

Knowing Your Roots: The Effects of Ethnic Identity on Adolescent Mental Health and Discrimination



adept.

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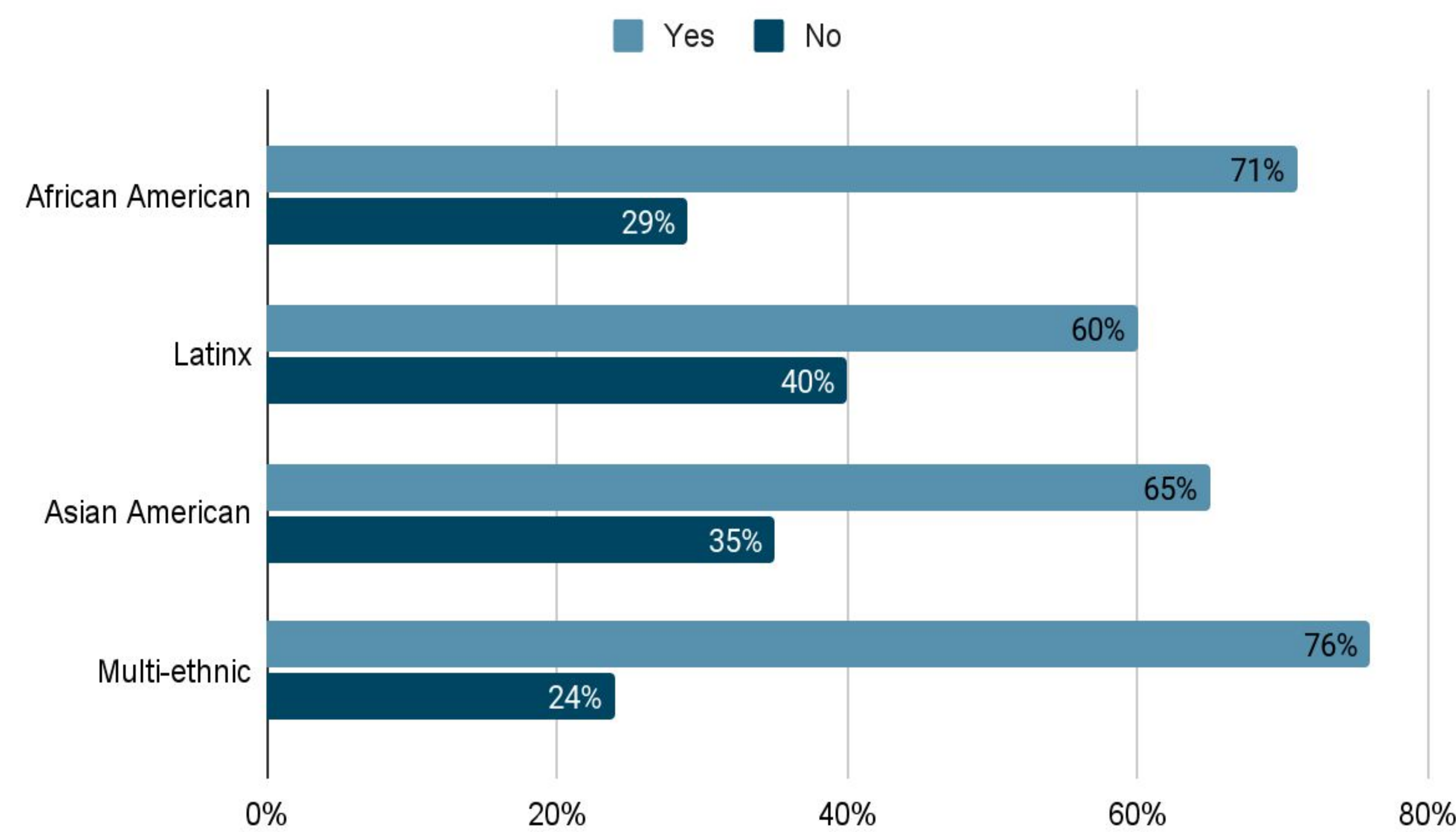
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Introduction

- Discrimination is a common experience for racial/ethnic minority youth [1]. Depending on the regularity and magnitude of discriminatory experiences, how it is perceived by minority youth, and the resources or coping strategies available to them, these experiences can result in mental health challenges during adolescence [1].
- Racial/ethnic minority youth encounter many messages about race [2]. These messages can be conveyed through negative experiences like racial discrimination, or positive experiences like ethnic-racial socialization. These experiences shape youth's understanding of what it means to be a member of a particular racial/ethnic group [2].
- Minority families' ethnic-racial socialization of their children (ERS) can be a protective factor by instilling a strong sense of ethnic identity (a sense of belonging in one's racial/ethnic group).
- As a result, it is possible that these practices may foster better mental health by combatting experiences of racial discrimination.

