

The Intersection of Race and Politics: Meeting the Needs of Racial Minority Youth

Melvin Oatis, M.D.
Clinical Supervisor NYU Child Study
Center

Objectives:

- The participant will understand social determinants of health and the impact on mental health.
- The participant will be informed about how racial stress can impact mental health in youth and their families.
- The participant will be familiar with public policies that have had a negative influence on minority mental health.
- The participant will understand clinical methods to address issues of power and race within the patient-doctor relationship.

Objectives:

- Becoming mindful and managing our own bias regarding discussions of race with our patients
- Recognition of the magnitude of importance our clinical work potentially has to mitigate the negative sequelae of trauma and discrimination to our patients

Project Implicit

- The Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report.
- Project Implicit is a non-profit organization and international collaboration between researchers who are interested in implicit social cognition - thoughts and feelings outside of conscious awareness and control.
- <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/> **Harvard IAT Test**

IAT cont.

- Resembles the recognition and inhibition responses required of children performing the Stroop color naming task where color name is asked while attempting not to read the name of the color which maybe discordant
- Feelings are assessed when the observer responds to a particular image/face as pleasant or unpleasant, threatening or non threatening within a short time frame

Why is this important for everyone?

- Why examine the social construct of race which plays out in the media of television, print media, social media of Twitter ,Instagram, Facebook, Snap chat, dating applications of Bumble, Tinder, J-Date , Christian Mingle, eHarmony, Kettle of Fish, Clover, Match.com , podcasts and every push notification on your cellular phone?

Race is relevant for all clinicians:

- “Racism is a social determinant of health that has a profound impact on the health status of children, adolescents, emerging adults & their families.” “Evidence supporting the continued negative impact of racism on health & well being through implicit and explicit biases, institutional structures & interpersonal relationships is clear.”
- M.Trent, D. Dooley, J. Douge, The impact of racism on child & adolescent health. Pediatrics 2019;8,144 (2) AAP policy statement

- Racism has been linked to birth disparities such as complications of low birth rate and infant mortality believed to be mediated by maternal stress
- Low grade inflammation as measured by cytokines is a pathogenic mechanism for several chronic diseases of aging such as coronary disease and stroke; higher levels were seen in adolescents reporting discrimination as compared to adolescents with a positive self image as related to race

- G. Brody et al, Discrimination, racial identity & cytokine levels among African American adolescents. *J. Adolescent Health* 56(2015) 496-501. Adolescents ages 17-19 randomly chosen from public high schools in a small town community
- Effects mediated by stress and release of stress hormones causing oxidative problems at a cellular level leading to inflammation
- Public health implications- heart disease, insulin resistance/diabetes, obesity

- Racism linked to mental health disorders of anxiety and depression in youth
- N. Priest et al. A systemic review of studies examining the relationship between reported racism, health & wellbeing for children & young people. *Social Science & Medicine*, 2013; 95:115 DOI. University of Melbourne
- Over 121 studies were reviewed primarily looking at Latino, African American and Asian populations ages 12-18

- The American Psychological Association Presidential task force on traumatic stress disorder and trauma in children (2009) cited discrimination as a possible contributing factor to stress in the lives of racial and ethnic minority children

Underscoring relevance while avoiding pitfalls:

- Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma 4:123-141, 2011, Underserved populations, Racial Trauma in the lives of Black children and adolescents, Jernigan & Daniel, the authors conclude that racial stress can emerge when systems are oblivious or unwilling to acknowledge the presence of racism and its negative effects upon Black child development where they are forced to find coping strategies to ongoing psychological stressors
- So called “post racial era”, (Pitts,2009), where mental health professionals working with children and adolescents of color may discredit the notion that race/racism is still a salient issue in society
- Psychologists have documented that racial stressors result in increased physical and psychological distress (Bryant-Davis, Ocampo 2005, Carter 2007, Daniel 2000)

Historical trauma recognized in Holocaust survivors is now known to affect Native American children and other communities of color adversely

ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) such as war, natural disasters, poverty, divorce, separation of children from families, racial discrimination, living in violent neighborhoods have been identified by researchers SAMHSA, CDC and NIMH and increase risk of depression, suicide, alcoholism and violence

Negative factors

- Another social determinant of health is association with the juvenile justice system which adversely effects development
- Higher incarceration rates of African American, Native American and Hispanic Americans remains problematic due to how laws are applied to these populations
- i.e. “When they see us”

Negative factors/policies cont.

- The overrepresentation of ethnic minority students, particularly African American males, in the exclusionary discipline consequences of suspension and expulsion has been consistently documented over the past 3 decades
- P. Fenning & Jennifer Rose, Overrepresentation of African American students in exclusionary discipline: the role of school policy. Urban education 2007 (v42)#6 536-559 Loyola Univ Chicago
- Non violent offences-”school to prison pipeline”

- Black, Latino and Asian American populations have rates of mental health diagnosis and treatment that are often lower than white cohorts despite similar levels of impairment
- Native American and Alaskan Natives also receive less treatment
- Appreciating the influence of factors of culture, stigma, access to care, and race will aid in establishing a therapeutic alliance for effective treatment and retention

Accentuate the positive

- Educational attainment is a critical social determinant of health in children predicting long term health and economic outcomes
- college graduates live longer & have lower incidence of chronic disease
- Recognize institutional, personally mediated and internalized racism affecting educational system

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: The relationship btw school attendance & health 2016

McGill N; Amer Pub Health Assoc. Education attainment linked to health throughout lifespan: explaining social determinants of health. Nations Health 2016; 46(6):1-9

When to broach the subject:

- Do I wait until I'm aware of discomfort with the patient(clinician and or patient)?
- Wait for the patient to bring it up?
- Immediately upon noticing a difference?
- Assume irrelevant to presenting problem and avoid?
- If not discussing, consider why?

Exploring/joining/educating

- Cultural values and religious beliefs
- Languages spoken at home and school and preferred language by different family members
- Traditional medicines or treatments
- Parenting practices and discipline methods
- Transitions, losses and or traumas
- Perceived strengths in culture and differences from older generations

Notable Resources:

- AACAP practice parameters for cultural competence in child and adolescent psychiatric practice
- Whistling Vivaldi-Claude Steele
- Multicultural social work Derald Sue
- The evolution of Grace Lee Boggs
- I am not your Negro-Raoul Peck
- 13th –Ava Duvernay
- Loving-2015
- The New Jim Crow- Michelle Alexander
- All you can ever know-Nicole Chung
- Conversations on Psychoanalysis and Race-Beverly Stoute