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THE EFFECTS OF THERAPEUTIC ARTS ON BLACK MENTAL HEALTH

by

Alicia Newsome

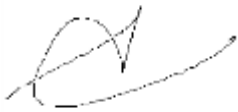
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Art and Design-Web and User Experience  
at  
Lindenwood University

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Alicia Newsome **Alicia Newsome**

Author



Andrew Allen Smith 5.5.22

Committee chair

Justin Kussman 5/5/22

Committee member



Erica Blum Erica Blum 5/4/22

Committee member

# THE EFFECTS OF THERAPEUTIC ARTS ON BLACK MENTAL HEALTH

A Project Report Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Arts, Media, and Communication  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Art and Design-Web Design and User Experience  
at  
Lindenwood University

By

Alicia Newsome

Saint Charles, Missouri

May 2022

## **ABSTRACT**

Title of Thesis: The Effects of Therapeutic Arts on Black Mental

Alicia Newsome, Master of Arts/Art and Design-Web and User Experience, 2022

Thesis Directed by: Erica Blum, Associate Professor Art and Design

This project focuses on black mental health that encompasses mental wellness education through social media and builds community connection by sharing stories. It reduces social exclusion and creates positive change in black communities. The final deliverable will be a short video poem compilation via YouTube that gives insight into what it is like living with depression and anxiety. It will include motion graphics, photo manipulation, and graphic art covers titled Misconceptions, Beautiful Temptations, Relentless, and Old Abuse. It is about implementing healthy coping mechanisms and bringing together a community that is often overlooked and/or stigmatized regarding mental health. It enhances one's ability to develop resilience, find inner tranquility, and search for meaning, and connectivity.

### **Acknowledgements**

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To my friend Marshae, I thank you for the encouragement and editing of my creative writing while also providing valuable feedback on ideas for my topic. To my therapist who helped me generate ideas while addressing my concerns with talking about black mental health. Finally, I would like to thank my classmates who provided support and thoughtful comments and recommendations.

**Table of Contents**

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	5
Context/Literature Review	6
Methodology	13
Production and Analysis	14
Conclusions	15
Bibliography	18

## **Introduction**

This research identifies how individuals are faced with life difficulties and experiencing psychological distress without knowing how to deal with them. People of color need to talk about their feelings openly and stop seeing it as a sign of weakness. In order to conquer the stigmas of mental illnesses in African American communities, it needs to be normalized by seeking help, removing negative thoughts, and discussing suicide prevention. Traditional preventative methods are not universally applicable. Suicide is influenced by several variables, including institutionalized racism, a lack of necessary resources, and trauma. Incorporating therapeutic art forms such as creative writing, music, and digital art will aid in coping with mental health. The data stored in our minds can be difficult to convey at times. Suffering in silence is unhealthy and healing evokes sadness.

My research over the last two years is presented as four video poems presented as a compilation which can be shown on various social media platforms so it can be a safe place to discuss black mental health openly. The video lasts about 14 minutes and discusses what it is like living with depression and anxiety and the effect it can have both mentally and physically. Coping mechanisms don't always work or won't stop suicide, but prevention is the key to a better life. Social media can also have drawbacks, leaving a suffering individual vulnerable.

## Literature Review

This project is about user experience and will allow for symbolic meanings, awareness, and meaningful emotional interactions about distress with individuals. This literature review considers whether images enable individuals to adjust their role and identity, which could be constructed and changed in the moment. They can divert attention to social environments and the interaction that occurs between individuals. There are also significant downsides such as written, and visuals that can trigger intense emotions that require delicate treatment.

The first goal of this research is to first acknowledge pain in order to heal. This comes in the form of film, creative writing, digital art, and motion graphics for this project. All are therapeutic art forms which can help individuals openly discuss mental health in African American communities. Afterwards one must recognize that black mental health is complex and difficult to measure as each person is different. Social media can be a double edged sword as it can cause more harm than good.

Goal one, according to Almond (2020), emphasizes that individual's display their inner lives as a social experience when going through feelings of loss. In order to heal, pain and emotions have to be acknowledged. When it comes to storytelling, some people experience poor self-esteem. They are left feeling helpless and instead of grieving, they can separate themselves from childhood trauma. As human beings, there is a strong tendency to represent the true self as a performance rather than a commonality. What seems to stand out is that many individuals have stood on the edge of stairs, terrified, sorrowful, and perplexed by the magnitude of the anguish that one risks.

