

Race and Trauma

Ecoee Rooney, DNP, RN, AFN-C, NPD-BC, DF-AFN
Ochsner Health/Louisiana State Nurses Association



What is Racial Trauma

- or race-based traumatic stress (RBTS), refers to the **mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes.**
- Any individual that has experienced an emotionally painful, sudden, and uncontrollable racist encounter is at risk of **suffering from a race-based traumatic stress injury.**
- In the U.S., Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) are most vulnerable due to historical and systemic oppression.
- Experiences of race-based discrimination can have detrimental psychological impacts on individuals and their wider communities. In some individuals, prolonged incidents of racism can lead to **symptoms like those experienced with post-traumatic stress disorder** (PTSD).

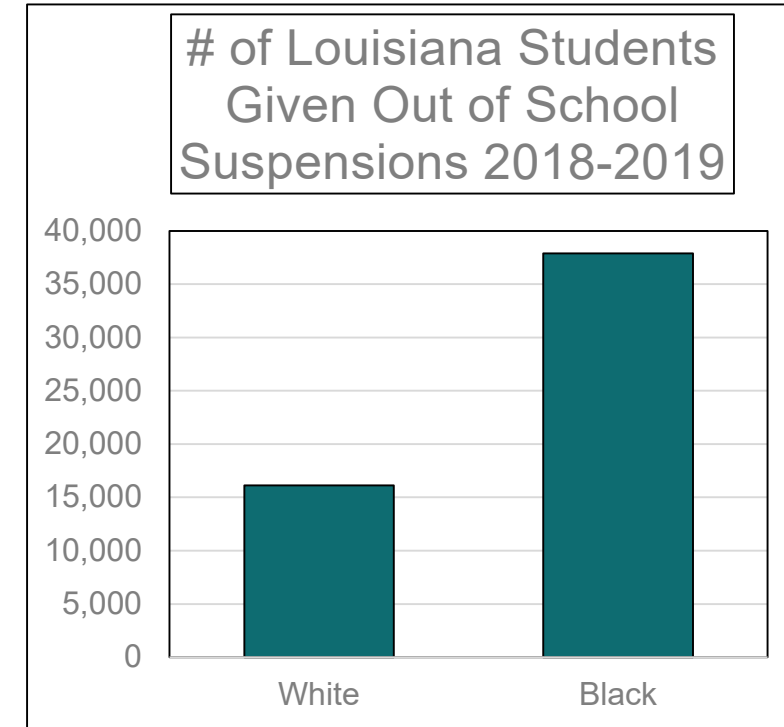
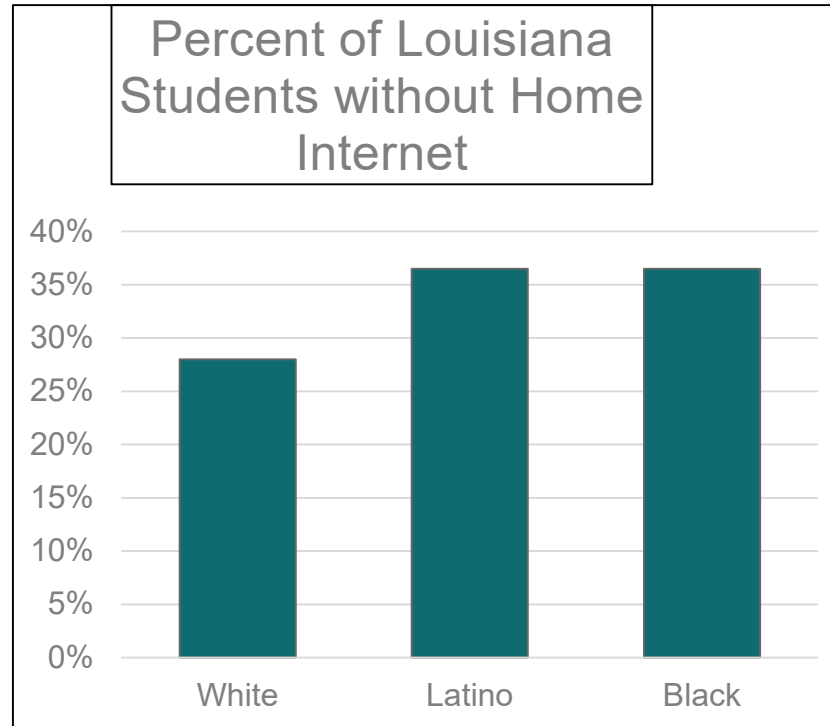
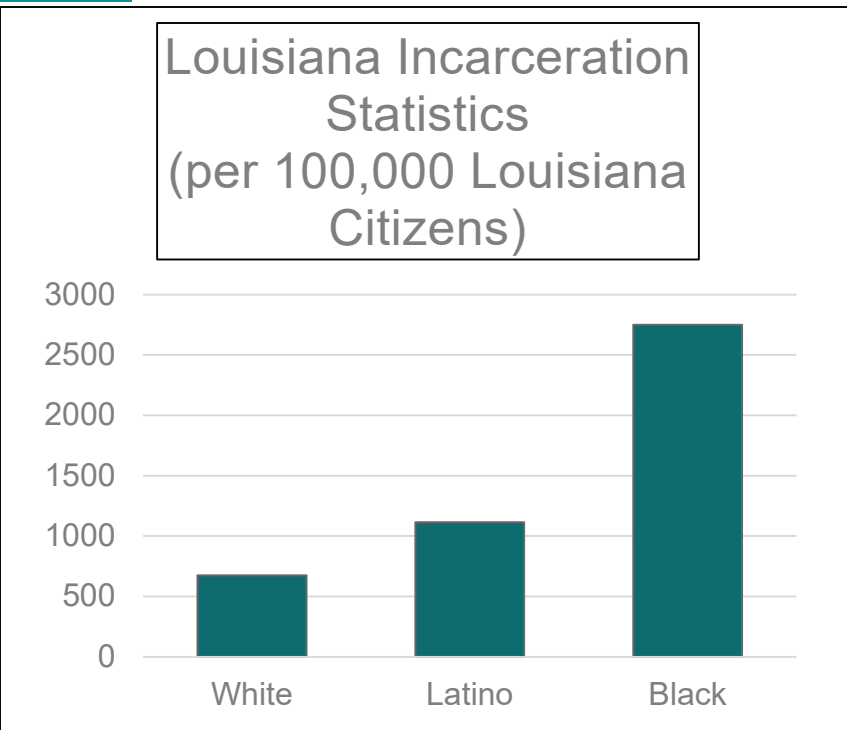
Understanding RBTS

