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PSYCHEDELIC RESEARCH

Laboratory for Culture and Mental Health Disparities
(www.mentalhealthdisparities.org)
Laboratory for Psychedelic Clinical Research

Research on clinical and therapeutic applications of psychedelics for mental health

THE BIG EIGHT OF DIVERSITY

1. Culture
2. Race/Ethnicity
3. Gender
4. Sexual Orientation
5. Social/Economic Classification
6. Age
7. Disability
8. Religion

Graphic: A diverse group of people all wearing business clothes.
A Divided Perspective
(Sue et al., 2007)

White people in our society tend to believe that:

- Racialized groups are doing well in life
- Racism is no longer an issue and discrimination is declining
- They are not capable of racist behaviors

People in racialized groups, on the other hand, are confronted with daily acts of racism and thus have a different racial reality.

- White people tend to limit their definition of racism to blatant, intentional, overt acts
- But few people who commit racist acts will admit to intentionally wanting to harm others due to race, so under this definition, very few acts of racism would be defined as such
- Even “good people” enact racism

Racism is Real and Systemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black Americans</th>
<th>White Americans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Ownership: 43.5%</td>
<td>Home Ownership: 72.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income: $35,416</td>
<td>Median Household Income: $59,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Income: $19,297</td>
<td>Per Capita Income: $31,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate: 11.4%</td>
<td>Unemployment Rate: 5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate: 27.2%</td>
<td>Poverty Rate: 9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduation Rate (2 year degree): 33%</td>
<td>College Graduation Rate (2 yr degree): 47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Wealth: $6,446</td>
<td>Median Household Wealth: $91,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality: 11.7 per 1,000 births</td>
<td>Infant mortality: 4.8 per 1,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal mortality: 40.0 per 100,000 births</td>
<td>Maternal mortality: 12.4 per 100,000 births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood obesity: 20%</td>
<td>Childhood obesity: 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood hypertension: 13.8%</td>
<td>Childhood hypertension: 8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes: 13.4%</td>
<td>Diabetes: 7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• PTSD (Pieterse et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2014)
• Stress (Clark et al., 1999; Berger & Sarnyai, 2015)
• Anxiety (Soto, Dawson-Andoh, & BeLue, 2011)
• Depression (Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Torres et al., 2010)
• Substance use (Gerrard et al., 2012)
• Alcohol abuse (Blume et al., 2012; Hurd et al., 2014)
• Binge eating (Harrington et al., 2010)
• Severe psychological distress (Chae et al., 2011; Chao, Mallinckrodt, & Wei, 2012)
• Psychosis (Anglin et al., 2014; Janssen et al., 2003; Oh et al., 2014)
• Disability (Carter & Forsyth, 2009)
• Suicide (O’Keefe et al., 2015; Hollingsworth et al., 2017)
• Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (Williams et al., 2017)

WHAT IS RACIAL TRAUMA?
When police violence goes viral on social media, the mental health of whole communities of color suffers (Bor et al., 2018)

“I feel a heavy weight on me. It’s the weight of centuries of hate and oppression. There are White people’s hands coming from all directions, grabbing and pulling at me..."
COMMON RACIAL TRAUMAS (1)

• Police harassment, search, and assault
• Workplace discrimination
• Community violence
• Murder of loved ones
• Incarceration
• Distressing medical and/or childbirth experiences


COMMON RACIAL TRAUMAS (2)

• Experiencing or witnessing torture
• Ethnic cleansing & persecution
• Destruction of cultural practices
• Living in a war zone
• Immigration difficulties
• Deportation

Racism Happens in Canada Too

Indigenous woman and mother of seven, Joyce Echaquan, was verbally abused by healthcare staff as she lay dying in a Quebec hospital.

Microaggressions

Even small instances of racism can cause psychological distress when experienced with enough frequency.
WAR ON DRUGS OR ON BIPOC?

