



HHS Public Access

Author manuscript

J Res Adolesc. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2022 December 22.

Published in final edited form as:

J Res Adolesc. 2022 December ; 32(4): 1298–1311. doi:10.1111/jora.12742.

Centering the Heterogeneity of Black Adolescents' Experiences: Guidance for Within-Group Designs among African Diasporic Communities

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Abstract

Despite notable improvements in theory and methods that center the lived experiences of Black adolescents, White supremacy endures in developmental science. In this article, we focus on one methodological manifestation of White supremacy—sampling decisions that assume Black adolescents are a homogeneous group. We examine overlooked concerns about within-group designs with Black adolescents, such as the erasure of some African diasporic communities in the United States. We first describe the homogeneity assumption and join other scholars in advocating for within-group designs. We next describe challenges with current approaches to within-group designs. We then provide recommendations for antiracist research that makes informed within-group design sampling decisions. We conclude by describing the implications of these strategies for researchers and developmental science.

Keywords

antiracism; Black adolescents; heterogeneity; methods; within-group designs

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INTRODUCTION

Developmental science research has been criticized for norms and practices rooted in White supremacy that significantly limit our understanding of Black adolescents, their families, and communities (Gaylord-Harding, Barbarin, Tolan, & Murray, 2018; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). These issues include excluding Black participants (i.e., members of the African diaspora), comparing Black urban families facing poverty to White middle-class suburban families, and using theoretical frameworks that position differences in Black adolescent development as individual deficits rather than systemic failures (e.g., Baldrige, 2014; Boykin & Allen, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda, Briggs, McClowry, & Snow, 2008). Black scholars have led efforts to reshape research with Black adolescents by calling developmental scientists to move away from deficit framing, and advancing the field via improvements in theory (e.g., Spencer et al., 1997; Stevenson, 1998) and methods (e.g., Hope, Brugh, & Nance, 2019; Neblett et al., 2016) that center the experiences of Black adolescents in social-ecological contexts. Indeed, a growing number of scholars have embraced an assets-based approach to understanding the lived experiences of Black adolescents in context (e.g., Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Butler-Barnes, Chavous, Hurd, & Varner, 2013; Cooper et al., 2015, 2020; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2018; Gaylord-Harden, Burrow, & Cunningham, 2012; Hurd & Sellers, 2013; Smith, Witherspoon, & Osgood, 2017; Smith-Bynum, Anderson, Davis, Franco, & English, 2016; Williams & Deutsch, 2016).

Despite these notable improvements, White supremacy remains embedded in the field of developmental science writ large, at all stages of the research process (e.g., Spears Brown, Mistry, & Yip, 2019; Syed, Santos, Yoo, & Juang, 2018). For the purpose of the current study, we consider White supremacy in the context of developmental science in the United States. White supremacy is a system of racialized power, in which White people's values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are centered as normative and are believed to be and are treated as superior to Black people's values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Bonilla-Silva, 2012). One assumption that flows from White supremacy is that Black people are a homogenous group, an assumption that dehumanizes Black people by failing to recognize their complexity in order to justify their continued oppression. In developmental science, one of the ways in which the assumption of homogeneity manifests is in the decisions researchers make about who comprises the samples of their studies and how researchers collect and analyze their data. These methodological decisions in turn impact the ways that researchers interpret and apply findings. Sampling decisions are both dynamic products of and contributors to the epistemological and ontological positions of research with Black adolescents. By addressing White supremacy in sampling, we can move purposefully toward a more antiracist developmental science that fully supports the well-being and positive development of Black adolescents.

To support our arguments, we first discuss how the homogeneity assumption is rooted in White supremacy. Next, we join other developmentalists (Phinney & Landin, 1998; Williams & Deutsch, 2016) in critiquing some instantiations of race-comparative methodological approaches and advocating for within-group designs (i.e., with only Black people as participants) to combat this homogeneity assumption. We then offer a new perspective, arguing for methodological approaches that honor the heterogeneity of Blackness in

within-group designs to avoid erasure of some African diasporic communities and deficit comparisons between African diasporic groups. Finally, we make methodological recommendations to combat the perpetuation of White supremacy in within-group designs such that they do not replicate the homogeneity assumption. We emphasize the importance of centering the heterogeneity of Black adolescents' experiences in order to advance an antiracist developmental science.