- This can look like depression, anger, recurring thoughts of the event, physical reactions (e.g. headaches, chest pains, insomnia), hypervigilance, low-self-esteem, and **mentally distancing from the traumatic events.**
- Some or all of these symptoms may be present in someone with RBTS and symptoms can look different across different cultural groups.
- It is important to note that unlike PTSD, **RBTS is not considered a mental health disorder. RBTS is a mental injury** that can occur as the result of **living within a racist system or experiencing events of racism.**

Historical Overview of Race Relations in Louisiana

- 1719 - 1st slave ships from Africa, a year after New Orleans was founded.
- 130 years later - 331,726 enslaved people in Louisiana (before Civil War)
- Post-Civil War Reconstruction era, **racist mobs** (the Ku Klux Klan, the White League and former Confederate soldiers) killed j Black people during massacres in New Orleans, Thibodaux, Opelousas, Colfax and St. Bernard Parish.
 - Between 1882-1936, at least 389 lynchings of Black people occurred in Louisiana.
- 1953, Baton Rouge was the site of the nation's first bus boycott against segregated seating (2 years before the Montgomery Bus Boycott)
- 1960, four 6-year-old New Orleans girls became the first Black children to attend all-white elementary schools in the South.

Resulting Inequities



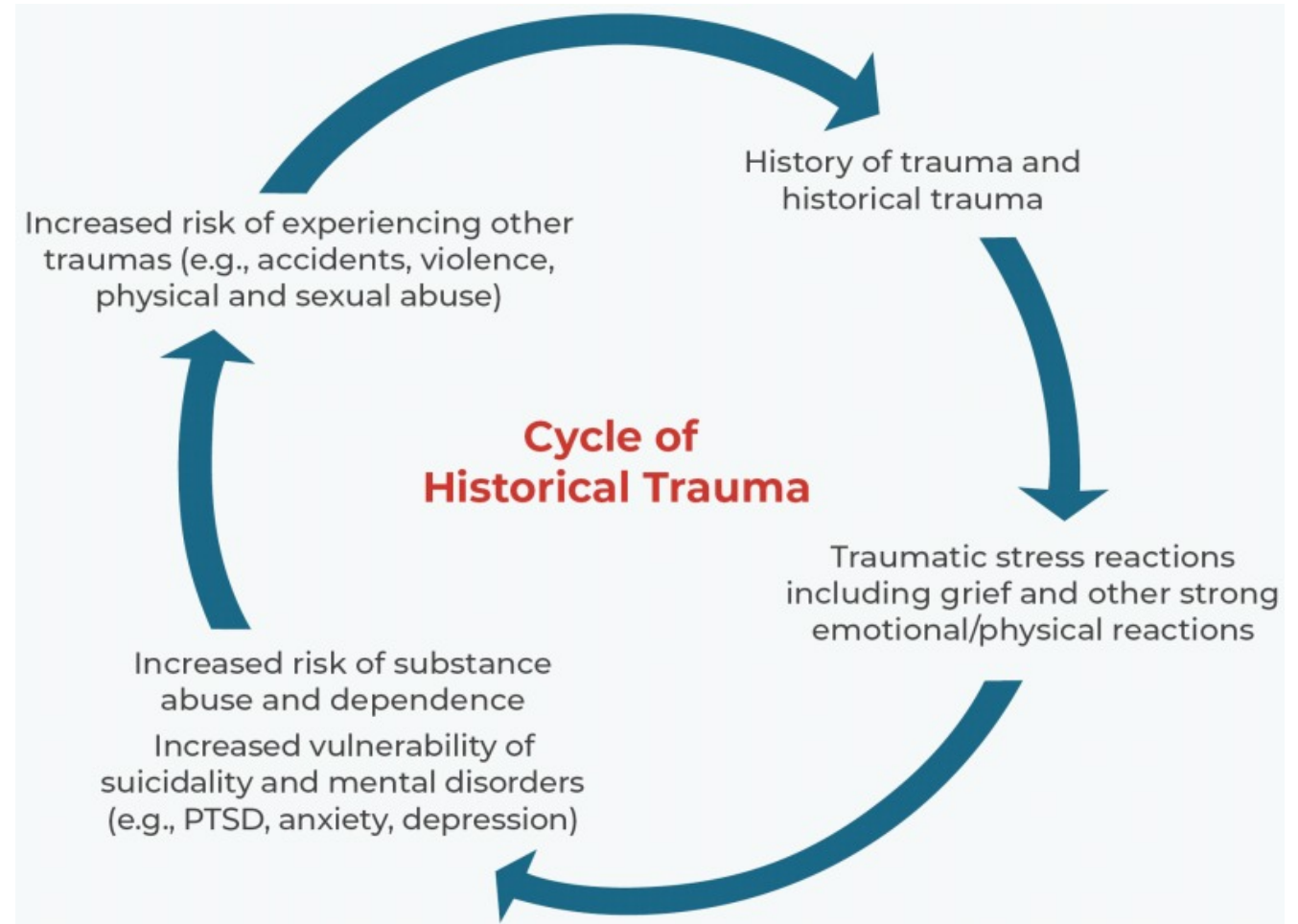
- **Black women in Louisiana are 4 times as likely as White women to die from pregnancy complications**
- **Black infant mortality rate (10.5 infants/1,000 live births) is more than twice the rate for White Louisianans.**

