African American Men's Gender Role Conflict: The Significance of Racial Identity

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This study examined the relationships between racial identity attitudes and gender role conflict in a sample of 95 African American men ages 23–80 years old. Participants completed the 1981 Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale by Parham and Helms and the 1986 Gender Role Conflict Scale by O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman. Results indicated that racial identity attitudes were differentially related to patterns of gender role conflict when racial identity is externally defined. However, an internally defined racial identity had no relationship to gender role conflict. Results are discussed in terms of the significance of racial identity for understanding African American men's conflict associated with traditional male gender role standards and expectations.

The current dominant theoretical perspective on men and masculinity is that there are many "masculinities" (Brod, 1987; Connell, 1987; Kimmel & Messner, 1992; Segal, 1990). Based on the model of social construction-ism, it is argued that the meaning of masculinity and associated gender role norms are cultural constructions (Brod, 1987; Kimmel, 1987; Kimmel & Messner, 1989, 1992). The theoretical assumption is that men internalize their conceptions of masculinity from their culture, and socialization en-courages men to attempt to live up to cultural standards of masculinity (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993). Differences in men's gender-related atti-tudes, as well as differences in men's gender-related stress and conflicts, can be attributed to differences in cultural conceptions of masculinity and

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cultural differences in male standards. However, research from the social constructionist perspective has primarily focused on a masculinity that has been widely prevalent in contemporary America. The label used for this particular construction of masculinity is "traditional," and researchers can assess whether endorsing traditional masculinity has the same meaning and correlates among different groups (Pleck et al., 1993). According to Thompson, Pleck, and Ferrera (1992), although the assumption is that some expectations and social forces will be a common denominator in all men's lives, social forces affecting men's experiences will be differentially salient for men of different ages, cohorts, classes, races, sexual orientations, and regions.

Several theorists have attempted to describe masculinity in African American culture, and how the traditional male role norms of American society can cause strain or conflict for African American men. According to Franklin (1987), African American men are subject to a very different set of socializing influences than White men; and they live in a different social reality and have a different masculinity. Majors and Billson (1992) identified traditional West African culture and a history of slavery and oppression as influential in the constructions of masculinity in African American culture. Racism, in particular, has been emphasized as having particular psychological consequences for the masculine identity of African American men (e.g., Cazenave, 1984; Clatterbaugh, 1990; Majors & Billson, 1992; Segal, 1990; Staples, 1978). One hypothesis is that because norms set for White masculinity are also held out as gender ideals for African American men, a double bind is created for some African American men who, due to poverty and racism, are blocked from achieving certain aspects of the mainstream culture's masculine ideal (Clatterbaugh, 1990).

Studies that have examined African American men's perceptions of the masculine ideal have found African American men endorse traditional aspects of the male role (e.g., being a provider, aggressive, competitive, ambitious) as well as more nontraditional aspects (e.g., spirituality, egalitarian family, emotional sensitivity, humanism, communalism) (Cazenave, 1984; Hunter & Davis, 1992, 1994; Wade, 1995). According to Hunter and Davis (1994), these more nontraditional aspects of masculinity may reflect some of the core or mainstream Black cultural constructions of manhood that have helped to sustain African American families and communities over time. For example, Bowman (1990) found that family closeness and religious belief mitigated the effects of provider role strain in a sample of African American husband-fathers. However, because African American men are expected to conform to the gender role expectations of traditional masculinity of the dominant culture as well as meet the often conflicting culturally specific requirements of the African American community (Hunt

& Davis, 1994), they may experience stress or strain associated with con-
flicting gender role expectations.

