



Pathways to Resiliency, Strength and Recovery

Date: Friday, May 6, 2016

Location: Regis University Lowell Campus, Denver, CO

Time: 1:15 - 2:15 p.m.

Track: Resiliency

Breakout Session Title:

The Role of Resiliency Among African American Female Veterans: A Qualitative Study

Presenter: **Lisa A. Brenner, Ph.D. & Lindsey L. Monteith, Ph.D.**, Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center, Denver VAMC and University of Colorado School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and **Brooke A. Dorsey Holliman, Ph.D.**, Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center, Denver VAMC

Abstract:

The suicide rate among African American females is the lowest of all racial and gender groups, thus has received little attention from suicide researchers. Limiting suicide research to white males provides a limited perspective that fails to acknowledge cultural and social determinants of health. There are specific historical and cultural circumstances unique to each racial and gender group, and these differentially shape factors that increase or decrease vulnerability and resilience. Understanding the impacts of resiliency may enhance our understanding of protective factors and, ultimately, novel suicide prevention strategies. Our aim was to examine resiliency and culture among African American female Veterans, while also uncovering protective features that reduce suicide risk in this population. Qualitative interviews were conducted with African American female Veterans. Interview questions focused on cultural beliefs and practices, in addition to the precipitants to acquiring resiliency. Veterans described developing resiliency from exposure to adversity. The prominence of different aspects of religion suggests that they are likely an

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important element of protecting against suicidal thoughts and behaviors in this population. When describing reasons for living and deterrents to suicide, Veterans frequently mentioned the impact that suicide would have on their loved ones. Results underscore the potential importance of specific cultural beliefs and practices as protecting against suicide among African American female Veterans.