

PROCEEDINGS OF

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MULTIDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM 2026



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Proceeding of the GARI COIMBRA MULTIDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM 2026

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About GARI

The Global Academic Research Institute (GARI) is an international scientific research conference organized in collaboration with international universities and institutions. GARI has brought together leading academic and industry experts from the global community who process diverse experiences and expertise in various scholarly or scientific disciplines. We established 2010 as an independent service provider then wider range of experience GARI became a powerful arm of scientific research conference organizer in the industry.

PREFACE

Global Academic Research Institute is proud to present the “GARI COIMBRA MULTIDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM”, which is a series of successful research symposiums. The Inaugural Session and technical sessions were conducted on 24th July 2026 at Hotel D. Luís - Coimbra, Portugal. The conference was organized into different disciplines, and empirical, conceptual, and methodological papers were accepted from academics, practitioners, and public policymakers, paying close attention to the academic standards of the papers. To maintain consistency, authors were required to follow the academic writing format of the GARI Publishers. The reviewing process was transparent, where papers underwent a double-blinded review process by eminent subject specialists in their respective areas. Thus, refereed full papers selected to be presented at the conference were published here. We do not assume any responsibility for any errors or omissions in the research papers, which rest solely with the authors.

The organizing committee, special appreciation to the Keynote Speaker & Session Chair Prof Susana Catarina Sousa Machado (CIICESI, ESTG, Coimbra, Portugal Instituto Politécnico do Porto, Portugal).

An International Academic Affiliation with Jagadguru Kripalu University - India, Department of Community Medicine, Mysore Medical College and Research Institute - India, International Federation for Fitness Health, Physical Education & Iron Games - Saudi Arabia, Australasian Institute of Ayurvedic Studies - Australia, Kathmandu School of Law – Nepal, Noble School of Business, India and Centre for Socio-economic & Sustainability Research, India. Journal Partner as GARI Publishers and GARI International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, all other GARI affiliated academic partners, Further the support given by GARI Tours as Travel partner, Official Creative Partner Sameera Artco & MICE official Partner Sri Lanka Convention Bureau. The conference committee expresses deep gratitude to the panel of reviewers for the priceless service rendered. Finally, the committee extends sincere thanks to the presenters and participants for their valuable contribution and active participation.

Conference Committee
GCMS 2026

GARI AFFILIATIONS

<< Couleur-Espace-Culture >> Association 1901 – France



Our Association aims to devote itself to the fields of art, architecture, urban planning to defend visual ecology and the harmony of colors in the environment. The different fields and domains concerned, the theoretical and methodological development as well as the practical bases of environmental projects, are at the center of the professional interest of the activities of the Association CEC Couleur-Espace-Culture.

Jagadguru Kripalu University - India



Jagadguru Shree Kripaluji Maharaj envisioned a university that not only provides quality education but also aims at all-round personality development of the students, turning them into leaders in their chosen fields. The faculty at JKU are experts in their respective fields, with an intense desire to teach and guide the students to success. Regular interactions with industry leaders and opportunities to be part of various conferences and seminars broaden the students' horizons.

Kathmandu School of Law – Nepal



Kathmandu School of Law, established in 2000 AD as an affiliate of Purbanchal University, is a community-based, non-profit academic institution that upholds its unrestrained commitment for a pragmatic, research-based and community responsive legal education in the

country. It was conceptualized within the ambit of non-profit movement dedicated to serve the need of an academically sound and functionally feasible legal education in Nepal.

Australasian Institute of Ayurvedic Studies – Australia



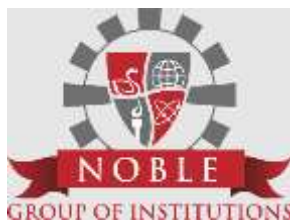
The Australasian Institute of Ayurvedic Studies is synonymous with quality and authentic education in Ayurveda. The Institute was founded in 1999 in Auckland, New Zealand and is proud to be the only training Institute in Australasia offering recognized Ayurvedic qualifications in both Australia and New Zealand.

International Federation for Fitness Health, Physical Education & Iron Games - Saudi Arabia



IFFPHPEIG was established in year 1995. It is one of the largest upcoming federation around the world. The Federation was established by the Honorary President Dr. Kaukab Azeem

Noble School of Business - India



Noble Institution will be a learning community that is focused on developing youngsters who will become leaders in an era of global competitiveness and technological advancements.

CSSR - Centre for Socio-economic & Sustainability Research, India



CSSR is an international academic and research organization committed to advancing scientific knowledge by fostering collaboration. We continue to empower researchers and professionals to transform innovative ideas into practical solutions that benefit society and contribute to sustainable global development.