WHITE SUPREMACY, THE ASSUMPTION OF HOMOGENEITY, AND BLACK HETEROGENEITY

Black adolescents are not a homogenous group, as evidenced by the ever-shifting meaning of race and ethnicity¹, rates of immigration, and increases in the multiracial population in the United States. For example, approximately 4 million Black immigrants resided in the United States in 2016, 39% of whom were African immigrants and 49% of whom were Caribbean immigrants (Pew Research Center, 2018). We use "Black" as a racial category, acknowledging that within this category exists a variety of African diasporic ethnic group identifications (e.g., African American, Caribbean, and African) and phenotypic expressions. Ethnicity differentially influences Black youth's experiences, creating heterogeneity in Black youth's geography, language, religious affiliation, and family heritage and traditions. Phenotypic expression (e.g., skin tone, eye color, and hair texture) also diversifies Black adolescents' experiences, as such variation is the basis for how they are perceived by others, how they perceive and define themselves, and the life experiences they must navigate related to both expression and identification (e.g., discrimination and sense of community).

Although demographic evidence indicates heterogeneity among Black adolescents, the White supremacist notion that Black people are a homogeneous group prevails in developmental science (Syed et al., 2018). The assumption of homogeneity erases the complexity and full humanity of Black people, and magnifies differences between Black people and other racial-ethnic groups, typically positioning Black youth as deficit in comparison to an assumed White norm. This limited and erroneous view of Black people's humanity is used to justify their dehumanization (i.e., seeing and treating them as less than human). This dehumanization is used to reinforce White supremacist notions that Black people are lesser than White people, who are seen as complex individuals whose expression of the full range of human experience is celebrated.

Scholars of color have led the charge in developing theories and models that integrate concepts from mainstream ecological theories with constructs and processes salient for racially-ethnically marginalized youth (see Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory; Spencer et al., 1997; see Integrative Model of the Developmental Competencies of Minority Children; García Coll et al., 1996). These cultural-ecological

¹Race is a social category that has come to represent phenotypic differences between groups of people. This categorization of people into "races" is sociopolitical, created by those in power to maintain a social hierarchy for the purpose of assigning differential access and resources to groups (Helms & Cook, 1999; Roberts, 2012). Ethnicity represents a social category in which people within a group share cultural practices and heritages (Markus, 2008). In this study, we refer to primary groups of interest as "racial-ethnic," in order to acknowledge the dynamic heterogeneity of Black adolescent racial and ethnic identification.

models have significantly expanded the scope of research on Black adolescents, specifically focusing on Black adolescents' lived experiences and culturally relevant risk and protective factors. These models have been used to illuminate individual differences in, for example, the impact of Black adolescents' racial discrimination experiences on their academic and emotional well-being (Dotterer & James, 2018; Seaton, Yip, Morgan-Lopez, & Sellers, 2012). In addition, researchers have identified differences in individual and contextual assets including racial identity, neighborhood contexts, family relationships, and socialization that contribute to positive outcomes among Black adolescents (Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & Banerjee, 2018). Despite the advancement of theory to ground our notions of the heterogeneous experiences of Black adolescents, mainstream developmental science has been slow to move away from monolithic representations of Black adolescent development. This is especially true in race-comparative research that relies on between-group designs.

CRITIQUES OF RACE-COMPARATIVE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

White supremacist assumptions of homogeneity have bred mainstream research that idolizes race-comparative between-group designs (i.e., research designs in which two or more racial-ethnic groups are compared) as the preferred way of understanding the experiences of racially-ethnically minoritized youth. As described by McLoyd (1990) and McLoyd and Steinberg (1996), in the history of developmental science, race-comparative between-group studies have been used to unfavorably contrast Black youth and families with their White counterparts through the comparison of scores on measures or the associations between predictor and outcome variables. Race-comparative designs may take forms such as including a White "control group" primarily from middle-class backgrounds in investigations with Black adolescents from low-income backgrounds, comparing but not contextualizing mean differences between Black and other racial-ethnic groups, and including race-ethnicity as a control variable (e.g., Helms, Jernigan, & Mascher, 2005; Knight, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2009). These deficit-oriented approaches reinforce essentialist notions of race-ethnicity (Volpe, Dawson, Rahal, Wiley, & Vesslee, 2019) and ignore historical factors such as slavery, Jim Crow, and current forms of structural racism that negatively affect Black adolescents. These methods also fail to capture the dynamics of race-ethnicity as they exist in adolescents' everyday lives (Williams & Deutsch, 2016). In these ways, race-comparative approaches limit researchers' ability to fully and accurately understand Black adolescent development.

