

# Discrimination's Aftermath

DISCOVERY ZONE, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SCIENCES, RESEARCH

Understanding racial and ethnic differences can start very early. By the age of 5, many children can recognize racial or ethnic groups. By 10, many know discrimination when they see it—including when they themselves are targeted.

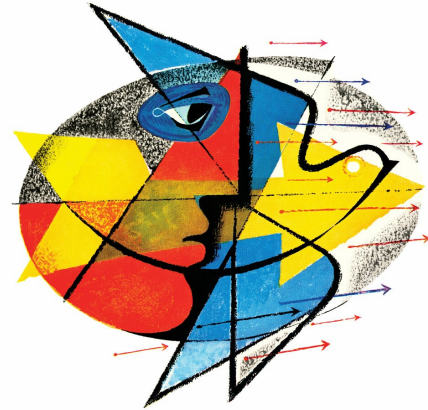
Hundreds of studies have tracked how racial and ethnic discrimination affects children's development, but Aprile Benner, an associate professor of human development and family sciences at The University of Texas at Austin, led a team that reviewed them comprehensively, assessing — across more than 200 peer-reviewed studies of over 90,000 youths — how discrimination affected adolescents' mental and physical health, behavior choices and academic performance. Benner and the team concluded: "Racial and ethnic discrimination influences all aspects of adolescents' daily lives and well-being."

The extent of discrimination's impact varies, and how parents interact with youths about experiences with discrimination appears to play a role. For example, Benner's team found Latino students, especially boys, tended to experience poorer outcomes from discrimination compared with African American students. The team theorized that African American families have more conversations with their children to prepare them for the biases that surface too often in daily life.

Benner's colleague in the department, Fatima Varner, explores the link between parenting and how youths respond to prejudice. African American youths whose parents remain closely involved and engaged after their child experiences a racially discriminatory event do better.

"Supportive parenting is linked to a host of positive outcomes for youths – from academic achievement to better social engagement," Varner said. "Parents have a critical protective role to play against the impact of racial discrimination."

There is a role for other adults, too. "We need to be asking," Benner said, "What can we all do to intervene to try to reduce discriminatory treatment?"



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