

The "Black Tax": The toll of daily racism on the mental health of black college students

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Learning Objectives

1. Describe 3 ways in which everyday racism impacts the mental health of black students
2. Define racial trauma
3. Cite 3 strategies for creating culturally competent and trauma-informed approach to therapy with black students
4. Describe how counseling center professionals can utilize a socioecological perspective to impact systemic institutional practices that negative impact student mental health





What is Racism?

Racism = race prejudice + social and institutional power

Racism = a system of advantage based on race

Racism = a system of oppression based on race

Racism = a white supremacy system

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/>

Overt White Supremacy (Socially Unacceptable)

Lynching
Hate Crimes
Blackface The N-word
Swastikas Neo-Nazis Burning Crosses
Racist Jokes Racial Slurs KKK

Covert White Supremacy (Socially Acceptable)

Calling the Police on Black People White Silence Colorblindness
White Parents Self-Segregating Neighborhoods & Schools
Eurocentric Curriculum White Savior Complex Spiritual Bypassing
Education Funding from Property Taxes Discriminatory Lending
Mass Incarceration Respectability Politics Tone Policing
Racist Mascots Not Believing Experiences of BIPOC Paternalism
"Make America Great Again" Blaming the Victim Hiring Discrimination
"You don't sound Black" "Don't Blame Me, I Never Owned Slaves" Bootstrap Theory
School-to-Prison Pipeline Police Murdering BIPOC Virtuous Victim Narrative
Higher Infant & Maternal Mortality Rate for BIPOC "But What About Me?" "All Lives Matter"
BIPOC as Halloween Costumes Racial Profiling Denial of White Privilege
Prioritizing White Voices as Experts Treating Kids of Color as Adults Inequitable Healthcare
Assuming Good Intentions Are Enough Not Challenging Racist Jokes Cultural Appropriation
Eurocentric Beauty Standards Anti-Immigration Policies Considering AAVE "Uneducated"
Denial of Racism Tokenism English-Only Initiatives Self-Appointed White Ally
Exceptionalism Fearing People of Color Police Brutality Fetishizing BIPOC Meritocracy Myth
"You're So Articulate" Celebration of Columbus Day Claiming Reverse-Racism Paternalism
Weaponized Whiteness Expecting BIPOC to Teach White People Believing We Are "Post-Racial"
"But We're All One Big Human Family" / "There's Only One Human Race" Housing Discrimination

COLLEGE EDUCATING WHILE BLACK...A Few Examples

Black Yale student reported to police for sleeping in her dorm

Smith College Employee Called Police On Black Student Eating Lunch

Anonymous tip sent to UMPD about claims of an 'agitated Black male'

Catholic University librarian calls police on student trying to study

Racist Graffiti Found on the Campuses of Northern Kentucky and Kent State Universities

Racists Zoombomb Black Student Group at the University of South Carolina

Vandals Attack the Home of the First Black President of the University of the South

Penn State Men's Basketball Coach Resigns After Investigation of "Noose" Remark

University Recruiter Asks African American Students to Line Up by Skin Tone and Hair Style

Was a White Power Hand Symbol Used at the Army-Navy Football Game?

After a Racist Incident, Syracuse University Suspends All Social Activities of Fraternities

Officer Pulls Gun on Student Picking Up Trash Outside of Dorm Building



Reactions to the video

- **What emotions did you experience as you watched this video?**
- **What physical sensations in your body were you aware of?**
- **What thoughts ran through your mind?**
- **What did this student seem to be experiencing at the time?**
- **What do you hypothesize he might have felt after the incident was over (short term and long term)?**





**Racism by another name is still the
same: Microaggression**



Where are you from? Where are you really from? No, where are you really really from?

What are you?

You speak English so well.

You're not like other Muslim people.

What do your people think about that?

You don't act like a normal Black person.

You're really pretty, for someone so dark.

Why do you sound so White?

Your name is too hard to pronounce, can I call you Mary?

