



# Experiences of parents of and guardians of children of color participating in Western New York youth Hockey: Psychosocial effects discovered in a focus group

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**Abstract**

The present study was designed to describe the association of Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM) with various risk factors in cases visiting antenatal department in territory care hospitals of district Lahore. A pretested questionnaire for each patient was used to pile data including respondent demography and risk factors. The risk factors and indicators were analyzed and ranked in the form of percentages and potential risk factors were identified among diabetic and non-diabetic groups. It was found that that illiterate and housewives were significantly ( $P$ -value = 0.000) prone to the GDM than educated and working ones. Age group of 29-35 was found significantly associated to GDM. It was also observed that most of the GDM cases were having history of diabetes mellitus, in family and diabetes in previous pregnancy. It was also found that diabetes mellitus was more common in high BMI group. It was concluded that the problem of GDM in Pakistan is more common due to lack of education, poverty, and lack of awareness amongst the high risk groups.

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## Introduction

As noted above in the music of Ice T (*nee* Tracy Morrow) many areas of North American culture remain viewed as a “Whites only” club and as Blacks attempt to gain in-roads into these institutions they are met frequently with the need to “re-invent the wheel” with regard to race relations and are often forced to fit into cultures which ultimately offer significant educational, personal and financial opportunity. In addition they must frequently perform at a higher level to gain the same recognition and benefits as their White counterparts; and, therefore the price of entry into these institutions is often higher than for members of the dominant culture.

Currently the Canadian National Household Survey (NHS) reports that 19% of the Canadian population is made up of “visible and non-visible minorities.” Those of Asian descent comprise approximately 3.4% of the population and those of African descent make up approximately 2.9% [2]. In the United States the total minority population is reported as 23% with African-Americans accounting for 13.2% of the entire population [3]. These figures are juxtaposed against ethnographic data in the National Hockey League in which there are approximately 690 active players, 20 of whom claim at least in part African heritage[4]. While the ethnic make-up of youth hockey in North America is not formally recorded it is rare to see players of color in contests at any level. Given the obvious values of team participation, discipline, work ethic, and physical fitness there are potentially ramifications of larger value. Educational financial assistance is available to proficient athletes who may then be able to attend college preparatory schools and universities. As of 2014, 160 colleges sponsored varsity level ice hockey teams with average yearly assistance of more than \$16,000.00 per player (both male and female)[5]. Scholarship money is typically available at Division I and Division II schools for hockey with males in high school hockey having a 5.0% chance of obtaining this support and females having an almost 2-fold chance at 9.9%. This is compared to the “major” sports (football, basketball, and baseball) where there is an accepted ethnic greater diversity and also a smaller chance of obtaining an athletic scholarship (4.0%, 1.9% and 4.2% respectively) [6]. Limiting access to a few at the essential, entry level (ages 4 – 6) can in all but a few instances preclude the development of the critical skills requisite to learning during the age (6-10) of optimal trainability, i.e., that period when an athlete playing hockey develops the skills essential to performing at a high level (NCAA Division I or NHL) [7].

The experience of athletes of non-Caucasian descent in the ranks of hockey at all levels is not new but it is unique in that it provides one repeated sampling of the societal intervention that may be used as a marker of progress being made, if any on a racial front. The reactions of those who are encountering these athletes; those who care for these athletes and the athletes themselves can be examined and compared on several levels. First with the temporal relationship over a relatively brief period of time, 4-5 years or the time that an athlete takes to move through the levels of youth hockey when he or she is most directly under the care and guidance of a parent or guardian. Second, we can compare experiences across several geographic regions where youth hockey is played given the now ubiquitous nature of the sport played coast to coast and also with many programs in the U.S. South and Southwest states. Third, comparisons may be made generationally as an analysis of responses from past decades can be compared to those now experienced by the current respondents.

