



A call to action to reconceptualize adverse childhood experiences among Black youth: Missing the forest for the trees

Making the “C-ACE” for a culturally-informed adverse childhood experiences framework to understand the pervasive mental health impact of racism on Black youth

Bernard, Calhoun, Banks, Halliday, Hughes-Halbert, & Danielson, 2021

Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma

Racial discrimination and other adverse childhood experiences as risk factors for internalizing mental health concerns among Black youth

Bernard, Smith, & Lanier, 2022

Journal of Traumatic Stress



How trauma became the word of the decade

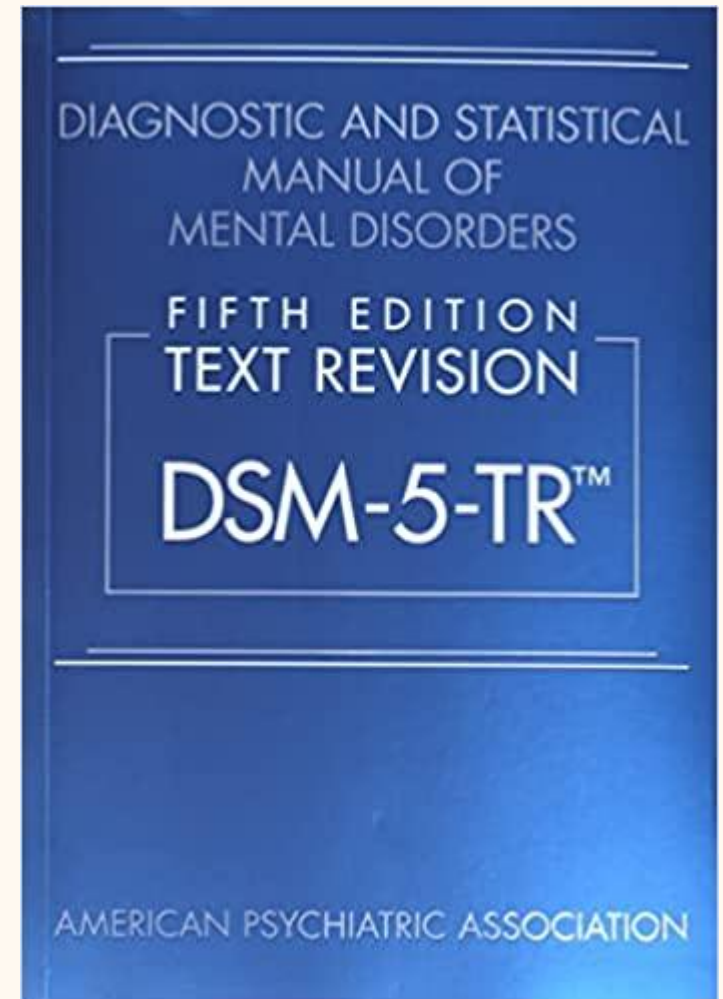
The very real psychiatric term has become so omnipresent in pop culture that some experts worry it's losing its meaning.

By Lexi Pandell | Updated Jan 25, 2022, 8:01am EST

Illustration by Bráulio Amado for Vox

Trauma is the experience of actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence.

-(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)



POTENTIALLY TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Natural Disasters

War, Terrorism, Political Violence

Serious Injury, Illness, Medical Procedures

Motor Vehicle Accidents, Crashes

Witnessing of Violence (home, community)

Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence

Physical Abuse, Physical Assault

Sexual Abuse, Sexual Assault, Rape

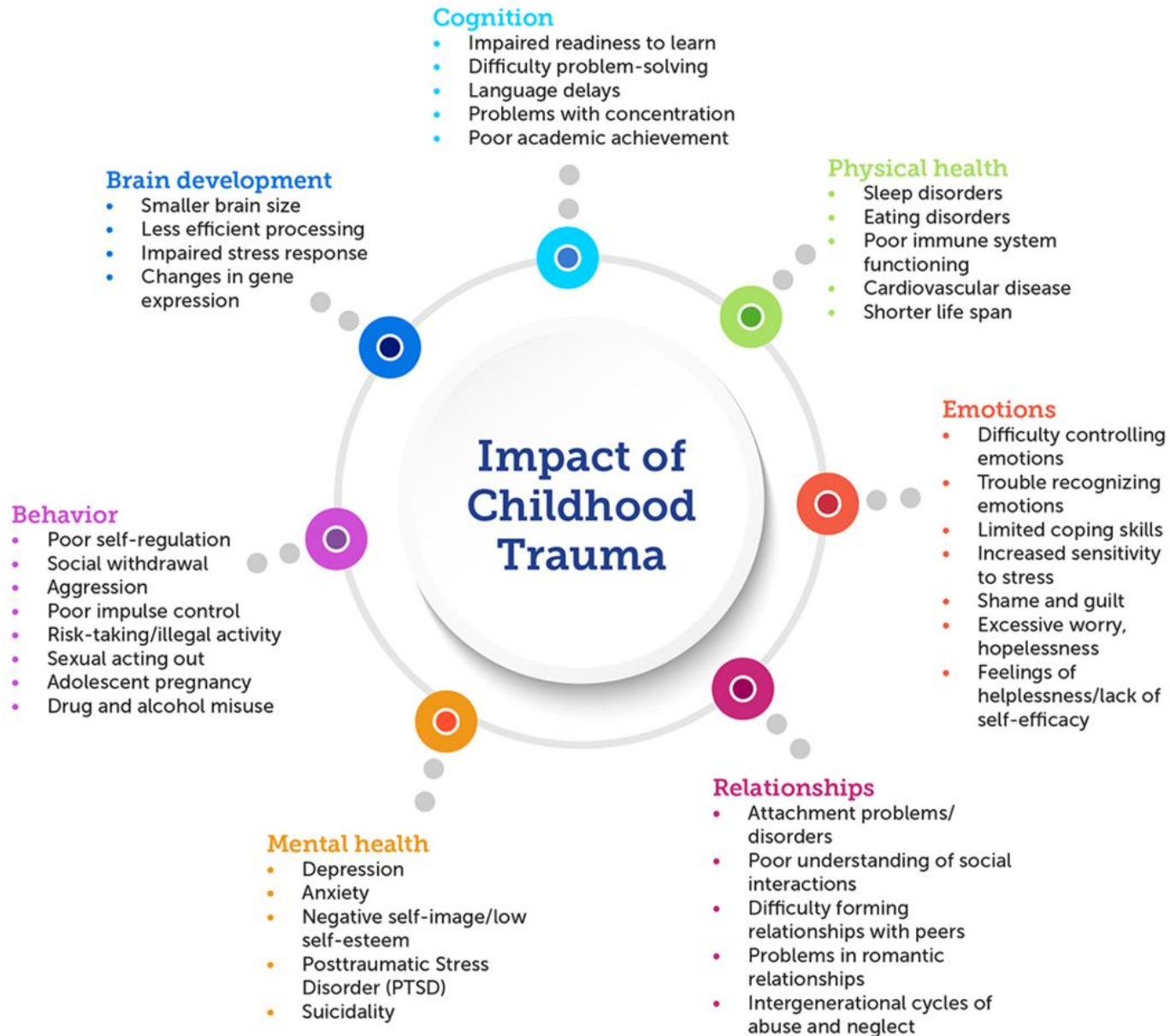
Neglect (physical, emotional, academic, medical)

Childhood Trauma Exposure

More than two thirds of children reported at least 1 traumatic event by 16 years of age



Impact of Childhood Trauma



The Adverse Childhood Experiences Framework



Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), 245-258.

The three types of ACEs include

ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION



Mental Illness



Mother treated violently



Divorce



Incarcerated Relative



Substance Abuse

WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

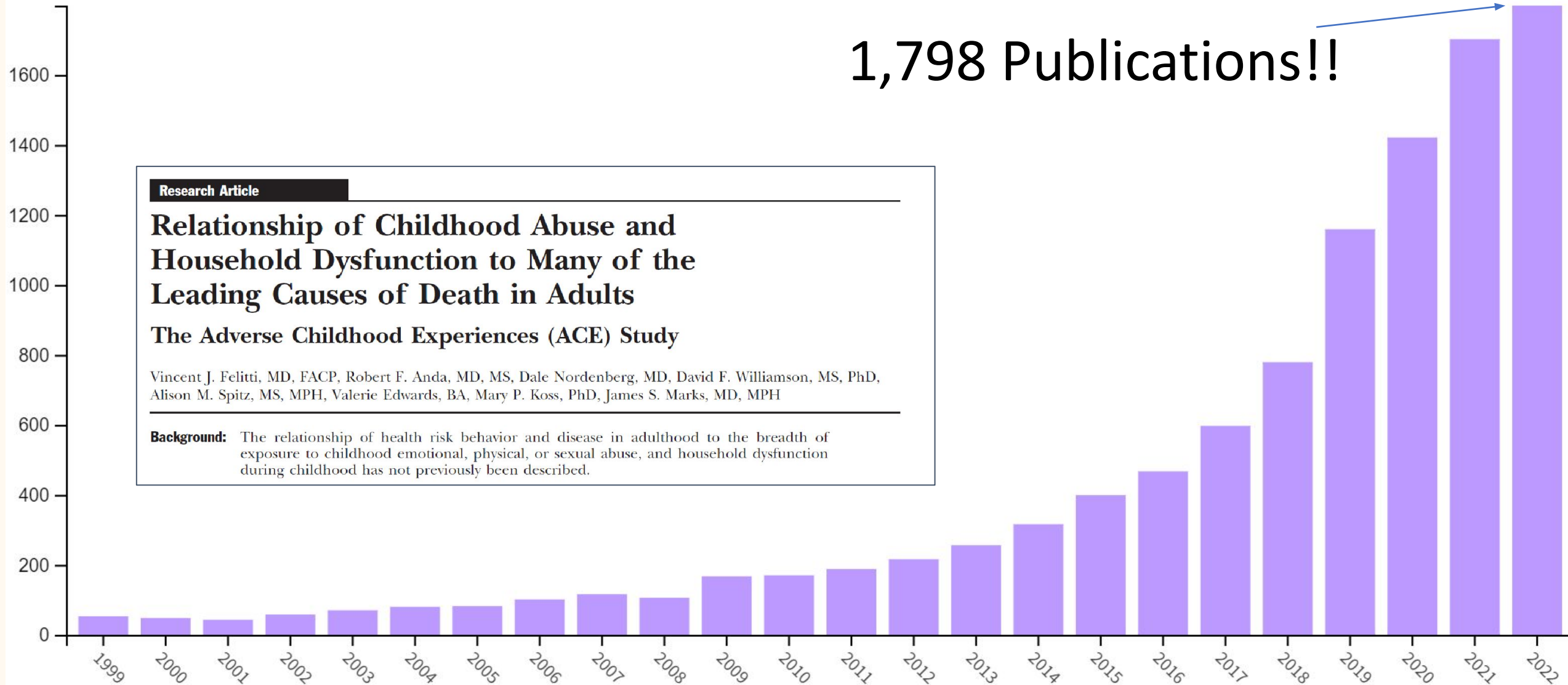
As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes





Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts

Total ACEs Publications (1999-2022; Web of Science)



Research Article

Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

Vincent J. Felitti, MD, FACP, Robert F. Anda, MD, MS, Dale Nordenberg, MD, David F. Williamson, MS, PhD, Alison M. Spitz, MS, MPH, Valerie Edwards, BA, Mary P. Koss, PhD, James S. Marks, MD, MPH

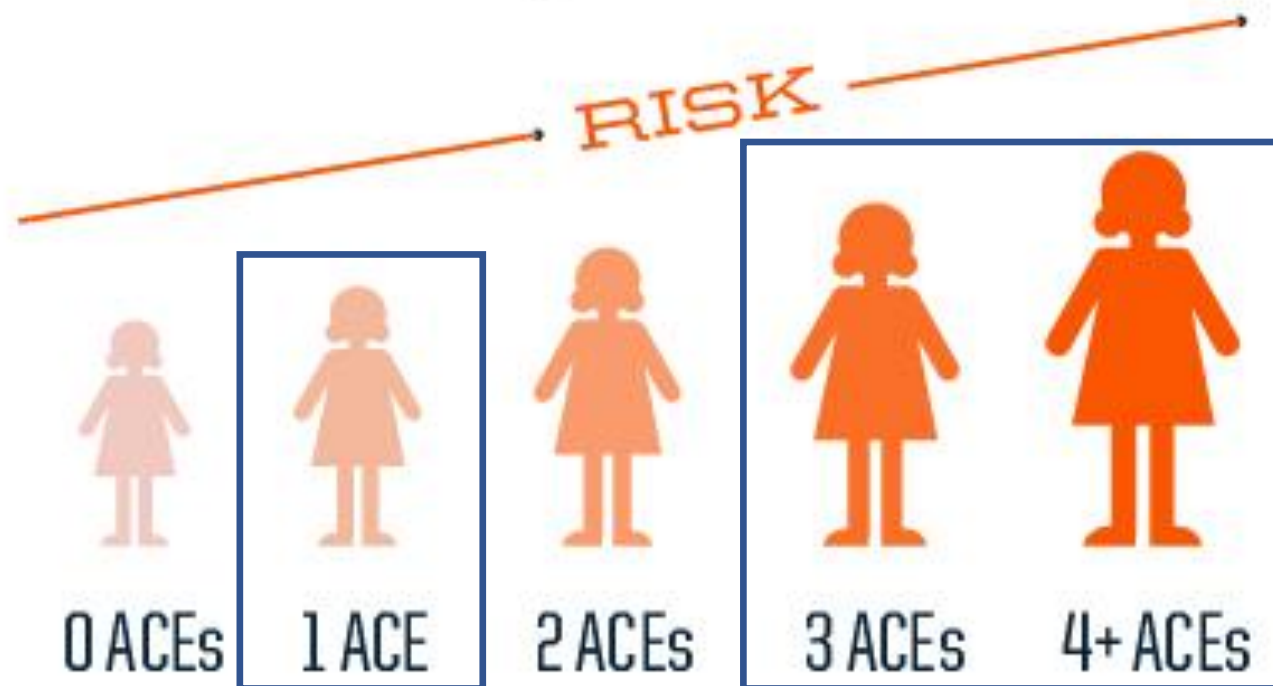
Background: The relationship of health risk behavior and disease in adulthood to the breadth of exposure to childhood emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, and household dysfunction during childhood has not previously been described.

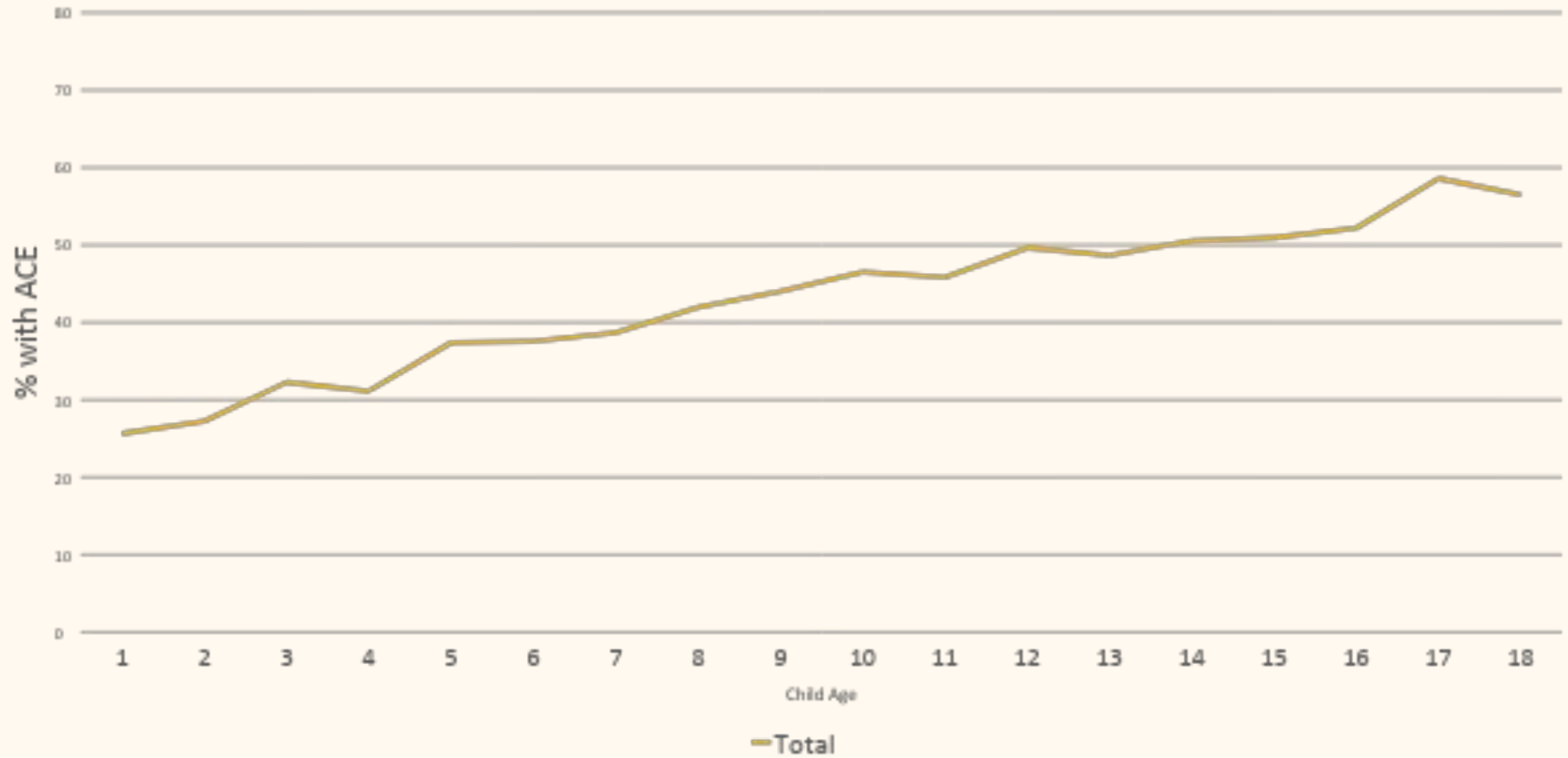
ACEs Literature by Discipline (Web of Science)