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Founded in 1984 by our chairman Dr. Bandula Rathnasiri Piyarathna D.A.M.S, Beam Hela Osu Lanka Pvt Ltd has been a trusted name in Sri Lanka's pharmaceutical manufacturing industry for over four decades with our workforce of over 160 employees. With ISO and GMP certifications, the company upholds the highest quality standards in producing a diverse range of Ayurvedic medicinal products. Its portfolio includes Arishta, Asava, Guli, Kalka, Churna, Rasayana, oils, syrups, herbal teas, and balms - each crafted with a deep commitment to the rich traditions of Ayurveda, serving both local and international markets.

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For over 20 years, Fadna has been more than just tea — we've been pioneers in functional food, blending the time-honored wisdom of Sri Lankan Ayurveda with modern science. Every cup delivers rich flavour, soothing aroma, and natural health benefits. With Fadna, you're not just drinking tea — you're nurturing your body, mind, and spirit.

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KEYNOTE SPEECH

“Artificial Intelligence, Workplace Profiling and Religious Freedom: Emerging Challenges for Equality and Privacy”

Prof. Susana Catarina Sousa Machado

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Center for Research and Innovation in Business Sciences and Information Systems

Lecture

Oporto Polytechnic Institute - School of Management and Technology of Felgueiras

INCLUSION IN BANKS' SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING: CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

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ABSTRACT

New EU reporting rules on sustainable practices integration into business provide more comparable insight into the practice of sustainability among the observed entities since all pillars (E, S and G) received more equal attention according to ESRS and CSRD. This research encompasses social pillar in banking sustainability reporting, underrepresented in earlier regulation, practice and reporting. More concretely, research focuses on inclusion subtopic, with the narrower focus on financial inclusion of people with disabilities. Paper analyses sustainability reporting practice encompassing the scope and depth of integration of social (S) pillar in the part of inclusion and people with disabilities, by using a Croatian banking sector as a case study and the sample of 6 large banks whose asset takes around 90% of total banking sector asset. Content analysis is applied to their 2025 sustainability reports. The goal of the paper is to identify and to compare their business practice, compliance and depth of reporting practices, in the area of inclusion of persons with disabilities. Our findings suggest significant improvement in sustainable business practice and reporting in this area, which can be justified by the fact that 5 of 6 large banks in Croatia are foreign owned. Implementation of sustainable practice and know-how in this area of parent banks helped banks in easier harmonization of reporting according to new regulatory rules (CSRD and ESRS). Our findings may be valuable to researchers and practitioners in this area regarding sustainable practice improvements.

Keywords: sustainability reporting, social pillar, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE & I), people with disabilities, Croatia

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UNDERSTANDING PRACTICAL EMOTIONS: BRIDGING AFFECT AND ACTION

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ABSTRACT

Emotions are a fundamental part of our lives. Emotions and cognition are closely interlinked and work together to generate adaptive responses. Emotions play a vital role in determining how we perform our daily tasks, preserve and organize our memory, and make decisions. This paper focuses on “practical emotions,” which are based on subjective experiences influencing practical decision-making and adaptive actions. A subjective experience is developed resulting from the cognitive and the emotional impacts of the individual experience as compared to objective experiences are based on actual events. A narrative review approach was employed to investigate the mechanisms and impacts of practical emotions. This paper encompassed a comprehensive overview of the conceptual framework of practical emotions, the current state of research, the physiological and psychological underpinnings of emotions, and their applications in various domains, and challenges. By reviewing literature and recent findings, this paper aims to broaden the understanding of practical emotions as functional components integral to human behavior and societal development.

Keywords: Practical emotions, Emotions, Mental health, AI, Physiology, Ethics, Social, Subjective

THERMAL PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT OF NANO-ENHANCED PCM LATENT HEAT STORAGE USING OPTIMIZED T-SHAPED AND INCLINED FIN DESIGNS

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ABSTRACT

There is now great interest in nano-enhanced phase change materials (Ne-PCMs) for thermal energy storage (TES) due to their improved thermophysical properties. A good way to enhance thermal conductivity is to incorporate a novel fin design that improves the melting process. Thus, this study investigates the thermal performance of six fin types given in a latent heat storage device using paraffin wax with copper nanoparticles. Two of the three versions have T-shaped fins, while the other three have 45° fins. A numerical code based on the enthalpy-porosity method was implemented for modelling both the melting front and heat transfer (HT). We focus on the evolution of average temperature, liquid-phase ratio, Bejan (Be) number, and cumulative thermal energy. Among all configurations, Case 3 (the ideal T-fins system) registered the fastest thermal response, achieving a 31.91% reduction in total melting time compared to the reference design (Case 1). Handling the angled fins in cases 4, 5, and 6 extended the melting time by approximately 91.7%, 80%, and 56.25%, respectively, compared to the non-tilted counterparts. These results highlight the outstanding performance of Case 3, which is suggested as the proposed fin design to enhance the performance of Ne-PCM TES systems.