The effects of this discrimination upon the psychological, spiritual, and physical health of the athletes and their guardians may also be harmful. Despite the reduction in outright discrimination in the past several decades, more subtle and chronic forms of discrimination are still very real for certain groups in our society [8-10]. According to Williams (2009), perceived discrimination has been linked to specific types of physical health problems such as hypertension, self-reported poor health, and breast cancer, as well as potential risk factors for disease, such as obesity, high blood pressure, and substance use [9]. In this regard a paradoxical relationship may be established wherein a youth activity which would otherwise be in strong accord with a current national movement to promote childhood health [11] is now a potential cause of the self-same maladies it is supposed to help prevent. While this study does not aim directly to determine the health effects upon guardians, findings here, either positive or negative, it help may guide further analysis from this perspective. This work attempts to uncover and record themes that exist which may motivate this group to or deter them from participating in this activity. It also seeks to enhance the discourse regarding minority participation in North American culture. Finally it attempts to identify areas where emphasis and energy can be placed to effect significant, positive change.

## Methods

Two predominant methodological theories were used in this work phenomenology or what the respondents in the work have observed and experienced; and symbolic interactionism [12] since family/social interactions invariably affect the world view of the respondents. Our intent was to delve into how this has affected their relationship with their children, their friends and families; as well as their relationship with those supervising their charges’ participation in these activities. Further, we sought to discern how these guardians may have extrapolated the overall experience in youth athletics to their own, professional lives.

We used a preliminary questionnaire distributed 3 weeks prior to the gathering of the focus group. The questionnaire addressed certain items directly (demographics, duration of youth’s participation, etc.); and incorporated one free listing exercise. The latter served to drive certain components of the discussion at the focus group. The focus group approach allowed us to take advantage of the relative homogeneity of the group and to generate a group effect [13] which encouraged meaningful interaction among respondents and enriched the discussion.

The focus group consisted of a total of 6 parents. All of the parents had children who participated in youth hockey programs in the Rochester area. All of these parents were African-American. Their comments were recorded and transcribed.

Payment for participation in this focus group was necessary to recruit those who were hard to find because of their busy schedules [14]. The incentive in our study was a catered dinner served with beverages of the participants’ choice. An informed consent document was distributed with questionnaire which explained the purpose of the work as well as the potential risks of participating in the focus group.

We described the outcomes as themes. We chose the theme of quality of the experience (positive or negative) of the parents or guardians of the children of color, and left a number of our interview questions “open” in an attempt to allow the emer-

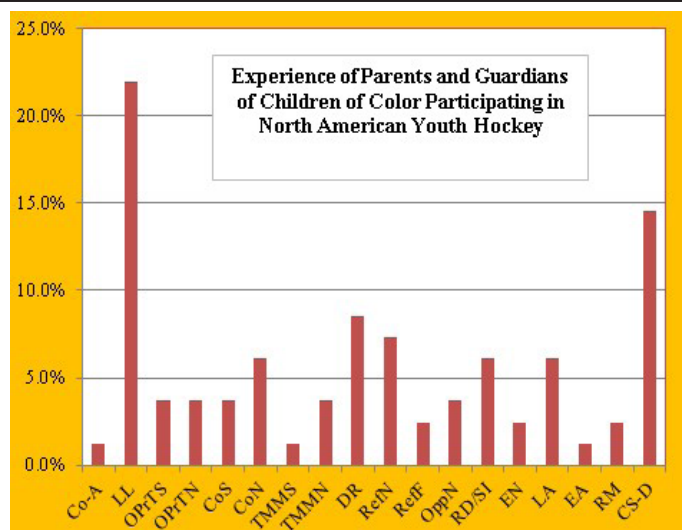
gence of secondary, spontaneous themes as a result of group effect [15,16].

The predominant themes became: racism; life experience events; sociological imagination; and supportive behavior. Within these themes certain categories occurred with a higher frequency.

We used off-line coding or analysis-by- hand. We recorded the comments of the focus group using the RecNow® (Chieko Ichikawa, Version 3.1, 2014) I-Phone® application, and transcribed them in their entirety. This provided a verbatim account of the discussion.

**Results**

The respondents discussed the way the “world” viewed them and their children, i.e., the seemingly reflex response to their children which occurred in a setting where the “other” had little or no prior knowledge of their athlete, i.e., no more than a different color jersey and skin. In this light the new, predominant themes became: racism; life experience events; sociological imagination; and supportive behavior. Within these themes certain categories occurred with a higher frequency. The categories that were most germane to the focus group interview are found below (Table 1). We then noticed that likely due to a pronounced group effect [15,16] these categories were iterated in the discussion as more and more anecdotes emerged directed by the shared experiences of the respondents. The relative frequencies are depicted in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Relative Thematic Frequencies

Most notable was the occurrence of verbal abuse in the form of derogatory racial remarks that were either heard by both the guardian and the child; or the evidence that such a remark had been made to the child by the nature and intensity of the child’s response to the perceived offender. We also noted an age-related frequency of the derogatory remarks reported. It appeared that racially charged verbal abuse was more likely to be encountered as the child progressed into Junior Hockey (age 16-20) (Figure 2) [17].

