

# ETHNIC-RACIAL DEVELOPMENT AND MEDIA EXPOSURE, BY AGE



**TABLE A1. ERD and media exposure, the early years (age 0 to 2)**

Awareness	Self-related processes	Other-related processes	Knowledge	Racism
<i>When and what do children notice about ethnicity-race?</i>	<i>What do children know and feel about their own ethnicity-race?</i>	<i>What do children know and feel about other ethnic-racial groups and interactions?</i>	<i>How do children understand what defines ethnicity-race?</i>	<i>What do children recognize about ethnic-racial inequalities in society?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By age 3 to 5 months, can differentiate faces based on skin color.</li> <li>• Aware of which ethnic-racial faces are familiar vs. unfamiliar (and similar vs. dissimilar).</li> <li>• Awareness depends on the infant's close social environment (family, caretakers).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 18 to 20 months, recognize the self as distinct from others with traits, characteristics, and appearances.</li> <li>• By 18 months, can use gender as a social category for themselves (and others).</li> <li>• Aware of who is similar (and dissimilar) to them based on skin color.</li> </ul>	Between 6 and 9 months, show preference for and are faster at recognizing faces that are ethnically-racially familiar to them.	Not yet relevant	Not yet relevant
<p><b>What should media do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on positive behavior and positive role models that are diverse in racial-ethnic cues (e.g., skin color and hair), rather than representing characters of a single ethnic-racial background or using negative representations.</li> <li>• Feature simple words, songs, and images that are inclusive and representative of several racial-ethnic groups.</li> </ul>				

**TABLE A2. ERD and media exposure, early childhood (age 3 to 6)**

Awareness	Self-related processes	Other-related processes	Knowledge	Racism
<i>When and what do children notice about ethnicity-race?</i>	<i>What do children know and feel about their own ethnicity-race?</i>	<i>What do children know and feel about other ethnic-racial groups and interactions?</i>	<i>How do children understand what defines ethnicity-race?</i>	<i>What do children recognize about ethnic-racial inequalities in society?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of differences in skin color and facial features.</li> <li>• May ask about or describe own or others' skin colors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can use concrete descriptors, like skin color, to describe self (e.g., "I am brown," or "I am peachy").</li> <li>• Feel positively about own skin color.</li> <li>• Believe that skin color is changeable not fixed (e.g., suntan).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May ask about or describe the skin color of others.</li> <li>• Can categorize others based on skin color.</li> <li>• Understand and will reinforce boundaries of ethnicity-race groups using concrete cues (e.g., skin color, food, language, holidays, clothing).</li> <li>• Will exclude peers on the basis of ethnic-racial cues (skin color, language).</li> <li>• Evidence of racial bias, with more positive evaluations of or preferences for White people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know skin color and concrete ethnic-racial cues.</li> <li>• Think that ethnicity-race changes if observables change (e.g., you are Spanish if you learn Spanish).</li> <li>• Think about ethnic-racial groups as distinct, nonoverlapping categories.</li> <li>• May interpret observable cues of ethnicity-race as evidence of differences in kind (e.g., a Black person is "a different kind of person" than a White person because of their skin color).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not yet understand abstract concepts like history and inequality.</li> <li>• Pick up cues of social status and power.</li> <li>• May model and mirror biases of others and use ethnic-racial group membership to organize games and play.</li> </ul>

**What should media do?**

- Repeatedly show positive behavior and positive role models that are diverse in racial-ethnic cues (e.g., skin color, language, hair texture and styles).
- Use many different examples of real people (rather than animals) to teach lessons about race-ethnicity.
- Give equal value to different racial-ethnic groups.
- Emphasize positive, nonstereotypical attributes of characters.
- Show children of different racial-ethnic groups engaging in a range of positive, nonstereotypical roles, activities, and behaviors.
- Demonstrate lessons, such as inclusive play, with visual behaviors (e.g., sharing), rather than just dialogue between characters.
- Avoid negative and stereotypic representations, stories, or events, especially for kids age 3 and 4. For older children, negative behavior (e.g., excluding others by race-ethnicity) should be met with explicit, negative consequences for the perpetrator and resolved quickly.
- Make concrete connections between ethnic-racial lessons (e.g., about culture, about friendships) to real-life situations, rather than using metaphors (e.g., cats and mice playing together).
- Feature positive friendships across racial-ethnic groups.
- Show teachable moments about race-ethnicity that parents can model in their behavior, conversations, or songs.

