**Introduction**

Mental Health Disparities
- Among adolescents living in the United States (U.S.), Latina/o населения account for approximately 35% of the total population (Pascal & Cohn 2008).
- Latina/o youth report higher levels of feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors when compared to youth from White, African American and non-Latina/o ethnic backgrounds (CDC YRBS, 2013).
- Psychosocial and cultural factors associated with being an ethnic minority may increase or decrease vulnerability to developing mental health problems (Gonzalez et al., 2012).

**Ethnic Identity & Mental Health**
- Ethnic identity refers to an individual’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the feelings and attitudes associated with the group membership (Phinney, 1999). This includes three distinct components: exploration, resolution, and affirmation.
- Higher levels of ethnic identity affirmation are associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms among Latina/o youth (Gaylord et al., 2007).
- Higher levels of ethnic identity, measured as a single construct, are related to improvements in well-being and life satisfaction (Romero & Roberts, 2003).

**Ethnic Identity & Self-Esteem**
- Self-esteem is an overall manifestation of an individual’s self-worth, encompassing beliefs about oneself and the emotional response to those beliefs (Rosenberg, 1965).
- Ethnic identity is associated with higher levels of self-esteem among individuals of Mexican descent (Roberts et al., 1997).

**Self-Esteem & Mental Health**
- Self-esteem positively impacts the lifetime course of depression, relationship satisfaction, job satisfaction, and physical health (Orth et al., 2012).
- Adolescents with higher levels of self-esteem experience less depressive symptoms and greater life satisfaction (Crockor & Wolfe, 2001).

**Self-Esteem as a Mediator**
- Given that self-esteem can have a significant impact on adolescent mental health and that ethnic identity formation is central during adolescence, self-esteem may explain the relationships that have been found between ethnic identity components and mental health outcomes.

**Gender as a Moderator**
- Past studies that examine ethnic identity have seldom looked at gender differences. The few studies that explore these relationships yield mixed results (Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Plummer, 1995).

**Purpose of Study**

**Hypothesized Model**

**Methods**

**Participants**
- N: 294 Mexican descent adolescents
- Ages: 14-18 years (M = 15.27 years, SD = 1.00 years)
- Gender: 44.6% boys, 55.4% girls
- Nativity: Majority born in U.S. (97.6%)
- SES: Majority indicated that their family income was “same as most others” in their school (46.9%) and community (53.1%)

**Instruments**
- Ethnic Identity Scale (Ethnic Identity Scale; Umaña-Taylor, et al., 2004)
- Depressive Symptoms (Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale-Revised-10; Eaton et al., 2004)
- Life Satisfaction (Satisfaction with Life Scale; Diener et al., 1985)
- Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

**Procedure**
- Return signed consent forms
- Adolescents gave assent
- Self-report questionnaire
- Collected in school computer lab using Qualtrics
- 45 minutes to complete
- Drawing for ten $25 gift cards to local cinema

**Results**

**Correlations, Means, SDs, & Alphas**

**Direct & Indirect Path Coefficients**

**Discussion**

- Our findings suggest that the three components of ethnic identity may relate to self-esteem in different ways.
- Ethnic identity exploration (i.e., learning of one’s ethnic background) did not significantly relate to self-esteem.
- Ethnic identity affirmation and resolution were significantly related to self-esteem, which in turn was related to higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of depressive symptoms.
- Given the significant mediating effect of self-esteem, Mexican descent youth may benefit from programming that works to increase ethnic identity. Specifically, resolution and affirmation due to the positive association with self-esteem and thus mental health outcomes of life satisfaction and depressive symptoms.
- Findings from this study may help counseling psychologists and public health professionals design and adapt interventions for Mexican descent youth that target the improvement of self-esteem to prevent negative mental health outcomes.
- Future research should investigate what other health outcomes self-esteem mediates for Mexican youth, and how to encourage ethnic development while incorporating self-esteem as a core component of prevention interventions, family-based programs, and other counseling sessions.

**References**