Rates of Discrimination in the Last 12 Months



Measures

- **Racial/Ethnic Discrimination**
 - 11 items; 1 - 6 scale (1 = Never, 6 = Everyday/almost every day)
 - Ex: You are treated with less courtesy than other people are
- **Ethnic Identity**
 - 17 items; 1 - 4 scale (1 = Does not describe me at all, 4 = Describes me very well)
 - Ex: I am clear about what my ethnicity means to me
- **Anxiety**
 - 8 items; 0 - 3 scale (0 = Not at all, 3 = Nearly every day)
 - Ex: Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge
- **Chronic Pain**
 - 11 items; 1 - 7 scale (1 = Not at all, 7 = Almost all of the time)
 - Ex: How often have you experienced headaches?
- **Suicide Ideation**
 - 4 items; varying response categories (e.g., 1 = Never, 4 = Often)
 - Ex: How often have you thought about killing yourself in the past year?
- **Controls**
 - Gender
 - Income

Research Questions and Hypotheses

- In a sample of ethnic minority youth, we examined the following:
 - Aim 1 was to examine the prevalence of minority youth's experiences with discrimination
 - We hypothesized that most adolescents will have experienced discrimination in the last 12 months
 - Aim 2 was to investigate the associations between discrimination and indices of mental health, including anxiety, chronic pain, and suicide ideation.
 - We hypothesized that discrimination will predict worse mental health
 - Aim 3 was to study whether ethnic identity moderates the association between discrimination and mental health difficulties.
 - We hypothesized a greater sense of **ethnic identity** will moderate the associations between discrimination and mental health problems



Results and Discussion

- **Results**
 - A majority of ethnic-minority teens - between 60% - 75% - had experienced recent and overt racial discrimination. (RQ1)
 - Higher levels of racial discrimination were independently associated with higher levels of anxiety, chronic pain, and suicidal ideation. (RQ2)
 - Ethnic identity was independently associated with less anxiety and less chronic pain.
 - Ethnic identity did not moderate the effect of discrimination on mental health outcomes. (RQ3)
- **Discussion and Implications**
 - A sense of ethnic-identity may promote better mental health for ethnic-minority youth.
 - However, it **may not be enough** to counteract the harmful effects of discrimination by itself.
 - Family-based ethnic socialization efforts are critical for teens, but families will need the support of broader **anti-racism policies and anti-racist community support** to more effectively reduce the harmful effects of discrimination on ethnic-minority youth.

Participants and Procedures

Project ADEPT (**A**dvancing the **D**evelopment of **E**motional Proficiencies among **T**eens) is a national study of resilience in American families. A diverse group of target adolescents (ages 14 - 17) and their parents were recruited through third-party research panels from across the United States, representative of all U.S. geographic regions.

Participants for the present study were 263 ethnic-minority adolescents (Mage = 14.34). They were 51% female and represented diverse racial/ethnic (119 African American, 60 Latinx, 61 Multi-ethnic, and 23 Asian American) and socioeconomic backgrounds (Mother Education: 20% High School or less, 25% Some college, 22% 4-year college degree, 16% Advanced degree).

Table 1.

Hierarchical Linear Regression Predicting Indicators of Mental Health

	Anxiety			Chronic Pain			Suicide Ideation		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Step 1: Background Variables									
Gender	.42	.09	0.28***	0.51	0.14	0.22***	0.31	0.23	0.15*
Family Income	-0.16	0.05	-0.18**	-0.28	0.08	-0.20***	-0.07	0.08	-0.06
Step 2: Everyday Discrimination									
Discrimination	0.08	0.02	0.24***	0.09	0.02	0.25***	0.80	0.02	0.24***
Ethnic Identity	-0.27	0.11	-0.15*	-0.38	0.12	-0.19**	-0.27	0.11	-0.15
Step 3: Interactions									
Everyday Dis. x Ethnic Identity	-0.05	0.04	-0.54	0.01	0.04	0.11	-0.05	0.04	-0.54

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$

References and Acknowledgements

References: [1] Zimmerman, G. M., & Miller-Smith, A. (2022). The impact of anticipated, vicarious, and experienced racial and ethnic discrimination on depression and suicidal behavior among Chicago youth. *Social science research, 101*, 102623. [2] Ruck, M. D., Hughes, D. L., & Niwa, E. Y. (2021). Through the looking glass: Ethnic racial socialization among children and adolescents. *Journal of Social Issues, 77*(4), 943-963.

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