

MURC Snapshot

Understanding Black Male Gun Violence: Examining “Males, Masculinity, and Gender Role Strain Paradigm Theory”

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Preface

As documented in the MURC Research Brief “*Examining Gun Violence Homicide Rates Across America: Trends, Factors, and Potential Solutions*” (O’Quinn & Mozee, 2022), the United States overall and the City of Jackson, Mississippi have experienced a record number of homicides committed by Black males. This MURC Snapshot examines one possible explanation as to why Black males are committing those homicides. MURC intends to further explore the applicability of this theory on Black males in Jackson MS.

The Theory

In the literature examining precarious manhood studies, Levant (2022), noted a 1990 anthropological study which states that manhood must be earned by action and that the actions must be repeated to maintain status. The *Precarious Manhood* studies indicate that a compromise in a man's sense of masculinity results in ‘aggressive demonstrations’ (Levant, 2022). Levant also cited an article published by Bosson et al. (2009) that stated the public demonstration of aggression was found to reduce the negative effect of ‘men’s anxiety regulated cognitions. Stanaland and Gaither (2021), noted that social pressure to be a man may even precede masculinity in the precarious sense. Bridges and Tober (2019), found that the over-demonstration of masculinity, as ‘proof of masculinity’, was demonstrated by males that were unable to obtain social status by other means, and ended up turning to guns and violence (Levant, 2022). Wilkinson (2001), observed that males in urban settings must be tough and remain that way in order to gain respect from others. This exhibition of toughness is often expressed in gun violence as guns are readily available, and because there are no other ways of expressing their manhood in communities (Wilkinson 2001, Levant 2022).

Using a new extension of the *Gender Role Strain Paradigm* (GRSP), Levant (2022) theorizes that “discrepancy strain” increases the tendency to gun violence. “Discrepancy strain theory” relates to the strain of failure that one experiences when they do not live up to an internalized ideal of masculine behavior (Levant, 2022). Does this theory accurately explain the rise in gun violence by Black males? If it does, then what can be done to counteract this theory? Please share your thoughts and opinions on this theory by emailing them to murc@jsums.edu.

References:

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