Comparative research that examines if health and development outcomes differ for adolescents of different racial-ethnic groups can play an important role in documenting disparities and mobilizing resources to eliminate such disparities. However, when such differences are conceptualized and reported, it should be clear that race-ethnicity is a stand-in for structural factors which disproportionately disenfranchise minoritized adolescents and disparities should be defined as differences rooted in structural inequities. Once disparities are established, research must move beyond only documenting differences and also measure the variables that race-ethnicity is often used as a proxy for (e.g., socioeconomic disadvantage, experiences of discrimination, flourishing despite adversity, racial socialization, and racial identity; Helms et al., 2005). For this reason, scholars

have advocated for within-group designs to understand Black adolescents' development. Within-group designs allow researchers to understand a group's developmental process and outcomes on their own terms, rather than in comparison to another group (McLoyd & Steinberg, 1996; Phinney & Landin, 1998; Williams & Deutsch, 2016). In addition to identifying salient cultural factors among Black adolescents, within-group research designs can also help extend and test theories about the human experience that are believed to be universal but have been developed with majority White samples (Phinney & Landin, 1998). For example, scholars using within-group designs have studied Black adolescents' racial socialization experiences and identity development (Cheeks, Chavous, & Sellers, 2020; Rogers, Scott, & Way, 2015; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998), sociopolitical development (Hope, Gugwor, Riddick, & Pender, 2019; Lozada, Jagers, Smith, Bañales, & Hope, 2016), and other issues that have been ignored in mainstream psychology, but are important for understanding variations in Black adolescents' development.

CAUTIONS AGAINST INVOKING THE ASSUMPTION OF HOMOGENEITY IN WITHIN-GROUP DESIGNS

Cautions in Sampling Approaches

A key axiology in developmental science is the quest to generalize research results (Magnusson & Marecek, 2017). In much of the developmental literature that uses convenience samples, within-group designs with Black adolescents are often preferred over between-group designs because results from Black adolescent samples are assumed to do a better job of generalizing to the more circumscribed Black adolescent population compared to the adolescent population writ large. But even Black adolescent convenience samples produce biased estimates because they cannot be expected to reproduce or capture the true degree of heterogeneity within Black adolescent populations. Black adolescents in the United States are not a homogeneous population (e.g., Celious & Oyserman, 2011), as evidenced by differences in their racial–ethnic identification (e.g., Banks & Kohn-Woods, 2007; Seaton, 2009), gender identity (e.g., Bruson & Miller, 2006; Chavous et al., 2008; Skinner, Kurtz-Costes, Wood, & Rowley, 2018), social class (e.g., Irving & Hudley, 2008), immigrant status (e.g., Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2008; Smith, Thelamour, & Booth, 2020), skin tone (e.g., Landor & Smith, 2019; Landor et al., 2013), and other sociocultural factors (e.g., age; Del Toro & Wang, 2020). Although many scholars challenge the notion of homogeneity, much research with Black adolescents still exemplifies a homogeneity assumption by presuming that estimates derived from samples of Black adolescents generalize equally to the entire Black adolescent target population. In this way, scholars may inadvertently perpetuate the assumption that there is no meaningful variation within the Black adolescent target population and advance a “one size fits all” approach for Black adolescents.

Cautions when Ignoring Intersectionality

Failure to recognize variation among Black adolescents is also exemplified by a lack of attention to intersectionality in many within-group design studies. A full history of

intersectionality and its developmental science applications is beyond the scope of this paper (see Grzanka, 2014, 2020; McCormick-Huhn, Warner, Settles, & Shields, 2019; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Santos & Toomey, 2018). However, in accordance with Black feminist scholars (e.g., Cole, 2009; Collins, 1990; Combahee River Collective, 1997/2005; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Hooks, 1981; King, 1988; Lorde, 1984), we define intersectionality as the ways in which intersecting societal-level systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and xenophobia) render differential patterns of (in)visibility, protection, access, and resources based on multiple intersecting social identity positions (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status). With respect to within-group designs, intersectionality theory offers a clear prescription for the myriad ways in which Black adolescents are not a homogenous group. However, in many within-group developmental studies, scholars focus on a single social identity position (i.e., “single axis,” Cole, 2009), such as exploring only race–ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, despite the emphasis on examining multiple social identity positions (Ghavami, Katsiaficas, & Rogers, 2016; Santos & Toomey, 2018) in foundational theoretical models (e.g., García Coll et al., 1996; Spencer et al., 1997; Velez & Spencer, 2018).

