The Impact of Racism on Children and Adolescents

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A little background...
Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.

2nd Annual Convention of the Medical Committee for Human Rights
March 25, 1966
Martin Luther King, Jr.

• “We are concerned about the constant use of federal funds to support this most notorious expression of segregation. Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman because it often results in physical death. I see no alternative to direct action and creative nonviolence to raise the conscience of the nation”
What’s in a Word?

- Inhumane: pitiless or lacking compassion
- Inhuman: cruel, monstrous, and barbaric; to lack all human qualities
Goal

• To recognize the negative impact of racism on the development, behavior and health of children and adolescents
Objectives

• Definitions
• Historical context
• Review of the literature
• Recommendations:
  • Personal
  • Practice
  • Community
Definitions
Bias

• Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair

• Explicit Bias
  • Openly expressed
  • Aware of Bias
  • Operates Consciously

• Implicit Bias
  • Expressed indirectly
  • Unaware of bias
  • Operates Unconsciously
Implicit Bias

“A tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc, are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly.”

**Explicit Bias:** Conscious attitudes that can be self-reported

**Implicit Bias:** Unconscious attitudes that lie below the surface, but may nevertheless influence behaviors
Race

• Originally considered a category of kinship or affiliation
  • Sharing a common ancestor
• Shift during European colonization of the Caribbean and North America
  • Enslavement of native people
  • Transatlantic slave trade
  • Indentured servitude
• An American Social Construct
  • Bacon’s Rebellion, 1676
    • Eventually became based on some phenotypic features of groups of people
• Allowed/Justified extermination of Native Americans, enslavement of Africans, exclusion of Asian immigrants in the US, etc.
• With time has become more ambiguous
Ahyoka “Niki”

• “In our [Keetoowah Cherokee] traditional way of life, we believe that I don’t tell you who you are, you tell me who you are, and that is who you are.
Racism

- Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior
- The belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races
- Racism includes 2 main components:
  - Racial Prejudice: a set of discriminatory or derogatory attitudes based on assumptions deriving from perceptions about race or skin color
  - Social Power: historically social, political, and economic privilege bestowed upon some groups
Levels of Racism

• Systemic
  • Racial bias across institutions and society
  • Example: The racial wealth gap reflects the cumulative effects of racial inequities

• Institutional
  • Racial inequities within institutions and systems of power
  • Example: school systems that provide unequal opportunities for people of different races

• Interpersonal
  • How we act upon our racial beliefs when we interact with others

• Internalized
  • The private racial beliefs held by individuals
  • These can be both conscious and unconscious, held toward oneself or toward others
A Gardener’s Tale

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7M0du3lS7rA
Institutionalized/Structural Racism

- Redlining
  - Systemic denial of capital investments in some neighborhoods
  - Denial of services such as mortgage lending, health care, grocery stores and transportation
- Education
  - School funding is based upon property values
  - Schools in redlined neighborhoods have fewer resources and poorer outcomes
- School-to-Prison Pipeline
  - Policing in poor performing schools

Differences in soil of the flower boxes
The gardener choosing not to have good soil in both
Prevention of the pink seeds from getting into the box with the red flowers
Interpersonal Racism

• Bias in Educators
• Differences in discipline of students
• Microaggressions

Prevention of the seeds from the pink flower box to enter the red flower box
Gardener nurturing the red flowers instead of the pink flowers
Microaggressions

• Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities
• May be intentional or unintentional
• Communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDd3bzA7450
Internalized Racism

• Members of stigmatized groups accept negative messages about their own abilities and self-worth

• Many be manifested by:
  • Poor school performance
  • Engagement in high risk behaviors
  • High drop out rates
  • Stereotype Threat

Pink flowers not allowing bees to pollinate them
• Racism is a social determinant of health that has a profound impact on the health status of children, adolescents, emerging adults, and their families.

• Although progress has been made toward racial equality and equity, the evidence to support the continued negative impact of racism on health and well-being through implicit and explicit biases, institutional structures, and interpersonal relationships is clear. Failure to address racism will continue to undermine health equity for all children, adolescents, emerging adults and their families.
Normal Development of Racial Awareness
Preschool: Ages 2-5 years

- Interested in physical characteristics
- Learning to distinguish colors for objects vs. social meaning of colors with race
- Classify people by skin tone
- Racial prejudice has not developed
Early School Age (Ages 5-8 years)

• Conscious of social groups
• Peer oriented
• Emerging concept of ‘fairness’ and ‘unfairness’
• Racial prejudice may begin at this age
Late School Age: Ages 9-12 years

• Understands interaction between individuality and group membership
• Better able to perceive unfairness
• Understands concept of humanity and ancestry
Adolescence: Ages 12+ years

