

Sexuality and Contemporary Issues in Black Parenting

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Negotiating the burgeoning sexuality of adolescent children is an age-old challenge for parents of every cultural background. Contemporary parents must also manage increasingly sexualized social media that allow children and adolescents to be sexually engaged in unprecedented ways. For Black parents, this quandary is exacerbated by racism and internalized racism—often expressed through the hypersexualization of African American males and females in music, videos, advertising, and popular culture in general. Additionally, as more diversity regarding sexual orientation in African American families emerges, the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ) Black adolescents must be addressed. This article will outline a conceptual framework for consideration of these issues and make recommendations to assist Black parents in successfully guiding Black adolescents through the development of safe and healthy sexuality.

Keywords: Black children and adolescents, sexual risk behavior, effective parenting

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

African American adolescents are more likely to participate in high-risk sexual behavior and thus risk teen pregnancy and its sequelae of diminished educational and economic opportunities more often than their White counterparts. Results of recent studies by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) show higher rates of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual risk behaviors among African American youths as compared to other ethnic groups (CDC, 2011). According to the CDC, “In 2009, young Blacks accounted for 65% (5,404) of diagnoses of HIV infection reported among persons aged 13–24 years” (CDC, 2011a, p. 1). In addition to disparities in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, African American youths represent a significant proportion of youths diagnosed with other forms of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including chlamydia, gonorrhea, and primary and secondary syphilis (CDC, 2011b).

The CDC’s 2010 Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance data show higher rates of STDs among ethnic groups, especially African Americans (CDC, 2011b). The data reported “Chlamydia rates were highest for Blacks aged 15–19 and 20–24 years in 2010. . . . The Chlamydia rate among Black females aged 15–19 years was 7,719.1 cases per 100,000 females, which was 6.6 times the rate among White females in the same age group (1,172.1)” (CDC, 2011b, p. 70). Similar rates of chlamydia were found in African American males who average 13.1 times the rate among White

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males (CDC, 2011b). In evaluating all racial and ethnic groups, African Americans ages 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 had the highest rates of gonorrhea in 2010 (CDC, 2011b). Black women ages 15 to 19 had a gonorrhea rate of 2,032.4 cases per 100,000 women, which is 17.1 times the rate among White females. Black males ages 15 to 19 had a gonorrhea rate of 1,024.7 cases per 100,000 men, which was 37.4 times the rate among White males (CDC, 2011b). Finally, the rates of primary and secondary syphilis have increased substantially over the years as

During 2006–2010, infection rates among males aged 15–19 years increased the most among Black men (from 14.0 to 24.5 cases per 100,000 population) . . . and in 2010, rates for Black women aged 15–19 years were 38 times the rate for White women of the same age.” (CDC, 2011b, p. 2)

To account for the large disparities in the prevalence of HIV and STDs in the African American adolescent population, researchers have articulated a number of contributing factors including the increasing rate of sexual risk behaviors exhibited by Black youths.

Sexual Risk Behaviors

Sexual risk behaviors are defined as those behaviors that place the individual at greater risk for HIV or STD infection or unwanted pregnancy as well as those behaviors that place the individual at risk for sexual exploitation. Early sexual debut is itself a risk behavior, because the earlier children and adolescents have sex, the less likely they are to be knowledgeable about the risks involved and what they can do to lower the risks (Ohalet, 2007). It has been found that younger youths are less likely to have the skills to negotiate with their partners about taking steps to prevent pregnancy and disease. Younger children and adolescents also have a natural inclination to defer to those older than they, particularly those to whom they feel close. This often means acquiescence to sexual acts that the youths may not desire. Substance use and abuse have also been linked to high risk sexual behaviors (Tubman, Oshri, Taylor, & Morris, 2011; Turchik, Garski, Probst, & Irvin, 2010).

There are risks involved in various types of sexual contact. For example, many youths are unaware that oral herpes and other STDs can be contracted via oral sex. However, having sexual intercourse versus other types of sexual contact such as digital stimulation or oral sex is also a risk behavior that leads to even higher rates of pregnancy and infection. Sex with multiple partners is another risk behavior that places children and adolescents in greater jeopardy. The prevalence of sexual risk behaviors among African American youths (grades 9–12) was higher than that among their Hispanic and White peers in the following areas: had actual sexual intercourse (65.2%, 49.1%, 42.0%, respectively); first sexual intercourse before age 13 (15.2%, 6.7%, 3.4%, respectively); intercourse with four or more persons (28.6%, 14.2%, 10.5%, respectively); and currently sexually active (47.7%, 34.6%, 32%, respectively; Frieden, Briss, Stephens, & Thacker, 2010).