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microassaults
Explicit racialized verbal/non-verbal comments that are meant to hurt, demean and dehumanize

Microinsults
Communication characterized by insults and insensitivity to a POC's identity or racial group

Microinvalidations
Communication that dismisses, negates a POC's experiences/feelings



IMPACTS

RACIAL TRAUMA OR RACE-BASED TRAUMATIC STRESS

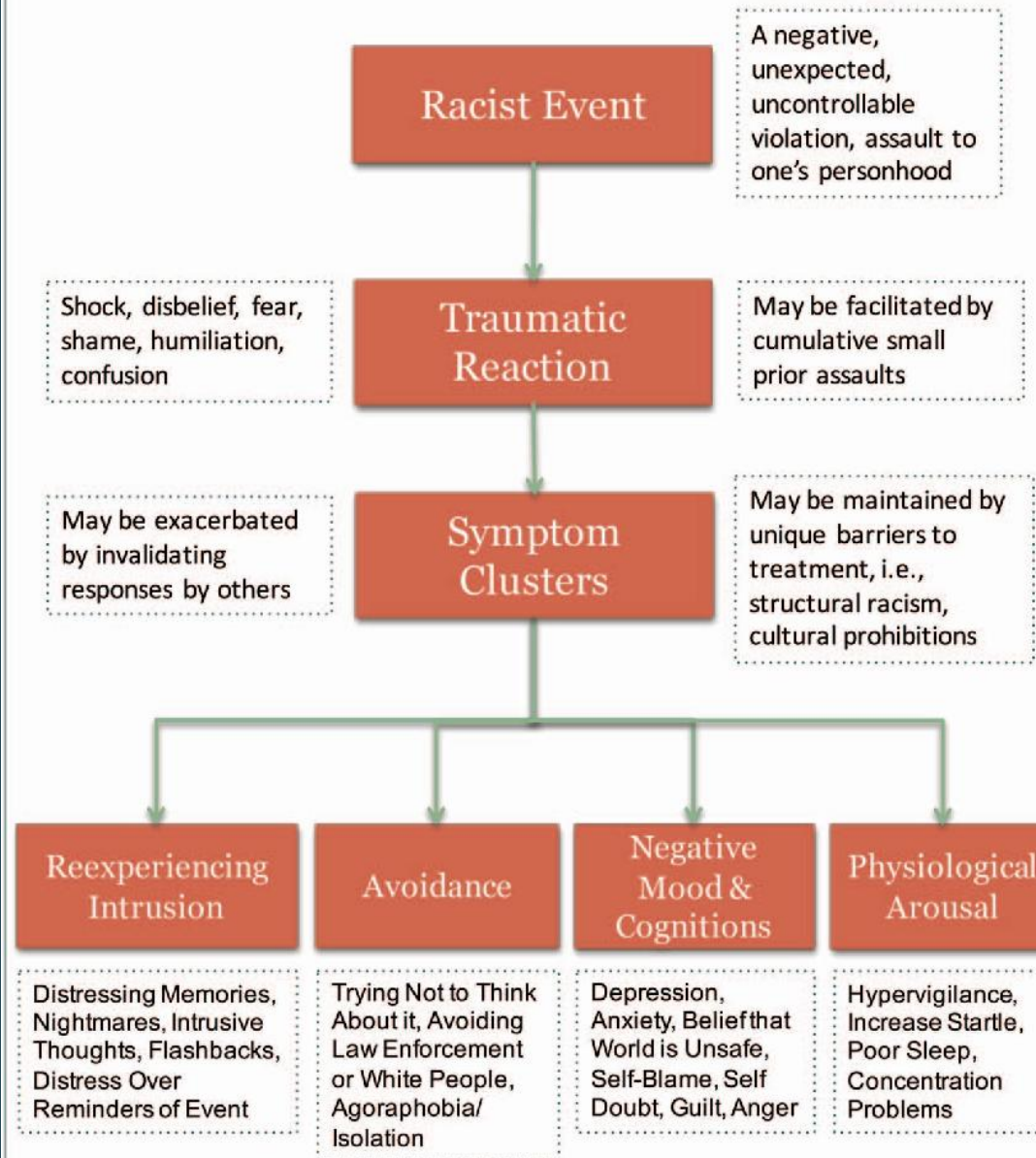
Race Based Traumatic Stress

(Carter, 2007)

- Emotional pain, injury, and psychological symptoms experienced when one encounters highly stressful experiences with racism.
- These negative encounters are unexpected, emotionally painful, and out of the person's control.