Even when within-group designs with Black adolescents are utilized, some researchers may seek to investigate intersectionality by examining between-group comparisons in order to understand the experiences of racial–ethnic subgroups of Black adolescents (i.e., on the basis of immigration, religiosity, gender identity, etc.). For example, researchers may try to address intersectionality by studying multiple identities in an additive analytic framework (e.g., Black identity and female gender identity). It is important that such approaches in within-group designs do not internalize the White supremacist ideal that comparative work should establish a hierarchy where one group is positioned (or reinforced) as the standard for normative development. Instead, to acknowledge and investigate variation among Black adolescents, we recommend a critical epistemological approach (i.e., an approach that examines the role of power in the knowledge generation process) that uses comparative designs to uncover differences in access to resources and power among Black populations (Fine, 2012; Hope, Brugh, et al., 2019; Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). In this way, between-group comparative approaches could be used responsibly to reframe developmental “deficits” as failures of larger societal systems and to redistribute wealth and resources to attend to the needs of overlooked and underserved communities (Del Toro & Wang, 2021). In taking an antiracist and critical approach, researchers should seek to understand developmental processes of racial–ethnic subgroups of Black adolescents without positioning those experiences in hierarchical comparison to another Black subgroup.

Caution when Ignoring Nativity and Ethnicity

Beyond the notion that Black adolescents are not a homogeneous group based on intersectional constellations of their social identity positions, some within-group studies still may be inaccurately assuming homogeneity in race–ethnicity. The racial category “Black,” although operationalized as a homogeneous category in a majority of developmental research (Dunham & Olson, 2016), groups together people who may identify as African immigrant, African American, Caribbean Black, West Indian, Afro-Latinx, or Bi-/multiracial (Deutsch, 2016). Indeed, sociology describes this inaccurate representation of Black

communities as “monolithic African American Blackness” (Vickerman, 2016, p. 75), and this inaccurate representation contributes to the erasure of some African diasporic communities in developmental science. For example, a majority of within-group Black-centered adolescent development research labels their samples as “African American.” In some cases, all Black participants may indeed identify as African American. Yet, the description of many of these samples, either in the eligibility criteria for the study or in the reported demographic makeup, reveals that participants may also include Black immigrant, Afro-Latinx, and/or multiracial adolescents. In this case, using the term “African American” in one’s research may not be accurate and could contribute to the erasure of Black non-African American (e.g., African, Afro-Latinx, and Caribbean) adolescents.

Black multiracial, immigrant, and Afro-Latinx adolescents remain understudied and marginalized within the developmental science literature, perhaps in part because the field assumes that within-group studies of Black adolescents are already sufficiently homogeneous. However, these adolescents have both similar and distinct developmental considerations from monoracial, nonimmigrant African American samples (e.g., Nishina & Witkow, 2020; Rong & Brown, 2002; Smith et al., 2020). Medford (2019) describes how current conceptual models erase Black immigrants, who are neither adequately represented in the literature on racialization (dominated by African Americans) nor immigrant assimilation models (dominated by White immigrants). This concern has been voiced in adolescent research as well (e.g., Ferguson, Bornstein, & Pottinger, 2012). Notably, the National Survey of American Life—Adolescents, a national representative sample of African American and Caribbean Black adolescents, has been used to examine heterogeneity among Black adolescents (e.g., Assari & Caldwell, 2018; Butler-Barnes & Iniss-Thompson, 2020; Reid, Hastings, & Caldwell, 2021; Seaton & Carter, 2020). However, a majority of this work has focused on differences between African American and Caribbean Black subsamples (i.e., utilizing interactions, moderation, and mean differences). If the majority of developmental research is focused on those that we presume are African American adolescents, and if we do not take specific efforts to adequately describe and improve representation of other African diasporic groups, the field risks rendering these groups invisible. The erasure of some Black adolescents in developmental science reinforces White supremacy because it denies these populations the dignity of inclusion in our exploration of the human experience, and renders our science incomplete at best and quite possibly inaccurate.

