

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

# Loving the Skin You Are In

Promoting the positive identity of autistic children of color

**Iheoma U. Iruka, PhD**  
 Research Professor, Department of Public Policy  
 Fellow, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG)  
 Founding Director, Equity Research Action Coalition

Presentation for Early Childhood Investigations  
 October 13, 2022



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**SPEAKERS**

**Dr. Iheoma U. Iruka**  
 &  
**Dr. Sheresa Blanchard**



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## Honoring Native Lands

I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I LIVE, WORK, AND BUILD MY FAMILIES' ECONOMIC WEALTH ON THE LUMBEE TRIBE TAKEN THROUGH COLONIZATION AND ATTEMPTED ERADICATION BY SETTLERS.

LUMBEE TRIBE PROVIDES PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ALL TRIBAL MEMBERS WITHIN THE AREAS OF CUMBERLAND, HOKE, ROBESON, AND SCOTLAND COUNTIES IN NC.



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## Honoring Black Bodies

- Many parts of the US was built by enslaved Africans and their enslaved descendants, and only within the past generation were Black people afforded full rights.
- Today, Black individuals and People of Color disproportionately work as service staff across the country. This community is largely responsible for the maintenance of our daily lives, the food and food service available, child care, health care, and many other basic necessities that make our lives easy. The wealth of our nation is due to the forced free labor of these Africans.

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## About the Equity Research Action Coalition



- University collaborative at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at UNC-Chapel Hill
- focuses on **co-constructing** actionable research and evaluation with practitioners and policymakers to support the optimal development of Black children prenatally through childhood.
- works at the intersection of research, program, and policy through **anti-racist and cultural wealth frameworks**



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## take home message



- Consider the **intersectionality** of race, ability, and socioeconomic status.
- Advancing equity must address **equitable access, supports, and experiences.**
- We must engage in **R.I.C.H.E.R. actions** to change the research paradigm.
- We are on a **journey** so continue to read, engage, lean in, and be accountable...doing nothing is condoning racism.



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### intersection of racism and ableism

- racism operated on **inferiority** based on the shape of the skull and gave rise to enslavement
- enslaved people were **maimed** and **disabled** to prevent them from running away or discourage behaviors that slaveholders considered defiant
- enslaved people that ran away were said to have **mental illness** that caused them to runaway



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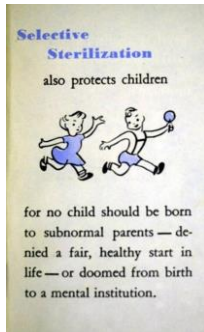
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### LET'S NOT IGNORE THE PAST OR HISTORY

#### intersection of racism and ableism

- 1900s eugenics movement that came from Great Britain to the U.S. encouraged the birth of "good" genetic stock and **sterilization of others, including individuals with mental illness, those who were poor, and those accused of sexual promiscuity and sexual criminality.**
- Courts that deemed women mentally defective were sterilized.
- In 1960s, more than 85% of those sterilized in NC were Black women



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### racism, ableism, and policing

*"Freddie Gray, Laquan MacDonald, Kevin Matthews, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Charleena Lyles, Sandra Bland, Quintonio LeGrier, Stephon Watts, Korryn Gaines, Natasha McKenna, Eric Smith, and Daniel Prude are **all Black, disabled victims of state violence.** In the United States, 50 percent of people killed by law enforcement are disabled, and more than half of disabled Black people have been arrested by the time they turn 28—double the risk in comparison to their white disabled counterparts." ~ Vilissa Thompson, 2021*



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### racism, ableism, and policing

- those with disability have higher probability of arrest
- Black people with disability were disproportionately likely to be arrested
- disability gap larger for Black females than males, but arrest higher for Black males

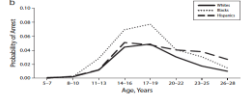
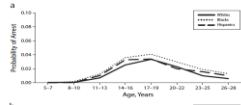


FIGURE 1—Age-specific probabilities of arrest for (a) people without disabilities and (b) people with disabilities. National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, United States, 1990–2004. Note: Age-specific probabilities averaged in groups of 5 years.

Source: McCauley, E. J. (2017). The Cumulative Probability of Arrest by Age 28 Years in the United States by Disability Status, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(12), 1977–1981. <https://doi.org/10.2195/ajph.2017.304095>



