

*If Elephants Could Talk:
Racial Literacy to Manage Stress in Face-to-Face
Encounters*

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Format:

Being Factual, Emotional, Practical

- What is REC, Racial Socialization, RECAST, and Literacy?
 - Assumptions, Definitions, Theory and Skills
- What don't we know about racial politics?
 - Latest research in Racial Literacy and Socialization in Schools
- Why are Racial Politics So Emotional?
 - **In-the-moment racial stress management/mindfulness**
- How do we resolve racial politics through racial literacy?
 - **Storytelling**, Journaling, Debating, Role-Playing
 - Childhood, Parenting, and Professional Stories

PROMOTING RACIAL LITERACY IN SCHOOLS

Differences
That Make a
Difference



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Racial Socialization, Trauma & Literacy Interventions (Stevenson, 2003-2014)

○ **PLAAY project**

- Movement and cultural style in-the-moment
- Basketball, martial arts, parent coaching, CPR group therapy, passion



○ **Shape-Up-** Barbershop Project for Black Men

- HIV/AIDS Safe Sex Skills Building (**Drs. Loretta & John Jemmott**)
- Retaliation Violence Reduction Skills Building; [Oldheads Schoolin' Youngboys Schoolin' Oldheads](#)

○ **Teacher Professional Development-** Dr. Jason Javier-Watson, Dr. Kelsey M. Jones

○ **PEARLS-** *Racial Literacy Magazine for Children-* Dr. Kelsey M. Jones

○ **EMBRace-** *Teaching Family Racial Socialization/Stress Management* –Dr. Riana Anderson

○ **ROOTED-** *How Diverse Families Talk to Children About Race-* Dr. Shawn Jones

○ **Forward Promise-** [National Office to Improve Health of Boys and Young Men of Color](#)

○ **All integrate ITM interventions and racial literacy curricula**

Things to know about REC training

- It's going to get emotional
- Emotion not just good thing, it's Jedi Knight good
- **“Courageous noticing”** (Edwards, 2015) - **“admission” of racial elephants IS courage**
- You will feel urge to hide or run; Don't, Stay in the present
- CLCBE through the stress-
- **It's not about the blame**
- I believe in you enough to challenge you- **It's going to get emotional**

Racial hate speech and violence has increased

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/12/16/update-1094-bias-related-incidents-month-following-election>

- SPLC surveyed 2500 educators -30 days after elections, 1094 hate incidents
- Many occurred around schools
- Educators (90%) report negative emotional/behavioral effects on students
 - **8 in 10 report greater anxiety for immigrant, Muslim, Black & LGBT students**
 - **Half said students targeted each other based on which candidate they'd supported.**
- Educators don't feel confident in how to navigate these moments
 - **educators described bigotry/harassment directly linked to election rhetoric**
 - **Although two-thirds report administrators have been "responsive," 4 out of 10 don't think their schools have action plans to respond to incidents of hate and bias**

Seeing Diversity & Diversity of Stress- Elephant is Both-And

- We judge world from our unique perspective -“My view, my study, my experience of Elephant”
- Either-Or reasoning is debilitating (right/left)
- *What if we saw Elephant as **Both-And** re: sight*
 - unique blindness and special sight
- *Understanding Elephant Both-And re: stress*
 - My viewpoint is unique and differentially stressful
 - For some discovery is exciting, for others enormous stress
 - What do you see when you see the elephant in the room?
 - A reasonable definition of diversity- uniquely blind, uniquely visionary, and uniquely stressful

Racial Literacy- Assumptions

In-the Moment (ITM) & Face-to-Face (FTF)