These data beg the question “Why are Black youths so much more sexually active than other youths?” Researchers point out that many aspects of parenting affect youths’ sexual risk behavior. “As central socializing agents for children, parents provide emotional connections, behavioral constraints, and modeling that affect children’s development of self-regulation, emotional expression, and expectations regarding behaviors and relationships” (Coley, Schindler, & Votruba-Drzal, 2009, p. 809). Family relationships are central in shaping sexuality and indeed all relational patterns. How parents relate to other family members, employers, and co-workers and the world at large impacts how children see these phenomena, so quite naturally parents have a central role in socializing their children regarding sexuality. Parents shape and model how sex is to be conceptualized and experienced emotionally (i.e., with shame and embarrassment versus with candor and self-confidence). Parents also model how power is negotiated in intimate relationships. It is through the

family that children develop an understanding, or lack thereof, as to how to connect emotionally and spiritually to their sexuality. This in turn affects their sexual expression as it appears in their dress, demeanor, mannerisms, and behaviors. It also impacts their expectations for themselves and others with regard to intimate relationships.

If parents do not offer guidance as to the meaning of love, sex, and intimate relationships, youths have no choice but to make inferences based on what is seen and heard in their environment. These environmental factors include the language and behavior of those around them and the television, music, and internet messages they are inundated with. Furthermore, the advent of social media has brought with it the capacity for children to gain information about sex and participate in sexual behaviors in ways unavailable to previous generations (Kanuga & Rosenfeld, 2004). In efforts to protect and monitor children's access to social media, it is important to address barriers faced by parents of lower socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic factors such as poverty, lack of education, as well as patterns of disproportionate and often intergenerational family violence may diminish some Black parents' capacity and resources to provide guidance about sexuality to their children. For these reasons, Black youths are at a heightened risk of being socialized and educated about sexuality through popular culture and social media.

Sexually Explicit Music

In its policy statement on the impact of music, music lyrics, and music videos on children and youth, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2009) states that

The effect that popular music has on children's and adolescents' behavior and emotions is of paramount concern. Lyrics have become more explicit in their references to drugs, sex, and violence over the years, *particularly in certain genres* (emphasis added). A teenager's preference for certain types of music could be correlated or associated with certain behaviors. As with popular music, the perception and the effect of music-video messages are important, because research has reported that exposure to violence, sexual messages, sexual stereotypes, and use of substances of abuse in music videos might produce significant changes in behaviors and attitudes of young viewers. Pediatricians and parents should be aware of this information. Furthermore, with the evidence portrayed in these studies, it is essential for pediatricians and parents to take a stand regarding music lyrics. (p. 1488)

Clearly one of the "certain genres" referenced in the above quotation is Hip Hop and R&B music, which increasingly contain sexually explicit lyrics including lyrics that are misogynist and sexually demeaning to women. Of the top 50 Billboard Hip Hop/R&B songs, 45% ($n = 20$) of the songs contained either sexually explicit lyrics, derogatory lyrics toward women, or both (Billboard, 2012). This did not include songs that may have had explicitly violent lyrics. Of the 20, all of the songs contained sexually explicit lyrics (i.e., making direct references to sexual activity). Nine of the 20 songs had lyrics that were both sexually explicit and derogatory toward women. Overall, 18% of the songs contained lyrics that were both derogatory and sexually explicit. To illustrate, the current number-one Hip Hop song as listed by Billboard is "Make Me Proud" by Drake and Nicki Minaj, which states "I always ride slow when I'm straddling and my sh*t so wet you gotta paddle in" (Graham, Maraj, Williams, Seetharam, & Shebib, 2011, Track 10). The number-four song, "Dance" by Big Sean, contains lyrics too vulgar to even be quoted here. The number-five song, Ni**as in Paris by Hip Hop icons Kanye West and Jay-Z (who is married to Beyonce) states, "I got that hot bi**h in my home, you know how many hot bi**hes I own" (West & Carter, 2011, Track 3).

