

3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on

# Depression, Anxiety and Stress Management

June 21-22, 2017 London, UK



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### **Don't nobody care about us girl: A cultural-relevant anxiety and stress intervention for inner-city African American girls**

**Introduction:** Research has found that among American adolescents, Black girls are at highest risk for anxiety. Cultural risk factors associated with anxiety in this population include skin color, racial identity, racism and the acting White accusation. Sexism appears to exacerbate these variables as gender issues interact with race. Black adolescent girls incur more daily hassles or small day-to-day problems than their female peers. These hassles are associated with increased anxiety. In addition, black girls' acceptance of multiple roles during adolescence is also associated with heightened anxiety.

**Aim:** In this presentation, the author will discuss the data on the levels of anxiety and perceived stress in a sample of American inner-city 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Black girls. Results indicated that anxiety within this sample is higher than the expected norms and perceived stress is at a moderate level. Implications of the results for development and implementation of a culturally-infused intervention will be discussed.

**Method:** Participants were 86 Black/biracial seventh and eighth grade adolescent females between the ages of 12-15 enrolled in Sisters United Now, a stress and anxiety intervention program. Participants attended one of two middle schools located in a large mid-western, low-income, urban school district. All students within the district receive free breakfast and lunch. The study was approved by Kent State's University IRB. Participants completed a variety of measures related to stress and anxiety: "The Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children" 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (MASC-2); the perceived stress scale (PSS), and the stress test. The stress test was developed specifically for the purposes of this study.

**Results:** Descriptive statistics of MASC-2 anxiety total T-score indicated the group had above average anxiety ( $M=58.3$   $\sigma=10.78$ ). In the distribution of MASC-2 classifications (range very low to very high) nearly all participants (96.3%) were classified as average to very high anxiety, and nearly half of participants (48.1%) were classified as having elevated anxiety. Descriptive statistics of the PSS indicated participants had a moderate stress level ( $M=22$   $\sigma=7.15$ ). A moderate positive correlation was found between PSS and MASC-2 total T-score ( $r=0.237$ ,  $p=0.034$ ). The stress test indicated that participants' top stressor was academics ( $N=41$ ), family ( $N=19$ ) and relationships ( $N=15$ ).

**Discussion:** Similar to existing research, the Black girls in this study reported elevated scores of anxiety. These findings indicate that participants are experiencing greater levels of stress and anxiety compared to their peers. Interestingly perceived stress and anxiety were moderately related possibly suggesting that these two factors are working independently in this sample. The findings highlight the importance for researchers to develop interventions to target this specific population. The purpose of such interventions should be to help these girls develop resiliency and strategies to cope and deal with stress and anxiety.

### **Biography**

Angela Neal-Barnett is a Director at Program for Research on Anxiety Disorders among African Americans, Department of Psychology, Kent State University. She has completed her PhD from DePaul University (1988). She has research interest in anxiety disorders among African Americans. Her research focuses on children's fears, violence and children's anxiety and panic disorders among African Americans. She is also interested in skin color issues and African American women's physical and emotional health.

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