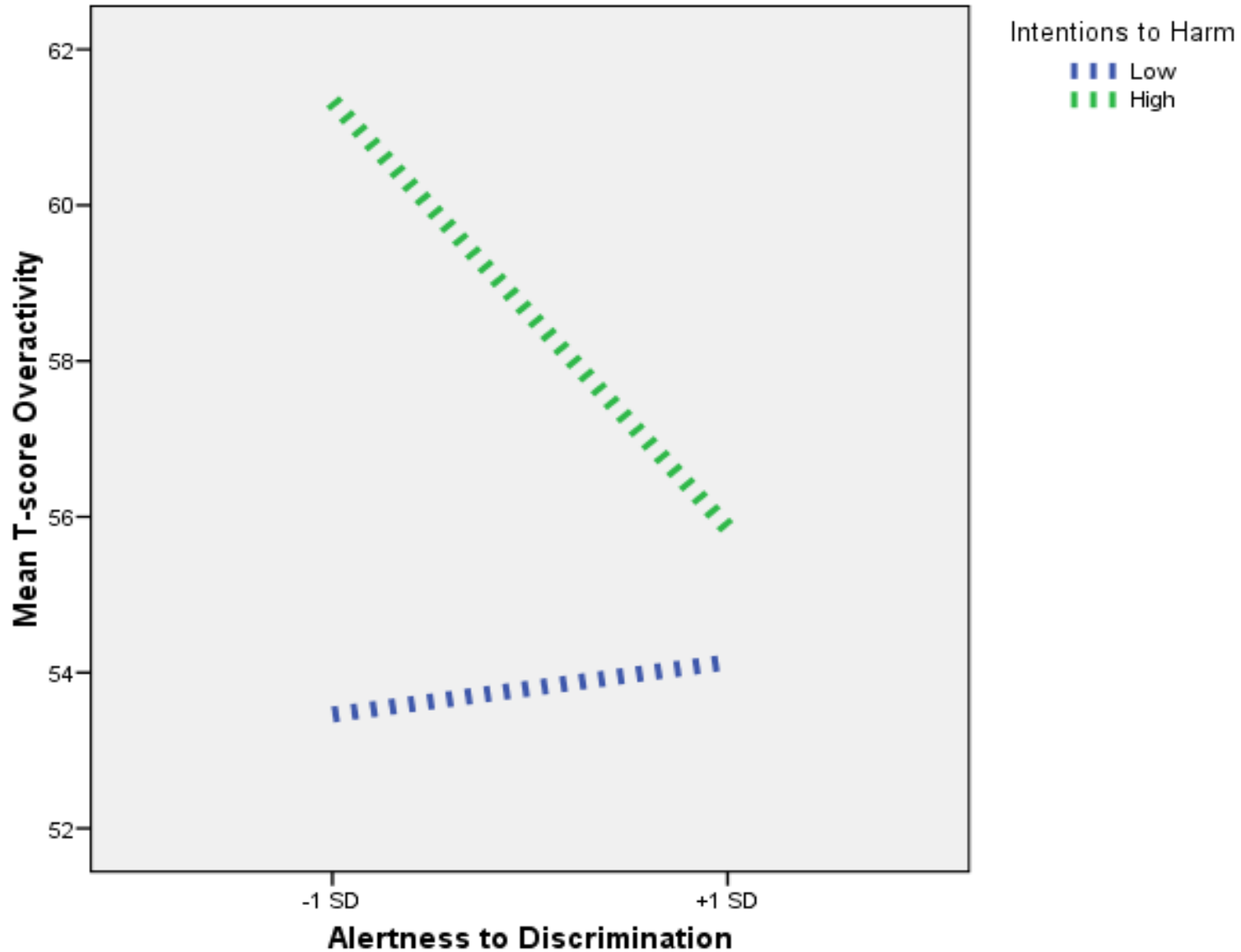
“Never Let Them See You Sweat”