The significance of the impact of such lyrics on African American males' and females' self-concept is not to be underestimated. For many young Black women, Beyonce is an icon: a symbol of Black female power and success. What does marriage mean if a woman of her stature

is described as a “hot bi**h” by her husband in a hit song? What does sex mean if it is sung about as Nicki Minaj describes it or as Big Sean describes it? More important, how can the implicit values that even the most involved and evolved parents believe they are instilling in their children compete with such explicit messages?

These messages invite youths to conceptualize sexuality as a means to gain power and self-gratification (Hill Collins, 2004). Some parents envisage but do not explicitly articulate more comprehensive notions of sexuality, such as sex as an act of generosity not selfishness, an act of sacred union or an experience of emotional and spiritual intimacy. However these conceptualizations are not even vaguely associated with what contemporary youths are inundated with about sexuality. This has a direct impact on the disempowerment of young women. For example, young women may not expect to have sexual partners who are emotionally engaged, because in addition to the articulation of dissonance between love and sex in contemporary music, they may also grow up in families where sexual power is not considered female. Many families follow a patriarchal structure that defers female needs and desires to those of the male. The notion that she comes first both literally and metaphorically in the sexual context is foreign to most adolescent women engaging in intimate relationships. Conversely, males are not encouraged to develop their sexual identity in tandem with their emotional evolution but rather are encouraged to view sex as conquest, domination, and empowering for those reasons. This in essence enfeebles their capacity to have an integrated experience in intimate relationships.

Thus, it is important for parents to articulate clear conceptualizations of gender identity so that youths do not define being male or female based on social norms that reflect internalized sexism or notions of masculinity that link it to homophobia and domination of women.

Sexually Explicit Internet Material

In addition to the impact made by sexually explicit music, studies indicate that exposure to sexually explicit Internet material is linked with sexual risk behavior (Peter & Valkenburg, 2011). A relationship has also been established between sexually explicit material on the Internet and the experience of exploitation amongst adolescents (Baumgartner, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010). Furthermore, a study of 500 publicly available profiles of 18-year-olds on MySpace showed that 24% of these youths referenced sexual behavior on their public pages. Of course, not all sexually active youths would post about it on a public website. However, the following authors point out that

The population of adolescents who display this information may represent a higher-risk population who is willing to showcase sexual behaviors in a public venue. Furthermore, regardless of whether adolescents actually engage in displayed behaviors, public sexual behavior displays can have unintended and lasting effects. The display of health risk information online may potentially attract unwanted online attention, such as from sexual predators or negatively affect future employment opportunities. These displays may also promote modeling of risk behaviors among other adolescents. Several factors make MySpace a particularly powerful setting for the modeling of risk behavior. First, risk behavior is widely displayed. Second, most MySpace users are similar in that they are adolescents and young adults—media models who are perceived to be similar to oneself are more likely to be imitated than those who are not. Third, the MySpace interface makes it easy to locate and connect with users who share interests, thereby amplifying the likelihood that modeling will occur. Indeed, MySpace facilitates exposure to far more varied peer behavior than does the average user’s face-to-face network. (Moreno, Parks, Zimmerman, Brito, & Christakis, 2009, p. 31)

Therefore, as adolescents begin look to social media as an outlet for role modeling and sexual expression, it is important to explore with them the meaning and impact of these on their attitudes and behaviors regarding sex.

PARENTING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEXUAL IDENTITY

Another important issue for contemporary parents is the increasingly visible diversity regarding sexual orientation and gender expression. It is important to note that a non-heterosexist approach to parenting is useful to all parents as children and adolescents are less likely to share their true feelings about attraction to people of the same gender if parents are overtly homophobic or heterosexist (Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). Also parents who express vehement condemnation of homosexuality may inadvertently incite their children to bully youths whom they believe to be gay, thus prompting their children to commit dangerous and perhaps even criminal acts against their peers. Part of the natural process of gaining clarity about one's sexual feelings and identity are exploration and experimentation. As society becomes more open to and about the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning (LGBTQ) people, adolescents will naturally consider their own sexual feelings in light of this new information (Ryan, 2007).