Keywords: Nano-enhanced phase change materials, thermal energy storage, T-shaped fins

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS CAN AFFECT CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION: MODERATING ROLE OF BRAND TRUST

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of current research study is to explore how social media algorithms (Personalized Content Delivery, Enhanced Engagement and Interaction, Social Proof and Peer Influence, Targeted Advertising, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), Reduced Cognitive Load, Emotional and Visual Appeal) affect consumer purchase intention and in particular, explore how brand trust can be used to moderate the effects of social media algorithms. By adopting a quantitative method, (342) customer responded to an online questionnaire and primary data were screened depending on SPSS. Results obtained show that social media algorithms have a positive influence on intention to purchase. Moreover, the brand trust is considered an important moderating variable that intensifies the influence of the algorithm-based content on consumer behavior. The results show the role of emotively powerful and aesthetically appealing content, social proof, and FOMO to be the most powerful in determining purchasing behavior, whereas over-involvement and a cognitive overload can be counterproductive. The study concludes on the necessity of balancing technological personalization and the establishment of trust as the means of maximizing the results of marketing. The practical implications of the research findings are that marketers ought to concentrate on developing emotionally attractive content, building consumer trust in a brand, and keeping it at the optimal rate of engagement to effectively change consumer purchase intentions. Study recommended increasing the attention on emotional and visual content that will appeal to the emotions and aesthetic tastes of the consumers since these are the most effective in making purchases. Further recommendations were presented in the study.

Keywords: Social Media, Personalized Content Delivery, Enhanced Engagement and Interaction, Social Proof and Peer Influence, Targeted Advertising, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), Reduced Cognitive Load, Emotional and Visual Appeal

MYTHOLOGY, MUSIC AND TRANSCENDENCE

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Spain

ABSTRACT

My research explores the persistence of mythological, archetypal, and symbolic structures within the human psyche through experiences of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM), a receptive music therapy method developed by Helen Bonny. Situated at the intersection of spirituality, psychology, and religious studies, the research examines how music-induced altered states of consciousness may facilitate the emergence of symbolic imagery, mythic narratives, and archetypal patterns associated with experiences of transcendence, self-knowledge, and connection with the sacred. The study adopts a qualitative and hermeneutic methodology based on the analysis of transcripts from GIM therapeutic sessions provided by accredited therapists affiliated with the Association for Music and Imagery. These narratives are interpreted through an interdisciplinary theoretical framework drawing from analytical psychology, mythology, phenomenology of religion, and consciousness studies, engaging authors such as Carl Jung, Mircea Eliade, Joseph Campbell, James Hillman, and William James. The central aim of the research is to investigate the transformative potential of mythic and archetypal imagination mediated by music, and to explore whether Guided Imagery and Music can function as a contemporary pathway to numinous experience and spiritual meaning-making. Particular attention is given to the therapeutic and existential significance of archetypal symbols emerging during musical imagery processes. By bridging music therapy, psychology of religion, and mythological studies, this research contributes to current interdisciplinary discussions on spirituality and consciousness, proposing music as a symbolic mediator capable of activating profound dimensions of human experience and inner transformation. This topic aligns closely with the conference's interdisciplinary focus on spirituality, psychology, consciousness, and transformative human experience.

Keywords: spirituality, psychology, human experience

EXPLORING AUTOMATED INVOICE PROCESSING: A FOUNDATION FOR AI AUTOMATION

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to outline the challenges and limitations of an existing manual invoicing process, and then describe what an ideal automated workflow would look like. Participants are used to understand the limitations of traditional ERP and accounting applications and to determine whether AI is a suitable alternative or tool to enhance their effectiveness. The researchers used a combination of structured interviews and questionnaires to establish existing and ideal workflows, as well as the perceived limitations of traditional ERP and accounting applications. A total of ten participants were interviewed, purposefully selected based on their specific characteristics and involvement in the process being evaluated. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews via Microsoft Teams to establish current and ideal workflows and to understand the perceived limitations of traditional ERP and accounting applications. Thematic coding was conducted manually by the researcher and triangulated against an independent coding pass generated by a large language model. Even though ERP and accounting systems may exist within an organisation, many manual tasks still need to be performed. This leads to frustration among team members, inefficiencies in the workplace, and errors in data capture. Traditional applications have their benefits, but are often deemed costly and have lengthy implementation timelines. Furthermore, traditional applications require high levels of skill and are not easily customisable for specific customer needs. A proposed ideal automated process is characterised by high levels of customisation, a projected 60% reduction in process steps, and a projected reduction in manual steps from 80% to 13% when compared with the documented manual baseline. Future opportunities exist for further studies that focus on different organisations, processes, and ERP and accounting applications.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, ERP and accounting applications, customisation, automation

PERI-URBAN GROWTH, ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE AND LAND-USE PLANNING: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GRAND LOMÉ AND YAOUNDE