Summary of Cautions

In sum, we suggest that some within-group designs reinforce White supremacy through the dual process of assuming homogeneity of Black adolescents and rendering some Black adolescents invisible in the field of developmental science. Specifically, White supremacy is embedded in within-group designs when researchers assume that they (1) allow them to examine a “homogeneous” group, or (2) are better than traditional convenience sampling approaches that do not have enough Black adolescent participants to examine between-group differences. These assumptions erroneously advance the idea that Black adolescents are monolithic and that a within-group design is only allowable when a race-comparative approach is not available. Guided by these cautions about misrepresenting

Black adolescents' development in within-group designs, we next outline overarching recommendations for methodological sampling decisions that center Black adolescents' heterogeneity.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAMPLING DECISIONS IN WITHIN-GROUP DESIGNS

In the sections below, we provide strategies for within-group sampling decisions that challenge the assumption of Black homogeneity. Many of these strategies may also be important for between-group designs, however, we focus primarily on the context of within-group designs. We focus on quantitative research in this study, given the emphasis on quantitative methods in developmental science (see Mims & Williams, 2020; Seaton & Tyson, 2019, for examples of qualitative and mixed methods approaches using within-group designs).

Preparatory Strategies to Make Informed Sampling Decisions

First, we encourage researchers to acknowledge their own social identities and think critically about the ways that these identities shape their research practices and decisions. In qualitative research, these formal practices are often referred to as positionality and reflexivity (Milner, 2007; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This self-reflective work is meant to raise awareness of the ways in which the studies that one designs is steeped in their assumptions, training, lived experiences, and societal power and privilege (see Hope, Brugh, et al., 2019, for more details on including positionality and reflexivity in quantitative work).

Second, we recommend some form of equitable sustained engagement with Black adolescents and their families, whether scholars collect their own data or use secondary data. For example, this may include the compensated involvement of Black adolescents in one's research program via a community advisory board (Brawner, Abboud, Reason, Wingood, & Jemmott, 2019), engagement in participatory research (Smith & Hope, 2020), or partnering with adolescent-led or adolescent-serving community-based organizations (Loyd & Williams, 2017). These approaches diverge from traditional research methods in which the researcher engages with the community only at the point of recruitment and enrollment in the study (Ross, Lepper, & Ward, 2010), after sampling decisions have been made. The ultimate goal of equitable engagement with Black adolescents and their families is to ensure that the heterogeneity of their lived experiences is accurately represented in developmental research.

Third, we recommend concentrated engagement with the work of scholars who take antiracist approaches to understand Black adolescent development. As described previously, critical gains in Black-centered antiracist theory and methods have been made. Approaching any investigation with Black adolescents from that body of literature will help developmental scientists avoid deficit-oriented and White supremacist perspectives. Moreover, familiarization with critical scholarship at the intersections of Black racial-ethnic and other social identity positions will help researchers operate from a perspective of Black heterogeneity. In consulting with Black adolescents and these bodies of literature, consider

the following questions: Whose experiences have been rendered invisible among this heterogeneous group of Black adolescents? How might oppression and privilege manifest for specific subgroups of Black adolescents? Answers to these questions can shape research approaches and sampling plans.

Who and What to Sample in Within-Group Studies with Black Adolescents

Both sampling and measurement decisions in within-group designs with Black adolescents are important because they govern the prevalence, representation, and perception of Black homogeneity in the literature. Therefore, we provide sampling and measurement recommendations for researchers to consider the characteristics of their desired sample *a priori*, design studies to collect more detailed demographic characteristics of their sample, and report these characteristics (for examples, see Del Toro, Hughes, & Way, 2020; Hughes, Del Toro, Harding, Way, & Rarick, 2016). Sampling and measurement considerations are often intertwined. Community members themselves may also guide the types of measures used in the investigation or identify important aspects of Black adolescents' experiences that should be measured (i.e., action research and community-based participatory research).

Sampling.—Deciding who to sample in a within-group study with Black adolescents should be driven by the topic of investigation, theory, and the subsequent research questions and hypotheses. We recommend that decisions about the characteristics of one's desired sample be made *a priori* based on Black-centered theory and guided by research questions that do not take a deficit-based approach. We recommend considering what social identities one desires to include in advance and ensuring that appropriate strategies are in place to successfully collect data from these subpopulations. Such strategies could include use of quotas or stratified sampling procedures (see Jager, Putnick, & Bornstein, 2017). We also recommend that any subgroup comparisons in within-group studies are planned before data collection and supported with hypotheses grounded in Black-centered theory and literature. Many of these recommendations assume convenience sampling, but probability sampling could also be an important methodological tool in within-group studies with Black adolescents. However, the use of probability sampling rests on accurate population statistics upon which to base known *a priori* probabilities of selection. The extent to which social identity groupings and labels such as race-ethnicity and gender may change across context and over time may pose challenges for accurate population numbers. Therefore, the use of probability sampling is most appropriate when researchers can be assured that they have relatively reliable population estimates, which may be challenging for smaller subpopulations of Black adolescents. Taken together, these sampling strategies can help ensure representation of Black adolescents in the literature and that any groups currently rendered invisible are not excluded just because it is more challenging to recruit them.