It is common for young people to be aware of sexual feelings for people of the same gender or even have a sexual encounter with a person of the same gender without identifying as non-heterosexual (Majied, 2010). Indeed, it may be useful to respectfully inform youths who are attracted to either the same or opposite sex that their current feelings may not be a final determinant of their sexual identity. If parents can articulate a notion of sexuality that describes it as evolving on a continuum, explaining that whom and what one is attracted to changes over time as one grows, young people can more readily adapt to these changes in their feelings and experience. This will also decrease the likelihood that they will assume a sexual identity or persona prematurely based on their attractions and feelings at the moment and/or the influences of their environment and social media.

Furthermore, many parents of youth who do identify as LGBTQ articulate not knowing that their child was non-heterosexual or transgendered until their child was being bullied or other negative consequences of homophobia began to emerge. Hence parents often find out their child is LGBTQ after there is a painful incident of some kind (Cahill, Battle, & Meyer, 2003). Due to social pressure to keep their sexual orientation secret so as to avoid shame at minimum and violence at worst, LGBTQ youths are more likely to engage in sexual behavior in dangerous venues so as not to be discovered. As there are fewer resources for these youths, particularly in some geographic areas, they often are easy marks for predators as they have no other guides through their experience (Majied, 2008).

For these reasons it is useful to integrate some discussion of the diversity of human sexuality into all discussions about sexuality, since often parents, educators, clinicians, and others engaging with youths do not know what sexual orientation and identity issues the youth under their purview may be negotiating (Szymanski & Gupta, 2009). Most parents and educators assume that the youths in their care are heterosexual and thus often overlook and close the door to discussions of the real sexual issues the youths may be negotiating.

In light of these realities, it is useful to pay further attention to how to assist Black parents in imbuing their children and adolescents with values, information, and skills that protect them from sexual risk behavior and exploitation (Parkes, Henderson, Wight, & Nixon, 2011). African American parents' engagement or disengagement with their children about sexuality is of particular interest as Black youths face such increased risk of sexual activity and STDs.

For various reasons, African American parents often do not give children any real information about what the meaning of sex is, how it is related to love, and what is involved in a healthy intimate relationship. Oftentimes these parents feel that if they simply say nothing about sex or threaten their children with severe consequences, this is enough to thwart any sexual behavior or inquiry. However, research is showing the opposite result: Parents who do not discuss sexuality at all or who simply threaten children with consequences actually have higher incidences of children

involved in risky sexual behavior. Hence the youths' natural curiosity about sex is being addressed in and by music, social media, and other environmental sources. If children do not receive detailed information from parents that contradicts the explicit messages they receive elsewhere, then non-parental influences will shape and define adolescent sexuality.

Effective Parental Involvement

Family systems models and empowerment perspectives are useful in understanding the bidirectional relationships between parent and child attitudes and behavior. Not only are children reacting to parents' engagement around sexual behavior, parents are reacting to children's emerging sexuality and the behaviors around it. As Coley et al. (2009) state,

In the field of developmental psychopathology, scholars have extrapolated such a transactional perspective and argued that antisocial or problem behaviors and ineffective or negative parenting practices co-evolve, exerting bidirectional influences on one another. (Dishon, Nelson, & Bullock, 2004; Patterson, Reid, & Dishon, 1992, p. 809)

As youths begin to participate in risky sexual behaviors, they often detach from their parents. Conversely, parents often disassociate from or relate more negatively with their children when the children become sexually active, thus providing, more opportunities for the young person to act out sexually. Put simply, negative parenting practices tend to reinforce negative behavior, and negative behavior tends to reinforce negative parenting practices. In order to interrupt this vicious cycle, parents must use empowered positive parenting that can lead to empowered positive sexual attitudes and behavior among youths.

Parenting Practices that Reduce Risk Behavior

It is clear that dialogue about the very basics of sexual risk reduction will have some impact on decreasing risky sexual behavior. Studies indicate that increased condom use by youths is augmented by parents talking with their children about using condoms (Hadley et al., 2009; Udell, Donenberg, & Emerson, 2011; Elkington, Baumeister, & Zimmerman, 2011). However, simply telling youths "Don't have sex and if you do, use a condom" is clearly not enough to help them conceptualize healthy sexuality, develop age-appropriate intimate relationships, protect themselves from exploitation, or prevent them from exploiting others. One approach to effective parenting is to integrate various types of parental monitoring into the parent-child relationship (Sneed, Stachman, Nguyen, & Morisky, 2009).