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ABSTRACT

Rapid urban expansion in cities of the Global South is increasingly characterised by peri-urban growth, where spatial development often outpaces formal planning systems. In this context, road infrastructure plays a central role in structuring land-use patterns and shaping urban form. This study examines how road infrastructure contributes to peri-urban spatial organisation in two contrasting African urban contexts (Grand Lomé and Yaoundé), while also providing insights for sustainable infrastructure planning in rapidly expanding peri-urban areas. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach combining statistical analysis of household satisfaction with road infrastructure, field observations, and semi-structured interviews with institutional and local actors. The findings reveal differentiated dynamics. In Yaoundé, satisfaction is associated with both the physical condition of roads and spatial location (sector), reflecting fragmented planning processes and uneven infrastructure provision. In the Grand Lomé, satisfaction is more closely linked to direct access to the dwelling and spatial location, despite a more structured institutional framework. In both contexts, proximity to paved roads does not appear as a significant determinant. These results show that peri-urban spatial structuring depends less on the extension of road networks than on their functional quality and their uneven distribution across urban sectors, highlighting differentiated territorial development patterns. They reveal a misalignment between formal planning frameworks and actual urbanisation processes, contributing to spatial inequalities. This paper contributes to peri-urban planning debates by demonstrating that effective land-use management requires integrating infrastructure provision with spatial dynamics and local conditions, rather than focusing solely on network expansion.

Keywords: Peri-urban growth, Land-use planning, Road infrastructure

TRANSFORMING CULTURAL CONTEXT: A SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM FOR THE INTEGRATION OF POSITIVE MASCULINITY IN THERAPEUTIC WORK WITH BLACK ADOLESCENT BOYS

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USA

ABSTRACT

There is a shortage of academic curricula and frameworks that view Black male adolescents as existing outside of traditional masculinity, reinforced by patriarchal standards that equate masculinity with dominance, aggression, and emotional suppression. Traditional masculinity values frequently contradict the values of collective cultures, which Black male adolescents are often immersed in. Academia often mirrors societal climates; thus, perpetuating the placement of patriarchal standards on Black male adolescents, resulting in claims of hypermasculinity and hypersexualization. While there has been an increase in studies aimed at examining adultification, hegemonic masculinity, and particular structures, few structured interventions have centered on Black male vulnerability and Positive Masculinity as an intervention for identity reconstruction among Black male adolescents. The combination of Positive Masculinity and Black Male Vulnerability centers emotional expression and communal responsibility as core principles of masculinity. This proposal features an eight-week curriculum grounded in Black male vulnerability and Positive Masculinity to cultivate communal healing and identity reconstruction. Ultimately, the curriculum seeks to validate Black adolescents while equipping them to engage their communities without perpetuating cultural betrayal. Black boys exist at a unique intersection of boyhood marred by sexualization and Blackness marked by adultification. Often, their personhood is considered secondary to the spoils of the school-to-prison pipeline, and their childhood is treated as a rhetorical question. Effective approaches to supporting Black boys must account for the broader context of their lives, including systemic barriers and their consequences. This text argues that systemic and cultural barriers not only harm Black boys' well-being but also lead them to seek community and belonging in potentially harmful spaces; the suggested curriculum offers an alternative.

Black boys are often seen as older, more dangerous, and more aggressive than their White peers, leading to higher rates of criminalization and incarceration (Fadus et al., 2020). They also experience more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), contributing to poor mental health and higher suicide rates (Fadus et al., 2020). Since 1991, suicide rates among Black adolescents have consistently risen, with Black children under 13 dying by suicide at twice the rate of their White peers, and males at greater risk (The Congressional Black Caucus, 2020; Lindsey et al., 2019). Yet, per a report by Child Mind Institute (2025), Black girls and women are more likely to receive suicide treatment, and Black boys and men are more likely to seek help from religious leaders and loved ones. While this network is integral to the success of Black adolescents, mental health trends suggest they need more support (The Congressional Black Caucus, 2020). Stigma around mental health care, lack of representation in therapeutic spaces, insurance, and payment stressors, and overemphasis on medication continue to push

Black boys out of therapy (Child Mind Institute, 2025). As a result, Black adolescent boys often turn to online spaces like social media and gaming for community. However, these spaces can promote harmful ideals of masculinity (Miller-Idriss, 2025), which can influence boys even if they don't directly participate. Incels, the manosphere, and red pill rhetoric thrive in online chatrooms and forums, and adolescents are at risk of radicalization and grooming by others online. Virtual adaptations of Hegemonic masculinity (HM) — a form of masculinity associated with aggression, domination, and the subjugation of women — are associated with real-world violence, and men who support ideals of HM are more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence, including sexual violence (Hunter & Jouenne, 2021). Thus, to bridge the gap in care for young Black boys and address the current trends in masculinity-focused radicalization exacerbated by the internet and the vulnerable stage of adolescence, this curriculum has been developed. Black adolescent boys deserve a soft place to land, one where vulnerability is encouraged, positive self-concepts are developed, and masculinity is centered in community and love, rather than hate. This framework is not based on the fear of what Black boys can become; it is wholeheartedly grounded in the strengths of who they are.