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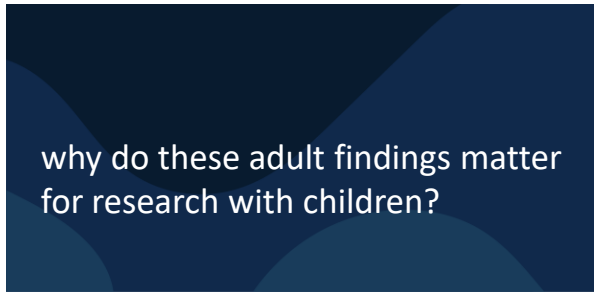
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WE CONTINUE TO SEE DISPARITIES

inequitable access

- children of color (Black, Latine, Native American) and children from families with limited English proficiency are less likely to access early intervention services and more likely to be identified later than White peers
- ZERO TO THREE State of Babies Yearbook 2020 found that:
  - Black and Latine children with developmental delays are 78% less likely to have their need for early intervention services identified;
  - Black children with developmental delays are 78% less likely to receive early intervention services.
- COVID-19 created more disparities in EI identification and access



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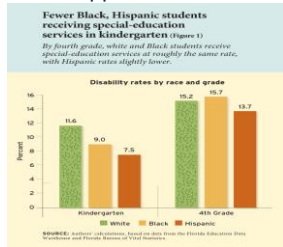
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WE CONTINUE TO SEE DISPARITIES

racial disparities in SPED access & supports

- Black and Latine children less likely to receive special education in Kindergarten
- in contrast, Black children are overrepresented in special education for "subjective" categories (e.g., intellectual disability or emotional disturbance)

Source: Elder, T. E., Figlio, D., Imberman, S., & Persico, C. (2021). Segregation and racial gaps in special education. *Education Next*, 21(2).



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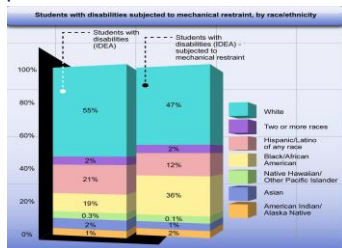
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WE CONTINUE TO SEE DISPARITIES

racial disparities in experiences cont'd

- Black children with disability likely to be subjected to mechanical restraint
- Black children represent 19% of population for 36% of students who are subjected to mechanical restraint



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# access, supports, and experiences matter for optimal outcomes

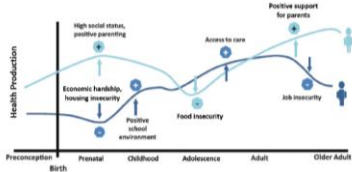


FIGURE 1-1 Variable health trajectories: Life course approach.  
 NOTE: This figure includes several examples; however, there are many other variables that impact health trajectories (see Chapter 3).  
 SOURCE: Adapted from Halfon et al., 2014.



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## Are racial disparities enough evidence of racism?



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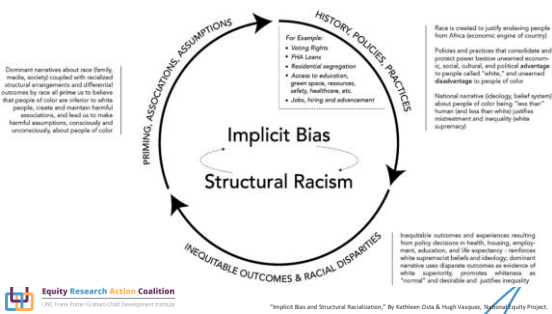
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Racial bias at each juncture of early intervention



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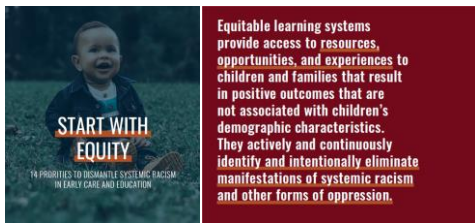
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Starting with Equity



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Ensuring equitable access, experiences, and outcomes

ACCESS	EXPERIENCES	OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equitable Funding</li> <li>Authentic Integration</li> <li>Center FCH &amp; FPN</li> <li>Equity in EI/SPED ID</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce Equity</li> <li>Equity in Workforce Prep &amp; Dev</li> <li>Equity in QRIS/ QI</li> <li>Equity in Global Quality Assessments</li> <li>Eliminate Harsh Discipline</li> <li>Equitable Access/Expansion to DLL</li> <li>Family Leadership</li> <li>Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Pedagogy (trauma-informed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity in Monitoring &amp; Accountability</li> <li>Equity in CQI</li> </ul>

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**10 ADDRESS EQUITY IN EARLY INTERVENTION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION ACCESS, IDENTIFICATION, AND INCLUSION.**



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**10 ADDRESS EQUITY IN EARLY INTERVENTION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION ACCESS, IDENTIFICATION, AND INCLUSION.**

**Congress should:**

- Fully fund IDEA, including Parts B Section 619 and C.
- Increase funding for Part D of IDEA to increase monitoring and accountability efforts—particularly those related to preschool placement and the provision of the least restrictive environment

**Federal Agencies should:**

- Ensure that all IDEA data reported to the federal government — including outcome data — are **disaggregated** by race, disability category, gender, and home language.