1. **Racial Encounters (FTF) Matter, not just Race Symbols**
 - *believing justice isn't doing justice ITM or FTF; proximal vs distal*
2. **Racial Stress MATTERS, not just General Stress**
 - *we avoid, under- & over-react to FTF racial conflicts*
3. **Legal dismantling of racism won't heal trauma**
 - *effects of racial conflicts hurt well-being, physical health, learning*
4. **Racial Competence, not Racial Character.**
 - *skills to see, process, recast, resolve racial conflicts are lacking*
5. **Schools/Institutions Socialize Avoidant Racial Coping**
 - *w/o literacy, organizations teach how not to talk about race*
6. **We Can Resolve Racial Stress in Everyday Life**
 - *resolving ITM stress is easier than curing systemic racism*

Racial Literacy Factors

-the ability to read, recast, and resolve racially stressful encounters, Stevenson, 2014

○ Racial stress

- “Race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environment that emerge from the dynamics of racism, **and that are perceived to tax or exceed existing individual and collective resources** or threaten well-being” (Harrell, 2000)
 - intra- & interpersonal; anticipatory, in-the-moment & reflective;
 - **Vicarious** racial stress – witnessing others stress & need for protection
 - **Practicing** Appraisal/Reappraisal of racial stress (low, med, severe)

○ Racial encounters

- Past, in-the-moment or anticipated interactions that tax individual self-regulation of emotions, physiology, cognitions and voice
- **Encounters** occur between and within individuals

○ Racial Coping and Racial Coping Self-Efficacy

○ Racial Assertiveness

Racial Literacy in Racially Stressful Encounters (RSE)

Stevenson (2014) (Twine, 2006)

- **Read-**
 - accurate seeing of meaning-making and scripts
- **Recast-**
 - reducing stress in FTF encounters using mindfulness
- **Resolve-**
 - assertively negotiating RSE to healthy conclusion

What is RECAST Theory?

- Racial Encounter Coping Appraisal and Socialization Theory
- Racial socialization can **reduce the stress** of coping **during racial conflicts** by improving one's racial coping self-efficacy.
- **But racial literacy takes practice.**
 - **“Practice?”**
 - **“Practice? We’re talking about practice?”**
 - **Yes**

How do we Practice?

Behavioral/Academic/Racial Literacy Curriculum Themes

Stevenson, (2014)

- 1) Racial Experience **Storytelling**
 - 1) Develops Self/Other Observation Encounter Awareness Skills
- 2) Racial Experience **Journaling**
 - 1) Develops Self/Other Appraisal Encounter Stress Appraisal Skills
 - 1) Self/Other-Appraisal through Journaling
- 3) Racial Encounter **Mindfulness**
 - 1) Develops Self-Care Stress Reappraisal and Reduction Skills
- 4) Racial Stereotype **Debating**
 - 1) Develops Self-Control Encounter Engagement Skills
- 5) Racial Coping **Role-Playing**
 - 1) Develops Self-Assertiveness Encounter Resolution Skills

Calculate, Locate, and Communicate: Self/Other-Observation Skills

- Did you notice anything about YOURSELF as you were drawing, sharing, listening?
 - Feelings, thoughts, body reactions, memories you were having?
 - about how other people see you?
- Did you notice anything about your PARTNER as he/she was sharing?

Calculate it, Locate it, Communicate it:

Racial Stress Mindfulness

- Calculate it
 - How stressful am I? (1-10?)
- Locate it
 - Where on my body do I feel the stress?
- Communicate it
 - What statements am I saying to myself?
- Breathe and Exhale

Tell 3 Stories

1. What were some of the messages about race and difference I heard or saw from family and neighborhood while growing up?
2. **How do you feel about race/diversity relations over the last year and how does it (if at all) affect your teaching?**
3. What if my child, sibling OR student came to me after being racially rejected, disrespected, or mistreated, what would I say to him or her?
4. Describe a racial conflict (experienced or anticipated) in my work as an teacher/supervisor/leader/professional that is stressful for me (7 or higher)
 1. Pick one that I handled well
 2. Pick one that I didn't handle well
 3. Pick one that hasn't happened yet, but I worry will happen
5. In pairs, tell your story, then listen to your partner's story
 1. Then in groups of 4 or 5, share your story and act out each group members' story as quickly as you can.
 2. We will use select role-plays to share to the entire audience for communal learning

Defining Racial Socialization and Literacy

Theories, Assumptions, and Skills

What is Racial/Ethnic Socialization?