Franklin (1987) articulated the possible sources of African American
men's gender-related attitudes and conflicts, and the ways men may vary
in their experience of the male role according to one's reference group.
He provided descriptions of three reference groups that African American
men typically live in and interact in, each having definitions of appropriate
male role behavior. The "Black man's peer group" is a kind of misogynist
adaptation some African American men have made to a racist American
society. Norms include sexist attitudes, anti-femininity, aggressive solutions
to disputes, antagonism toward other Black men, and contempt for non-
material culture. The importance of this group decreases with increases in
socioeconomic status. The more influence the peer group has, the less likely
the larger society will play a role in defining male role norms. The "sub-
cultural reference group" is the African American community. Polarization
of gender roles is minimized, and men are expected to assume a gender
role that is not as extremely traditional as the societally sanctioned one.
Franklin asserted that historically the minimization of gender-role polari-
zation was emphasized from a position of African American unity. How-
ever, today this minimization has become a source of conflict between
African American men and women. The "societal reference group" is the
larger social system and is often the catalytic agent for gender role strain,
increasing gender role strain where the seeds of it exist. Embracing or emu-
lating societal definitions of masculinity while falling victim to barriers to
full male traditional gender role assumptions increases gender role strain.

Similar to Franklin's (1987) theory of the Black man's reference
groups, Black racial identity theory incorporates the concept of reference
group orientation within its conceptual model. Racial reference group ori-
entation refers to the extent to which one uses particular racial groups to
guide one's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, which is reflected in such
things as value systems and ideologies (Helms, 1990). Helms (1993) pos-
tulated that racial identity consists of varying ego statuses. These statuses,
in turn, moderate the use of Black and/or White racial groups as a refer-
ence point for viewing and interpreting the world, with each status being
considered a distinct "worldview" (Helms, 1986). As such, racial identity
may be a psychological variable that has utility for understanding differ-
ences in African American men's gender-related attitudes and conflicts.

Helms (1990) proposed that four ego identity statuses contribute to
the development of different racial identity attitudes. The first status is
Preencounter when Whites serve as the racial reference group and there
is a rejection of Blacks as a reference group. The second status is Encounter
when the individual is beginning to accept Blacks as a racial reference

group. The third status is Immersion/Emersion; here Blacks serve as the racial reference group, and there is a total rejection of Whites as a reference group. The fourth status is Internalization. Blacks are the primary racial reference group; however, the person is more pluralistic and bicultural in perspective. The general theme is one of racial transcendence whereby personal identity is not externally defined.

Although no study has examined the relationship between racial identity and African American men's conflict associated with traditional male gender roles, O'Neil and his colleagues have developed a program of research to empirically assess men's lives in the context of gender role problems (O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995). The construct, gender role conflict, is defined as a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others. The Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS; O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986) assesses one's level of personal conflict or stress aroused by traditional masculinity standards. Patterns of gender role conflict have been found to be related to low self-esteem and lower intimacy (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), anxiety and depression (Good & Mintz, 1990), lower marital or relationship happiness (Campbell & Snow, 1992), and hostility toward women (Chartier, Graff, & Arnold, 1986). However, the majority of gender role conflict studies have used samples of college-age White males. Heppner (1995) noted that "although gender role conflict theory espouses a contextual perspective . . . research in the area has been less likely to follow suit" (p. 22). In the special section of the January 1995 *Journal of Counseling Psychology* devoted to masculine gender role conflict, it was recommended that future research investigate the validity of the GRCS in noncollege samples and with men of different ethnicities (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Good, Robertson, O'Neil, Fitzgerald, Stevens, DeBord, Bartels, & Braverman, 1995; Heppner, 1995).

Only one study has examined predictors of gender role conflict in which African American men were included in the sample, Stillson, O'Neil, and Owen (1991) examined race and class among other predictors of gender role conflict in a sample of adult men. Their results suggested that there may be two separate constellations for African American men with regard to gender role conflict. First, African American men reported gender role conflict related to success, power, and competition issues, restricting emotions, and balancing work and family relationship needs. However, lower class African American men who considered themselves instrumental and inexpressive in their self-descriptions of gender-related personality traits reported gender role conflict related to success, power, and competition issues, but lack of gender role conflict related to restricting emotions and balancing work and family relationship needs.