**States and Tribes should:**

- Identify segregated preschool special education programs operating in the state/tribe and **invest in meaningful structural reforms** to expand high-quality inclusion,

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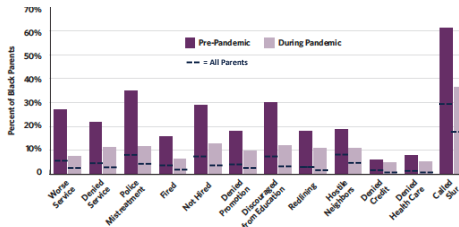
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More Black parents report experiences of discrimination than other parents.



Note: N = 235, RAPID-EC surveyed between August 24, 2020, and March 8, 2021.

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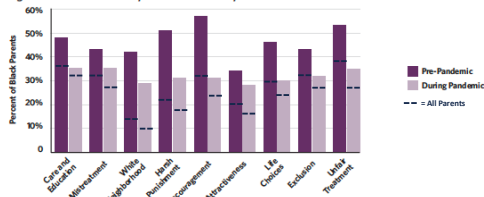
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More Black parents have concern about their child's racialized experiences than other parents.

Figure 3. Black Parents of Babies: Concern for Children



Note: N = 235, RAPID-EC surveyed between August 24, 2020, and March 8, 2021.

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More Black parents, especially those in poverty, engaged in cultural socialization practices than other parents.

Table 6. Discussions about Challenges and Advantages of Race Reported by Black Families and All Families with Babies

	Discussed Challenges		Discussed Advantages	
	Pre-Pandemic	During Pandemic	Pre-Pandemic	During Pandemic
<b>Black Parents of Infants &amp; Toddlers</b>				
Below/Near-Poverty	56.47%	54.97%	35.62%	44.04%
Middle-Income	31.53%	39.06%	23.87%	28.86%
<b>All Parents of Infants &amp; Toddlers</b>				
Below/Near-Poverty	32.75%	34.26%	34.74%	37.87%
Middle-Income	15.64%	17.66%	26.67%	35.46%

Note: Black families with babies N = 235; Full sample with babies N = 3124; RAPID-EC surveyed between August 24, 2020, and March 8, 2021.

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### Other ethnic-racial socialization practices

**preparation for bias:** preparing children to live in a society that does not see or treat them equally to white peers (e.g., the talk)

**promotion of mistrust:** parents socialize children to be cautious in interactions with white people as preventative and preventative measure

**egalitarianism:** parents focus on children being as good as everyone else and prepare children to navigate society such as school



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what can you do?  
what is your role?

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### We must identify opportunities to repair the historical trauma, harm done, and mitigate inequities

For parents	For early childhood education (ECE) professionals	For ECE programs	For ECE systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop knowledge &amp; resources to support parent-child conversations on racial-ethnic identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop strategies and resources for ECE professionals to help children reach their full potential by supporting their positive ethnic-racial identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify strategies educators can use to advocate for systemic approaches and policy changes that will support ethnic-racial identity formation in young children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify, measure, and hold programs accountable for policies and practices that are effective in supporting positive racial-ethnic identity formation</li> </ul>

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### Other professionals

- Understand the historical and contemporary role of medicine in racial trauma (e.g., Tuskegee experiment)
- Ensure that all staff members have attended racial equity trainings
- Develop processes to support self-assessment and bias identification
- Value diversity (e.g., visible representation, inclusion of people of color's perspective)
- Engage with the minoritized communities in authentic and meaningful ways
- Provide content (e.g., books, magazine, wall art, website) and activities that center fairness and positive racial and ethnic identity (e.g., survey, townhall)



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### BE RICHER!

- Re-educate about history
- Integrate rather than just desegregate
- Critical consciousness
- Humility of privilege
- Erase racism
- Re-vision different ways, approaches, theories, data, teams, measures...



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### Take Home Message

- Consider the **intersectionality** of race, ability, and socioeconomic status.
- Advancing equity must address **equitable access, supports, and experiences**.
- We must engage in **R.I.C.H.E.R.** actions to change the research paradigm.
- We are on a **journey** so continue to read, engage, lean in, and be accountable...doing nothing is condoning racism.



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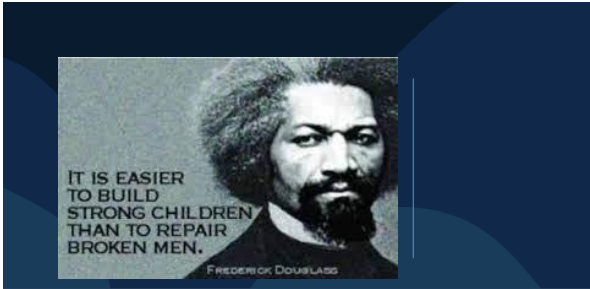
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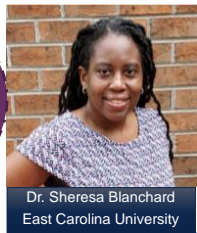
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