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Does labelling racism as bullying perpetuate a colour-blind approach when working with culturally diverse families?

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this resource may contain images or names of people who have passed away.

Resource summary

This resource examines the significant impacts faced by children and families when subjected to racism, particularly when it is acknowledged and addressed within the context of bullying. Defining the connection and differences between bullying and racism helps in framing responses to ensure tailored support and cultural safety for families while addressing systemic conditions. Practical considerations and strategies offer opportunities for practitioners to further develop their culturally responsive practice approaches.

Key messages

- There are similarities and distinctions between bullying and racism. While both are pervasive and profoundly harmful, racism is further intensified by its scope, complex power dynamics and deeply ingrained, systemic nature.

- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities often experience both bullying and racism. The intersectionality of children's experiences amplifies instances of discrimination and systemic racism and exacerbates inequalities in education, employment, housing and healthcare.

- Racism can cause children to internalise harmful ideas and stereotypes about their culture. It can lead to self-hate and create significant identity clashes for children.

- Practitioners who take a culturally curious approach and practise cultural humility can help children and their families to challenge some of the unhelpful assumptions caused by bullying and racism.

- Recognising, understanding and changing unconscious ideas about cultures (unconscious cultural bias) helps dismantle the inadvertent perpetuation of racial discrimination.

- Addressing racism requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach, particularly from those who are privileged and empowered within dominant cultural systems.

Terminology

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) is a commonly used term in Australia and is used by the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia. However, we recognise the limits of its usefulness. When we use this term, we are referring to the vast array of languages, ethnicities, nationalities, traditions, societal structures and religions within families and across many different communities.

Who is this resource for?

This paper is for practitioners seeking to develop their culturally responsive and anti-racist practice. It distinguishes between bullying and racism and examines the unique effects of both issues on the lives of children from CALD communities.

This resource highlights the roles of schools, peers and bystanders in contributing to culturally safe spaces, offering guidance on how they can challenge racism and safeguard children's mental health. It expands on the ideas delivered in the recent webinar, *Supporting culturally and linguistically diverse children and families who experience racism*. It also builds upon the four key domains as introduced in the Emerging Minds online course, *Understanding children's mental health in culturally diverse communities*.

The experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities are impacted by racism more than any other group in Australia. Experiencing racial discrimination while accessing institutions and interventions that are not culturally responsive and safe has a substantial and cumulative negative effect on children's mental health and wellbeing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children report the highest levels of racially discriminatory treatment in Australia (Priest et al., 2018).

This brief paper does not have the scope to extensively consider the sociopolitical impacts that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have endured over centuries, given the depth and complexity of their experiences. If you wish to explore strategies for supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in greater detail, please consider exploring Emerging Minds' selection of online courses in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing learning pathway*.

Introduction

Bullying and racism are two distinct yet interconnected issues that impact children's mental health, development and overall wellbeing. Understanding their similarities and distinctions, and employing effective responses is fundamental for creating a safe and inclusive environment for children.

This paper explores the complexities of racism, emphasising its distinction from bullying and highlighting the profound effects it has on marginalised communities. Clarifying these differences shapes helpful and impactful responses

that can be implemented by children, parents, practitioners and educators, as well as peers and bystanders – a whole-of-community approach to responding to racism.

What is bullying?

'Bullying is a pervasive problem that can occur in various settings, such as schools, workplaces, and online platforms. Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm… [with] immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders' (Bullying. No Way!, 2022). Bullying can take different forms, including verbal abuse, physical aggression, social exclusion and cyberbullying (Rollbusch, 2022).

Effects of bullying

Childhood bullying has significant physical, psychological and socioeconomic consequences for individuals, families and communities. This is true for children who experience bullying and those who engage in bullying behaviour. The Commissioner for Children and Young People of South Australia (2018) found that the effects of experiencing and engaging in bullying in childhood are similar to the effects of childhood abuse and neglect. These distressing social experiences can contribute to the development of negative identities in children that, if left unsupported, can have long-lasting effects throughout adolescence and adulthood (Arseneault, 2018; McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015; Bullying No Way, 2022).

