

UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO RACIAL TRAUMA

What is racial trauma?

“Racial trauma has been defined as... The cumulative traumatizing impact of racism on an individual that can be caused by individual acts as well as structural racism at the cultural and community levels and racism from historical contexts.”
– Williams et al, 2021



Association with race-based stress

- Race-based stress occurs through direct or indirect instances of racism and can lead to mental health outcomes including depression, anxiety, and a negative outlook on life.
– Hargons et al. 2022, Thomas 2021
- Racial trauma could be viewed as an outcome of an accumulation of race-based stress, but not all race-based stress leads to racial trauma if the appropriate support is provided and engaged with to facilitate coping and healing strategies. – Hargons et al, 2022

Contextualising racial trauma



Racism is a form of discrimination and oppression, which occurs at three levels; the personal, the cultural, and the structural (otherwise known as the PCS approach) – Thompson, 2006

- 1 The personal level refers to individual views and norms which are influenced by the cultural level.
- 2 The cultural level is where shared values and the norms of society are embedded and generally accepted.
- 3 The structural level is where the norms, values, language, and behaviours are 'sewn into the fabric of society.'

The PCS approach offers a useful context as to why individuals may not engage with certain services or might not trust the services or institutions. Individuals may also fear of further exposure to racial trauma through racist practice and cultures.
– Thomas, 2021

Supporting individuals with racial trauma and race-based stress



- Racial stress and trauma are all experienced differently by people, some of which is due to us all having multiple identities and challenges and realities related to all our identities. – Thomas ,2021, Hargons et al, 2022

To support individuals with racial trauma and race-based stress practitioners must be;

- Cognisant of how gender, ethnicity, and other identities such as religion, sexuality, and class all intersect to be able to create individualised approaches to support their needs .
- Culturally competent and able to discuss race, culture, and racism, and historical group trauma as these experiences are central to individuals' identities.

Using the correct language and fostering cultural competency



- Language and terminology is integral to supporting individuals of ethnic minority and how the use of the term 'BAME' is for many offensive and not representative of the diverse variety of ethnic identities. – Thomas, 2021
- 'Racially and ethnically minoritized' has been suggested for best practice. This is a non-hierarchical term, that is not an identity and validates multi-racial/multi-ethnic identities. It also acknowledges the process by which people come to be minoritized as something social rather than natural or inherent.' – Thomas, 2021
- Culturally competent practice is characteristic of active listening, facilitating, and supporting conversations relating to individuals' experiences of culture, ethnicity, racism and racial trauma. – Imkaan, 2016, Thomas, 2021

Four key principles for good practice



To be followed to ensure support to those with racial trauma and create a system that is not racist and causing further trauma.
– Thomas, 2021

- 1) Acknowledge racial trauma so people engaged in services feel validated and can discuss their experiences
- 2) Normalise conversations on race, racism, and racial trauma so good practice is achieved
- 3) Develop appropriate support services that are culturally distinct, safe, and offer individualised approaches to healing and rehabilitation
- 4) Challenge institutional racism

Trauma-Informed Approach



The Criminal Justice System are working with Public Health Wales to research and develop policy and practice around racial trauma.

Trauma-informed approaches should create healing environments for those who have experienced racial trauma.

Support should be intersectional and be tailored for individuals based on their;

- Experiences
- Identities
- Boundaries
- Expectations
- Needs