Understanding Trauma

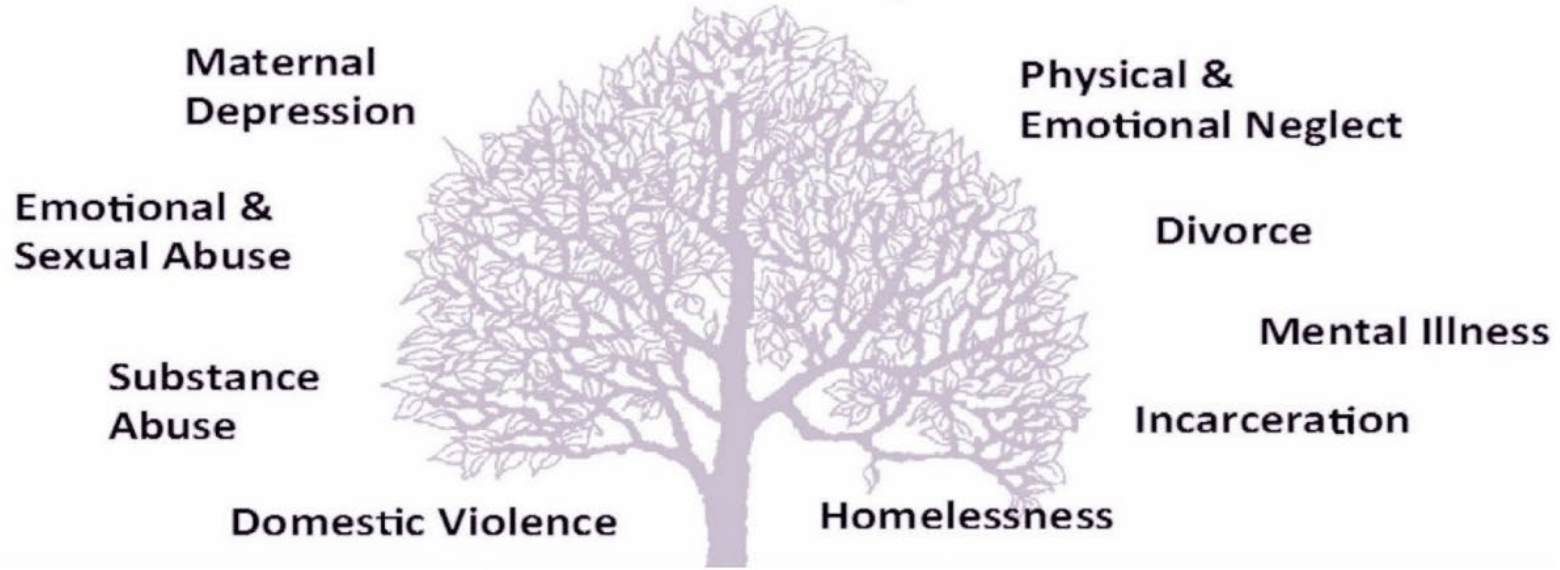
- Trauma is defined as a sudden, potentially deadly experience, often leaving lasting, troubling memories.
- Trauma can affect one's beliefs about the future:
 - loss of hope, limited expectations about life, fear that life will end abruptly or early, or anticipation that normal life events won't occur

Examples of historical trauma

- Slavery, segregation, and discrimination in the South
- Holocaust
- Katrina
- Displacement of indigenous
- Genocide