Psychological effects of childhood bullying

Children involved in bullying are three to six times more likely to develop psychological issues, including depression, anxiety, eating disorders, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. These effects persist regardless of age, gender, or pre-existing psychological difficulties. Moreover, children who experience or engage in bullying behaviours have an increased likelihood of being diagnosed with mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety and borderline personality disorder later in life (Robinson, 2020; Rivara & Menestrel, 2016; Rollbusch, 2022).

Physical effects of childhood bullying

Childhood bullying can lead to physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, sleep problems, appetite changes, and regressive behaviours like bedwetting. These physical effects can reinforce negative self-perceptions and often go unnoticed by supportive adults (Robinson, 2020; Rivara & Menestrel, 2016; Rollbusch, 2022).

In the following video (5 minutes 11 seconds), practitioners discuss how to sensitively explore children's experiences of bullying and the impact it has had on them.

Principal – Practice design
Parenting Research Centre
Elly Robinson
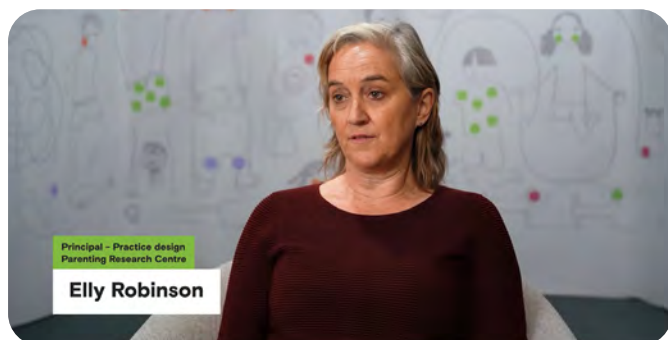
▶ WATCH THE VIDEO TO LEARN MORE

Socioeconomic impact of childhood bullying

Children who experience bullying may withdraw from or refuse to attend school, leading to poorer academic outcomes. Incorrectly labelling children as 'naughty,' 'lazy' or 'withdrawn' because of their school refusal can further worsen their mental health. Experiencing and engaging in bullying behaviour also correlates with increased peer rejection, relationship problems and fewer friends (Wolke et al., 2014).

The economic cost of childhood bullying in Australia was estimated at $763 million in 2016 (Jadambaa et al., 2021). Having experienced or engaged in bullying behaviour as a child has the potential to impact employment prospects and result in increased contact with the criminal justice system in adulthood (Robinson 2020; Rivara & Menestrel 2016; Rollbusch 2022).

The ramifications of bullying behaviour extend beyond those directly involved. Bystanders witnessing bullying might grapple with feelings of guilt or helplessness over not intervening. On the other hand, 'upstanders' – people who actively support children who are being bullied and stand up to those doing the bullying – play a crucial role in reducing its harmful effects. Notably, both bystanders and upstanders encountered impacts stemming from the bullying itself (Bullying. No Way!, 2022).

Read the practice paper, *Key considerations for practitioners responding to childhood bullying* for more information about how to respond effectively to children's disclosures of bullying involvement.

How is racism different to bullying?

While bullying involves repeated aggressive behaviour with a power imbalance, racism encompasses prejudice, discrimination and unequal treatment based on race, ethnicity, language and culture. Unlike bullying, racism is deeply rooted in societal systems, privileging certain racial groups within a hierarchy. It is important to differentiate these types of harm as they require significantly different understandings and responses (Prosser, 2020).

Forms of racism

Racism is deeply rooted in societal systems, perpetuating prejudice and discrimination based on an individual's race or ethnicity. It can manifest in various forms, such as:

- racial slurs
- microaggressions
- stereotypes
- unequal treatment; or
- institutional policies that perpetuate systemic advantages or disadvantages for different racial groups.

Racism operates at both interpersonal and institutional levels, shaping individuals' experiences and opportunities from birth (Yared and Joshi, 2023).