• Values are solidified, including prejudices
• 2nd peak of prejudice can occur at this age
Impact of Racism on Academics, Behavior and Child Health
Academics

• Inequitable funding in education
• Less experienced teachers
• Less challenging curricula
• Resource allocation
Discipline

- Pre-school to prison pipeline
  - Police officers placed in schools
  - Disciplinary policies and practices criminalizing youth
  - Disproportionately higher amount of black students receive harsher punishments, in-school arrests and funneled into the justice system

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rspZv2a0Pp8
Academics: Youth Perception

• Ethnically diverse urban public school youth report:
  • Receiving lower grades than deserved
  • Being discouraged from taking advanced classes
  • Unfair disciplinary actions
Academics: Impact of Racism

• Experiences of discrimination in school associated with:
  • Poor school engagement
  • Poor academic motivation
  • Stereotype threat
    • Fear of confirming stereotypes about one’s social group
    • Manifests as self-doubt and anxiety that depletes working memory and leads to poor standardized test scores
    • Can impact academic performance of marginalized groups
Behavioral Health: Toxic Stress

• Chronic elevation of stress hormones
• Increased burden on the immune system
• Stress on end organs
  • Cardiac: increased risk on cardiac disease
  • Pulmonary: increased risk of COPD
  • Neural/Psychiatric: increased risk of substance abuse, depression, suicide
• Brain changes
  • Decreased neuronal connections in prefrontal cortex and hippocampus
  • Increased neuronal connections and activity in the amygdala
• DNA changes
  • Methylation
  • Acetylation
Behavioral Health

• Emotional distress
• Depressive symptoms
• Toxic Stress
• Anxiety
• Hopelessness and powerlessness
• Delinquent behaviors
• Violence
• Aggression
• Giving up
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

• Traditional ACEs
  • Abuse
    • Physical
    • Emotional
    • Sexual
  • Neglect
    • Physical
    • emotional
  • Household dysfunction
    • Domestic Violence
    • Parental mental health
    • Substance use
    • incarceration

• Additional ACEs
  • Witness to violence
  • Unsafe neighborhood
  • Racism/discrimination
  • Victimization/bullying
  • Foster care
Discrimination and Mental Health in a Representative Sample of African American and Afro-Caribbean Youth
Lee M. Pachter, Cleopatra H. Caldwell, James S. Jackson, Bruce A. Bernstein

• National Survey of Life (NSAL)-University of Michigan 2001-2004
  • Evaluated 810 African American and Afro-Caribbean Adolescents
  • >86% reported experiencing at least one discriminatory experience
  • Discrimination associated with 12-month and lifetime of anxiety and depression

Pachter, 2017
The Detrimental Influence of Racial Discrimination on Child Health in the United States
Ashaunta T. Anderson, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.H.S.,1 Lewis Luartz, M.A., M.Ed, Nia Heard-Garris, M.D., M.Sc., Keith Widaman, Ph.D., Paul J. Chung, M.D., M.S.2

• Evaluated 95,677 children using the 2011-2012 National Survey of Children’s Health.

• Children who experience racial discrimination are at higher risk for poor health as mediated by mental health.

• Children who experienced racial discrimination also had decreased "excellent health" status as compared to those who did not

• Children who experienced racial discrimination were more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD
Biased-Based Harassment

• 2008-2009 Dane County Youth Assessment (Wisconsin) and 2007-2008 California Healthy Kids Survey
  • Biased-based Harassment is defined as being harassed in the last 12 months due to race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or sexual identity
  • Those who suffered biased-based harassment were more likely to experience substance use, truancy and violence
Justin P.
Chicago, Illinois

• “I remember I stopped sitting in the lunchroom because they had divided the table, and they had put on one side and said, ‘This is the Mexican border, and you can’t cross it to sit with us’. I didn’t know what to say. I just left”.
CHILD HEALTH OUTCOMES
Impact of vicarious racism on child health

Maternal Experiences of Racism

Pre-Birth, Maternal Pathway

Mediators
Depressive symptoms
Gestational age

Moderators
Ethnicity (Hispanic)

Child/Youth Health Outcomes
Preterm birth
Cortisol reactivity
Birthweight

Vicarious Racism

Post-Birth, Caregiver Pathway

Mediators
Parental mental health (e.g., parental depression)
Undesirable parenting practices (e.g., harsh parenting)
Carer negative affect balance
Child/youth distress

Moderators
Parental ethnic-group attachment
Parental acculturation
Child/youth cultural socialization