Keywords: Black Male Vulnerability, Positive Masculinity, Black Male Adolescents, Culturally Responsive Curriculum, Adulthood

FROM BELIEF TO COMMODITY: TRANSFORMATION OF MEANING OF THE EVIL EYE BEAD IN THE CONTEXT OF TOURISM AND CONSUMPTION

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Turkey

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the transformation of meaning and function that the evil eye bead has undergone in the context of tourism and contemporary consumption practices. Traditionally a belief-based object intended to protect against the evil eye, the evil eye bead is increasingly transforming into a cultural commodity in line with tourist demand and global consumption dynamics. In this context, the study aims to examine how the symbolic and protective meanings of this object are reinterpreted in different contexts of use. The research is structured within Dell Hymes' S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model and focuses on the communicative dimensions of consumption and usage practices rather than production processes. In this vein, the study analyzes shifts in the meaning of the evil eye bead between traditional and modern contexts through components such as "ends," "key," and "norms." Additionally, the role of tourism in the process of repositioning the evil eye bead as both a cultural representation and a consumer product is discussed. Designed as a qualitative research study, the project is currently conducting data collection through field observations and visitor experiences in Nazarköy, Izmir. In this regard, the research proposes conceptualizing the evil eye not merely as an element of intangible cultural heritage, but as a dynamic cultural and communicative practice whose meaning is constantly reproduced within the contexts of tourism and consumption.

Keywords: Evil Eye Bead, S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. Model, Intangible Cultural Heritage

LIBERATING IDENTITY: A TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND BLACK MALE STUDIES FRAMEWORK FOR BLACK MEN IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

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USA

To be a Black man in America is to be in a constant state of awareness. — Coates (2015)

Ta-Nehisi Coates' quote depicts the vigilant nature that a Black man must embody to simply survive in America. Survival has long been the dominant tale for Black boys who are often forced to assume roles of manhood prematurely. Unlike the coming-of-age story for other racial counterparts, Black boys' path into manhood is often abrupt and unacknowledged. Black boys' journey into manhood is not glamorized, not marked by rituals, nor parties, exchange of wealth, or conversations about such change. Instead, environmental, social, cultural, and political factors shape Black boys' entry into adulthood, often leading Black boys to feel ill-equipped and incomplete at times to navigate life fully due to missing elements of their childhood that would have brought them joy (Curry, 2017). Such a dehumanizing cycle did not originate in contemporary society; this has long been the harsh reality that Black males have historically faced, the denial of their youth, and the adultification of their bodies (Curry, 2017). Not only are Black boys adultified as they come of age, but they are also criminalized and hypersexualized by society, as their skin complexion and gender are weaponized to contort their self-identity into feelings of self-hatred or hatred of those with a similar hue (Goff et al., 2014). Manipulation of the Black males' concept of Blackness is often rooted in intentionally placed systemic barriers such as racialized

surveillance, educational punishments, and disproportionate policing (Alexander, 2010). Eurocentric theoretical frameworks, which are often positioned as the standard and the traditional way of counseling alone, do not fully account for the complexities that a Black male face in adulthood (Curry, 2017). To understand this population of Black males in early adulthood (ages 18-30 years), it must be viewed through the lens of Black liberatory frameworks. Such frameworks acknowledge Blackness, historical trauma, and systematic oppression that are key detriments hindering the growth of Black boys to Black men.

I selected this population because Black males' developmental stages into early adulthood remain underresearched, lacking theories and frameworks to capture the unique challenges faced by Black males. One liberatory theoretical framework that attempts to capture the importance of the distinctive obstacles that Black males face is Dr. Tommy Curry's Black Males Studies, which centers on the structural vulnerability, racial subjugation, and historical dehumanization faced by Black males (Curry, 2017). Transformative Learning Theory, although created from a Eurocentric lens, encompasses prominent features of liberatory frameworks, highlighting the importance of critical reflection, self-definition, and perspective transformation as individuals reinterpret experiences, which would benefit Black men in early adulthood by reconstructing and championing their identity (Mezirow,

1991). Therefore, the purpose of this manuscript is to combine theoretical elements of Transformative Learning Theory and Black Male Studies to support identity reconstruction, discontinuance of survival-based coping, and the examination of systemic barriers, thereby providing a framework to liberate the identities of advancing Black males in early adulthood.