Adverse Childhood Experiences



Adverse Community Environments

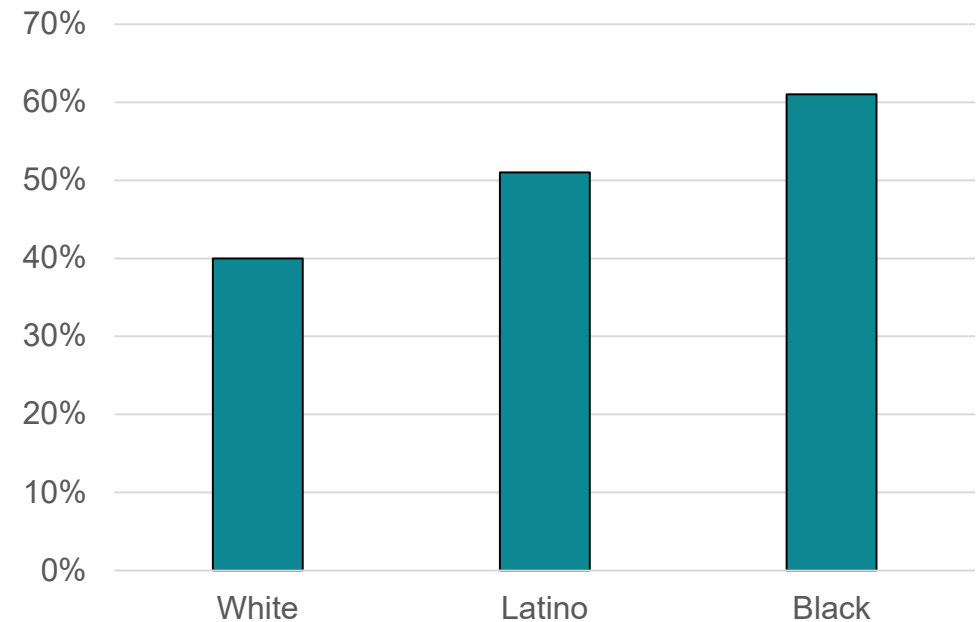