Racial Trauma and PTSD in the DSM-5



Racial Battle Fatigue

Describes the psychophysiological symptoms—from high blood pressure to anxiety, frustration, shock, anger and depression—people of color may experience living in and navigating historically white spaces. – (Smith et al, 2016)

Smith et al (2016) found that Black male college students who experience “chronic racial micro and macroaggressions will perceive their environment as extremely stressful, exhausting and diminishing to their sense of control, comfort and meaning while eliciting feelings of loss, ambiguity, strain, frustration and injustice.”





HEALING

BLACK STUDENTS LIVED EXPERIENCES

PLEASE RESPOND IN THE CHAT

- Have your black students talked about the extra “tax” of being black in a white dominated society and/or campus?
- What are some of the challenges and barriers to doing this work?



Challenges & Barriers

Also known as “What Not To Do”



Semantic Moves & Defensive Mechanisms	Example/Definition
“Whataboutism”	“What about all lives or Blue lives? Don’t those matter?” “What about Black on Black crime?”
White Silence	When individuals with white privilege stay silent when it comes to events, situations, discussions related to race, racism, and white supremacy. (Saad, 2020)
White Fragility	A reaction in which even a minimal amount of racial stress is emotionally intolerable, setting off a number of defensive behaviors (DiAngelo, 2018)

Semantic Moves & Defensive Mechanisms	Example/Definition
Tone Policing	<p>Tactic used by those with privilege to control the voices of those without privilege by focusing on their tone of voice, rather than content of what they are saying.</p> <p>The purpose is to make White people feel comfortable.</p> <p>Examples: “too angry”, “too aggressive”, “too Black” (Saad, 2020)</p>
Colorblindness	<p>“I don’t see color, we’re all the same at the end of the day. I don’t care if you’re White, Black, Purple, or Polka Dot.”</p>
White Exceptionalism	<p>“.....the belief that you, as a person holding white privilege, are exempt from the effects, benefits, and conditioning of white supremacy and therefore the work of anti-racism doesn’t apply to you.” I am one of the liberal good ones. (Saad, 2020)</p>