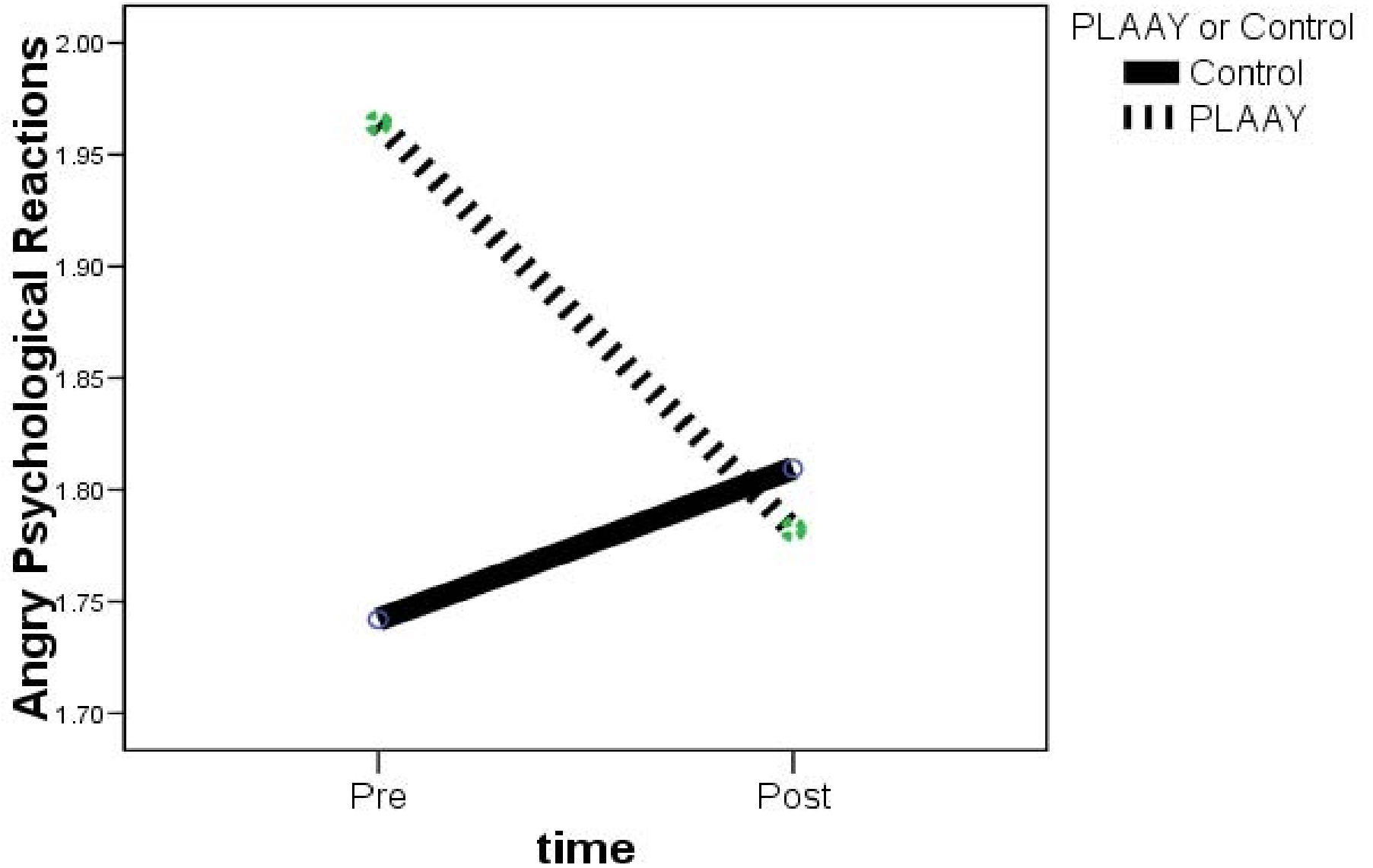
(Thomas, Coard, Bentley, Zamel, & Stevenson, in press)