**TABLE A3. ERD and media exposure, middle childhood (age 7 to 11)**

Awareness	Self-related processes	Other-related processes	Knowledge	Racism
<i>When and what do children notice about ethnicity-race?</i>	<i>What do children know and feel about their own ethnicity-race?</i>	<i>What do children know and feel about other ethnic-racial groups and interactions?</i>	<i>How do children understand what defines ethnicity-race?</i>	<i>What do children recognize about ethnic-racial inequalities in society?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of skin color and other concrete ethnic-racial cues (e.g., hair, facial features, language, food).</li> <li>• Observe patterns in representation based on ethnicity-race (e.g., who is likely to be president).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will use concrete descriptors (“I am brown”) and social labels (“I am Mexican”) to describe self.</li> <li>• Social identity develops, meaning the “we” part of the self (e.g., “we” = Asian kids).</li> <li>• Can explain the meaning and importance of ethnicity-race as part of the self.</li> <li>• Feel positively about own ethnicity-race but also recognize (and experience) negative views from others.</li> <li>• Ethnicity-race is not an important self-descriptor (however, it’s more important among children of color).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social identities and group boundaries become clearer (“us” vs. “them”), which can highlight ethnic-racial differences.</li> <li>• Will exclude peers on the basis of ethnic-racial cues and social norms.</li> <li>• Demonstrate some favoritism toward their own group members.</li> <li>• Evidence of racial bias, with more positive evaluations of or preferences for White people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know observable (skin color, language) and nonobservable features of ethnicity-race (heredity).</li> <li>• Clearer about stability of ethnic-racial group membership (e.g., learning Spanish does not mean you are Spanish).</li> <li>• Understand ethnicity-race as connected to family and place (e.g., country of origin, family background).</li> <li>• Learn historical ethnic-racial events and icons (e.g., segregation, César Chávez).</li> <li>• Know widely held ethnic-racial stereotypes (e.g., “Black kids are athletic”).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand that ethnicity-race can impact how people are treated.</li> <li>• Can connect history to the present (e.g., slavery and racial inequality).</li> <li>• Able to report experiencing and/or witnessing ethnic-racial discrimination.</li> <li>• May attempt to correct, question, or challenge racial injustice or racism.</li> <li>• More awareness and knowledge among children of color.</li> </ul>

**What should media do?**

- Repeatedly show positive behavior and positive role models of older children that are diverse in racial-ethnic cues (e.g., skin color and hair).
- Negative behavior, such as excluding by race-ethnicity, should be met with explicit, negative consequences for the perpetrator and resolved quickly.
- Make concrete connections between ethnic-racial lessons (e.g., about culture and friendships) to real-life situations, rather than using metaphors—for example, feature positive friendships and inclusive social behavior across racial-ethnic groups.
- Show role models of different race-ethnicity groups who engage in counter-stereotypical behaviors and interests without ridicule from other characters.
- Show nonsexualized women (e.g., realistic body types, avoidance of signifiers such as cleavage, unrealistically long legs), particularly for women of color.
- Show nonaggressive men who resolve conflict without resorting to violence, particularly for men of color.
- Introduce children to great historical figures, athletes, or media stars of diverse racial-ethnic groups.
- Call out instances of racial injustices (e.g., calling a racial slur “racist” rather than “mean”).
- Model civic responsibility, including recognizing and taking action against instances of racial discrimination and inequality.
- Include stories about people of color that are not just about racial bias, systemic disadvantage, and trauma.
- When showing systemic disadvantage, racism, and retellings of events centered on ethnicity and race, be clear about the role of White people.