Population

Arnett's (2000) research identifies emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental period characterized by demographic variability, self-reflection, and extensive identity exploration. Although Arnett initially outlined emerging adulthood as ages 18-25, later scholars have argued that the developmental stage could include the entirety of one's twenties. Settersten and Ray (2010) suggested that economic factors such as inflation, recession, and rising unemployment have delayed the traditional progression of an emerging adult's departure from their parents' household, thereby strengthening the argument for expanding the scope of emerging and early adulthood from ages 18-25 to ages 18-30. Burton et al. (2011) suggest that the premature insertion of Black boys into manhood causes them to adopt survival-based coping strategies, which are often maladaptive. Black men in early adulthood with survival-based coping styles, in tandem with distorted views of self and community, are positioned to fail by societal standards (Curry, 2017). Black boys are often not denied the privilege to participate in activities that foster emotional relief and support the strengthening of one's identity due to structurally oppressive practices embedded within educational, familial, and societal systems (Goff et al., 2014; Burton et al., 2011; Curry, 2017).

Curry (2017) and Alexander (2010) assert that these systemic barriers experienced are unique to Black males, often resulting in criminalization and racialized surveillance. For Black men ages 18-30, the rate of incarceration is disproportionately higher than that of their racial counterparts (Alexander, 2010). Understanding the layered complexities for exploring the sociocultural context of Black males in early adulthood will provide insights to build theoretical frameworks to help Black boys as they prepare for early adulthood. Strengthening Black males' preparation for early adulthood requires more than theoretical frameworks; it requires practice and cultural reconstruction. Actionable steps must be taken in the homes during adolescence to halt the process of adultification in the familial setting. The excessive punishment of Black boys, both verbal and physical, can contribute to eroding their concept of self, thereby contributing to the Eurocentric model of oppression (Akbar, 1996; Curry, 2017). Radical shifts in cultural norms, policies, and institutional structures are needed to help both professionals and families transform the lens through which Black youth are being objectified, criminalized, and adultified. To support the radical shift, structures such as counseling must serve as catalysts for Black male empowerment. Counseling, as a discipline, often reflects the state of society, thus often conceptualizing racialized frameworks that alienate specific minority ethnicities and cultures (Akbar, 1996). In particular, Black communities are often targets of such cultural backlash towards minorities, leading to distrust in helping professions (Vontress et al., 2007; Metzl, 2009). Tailored counseling approaches for Black men in early adulthood must reflect collaboration, shared meaning-making, identity reconstruction, and co-leadership, as these aspects were lost to the Black boy as a result of adultification during

adolescence. Therapeutic frameworks such as Black Liberation Narrative Therapy, African-centered Therapy, Existential Therapy, and Transformative Learning Theory include elements that affirm Black males' experiences, enabling them to dismantle maladaptive identities within themselves and their communities. Innovation in traditional counseling approaches is needed to provide Black males with culturally appropriate care.

Black Male Studies and Transformative Learning Theory Frameworks

Historically Black communities were systematically excluded from the counselor sector primarily due to systemic barriers such as limited access to education, economic struggles, and institutionalized racism (Vontress et al., 2007). On rare occasions when Black individuals were welcomed into the field of counseling, they were pathologized and given treatment based on pseudoscience. For example, drapetomania, which was coined the runaway slave syndrome, claimed that enslaved people who decided to flee for freedom were mentally ill. (Akbar, 1991; Metzl, 2009). Such historical trauma has lingering effects in Black communities, resulting in Black individuals remaining suspicious and apprehensive of the field of counseling. The integration of Black Male Studies with Transformative Learning Theory creates a liberatory framework that centers Black men in early adulthood at its theoretical foundation. There is a scarcity of theoretical frameworks that position Black males as the subject instead of the perpetrator. The collaboration of both theories illustrates how oppressive structures, survival-based coping strategies, and racialized gender norms can shape Black males' worldviews in early adulthood (Curry, 2017; Mezirow, 1997). In addition to target racial surveillance and oppressive tactics, Black males face gendered dynamics that

stigmatize seeking clinical help. Across nearly all ethnic groups, females are more likely to engage in counseling services than their male counterparts. Black males are often left carrying the racial and gender pressures resulting from societal norms and systemic oppression (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). These sociocultural forces shame Black males into refusing to attend counseling to explore their self-identity, process significant life transitions, and discontinuance of survival-based coping (Curry, 2017). Due to these complexities that Black males face, Black liberating theories and adult learning theories must intersect to engage Black males entering early adulthood as an act of resistance against oppressive structures.

Numerous adult learning theories aim to connect understanding to lived experience to promote immediate application. Differing from other learning theories, Mezirow (1997), Transformative Learning theory seeks to have individuals develop autonomous thinking. Transformative Learning Theory provides a basis for exploring interventions that benefit Black males' development in early adulthood by guiding them to reflect on and critically examine their lived experiences. Mezirow (1997) suggests that Transformative Learning Theory's core principles, habits of mind, and a point of view are both instrumental during an individual's learning process, therefore impacting their self-identity. Habits of mind are habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and socializing that are shaped by sociocultural norms (Mezirow, 1997). In the context of Black males in early adulthood, many habits of mind are hypervigilance, hypermasculinity, emotional suppression, and survivor's mentality (Curry, 2017). Mezirow's (1997) point of view refers to the specific feelings, judgments, beliefs, and attitudes individuals hold toward specific groups, experiences, or contexts. For Black males in early adulthood, their

