

The overall objective of this project is to examine race-specific socio-behavioral pathways linking adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and cognitive functioning in later life. Differential exposure to ACEs contributes to racial disparities in cognitive impairment and dementia. Much less is known about to what extent the cognitive impact of ACEs operates through subsequent risk factors, such as low educational attainment and unhealthy lifestyles, and how such “chain of risks” may vary by race. Using data from a nationally representative sample of older adults in the U.S., this project will estimate the joint and individual impacts of an extensive list of ACEs on cognitive functioning through low educational attainment, smoking, and physical inactivity (PI), which are established risk factors for cognitive impairment that are modifiable through interventions. Specific aims of this project include: 1) determine how different types of ACEs individually and jointly predict cognitive trajectories in later life; 2) test whether low educational attainment, smoking, and PI mediate the adverse effects of ACE on later life cognitive functioning; and 3) determine how race may moderate the above-mentioned pathways linking ACE exposure and cognitive functioning.