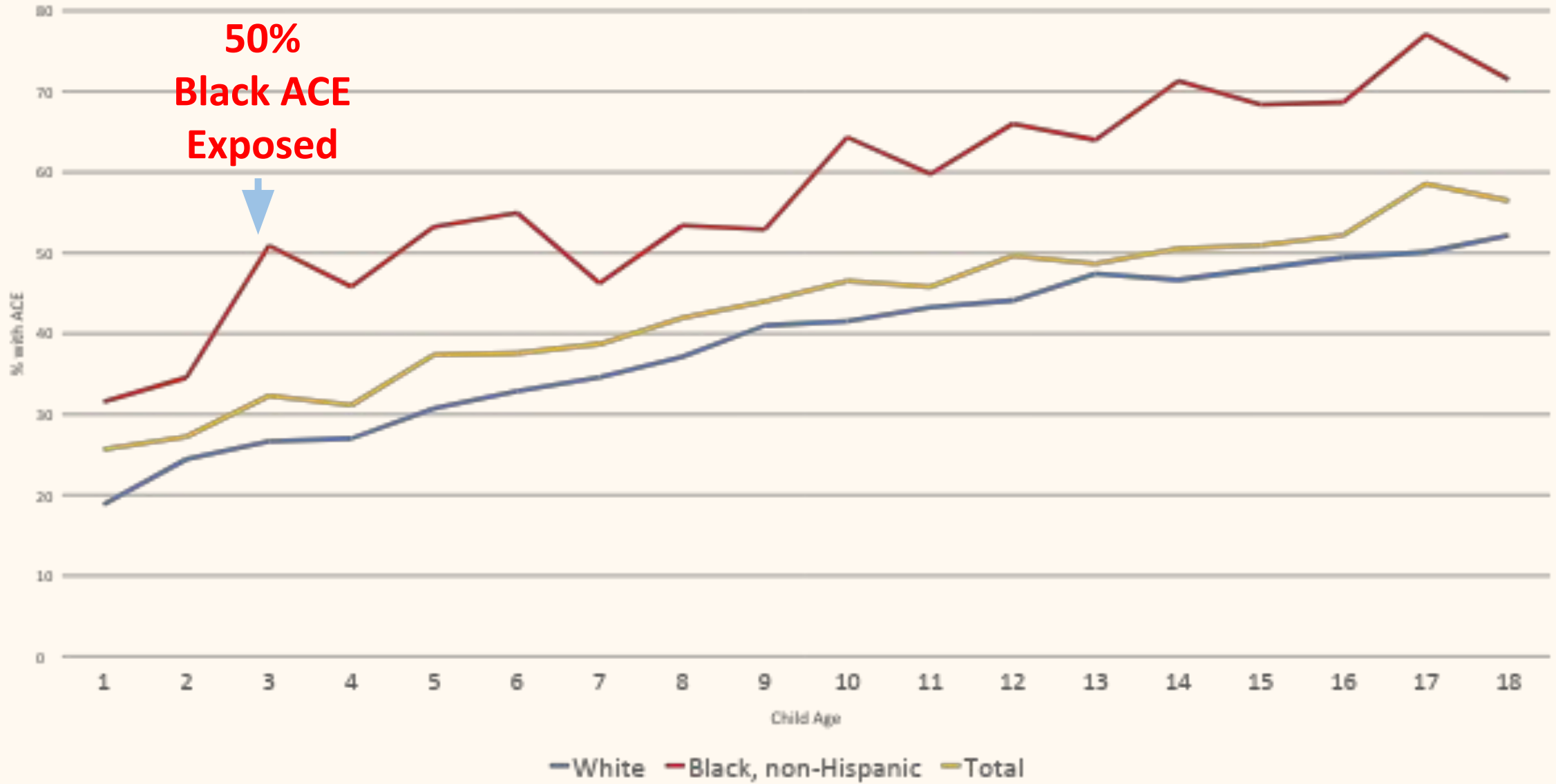


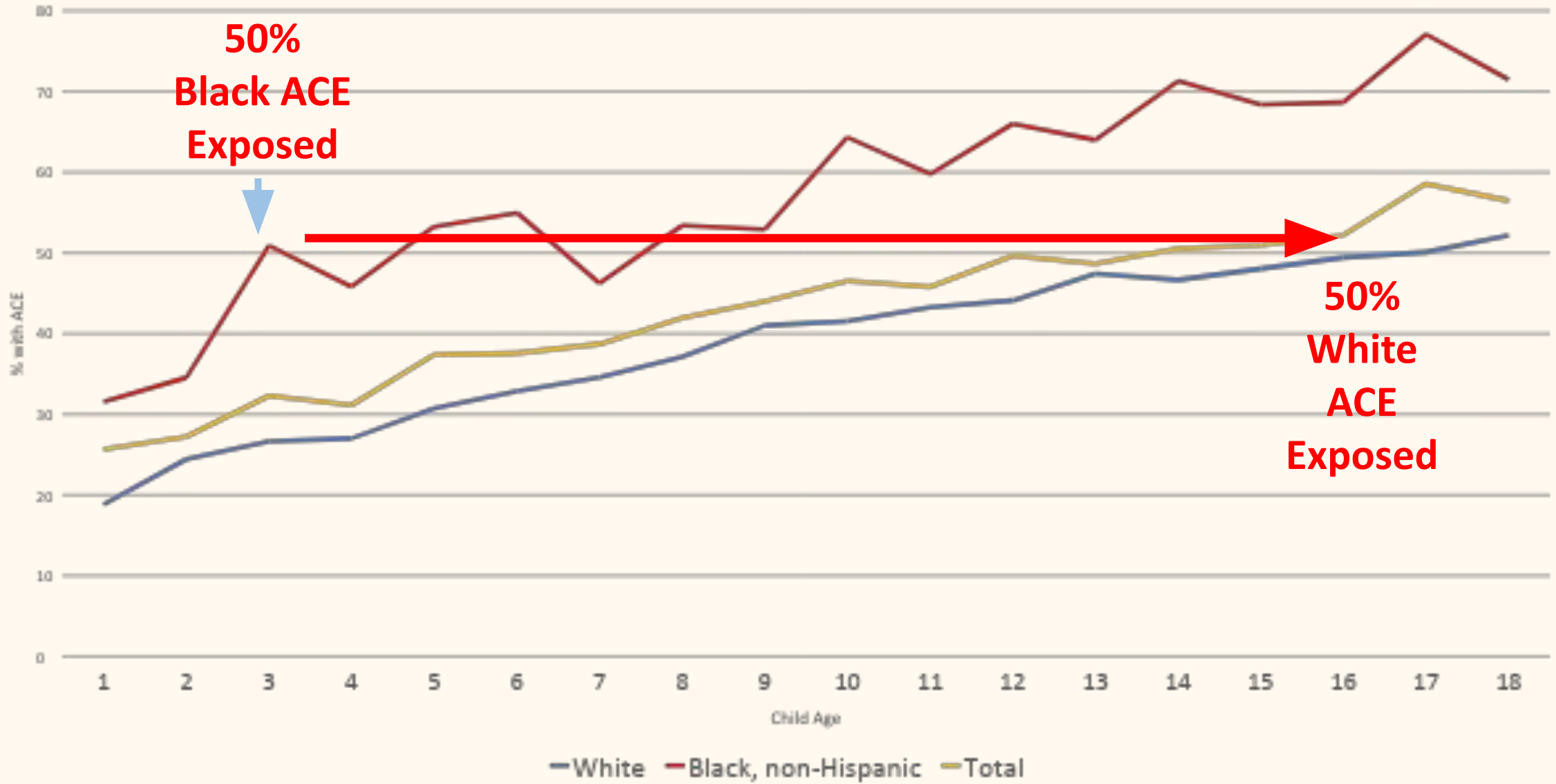
WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes

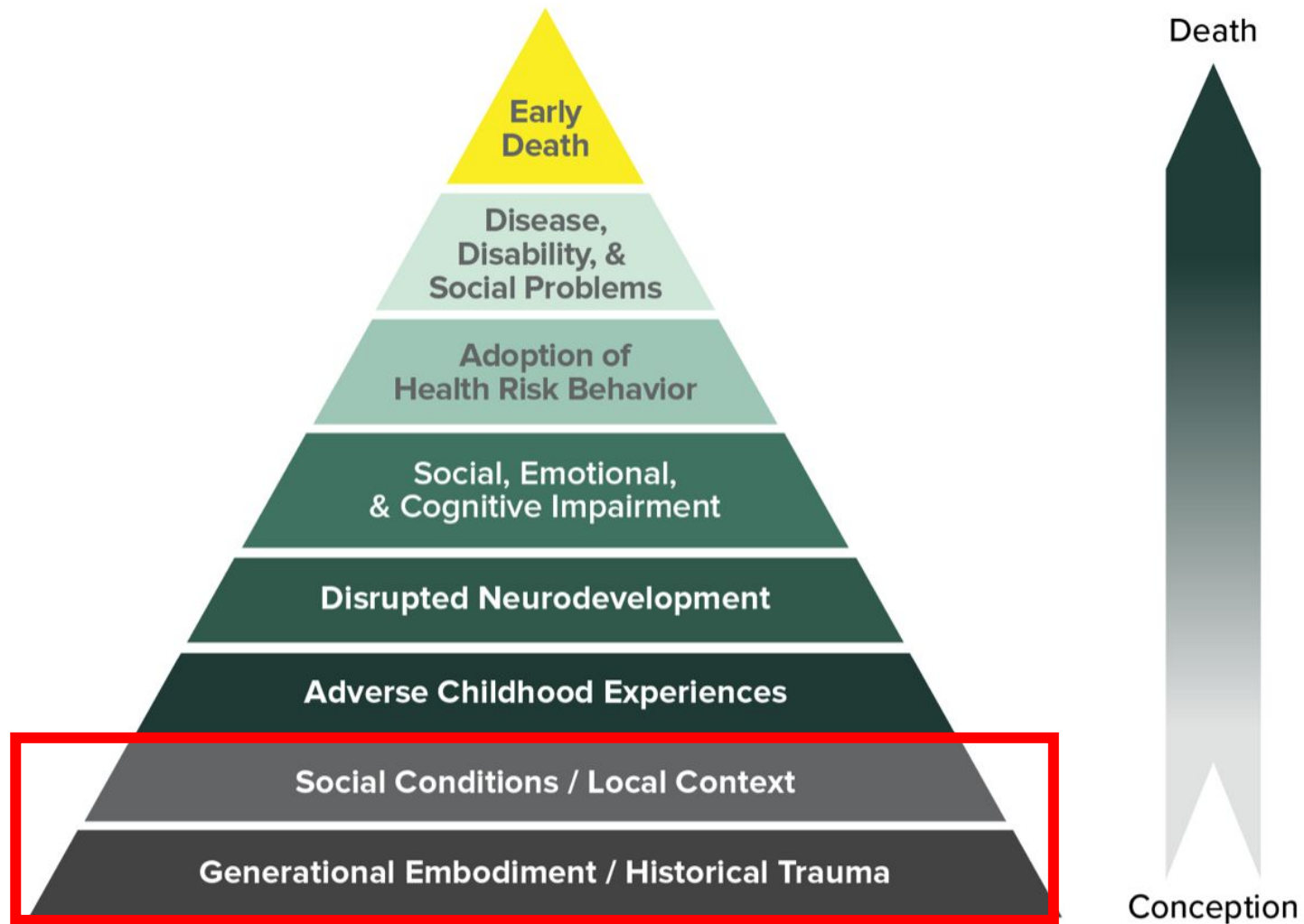








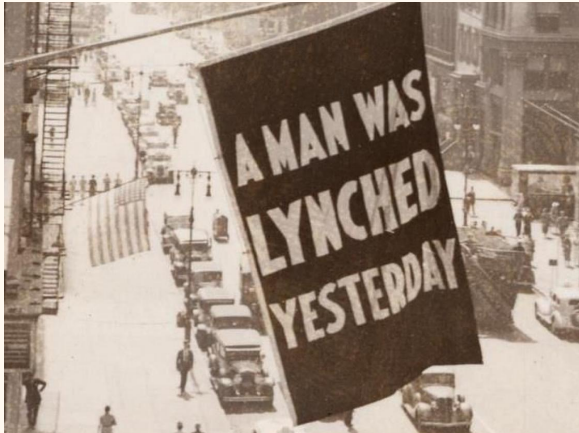
So, What Are We Missing?



Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

Historical Trauma

- The cumulative exposure to traumatic events that not only affect the individual, but continue to affect subsequent generations

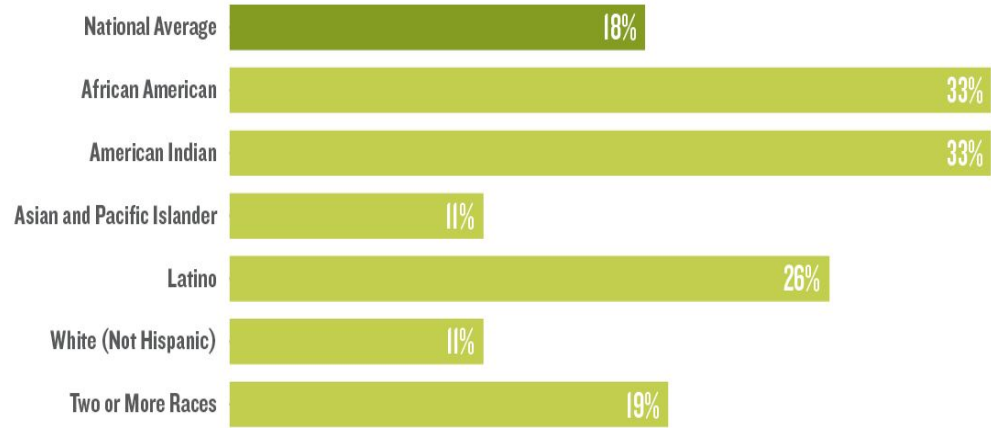


Transatlantic Slave Trade

Dots represent individual slave ships. The larger the dot, the more enslaved people on board.

Social Conditions

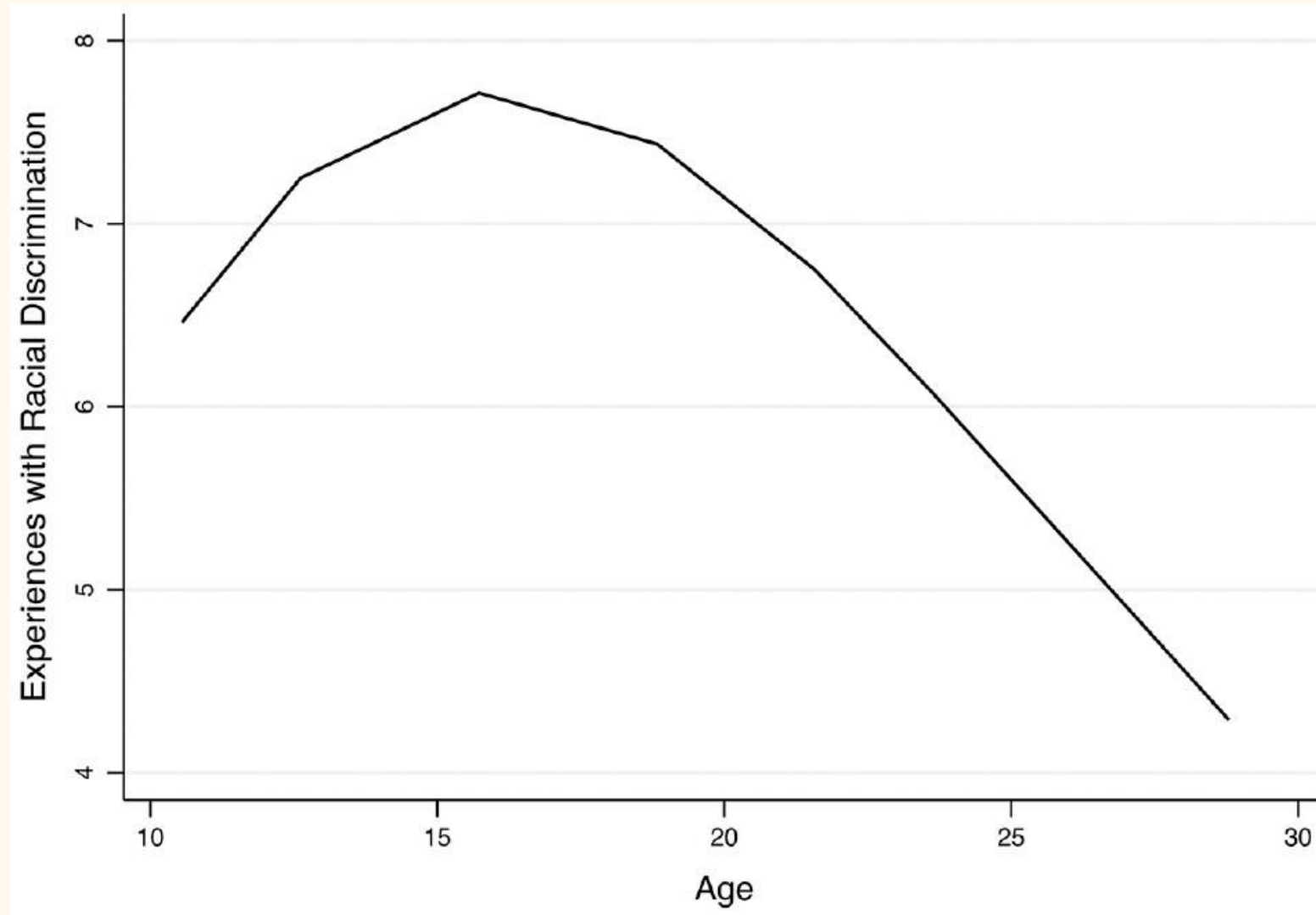
Children in Poverty by Race: 2017



Defining Racism

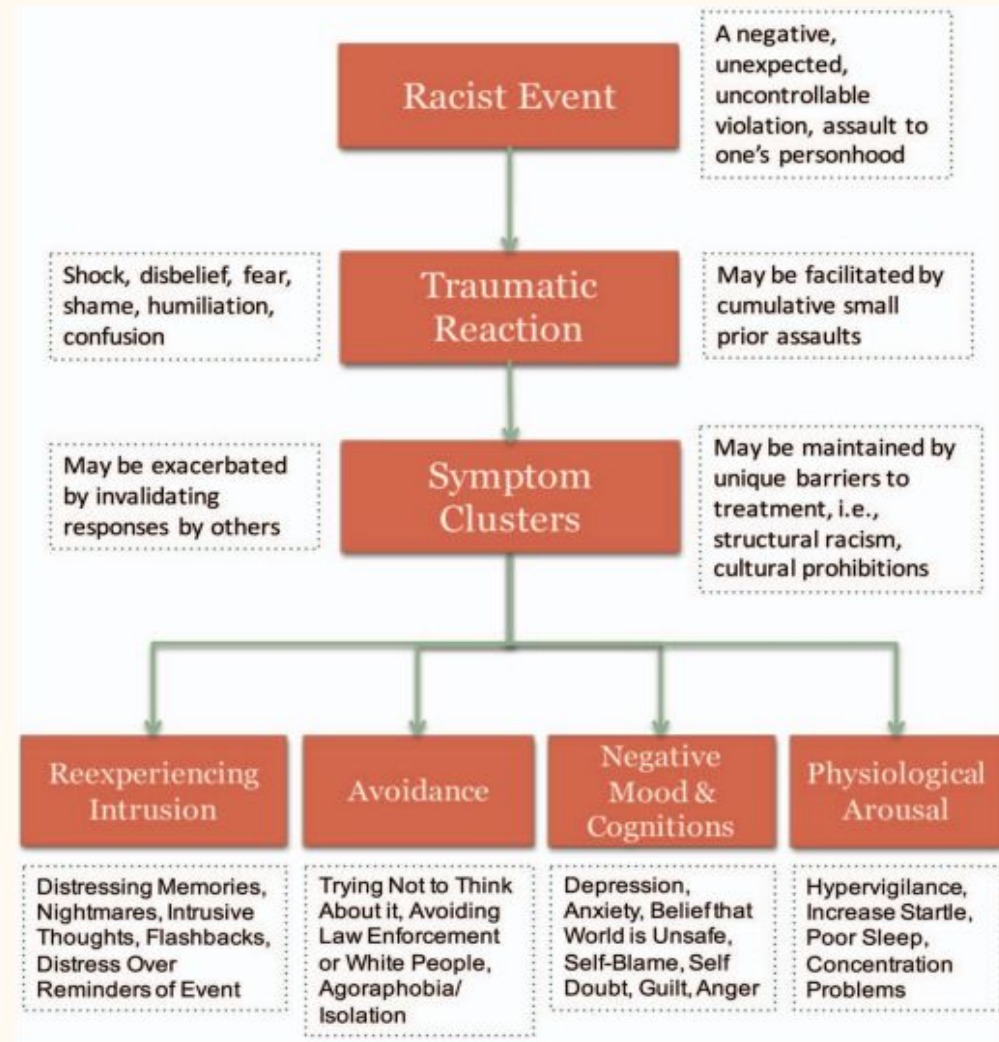
“A system of dominance, power, and privilege based on racial group designations; rooted in the historical oppression of a group defined or perceived by dominant-group members as inferior, deviant or undesirable”
-(Harrel, 2000; p. 43).

Interpersonal discrimination



Racism-Related Trauma

The emotional and psychological response to racial incidents that are unexpected, experienced as threatening, and result in significant psychological stress
(Carter, 2007)



Rumination as a Mediator of the Association Between Racial Discrimination and Depression Among Black Youth

[Donte L. Bernard](#) , [Colleen A. Halliday](#), [Funlola Are](#), [Devin E. Banks](#) & [Carla Kmett Danielson](#)

Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities **9**, 1937–1945 (2022) | [Cite this article](#)