**TABLE A4. ERD and media exposure, young teens (age 12 to 14)**

Awareness	Self-related processes	Other-related processes	Knowledge	Racism
<p><i>When and what do children notice about ethnicity-race?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of phenotypic cues for ethnicity-race (e.g., skin color, hair, facial features).</li> <li>• Observe more patterns in representation based on ethnicity-race (e.g., which students get into trouble, who is likely to be a doctor vs. an athlete).</li> <li>• May notice greater differentiation within ethnic-racial groups based on phenotype, gender, social class, etc.</li> <li>• Aware and/or experience differential treatment based on ethnicity-race.</li> </ul>	<p><i>What do children know and feel about their own ethnicity-race?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic-racial identity becomes more important and relevant.</li> <li>• May question assumed labels or select alternative labels for self (e.g., Asian American vs. Chinese).</li> <li>• Young people of color may spontaneously describe self in ethnic-racial terms.</li> <li>• White tweens and teens may identify with ethnic/religious heritage (e.g., Jewish, Italian) but not “White.”</li> <li>• Recognize their multiple self-identities (e.g., immigrant, boy, gay).</li> <li>• Compare self to others and social expectations (e.g., “I’m not like other Dominican kids”).</li> </ul>	<p><i>What do children know and feel about other ethnic-racial groups and interactions?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social groups and boundaries become more important and influence identity development.</li> <li>• Young people of color report ethnic-racial discrimination and stereotyping from peers and adults.</li> <li>• Cross-ethnic/racial friendships generally decline.</li> <li>• Diverse peer groups can support positive cross-group interactions and attitudes.</li> </ul>	<p><i>How do children understand what defines ethnicity-race?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand varied and diverse aspects of ethnicity-race, including abstract connections to history and social status.</li> <li>• Stereotypes of ethnic-racial groups are more nuanced with positive and negative characterizations (e.g., “Latinos are poor, have big families and a strong culture”).</li> <li>• Stereotypes about ethnicity-race also connect to stereotypes about other identities like gender, social class, sexuality (e.g., “Black girls are loud”).</li> </ul>	<p><i>What do children recognize about ethnic-racial inequalities in society?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can understand that ethnicity-race is a social and political construct that can impact how people are treated by others.</li> <li>• May recognize that ethnicity-race can impact opportunities (e.g., education, jobs, housing).</li> <li>• More likely to recognize systemic disadvantages.</li> <li>• Young people of color report experiencing and/or witnessing ethnic-racial discrimination from peers, teachers, other adults, and even online.</li> <li>• Young people of color are more likely to understand and recognize racism than White young people.</li> </ul>

**What should media do?**

- Explicitly feature a summary of a lesson, especially if there was moral ambiguity or gray areas about race-ethnicity, such as discrimination or injustice.
- Show characters of diverse ethnic-racial backgrounds discussing topics of ethnicity-race in meaningful, informative, and genuine ways.
- Show examples of positive, supportive, and fulfilling friendships and relationships across racial-ethnic groups.
- Show role models of different race-ethnicity groups who engage in counter-stereotypical behaviors and interests.
- Show examples of fully realized characters of color who experience both ups and downs, and are accepted and supported by their peers and communities.
- Introduce children to great historical figures, athletes, or media stars of diverse backgrounds.
- Highlight stories of characters’ positive racial-ethnic identity development.
- Call out instances of systemic racial-ethnic injustices (e.g., calling a racial slur “racist” rather than “mean”).
- Model civic responsibility, including recognizing and taking action against systemic racial discrimination and inequality.
- Include stories about people of color that are not just about racial bias, systemic disadvantage, and trauma.
- When showing systemic disadvantage, racism, and retellings of events centered on ethnicity and race, be clear about the role of White people.