Measurement.—Collecting demographic data is also important for within-group research. It is imperative that researchers report the race-ethnicity of their participants. Although this may seem clear, DeJesus, Callanan, Solis, and Gelman (2019) found that 73% of articles published in a set of top-tier psychology journals in 2015 and 2016 did not report the race of participants. Furthermore, as highlighted above, adolescents who identify as Black racially may vary in terms of ethnic identification (e.g., Latinx, African, and African American).

Beyond race–ethnicity, developmental scientists usually report gender, geographic location, and socioeconomic backgrounds of their participants. However, Black youth may identify as immigrant, LGBTQ, religious, or may be differently abled. These identities, which may be concealable, are underresearched in developmental psychology but may differentially shape adolescents’ experiences and influence research findings (Del Toro & Yoshikawa, 2016).

We recommend that researchers include questions about participants’ identifications (e.g., race–ethnicity, gender, immigrant status, ability status, social class, sexual orientation, and religion) in their studies and report them in their research products, even if these social identity positions are not a central focus (Ghavami et al., 2016). We highlight the potential importance of some of these identifications as examples of their utility. Studies should include items on race–ethnicity that have a range of options and open-ended responses to capture the array of ethnic and national identities that may apply to Black adolescents. Because these racial–ethnic identity labels could shift over time and contexts as adolescents undergo racial–ethnic identity development (Seaton et al., 2012), researchers should collect information on identifications at each wave of data collection in longitudinal studies. Researchers should also collect information on the birthplace of adolescents and their caregivers, including biological parents and current caregivers. This information can be used to identify immigrant generation status, which has implications for developmental outcomes (Clark, Glick, & Bures, 2009; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Portes & Zhou, 1993). In addition, collecting these data can capture a variety of family structures that reveal further heterogeneity within samples. Religion and spirituality should also be collected to prevent erasure (Taylor & Chatters, 2010). For example, the experiences of Black Muslim youth are often overlooked despite the additional policing and discrimination that Black Muslim communities have experienced post 9/11 and during subsequent political “Muslim Bans” in the United States (e.g., Abdurraqib, 2009; Mauleón, 2018).

Once these demographic characteristics are collected, they should be reported in research products. Reporting this information will serve several important purposes. First, reporting demographic characteristics will concretize the heterogeneity of Black adolescents within published developmental research. Second, reporting demographic characteristics will illuminate the important limits to generalizability of the research findings. Third, reporting demographic characteristics will allow the field of developmental science to better understand who is well represented, who is hypervisible, and who is invisible in research on Black adolescent development. Such transparency will be vital for ascertaining problems with representation in the larger developmental literature. This will allow researchers to contribute to the antiracist narrative that Black adolescents have varied backgrounds, even if researchers themselves are not examining heterogeneity directly in their investigations.

Using Intersectionality Frameworks to Make Informed Sampling Decisions

The decision to conduct a study grounded in an intersectionality framework depends upon one’s theoretical perspective, research questions, and the preparatory strategies described above. With this caveat, we propose two recommendations regarding the use of intersectionality frameworks to center heterogeneity in Black adolescent development.

Cole (2009) describes the importance of determining both who is included within social identity categories and the role of inequality in their experiences when conducting intersectionality research. In line with this approach, we assert that research with Black adolescents requires clear conceptualization that Black people come from various racial–ethnic groups and are heterogeneous at the intersection of social identities that afford different degrees of power and privilege. Therefore, in studying the intersecting social positions of Black adolescents using a within-group design, care should be taken to determine the intersecting social positions that should be examined. Black youth may have different or similar relations to structural power, inequality, and privilege at the intersections of their social positions, and these relations must be explicitly theorized (Cole, 2009; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016a, 2016b; Syed & Ajayi, 2018). This theorizing paves the way for decisions about who should be included in the sample based on the researcher’s interest in understanding the role of specific types of intersecting inequity in the lives of Black adolescents.