Racism and bullying differ in their scope, targets, power dynamics and systemic nature. The essence of racism lies in the perpetuation of a racial hierarchy that places whiteness in a privileged position. Institutional power imbalances sustain racism, granting privileges to those at the top of the hierarchy while withholding them from racially marginalised groups (Becares & Priest, 2015; NCCDH, 2022; Yared et al., 2020). Dr Priest describes both the perpetuation and the impact of racism as 'like smog in the air' which 'we absorb … from birth' (Priest et al., 2013). This includes the dominant cultural group (Anglo-Saxon Australians), who may be conditioned to contribute to the perpetuation of cultural norms that marginalise certain racial groups.

Overt racism

Overt racism involves explicit and conscious bias, where individuals intentionally discriminate against others based on race, gender, religion, or other identifiable cultural attributes. It includes acts, statements or behaviours that are explicit and openly prejudiced and discriminatory, making it easy to identify.

This form of racism is typically rooted in deeply held beliefs, stereotypes, or personal attitudes, and involves conscious choices to favour or discriminate against certain groups. It is often motivated by prejudice and a desire to maintain power and privilege.

Overt racism can occur in various aspects of life, such as the workplace, education, healthcare, and

social interactions, leading to unfair treatment and discrimination.

Systemic racism

Systemic racism is linked to overt racism through policies and practices that perpetuate disparities in education, employment, healthcare, and housing. It results in ongoing social inequalities and encompasses behaviours, policies and systems that lead to disparities in life outcomes based on race or ethnicity.

This type of bias may not always be as visible as overt racism, but it has a profound impact on people's quality of life and wellbeing. Institutional racism is particularly challenging to recognise and combat and is perpetuated by organisations and governments that do not see themselves as racist (Elias & Paradies, 2021) and, it often reflects the cultural assumptions of the dominant group, marginalising and othering non-white/Anglo-Saxon communities (Elias et al., 2021).

When whiteness is seen as the norm, it offers automatic racial privilege and entitlements to certain groups. For example, in her seminal essay, White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack, Peggy McIntosh (1969) articulates white privilege through statements that highlight the often-taken-for-granted and significant benefits for those identified as 'white'. McIntosh shows how, in doing so, racial discrimination is perpetuated against groups not considered white.

Covert racism

Covert racism, also known as hidden or subtle racism, refers to racial bias and discrimination that is not obvious or easily recognisable. These subtle, less explicit forms of prejudice and discrimination are more challenging to identify and therefore confront.

Covert racism may be expressed through attitudes, behaviours and institutional practices that perpetuate racial inequality but are not as obvious as more overt forms of racism (Elias et al 2021). Examples include the higher likelihood of racial profiling and harsher sentencing for certain racial groups, as well as unequal access to legal representation. These systemic issues contribute to a cycle of disadvantage for certain racial communities, highlighting how institutional structures can perpetuate discriminatory practices.

Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions are subtle and common acts of discrimination that can be perpetuated through unconscious bias or thoughtlessness. They convey derogatory, stereotypical or negative biases based on ethnicity.

Perpetrators of microaggressions may not realise they are engaging in such behaviours. These actions or comments can be brief and seemingly harmless, but they can have a harmful and cumulative impact on children's wellbeing and self-esteem.

Microaggressions are a form of covert or subtle discrimination, and they are typically rooted in deeply ingrained societal prejudices. Microaggressions can easily go unnoticed by those who do not experience them, making it challenging for a child (or parent) to explain or report these incidents (Sue et al., 2007; Prosser, 2020).

[Download a PDF of examples of microaggressions](#)

Unconscious cultural bias

Unconscious bias (also known as implicit bias) encompasses underlying, automatic and unintentional attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes that all people unknowingly hold toward different cultures or social groups. This type of bias perpetuates racism more broadly, manifesting in everyday interactions for children.

In practice, unconscious cultural bias might look like:

 – assuming a child's parents don't speak English

 – asking a child where they are from; or

 – saying to a child, 'Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. You need to speak up more.'