Whole Health Louisiana, 2022

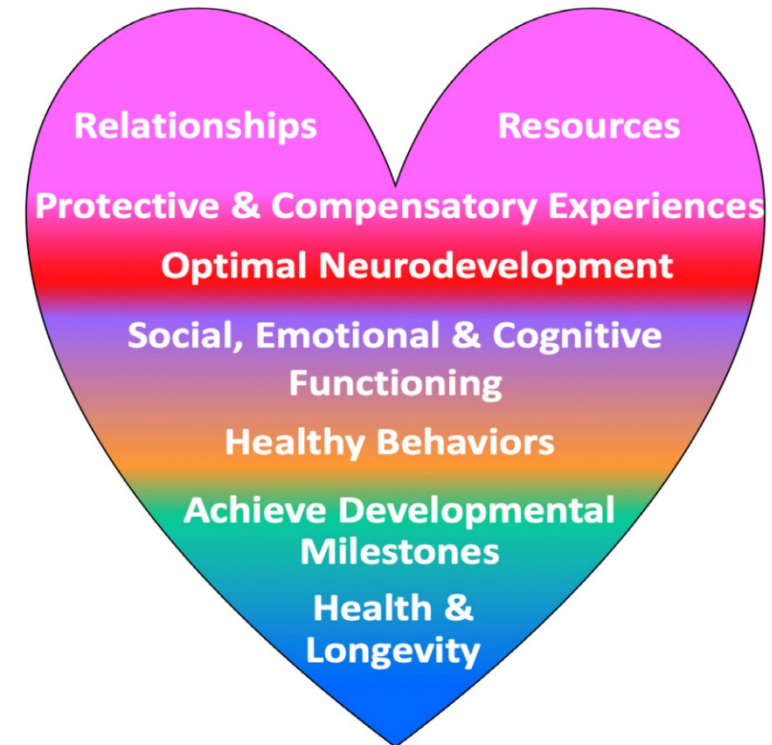
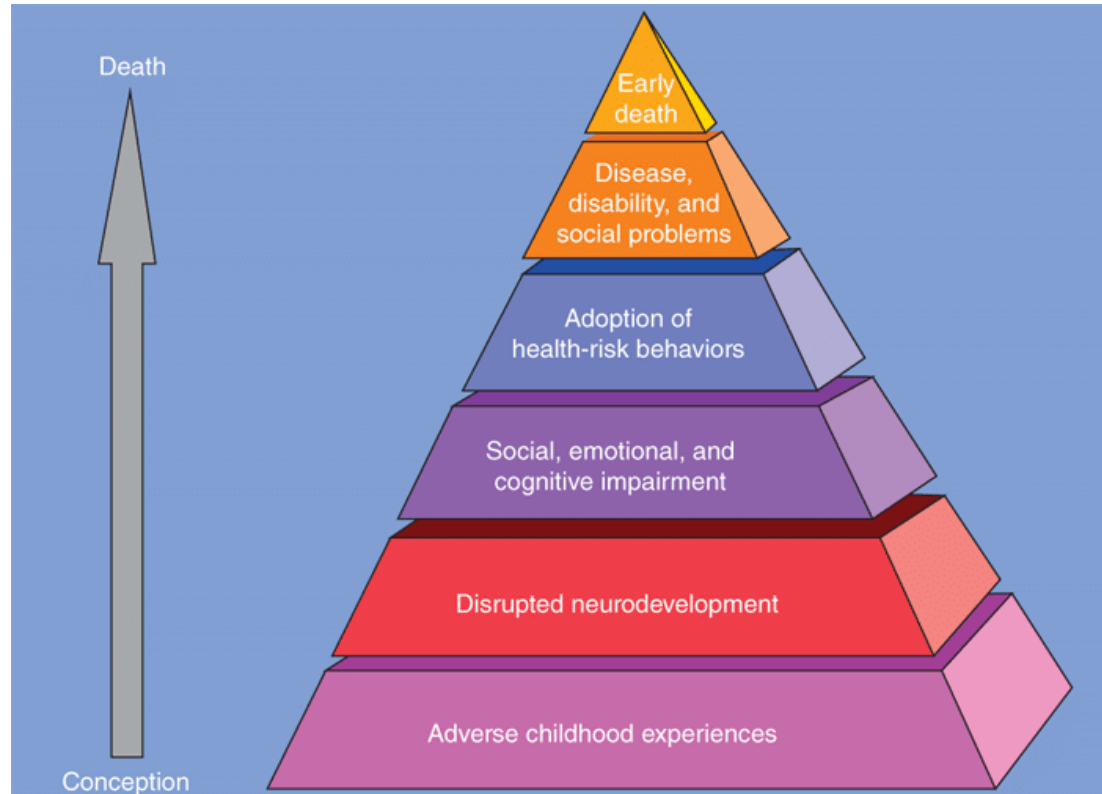
Data on ACEs by Race