Cameron (2020) argues that films are created so that the viewer empathizes with the individual if those visuals are symbolic of pain and feelings. If the viewer feels the character's



pain and/or emotions, then they are more likely to sympathize with them. What is shown has to be genuine. A frame by itself is seen as an empty space, but when you place a person within it, it creates a whole new meaning. Cameron adds that cameras mix and distort the capabilities of visage and body, showing and exaggerating the ways in which each might operate as a sign for those in a narrative environment. Faces tend to blend in with and occupy other features, causing identity and individuality to become obscured.

Cheyne (2019) explains that the mind creates this feeling in the listener that makes them connect mentally to imagery that is displayed on the screen. “The specific feelings at each point—the reader might feel pity rather than empathy at Edgar’s pain, or be more sympathetic to his violent outbursts are less important than the shifting series of emotional responses evoked” (p. 37). The images seen can make one feel uncomfortable and amazed. The mind is associated with thought patterns such as positive and negative emotions, while the body is focused on physical features. When a film accurately depicts a setting with a chosen ambiance, it makes the viewer pay attention.

Every movement of visual imagery changes what we see, making us feel vulnerable or secure. Camera movements enable us to feel what is shown on screen. Films are made to captivate audiences rather than to generate a feeling of authenticity. Viewers cling to these individuals in a world that is simultaneously both perinatal and completely unbounded, caught between endless freedom and absolute vulnerability. “But the role of camera movement often seems to make us approach deeper into the world of the film, to merge into it. We become in some sense immersed” (Gunning, 2020, p. 266). Motion within film becomes a tool that allows individuals to experiment with their senses and feeling of place attachment.

Individuals can use technology to manage their emotions by scrolling on social media sites. Emotions are specific behaviors that impact our feelings and the consequence of our decisions on those moods. Music, for example, is a common way to both deepen and enhance an affective experience while also controlling its spatial structure by using it to govern our moods and feelings (Krueger and Osler, 2019). Being closed out of a group can make individuals feel as if they are on the outside looking in, as with socioeconomic opportunities. It not only diminishes one's social world but also eliminates a reputable tool for interpersonally contextualized emotional processing.

Fear in regard to timing and motion play a pivotal role in perception by altering our state of consciousness, making what is seen irresistible, and further drawing in the viewer. Murray adds that the “‘imaginary is immanent in the real’: the connection between imaginaries and realities is motion in time” (Murray, 2020, p. 16). Motion, whether visual or auditory, has the power to teach perception since it can be replicated using all of the senses. Motion via durations is a persuasive approach for symbolization because it creates powerful meaning. Movement, whether visual or auditory, can be used to teach perception since it can be recreated using all of the senses. “Motion through duration is a powerful meaning-maker, and as such is a persuasive tool for symbolization” (Murray, 2020, p. 16). Time is required for movement, both physical and virtual movement through space. Both static and moving texts have always used techniques from the other: auditory texts can be rendered static through memory and repetition of stories; moving texts rely on words and/or communication.

Omand (2021) argues that when it comes to art therapy, its potential use in describing individual experience by looking for meaning in those images can explain information promptly and compellingly. Images can indicate more about an individual's state of mind, or being, based

on who is in a room with them. Seeing the images as constructs allows individuals to see film as having representations from our inner world while also appearing for all to observe. Body language changes based on what is seen on the screen. It is not about just placement of characters within this frame, but it also has to do with the viewer's experience. You cannot separate yourself from this environment. "For beyond putting bodies into place within the picture, the positions of bodies outside of it-namely, our bodies as viewers-are inextricable from the complex network of spatial orientation that perspective lays out" (Pranolo, 2020, p. 160).

Cinematic engagement is seen as important by taking the spectator into the world of the character, their situation, and their intentions. He states that within imagination, the audience perception and how they feel are important in engagement:

He analyzes the different modes of engagement with audio-visual images that contribute to our experience of perceptual and emotional responsiveness to moving images, and offers a timely defense of the concept of identification that emphasizes both its intersubjective and imaginative characteristics (Sinnerbrink, 2019, p. 193).