Child/Youth Health Outcomes

Post-Birth, Non-Caregiver Pathway

Mediators
None studied

Moderators
None studied

Child/Youth Health Outcomes
Depressive symptoms

Child/Youth Health Outcomes
Physical Health
BMI
General illness
Weight-for-age

Mental Health
Depressive Symptoms
Anxiety
Substance Use
Well-being

Socioemotional Health
Externalizing behavior
Internalizing behavior
Socioemotional difficulties
Self-esteem
Positive behavior

Child/Youth Development
Cognitive Development (e.g., visuospatial)

Health Care Utilization
Frequency of sick-child visits

Heard-Garris, Soc Sci Med, 2018
Pediatric Health Disparities

“Racial/ethnic disparities in children’s health and healthcare are quite extensive, pervasive, and persistent”

Flores and The Committee on Pediatric Research, Pediatrics, 2010
PERSONALLY MEDIATED RACISM IN HEALTHCARE

“Bias, stereotyping, prejudice and clinical uncertainty on the part of health care providers may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in health care.”

Smedley, Stith, Nelson, Unequal Treatment, 2002
Health Disparities

• “A number of factors contribute to these disparities, including socioeconomic status, limited health insurance coverage, and low health literacy and limited English proficiency among caretakers, all of which are more common among children from racial/ethnic minority groups”.

Next Steps/Recommendations
Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

“To go beyond race, we have to go through race”.
C.S. Lewis

• “You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending”.
Liberation
Personal
# How to Become an Anti-Racist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptance Teaches</th>
<th>Anti-Racism Teaches</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be comfortable in your skin</td>
<td>Being uncomfortable is how you learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone is equal</td>
<td>Value each other’s differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do as I say</td>
<td>Do as I do</td>
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<tr>
<td>I want to give my child diverse culture in school</td>
<td>Advocate for all children in school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read from authors we know and trust</td>
<td>Diversify your media diet to include more voices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teach them as much as you know about racism</td>
<td>Learn more and keep learning more</td>
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<tr>
<td>Come with good intentions</td>
<td>Know your impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acknowledge that racism is wrong</td>
<td>Intervene when racist acts occur</td>
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Metro Parent Magazine, August 2020
You can start today!

- Step 1: Understand your biases
- Step 2: Educate yourself
  - US History
  - Social Media
- Step 3: Embark on a personal journey
  - Do something every day that allows you to re-wire your brain to actively catch yourself
  - Peel back the blinders (eg 21 day equity challenge)
- Step 4: explore and expand social circle; get outside of comfort zone
- Step 5: Speak up
  - When racist or discriminatory events occur
  - When events against your values occur
  - “See something, say something”

REMINDER: This is a marathon, not a sprint (mindful practice)
Resources

The 1619 Project

Pediatrics

The Death of George Floyd: Bending the Arc of History Towards Justice for Generations of Children

Benard D. Dreyer, MD, Maria Trent, MD, MPH, Ashantia T. Anderson, MD, George L. Askew, MD, Rick Boyd, MD, MPH, Tunmise R. Coker, MD, MBA, Tamera Coyte-Beasley, MD, MPH, Elena Fuentes-Aflick, MD, MPH, Tiffini Johnson, MD, Fernando Menendez, MD, Dana Meistrell Williams, MD, Zaneta O. Owusu, MD, MPH, Patricia Potowski, MD, MSc, Adhika A. I. Speaks-Franklin, MD, MPH, Olivia W. Thomas, MD, Leslie Walker-Harding, MD, Ernestine Willis, MD, Joseph L. Wright, MD, MPH, Stephen Berman, MD, Jay Berkheiser, MD, Kneer R. Jenkins, MD, Colleen Knott, MD, MBA, Judith Pallardy, MD, James M. Puzino, MD, Fernando Stein, MD

Opinion

I’m Sick of Asking Children to Be Resilient

It’s time for reparations and resources and to not expect kids to “rise above.”

By Mona Hanna-Attisha

Dr. Hanna-Attisha is a pediatrician and professor at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine.

May 22, 2020

FLINT, Mich. — A baby born in Flint, where I am a pediatrician, is likely to live almost 20 fewer years than a child born elsewhere in the same county. She’s a baby like any other, with wide eyes, a growing brain and a vast, bottomless innocence — too innocent to understand the injustices that without her knowing or choosing

Uncomfortable Conversations With A Black Man

Implicit Bias Resource Guide

Tell Me Who You Are

NICHQ

Embrace Race

Raising A Brave Generation
If you want to better understand racism and systemic racism, and what it means to be an ally, learn more:

Trevor Noah shares his thoughts on current events and the domino-effect of racial injustice.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4amCfVbA_c

Systemic racism affects every area of life in the United States from incarceration to banking. Here is a closer look at systemic racism and how we can correct it.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrHIQjO_bdQ