- The predictability of intentions to harm (rejection sensitivity) on teacher perceptions of youth overactivity depends on Discrimination Alertness (DA) socialization of the youth
- Racially socialized youth (high levels of DA) don't receive high ratings of maladjusted overactivity from teachers even when their intentions to harm teachers or peers (rejection sensitivity) are high
- Racially socialized youth (high levels of DA) don't receive high ratings of maladjusted overactivity from teachers when their anger control is very low
- Perhaps it's when you know why you should not show your sensitivity or lower your anger that leads to this result
 - The why is because you may understand how Black anger raises fears in teachers

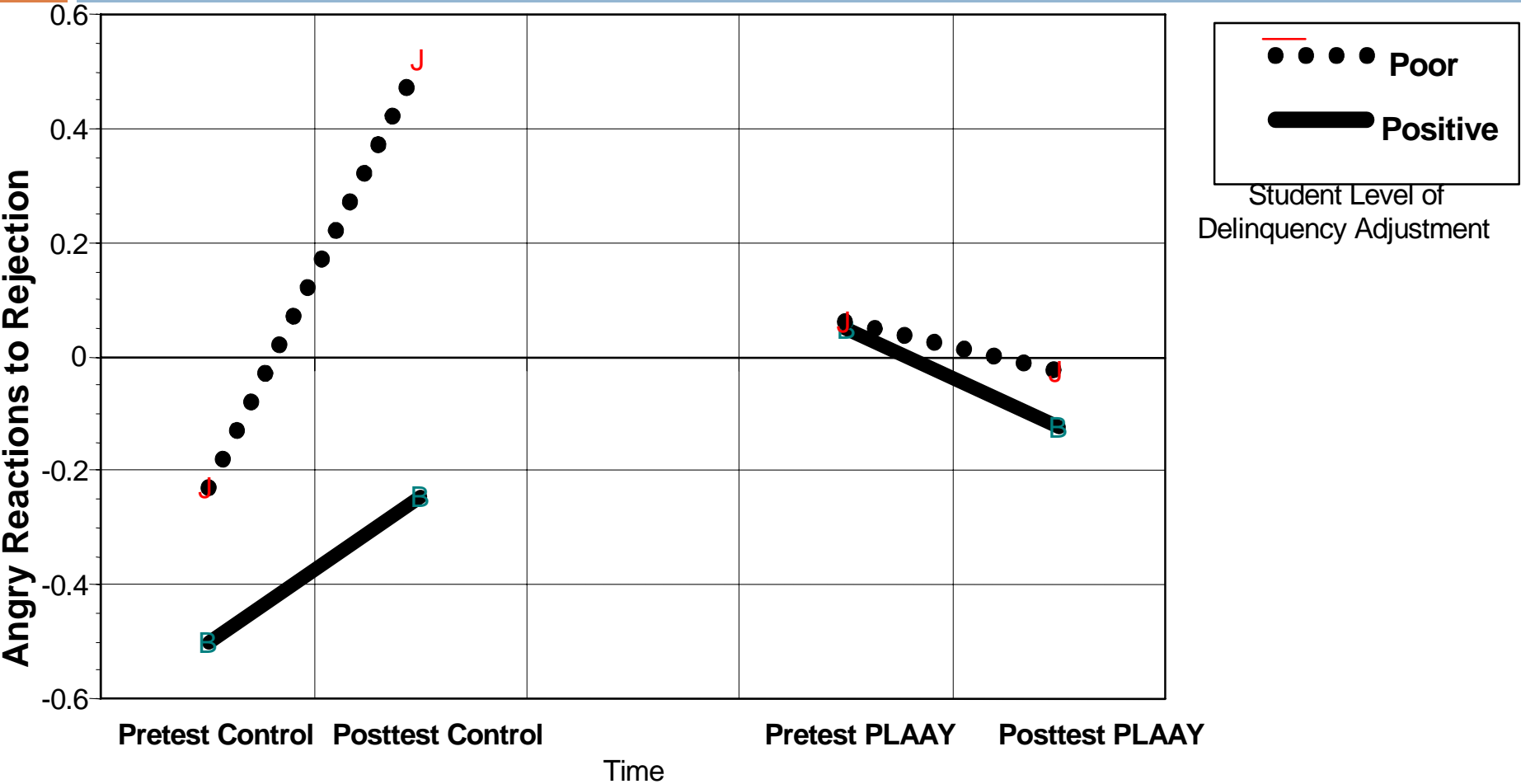
Alertness to Discrimination moderates relationship between intentions to harm and teacher perceptions of overactivity