Summarizing the literature on gender role strain and conflict in Afri-can American men, it can be argued that there are potentially several sources or types of gender role conflict. First, it has been theorized that African American men are influenced by mainstream society's definitions of masculinity (Cazenave, 1984), and that they experience psychological strain in trying to live up to traditional male role norms (Franklin, 1987). In this regard, African American males are no different from males of other racial ethnic groups in American society who try to conform to traditional masculinity standards. However, gender role conflict may be exacerbated for African American men due to racism and discrimination—obstacles to fulfilling traditional male role expectations. Second, African American men may experience conflict with gender roles due to competing masculini-ties—one culture of masculinity developing from a European tradition, the other from an African tradition and influenced by a history of racial op-pression. However, gender role conflict may be reduced by the adaptational aspects of African American masculinity. Third, African American men's experience of gender role conflict may vary in definition and degree ac-cording to one's reference group orientation, for example, the extent to which an individual uses Whites and/or Blacks as a reference group.

Whereas gender role conflict theory seems to offer a basis for exam-ining African American men's conflict with traditional gender roles, racial identity theory seems to offer a basis for examining differences in gender role conflict among African American men according to racial reference group orientation. Racial identity is a psychological variable that has not been considered in many race-specific studies and has utility for under-standing within group racial variation. Therefore, in line with the previously mentioned recommendations for future research on gender role conflict, the primary purpose of this study was to explore whether a relationship exists between African American men's racial reference group orientation, as rep-resented by the different racial identity attitude statuses, and the experience of gender role conflict, as represented by the Gender Role Conflict Scale.

Based on Franklin's (1987) theory of Black men's reference groups and Helms' (1990) model of Black racial identity, it is expected that patterns of gender role conflict will vary according to racial reference group orientation and racial identity status. Specifically, the more an individual tries to adhere to the traditional gender role norms of Euro-American culture, the more likely he will report experiencing gender role conflict. Additionally, however, the more one's racial identity is externally defined (i.e., the racial reference group orientation dominates the individual's personality at the cost of one's personal identity), the more likely the individual will try to adhere to the traditional gender role norms of the reference group. Therefore, it was ex-pected that when racial identity is externally defined (i.e., Preencounter, En-

counter, and Immersion/Emersion statuses) African American men would re-
port experiencing conflict with traditional male gender role norms, although
the relationship patterns will vary according to one's racial reference group
orientation. However, when racial identity is internally defined and Blacks
are the reference group (i.e., Internalization) there will either be no relation-
ship or a negative relationship to gender role conflict.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 95 African American men from two metropolitan
areas in the eastern United States. Two groups comprised the sample. Fifty-
six percent (n = 53) of the participants were members of a Black frater-
nity—a national organization of college-educated predominantly African
American men of all ages. The fraternity participants were alumni who are
currently actively involved in the fraternal organization post-graduation.
The second group of participants (n = 42) were not from the fraternity
and comprised 44% of the sample.

Fracternity Participants. Ages ranged from 30 to 80 years (M = 48, SD
= 12). Fraternity participants reported the following for their marital status:
married (53%), single (26%), divorced (13%), separated (4%), and wid-
owed (4%). Employment status was as follows: full-time employed (62%),
self-employed (11%), and retired (17%). Individual incomes were reported
for the following ranges: $17,000-$26,999 (8%), $27,000-$41,999 (19%);
$42,000-$64,999 (47%), and $65,000 or above (26%).

Non-Fraternity Participants. Ages ranged from 23 to 68 years (M = 39,
SD = 11). Non-fraternity participants reported the following for their mari-
tal status: married (43%), single (33%), divorced (14%), separated (5%),
and widowed (5%). Employment status was as follows: full-time employed
(57%), self-employed (17%), retired (14%), underemployed (2%), and stu-
dent (2%). Individual incomes were reported for the following ranges: un-
der $17,000 (12%), $17,000-$26,999 (17%), $27,000-$41,999 (33%);
$42,000-$64,999 (24%), and $65,000 or above (10%).

(Percentages are based only on those participants who responded to
the items and therefore may not add up to 100%.)