The psychological self can be accessible by looking into Freudian theories of identity in the development of inner consciousness. The phenomenological theory is used to identify the conscious experience such as moods and/or ideas.

Mindfulness may help coping skills that contribute to a discount of negative thoughts that weaken self-efficacy. Older individuals' cognitive functioning and emotional control were strengthened by mindfulness practice. Authenticity, competency, and connectedness are three core psychological conditions that have to be met in order to ensure optimum coping (Yeh et al, 2020). Metaphors are an effective and meaningful way of conveying difficult content, thoughts, insights, and emotions in a way that the audience will understand. Metaphors allow individuals

to express the indescribable, are incredibly beneficial, integrate cognitive and emotional processes, offer a safe environment, and allow individuals to help themselves. They can be found in visuals, thoughts, and things. A painting can evoke different feelings from each art piece. Some individuals face unhappiness, while others experience good feelings that might allow them to feel better. Pain is both an adaptive and psychological component of life (Zakrzewska, 2020).

Goal two is presented with the fact that the human mind is so complex. One must factor in urbanization, stigmatization, and barriers black communities face. Identity plays a significant part in the personality of an individual. Identity can be hidden within one's mind and can differ from what is perceived by others. The source and intention of an object are set, and its personality is decided by how it accomplishes that purpose. To identify the self, one must first differentiate between psychological and non-psychological orientations to individuality. This study looked at self-awareness and how it connects to overall health. Research questions whether our conscience defines our identities and that by sacrificing our inner self we in turn lose our identities (Edwardes, 2019).

Mentalization on the other hand contains both a temporary and social evaluation of an individual and others. It reflects those abilities that allow individuals to explore the world effectively, and while establishing self - identity. "Mentalization is a multifaceted construct including different dimensions: automatic/implicit versus controlled/explicit mentalization, internally versus externally focused, self-versus other-oriented and cognitive versus affective mentalization" (Fischer-Kern & Tmej, 2019, p163). Individuals who have been subjected to childhood traumas are more likely to become depressed as adults when existing connections are disrupted. This can occur when facing rejections, grief, and feeling like a failure or a mixture of these interpersonal stressors.

The way individuals are judged by others and by themselves has a great impact on their inner lives and society. The individual's connection to their emotions, or how they describe their own emotive experiences, is a pivotal step for them and others to understand their well-being. The environment they live in makes individuals act the way they do based on cultural perception. Wellbeing is a word that includes both an internal psychological condition and environmental stressors that may lead to people being happy or content. Mental health is concerned with psychological issues:

In this sense, wellbeing is a societal goal: something that must be achieved for the overall improvement of people's lives so that they as individuals, and in turn society as a whole, can achieve a better standard of living that includes positive ideas of flourishing and enjoyment (Gross and Musgrave, 2020, p. 27).

Elements of social fragility, such as shyness, fall outside the normal scope of mental health and wellbeing but are still acknowledged as impacting people's social experiences:

In this sense, being a musician and performing on stage can function as a way of coping as well as being a source of creative energy and impetus. This maps onto ideas about what musical practices and reflexive thinking have in common (Gross and Musgrave, 2020, p. 29).

Mental disorders vary, and so when one questions these labels and examines the history of their intellectual and cultural growth that the environment of mental health is immensely diverse and controversial. On an individual basis, there seems to be an understanding that discussing one's mental health can be exceedingly frightening, leaving the individual and those who care about them in a potentially vulnerable situation:

The idea of the separation of the body and mind, and then their reintegration in the discourse of wellbeing so prevalent across social media, are evidence of the contradictions, confusion, conflation and entanglement of terms and ideas that circulate in the broad mental health space (Gross and Musgrave, 2020, p. 29).

There is no clear way to define mental health and its connection to wellbeing. Testing both happiness and mental health can be hard. In reality there is no true way in how an individual can do it. An individual's socioeconomic situation may lead to a more in-depth and powerful understanding of how misery is caused in the first place.

One can try to control positive emotions to feel good or be enjoyable to be around. It describes suppression of negative emotions to avoid feeling miserable or taking actions they would later regret:

Emotions are regulated by choosing carefully the situations one gets into, by modifying the situations one is already in, by directing one's attention toward some things rather than others, by changing the way one thinks about the situation one is in, or finally by modulating one's response to the situation (Maibom, 2019, p. 150).