points of view can be shaped by the adultification during adolescence, systemic oppressive structures such as the school-to-prison pipeline system, which criminalizes Black boyhood (Goff et al., 2014; Curry, 2017). As a result of these factors, Black males tend to mistrust structures, internalize stressors, and seek survival in early adulthood. Transformative Learning Theory suggests that points of view can be altered after critical examination and the reconstruction of one's self-identity through reflective thought, imaginative problem posing, and interactive engagement to redefine problems within a collaborative framework (Mezirow, 1997). Such transformative learning activities can incorporate expressive art, journaling, storytelling, and role-playing to reduce emotional suppression and empower Black males to seek joy in their daily lives without shame. Black Male Studies is a Black liberatory approach that seeks to capture the lived experiences of Black males, thereby addressing sociocultural norms and historical events that have impeded Black men's progress in society (Curry, 2017). Through Eurocentric lenses and popular culture, Black males are often portrayed primarily as patriarchal aggressors rather than as survivors of systemic violence, oppression, and dehumanization, resulting in a lack of autonomy and safety (Curry, 2017; Metzl, 2009). In addition, Curry (2017) examines the core principle of figurative and literal deaths that Black males encounter through their emergence into early adulthood. Literal deaths encompass physical death and social violence (lynching, shootings, incarceration). Figurative death is categorized as emotional and social erasure, which is prevalent in Black youth during the adultification process (Curry, 2017; Goff et al., 2014).

Laing, Brown, and Hamer's (2021) research on Black boys reveals that the current educational system continues to

play an active role in adultifying Black boys from grades K-12. The repercussion of schools' lack of commitment to provide nurturing environments for Black boys ultimately leads to figurative death, which forces Black boys to navigate their boyhood with limited emotional freedom, heightened surveillance, and adulthood-like responsibilities (Curry, 2017; Laing, Brown, & Hamer, 2021). Curry's (2017) notion of literal death is supported by Alexander's (2010) examination of the school-to-prison pipeline system, which serves as a gateway for Black boys to enter the prison-industrial complex. The school-to-prison pipeline hinders Black boys' development, which results in them being ill-equipped to function at their full capabilities in early adulthood. Such literal death contributes to a generational cycle, leading Black boys to become the male authority figure in a fatherless homes prematurely. Through both literal and figurative death, Black male vulnerability, consisting of sexual, economic, and psychological factors, is suppressed (Curry, 2017).

Case Example

Dashawn is a 24-year-old Black male mandated to receive counseling services as part of his court order. He was recently released from prison after serving five years for grossly negligent vehicular manslaughter. Currently, Dashawn is unemployed; he describes himself as a "failure" and a "disappointment to my family." Raised in subsidized housing complexes, Dashawn grew up in a single-parent household with his mother and two younger sisters. His father was incarcerated throughout his formative years. At age seven, Dashawn's father was killed in suspected gang activity, resulting in internalized fear and shame. By age nine, Dashawn began caring for his two younger sisters, ages three and five, while his mother worked two full-time jobs, thus assuming many adult-like responsibilities.

Dashawn recalls his mother labeling him "the man of the house" after his father's passing. He views himself as a father-like figure to his younger sister, identifying himself as their and his mother's "protector," suggesting a pattern of internalized pressure, hypermasculinity, and emotional suppression (Curry, 2017). Throughout K–12 schooling, Dashawn reported chronic absenteeism and often felt targeted by authoritative figures, resulting in harsh disciplinary measures. During middle school, Dashawn engaged in disruptive behavior, including frequent fights and classroom disruptions. Due to his perceived problematic behavior, he was diagnosed with Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) at age 11, a diagnosis that is often attributed to Black males at a disproportionate rate. ADHD is often unjustly influenced by racialized understandings of behavior rather than objective clinical criteria (Morgan et al., 2013).

Sports, particularly football, became a source of stability and emotional relief from environmental, familial, and educational stressors. Dashawn viewed football as a "way out" for the poverty that afflicted his family. Although football served as a positive outlet, Dashawn recalled feelings of tokenism and continued surveillance by his White peers and school staff. The dual expectations of an athletic talent and a problematic Black male student contributed to Dashawn's current confusion about his self-identity. At age 18, after receiving an athletic scholarship to play football at a community college, Dashawn sustained a significant injury. Dashawn's injury led to the withdrawal of his scholarship, prolonging his internalized shame. In response to his perceived loss of self, he turned to drinking alcohol as a survival-based coping, a pattern that was the catalyst for the incident that led to his incarceration. Dashawn's repeated exposure to unfair school discipline,

familial instability, and oppressive systems demonstrates the active and passive structures that work against the Black males' progression. Dashawn's father's death is the unfortunate literal death that Black males face, one shaped by systemic deprivation, structural violence, and limited economic and educational opportunities that disproportionately impact Black men (Curry, 2017). Dashawn experienced social erasure resulting from his five-year sentence of being incarcerated, thus forfeiting his developmental years in early adulthood. As a result, his identity was shaped under oppressive structural conditions where vulnerability was unsafe; emotional expression was discouraged, and worth was tied to protection and endurance.

