Haitian and Haitian American Experiences of Racism and Socioethnic Discrimination in Miami-Dade County: At-Risk and Court-Involved Youth

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Abstract

We examine how juvenile justice involved youth of Haitian descent in Miami-Dade County cope with structural racism and its impact on their mental health. Drawing on longitudinal ethnography, psychosocial assessment data, and a family-based clinical intervention funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, this article explores youth narratives of discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic. We use critical race theory and theory of practice to understand youths' perceptions as racialized bodies and stigmatized selves, highlighting the experiences and perspectives of a particular black immigrant group, ethnic beings caught up in the everyday practices of racialization, sociocultural marginalization, and racism. We frame these experiences as a variation of the complex continuum of structural racism and racial domination in the US. These experiences have caused anger, fear, anxiety, chronic anticipatory distress, and hopelessness among youth of Haitian descent. We conclude with some recommendations for therapeutic support that encourages youth to process their experiences, promotes their development of a positive self-concept, and provides them with mind-body techniques to attenuate the physical impacts of discriminatory events. The clinical trial registration number for this study intervention is NCT03876171.

Introduction

Attention to racial disparities and discrimination experienced by minority populations in the US is increasing. COVID-19's disproportionate impact on minoritized populations and documented violent behavior of law enforcement have corroborated minority narratives of discrimination and racism once minimized as innocuous or misunderstandings. Structural racism and discrimination have been widely recognized as a fundamental cause of disease and are linked to various morbidities, premature mortality (Dennis et al., 2021), and poor mental health (Alang, 2020; Carter et al., 2017; DeVylder et al., 2020; Lee & Ahn, 2012; Pieterse et al., 2012). Recent studies have focused on the impact of racial discrimination on adolescents (Brenner et al., 2018; Brunson & Miller, 2006; Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2016; Kohli & Solòrzano, 2012). However, the broad categorizations used in such studies, such as Black or Hispanic, fail to capture and distinguish between the experiences of ethnic minorities. Focusing on justice-involved youth of Haitian descent, this article fills an important gap in our understanding of the mental health impacts of adolescent experiences of racial and socioethnic discrimination.

Using longitudinal ethnography, psychosocial assessment, and family-based therapy data, we explore discrimination narratives of justice-involved youth of Haitian descent in Miami-Dade County, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and at a time of racial reckoning resulting from witnessing the deaths of people of color at the hands of law enforcement. We use the lenses of critical race theory and the theory of practice to analyze study participants' perspectives as racialized bodies (Blacks) and stigmatized ethnic identities (Haitians, immigrants) within a system of structural racism and racial domination. The unique perspectives of this Black immigrant group experiencing everyday practices of racialization, sociocultural marginalization, anti-immigrant sentiment, and racism are an informative example of the complex continuum of structural racism and racial domination they face in the US.

After discussing racial discrimination and its impacts on Black youth, we briefly review key tenets of critical race theory and Bourdieu's theory of practice. The findings section explores youth perceptions of discrimination; police encounters and youths' responses; and reported mental health impacts of racial and socioethnic discrimination. The discussion highlights the intersectional configuration of these themes, and our combined ethnographic and clinical approach allows us to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of this distinct ethnic group during a pandemic and period of social justice and racial reckoning. Finally, we conclude with recommendations for clincians working with Haitian families.

Racial Discrimination and its Impact on Black Youth

A Pew Research Center (2013) survey found that Blacks and Latinos were more likely to report unfair treatment in public spaces than their White counterparts. These perceptions have been met with incredulity: "People of color […] often have their lived racial realities about bias and discrimination met with disbelief […], often told that they are oversensitive, paranoid, and misreading the actions of others" (Sue, 2017, p. 171). During adolescence, these experiences significantly increase (Basto et al., 2012; Dulin-Keita et al., 2011) and adolescents also begin to recognize covert discriminatory actions (McKown & Weinstein, 2003). Even by "age 10 […] children begin to understand that ethnic-racial differences are connected to social disadvantages" (Umaña-Taylor, 2016, p. 114). This process begins in schools, where youth of racialized ethnicities are disproportionately punished for minor infractions. In fact, everyday school encounters with racial/ethnic discrimination teach adolescents the rules and practices of their social world while reinforcing power, prestige, and subordination along racial lines (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In the criminal justice system as well, Black adolescents are often not perceived as children; they are dehumanized and, therefore, denied the presumption of innocence given to White adolescents leading to distinct racial disparities in sentencing. In 2015, Black youths represented 47.3% of juvenile cases referred to adult courts (OJJDP, 2018), an example of how dehumanizing children enables state-sanctioned violence against them (Frederickson, 2002), removing the moral obligation of the "Golden Rule."