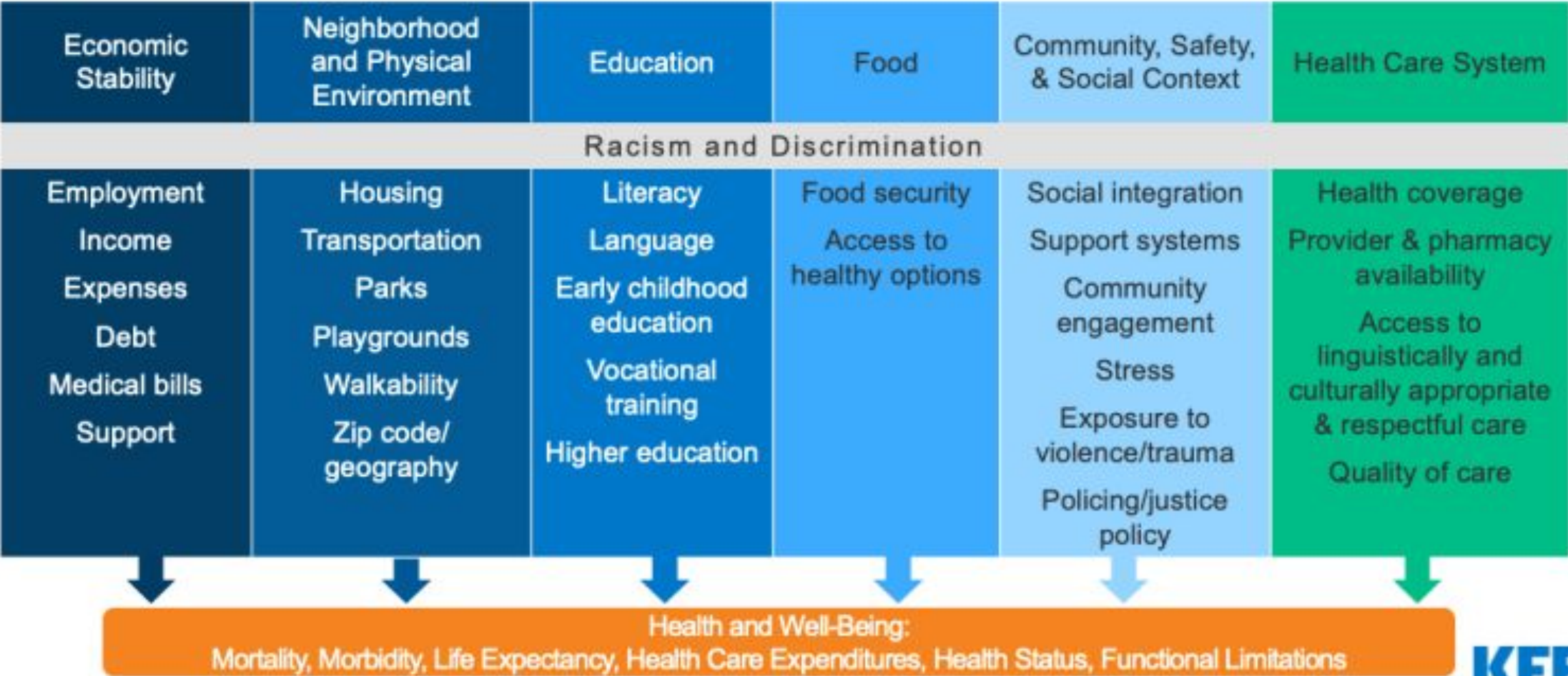
› [Am J Orthopsychiatry](#). 2023;93(4):293-303. doi: 10.1037/ort0000679. Epub 2023 May 8.

Developmental differences in the impact of racial discrimination on depression and anxiety among Black youth: Examining rumination as a mechanism

[Donte L Bernard](#) ¹, [Cristina M López](#) ², [Devin E Banks](#) ³, [Austin M Hahn](#) ², [Carla Kmett Danielson](#) ²



Health Disparities are Driven by Social and Economic Inequities



Ndugga, N., & Artiga, S. (2021). Disparities in health and health care: 5 key questions and answers. *Kaiser Family Foundation*, 11.

Bridging the Gap

- *The APA Presidential Task Force on Traumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Children and Adolescents (2009)* and *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017)* have cited racism and racial discrimination as a contributing factor to stress in the lives of racial and ethnic minority children.

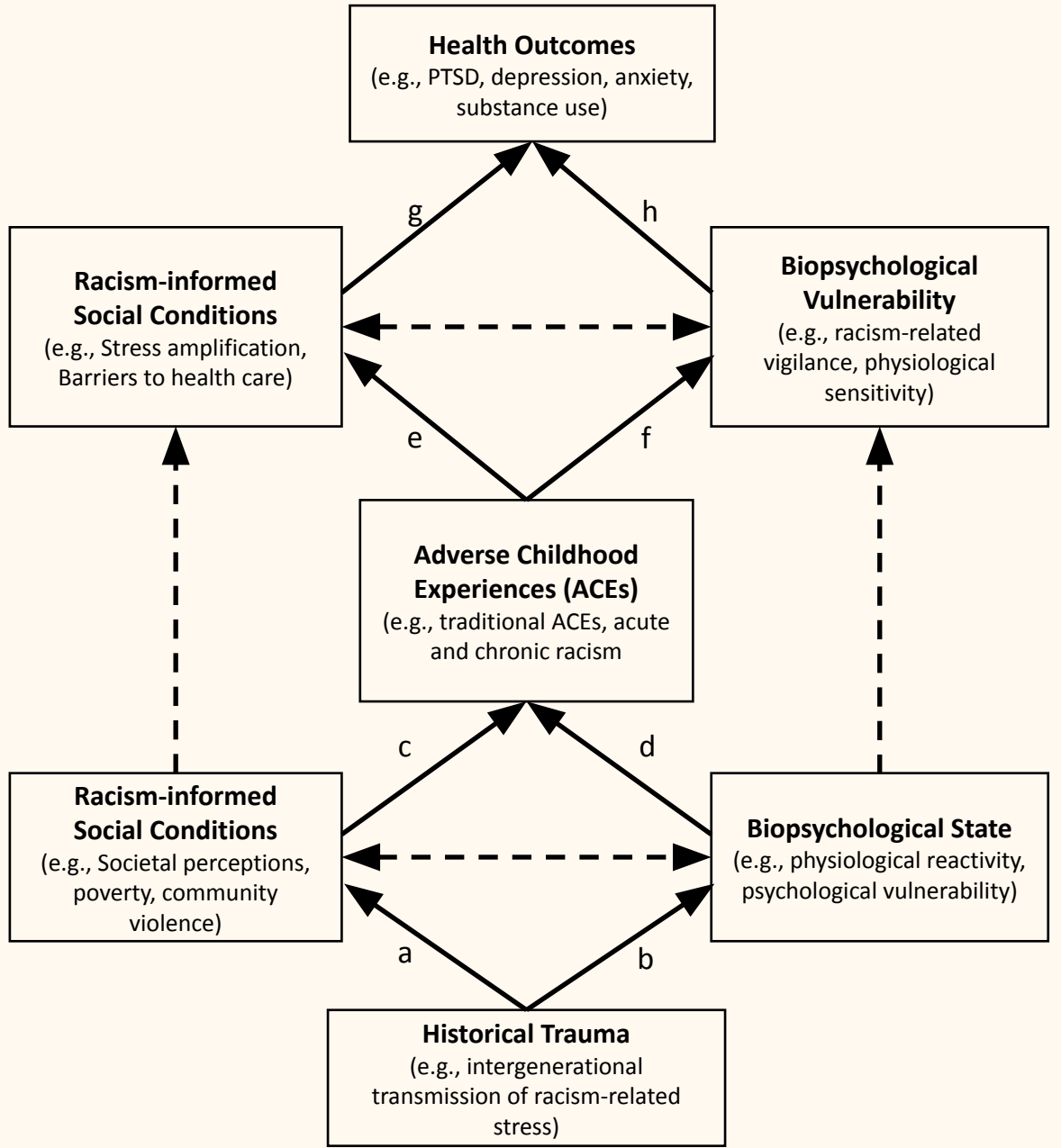
Integrating Racism into the ACEs Framework

- ACEs + Racism
 - (Vásquez et al., 2019)
- Culturally specific ACEs
 - Racial discrimination and community violence vs. parental drug and alcohol problems.
 - (Maguire-Jack et al., 2019)
- Expanded Model of ACEs
 - (Cronholm et al., 2015)
- Adverse Community Events
 - (Ellis, 2017)

Culturally-Informed Adverse Childhood Experiences Framework to Understand the Pervasive Mental Health Impact of Racism on Black Youth

Post-ACE Mental Health Risk Factors

ACE Exposure Risk Factors

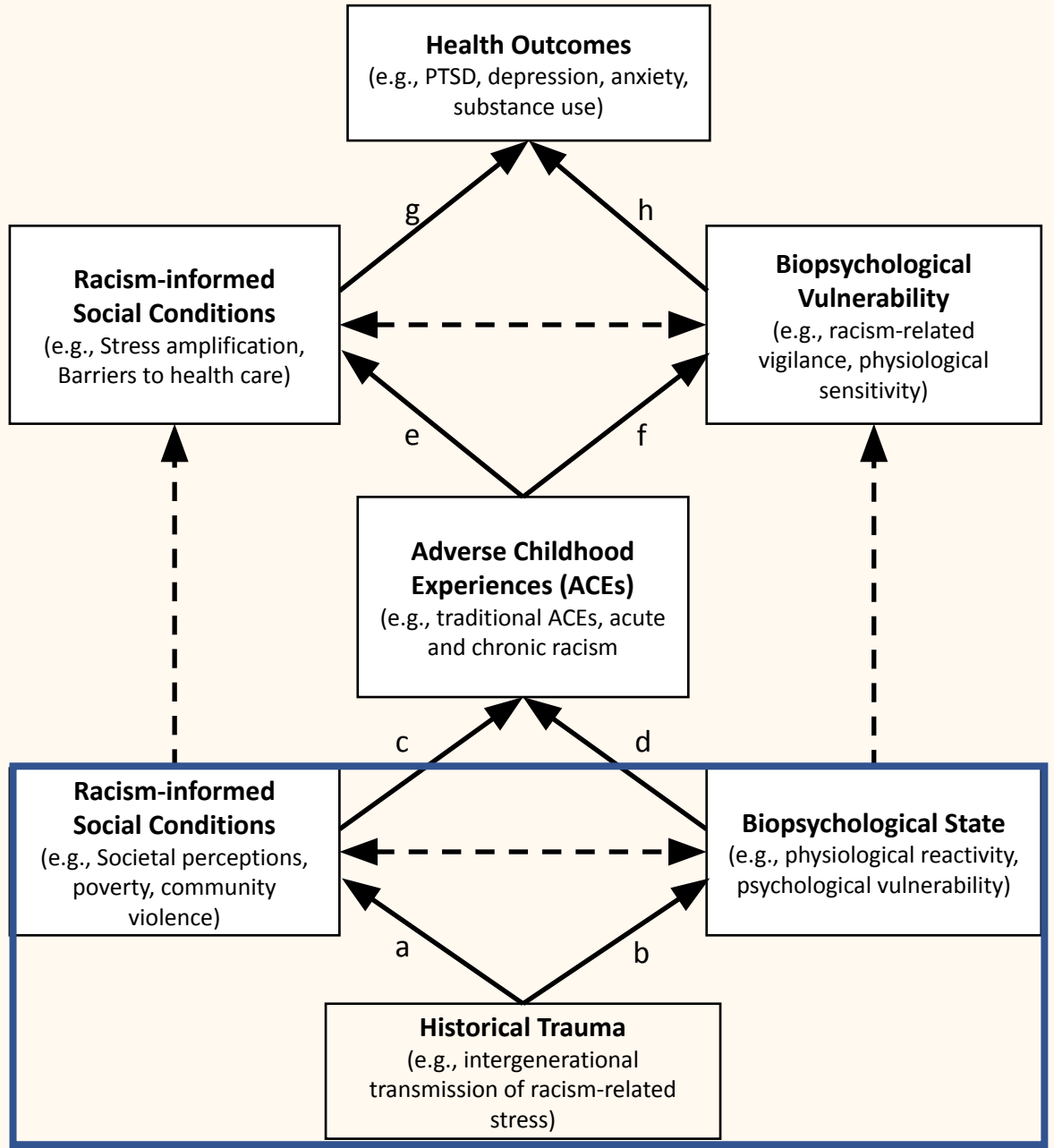


Bernard, D. L., Calhoun, C. D., Banks, D. E., Halliday, C. A., Hughes-Halbert, C., & Danielson, C. K. (2021). Making the “C-ACE” for a culturally-informed adverse childhood experiences framework to understand the pervasive mental health impact of racism on Black youth. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, 14(2), 233-247.

