Dr. Kerry-Ann Escayg

“Racial trauma: What teachers need to know and do”
Agenda

• What is it? Defining racial trauma
• Racial trauma in young children
• What to look for? Manifestations of racial trauma in young children
• Anti-racist ECE-Trauma informed Teaching
Racial trauma: What is it?

Racial trauma refers to the psychological distress experienced by racialized groups (Black, Indigenous, Latino/a) as a result of either direct or indirect exposure to racism (Comas-Diaz, Hall, & Neville, 2019).

• “Such experiences may include threats of harm and injury, humiliating and shaming events, and witnessing racial discrimination toward other POCI” (Comas-Diaz, Hall, & Neville, 2019, p. 1).

The bulk of research on racial trauma, however, has focused on adults (Saleem, Anderson, & Williams, 2019).
Racial trauma in Young Children

- Racial trauma in young children manifests as fear, self-rejection/hatred, helplessness and worry (Jernigan & Henderson, 2011; Saleem, Anderson, & Williams, 2019)
- Contexts such as schools as well as the broader society contribute to racial trauma in young children (Jernigan & Henderson, 2011)
- Similar to adults, observing racism as well as experiencing racism can elicit trauma symptoms in young children.
Racial trauma in young children:

- **Contextual** (society): Anti-black racism
- **School**: Teacher-child interactions, child-child interactions, curriculum, school environment
- **Outcomes**: Self-rejection/internalized racism (Jernigan & Henderson, 2011) *Racial socialization is a buffer against such outcomes, however.*

Other potential outcomes include anxiety and anger
- **Contextual**: police brutality, violence
- **Outcome** = Fear (hooks, 1992), anxiety
Anti-racist ECE: Racial-trauma informed teaching

Recognize the impact of racism, including the psychological impact (this will require training and more PD opportunities)

2) Establish a positive relationship with students and create a safe learning environment (offset fear, anxiety)

3) Ensure classroom materials, teaching, and curriculum promote positive racial identity development (offset internalized racism, self-rejection/hatred)

4). Do not dismiss students’ feelings. Instead, validate their emotions.
Resources: List of readings on racial trauma

References


