

# Parents feel racial socialization may help minority children succeed in school

28 May 2015

A child's ability to succeed academically is one of the strongest determinants of his or her future quality of life. In particular, it has been directly linked to overall longevity and several other critical health outcomes.

Ashaunta Anderson, MD, MPH, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the Center for Healthy Communities in the University of California, Riverside School of Medicine, and a team of researchers have described the types of racial socialization in early childhood that may increase a child's ability to flourish in school and ultimately lead a healthier life.

Results of the study will be featured in *Academic Pediatrics*, a journal published by the American Pediatric Association. Co-authors of the article are Aurora Jackson, Ph.D., Loretta Jones, M.A., David Kennedy, Ph.D., Kenneth Wells, MD, M.P.H. and Paul Chung, M.D., M.S. The full article is available online through *Academic Pediatrics*.

While seeking to describe the different ways families prepare children to navigate issues of race and racism, Anderson and her team of researchers have uncovered a connection between certain approaches to racial socialization in early childhood and parents' expectations for greater success in school.

Anderson and her team of researchers organized 16 [focus groups](#) involving 114 parents of children four years of age and younger from the following ethnicity-language groups: African American, Spanish-language primary Latino, English language-primary Latino and Korean. Four focus groups were held for each ethnicity-language group.

Parents participating in the study felt that racial socialization in [early childhood](#) promotes school readiness, but were not sure of the best timing and particular approach for success. Approaches to

racial socialization that promoted cultural pride and identity were commonly used for this young age group and have been consistently linked to positive outcomes in prior studies.

'The sense of pride and identity provided by this approach appears to give children some protection and resilience when they encountered racism from peers and others, which we begin seeing the effects of as early as preschool,' said Anderson. 'If we can educate parents of young children to use positive racial [socialization](#) before toxic experiences have the chance to cause lasting damage, we may be able to significantly influence the trajectory of many children's lives.'

Statistically, educational disparities are strongly correlated with disparities in key [health outcomes](#) later in life and overall longevity. As a result, improving academic success has recently become recognized as a potential mechanism for improving public health.

As a race-based educational achievement gap in American schools persists, a corresponding assortment of race-based health disparities follow proportionately, according to multiple studies cited by Anderson. The results of this study may inform the development of culturally tailored parenting interventions designed to decrease the race-based achievement gap and the corresponding health disparities that typically follow in their wake.

Provided by University of California - Riverside

APA citation: Parents feel racial socialization may help minority children succeed in school (2015, May 28) retrieved 29 August 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-05-parents-racial-socialization-minority-children.html>

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