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Post-ACE Mental Health Risk Factors

ACE Exposure Risk Factors

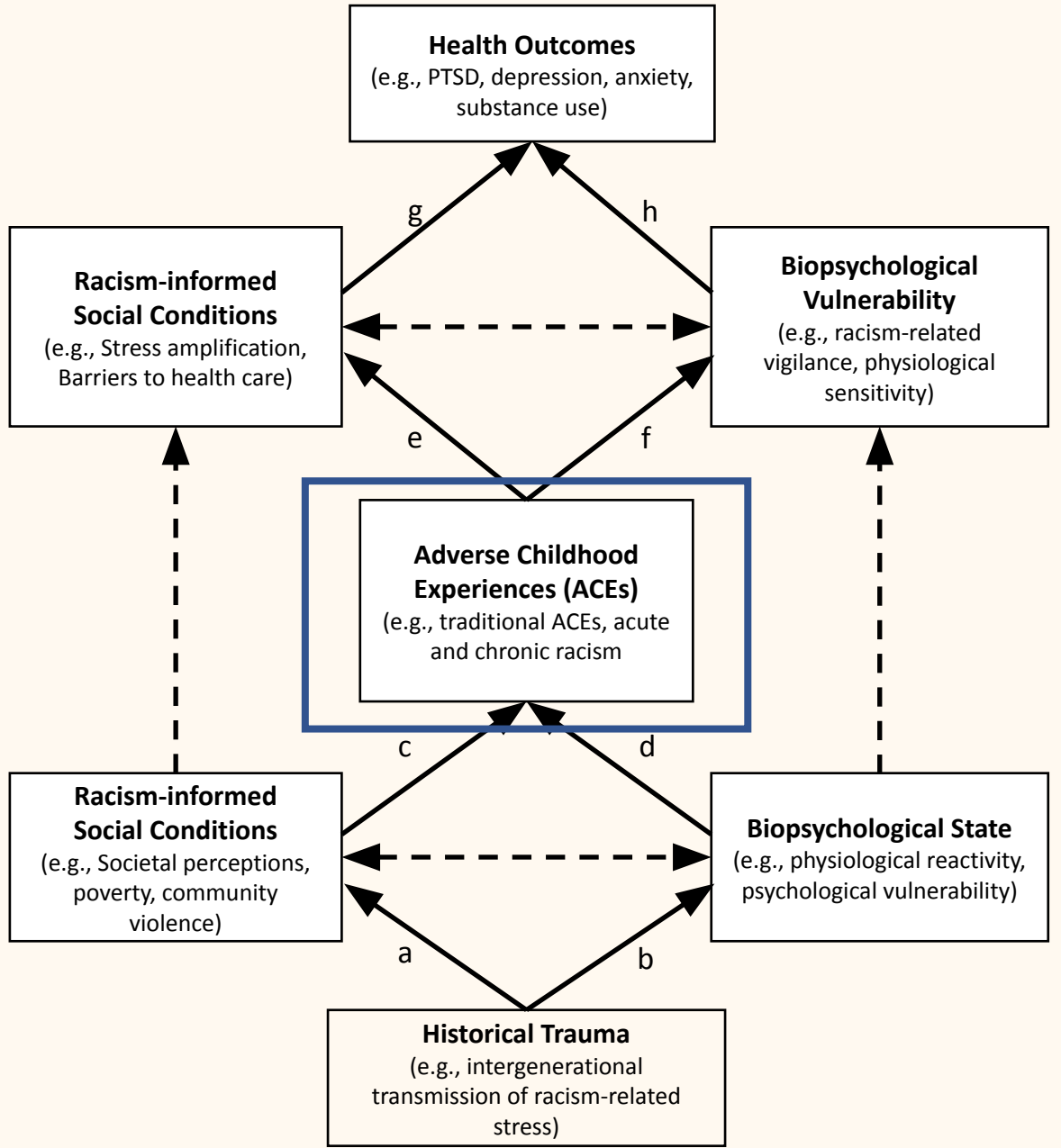


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Post-ACE Mental Health Risk Factors

ACE Exposure Risk Factors



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J Trauma Stress. 2021 October ; 34(5): 995–1004. doi:10.1002/jts.22670.

Racial Discrimination is Associated with Acute Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms and Predicts Future Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Severity in Trauma-Exposed Black Adults in the United States

Claire M. Bird¹, E. Kate Webb², Andrew T. Schramm³, Lucas Torres¹, Christine Larson², Terri A. deRoos-Cassini³

Beyond Trauma Exposure: Discrimination and Posttraumatic Stress, Internalizing, and Externalizing Problems Among Detained Youth

Lucybel Mendez¹ ,
Michaela M. Mozley¹  and
Patricia K. Kerig¹

Journal of Interpersonal Violence
2022, Vol. 37(3-4) 1825–1851

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Racial discrimination and other adverse childhood experiences as risk factors for internalizing mental health concerns among Black youth

Donte L. Bernard , Quinton Smith, Paul Lanier

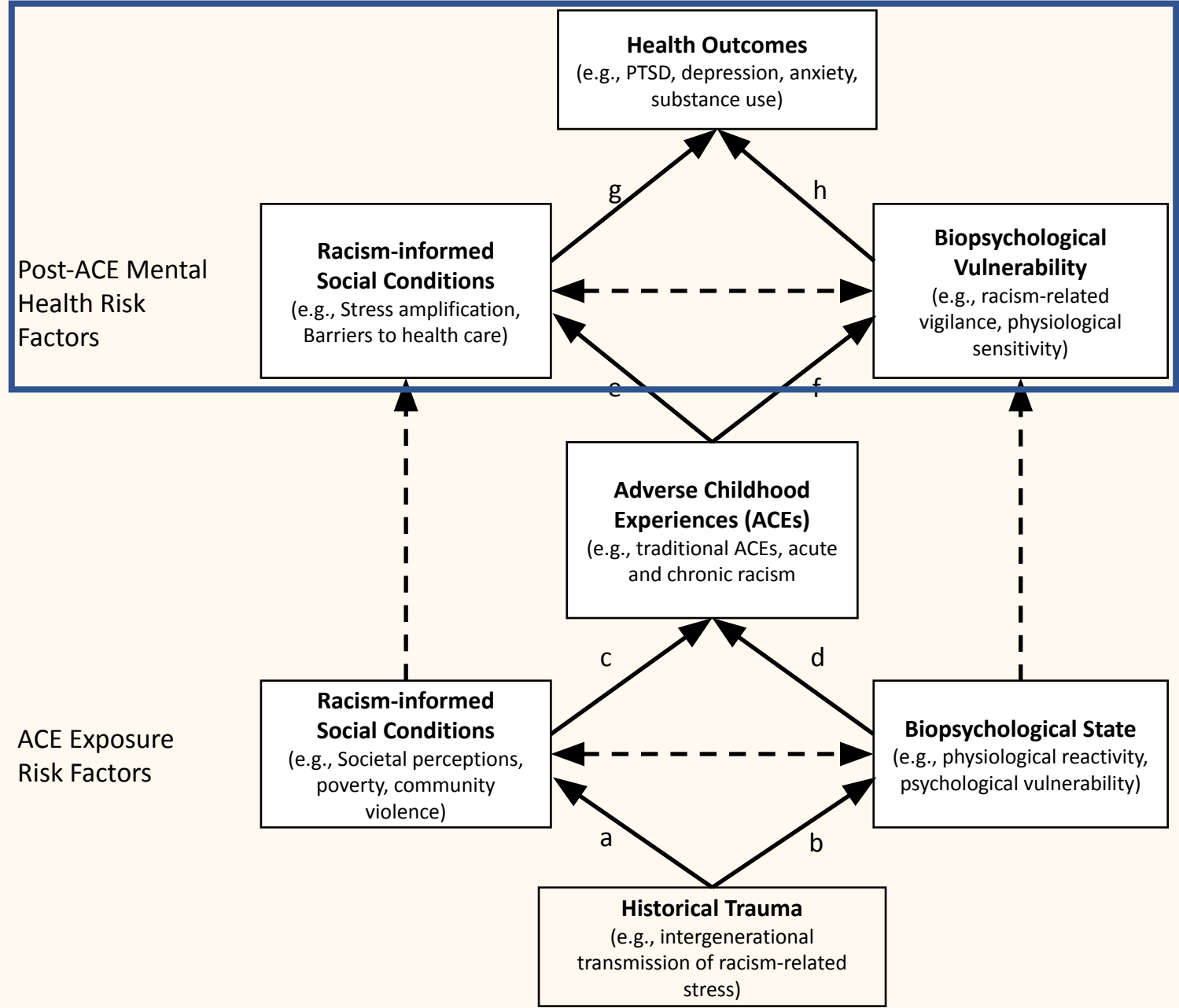
TABLE 4 Results of multivariable models estimating the associations between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and depression and anxiety

ACE endorsed	Depression		Anxiety	
	aOR	95% CI	aOR	95% CI
Racial Discrimination	1.35	[1.23, 1.49]	1.39	[1.31, 1.47]
Hard to cover basics like food or housing	1.74	[1.68, 1.81]	1.79	[1.75, 1.84]
Parent or guardian divorced	1.59	[1.54, 1.64]	1.24	[1.21, 1.27]
Parent or guardian died	1.18	[1.10, 1.28]	0.91	[0.80, 1.04]
Parent or guardian spent time in jail	1.01	[0.99, 1.04]	0.96	[0.93, 0.99]
Adults slap, hit, kick, or punch others	1.19	[1.16, 1.22]	1.06	[1.05, 1.07]
Victim of or witness to neighborhood violence	1.74	[1.70, 1.78]	1.36	[1.32, 1.40]
Lived with person with mental illness	3.21	[3.13, 3.28]	2.91	[2.83, 2.98]
Lived with person with alcohol/drug problem	1.24	[1.21, 1.27]	1.22	[1.21, 1.23]

Note: N = 8,672, with pooled results from six imputed models. Models controlled for child age, sex, geography, and poverty level.