Studies of police encounters have recently shifted focus from experiences of law enforcement officials to those of civilians (Novich & Hunt, 2017). One study of 40 urban Black adolescents' (ages 13 to 19) found 83% reported experiencing police violence, and over 90% knew someone who had been harassed by the police; over half of those who experienced police violence had never engaged in delinquent behavior (Brunson & Miller, 2006). Participants were not critical of policing overall, but lamented poor police/community interactions (ibid).

Staggers-Hakim (2016) found that African American teenage boys fear police, who they believe perceive them as a threat to society. Police violence is, therefore, an anticipatory stressor (Alang et al., 2021; Miller & Vittrup, 2020) causing some Black boys to engage in avoidant behaviors (Jackson et al., 2007). DeVylder et al. (2020) argue that the impact of police violence on the mental health of its targets is often invisible, yet pervasive. Leary (2005) suggests that ethnic minority groups' continued exposure to intergenerational poverty, violence, and racism results in chronic—not post—traumatic stress.

Law enforcement officials are facing increased public scrutiny, as incidents of police violence are more widely captured and disseminated by police body cameras and cellular phone videos (Campbell & Valera, 2020). This has shifted perceptions of policing in communities of color (Bor et al., 2018; Oshiro & Valera, 2018) and resulted in public outrage. Increased visibility may lead to greater reform; however, it also exacerbates the mental health consequences of police violence (Bor et al., 2018; Miller & Vittrup, 2020) by revealing "a sense of diminished value [of Black lives] within the US racial and class hierarchies" (DeVylder et al., 2020, p. 1707). These experiences of discrimination, as state-sanctioned violence, reveal how one's group is viewed negatively by others (Sellers

& Shelton, 2003). Positive public regard for one's ethnic or attributed racial group is positively associated with academic performance and negatively associated with depression (Rivas-Drake, 2011).

There has been a sharp recent rise in minority youth suicides (CDC, 2016). Some studies link youth suicidal ideation or self-harm behavior to perceived discrimination (Cervantes et al., 2014). This is consistent with links found between suicide and feelings of loneliness, ostracism, or social disparagement among predominantly White populations (Massing-Schaffer et al., 2019). Madubata et al. (2019, p. 7) found that "discrimination experiences reported by [African-American and Latinx] adolescents were associated with thoughts of suicide, both concurrently and longitudinally." Further exacerbating the issue is that for marginalized youth, prejudice, discrimination, and social exclusion serve as barriers to accessing mental health services (Sapiro & Ward, 2020).

Youth of Haitian Descent within Miami's Black Population

The category "Black" in the US largely obscures cultural differences between African American and Black immigrant populations (Cone et al., 2014). Haitian immigrants and their descendants experience a distinct form of discrimination, associated with Haiti's negative representations in popular Western imagination, immigration policies, and the associated challenges of acculturation (Cela et al., 2017; Farmer, 1994; Laguerre, 1982; Marcelin, 2005). These processes are deeply rooted in US history and Haiti's legacy as the site of the modern world's only successful slave revolution (Dillon & Drexler, 2016; Dupuy, 2019; James, 1963). At the height of their migration to the US, Haitians were racialized, criminalized as illegal immigrants, stigmatized as distant others with limited English proficiency, and perceived as a health threat (Farmer, 1994; Marcelin, 2005; Nachman, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). The mistreatment of Haitian migrants during the 2021 US-Mexico border crisis and swift expulsions by US officials despite the multiple crises occurring in their homeland have reinforced perceptions of racial discrimination experienced by Blacks in the US and the historically distinct forms of abuse suffered by Haitian migrants (Craig et al., 2021; Kurmanaev, 2021; Morrison et al., 2021). The message has been clear: Haitians do not belong in the US. Youth of Haitian descent are, therefore, marginalized based on their skin color and ostracized as foreign Black bodies in the US.