These experiences are accumulative and although they often go unnoticed by the practitioner, they can significantly affect children's identity development, with profound and intrusive consequences (Tsipursky & McRaney, 2020).

The process of socialisation reinforces unconscious cultural stereotypes and biases among children, significantly impacting how they see themselves and others, and their overall social and emotional development. These underlying assumptions and judgements also shape children's interactions with their peers, often leading to exclusion or misunderstandings directed at children from various cultural backgrounds (Sharma and Prakash, 2022).

The Emerging Minds online course, *Understanding children's mental health in culturally diverse communities*, explores unconscious cultural bias in practitioners and its implications for healthcare services. This includes how allocation of resources and opportunities for children based on their cultural heritage results in disparities in education, healthcare and extracurricular activities (Elias & Paradies, 2021).

Addressing unconscious bias

Without awareness and direct action, practitioners can inadvertently collude and propagate bias when working with culturally diverse communities. When practitioners impose their cultural values on clients, they are not considering the needs, beliefs and values of people from cultures different to their own. This can make children and families feel powerless and reinforce discrimination.

Practitioners committed to culturally responsive practice examine and challenge the default ways of engaging and working with diverse communities. They actively challenge dominant ideas, notice assumptions, and recognise and value diverse forms of knowledge and expertise while seeking to elevate them. Also known as 'decolonising practice', practitioners can examine and challenge the wider societal applications of dominant ideas and social narratives by engaging in ongoing critical reflection, dialogue and advocacy (Tascon, 2019).

Anti-racist practice approach

You can address racism and its effects by using a multilayered approach, including increasing your racial literacy through self-education, and applying a reflective, curious lens when implementing anti-racist practices (Dolman, Ngcanga & Anderson, 2020; Williams et al., 2022).

Anti-racist practice goes beyond cultural inclusivity and responsiveness; it explicitly acknowledges racism and actively works to dismantle systems of oppression (Kendi, 2019). To incorporate anti-racism into your practice, you can focus on the following:

- **Critical self-reflection**: Critical self-reflection can help you to understand where you are implicated in the systems of racism, privilege and power dynamics, including your own prejudices, and how these elements may impact therapeutic processes.

- **Cultural humility** involves examining your own cultural biases, values and beliefs, while recognising how these biases impact on interactions with people from cultures different from your own. It also entails showing respect, being open to celebrating diversity and differences, and adopting a learning approach that embraces a lifelong journey of understanding.

- **Cultural curiosity** involves seeing children and families as valuable sources of cultural knowledge. Their skills and wisdom have enabled them to respond to experiences of adversity and can continue to inform responses to current problems they are facing. Practitioners should be prepared to learn from clients about their understandings, perspectives and experiences (Dolman et al., 2020).

- **Equitable conversations**: You can cultivate the capacity to engage in discussions about race, racism and whiteness with children and their parents in a comfortable and safe manner, even when it involves acknowledging your own privilege, biases or racism, which may cause discomfort.

- **Continuous anti-racism learning**: Continuous education will help you to better understand how racism, racial trauma and whiteness impact children's mental health and development. Demonstrating a commitment to ongoing learning is a crucial part of anti-racist practice.

- **Culturally safe physical space**: Practitioners need to consider the physical space where they meet with children and families. Thinking about the waiting room, website and workplace staff and ensuring they reflect a culturally safe, diverse, welcoming and anti-racist environment further reinforces inclusive messaging.

You can incorporate anti-racism into your approach by:

- engaging in critical self-reflection

- embracing cultural humility and curiosity

- fostering equitable conversations about race; and

- committing to ongoing anti-racism education (Dolman et al., 2020; Subban & Subban, 2022; Yared and Joshi, 2023).

Watch the following video (10 minutes, 6 seconds) to hear from parents and practitioners about experiences of racism and what practitioners can do about it.

▶ WATCH THE VIDEO TO LEARN MORE

Cultural humility and a culturally curious approach

Developing deep relationships with families and using their insights to inform assessments and interventions is particularly valuable when families are striving to overcome biases and adversities.