Culturally-Informed Adverse Childhood Experiences Framework to Understand the Pervasive Mental Health Impact of Racism on Black Youth



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RING THE ALARM

THE CRISIS OF BLACK YOUTH SUICIDE IN AMERICA



A REPORT TO CONGRESS FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS
**EMERGENCY TASKFORCE ON BLACK YOUTH
SUICIDE AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Meta-analysis: Are Psychotherapies Less Effective for Black Youth in Communities With Higher Levels of Anti-Black Racism?

Maggi A. Price, PhD , John R. Weisz, PhD , Sarah McKetta, MSc , Nathan L. Hollinsaid, BS ,
Micah R. Lattanner, PhD , Allecia E. Reid, PhD , Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, PhD 

Objective: To examine whether anti-Black cultural racism moderates the efficacy of psychotherapy interventions among youth.

Method: A subset of studies from a previous meta-analysis of 5 decades of youth psychotherapy randomized controlled trials was analyzed. Studies were published in English between 1963 and 2017 and identified through a systematic search. The 194 studies (N = 14,081 participants; age range, 2-19) across 34 states comprised 2,678 effect sizes (ESs) measuring mental health problems (eg, depression) targeted by interventions. Anti-Black cultural racism was operationalized using a composite index of 31 items measuring explicit racial attitudes (obtained from publicly available sources, eg, General Social Survey) aggregated to the state level and linked to the meta-analytic database. Analyses were conducted with samples of majority-Black (ie, $\geq 50\%$ Black) (n = 36 studies) and majority-White (n = 158 studies) youth.

Results: Two-level random-effects meta-regression analyses indicated that higher anti-Black cultural racism was associated with lower ESs for studies with majority-Black youth ($\beta = -0.2$, 95% CI [-0.35, -0.04], $p = .02$) but was unrelated to ESs for studies with majority-White youth ($\beta = 0.0004$, 95% CI [-0.03, 0.03], $p = .98$), controlling for relevant area-level covariates. In studies with majority-Black youth, mean ESs were significantly lower in states with the highest anti-Black cultural racism (>1 SD above the mean; Hedges' $g = 0.19$) compared with states with the lowest racism (<1 SD below the mean; Hedges' $g = 0.60$).

Conclusion: Psychotherapies tested with samples of majority-Black youth were significantly less effective in states with higher (vs lower) levels of anti-Black cultural racism, suggesting that anti-Black cultural racism may be one contextual moderator of treatment effect heterogeneity.

Key words: anti-Black cultural racism, psychotherapy, spatial meta-analysis, treatment effect heterogeneity, youth

J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry 2022;61(6):754–763.



So, What Do We Do?

Expand conceptualizations of trauma

An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Poverty as an Adverse Childhood Experience

Michelle Hughes, Whitney Tucker

Exposure to Community Violence as a New Adverse Childhood Experience Category: Promising Results and Future Considerations

Eunju Lee, Heather Larkin, & Nina Esaki



American Journal of Preventive Medicine

Volume 49, Issue 3, September 2015, Pages 354-361



Research Article

Adverse Childhood Experiences: Expanding the Concept of Adversity

[Peter F. Cronholm MD, MSCE^{a b c}](#)  , [Christine M. Forke MSN, CRNP^{d e}](#),
[Roy Wade MD, PhD, MPH^f](#), [Megan H. Bair-Merritt MD, MSCE^j](#), [Martha Davis MSS^k](#),
[Mary Harkins-Schwarz MPH^h](#), [Lee M. Pachter DOⁱ](#), [Joel A. Fein MD, MPH^{e g}](#)





Preventive Medicine

Volume 157, April 2022, 107016



Expanding adverse child experiences to inequality and racial discrimination

[Jesse J. Helton^a](#)  , [Jordan P. Davis^{b c d e}](#), [Daniel S. Lee^e](#), [Sheila Pakdaman^e](#)

The Case for Conceptualizing Youth-Police Contact as a Racialized Adverse Childhood Experience

Dylan B. Jackson, PhD

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dylan B. Jackson is with the Department of Population, Family, and Reproductive Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD.

Enhance measurement of ACEs



- Philadelphia ACEs survey
 - Chronholm et al., 2015
- Pediatric ACEs and Related Life Events Screener (PEARLS)
 - Koita et al., 2018
- National Survey of Children's Health
 - Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative

Modify case-conceptualizations



Ralph Yarl

Healing Interpersonal and Racial Trauma: Integrating Racial Socialization Into Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for African American Youth

Isha W. Metzger¹ , Riana Elyse Anderson², Funlola Are³, and Tiarney Ritchwood⁴

Child Maltreatment
2021, Vol. 26(1) 17-27
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EMBRacing Racial Stress and Trauma: Preliminary Feasibility and Coping Responses of a Racial Socialization Intervention

Riana Elyse Anderson¹, Monique McKenny², Amari Mitchell³, Lydia Koku⁴, and Howard C. Stevenson³

Journal of Black Psychology
2018, Vol. 44(1) 25–46
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Cognitive and Behavioral Practice xxx (2022) xxx–xxx

Cognitive and
Behavioral
Practice

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An Evidence-Based Approach for Treating Stress and Trauma due to Racism

Monnica T. Williams, *University of Ottawa*
Samantha Holmes, *City University of New York, College of Staten Island*
Manzar Zare, *University of Ottawa*
Angela Haeny, *Yale School of Medicine*
Sonya Faber, *Bioville GmbH*

[Published: 07 November 2022](#)

A Flexible Treatment Planning Model for Racism-Related Stress in Adolescents and Young Adults

[Ryan C. T. DeLapp](#)  & [Laurie Gallo](#)

[Journal of Health Service Psychology](#) (2022) | [Cite this article](#)

In Summary

- Difficult to conceptualize childhood adversity without the recognition of racism in the lives of Black youth
- Racism-related stressors bear striking resemblance to ACEs as traditionally conceptualized
 - a) Represent distinct and potentially traumatic events that can accumulate
 - b) Chronic can compromise health both immediately and over time
 - c) May compromise health through multiple pathways
- Exclusion of culturally relevant potentially traumatic experiences may lead to inaccurate or incomplete case-conceptualization, treatment approaches, and policies

Contact Information

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Move beyond person-centered investigations

Our recommendations for practitioners are:

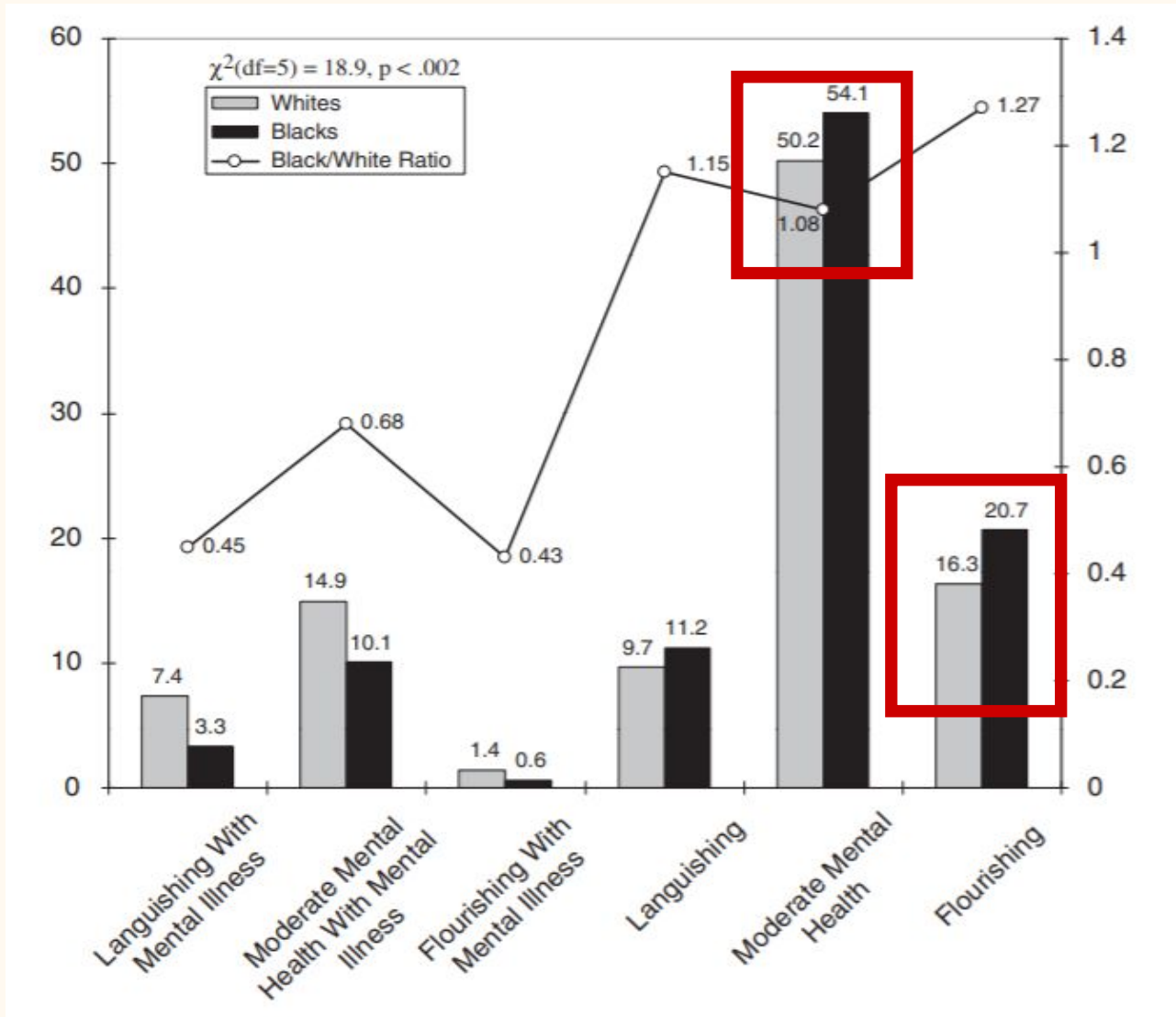
1. To be more cautious and sensitive in translating evidence from population research to individual risk in order to reduce stigma and avoid deterministic messages from being propagated.
2. Give careful thought to how and when to appropriately record ACEs in different practice settings. In some situations, e.g. in therapeutic settings, detailed information on specific adversities might be useful but it needs to be recognised that ACEs do not necessarily result in poor outcomes.
3. Consider whether evidence is available on the effectiveness and acceptability of programmes such as routine enquiry and trauma informed initiatives before implementation.
4. Only routinely enquire about ACEs where the benefit outweighs any potential harm, and where evidence-based interventions exist and are readily available.
5. Look beyond individuals and families to the broader structural 'causes' of ACEs, such as poverty – especially when developing policy initiatives.