- Original drug laws were intended to target people of color, and in many ways still do.
- Policing efforts are heavily biased in favor of low-income neighborhoods and people of color (Beckett, Nyrop, & Pfingst, 2006).
- These assaults have resulted in incarceration and trauma, primarily in Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities.
- The presence of law enforcement is a trigger for trauma for many people of color.
LEGAL ISSUES & POLICE VIOLENCE

• Black and Hispanic men are heavily subject to profiling by law enforcement
• As a result they may be dealing with stressful legal issues in addition to traumatization
• “Drugs” are frequently an excuse for humiliating and traumatizing searches and incarceration
• Contributes to drug stigma in communities of color

MEDICAL MISTRUST

• People of color often under-utilize health care services out of fear of mistreatment, being hospitalized involuntarily, or being used as “guinea pigs”
• Black people appear to have greater distrust of the medical establishment and mental health care, many believing that medical institutions hold racist attitudes
• Negative perceptions may be rooted in historical abuses of slaves
• US government sanctioned research abuses such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study
  • Study ran for 40 years
  • No knowledge or consent
  • Over 100 died in the experiment
MK ULTRA program was launched in 1952 to study mind control techniques

- Hundreds of people were given LSD, including many without knowledge or consent
  - Subjects included Americans, Canadians, and internationals
  - Most abuses were of Black men

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**CAN PSYCHEDELICS HEAL RACIAL TRAUMA?**
I feel so alone. Like I’m invisible, like a ghost. I am yelling, shaking people, and no one hears me. I float around and no one sees me - it’s because I am a Black woman.
THERAPISTS OF COLOR

With grant funding from Open Society Foundations (OSF), organized a training with MAPS to train the largest cohort of psychedelic therapists of color ever.

PSYCHEDELICS AND RACIAL TRAUMA

• Nationwide data collected in Canada and the US using Qualtrics Panels
• Participants of color asked about past experiences with racial trauma and mental health symptoms
• Included those who said that using psychedelics helped them manage racial and ethnic discrimination

Cross-sectional internet-based survey on coping with racism

• N=313 US/Canada
• Changes assessed by retrospective report of the 30 days before/after the memorable psychedelic experience
• M_age=32; Female=57%; Never married=28%

CANONICAL CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Intensity of trauma symptoms significantly decreased after psychedelic experience (p<.001, d=-.45)

CAN PSYCHEDELICS CAUSE RACIAL TRAUMA?
THREE BLACK WOMEN THERAPISTS DESCRIBE THEIR MDMA EXPERIENCES


SET & SETTING SHAPE OUTCOMES (FOGG ET AL, 2021)

There are many factors that impact individual responses to entheogenic and psychedelic-assisted psychotherapies, including race, ethnicity, and culture.
PSYCHEDELIC-ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPIES HAVE ARRIVED

- How will we ensure mental health professionals are equipped to do this important work?
- How do we ensure safety of the most vulnerable groups?

SAFETY AND COMPETENCE

- Maximize benefits of psychedelic therapies while reducing potential harm
- Can be achieved through
  - Provider education/training
  - Credentialing/certification
  - A code of ethics
  - Oversight and accountability
- Needed infrastructure in progress

Rochester, Vallely, Grof, Williams, Chang, & Caldwell (in press)
PRIORITY AREAS TO PROMOTE ACCESS AND EQUITY

- Training standards must include cultural competencies for the safety of people of color and others with marginalized identities
- Diversification of psychedelic training programs (students and instructors)
- Public education about psychedelics, focused for different communities
- Encourage/fund communities of color to develop their own paradigms for psychedelic treatment and healing

TRAINING OPTION: EXAMPLE

CHACRUNA INSTITUTE FOR PSYCHEDELIC PLANT MEDICINES

Course: Diversity, Culture and Social Justice in Psychedelics

This 9-week course taught by leading experts, will teach students to consider the cultural, social, historical, and economic context that influences the psychedelic renaissance and psychedelic-assisted therapies.
RESOURCES (1)

Psychedelics and Social Justice


RESOURCES (2)

Psychedelics and Social Justice


THANK YOU

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