To ensure that intersectionality is used correctly in sampling decisions to represent the heterogeneity of Black adolescents, researchers should consider two important interconnected parts of their sampling strategy. First, researchers must explicitly take an a priori intersectionality approach, immersing themselves in intersectionality theory and literature both within and outside the discipline, and designing their study from that perspective at the outset. Second, researchers must consider the degree to which they will engage in more targeted sampling within Black adolescent populations (e.g., recruiting only Black immigrant adolescents for a study and/or Black immigrants from specific countries of origins). This is especially true as it is not possible to examine the intersection of all marginalized identities in a given study, nor should that be the goal. Such targeted sampling is best positioned to examine “intersectional effects” (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016a), elucidating how the meaning of one social category (e.g., race) is inextricably shaped by the meaning of another category (e.g., sexual orientation and immigrant status). Studies examining “intersectional effects” allow for deeper exploration of the role of interlocking systems of oppression in the lives of Black adolescents. As such, we encourage researchers to be selective about which social identities to include in their research as focusing on too many groups can limit deeper understanding of intersectional effects. It is critical that researchers be guided by theory and their research goals when examining intersectional effects, so that all social identities are conceptualized as central rather than peripheral to shaping the understanding of the specific developmental experiences of interest in the targeted group. In their limitations section, researchers should point out the need to expand this intersectional lens to the experiences of other groups not included in their study. Although it is also possible to sample more broadly (e.g., recruiting both Black immigrant and non-immigrant adolescents for a study), this approach would likely shift the focus of the project to examine differences between intersectional social positions rather than providing rich information about the unique experiences of Black adolescents at the intersections.

PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH CENTERING BLACK ADOLESCENTS' HETEROGENEITY

Practical constraints due to time, personnel, and funding may act as a barrier to implementing our recommendations. In those instances, we recommend that researchers make decisions driven by theory, empirical evidence, and antiracist research goals. More specifically, some new research questions are developed based on prior research that establishes differences across subgroups (e.g., gender and immigrant status), or based on inexplicable failed replications. Such prior research suggests that more depth at the sampling and/or measurement level is needed to disentangle these findings. While brevity of survey instruments to reduce participant response burden may serve one goal, it can lead to inaccurate conclusions that perpetuate White supremacy and oversimplify complexity in Black adolescent experiences. Therefore, researchers should be more intentional about sampling and measurement at the research design phase. Additionally, to overcome these practical constraints, researchers may need to pool resources with other researchers to answer a broader set of questions with more nuanced conceptualizations of Black adolescents (see the ISR NSAL data; Jackson, Caldwell, Antonucci, & Oyserman, 2016).

We also acknowledge that some researchers primarily use secondary datasets to study adolescent development and are therefore limited in making within-group sampling decisions, selecting measures, and taking an intersectional approach. Secondary datasets typically have the benefit of being nationally representative with relatively large sample sizes for within-group research designs. In many cases, these datasets may not have nuanced conceptualizations of race–ethnicity and other social identities. Research that documents previously *understudied* disparities for Black adolescents is important. But even secondary datasets often have multiple indicators of structural or institutional factors. Depending on how such factors are conceptualized, independently or along with other institutional data (e.g., geocoding of neighborhoods with school funding data), using data on these factors can provide more nuanced insight into the role of systems in the development of marginalized youth than investigating between-group differences based on demographic categories alone. Therefore, we advocate for researchers to move beyond documenting well-established disparities to identifying structural factors driving inequities to make antiracist contributions to the literature. Where measures of structural factors and multidimensional conceptualizations of social identities are absent in the secondary dataset, we encourage researchers to discuss the potential role of these factors in their paper and note these conceptual limitations. Finally, researchers who rely primarily on secondary data should consider adopting an advocacy role in order to have more nuanced constructs added to nationally representative datasets.

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO CENTERING BLACK ADOLESCENTS' HETEROGENEITY

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge some of the structural barriers to implementing our recommendations for within-group research that challenges the assumption of Black adolescent homogeneity. First, there is systemic inequity in the

amount of research on race–ethnicity that is published. This inequality is in part due to editorial gatekeepers, with fewer publications on race–ethnicity in journals with majority White editors (Roberts, Bareket-Shavit, Dollins, Goldie, & Mortenson, 2020). Even when publications that highlight race–ethnicity are present in the literature, they tend to be written by White authors with fewer participants of color in their investigations (Roberts et al., 2020). Additionally, evidence indicates that scholars are less likely to employ equitable citation practices, with women of color being particularly less likely to be cited compared to other scholars (Cite Black Women, n.d.; Moradi, Parent, Weis, Ouch, & Broad, 2020). This structural lack of representation of Black scholars and the centering of their work creates a culture of White supremacist research.