Within Black communities in Miami-Dade County, cultural borders define neighborhoods as ethnic enclaves (e.g., Haitian, Cuban, Bahamian, Jamaican) shaped by common experiences, language, and immigration background (Dunn, 1997; Marcelin, 2005). Even among Black adolescents, the social bonds established at school are undermined by cultural-spatial divides (Marcelin, 2005). These processes have subjected Haitian immigrants and their descendants to intersecting forms of socioethnic discrimination impacting adolescents' mental health and identity formation.

Theoretical Framework

Our view of the impact of racial and socioethnic discrimination on the lives of youth of Haitian descent in Miami-Dade County is grounded in critical race theory (Bridges, 2019; Christian et al., 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) and theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1990;

Calhoun et al., 1993). Bonilla-Silva (2009) describes racism as a social system informed by racial ideologies for the express purpose of domination. Racism's "underlying logic" never changes; however, its expression may vary over time, adapting to changing conditions (Christian et al., 2019, p. 1734). Through the lens of critical race theory, we interrogate and challenge the persistence of racial inequality in the US through counter-storytelling that centers the experiences of people of color (Christian et al., 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

We employ Bourdieu's concept of habitus, an internalized and durable system of dispositions that structure individual and collective perceptions, tastes, imaginaries, and ideas in a sociocultural context (Bourdieu, 1990; Calhoun et al., 1993). The habitus of any sociocultural context is constantly subjected to and affected by experiences in a way that reinforces or modifies its structures (Bourdieu 1990). Habitus generates a sense of practice for individuals, groups, and institutions that continuously redefines belonging and an array of beliefs while developing strategies (e.g., coping, avoiding, encountering, enforcing, etc.) that inform actions.

Bourdieu (1990) argues that as it becomes more difficult to exercise direct forms of domination, the need for more subtle or disguised forms-"symbolic violence"-emerges. Through sociocultural practices and the embodiment of norms and values, one garners respect or contempt. As briefly discussed here, the theory of practice allows for the examination of social spaces in which struggle and domination may be institutionalized or relational. Accordingly, people's actions in a given social space are undertaken in light of perceived opportunities and/or obstacles, as well as the probability for success or failure, which have been internalized and transformed into dispositions that endure and are passed on over time and across generations. From this theoretical lens, we analyze the strategies (practices) youth of Haitian descent employ to confront everyday racism, the mechanisms they use to cope with discrimination experienced in Miami-Dade County's neighborhoods and institutions. Therefore, we address the following questions: How has racial and socioethnic discrimination reinforced the marginalized status of youth of Haitian descent and impacted their mental health?

Methods

The data drawn for this article derive from the Haitian Adolescent and Family (Intervention) Study. The Culturally Informed and Flexible Family-Based Treatment for Adolescents (CIFFTA), originally implemented within the Hispanic population (Santisteban et al., 2013), was modified for at-risk, juvenile justice-involved youth of Haitian descent, ages 13 to 17, and their families. The intervention consists of integrated individual- and family-based therapeutic services in which adolescents build skills such as emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness, while family interventions enhance protective factors such as guidance, validation, and support in dealing with chronic stressors. Youth are referred by the Miami-Dade County Juvenile Service Department's (JSD). After obtaining consent from caregivers and assent from adolescents, participants are randomized to either CIFFTA or treatment as usual.

To date, 20 young men and 15 young women, have been recruited. All participants complete assessments at baseline, 3-, 6- and 12-months. For the ethnographic component, youth and family members are interviewed and observed in their homes, neighborhoods, and other social settings. For families randomized to the CIFFTA intervention, a therapeutic plan is developed based on the youth's risk-level. The intervention includes individual and family therapy and psychoeducational modules for youth and caregivers, as needed, typically delivered in one-hour weekly sessions over the course of 12-weeks. One adaptation to the model included home-based service delivery to improve family participation and ensure completion. Six months following completion of the intervention, therapists re-engage youth in an hour-long booster session. Primary study outcomes include abstinence in substance use, improved family functioning, avoidance of sexual risk behaviors, and improvement of conduct disorder. Secondary outcomes include reduced recidivism rates and gang involvement. The data consist of the recorded therapeutic intervention, ethnographic interviews, and observations. Transcripts and written field notes were analyzed with reference to the type of interview and the coded categories. We undertook a thematically based content/discourse analysis of participants' own cultural constructs and experiences of socioethnic discrimination and racism.