Maintaining curiosity might be challenging, as you may be tempted to offer advice based on your experience

and expertise. Critical self-reflection will help you to adjust your ideas, beliefs and biases and learn from culturally diverse families. Recognising families as the experts in their own lives and leveraging their skills and knowledge to tackle problems effectively helps you to better support children experiencing racism.

Cultural curiosity is about appreciating differences rather than viewing children and culturally diverse families as problems to be solved. It encourages practitioners to approach families uniquely, avoiding stereotypes and assumptions. This mindset fosters authentic relationships and empowers families to utilise their wisdom for problem-solving and positive perspectives.

It is important to recognise that the way we think, consider and pose questions is influenced (often unconsciously) by our cultural perspective. Culture is deeply rooted in our social systems; it plays a significant role in how societies function and are interpreted and experienced. Curiosity, within this context, can sometimes lead us to favour perspectives aligned with our society's dominant culture.

To gain a more well-rounded understanding of the families you support, it's essential to continuously assess the less obvious aspects of your curiosity – those aspects that are invisible but ingrained. By intentionally reshaping your lines of inquiry and actively listening for what remains unseen, unasked or unexplored, you can develop a deeper understanding of the diverse needs and complexities that families may bring (Zurn, 2021).

Emerging Minds has a range of resources with more information on developing culturally responsive practice and a culturally curious approach.

How does racism affect children and families?

The profound influence of racism on the mental, physical, social and emotional wellbeing of children is undeniable. It increases a child's susceptibility to emotional distress, negative self-perception and identity creation, and disruptive behaviours such as anger and aggression. As time goes on, experiences of racial prejudice add up, making things worse for children (Priest, Kavanagh, Bécares & King, 2019).

A concerning aspect of racism lies in its ability to undermine a child's identity, thereby setting off a chain reaction of subsequent negative consequences. The ramifications of racism are particularly pronounced within racially marginalised communities, taking a substantial toll on both their mental and physical health. Repeated instances of racism can trigger ongoing stress, anxiety, depression, and a spectrum of other mental health difficulties.

In some cases, individuals may internalise harmful stereotypes about their racial background, resulting in self-deprecation or a compromised sense of identity (Priest et al., 2019; Trent et al., 2019).

Internalisation

Internalised racism happens when people adopt racist beliefs about their own racial group. When a child internalises negative comments and attitudes directed towards them, they start to believe that these taunts represent a personal truth about who they are. This belief can lead them to devalue themselves, their culture, and people belonging to the same cultural background as them. They may also attempt to downplay certain aspects of themselves that highlight the differences that have been criticised (Prosser, 2020).

For more information on the effects of internalised racism and what you can do to support children's mental health, check out the webinar, *Supporting culturally and linguistically diverse children and families who experience racism*.

Understanding complexity through an intersectional and social determinants of health (SDH) lens

Intersectionality and the social determinants of health (SDH) underpin how various factors like race, gender and class can compound discrimination and disadvantage. Children's experiences of race are influenced by broader social contexts. Understanding how race intersects with societal and economic factors helps you to appreciate the challenges children face daily.

Another crucial factor in comprehending intersectionality involves recognising where your intersectional identity aligns with the dominant systems, consequently affording you power, privilege, knowledge and authority. This holistic approach allows for more inclusive strategies to combat systemic injustices and promote genuine equality (Mundy et al., 2018).

Racism is a determinant of child health, affecting emotional and behavioural development. It is linked to poor health outcomes among various minority groups in Australia and hinders access to vital resources like employment, housing and education (Berry et al., 2021). It can also impact parental mental health, potentially affecting parent-child relationships and children's long-term wellbeing. However, a child's connection to their culture and family can protect against these negative impacts.

Taking an intersectional approach is vital when assessing how racism affects children. A child's race, culture, gender and socioeconomic status can all

compound racism's impact, leading to entrenched barriers, increased instances of racism, social isolation, and implications for health and support services. Intersectionality is a valuable tool for addressing health disparities, providing a nuanced understanding of inequalities, and improving responses and interventions by recognising that disparities result from the interplay of multiple marginalised factors (Shannon et al., 2022).

