

Depression in Black and White adolescents: Effects of
family functioning and communication

Carrie R. King, Ph.D.

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Advisor: John P. Garske, Ph.D.

Abstract

The current study focused on 131 Black and White middle school adolescents. Self-report questionnaires assessed depressive feelings, the level of openness and trust adolescents felt in communication with each parent, and the degree to which their families got along, were able to make decisions, and supported one another. Results showed that African Americans and Whites had comparable levels of depressive symptoms. For the entire sample, predicted inverse correlations occurred between depression and family functioning, and depression and communication. The patterns of correlations differed by race. Specifically, regression analyses revealed that White adolescents' depressive symptoms were predicted by family functioning and communication with mothers. For Black adolescents, father communication alone predicted depression. The results confirmed existing literature that shows adolescents of different races experience depression similarly, and that different variables are associated with depressive mood as a function of race. Directions for future research are discussed.