The research team consists of three anthropologists--a Haiti-born male; a US-born Haitian descent female; and a US-born White male; a clinical psychologist of Hispanic origin, and one US-born White male criminologist. The therapeutic team includes two therapists: one Haiti-born male and one US-born Haitian descent female, both fluent in English and Haitian Creole with several years of clinical experience working with ethnic minority populations. They received direct supervision from a senior licensed psychologist, a female of Haitian descent, who specializes in family psychology and acculturation processes. The clinical team was trained by the CIFFTA model co-founders. The clinical and research teams were able to develop close relationships with families and engage family members in a consistent and sustained manner over the course of several months due to the home-based delivery approach. The team's shared Haitian heritage, Creole language fluency, and diverse generational representation, among other markers, facilitated rapport with adolescents and family members.

In March 2020, when the US declared a Public Health Emergency for COVID-19, site visits were suspended. An amended study protocol ensured the continuity of services through remote delivery. Original and amended protocols were approved by the University of Miami Institutional Review Board.

Findings

Most families in this study live in low-income, ethnic enclaves in the northern sections of Miami-Dade County. Some findings were collected during the assessment phase, which included tools such as the Youth Self Report and Child Behavior Checklist which measures for discrimination. During the first therapeutic session, experiences of discrimination were explored as part of the family interview process and may be explored further during the ongoing intervention, consistent with the CIFFTA model. Finally, in light of emerging social justice movements and racial reckoning resulting from the George Floyd case, issues of

discrimination were further explored with all families through ethnographic interviews. All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Narratives and experienced effects of racial and ethnic discrimination

During therapy, Andre, a US-born 13 year old, reported experiencing racial discrimination: "*Regular people on the street, they say like racist stuff… because you Black […] I don't care.*" Most youth and caregivers rarely provided specific accounts of discrimination except in cases of racial profiling. Marie, 16, reported "very stressful" experiences of her family being followed around stores by security guards while "*all they did was shop.*" The youth was expressive and open about the stress of being repeatedly profiled. In contrast, Jean, another US-born 13 year old, experienced racial discrimination of another kind, that of invisibility. During a counseling session, visibly upset, he relayed his experience: "*White people being racist. I went to the Aventura Mall to buy Starbucks and this guy was being racist.*" He shared that he was completely ignored by a store clerk. His mother added: "*Yes, I went to the mall with him. I went to use the bathroom and he went to buy water. I always tell him I don't want him going into the store by himself. Because if the person is Black, you go into the store, they don't need to know if you have money, if you don't have money, they say you came to steal!*" The symbolic violence of institutional racial profiling suggests to the victim that Blacks do not belong in these spaces, leading some to modify their behaviors-Jean's mom will not let him to go to the mall without her.

Although schools should be safe spaces, they were found to be sites of marginalization, discrimination, and peer violence. Female accounts of racial and socioethnic discrimination most often occurred in schools. "*My school is a big mess. I wanna leave and my concerns about my school is why do I get treated different?* (Annick, 14)." The youth provided this information on the Youth Self-Report which resulted in the assessor using clarifying questions and reflections to better understand her responses. The mental health toll of these experiences on adolescents can result in trauma reactions, including hypervigilance, depression, avoidance, and lead to school failure and drop out (Rivas-Drake, 2011).

Annick, a second generation Haitian American, has a history of conflict with one of her White peers. Her parent has expressed concern for her safety at school. Annick reported being falsely accused, lied about, and threatened with bodily harm while her peer brought drugs to school with no consequences. Annick believed the school failed to properly manage the ongoing conflict: "*…we were in the office 24/7…I would see a school counselor once a month, they wouldn't do anything about the situation […] this girl only got 3 days of suspension and I got 10 days when she threatens to kill me and one of my closest friends […] that's the only reason why I fought her.*" Annick believed she was unjustly charged with battery while defending herself and given a harsher sanction than her White assailant. Perceived racial injustices experienced in school settings may inform youth dispositions regarding access to racial equality and justice in the broader society.