-protection, affirmation, reappraisal, & negotiation of R/E self-efficacy, stress, & conflict (Stevenson, 2014)

-Seeing the Racial Jungle

- **The transmission and acquisition** of
 - intellectual, emotional, and behavioral skills to
- **protect, affirm**
 - individual & collective “sacred humanity” and racial self-efficacy for
- **reappraising**
 - racially/ethnically stressful encounters and
- **negotiating**
 - racial/ethnic conflicts that occur in 5 socialization contexts
 - **Information, relationships, identity, style, stereotype**

Why is it important to reduce racial stress?

Racial Microaggressions

(Pierce, 1970; Sue, 2007; May–June American Psychologist 271Vol. 62, No. 4, 271–286)

- *Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (p. 271)*
- *Microassaults*
- *Microinsults*
- *Microinvalidations*

“A Racing Mind”

- Claude Steele in *Whistling Vivaldi* identifies research that shows when threatened by racial matters, our brains work overtime.
- A “racing mind” focused on some tasks is not prepared to focus on other mental tasks

PreK Left Behind- Expulsion Rates in State PreK Systems- (Gilliam, 2005, Yale Child Study Center)

- ▣ “Prekindergarten students are being expelled at a higher rate than K-12 students. (Expulsion is defined as complete & permanent removal of a student from an entire education system.)”
- ▣ Based on 3,898 PreK classrooms (81% response rate) representing all 52 state-funded PreK systems operating across 40 states.
- ▣ 10.4% of PreK teachers reported expelling at least one preschooler in past 12 months and
- ▣ 19.9% of those teachers reported expelling more than one.
- ▣ Rate is 3.2 times the rate for K-12 students.“

Racial Threat → Dehumanization → Health

- **Fear reactions of Black males like spiders & snakes (Richeson, et al., 2008)**
- **Preschool Left Behind (Gilliam, 2005)**
- **Play of Black & Brown preschoolers seen as negative (Yates & Marcelo, 2014)**
- **5 yr old Black boys trigger thoughts of guns and violence (Todd, et al, 2016)**
- **10 yr old Black boys seen as less innocent (Goff et al., 2014)**
- **Black & White teachers are hypervigilant of Black boys behavior (Gilliam, 2016)**
- **Poor white youth less likely jailed than rich Black youth (Zaw, et al, 2016)**
- **Teen-perceived racism negatively affects sleep of Black adults (Adam et al., 2014)**

Black PreK Left Behind by Stereotype Fears (Gilliam,

2005, Yale Child Study Center)

- First nationwide study of expulsion rates in state-supported preschools found
 - African American preschoolers are twice as likely to be expelled as white or Latino children and five times as likely as Asian Americans (Dobbs, 2005; Gilliam, 2005)
- Pattern of risk for expulsion with African-American students K-12 (Holzman, 2004).
- Pattern is suggestive of disproportionate control and punitive actions taken by authority figures that consciously and/or unconsciously may be **egregious overreactions driven by their biased expectations and fears** of these youth
- Behavioral consultant in room reduces the disparity
- Gilliam, W. S. (2005). *Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems*. New Haven, CT: Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy.
http://ziglercenter.yale.edu/publications/34774_National%20Prek%20Study_expulsion.pdf

A RESEARCH STUDY BRIEF¹

Do Early Educators' Implicit Biases regarding Sex and Race Relate to Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?

Walter S. Gilliam, PhD
Angela N. Maupin, PhD
Chin R. Reyes, PhD
Maria Accavitti, BA
Frederick Shic, PhD

Who Believes in Me?