**Table 1:** Focus Group Thematic Categories

1. CoA- Coach Authority
2. LL- Lesson Learned
3. OPRTS- Other Parent Team Supportive
4. OPRTN- Other Parent Team Negative)
5. CoS- Coach Supportive
6. CoN- Coach Negative
7. TMMs- Teanunate Supportive
8. TMMN- Teammate Negative
9. DR- Derogatory Remark
10. RetN -Referee Negative
11. RetF- Referee Fair
12. OppN- Opponent Negative
13. EN- Economic Neglect
14. LA- Limited Access
15. EA- Enhanced Access
16. RM- Role Model
17. CS-D- Child Self-Defense

**Table 2:** Respondents Relative Focus Group Participation

Category		Respondents	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Totals
Coach Authority	Co-A		1						1
Life Lesson	LL		4	4	5			4	17
OtherParent Team (Supportive)	OPrTs		2		1				3
Other Parent Team (Negative)	OPrTN		1	1					2
Coach Supportive	Cos		2	1					3
Coach Negative	CoN			1	2				3
Teammate Supportive	TMMs		1						1
Teammate Negative	TMMN		2						2
Derogatory Remark	DR		3		4			2	9
Referee Negative	RefN		3		4				7
Referee Fair	Refp		1		1				2
Opponent Negative Racial	OppN				2				2
Discrimination/ Social Isolation									
Economic Neglect	EN		1		2				3
Limited Access	LA		4		2				6
Enhancing Access	EA		1	1	1				3
Positive Hockey	RM			1	1				2
Role Models of Colour									
Child Self-Defense	CS-D		5		5			2	12
Totals			32	10	33	0	0	8	83
Percentage of Responses			38.60/o	12.00/o	39.80/o	0.00/o	0.00/o	9.60/o	100.00/o

## Discussion

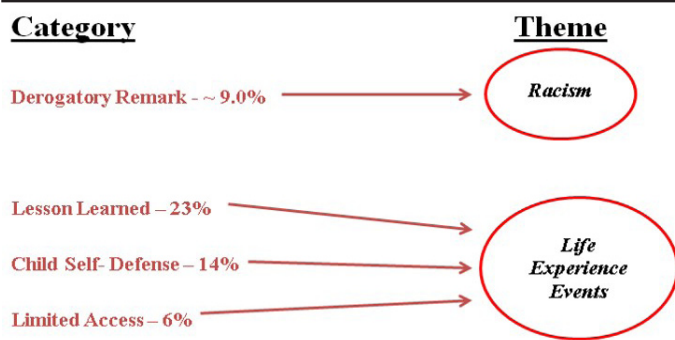
The categories that occurred with the highest frequency were life lesson; child self-defense; derogatory remark, and limited access in decreasing order (Figure 3). The resulting predominant themes then become racism and life experience events. The components of racism, derogatory remarks and limited access, accounted for 15% of all responses. The components of life experience events, lesson learned and child self-defense, accounted for 37% of the responses. Interestingly the predicted outcomes which anticipated the themes of surroundings and pre-existing influences; team-specific issues; all-guardian environment; and on-ice environment accounted were remarkably absent from the considerations of emphasized concerns.

The theme of preparation for life experience can probably be re-described as social imagination or the linkage of personal experiences with societal history. This is well-described by Co-

per (2012) as described in his review of the experience of Black athletes at predominantly white institutions[18]. Here the racial events that involve the youth of color iterate the experience of the ethnic group as a whole. The common themes in this framework include: racial discrimination and social isolation; academic neglect; economic deprivation; limited leadership opportunities[18].