For more liberal parents, the notion of monitoring often brings to mind notions of "big brother" infringing on their child's rights to privacy. Conversely, the more conservative parent may be tempted to over-monitor children, thus prompting deception and other attempts to covertly gain autonomy. Cottrell et al. (2007) identify six styles of monitoring that can be incorporated to create an effective parental monitoring paradigm. Direct monitoring refers to engaging directly with one's children, attending activities with them or talking with them about what they have been doing or plan to do. Indirect monitoring refers to parents talking with friends or associates of their children as well as to parents of their friends in order to have a sense of the activities and relationships that youths are involved in. It should be noted that this type of monitoring can be experienced as less intrusive to the young person if parents build positive relationships with their children's friends and parents of friends, rather than just using them as instruments to monitor their children. School monitoring refers to both contact with schools and engaging with one's child about school issues working on homework and other school projects together. This would ideally include involvement in school activities and dialogues that address sexuality.

Health monitoring means engaging with children and adolescents about nutrition, exercise, general health, and mental health. This aspect of parental monitoring can certainly be expanded to include sexual health discussions where parents provide information about both the physical and emotional aspects of sexual well-being. Such dialogues, particularly when conducted with a tone of support and respect for the youth's experience, can provide opportunities for parents to ask children how they feel about their developing bodies and budding sexuality. Parents can candidly ask youths about what feelings they are negotiating around sexual desire and discuss with the youth how to manage these feelings. Obviously, youths discuss topics such as masturbation, pornography, and sexual desire with one another, so if parents wish for their input to matter, they must present it in a way that is meaningful to the young person. If these discussions can be held without condemnation and shame, the youths are more likely to feel safe discussing such issues with parents.

This type of dialogue also provides an opportunity to talk about physical boundaries balanced with the natural human need for closeness and affection. Giving children age-appropriate information about how and when it is suitable to touch and be touched by others can facilitate youths' understanding of sexual exploitation from an early age. This will serve to reduce the likelihood of youths becoming either perpetrators or victims of sexual exploitation. If these kinds of dialogues are initiated in early childhood, they may continue naturally into adolescence. Computer monitoring is clearly indicated not only to facilitate protecting youths from predacious websites and individuals but to allow them access to the wealth of resources available about sexual health and well-being that are available on the internet. Phone monitoring, particularly with youths who have mobile phones will allow parents to track how youths are using these devices to engage in sexual risk behavior. Sexting, the transmission of sexual content via cell phones, Internet, and other electronic media, is behavior that may have serious emotional, social, and legal consequences for youths (Mitchell et al., 2012). The recent suicide of a youth shortly after images were released of him engaged in sexual activity with another male is one example of this. Youths must be advised that sexual content that they post electronically creates enduring records of their own private lives and the lives of those they sexually engage with (Kimberly, Findelhor, Jones, & Wolak, 2012).

Music monitoring is clearly indicated in light of the issues highlighted earlier. However, engaging with children around music positively is more likely to be effective than telling them not to listen to it at all. In a survey of youth attitudes about misogyny in Hip Hop, Gourdine and Lemmons (2011) found that

The youths assumed that most of the adults had preconceived notions about the negativity of hip hop and rap music and, as a result, discussions regarding aspects of the music were initially strained. Further, the youths expressed concern that there were different genres of hip hop and rap music and that one needed to understand the history of those artists who fell into what they termed "conscious" and "unconscious" categorizations. Most of the adults on the committee felt that the music was offensive and did not rise to the level of artistry that the music of their generation had, even while admitting earlier forms of hip hop and rap music were acceptable to them (p. 2).

This highlights the need for parental interaction with youths regarding music. Banning a genre of music is likely to be less effective than listening to music with young people and discussing positive and negative messages contained therein. In this way, parents allow the young person to develop critical thinking about music and the degree to which they allow popular culture to influence their personal lives and decisions. Listening to all types of music with one's children may serve to expand their notions of what music is. Also listening to children's preferred genres of music with them and discussing it, especially when it contains sexually suggestive content, allows them to acknowledge their enjoyment of the wit, audaciousness, and rhythms of such music while still critiquing it from the standpoint of values. If parents approach their children

with inquiry, as opposed to judgment, in regard to their musical choices, this allows the youths to develop the capacity to make good decisions for themselves about music and other socio-cultural influences.