(Thomas, Coard, Bentley, Zamel, & Stevenson, 2007)





Comparison of PLAAY and Control Groups on Angry Reactions to Rejection for Two Delinquency Adjustment Groups



Implications for PLAAY

- Sensitivity to rejection may serve a *protective* function in certain contexts
- Racial socialization can be *protective*.
- Intervention development should
 - ▣ Focus on increasing emotional processing and preparation of actual and perceived rejection
 - ▣ Focus on explicit racial socialization strategies
 - ▣ Reduce distance in intervention strategy

Summary

- Failure to apply developmentally appropriate knowledge and accurately understand stereotypes and Black cultural style dehumanizes, distances, and disrespects Black boys
 - ▣ Contributes to disidentification from schooling
 - ▣ Missed, Dissed, & Pissed
- Boys can learn alternative ways to problem solve the challenges of urban street culture where aggression and anger are necessary coping strategies

“YOU CAN DISCOVER MORE ABOUT A PERSON IN AN HOUR OF PLAY THAN IN A YEAR OF CONVERSATION.”

Plato (427– 347 BC)

Spontaneous Eruptions from physical activity

- How can we see youth struggling with identity demands during physical activity?
- How can physical activity contribute to more disclosure of personal struggles in the CPR groups?
- How are relationships between staff and youth developed through physical activity conflicts?

“PLAAY Fighting in MAAR”

Building Relationship and Credibility with Black Boys through Challenge

Lion's Story-



Strategies of Culturally Relevant Intervention Affection

- **Understand** functionality of anger/violence/sexual harassment within male-dominated context & society;
- **Build trust** daily over and over again in the small moments; Isomorphic attribution
- Use own **personal and cultural** style to **influence** others
- **Touch** the boys to **reduce** emotional & physical **distance**

Elements of culturally relevant intervention, Protection

- **Provide** alternative rationales, vistas, maps for managing insecure masculinity
- **Challenge** society's pathology hype of Black males by **infecting cognitions**
- **Expect** them to embrace their humanity, not society's view of criminality
- **Teach counter-socialization explicitly**
 - ▣ cultural socialization strategies, not social skills
 - ▣ Survival & creativity/transcendence-critical conscious.
- **Engage** Black movement, culture, & style
- **Monitor** behavior, attitudes, activities

Elements of culturally relevant intervention, Correction

- **Reframe** distorted beliefs about others' hostility, definition of self, & societal access
- Identify and **distract** potential **conflict**
- Physically **mediate** conflicts
- **Intervene** in rough moments of boys' life
- **Coach** basketball/self-defense skills for **social competence**

Recommendations

- Use recreation therapeutically
- Affinity groups for black males
- Role play in the groups for dissing in classrooms with teachers
- Practice skills of assertiveness and voice, (Self-eff)
 - ▣ Practice, practice, practice;
 - ▣ Integrate cultural knowledge
 - ▣ Allow students to add cultural style to the skills
- Do same with teachers
 - ▣ Role play moments of student-teacher conflicts
 - ▣ Give feedback on developmental and cultural knowledge; different perceptions

Future Research

- Connect role of culturally relevant intervention to substance abuse intervention
- Track connections of cultural relevant in-the-moment conflicts and interventions using bio-behavioral measurement