Challenges & Barriers

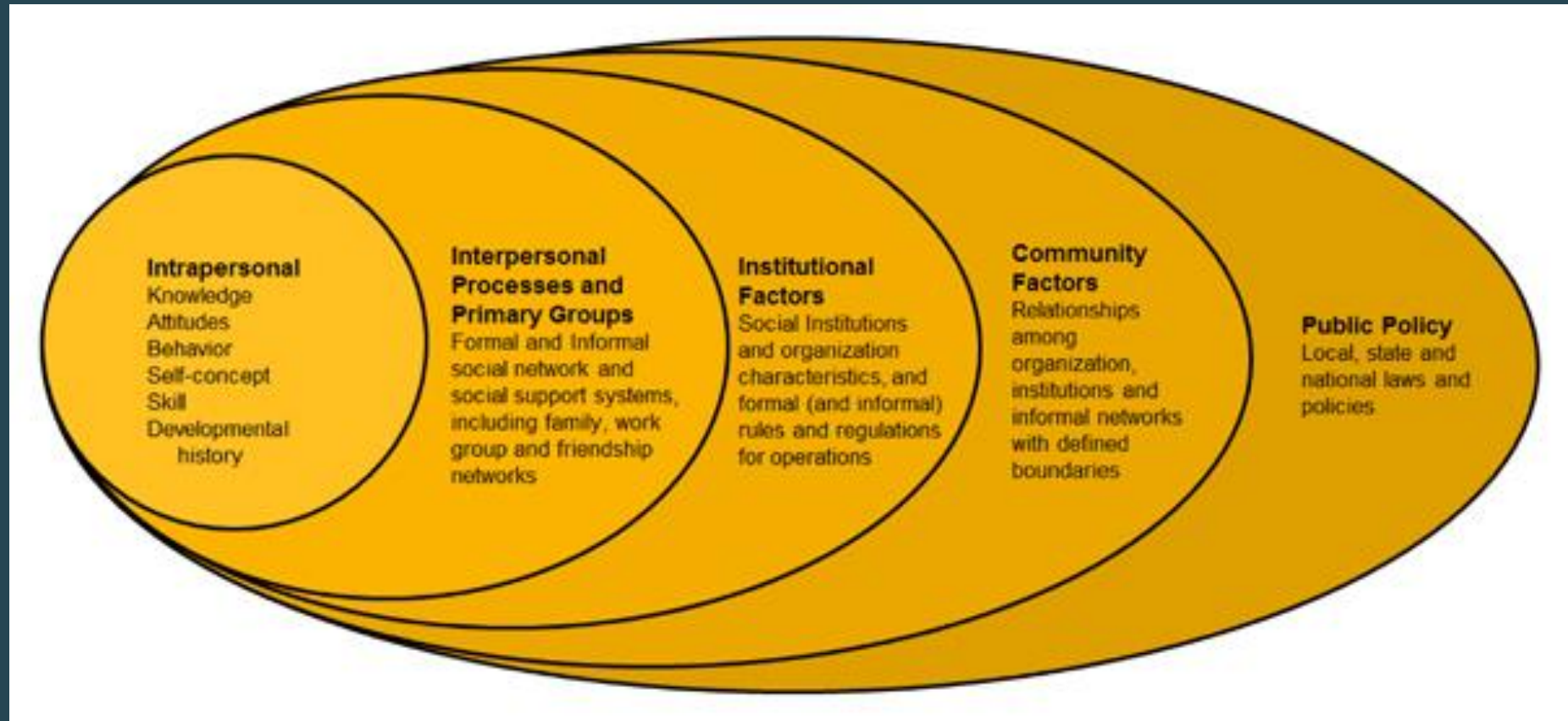
Try this instead



“Re-Railing Strategies” Brown & Sered	Example
<p>Eyes on the Prize: Refocus on the goal of the conversation. What are you hoping to see happen as a result of this talk?</p>	<p>“I really want to understand your experience. Let’s stick with this a while longer. Tell me more.”</p>
<p>Call it What it is: Name and acknowledge the distraction.</p>	<p>“My statement actually seemed to move us further away from the conversation on racism, and if so, I apologize for that. Let’s continue where you left off.”</p>
<p>Put it on the Agenda: Create space for a related topic without losing focus on the discussion at hand.</p>	<p>“I think your experience with discrimination in your academic department is really important. Are you OK, with continuing to talk about it next time?”</p>

<p align="center">“Re-Railing Strategies” Brown & Sered</p>	<p align="center">Example</p>
<p align="center"> Moments of Silence: Allowing space to listen deeply and giving space for mental processing. </p>	<p align="center"> “This is a hard conversation and maybe we’d all benefit from a moment of silence to just sit with what we’ve heard and what we’re feeling before we keep going?” </p>
<p align="center"> Do you See What I see: Invite the de-railer to acknowledge the validity of an experience to refocus the goal of the conversation. (May be helpful in group counseling) </p>	<p align="center"> “I hear what you are saying and am listening to you, but I’m wondering about how it relates to what Amani just shared about her interaction with campus police?” Or “Amani, what did you need from the group in sharing your experience with us/me? Have we/I met that need?” </p>

A Socioecological Perspective



Understanding privilege and marginalization in the therapy space: A multicultural and social justice approach

Ratts et al (2016)

Self-Awareness

- **Counselor self-awareness is important for identifying one's cultural values, beliefs and biases.**
 - ❖ assists in identifying one's worldview and hot-button issues that may interfere with helping clients.
- **Being cognizant of a client's cultural values, beliefs and biases may help counselors understand clients' worldviews and identity development.**
- **Awareness of the impact of shared and unshared identities; privileged and marginalized statuses; values, beliefs and biases; and culture influence the counseling relationship may be important in determining appropriate treatment interventions**



