BACKGROUND

Ethnic-racial identity (ERI) is a psychological construct that reflects the beliefs and attitudes that an individual has about ethnic-racial group membership. It is informed by one’s heritage and experiences. Public regard is how positively or negatively an individual believes others feel about their ethnic-racial group (Sellers et al., 1998). The Social Identity Theory states that positive feelings regarding one’s group is an important method to feeling positively about oneself (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Guiding Questions and Hypotheses:
- What is the relation between public regard of one’s ERI and the mental health of Black immigrant adolescents and African American adolescents?
  - Higher scores of public regard will be associated with better mental health outcomes (i.e., lower depressive symptoms).
- Is there a difference in this association between those who identify as African American adolescents who are descendants of enslaved Africans and second-generation, US-born adolescents whose parents are immigrants from African countries?
  - Nativity will moderate the association between mental health and public regard. African American adolescents are hypothesized to have lower levels of public regard and higher levels of depressive symptoms than second-generation US-born Black American adolescents.

RESULTS

Figure 1 Mean scores for depressive symptoms for all three waves of data collection. Scored 0 to 3 with high scores meaning higher levels of depression.

Figure 2 Mean scores for public regard for all three waves of data collection. Scored 1 to 5 with high scores meaning higher levels of public regard.

For both African American adolescents and second-generation US-born adolescents whose parents are immigrants from African countries:
- A statistically significant association between public regard and depressive symptoms was found
- There was a negative association: higher levels of public regard predicted lower levels of depressive symptoms
- The association between public regard and depressive symptoms was found to be moderated by nativity.
- African American adolescents were found to have higher levels of public regard and lower levels of depressive symptoms than second-generation US-born Black American adolescents.

Participants:
- Data was collected in three waves 6 months apart in one US Southwestern and one Midwestern high school for grades 9-12
- n = 605 African American adolescents with both parents born in the US
- n = 52 Second-generation US-born adolescents with at least one parent born in an African country

Procedures:
- Self-administered survey taken during class

Measures:
Public Regard – Subscale from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity – Teen (Scoutham, et al. 2008)
- 3 items; Wave 1 α = 0.728, Wave 2 α = 0.755, Wave 3 α = 0.778, “People think that people of my ethnicity are as good as people from other ethnicities.”
Depressive Symptoms – The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977)
- 20 items; Wave 1 α = 0.811, Wave 2 α = 0.839, Wave 3 α = 0.851, “I thought my life had been a failure.”

DISCUSSION

The current study contributes to not only the growing body of adolescent ethnic-racial identity development literature, but also the scarcity of data that details within-group variation of Black youth in the US.

These results provide evidence that there are differences in the association between public regard and mental health among Black adolescents.

Practitioners should take into consideration these differences in order to find the best approach to providing mental healthcare for Black adolescents.

Educators should also take into consideration that some students of the same race or ethnic group may need more additional support than others.

Future research should address the underlying reasons for these differences, as well as if differences exist within other ethnic and racial groups.

IMPLICATIONS

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METHOD

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