Regarding the interpretation of the themes there was at first a sense of resignation that may be somewhat common in the attitudes of minorities placed in the setting of the dominant culture, e.g., as respondent R<sub>1</sub> remarked,

*“Umm, but you know that’s what we would tell him then: this is part of life. This is something you’re learning in your experience now and you’ll experience it later on in life.”*



**Figure 2:** Categorical Organization into Predominant Themes

This quasi-defeatist perspective was then countered by a remarkably brisk exchange regarding how the children could empower themselves within the game rules. Junior hockey parents were quick to point out how their perspective had changed during their children's careers. At one point stating that at first they taught "turning the other cheek" quoting the philosophies of Judaism and Christianity, Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr. the guardians then related how they evolved to the philosophies of Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown embracing a rejection of the passive resistance or the "nonviolent protest" and fostering an aggressive retaliation. We must note that this attitude was not, by their own accounts, part of the parents' initial, or baseline consciousness. The attitude evolved following the frustration with the officials', coaches' and referees', inability or unwillingness to curb aggressive verbal assault of a racial nature.

"R1: *The refs don't hear it. There's nothing being done. There's no one protecting you. You have to protect yourself you've gotta get your ice justice so we said Elliott if you get the opportunity to get your ice justice take it so he did that you know if someone called him nigger that kid better not turn his back he laid out a couple of kids really good.*

R5: *and the refs not looking-not hearing"*

Indeed one parent, R3, related an anecdote regarding what she perceived to be "selective hearing."

"R3: *It happens here's a funny story so where were we? I forgot where we were. Elliott's playing, right? He has a kid on his team [whose last name is "White"], the kids are coming down on a break and Elliott goes, he calls for the puck and he goes "Whitey, Whitey, Whitey!" and so after the play's over the referee comes up to him and goes "son you can't use the 'w' word. But the refs can't hear when they call my son the "n" word. I'm sitting there like, "really?" So, yeah, they hear when they want to hear."*

Interestingly a minor category that proved important to possible solutions to this situation was limited access. While this category accounted for 6.1% of all categorical responses produced, it was emphasized as a reason why the current situation existed and it has been alluded to in several discussions [19,20] on the participation of individuals of color in the dominant culture. To a person all respondents agreed that numbers needed to increase in order to remove the novelty of minorities in the sport.

## Conclusion

The group agreed that there needed to be harsher penalties for verbal abuse based on race, ethnicity and religious beliefs.

They asserted that there was an emphasis on anti-bullying initiatives in the schools; zero tolerance of vulgarity at all youth sports events (including youth hockey) with immediate expulsion (and subsequent suspension) of players from a game or adults from the arena as a penalty; a worldwide anti-racism movement that was becoming more and more prominent [21]; and zero tolerance for derogatory remarks with respect to race, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation in each of the major sports at the professional level. It followed, in their opinion, that there should be nothing less than comparable repercussions for similar behavior at the youth levels.

Second, the respondents agreed that the most likely cause for the disparity in treatment of their charges was the fact that these children remained the exception rather than the rule in the sport. This was likely due to limited access to hockey and limited exposure to the sport and was thought to have both cultural and economic bases. Culturally, hockey was not the "default sport" of underprivileged youth in the inner cities in the United States. Frozen ponds and inexpensive equipment were never to be found in the housing projects or barrios of most major metropolitan centers. But for next to nothing a child with little or no means could engage in some replica of football, baseball, soccer, or basketball; acquire a working skill set in any of these disciplines. This imposed less of a financial and time burden on their families than would participation in organized youth hockey. In addition, ease of accessibility to these "default" sports allows for a form of investment for which there is at least some hope of a return on that investment. The yield here would be in the form of academic or even, remotely, professional opportunities. The guardians participating in the focus group believed that, at least in part, an ulterior motive existed on the part of white parents who were so inclined to diminish the competitive pool and to enhance their own child's opportunity. Race, it seemed, was one convenient and obvious way to foster this exclusion.

Ultimately the parents and guardians of these children of color believed that numbers were the critical factors in controlling the discussion. Financial means to make the sport available to youth of color; and obtaining a critical mass of participants of color were the keys to improving the experience of their children. This, they believed, would remove the quick and easy ability to discriminate and prove essential to removing the stress of exclusionary treatment at the youth level in this sports "neighborhood." Large randomized controlled studies would be needed to provide any statistical significance to these trends.

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