Watch the webinar, *Supporting culturally and linguistically diverse children and families who experience racism* to hear more from culturally diverse practitioners and parents on the effects of racism.

Why is using the terms bullying and racism interchangeably a problem?

Using the terms bullying and racism interchangeably can lead to inappropriate assessment and intervention. Recognising the differences between racism and bullying is vital for addressing each issue effectively. Racism involves systemic discrimination and requires a more comprehensive approach to address the underlying issues. Mislabelling racist incidents as bullying may prevent individuals and institutions from recognising and addressing the role of systemic racism and privilege in perpetuating discriminatory practices.

Failing to acknowledge racism as a unique form of discrimination can contribute to the re-marginalisation of already racially marginalised people and communities, preventing them from receiving the specific support and understanding they need. Applying bullying prevention strategies to combat racism may not be effective, as racism's roots and impact go beyond interpersonal interactions and extend into institutional and societal structures. Interchanging these terms can hinder efforts to raise awareness about the complexities of racism and its historical and ongoing impact on marginalised communities.

Further effective responses

Bullying requires multilayered responses and a considered preventative strategy. In addition, combating racism involves challenging systemic prejudices, fostering diversity and inclusion, and tackling institutional practices that sustain racially rooted discrimination, including unconscious bias.

Practitioners, parents and schools hold vital roles in addressing racism and bullying. By acting as allies and actively participating in anti-racist efforts, they contribute to the support of children's mental health and overall wellbeing. Practitioners and educators can support parents in having open discussions with their children about diversity and inclusivity, which lends itself to more easily to talking about racism.

Listen to this episode of the Emerging Minds podcast to hear from practitioners about dismantling interpersonal racism to support culturally diverse families.

Discussing race and diversity with children

It is essential for children and adults to openly discuss and understand racism. This empowers them to build awareness and resilience (Priest, 2020). However, careful consideration is needed when discussing race and diversity with children, to avoid potential missteps.

Creating a safe space ensures that children are not singled out and asked to share their experiences based on assumed cultural backgrounds, or to act as experts or spokespeople for culturally diverse groups. Using examples from the media to learn about how racial groups are positioned and what is normalised, promoted as acceptable and aspired to can offer children a reflective space to examine the origins of racism. Once children understand racism's origins and have an insight into its ongoing impact on racially marginalised communities, they are better positioned to acknowledge their role and what actions they can take to address racism in their communities.

To see an example of a school program designed to provide a class of primary school students with the tools to identify racial bias and make positive change, their ideas of how to identify racial bias and make positive change with primary school-aged children, watch the ABC documentary, *The school that tried to end racism*. When educators provide accurate historical context, they encourage children to call out racist behaviour, celebrate everyone's cultural heritage and diversity, and be more inclusive.

Supporting peers and bystanders

Peers' role in combatting racism is also significant, as they are often present during incidents and, as with bullying, positive bystander intervention can help

address racist attitudes and behaviour. The presence of supportive peers can significantly impact the wellbeing of the child who is being targeted. In such situations, peers can offer valuable assistance by acknowledging the child's experience, demonstrating empathy, and validating their feelings. This not only provides emotional comfort to the child, but also sends a strong message that they are not alone in their struggle.

Additionally, peers can encourage the child to seek help from trusted adults, teachers or other authority figures. By doing so, they contribute to creating a support network that is essential for addressing and resolving instances of racism, while also playing a crucial role in holding people and institutions accountable for this behaviour.

Promoting allyship skills among children and the broader community is a powerful way to enhance inclusivity and raise awareness about the realities of racism and oppression. Allyship emphasises the importance of collective accountability, self-reflection, and actively challenging oppressive behaviours and attitudes. It reinforces the idea that creating lasting change in societal attitudes and practices is a communal effort. When individuals commit to being allies against racism and discrimination, they not only stand in solidarity with the affected individuals, but also actively work to dismantle oppressive systems and prejudices (Bullying. No way!, 2022).

