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Let's Talk: A Study of the Impact of Gendered Racial Socialization on African American Adolescent Girls' Mental Health

Lesley Winchester
Virginia Commonwealth University

Keyona Allen

Shawn C. T. Jones, Ph.D

Elan Hope, Ph.D

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INTRODUCTION

- Racial Discrimination is a stressor that has the ability to negatively impact Black youth's psychological health (Gee et. al., 2012).
- Parents of Black youth may engage in racial socialization—messages about race and racism—as one means to safeguard Black youth wellbeing (Neblett et. al., 2008).
- More recently, there has been an interest in *gendered racial socialization*, understanding that, due to their intersecting identities, parents may provide unique messages to girls vs. boys (Tribble et. al., 2019).
- Like broader racial socialization, GRS messages vary in content, with some focusing on pride and empowerment and others espousing more internalized racially oppressive beliefs (Brown et. al., 2017). However, little is known about the impact of GRS on Black youth.
- Framed by García Coll's et al.'s (1996) Integrative Model, our study investigates the way that messages of IGRO and GRPE from parents can impact the mental health (depression, anxiety, and stress) of Black adolescent girls.

HYPOTHESES

- Racial Socialization messages that connote Internalized Gendered Racial Oppression (IGRO) will have a negative impact on symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms in Black girls.
- Gendered Racial Socialization messages of Pride and Empowerment will moderate the negative impact of IGRO on depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms for Black adolescent girls.

METHODS

- The current study is based on data from the Black Families Project (BFP)—a dyadic survey of Black adolescents and their primary caregivers from across the United States.
- Participants included 287 self-identified Black adolescent females, ages 13 to 17 years old ($M = 15.4$ years; $SD = 1.25$).
- The majority of the sample identified as African American (79%). Other ethnic backgrounds represented include African (12%), Caribbean/West Indian (6%), Afro-Latina (2%) and self-described as multiethnic (3%).
- Participants were located across the United States, with representation from 37 states and the District of Columbia. Most participants were from the South (54.4%), while 25.3% were from the Midwest, 13.3% from the Northeast, and 7% from the Western region of the country. Seven percent of adolescents identified as LGBTQ.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	-					
2. IGRO	.017	-				
3. GRPE	-.041	.003	-			
4. Depression	0.015	.188**	-.071	-		
5. Anxiety	-.011	.217**	-.074	.914**	-	
6. Stress	-.010	.165**	-.080	.883**	.892**	-
Mean	15.44	1.92	4.43	1.32	1.28	1.42
SD	1.24	1.06	.86	.64	.59	.65

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

MEASURES

Predictor: GRS: Internalized Gendered Racial Oppression

- 5 items measuring frequency of parent communicated messages adapted from the Gendered Racial Socialization scale (Brown et. al., 2017).
- E.g. *"light skin is more attractive than dark skin"* and *"Black women with natural hairstyles are unattractive"*
- 5-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating higher frequency of received messages

Outcomes: Depression, Anxiety, and Stress

- 21 total items measuring frequency of feelings and symptomology of depression (7 items), anxiety (7 items), and stress (7 items) from the short-form version of the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-21) (Szabo, 2010).
- Depression: e.g. *"I felt that life was meaningless"*
- Anxiety: e.g. *"I felt scared without any good reason"*
- Stress: e.g. *"I found it difficult to relax"*
- 4-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating higher frequency of received messages

Moderator: GRS: Gendered Racial Pride and Empowerment

- 11 items measuring frequency of parent communicated messages adapted from the Gendered Racial Socialization scale (Brown et. al., 2017).
- E.g. *"you should be proud to be a black woman"* and *"Black women are intelligent"*
- 5-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating higher frequency of received messages

RESULTS

- A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to test study hypotheses. All analyses were run using Version 3.3 of the PROCESS Macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017). Both the predictor (IGRO) and hypothesized moderator (GRPE) were grand mean centered.

Depression:

- Main effect models was significant, $R^2 = .04$, $F(2, 284) = 5.97$, $p < .01$. Adding the interaction term was also significant, $\Delta R^2 = .035$, $F(3, 283) = 7.65$, $p < .001$, $b = -.16$, $p = .01$.
- Simple slopes analysis suggested an attenuated relationship between IGRO and depressive symptoms as GRPE socialization increased (see Figure 1).

Anxiety:

- Significant main effects of IGRO and GRPE were again qualified by a significant interaction $R^2 = .10$, $F(3, 283) = 10.46$, $p < .001$, $b = -.16$, $p < .001$.
- Simple slopes indicated that the negative impact of IGRO on anxiety symptoms was attenuated as endorsement of GRPE socialization increased (see Figure 2).