With a person becoming overwhelmed, their emotional distress becomes personal. The belief is that if an individual experiences too much negativity toward someone in need, they become swamped. Shame and guilt are frequently felt at the same time, yet research on each emotion proceeds as if the emotion felt most profoundly at the time is the only one felt. Individuals can either ponder about one situation or have an emotional reaction to it. Coping with stress has an impact on one's well-being, social connections, mental health, and social behaviors. Individuals can experience anxiety, depression, as well as impaired communication, and socioeconomic status. Emotion regulation is especially important for these vulnerable individuals.

Personal identity plays a role as it can be temporary, fragile, and reliant on different social entities at different times. When different sets of values, usually in contradiction with each other, are linked to multiple forms of the cultural problem, differences can become unhealthy. Being a woman, enjoying poetry, and residing in London are all qualities of a person, but they do not create identity markers until that person has put enough emotion and commitment in them to cause action (D. Scott, 2021). Identity is used in this situation to convey a feeling of happiness and therefore continuity over time. "All discussions of a person over time require some understanding of change; that is, a notion of change is built into the conception of the human

being.” (Scott D, 2021, p. 142) We would not have a concept of identity if there's no cohering element between temporal moments. So while every moment involves a change in an individual it must have a concept of durability over time as well as this idea of originality. Property dualists argue that thoughts cannot be limited to physical characteristics, but that causation can be realized by the same factors that influence fundamental forces:

Fundamental versions of property dualism accept that consciousness consists of operative physical processes, but ontologically a claim is being made that properties of consciousness do not and cannot be derived from physical properties. (Scott D, 2021, p. 144)

If one cannot find justification for the foundation of having any conscious component in the psyche that is unreal, then they are compelled to acknowledge a highly skeptical position in relation to experience and understanding. Mental illnesses cannot be seen in the same way as physical disabilities. This makes it difficult to understand how these illnesses, such as anxiety and depression, negatively affect individuals. A design is created to pique people's interest and contradict what is seen as negative cultural perceptions about mental illness. Mental illness cannot be seen physically thus becoming overlooked by others. This can make it difficult for people to understand how it can adversely affect a person's life the same way that a physical disability can. Visual data in the form of notes is used to connect individuals to the person who created them.

To help people connect with the individual behind the data, the visualization I designed included handwritten notes highlighting particular points in the data and explaining them. These describe the way I was feeling or explain the reasoning behind an incident to help people better understand the lived experience behind the numbers (Simpson, 2020, p.



161).

Visual data can be beneficial because an individual can pick and choose what data to omit and what information they wish to share. It can also harm the individual as their personal data is transmitted via social media and can be overly shared and reposted by others. Visual data can lose some of its authenticity as new meanings can be interpreted because of digital reproduction and distribution. Hand drawing also has its imperfections:

These imperfections, combined with the personal nature of the data and the handwritten annotations, made for a powerful and affective data visualization, which captured people's attention. Yet, the notion of authenticity troubles me. (Simpson, 2020, p. 165)

Visual styles help to remind the reader that the picture is a personalized representation presented by the author when utilizing color, line drawing, and handwritten content. Viewers are mindful that handmade illustrations depict the author's perception of an experience, creating this sense of honesty. Furthermore, individuals have unprecedented access to the ideas, desires, and emotions of people in a society. The human mind makes it difficult to empathize with others to accurately determine their feelings and thoughts. Some individuals retract from society as a result of failure. One can become isolated and find it difficult to build connections. The actions taken can then become someone's identity (Henderson, 2019).

Human rights are a major factor in personal identity. This premise is based on Kantian ideas that human beings are viewed as separate beings capable of making their own judgments and deciding their own fates. When it comes to substance use, discrimination linked to mental health, physical disability, and culture or sexuality is documented by almost half of those with major mental illness. Individuals who are faced with multiple forms of prejudice may experience more high levels of mental distress, rendering discriminating mistreatment by others greater. "In

general, individuals with mental health conditions, including those with substance use problems, may be more likely to conceal their diagnosis than those with a physical one” (Wogen & Resrepo, 2020, p. 55). Stigmatization may contribute to underreporting so these population-based demographic surveys results are skewed. When we stigmatize individuals who we view as different from ourselves, we presume they are evil, violent, or vulnerable. Dehumanising a person who is different completely undermines their entire identity and reduces them to a lower status. “Consequently, a person who is being stigmatized may perceive that she is not accepted or considered equal, engendering feelings of inferiority, shame, and self-loathing” (Wogen and Resrepo, 2020, p. 53).