Measures

Gender Role Conflict Scale. The Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS;
O'Neil et al., 1986) was developed to assess patterns of gender role conflict

in men originating from the fear of femininity. "A pattern of gender role conflict is defined as a set of values, attitudes, or behaviors learned during socialization that causes negative psychological effects on a person or on other people" (Stillson, O'Neil, & Owen, 1991, p. 460). The GRCS is a 37-item self-report instrument in which participants respond to statements by indicating their agreement on a 6-point Likert-type scale. Responses range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6), with a total scale score range from 37-222. Higher scores indicate more gender role conflict and greater fear of femininity.

Factor analysis on the GRCS has consistently yielded four factors (O'Neil et al., 1995): (a) *Success, Power, and Competition* has 13 items. Success refers to "persistent worries about personal achievement, competence, failure, status, upward mobility and wealth, and career success" (p. 22); power refers to "obtaining authority, dominance, influence, or ascendancy over others" (p. 22); and competition refers to "striving against others to gain something or the comparison of self with other to establish one's superiority in a given situation" (p. 22); (b) *Restrictive Emotionality* has 10 items. Restrictive emotionality is defined as "having difficulty and fears about expressing one's feelings and difficulty finding words to express basic emotions" (p. 22); (c) *Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men* has 8 items. Restrictive affectionate behavior between men is defined as "having limited ways to express one's feelings, thoughts, or touch of other men" (p. 23); (d) *Conflict Between Work and Family Relations* has 6 items. Conflict between work and family relations is defined as "experiencing difficulties balancing work and family relations resulting in health problems, overwork, stress, and a lack of leisure and relaxation" (p. 23).

O'Neil and Owen (1994) report the following internal consistency reliabilities based on average reliabilities across 11 studies: Success, Power, and Competition = .86; Restrictive Emotionality = .84; Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men = .84; Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations = .80. The GRCS has demonstrated convergent validity with other masculinity measures and measures of men's conflicts and stress (O'Neil et al., 1995).

Black Racial Identity Attitudes Scale. The short form of the Black Racial Identity Attitudes cale (RIAS-B; Parham & Helms, 1981) was originally developed to operationalize and measure the general themes of four of the five stages of racial identity proposed by Cross (1971). The scale was designed to convert Hall, Cross, and Feedle's (1972) Q-sort items into a transportable paper-and-pencil measure (Helms, 1990). Each stage of racial identity development has implications for a person's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors and whether Blacks and/or Whites will be treated as reference groups (Helms, 1990). Helms (1986) proposed that each stage be consid-

ered a distinct "world view" by which people organize information about themselves, other people, and institutions.

The RIAS-B (short form) is a self-report instrument consisting of 30 items, to which participants indicate their agreement on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Items keyed to a particular subscale are summed to represent the total score for each scale. Higher scores on the subscales indicate higher levels of the relevant attitudes.

The RIAS-B short form has four subscales: (a) The *Preencounter* scale consists of 8 items representing "idealization of the dominant traditional White world view, and consequently, denigration of a Black world view" (Helms, 1990, p. 20). The person abandons Blacks as a reference group while accepting Whites as such (Helms, 1990); (b) The *Encounter* scale consists of 3 items representing "the person's decision to adopt a Black perspective and is characterized by feelings of euphoria as well as confusion with respect to racial identity issues" (Helms, 1990, p. 36); (c) The *Immersion/Emersion* scale consists of 10 items representing a Black reference group orientation that is externally defined (Helms, 1990); (d) The *Internalization* scale consists of 8 items representing a Black reference group orientation that is not externally determined, but is internalized and personally relevant (Helms, 1990).

Helms (1990) reports obtained reliabilities for the short form subscales as follows: Preencounter = .69; Encounter = .50; Immersion/Emersion = .67; and Internalization = .79. The four scales have been found to be differentially related to counselor preference (Parham & Helms, 1981; Pomales et al., 1986), self-esteem (Parham & Helms, 1985a), affective states (Parham & Helms, 1985b), and cultural values (Carter & Helms, 1987). According to theory, these are characteristics that should be related to racial identity. Social class was found not to be related to racial identity attitudes (Carter & Helms, 1988).