Jessica, a second generation 14 year old, reported being treated differently at school, and her father concurs. Jessica was referred to the JSD for throwing a soda bottle that she claims inadvertently hit another student. Referring to the incident as an unfortunate mistake, her father defended her character during a session with the therapist. Asked how his daughter

became involved with the JSD, he replied: *"[…] she's not a child who has problems…I don't know how this situation has transpired as it has […] this is the first time [she] has been in a situation like this."* Her father further felt the situation had been exaggerated and did not warrant juvenile justice involvement. Jessica shared that a school security guard reported her to the police, accusing her of trespassing on school grounds. When she tried to explain that she was a student: *"they told me I just need to leave […] the principal was accompanying the police officer and just went along with what the police was* (sic) *saying."* When asked why she thought she was targeted, Jessica responded: *"I don't know if it's because they're Yanks and I'm not."* When prompted, she explained that it was because she is of Haitian descent and they were African American. According to Jessica, this happens to others, but she was *"the only one who doesn't stand for it. [I] say something about it."* In this instance, Jessica's resistance to being discriminated against manifested as anger and defiance. Unfortunately, standing up for herself, a traditionally healthy coping response, may be misinterpreted as aggressive and, ironically, result in more conflict. When appropriate responses are not reinforced, individuals often give up and experience helplessness.

Joanne, a second generation 15 year old raised by her Haitian-American father, was reportedly suspended two or three times early in the 2019–2020 academic year. She believed *"…they probably just waiting for [her] to turn 16…."* to transfer her to another school. When her teacher requested that she hand over her phone, Joanne explained: *"I ain't have it that day. My daddy took it, and she didn't believe me…"* Joanne's father corroborated her story, and its injustice: *"it's like the way [the principal] was talking like she had proof […] just taking the teacher's side."* After being kicked out of class, Joanne was told by a school administrator: *"… 'I don't think this is the school for you.'"* Joanne also recounted experiencing anti-Haitian sentiment: *"[her peers] used to rank on [her] everyday"* and she would get into fights due to her Haitian-American identity. Joanne responded to socioethnic discrimination by resisting and fighting. Although her behavior may be characterized as defiant or oppositional, she protested and fought to defend her ethnic identity. Joanne has since been transferred to an alternative school.

Other youth were ostracized due to their Haitian heritage, on the Youth Self Report form, Marie wrote: *"[Peers] are harsh* […] *they treat me like I'm slow or like trash* […] *teachers, pretty inconsiderate, rude, mean […] judgmental on* (sic) *Haitians of the school."* Marie appeared to have low self-esteem and may be struggling with her identity. Stephanie, a second generation 14 year old, was *"bullied every day"* and assaulted by her African-American peers. Stephanie reported being attacked as many as four times, once suffering a black eye and lacerations. One attack was recorded and posted to social media. She felt forced to *"steal [her] mother's money"* to pay one of her bullies to take down the video. Stephanie feels unsafe at her school and has witnessed many instances of violence between students but refuses to report them for fear of retribution. During an individual session, she reported that her experiences of socioethnic discrimination were *"very stressful,"* warning that she would *"end her life"* if forced to return to school.

Stephanie's experiences of discrimination resulted in shame and depression. Her distress has escalated to school avoidance, increased conflict at home, and the ultimate expression of psychological distress—suicidal ideation. Indeed, race and culturally-based stressors are

believed to be related to an increase in the incidence of self-harm among adolescents of color. Based on her disclosure, a risk assessment was performed. The youth was subsequently assessed and determined to be at low risk for suicidality.

Police Encounters in Public Spaces: Youths' Responses and Strategies

Several male participants shared experiences of racial discrimination, specifically by police. Stanley, a Haiti-born 15 year old, was taken into custody for rough housing with a friend: "*I wasn't really scared, 'cause we wasn't* (sic) *doing anything bad or nothing but, I thought [the police] would just […] sit us down […] bring us home and talk to our parents and stuff […] but they took us to the police station.*"

Andre said his friend: "*… was driving [a scooter] on the wrong side of the road. [He] did not see the police car at all.*" The officer discovered that the scooter was stolen, unbeknownst to Andre. Jonas, a 17 year old born in the US to Haitian parents, demonstrates Black male fear of police: "*[…] while he was parked […]a group of police cars drove by them […]. And then when he saw [the police] turn back and flash their lights inside the car he had this B.B. gun, which is what the police thought was a real gun.*" The clinician further explained: "*when the police flashed the car, he ran […] and the B.B. gun fell to the ground. And the police started chasing him. So […] he surrendered. The police asked, 'Where's the gun?' and he's like, 'I don't have a gun.' […] [When] they went back to the car […] they realized it wasn't an actual gun.*"