**TABLE A5. ERD and media exposure, late teens (age 15 to 18)**

Awareness	Self-related processes	Other-related processes	Knowledge	Racism
<p><i>When and what do children notice about ethnicity-race?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of phenotypic cues for ethnicity-race (e.g., skin color, hair, facial features).</li> <li>• Observe more patterns in representation based on ethnicity-race (e.g., which students get into trouble, who is likely to be a doctor vs. an athlete).</li> <li>• May notice greater differentiation within ethnic-racial groups based on phenotype, gender, appearance, social class, etc.</li> <li>• Aware of and/or experience differential treatment based on ethnicity-race.</li> </ul>	<p><i>What do children know and feel about their own ethnicity-race?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic-racial identity becomes more important.</li> <li>• May question assumed labels or select alternative labels (e.g., “I’m Asian American” or “I’m Chinese”).</li> <li>• Young people of color may spontaneously describe self in ethnic-racial terms.</li> <li>• White young people may identify with ethnic/religious heritage (e.g., Jewish, Italian) but not “White.”</li> <li>• Recognize their multiple self-identities (e.g., immigrant, boy, gay).</li> <li>• Compare self to others (e.g., “I’m not like other Dominican kids”).</li> <li>• Self-labeling may be more fluid, based on context (e.g., school vs. home).</li> </ul>	<p><i>What do children know and feel about other ethnic-racial groups and interactions?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social groups and boundaries become more important and influence identity development.</li> <li>• Young people of color report ethnic-racial discrimination and stereotyping from peers and adults.</li> <li>• Cross-ethnic/racial friendships generally decline, even in diverse settings.</li> <li>• Diverse peer groups can support positive cross-group interactions and attitudes.</li> </ul>	<p><i>How do children understand what defines ethnicity-race?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the varied and diverse aspects of ethnic-racial groups, including abstract connections to history and social status.</li> <li>• Stereotypes of ethnic-racial group are more nuanced with positive and negative characterizations (e.g., “Latinos are poor, have big families and a strong culture” means being an immigrant, getting into trouble, but also having big families”).</li> <li>• Stereotypes about ethnic-race connect to stereotypes about other identities like gender (e.g., “Black girls are loud”).</li> </ul>	<p><i>What do children recognize about ethnic-racial inequalities in society?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can understand that ethnicity-race is a social and political construct that can impact people’s treatment.</li> <li>• May recognize that ethnicity-race can impact opportunities (e.g., jobs).</li> <li>• More likely to recognize systemic disadvantages (rather than individuals).</li> <li>• More aware of multiple sources of inequality (e.g., ethnicity-race, sexuality).</li> <li>• Young people of color experience and/or witness offline and online ethnic-racial discrimination from peers, teachers, and other adults.</li> <li>• Young people of color are more likely to understand and recognize racism than White adolescents.</li> </ul>

**What should media do?**

- Show examples of complex, supportive, and fulfilling friendships and relationships across racial-ethnic groups.
- Show characters of diverse ethnic-racial backgrounds discussing topics of ethnicity-race in meaningful, informative, and genuine ways.
- Show role models of different race-ethnicity groups who engage in counter-stereotypical behaviors and career/academic interests.
- Show examples of fully realized characters of color who experience both ups and downs, and are accepted and supported by their peers and communities.
- Introduce children to great historical figures, athletes, or media stars of diverse racial-ethnic groups.
- Model civic responsibility, including recognizing and taking action against systemic racial discrimination and inequality.
- Highlight stories of positive racial-ethnic identity development, delving into the nuances of intersectionality (e.g., race-ethnicity, gender, class, ability).
- Include stories about people of color that are not just about racial bias, systemic disadvantage, and trauma.
- When showing systemic disadvantage, racism, and retellings of events centered on ethnicity and race, be clear about the role of White people.
- Call out instances of systemic racial-ethnic injustices (e.g., calling a racial slur “racist” rather than “mean”).