Dashawn's habits of mind and point of view originated from oppressive systemic structures identified by the Black Male Studies theoretical framework. Mezirow's (1997) concept of habits of mind aligns with the foundation of Black Males Studies, which emphasizes reflecting on Black males' historical and contemporary experiences. Through the Transformative Learning theory lens, habits of mind and point of view must be critically explored, while encouraging Dashawn to engage in a collaborative reflection process with the clinician (Mezirow, 1997). The sociocultural effects of growing up in a low-socioeconomic-status environment were identified as a primary oppressive system that played an instrumental role in shaping his identity and his worldview. The educational system was identified as the secondary oppressive structure, which resulted in his behavior being framed as problematic. Ultimately, the educational system and his family failed to equip him with the necessary healthy coping strategies to address stressors that may arise during early adulthood (Curry, 2017). Through the Transformative Learning theory lens, habits of mind must be critically explored, while encouraging

Dashawn to engage in a collaborative reflection process with the clinician (Mezirow, 1997). Transformative Learning activities should be grounded in critical dialogue and reflection. Such interventions can include, but are not limited to, journal prompts, creative arts, intentional mindfulness, somatic movement, and role-playing. These activities should be curated for the client's needs. For example, in Dashawn's case, he would benefit from activities aimed at working through feelings of grief and shame, through mindfulness, and somatic techniques to engage the body. Addressing the physiological impacts of grief-related stress allows for reintroduction of physical activities as a healthy coping strategy. Recalling that he used football as a healthy way to cope with oppressive structures. This will serve to build rapport with Dashawn, as he was opposed to attending counseling because he was mandated to do so. Through the integration of Transformative Learning Theory and Black Male Studies, Dashawn will be able to express himself without feeling pressured to suppress his emotions. Throughout Dashawn's process of reconstructing his self-identity, reshaping his point of view and habit of mind, he is no longer defined by adultification, shame, grief, and oppressive structures that shaped his early development. This therapeutic process facilitates personal growth and expands his view of adulthood, Blackness, and himself, cultivating agency and enabling Dashawn to imagine alternative futures beyond the constraints of oppressive systems.

Implications and Conclusions

The integration of Black Male Studies with Transformative Learning Theory offers implications grounded in the cultural and historical backgrounds of Black males. Counselors who aspire to use this framework would welcome clients' lived experiences into the session without

pathologizing them. Therefore, counselors must prioritize collaborative meaning-making, the discontinuation of survival-based coping skills, and the examination of systemic barriers faced by Black males. Implications for research include the need for expanded theoretical frameworks that center Black male subjectivity rather than viewing them as problematic. Future scholarship should explore the differences faced by Black males who identify as interracial and the effects of colorism on Black males' development in early adulthood. Programmatically, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) would benefit from prioritizing the incorporation of Black Male Studies with Transformative Learning Theory in counseling centers to assist with improving retention rates of Black male students through affirming lived experience and reconstructing student identity. In conclusion, this manuscript demonstrates that the Black liberatory theoretical framework, in combination with adult learning theory, is essential for supporting Black men in early adulthood. Transformative Learning Theory offers a pathway to unlearn negative self-perceptions and to reconstruct one's identity, while Black Male Studies ensures that therapeutic work remains accountable to the structurally unique realities Black males have faced and continue to face (Curry, 2017; Mezirow, 1997). When combined, these frameworks position counseling as a liberatory space where Black men can redefine themselves beyond survival.

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URBAN PUBLIC SPACES AS INFORMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS IN CITIES

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ABSTRACT

Urban public spaces play a significant role in shaping youth engagement and the social dynamics of cities, extending beyond recreation to function as informal learning environments. While research on learning has focused on formal settings, a growing body of interdisciplinary work highlights the importance of everyday urban environments for attention, interaction, and experiential learning. This paper presents a structured review of literature on youth engagement in urban public spaces, with an emphasis on visual attention, behavioral interaction, and spatial experience. Drawing on urban studies, environmental psychology, and education research, it synthesizes how spatial attributes such as greenery, safety, comfort, social presence, and visual legibility affect youth participation and engagement. The findings indicate that well-designed public spaces foster curiosity, social interaction, and inclusive learning opportunities, while poorly designed environments tend to limit engagement and reduce experiential quality. The paper reframes public space as a socially embedded learning environment and argues for its role in enhancing inclusivity and engagement in rapidly urbanizing contexts.

Keywords: Urban public spaces; youth engagement; informal learning; social dynamics; environmental perception; inclusive urban design

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