During clinical sessions, two youth reported being racially profiled by police: "*This happened to me three times. […][Even] before I got arrested.*" Describing one incident, Gerard, a Haiti-born 16 year old, explained: "*You fit the description [of a suspect], they ask for my name. They stopped me for a good 30 minutes. There were like five cop cars behind me.*" According to his clinician: "*The youth had to identify himself […] let the police know where he lived, attends school and, basically, de-escalate the situation. The police figured out that he was not the suspect and let him go.*" The youth had never shared these experiences, his clinician suspects, due to communication issues and fear of being blamed by his father for being stopped by the police. He does not have the right to walk freely in his neighborhood, can be subject to stop and search at any moment, and believes that any incident may be perceived as his own fault, all examples of symbolic violence.

Andre initially expressed apathy about his experiences of racial profiling: "*It made me feel nothing.*" Yet, his frustration and fear were clear: "*I just want to curse them out that's all […] Even if I am not doing anything […] when you from the 'hood and you see the police, you were already taught when you see the blue lights, run!*" Such experiences of racial discrimination are often internalized because—irrespective of innocence or guilt—these youths always "fit the description." Having internalized these racialized perceptions of them, they have developed avoidance strategies—running—that reinforce stereotypes of their criminality. Andre believed that Black youth living in his neighborhood were condemned: "*[…] you are black, you steal. You are black, you are most likely not to have a dad. You are most likely to go to jail. In the 'hood, there is (sic) only two options: either death or jail.*"

During the baseline assessment, David, 14, described his arrest to the assessor:

> *He was out with some friends in the area. They decided to jump a fence into a parking lot. While they were walking, the police showed up and they started to run. He fled and hid in an abandoned truck. While hiding, he was discovered by a canine unit dog. The dog scratched his arm and bit his leg. He alleges that after coming out of the truck a police officer hit him which resulted in a laceration and black eye.*

The youth reported being treated at a local hospital without his parent's knowledge. David's mother made him show the assessor the scars on his left arm; the family had filed a complaint but had yet to receive any status updates.

In addition to helplessness, traumatic and life threatening incidents can lead to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), marked by re-experiencing the trauma, avoidance, negative cognitions or moods, and physiological arousal (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017). Youth reactions to the police (e.g., running, negative thoughts, numbing to emotion), suggest that they experience several, if not all, the symptoms of PTSD. It is important to consider that experiencing the symptoms does not always lead to the disorder, and at times, symptoms can be a coping process. Therefore, context should help determine whether a reaction is adaptive or maladaptive.

Reported Mental Health Impacts of Discrimination

The reported mental health impacts of socioethnic discrimination on youth of Haitian descent include fear, hopelessness, and chronic stress reactions. There were rare instances where study participants challenged negative narratives about Blacks and Haitians. Marie defiantly proclaimed: "*I'm still not going to disown it […] being Pro Black is the only way you can grow, period.*" She has reportedly embraced her heritage: "*when I touched my Haitian side […] it struck me as why not be proud of Haitian culture? […] I'm gonna be proud of where I come from.*" This type of healthy coping response can be reinforced to foster a positive self-concept while mitigating the negative effects of chronic race- and ethnic-based discrimination.

Many youths reported ongoing experiences of discrimination-related stress. Ariel, James' sister and caregiver, feels ethnically stigmatized speaking Haitian Creole in public. Marie and Jean have been targets of racial profiling in stores and anticipate that this will continue. Gerard has been racially profiled in his own neighborhood and has no reason to believe that he won't be stopped again. The news, social media outlets, family members, and peer groups have made youths acutely aware of incidences of police brutality occurring throughout the country. Witnessing tragic deaths or maiming, even indirectly, is stressful for many. During a booster session facilitated remotely, Sandra, 14, shared: "*Honestly, it made me look at America way more different. I looked at White people different* (sic) *[…], are they being racist?*" Persistent, poorly-managed uncertainty can result in anxiety, worry, and fear. Depending on the frequency of stressful encounters, these youths may suffer increased anxiety and stress, with consequences on their physical and mental health. As potential targets of racial and socioethnic discrimination, racial profiling, and police violence, these youths are forced to live with the resultant chronic anticipatory stress.