Individuals with mental health and addiction difficulties are faced with a variety of stigma's , such as stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination:

Stereotypes are the over-generalized social beliefs we have about groups of people. For instance, persons with substance use problems may be perceived as untrustworthy, weak, and unwilling to stop using substances. Prejudice is an emotional response (for example, anger, irritation, pity, fear) among those who agree with the stereotype. Discrimination refers to behavior resulting from stereotypes and prejudices; for example, a person with drug dependence may be denied housing on the basis of these characteristics (Wogen and Resrepo, 2020, p. 53).

It is important to identify how stigma develops at multiple levels of society and the individual in order to truly understand the mental health impact that stigma can have on people with drug use disorders. Social, ethical, organizational, individual, and multi stigma are the five categories of stigma. Each poses unique challenges and solutions in safeguarding the rights of individuals with substance use disorders.

In addition to the latter, black mental health suffers because of barriers such as socioeconomic disparities, stigma, bias and the inadequacy of data. African Americans face negative experiences like exclusion from health care, and discussing feelings is a sign of weakness. (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2021) According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of black men receive mental health treatment despite experiencing emotional distress. There are barriers that individuals face regarding not only adequate mental health treatment but also the stigma and misuse of mental health illness (Corriher, 2021).

Furthermore, the limitations of established mental health services to meet individuals needs and guarantee their rights have been brought to light by society:

Effective, acceptable, and scalable treatment alternatives remain on the periphery of health care systems, deinstitutionalization has stalled, and the insufficient mental health investment continues to be focused predominantly on a biomedical model, despite increasing global recognition that mental health is a human development imperative (Chapman, 2021, p. 3).

If one does not focus on mental health issues in general, its structural roots will fall. Family structures are structural roots, and if they are violent, they have a significant impact on mental health.

Urbanization and mental health are linked to substance abuse, and alcoholism is prevalent in urban environments. In densely populated places, families tend to be unstable, and unity falls apart due to cultural change and conflict. With a lack of adequate resources, mental health illnesses increase with urbanization. Individuals' main priorities are health care, which can become expensive for people, and mental health is not easily accessible. Mental health remains a

lengthy problem that will only deteriorate in low-poverty areas that are expanding due to globalization (Hurt, 2019).

One must understand that therapeutic art forms don't always work and for those who are considering suicide, the art form comes too late. When it comes to suicide, it leaves a void that cannot be filled. It can have a great impact on families, but if it is not discussed, cannot help families positively. Without valuable resources, suicide prevention can be hard. African Americans should talk more openly about mental health, listen to those who suffer, and not be afraid to ask for help (Gillison, 2021).

Goal three of this research and project emphasizes that social media can be a double edge sword when it comes to producing visual imagery. Technology delivers stories to us before individuals even start writing them. In the changeable digital realm, people lose the capacity to recall and convey the narrative written about themselves. Machines drove the human body and mind into unprecedented and artificial roles with classifications and responsibilities that elevated some and humiliated many more as they began to replace humans. As large-scale technology became accessible, a plethora of devices infiltrated daily life, altering human environments and disrupting social relationships (Rogers, 2020). While technological innovations are important, some humans get more power at the expense of others. These distinct constructs of the human mind cannot be simplified. In society the positive and negative aspects of humans are closely connected. Rogers also claims that cultural and biological connections are unrealistic. Culture shifts and do not progress in any substantive fashion. "It must edge forward slowly, with care and caution, into the dark uncertainty of the future and avoid taking massive stupid leaps" (Rogers, 2020, p. 23). Among the most cherished and vital components of being human is one's individuality. "The transmission of narrative identity is the essence of culture – it's what wraps

humans up in a human world” (Rogers, 2020, p. 26). Anticipatory technology feeds us our stories before we develop them. we lose the capacity to remember and communicate the stories we write of ourselves in the programmable digital environment:

The distortion of the most consequential ideas in human history, such as what distinguishes truth from falsity, and what role technology should play in human life, has been ushered in not because they have prevailed in a contest of ideas but because they have been installed by default (Rogers, 2020, p. 26).