- We don't have Louisiana data on the prevalence of ACEs in Louisiana
- Most important finding of ACEs study (1999) was that the relationship of # of ACEs with adult health (physical and mental)

Percentage of Children in the US that have Experienced at least one ACE



Impact of ACEs vs PACEs



Source: T.E. King, M.B. Wheeler: Medical Management of Vulnerable and Underserved Patients: Principles, Practice, and Populations, Second Edition, www.accessmedicine.com
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Intergenerational Trauma and Epigenetics

- Mothers exposed to the Holocaust showed changes in the activity of a DNA segment involved in regulating the stress response.
- Their children, who were not directly exposed, also showed these changes.

Depression: 1.7 times higher
Chronic depression: 2.5 times higher
in children of women who experienced
severe child abuse compared with
children of mothers who didn't experience
such abuse.



Intersectionality and Trauma

- BIPOC may intersect with other identities such as **gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, housing status, and socioeconomic status** in their experiences of trauma
- The unique challenges faced by individuals at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities experience further isolation, vulnerability, and exclusion.



What Can WE Do?

Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms

- Enhanced primary care
- Victim-centered services
- Treatment to lessen the harms of ACEs
- Treatment to prevent problem behavior and future involvement in violence
- Family-centered treatment for substance use disorders

From CDC: Fast Facts: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences

Carl Rogers: Unconditional Positive Regard

- According to Rogers, unhealthy behaviors like overeating, drinking too much, and not adhering to a medication regimen aren't altered with confrontation, judgment, or punishment.
- According to Rogers, we are wired for self-actualization, or the need to fulfill our potential.
- Painful experiences like being bullied, shamed, or judged thwart our growth.
- **Unconditional positive regard restores hope** by showing us we are loved and accepted.
- When people feel safe, honesty follows. Honesty is crucial for growth and change.

Resources to Learn More

- [Handouts for parents about Understanding ACEs, toxic stress, resilience & Parenting with ACEs](#)
- [Fast Facts: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences](#)
- [What is Trauma-Informed Care? - Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center \(chcs.org\)](#)
- [Mapping Disparities in Chronic Disease to Improve Health Equity—See the Maps to Close the Gaps](#)

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Thank You for Being the Change