Frequent witnessing of police violence can result in anger, fear, depression, anxiety, distrust, and PTSD (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017), as does witnessing such violence carried out against those who look like you. Several youths reported anger, anxiety, and fear for their safety. Beatrice, 17, "*worries about*" police violence and racial discrimination. Marie reported being "*afraid of police stations.*" Jessica empathized with her stepbrother, who felt "*unsafe,*" further fueling her own anger. Since his arrest, Stanley no longer feels safe outside his home and is angry about George Floyd's death: "*I feel like the cops are really wrong for what they did and for not really helping [him].*" Sandra shared similar sentiments, *"[…] it is messed up […] it's so wrong […] he had a whole daughter!*" Jessica was searching for an outlet to express her emotions: "*I haven't been able to speak out […] it angers me […] I need to talk to someone in charge."* She was acutely aware of Black male vulnerability to police violence: *"I have brothers […] it does bother me.*" Acknowledging the direct threat to himself, Marcus, 18, shared: "*It does make me angry that the police keep killing us,*" and Anthony, 15, "*…was not happy because […] it is Black people they are killing.*" Marcus felt hopelessness because "*there is nothing that [he] can do about it.*" While Alex, 16, worried that: "[…] *it could happen to anyone,"* Stanley feared: "*It's history repeating itself. It's going to happen again ten years from now.*"

Sarah,16, expressed hopelessness, at which time the therapist used a reflection to clarify her statement suggesting that police violence had become an everyday occurrence: "*it's something consistent […] people die every day […] it's not normal […] but we see this every day…it's kind of like an eyeopener.*" Hopelessness was also evident in Gerard's silence about his repeated experiences of police profiling and David's resentment about his mother's unsuccessful efforts to hold the police accountable. With hopelessness came resignation; when asked about the Black Lives Matter movement and social justice issues gripping the country, Joanne responded, *"[…] there's no point to talk about it…no reason to talk about it […] ain't nothing to talk about.*" Similarly, during a therapeutic session Marie refused to discuss it: "*I don't really want to speak on that situation, it's a really touchy subject for me. I'm already trying to clear my mind of it.*" When asked what she thought she could do to effect change, she responded: *"[…] what can I do at this age?"*

Discussion

Many of the youths navigate multiple worlds: the US—where they live—and Haiti—where they or their parents were born; institutions that may see them as Blacks, Haitians, or Haitian Americans; and home, with its own values and beliefs. As they develop autonomous identities, these worlds converge and collide—as do their own lived experiences.

Black adolescents in the US are engaged in the complex and often contentious process of identity development while confronting racial discrimination. The data reveal many negative messages from law enforcement, educational and commercial institutions, community members, and their peers. Some messages are aimed at Blacks, in general, others at immigrants or just "Haitians". As the CIFFTA model was designed for family-based work with Hispanic families and has now been modified for use with Haitian families, exploring experiences of discrimination is a critical component of the therapeutic model. During the initial family interview and throughout the intervention, these issues are explored and re-

visited, as necessary. When discussing experiences of racial and socioethnic discrimination, the clinicians created a safe therapeutic space where youth could discuss and process their feelings of discrimination. Most discussions were initiated individually with youth and separately with parents, unless raised during a family session by one or both parties.

When the data are examined along gender lines, we find that young males of Haitian descent more readily reported racial discrimination—the result of over-policing and/or racial profiling while their young female counterparts shared experiences of socioethnic discrimination in spaces and environments in which their Haitian identity was known, particularly schools. Seaton et al. (2008) contend that perceived discrimination has greater implications for youth of Caribbean descent than for African Americans, arguing that socialization processes among the former may render them ill-prepared for the types of discrimination they will confront in the US. As Cone et al. (2014) note: "Haitian students are confronted with the fact that while their classmates may look the same, they speak, dress, and behave differently, and ridicule them for their foreignness" (p. 290). Therefore, these youths must reconcile these identities, often without the capital to counteract historic negative portrayals of people of color, particularly Haitians, in the media or racial discrimination by authorities.