Intrapersonal Work

- Discuss your own cultures and identities,
- Inquire about client's cultures and identities.
 - Explore racial socialization
- Provide open conversations related to how, collectively, privileged and marginalized identities might work to enhance or barricade the counseling relationship.
 - Insight into clients' cultural backgrounds.
 - May increase mutual trust and the therapeutic alliance.
- Exploration of client experiences with microaggressions and discrimination.
 - Develop critical consciousness around experiences with racism and other isms.
 - Helps clients externalize their oppression.
- Empowerment based approach to help clients express feelings associated with racist experiences



Interpersonal work

- ❑ Explore client relationships with family, friends, co-workers and their communities
- ❑ Talk directly with individuals in clients' lives (with client permission)
 - ❑ Helps identify individuals who support or obstruct client progress
- ❑ Help clients develop networks with caring individuals who share a similar privileged or marginalized identity and with whom they identify (e.g., black sorority or professional organization, campus social justice groups, faculty/staff mentors, making introductions, and advocate)



Institutional & Community Work

The focus is institutional rather than individual change.

Inquire about the racial climate within a client's workplace, community organizations or school.

“What is it like being the only Black woman in a predominately White university?” or

“How do you navigate being a black on man on the football team?”

Conduct a climate survey of the counseling center and/or the university.

Conduct a self-assessment of diversity and inclusion practices and policies within the counseling center and/or university

Hire a consultant (if possible)

Volunteer for campus committees the focus on Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)

Be the voice for DEI considerations on all committees you are on

Advocate and provide feedback to other campus stakeholders



Public Policy Work

- **“The Political is Personal”**
 - Health, education, immigration, voting rights, housing, law enforcement
- **Strive to stay current of public policy at the local, state, and federal level**
- **Encourage professional associations to lobby for new policy or reform existing policies**
- **Personal involvement in political action and social justice activities**



A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH TO HEALING RACIAL TRAUMA

1. Recognize that the invalidation of a Black person's identity is psychologically, physically, and emotionally painful.
2. Recognize that there are psychological defenses or coping mechanisms that are employed to manage the pain and hurt associated with racism.
3. Employ a dosing strategy in exploring racial trauma, and utilize and teach effective interventions for soothing the hurt and pain.
4. Understand that racial trauma is often generational.
5. Understand that just because you are a person of color, it does not mean that you are automatically skilled in addressing issues of race, racism, racial trauma, or Black pain

Strategies: Coping with Racial Trauma

- Recognize that self-preservation and finding ways to protect one's self from constant emotional assaults is crucial.
- Acknowledge the racist incident and how it has impacted you.
- Talk about your reactions, feelings and thoughts to mitigate the onset of more severe psychological reactions.
- Seek support from trusted others; peers, elders, loved ones, colleague, clergy; and someone who can relate to your experience.
- Limit exposure to news coverage and social media that can trigger traumatic reactions.
- Engage in social activism and community engagement.
- Engage in self care activities.

Strategy: Healing Journal Prompts for Racial Trauma

1. I have experienced racism/racial trauma when..... this has impacted my life by.
2. I am feeling (rage, sorrow, rage, guilt, grief, exhaustion, etc.) from.....
3. I feel unconditional love and support of my ancestors when.....
4. I feel affirmed and celebrated in my skin when....

Source: <https://www.zenitjournals.com/collections/racial-healing-journals>





A word about counselor self-care

- Follow the same recommendations as clients
- Seek your own therapy
- Engage in peer consultation & support
- Educate yourself on anti-black racism. Don't rely exclusively on clients.
- Be sensitive to the fact that black counselors and other counselors of color likely have their own experiences of racial trauma and racial battle fatigue

Discussion & Food for Thought

- What are the intentional interventions that you plan to put into place to address race based stress and racial trauma?
- How are your decisions and actions as a counselor supporting racial equity?
- In what ways can you use your own privilege to advance the eradication of systemic racism at your institution?
- What is one takeaway or “Aha” moment for you from this presentation?
- Other questions & comments?



BLACK LIVES MATTER.



Suggested readings

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Suggested readings

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