Nobody understands the principles on which ideas have been adopted and developed, thus there will not be a conflict of the mind.

When it comes to social media platforms and websites, comment sections are included to make them more participatory by encouraging users to leave comments on the content of other users across platforms such as YouTube videos, tweets, and Facebook; they can also be used offensively, antagonistic, or hate-filled. As a result, comment sections are regularly rife with examples of online hatred as users exploit anonymous posting options and/or provide fictitious usernames to publish vicious comments that would not be acceptable in person. Culture is to blame for why individuals post these hateful messages. Hate speech is labeled as “trolling,” and individuals tend to ignore it instead of confronting it (Clucas, 2020). YouTube influences and impacts contemporary society. It acts as a source of knowledge offering this type of reassurance, even if being bound in these sequences of lost time, repeating the same words spoken in the same way, in the same settings isn't always healthy. “The repetition acts like a centrifuge, separating out the sheer potential and contingency that is otherwise dissolved in every moment of our lives.” (L. Scott, 2019, p. 18) Reminiscing can deteriorate into fragmentary cycles of habitual repetitions and can develop into a therapeutic process of mourning and healing. Scattered

patterns of obsessive memorization led to a gloomy picture of YouTube.

Social media is an illusion created to mold oneself into whomever you choose to be, while your true self is hidden:

These mediating social sites and screens dissociate us inwardly, detaching the self from a performed image. And they dissociate us outwardly, detaching us from others by eliminating physical proximity—allowing us to forget others' humanity, to remove ourselves from the shared scene in which we are all ethical actors (Meadowcroft, 2019, p. 75).

You define an individual by listening to indicators of what is known about yourself, such as judgment, purpose, and behaviors. Social media shatters this relationship, causing us to see separate ideas, idealized beliefs, and clichés rather than people. Being against something or not being attached to something is defined as a divide. Thoughts and signs are part of the group of concepts and messages that are only relevant in the context of other pairings of idiomatic expressions from which they differ. Peer interactions emerge from a young age and are difficult to break. They might manifest themselves in a variety of ways at different points in a person's life. Hearing someone talk and feeling their physical presence are examples of recognizable consequences. This involves awareness of inner signs such as our behavior and the identification of others. “At its worst, social media disrupts this relationship, so that we see not people, but discrete statements, abstracted ideologies, and caricatures” (Meadowcraft, 2019, p. 78).

Reposting, commenting, or liking photos are actions taken. There is no spontaneous, unconscious, or thorough understanding of the mind behind this. The manipulation of social media is equivalent to that of mainstream media technology with the fragmentation of society's interconnectedness:

We as human beings are that strange phenomenon aware of phenomena, apprehending movement in both halves of spacetime, and that union seems somehow essential to the humane: Chronos, time cold and alone with his sickle and hourglass, is a dread old god. But kairos, the opportune time, the time for actions in space, is propitious and alive in the world (Meadowcraft, 2019, p. 78).

Meadowcraft suggests that we should be less judgmental, since there are some positive effects to social media platforms that shape our lives. Technology provides valuable information and meaningful conversation that we might not have otherwise.

### **Research Methodology**

This project aims to use qualitative data to present information related to mental health well-being. By openly discussing black mental health, stigmatization can cease to exist. Personal accounts and statistical data are used in the findings involving therapeutic art forms. Database research, photo manipulations, creative writing and motion graphics are used to produce a 14 minute compilation video poem. The focus is directed towards long term coping mechanisms and suicide prevention in African American communities. Statistical data is provided by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Vital knowledge is gained while raising awareness about black mental health by looking at mental traumas and their influence in how we operate in society. Suicide prevention is an important part that will involve how we experience trauma and how to cope with it in a better way.

There are misconceptions associated with black mental health. In gathering information, the main objective for this project is to showcase how traditional therapies do not work across cultures. People are dealing with life concerns and experiencing depressive symptoms without knowing how to deal with them, so something as simple as writing can alleviate the need to let

those emotions build up. People of color typically push too hard when it comes to others, or withdraw, leading to unhappiness and suicidal ideation. Prevention is a long-term process that is rarely attainable in the last moments before a tragedy. This project acts as a coping mechanism before someone reaches that breaking point. It is about giving a voice to the voiceless.