As the data suggest, youth of Haitian descent's experiences of discrimination have structured their perceptions of authority figures. This includes distrust—of Whites, generally, and even of African-American school officials and peers. There is fear of police officers who are perceived as dangerous. These youth acknowledge experiences of racial discrimination as Blacks, whether directly as a result of police profiling, abuse, and violence or indirectly as witnesses of over-policing in their neighborhoods and incidents of police violence committed against Blacks around the country. Further, the ubiquitous images of police violence on news and social media platforms has increased Black youths' exposure to trauma (Campbell & Valera, 2020; Staggers-Hakim, 2016) ultimately impacting their mental health and well-being.

Some youth felt that their referral to the juvenile justice system for minor offenses reflected racial disparities in the criminal justice system. The disparate treatment of Black boys by the criminal justice system adds to their sense of dehumanization, resulting in legitimate fear of the police. Adolescent boys and their families were aware of "racial disparities in sentencing and even the disparate use of force by officers," (Goff et al., 2014, p. 257) as implicit bias against Blacks often informs police officers' decision to shoot (Carrell et al., 2007; DeVylder et al., 2020; Sue, 2017). Habitus is informed by everyday experiences, continuous exposure to various forms of treatment in space and time, and memory; for these youths, systemic racism has generated an internal disposition, or habitus, where constant fear of arrest, incarceration, injury, or death inform how Black males, in particular, interact with police. Avoidance is, therefore, one potentially life saving strategy that should not be mistaken for culpability.

Yet, the data suggest that youth of Haitian descent must also contend with socioethnic discrimination which has resulted in various forms of marginalization, stigmatization, and even violence. In public spaces, some participants were uncomfortable speaking Creole and

were the targets of racist behaviors and ethnic insults. The data reveal that experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination by these youths were directly linked to poor behavioral (e.g., fighting), socioemotional (e.g., running, managing feelings), and academic adjustment (e.g., truancy) among youths, and, in a myriad of ways, convey clear messages about their diminished value as Blacks, Haitians, and (children of) immigrants.

Conclusion

This article highlights the distinct experiences of racial and socioethnic discrimination by a minority, immigrant adolescent population and its impacts on their mental health. Given these experiences, clinicians working with youths of Haitian descent are encouraged to create a safe therapeutic space where youth can name and process their feelings of discrimination. These spaces can be created through narrative therapy, counterstorytelling, or *testimonio* (liberation psychology). Clinicians may also wish to utilize broaching to explore how experiences of racism and socioethnic discrimination impact youth mental health (Day-Vines et al., 2007). However, patience will be required, as some youth may feel ashamed and reluctant to process these traumatic experiences.

Clinicians can help youth reduce areas of poor self-concept, increase pride in their ethnic identities, and identify options for coping effectively with race/ethnicity-based stressors. Clinicians working with Haitian families should seek to increase intergenerational understanding between family members. This can be accomplished by using structural family therapy techniques to decrease conflict, as well as using narratives/storytelling to increase empathy. These techniques can help parents and youth understand their respective experiences of racial and socioethnic discrimination. First generation immigrants, coming from a majority Black country, experience discrimination differently than youth born and/or raised in US environments where they are part of a minority. Because individuals vary in the ways they understand race, how it impacts their lives (Carter, 2007), and how they react to racial and socioethnic discrimination, clinicians can create environments where exploration of these different experiences increase parents' and youths' reciprocal support. Clinicians should use empowerment and strength-based approaches to reinforce the resilience already present in the youth and family, while engaging them in building skills in areas such as emotional awareness, conflict resolution, and communication that are expressed differently in Haiti and the US.

Therapists may need to use trauma-informed interventions and techniques (e.g., grounding or relaxation) should youths identify a negative reaction while processing experiences of discrimination. Recent research indicates that mind-body techniques, such as relaxation and mindfulness, can help disrupt the negative physical and mental effects of chronic race-based stress, however it must be noted that these modalities, while helpful, are limited as they fail to address the root causes, systemic racism. Clinicians should incorporate skills building in these areas to help youth develop lifelong coping strategies as they will continue to experience these stressors. The negative effects of experiences of racism and socioethnic discrimination can be mitigated by addressing internalized stereotypes and increasing positive regard for one's group membership.

Study Limitations

This study was limited to youth referred through the JSD's diversion programs and does not capture the full complexity of experiences of youths of Haitian descent in Miami-Dade County. However, it lays the foundation for future studies of how youth of Haitian descent experience and respond to discrimination, while enriching our understanding of comparable developmental experiences among other youth of Caribbean immigrant descent in the US.

Acknowledgements

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