Supporting parents to challenge racism

Encouraging parents from the majority culture to talk about racism with their children and family is key to addressing racism and its impacts. Discussing cultural diversity, strengths and wisdom, coupled with self-reflection on how racism persists in society, especially through the media, fosters an appreciation of differences.

These conversations encourage families to take responsibility for celebrating diversity, promoting cultural humility, fostering curiosity and challenging racism. Talking about racism can be uncomfortable or even scary, especially if someone within the family holds racist views. But taking a curious, empathic approach and focusing on the racist behaviour and beliefs, rather than the person themselves, can help to open up conversations and ease any defensiveness. The Australian Human Rights Commission has developed a conversation guide for talking about racism, and the Raising Children Network has information on talking about racism with children and teenagers.

Analysing media depictions and stereotypes of various cultural groups, along with assessing cultural representation in mainstream settings such as libraries and schools, improves understandings of racism in practice. With awareness and a willingness to learn, families can take on the role of ally and stand up for equity and fairness.

Supporting parents who are experiencing racism

When your work involves supporting parents who are experiencing racism, a trauma-informed and culturally humble learning approach is essential to ensure sensitivity and prevent re-traumatisation. A culturally responsive practitioner will follow the lead of the parent and family by listening for what the family's needs are and what their role is in meeting these needs. This approach aims to address the burden placed on families who experience racism, who are often left with the responsibility of initiating discussions and, in some cases, having to validate their experiences.

It is important not to assume you can discuss experiences of racism with families, especially if you are from the dominant culture. Reni Eddo-Lodge's 2014 blog post, 'Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race', provides a powerful perspective on the toll experienced by those who endure racism and are frequently tasked with the responsibility of discussing it. Furthermore, the 1994 film 'The color of fear' prominently highlights the white privilege discourse playing out in public conversations and the ongoing impact for those who experience racism (Hamad, 2020).

Reporting instances of racism

Racial discrimination, including racial hatred, is prohibited under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Attorney-General's Department, 2022). Supporting parents and families in reporting instances of racial discrimination provides organisations with an opportunity to address and prevent future occurrences, and also contributes to cumulative benefits for systemic response and change. Practitioners have a pivotal role to play in systems change, including being a part of working groups to develop practice and processes and, where organisational barriers exist, advocating for change.

As a practitioner, you can play a valuable role in helping families to navigate grievance procedures, which may involve contacting relevant authorities such as state education departments or anti-discrimination and human rights commissions. Accessing resources and support from organisations like the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission can further assist parents in addressing racial discrimination (Noone et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Understanding the differences between bullying and racism is essential for promoting children's wellbeing. The intertwined issues of bullying and racism represent deeply rooted and complex challenges in society. While they share some similarities in terms of their harmful impact on children's wellbeing, racism stands out due to its extensive reach, intricate power dynamics, and systemic nature. This systemic aspect leads to the internalisation of harmful stereotypes and self-hate, creating profound identity conflicts for children that can lead to lifelong mental health challenges.

The intersectionality of children's experiences magnifies instances of discrimination, resulting in exacerbated inequalities across various facets of life. But effective responses by practitioners, parents, schools, and peers provide opportunities for change. Approaches such as intersectionality, anti-racism, and the cultivation of cultural humility and curiosity can enhance responses, prevent the perpetuation of discriminatory practices, and kickstart the crucial process of reviewing and rebalancing power dynamics. In addition to addressing overt acts of racism, these efforts aim to prevent a colour-blind approach in practice, where racial discrimination can go unnoticed and be unintentionally perpetuated within social service systems and interventions.

To address racism comprehensively, it is imperative that those with privilege and influence within dominant cultural systems play a central role. Identifying and addressing unconscious cultural biases stands as a critical element in the fight against racial discrimination, as it aids in dismantling the unintentional perpetuation of detrimental stereotypes and attitudes. An illustrative instance of this lies in labelling racialised bullying as racism.

AVAILABLE HERE

More resources on supporting CALD families

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