Race matters in teaching Black students

- When a white (or other non-black) teacher and a black teacher evaluate the same black student,
- the white teacher is 30% less likely to believe that the student will graduate from a four-year college
- 40 percent less likely to believe student will graduate from high school.
- The discrepancy was greater for black males.
- Gershenson, S., Holt, S. B., & Papageorge, N. W. (2016). Who believes in me? The effect of student–teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. *Economics of Education Review*, Available online 11 March 2016.

Summary of Findings

1. TFA Teachers who report high racial discrimination and family racial socialization, collegial conversations, school racial conflicts report
 1. **less threat** towards and during classroom racial encounters
2. TFA Teachers who report greater **threat** and **trauma** towards classroom racial encounters report
 1. **lower self-efficacy** in structuring rules and expectations, managing defiant behavior, and in motivating a classroom of Black and Latino students.
 2. **Greater difficulty** in having racial conflict conversations with colleagues
3. The opposite is true for TFA Teachers who report greater competence (help-seeking) towards classroom racial encounters

Healthy Racial Comeback Lines (Stevenson, 2014)

- “I reject your rejection of me.”
- “statements, thoughts, attitudes, mannerisms, movements, words, and assertions that allow an individual to deflect insult or injury from microaggressions, both subtle and blatant, without resorting to physical retaliation.”
- Most efficient when
 - integrated into one’s personality and style,
 - spontaneously delivered without halting speech or hesitation,
 - poignantly checkmates the opponent’s primary or major insult,
 - You know that you don’t have to say it
 - preventing your opponent from retaliating
 - **ISN’T OVER-REACTION OR UNDER-REACTION**
- Two types of comeback lines-- healthy and unhealthy- **PRACTICE BOTH**

TAKE HOME POINTS

1. Feeling overwhelmed (racial fight, flight, or fright) about what to do during a racial face-to-face encounter in our work is **human**.
2. Avoiding that feeling and pretending it doesn't affect your work is also human, but is still **incompetence**, unprofessional and **unethical**.
3. Racial **stress impairs** your thoughts, behaviors, and emotions, and thus your relationships with clients and colleagues
4. Racial stress is more **observable, manageable** and **resolvable** than systemic racism, but only if you face it.
5. Asking for help, seeking knowledge, and **practicing** how to manage racial stress makes you more smart, competent, ethical, confident, and **COURAGEOUS**.
6. Racial literacy is not about blaming others or myself, but about how well I can read, recast and resolve a racial conflict (and **not run away**) .

Elephant Attention

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Its not about the blame.

Not trying to make you feel guilty.

It's not just about you. It's the filthy way we both ignore the elephant in the room.

I deplore the card games, the slurred names, and fanning the politically correct flames.

It's not even about the shames that we can't mention, 'cause the silencer on the racial tension is the doom, that we presume.

I'm not trying to build fences or get too intense, or bait your defensiveness; but my sixth sense says that it's senseless that we can't even mention or make reference to **that** boil waitin' to bloom,

or **that** cloud of "racist" that looms large over the elephant standing like a dusty heirloom in the corner of the dusty room.

Were we crazy thinking that we could polish away the rusty with a broom, or sweep away this mess, like it was the wind, tsunami or monsoon that blew in this unrest of the racial?

No. It was our musty elephant that exhumed up & dragged in the fume.

No broom can clean this spew up, that we all threw up.

We need a bigger tomb to bury the sorrow and the worry that years of fears have brewed up, pretending that the skin color didn't bother you or father me; didn't other me or mother you.

We both know that the dark will make you holler and bring out that other you.

We both know that you're afraid that the darker brother is gonna smother you 'til you're blue.

No need to sweat it, I get it.

Everybody in the lighter hue **and** the darker hue has got the same fear of the darker smother brother too.

So don't hate the player or the shame that the racial blame keeps wreaking. Hate the racial game.

Cause it's way too insane if you keep sneaking and freaking about every time the elephant wants a shout out.

Just say hello and ask if he wants to stay or go and then we'll all know whether it's okay to mention the tension or find the right intervention for our negative emotions.

Because ignoring the snoring in the corner is boring and elephants won't leave without attention.