### **Production/Analysis**

Marketing directly to an audience via social media is still in its early phases. There are no articles tailored to black mental health. National mental health websites were utilized for the missing data. You cannot choose to be mentally sound. When it comes to social interaction, mental illnesses can be a difficult process. One in three men are less likely to receive treatment or seek support for depression because of the stigma regarding men showing their emotions. Men have greater rates of suicidality than women. The artwork and words help illuminate an anguish that is normally voiced in isolation. In order to de-stigmatize mental illness, African Americans should openly discuss it to motivate others to talk openly. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in 2019 34.6% of African Americans between the ages of 18-25 received mental health treatment: in 2020 it rose to 37.1%. Suicide rates in 2020 among African American males were 12.6% while females were at 2.8%. From 2019, suicide rates increased slightly for African Americans from 7.04% to 7.5% according to the Survive Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) organization. This project compilation consists of four video poems with graphic art covers. They are titled Misconceptions, Beautiful Temptations, Old Abuse, and Relentless. Three of the four cover art pieces have moving components consisting of a square animation, moving clouds, and a glitch effect. A gradient effect is added to the Relentless artwork to highlight how much mental health consumes. Old Abuse and Beautiful Temptations are conversation pieces similar to that of spoken word but with



musical elements. Old Abuse is black and white. It is devoid of color. Light colors are used to symbolize a light, a bit of hope in troubled times while the black is the absence of this when black individuals are feeling confused, depressed, or out of place because they feel that no one understands. It explains how defeated one can be and forget about reality because of these many thoughts that plague. Beautiful Temptations are the devices we lean on to find peace or an escape. This can be alcohol, knives, broken glasses, or anything else that is a drug and is unhealthy but is the only way to escape, and in some cases, suicide is the only way. Misconceptions is about the misconceptions associated with black mental health and why it is more stigmatized in black communities.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 63% of Black individuals consider mental illness to be a sign of weakness. Annually mental illness affects 17% of African Americans. Many incidents go unreported due to systematic racism, stigmatization, and other impediments. African American adults in the United States are more likely than white individuals to have ongoing mental suffering, such as depression and fear. Black adults who suffer from poverty were most likely to experience significant psychological stress.

### **Conclusions**

Creative writing can make an individual calm when experiencing anxiety and/or depression. Having the ability to write down personal feelings for this project while providing digital design eases the mind. Every word that you put on a page offers freedom that you cannot experience any other way. This project became a way to not feel easily judged by others. This project made it comfortable to write about black mental health, but it also makes you vulnerable. You must step away several times to clear your head of negative thoughts because you are providing a recollection of the past and present. Ultimately, it can become too much to bear as

your mind races, but it feels good to talk openly. Poems are written as it offers a safe environment to express yourself.

This project is a success as it offers this one on one with your emotions by being open and honest with yourself. It helps you overcome adversity in a more effective way. When recovering, you want to set some time aside to better understand emotions and triggers that are associated with it. This enables you to avoid situations that cause you to become agitated. When creating the art covers for the video compilation, recording and writing, it gives you the ability to track your progress. By keeping track of this mental health progress, you are able to recognize challenges you are overcoming, and the writing or depiction of black mental health becomes your freedom or peace. Furthermore, you will be able to experience the great improvements you are making.

While there were some roadblocks, I believe I have produced a project in therapeutic art forms that helps in dealing with black mental health and well-being. Although I was not able to find a lot of information regarding black mental health statistics, I am satisfied with it. The strength in this project lies within the words themselves as it offers raw emotions into what it is like living with mental illness. By using social media, I can reach a broad audience while emphasizing the importance of ending the stigma surrounding it. The compilation encompasses storytelling techniques that can keep an audience's attention throughout. It reduces social exclusion and creates positive change in black/minority communities. It offers a way of balancing black lives and improving mental health. It is about implementing healthy coping mechanisms and bringing together a community that is often overlooked. Mindfulness is about eliminating those negative behaviors. Well-being is about prevention, coping with life's obstacles (stress, loneliness, depression), and being persistent.

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