Maintaining Professionalism In The Age of Black Death Is….A Lot by Shenequa Golding

https://medium.com/@shenequagolding/maintaining-professionalism-in-the-age-of-black-death-is-a-let-5e0cc5017565

6 Steps Everyone Can Take To Become An Ally In White, Male-Dominated Workplaces by Ethan Siegel


White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism
Dr. Robin DiAngelo reads from her book, which explains the phenomenon, and discusses how white people can develop their capacity to engage more constructively across race.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45ey4jg0xsU
Practice

• Create a culturally safe medical home
• Provide anticipatory guidance to all patients
  • Recognize racism
  • Oppose negative messaging
  • Counter negative messages with positive ones
• Assess patients for stress and refer if indicated
  • Mental health professionals
  • Trauma-informed care
• Infuse cultural diversity in early literacy programs
• Develop resources for families with civil rights concerns
• Conduct internal QI/QA to increase analysis of quality of care based on race
Talking to Children About Racial Bias

- From HealthyChildren.org
  - Includes strategies to help children deal with racial bias and how parents/caregivers can confront their own racial bias, but...

- **Do WE as providers:**
  - Confront our own racial biases?
  - Talk to each other and encourage each other to challenge racial stereotypes and racial biases?
  - Consider ourselves as role models (do we practice what we preach)?
Regardless of age or developmental level

1. Show Concern
2. Share Knowledge
3. Offer Support

(Maroney T, Zuckerman B, 2018)

“Interventions to eliminate achievement gaps cannot fully succeed as long as social stratification caused by gender and racial discrimination is not addressed.” (Becares L, Priest N, 2015)
The conversation can begin early...

- Talk with parents/caregivers about bias and stereotypes while the child is an infant
- Openly discuss concerns, provide knowledge, and discuss exposing child to diverse networks
- Preparation for when the child is a toddler to preschool-aged (children learn to classify people by skin tone at this age)
Resources

- Embrace Race
  - www.embracerace.org

- “How to Talk to Kids About Race: Books and Resources That Can Help” by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich
  - www.readbrightly.com

- Raising Race Conscious Children: a resource for talking about race with young children
  - www.raceconscious.org
Anticipatory Guidance: Preschoolers

- The child may begin to notice and point out differences in the people around you (i.e., at the grocery store, at the park, etc.)

- When child asks about someone's skin tone... "Isn't it wonderful that we are all so different!"

- Hold your arm against theirs to show the differences in skin tones in your family
Anticipatory Guidance: School-Age Children

• Ideal time period to discuss race, racial bias, and diversity
• Use examples from favorite shows or videos he/she watches
• If the child gives an example (a school incident), ask the child about their thoughts and feelings (keep it open-ended)
• Discuss what they view in social media and how that affects them too
Anticipatory Guidance: Adolescence

- Values are solidified; 2\textsuperscript{nd} peak of prejudice can occur
- Special considerations for male adolescents of color on interacting with law enforcement
  - Probe experiences to gather information & provide support. If not, you can respond “I am so glad…”. Inquire if the patient has discussed the issue with his/her parent.
  - When discussing this issue:
    1) I want you to know your legal rights with the police
    2) I want you to remember that your main goal is to get home safely
    3) It is not fair that you have to worry about negative police interactions

Reference: Pediatric perspectives “The Talk”, Physician
Perceptions of Racism in Children and Youth (PRaCY)

- Watched closely or followed around by security guards or store clerks at a store or the mall
- Got poor or slow service at a restaurant or food store
- Got poor or slow service at a store
- Accused of something you didn't do at school
- Treated badly or unfairly by a teacher
- You had the feeling that someone was afraid of you
- Someone called you an insulting name
- Someone made a bad or insulting remark about your race, ethnicity, or language
- Someone was rude to you
- Have you ever seen your parents or other family members treated unfairly or badly because of the color of their skin, language, accent, or because they come from a different country or culture?
Racial Literacy

• To communicate effectively, we must have a common understanding of racial vocabulary, concepts and language.

• The concept of racial literacy as conceptualized by France Winddance Twine refers to a set of practices designed by parents and others to teach their children how to recognize, respond to and counter forms of everyday racism.
Racial Literacy: Conversations Around the Kitchen Table

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TBPsFt7w0k
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqJ-psD9vJw
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oM-aVROi4D0
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMTBhz92xvU
Workforce

• Advocate and participate in programs to teach effective communication and cultural awareness across different patient populations

• Participate in pipeline programs to encourage workforce diversity and inclusion
Community and Beyond

• Advocate for health equity
• Advocate for quality education in all districts
Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.

Speaking before the Second National Convention of the Medical Committee for Human Rights.
SYSTEMIC RACISM IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS. #WHITE COMPLIANCE.