Specific to our recommendations above, we urge reviewers and editors to think carefully about data analysis recommendations that prolong or impede the review process for within-group investigations with Black adolescents. To prevent reification of comparative analyses rooted in White supremacy, it is important for reviewers and editors to provide a clear rationale for requesting any post hoc analyses, and such rationale should be grounded in theory from which concrete hypotheses can be drawn. We posit that requesting post hoc analyses that are not theoretically grounded may cater to scholarly interests in differences that are rooted in deficit frames that subsequently reinforce White supremacy. We recommend that editors clarify what post hoc analyses authors are expected to pursue and strongly consider whether those reviewer recommendations are within the scope of the original submission and should preclude moving forward in the review process. For authors, we recommend strategies such as citing papers that highlight the importance of within-group designs as antiracist practice, citing papers that caution against post hoc analyses not grounded in theory, emailing the editor to clarify the extent to which they should pursue such post hoc analyses, and specifying analyses that are confirmatory and those that are exploratory at the outset.

We also recommend that journals require the inclusion of detailed demographic and sociocultural information in published research with Black adolescents. It is not only important for researchers to include this information, but this systemic change is also necessary to produce better antiracist developmental science. Therefore, we call upon journal editors to develop an explicit policy regarding the inclusion of demographic and sociocultural information. This policy should be part of the journal submission guidelines and direct the review process (see *Child Development* journal author guidelines for an example). Yet another important guideline for journal editorship to consider may be to call for more detailed information on how sampling decisions were made. If discussion of such decisions were a standard part of all journal articles, this would increase transparency and improve accountability for thoughtful antiracist sampling decisions, which would further equity in developmental science.

CONCLUSION

Developmental research has traditionally approached the development of Black adolescents from a deficit perspective. One notable way that such an approach has been facilitated has been through an emphasis on race-comparative between-group study designs, which

have been used to position Black adolescents as less than, powerless, in need of saving, and hypervisible or invisible under the disciplinary White gaze. Furthermore, many dominant frameworks in developmental psychology emphasize universality, often desiring generalizability over context dependence, thereby neglecting within-group heterogeneity (Santos & Toomey, 2018). Yet, concerns about reifying inaccurate notions of monolithic Blackness in within-group designs have received less attention in the methodological literature. In response, we proposed strategies for optimal within-group designs to guide a new generation of research on Black adolescent development.

We suggest that researchers be critically aware of their own social positions and how they shape their research, engage with Black adolescents and their families prior to recruitment and study enrollment, and ground their research in antiracist scholarship on Black adolescent development. Moreover, researchers should ensure that decisions about the characteristics of the desired sample are made a priori based on antiracist theory and guided by research questions that do not take a deficit-based approach to understanding the lived experiences of Black adolescents. Collecting and reporting key demographic and sociocultural information of samples of Black adolescents will also combat notions that within-group studies utilize homogenous samples of Black adolescents. We also discuss the need to increase the body of literature on Black adolescent development at the intersection of social positions by using an intersectionality framework. This approach will make visible the experiences of adolescents who have been understudied, simultaneously increasing their representation in the literature while highlighting the heterogeneity among Black adolescents. Finally, we recognize that achieving this goal will require effort from both individual researchers and the field at large. We call for the removal of structural barriers in the publication process that reinforce anti-Blackness and the perpetuation of White supremacy in developmental science. There have been evolutions in thinking about social identity categories in developmental science over time, which suggests that developmental science can undergo a similar change to acknowledge the complexities of the Black adolescent experience. Taken together, these suggested approaches will move us toward a more antiracist developmental science, one that decenters White supremacy and recenters the fullness and complexity of Black adolescent development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful for the generations of Black scholars who have been and continue to be models, leaders, and warriors in the fight for social justice and the fight for the recognition of the full humanity of Black adolescents in developmental science and beyond, despite continued costs to their personal and professional lives. We stand on their shoulders. We are grateful for their mentorship of us and hope that this work honors them, honors our ancestors, and contributes to collective efforts for change.

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