Practitioner Review: Twenty years of research with adverse childhood experience scores – Advantages, disadvantages and applications to practice

Rebecca E. Lacey,¹ and Helen Minnis²

¹Research Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London, London, UK; ²Institute of Health and Wellbeing, College of Medical Veterinary and Life Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

Towards a Resilience Perspective

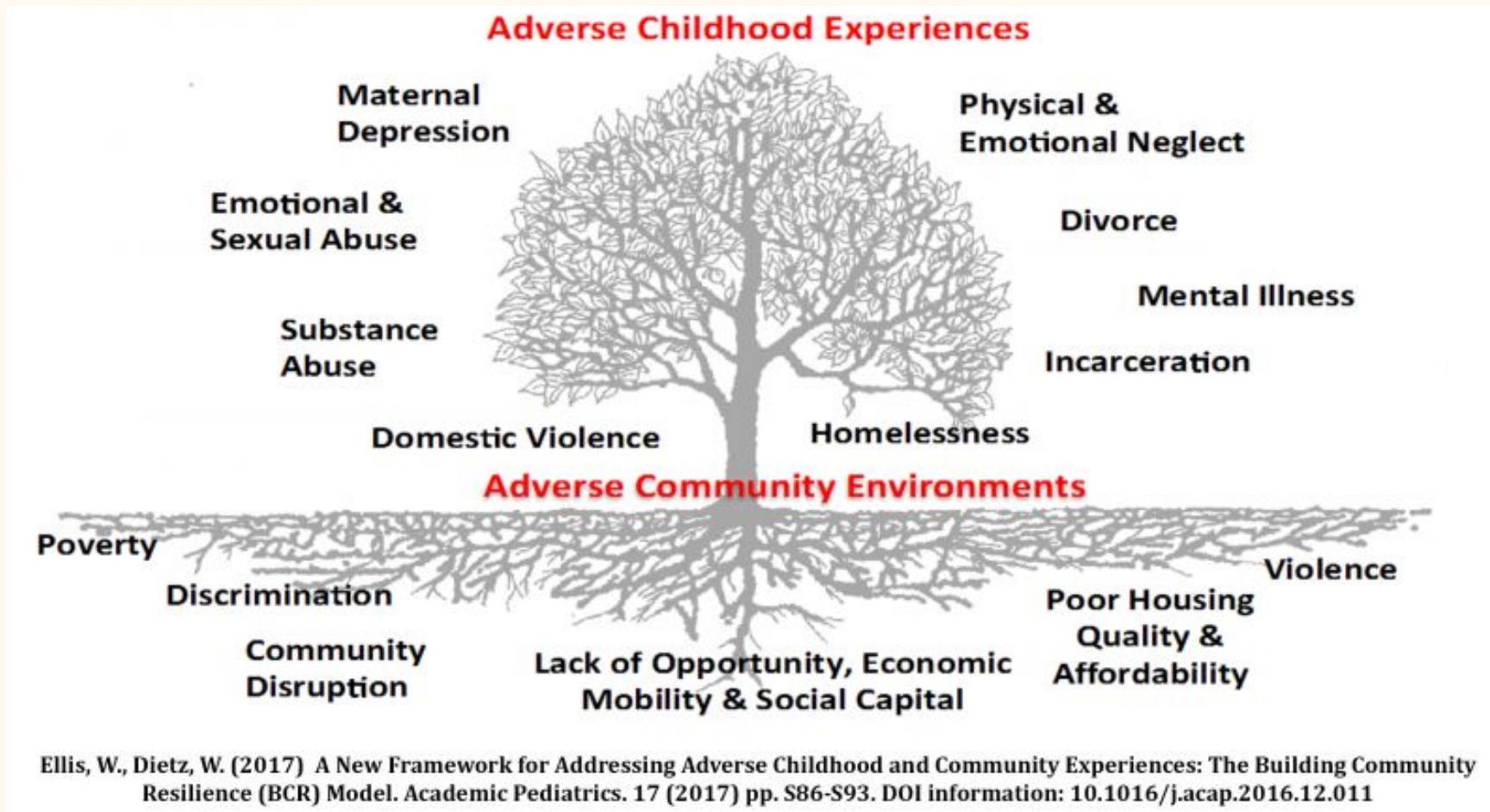


In Conclusion

To reduce the health effects of racism among African American and other youth experiencing marginalization, it is critical that we validate their perceptions and experiences, empower them, and collaborate with them to leverage the community strengths they identify.

(Woods-Jaeger et al., 2013)

The Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences Framework



ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

9.5% of GA children had a guardian with substances abuse.⁴

- Mental Illness
- Homelessness
- Substance Abuse
- Emotional & Sexual Abuse

- Divorce
- Incarceration
- Domestic Violence
- Maternal Depression
- Physical & Emotional Neglect

10% of GA children had a parent serve jail time in 2017-2018.²

21% of GA children live in Poverty.²

ADVERSE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

- Poor Housing Quality & Affordability
- Systemic Racism
- Community Violence
- Mass Incarceration
- Forced Displacement
- Pandemics
- Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital
- Holocaust
- Slavery
- Genocide

30% of GA children live in housing that is more than 30% the household income.²

Atlanta is the #1 city in the U.S. for income inequality.³

ADVERSE COLLECTIVE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES



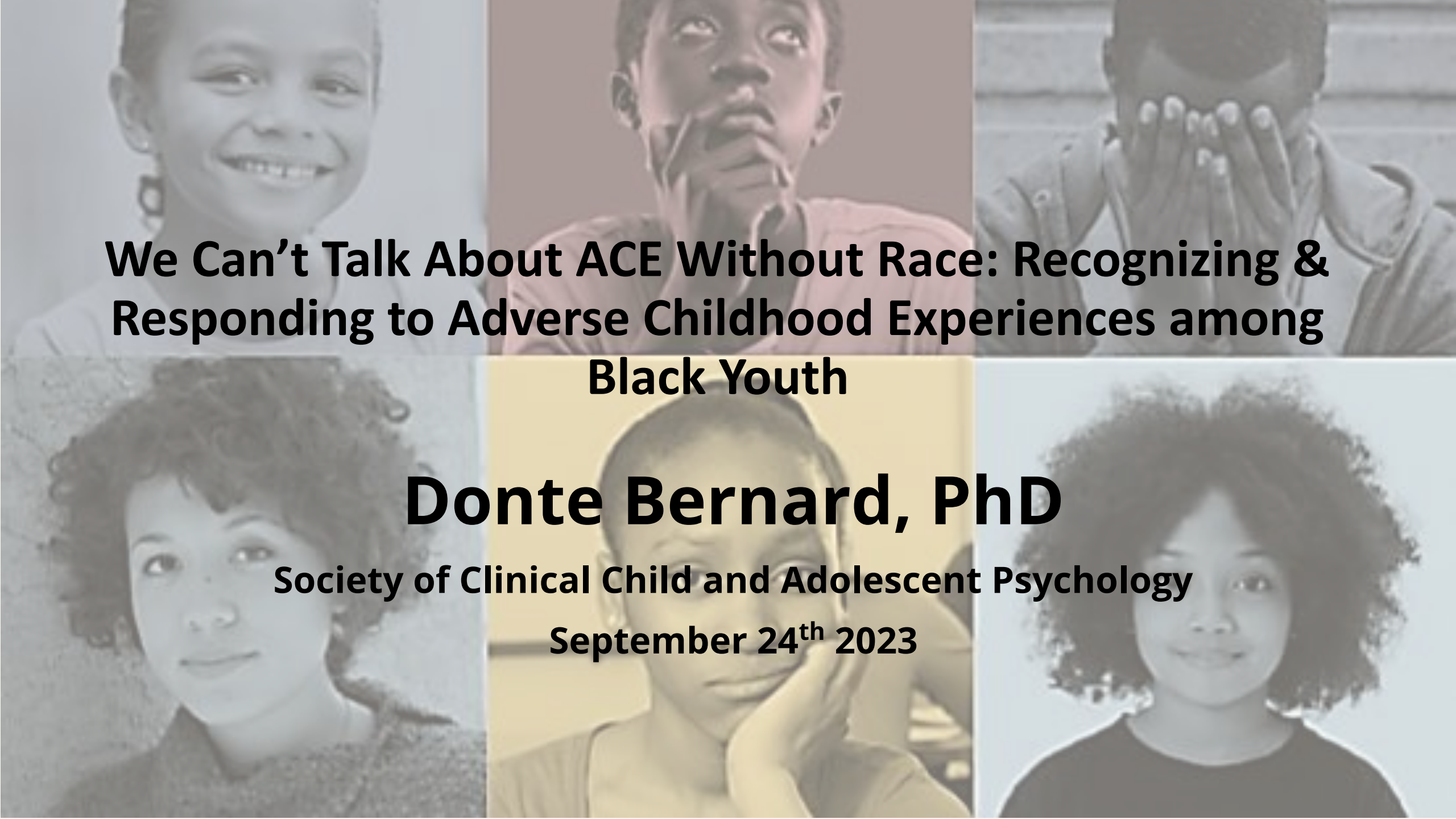
**A call to action to reconceptualize adverse
childhood experiences among Black youth:
Missing the forest for the trees**

Donte Bernard, PhD

University of Arkansas

Colloquia series

September 7th, 2023



We Can't Talk About ACE Without Race: Recognizing & Responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences among Black Youth

Donte Bernard, PhD

Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology

September 24th 2023