Parental Warmth as a Protective Factor

Another important aspect of effective parenting is parental warmth. Parental warmth is identified as a preventive factor with regard to youths' sexual risk behavior. This makes sense intuitively as for many people, young and old, sex serves as a means of experiencing physical closeness and intimacy. Research indicates that when parents are affectionate with their youths and engage with them positively in a variety of activities, youth are less likely to participate in sexual risk behavior (Deptula, Schoeny, & Henry, 2010; Kapungu et al., 2006). Attachment theory dictates that early experiences with caregivers provide a blueprint for how children will approach and participate in intimate relationships (Feeney, Peterson, Gallois, & Terry, 2000). Disengaged parenting can lead to children's seeking closeness in maladaptive and risky ways that place them at risk for disease, unwanted pregnancy, and/or exploitation.

Parental Engagement with Youth on Family Values

Due to the increasingly hectic pace of life, particularly in families that negotiate significant social stressors as Black families do, finding time to regularly and positively imbue youths with a sense of values can be difficult. However, such communication is invaluable in providing youths a framework to assess and engage their day-to-day reality (Murry, Brody, McNair et al., 2005). Often the only time values are discussed is when there has been a perceived violation, and then the conversation is often hostile and punitive toward the youth. Other approaches that seek to proactively communicate with young people in a more empowering fashion have been shown to be more effective. According to researchers Murry et al. (2011), "The extent to which conversations between parents and youths are emotionally and instrumentally supportive appears to be important in buffering African American Adolescents against precocious sexual activity (Murry, 1996; Wills, Mariani, & Filer, 1996). In addition, youths who believe their parents will listen to them without criticizing them tend to engage in more discussions with their parents" (p. 1163). The authors go on to state that imbuing children with a sense of racial pride and positive perceptions of their heritage and history as African Americans serves to contradict the stereotypical images proffered by popular culture and social media and reduces the risk of adolescent sexual risk behavior. For children and adolescents who have such pride and awareness, the hypersexualization of African Americans is seen clearly in the light of the historical racism that spawned it, and they are less likely to internalize these images as part of their sexual self-concept.

Parenting Trainings, Manuals, and Interventions

Many parents, particularly African American parents, attempt to raise their children using the same guidelines, or lack thereof, with which they were parented. This has proven ineffective as times change and access to sexual information and experience that was previously unavailable is now literally at the fingertips of contemporary youths. In light of this, making use of trainings, literature, and interventions that have proven effective at reducing sexual risk behavior must be a part of the contemporary African American's parenting repertoire. For example, a study of a parent-based intervention administered to lower sexual risk behavior in early adolescence found that the groups of parents and youths who participated in the intervention (which included parent training, written materials targeted to both parents and youths, as well as "booster sessions" to

support parents in using what they learned) reduced rates of sexual activity and frequency of sexual intercourse in the population studied (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2011).

Additionally, the researchers found that nature of the dialogue that parents hold with youths about sexuality must focus on issues of concern to the youths. That is to say that many parents focus the conversation on health concerns, whereas for many youths, their principal concerns regarding sex are social concerns. Young people often view sex as a means of connecting socially, gaining popularity, and bolstering their sense of themselves as attractive. Part of the folly and freedom of youth is fearlessness and a sense of immortality, so if parents approach the conversation about sex from the standpoint of health only, it may seem impertinent to the young persons' most pressing concerns. Conversely, by heightening youths' awareness of the negative impact that premature and risky sexual activity can have on them socially (i.e., the disfiguring nature of herpes and AIDS lesions, the damage to one's social reputation sexualized social media can cause), youths may be more likely to consider these issues before taking such risks.

In summary, contemporary youths and family service providers and parents of Black youths must face the reality that in this new age, Black youths' engagement in risky sexual behavior is on the rise as are the negative consequences associated with it. However, by focusing attention on improving the quality of their relationships with their youths, engaging with them positively regarding sexuality, music, and social media and accessing resources to support them in doing so, Black parents can guide their children toward a safe and enriching experience of sexuality. Doing so not only protects them from harm but contributes to their well-being and that of their community.

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