ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT OF RACE-BASED TRAUMA IN RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITY VETERANS

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OUTLINE

- Theoretical underpinnings
- Assessment measures
- Treatment approaches
- Recommendations
BACKGROUND

- Exposure to racism can have a detrimental impact on physical and emotional well-being\(^1,2\)
- Higher rates of PTSD symptoms in OEF/OIF and Vietnam minority veterans\(^3,4\)
  - Exposure to race-related stressors is a predictor of PTSD\(^5\)
- Race-based trauma is under-evaluated and under-reported in clinical settings\(^6\)

\(^1\)Harrell (2000), \(^2\)Bryant-Davis, & Ocampo (2006), \(^3\)Koo, Hebenstreit, Madden & Maguen (2016); \(^4\)Kulka et al (1990), \(^5\)Loo, Fairbank, & Chemtob (2005), \(^6\)Scurfield & Mackey (2001)
How have you explored race-based trauma in your work?
**Race Based Traumatic Stress Injury** (Carter, 2007)

**Racial Discrimination**
*Avoidant:* barring access, exclusion, withholding information and use of deception

**Racial Harassment**
*Hostile:* physical, interpersonal and verbal assaults, treatment as stereotype, assumptions as criminal or dangerous

**Discriminatory Harassment**
*Aversive-hostility:* “White flight,” isolation at work, denial of promotion, question of qualifications

**Event Experienced As:**
- Negative (emotional pain)
- Sudden
- Uncontrollable

**Critical Signs:**
- Avoidance
- Intrusion
- Arousal

**Unpacking Racism:**
- Individual
- Institutional
- Cultural

**Reaction Signs/ Symptom Cluster**
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Memory loss
- Inability to concentrate
- Hyperactive
- Depression
- Poor relationships
- Withdrawal
- Guilt
- Increased vigilance
- Spiritual
- Activism
- Commitment to being strong
ASSESSMENT OF RACE-BASED TRAUMA

It is difficult to obtain an accurate assessment using traditional methods¹

Ethnoviolence occurs at many levels and takes different forms

Single incident vs. accumulation of stressors

Existing measures have limitations and are under utilized²

Perceptions of Racism Scale, The Schedule of Racist Events, Race-Related Stressor Scale, Race-based Traumatic Symptom Scale

¹Helms, Nicolas, Green (2010); ²Waelde, Pennington, Mahan, Mahan, Kabour, & Marquett, (2010).
TREATMENT OF RACE-BASED TRAUMA

- RCTs include predominantly White participants\(^1\)
- Treatment protocols do not explicitly address race-based trauma
- Instead, treatments may be adapted to fit the individual needs of patients\(^1,2\)

\(^1\) Helms, Nicolas, Green (2010); \(^2\) Comas-Diaz (2012)
ADAPTING COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS

- Avoiding challenging whether events are racially motivated
- In vivo exercises that focus on tolerating emotional response to the possibility of racism
- Discussing the impact of racism on beliefs around Safety, Trust, Power/Control, Esteem, Intimacy

“I am in a perfect storm of violence and insecurity based on my age and my race, for which there appears to be no safe harbors”  
Williams et al. (2015)
RECOMMENDATIONS

Communication

Empowerment

Support
REFERENCES

THANK YOU!