Stress:

- Similar to findings for depression and anxiety, the interaction of IGRO and GRPE was significant. Probing the interaction suggested that the relationship between IGRO and stress was only significant for those reporting GRPE at or below the 44th percentile.

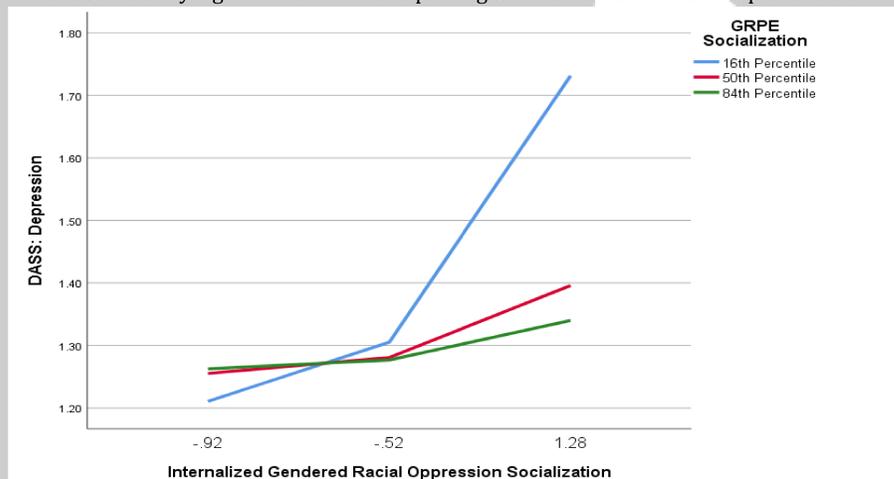


Figure 1. Simple slopes of internalized gendered racial oppression socialization (IGRO) predicting youth depressive symptoms at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentile of gendered racial pride and empowerment (GRPE) socialization (IGRO and GRPE grand mean centered).

RESULTS CONTINUED

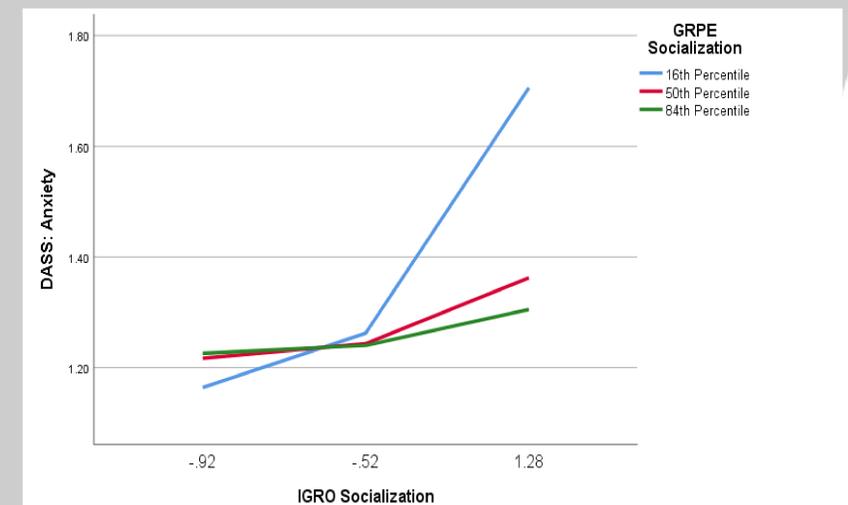


Figure 2. Simple Slopes of internalized gendered racial oppression (IGRO) socialization predicting youth anxiety symptoms at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentile of gendered racial pride and empowerment (GRPE) socialization (IGRO and GRPE grand mean centered).

DISCUSSION

Consistent with our hypotheses, findings suggest that IGRO increases symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress for Black girls with GRPE attenuating these effects.

- Findings support previous literature that purports racial socialization to be a protective mechanism to negative racial messages (e.g., Neblett et. al., 2008).

Limitations and Future Directions:

- The Gendered Racial Socialization Scale measures IGRO socialization not internalization.
- We are only able to see these relationships with teen girls.

Implications:

- These findings can be used to inform clinician's development of programs and interventions to support Black parents racial socialization practices.

Conclusion:

- This study extends researchers' understanding about gendered racial socialization.
- It is important to continue to identify and employ gendered racial socialization practices that foster healthy wellbeing of Black girls in schools, workplaces, and homes.

REFERENCES



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