

# Ages and Stages in Developing Understanding of Race, Culture and Identity



<b>INFANTS</b> (up to one year old)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Notice difference in colors, including colors of skin</li><li>● Begin to show preference for people whose skin color matches their own</li><li>● Imitate intonation of caregivers; show clear difference in understanding of the language/s they are spoken to vs. others</li><li>● Show understanding of self as separate from others/caretakers</li></ul>
<b>TODDLERS</b> (one-two years old)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Show marked curiosity in physical characteristics of others and ask frequent questions</li><li>● “Match” people based on characteristics they notice</li><li>● Outwardly express discomfort with people that have different skin color from themselves</li><li>● May only choose to play with toys or books that look like them</li><li>● Make frequent comments about their own physical appearances, particularly in contrast to others</li></ul>
<b>PRE-SCHOOLERS</b> (three-four years old)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Have strong understanding of family/ cultural way of behaving, expressing rules, using language, etc</li><li>● Express strong sense of empathy and deep interest in fairness</li><li>● Highly focused on categorizing people in the world around them; struggle with understanding nuance in these categories (i.e. can two children with brown skin have different racial identities?)</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May not understand racial identity constancy (i.e. will I always be white?)</li> <li>● Show evidence of internalized superiority &amp; internalized oppression</li> </ul>
<b>EARLY ELEMENTARY (five to seven years old)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For children whose home culture is different from dominant culture: may face a crisis in understanding differences and valuing experiences</li> <li>● Understand concept of racial constancy</li> <li>● Express interest in how skin color is formed and can understand basic scientific explanations</li> <li>● Use racial/identity based insults or name-calling to express anger because they know these hurt people</li> <li>● May identify outwardly with their racial/cultural group; may express pride in their family history</li> </ul>
<b>LATE ELEMENTARY (eight to ten years old)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Able to consciously “code switch” between home/community and school culture</li> <li>● Children from marginalized groups: become aware of racism and may psychologically “drop out” of school</li> <li>● Marked increase in name calling and show influence of dominant culture in language</li> <li>● Can engage in conversation about the harm of stereotyping</li> <li>● Stereotyped understandings by this age frequently do not change throughout a person’s life unless they experience a life-changing event</li> <li>● May reject facts in favor of stereotyped beliefs</li> </ul>

Information collected from: Raising Race Conscious Kids Blog; YWCA Racial Justice & Public Policy “Development of Racial Identity by Age”; “Stages in Children’s Development of Racial/Cultural Identity & Attitudes” by Louise Derman-Sparks;

## Recommended Resources for Further Understanding



- ★ Raising Race Conscious Kids Blog: A frequently-updated led by Brooklyn parent Sachi Farris addressing issues at the intersection of racism and parenting in all ways. <http://www.raceconscious.org/blog/>
- ★ Embrace Race: A collection of resources including books, tip-sheets, blog posts, and monthly call-in webinars hosted by a mixed-race couple. <https://www.embracerace.org/>
- ★ National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): Diversity, Equity and Cultural Competence: The landing page for NAEYC's growing source of academic research on how diversity, equity and culture come to play in the education of young children <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/cultural-competence>
- ★ A Striving Parent Blog: Written by a white mother sharing reflections in her adventures attempting to raise anti-racist children <https://strivingparent.com>
- ★ Center for Racial Justice in Education's Comprehensive List of Resources: Previously Border Crossers, the Center for Racial Justice in Education trains and empowers educators to dismantle racism and injustice in schools and communities. <http://centerracialjustice.org/resources/>
- ★ Teaching for Change, Teaching about Race: A research-based summarizing document outlining how and why educators can teach children about race from a young age <https://www.teachingforchange.org/teaching-about-race>
- ★ Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards: A practical guide to developing anti-bias education programs, addressing most forms of oppression, including race.
- ★ NurtureShock: New Thinking About Children by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman (2012): One of the most influential books in this field, the authors demonstrate how children develop based on neuroscience and culture
- ★ Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And other Conversations About Race by Beverly Daniel Tatum (2003): Written by a renowned psychologist in understanding racism, Tatum outlines observable trends in children's behaviors and offers the solution of communication across lines of difference