Personal Data Questionnaire. This questionnaire asked participants to report information on their age, level of income, employment status, and marital status.

Procedures

All data were collected by the researcher, who was an African American male and member of the fraternity. In order to recruit a sizeable sample of adult African American men for participation in the study, it was necessary to go beyond the usual sampling procedures and use two convenience samples. The first sample was recruited by mailing a cover letter, the measures in a fixed order (Personal Data Questionnaire, RIAS-B, GRCS),

and a stamped return envelope to men from three chapters of a Black Fraternity. (Names and addresses for the recruitment of participants were provided by the Fraternity's alumni directory.) Using this method, 172 questionnaires were mailed and 53 responded—a response rate of 31%. The nature of a fraternal organization (i.e., the norm of helping other members who request such help) led the researcher to expect a high return rate and therefore to plan for only one mailing. Because of the low return rate another procedure for recruiting participants was implemented. The second method involved giving questionnaires and return envelopes with a different cover letter to African American men and women with whom the researcher was acquainted. Using this method, 76 questionnaires were distributed and 42 responded—a response rate of 55%. Using both methods, 248 questionnaires were distributed with a response rate of 38%. Though the response rate for this study was less than desirable, it falls within the range of response rates reported for counseling research using survey procedures (43.5% of 34 studies had response rates below 50%; Weathers, Furlong, & Solorzano, 1993).

Because of a total return rate of 38%, consideration was given to the question of whether participants who self-selected to participate in the study versus those who did not would influence the relationships between the variables in question. Theoretically, the decision to complete the questionnaires should not be related to how racial identity attitudes correlate with gender role conflict. However, the homogeneity of the sample may produce a restricted range of responding which may attenuate the magnitude of the relations.

RESULTS

Scale Means and Standard Deviations

Scale means and standard deviations for the GRCS and RIAS-B are shown in Table I. Gender role conflict subscale means and standard deviations were similar to those reported for the sample of adult men in the Stillson et al. (1991) study, in which African American men were included in the sample. The overall Gender Role Conflict Scale mean score indicates that participants on average "probably disagree" that gender role conflict is currently a part of their experience ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .34$). Racial identity attitude subscale means indicate that participants' strongest endorsements were for the Internalization attitude ($M = 4.08$, $SD = .40$), whereas the Preencounter attitude was the least strongly held attitude ($M = 1.78$, $SD = .49$). This result is consistent with virtually all studies using the RIAS-B

Table I. Scale Means and Standard Deviations[a]

Measure	Mean	SD
Gender Role Conflict Scale	3.28	.34
Success, Power, Competition	3.61	.88
Restrictive Emotionality	2.92	.93
Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men	3.18	1.00
Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations	3.39	1.09
Racial Identity Attitude Scale		
Preencounter	1.78	.49
Encounter	2.95	.65
Immersion/Emersion	2.82	.52
Internalization	4.08	.40

[a]$N = 95$.

where means were reported (e.g., Austin, Carter, & Vaux, 1990; Carter & Helms, 1988; Helms & Carter, 1991; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Sandoval, Gutkin, & Naumann, 1994).

One-way analyses of variance were conducted to determine if there were gender role conflict and racial identity attitude differences between the fraternity and non-fraternity participants. These analyses found no significant mean differences on the GRCS and RIAS-B.

Correlations Between Demographic and Psychometric Variables

Correlations among all demographic and psychometric variables are presented in Table II. Age significantly positively correlated with income, marital status (married vs not married), and fraternity membership; and negatively with employment status (full-time or self employment vs retired, student, or underemployed), Encounter and Immersion/Emersion attitudes, and Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations ($p < .05$). These correlations suggest that the older the participant, the more likely it was that he was from the fraternity subsample, retired, and/or married; had a high income; did not endorse Encounter and Immersion/Emersion attitudes; and/or reported a lack of conflict in balancing work and family needs. Income significantly positively correlated with fraternity membership ($p < .001$), which suggests that the fraternity subsample reported higher incomes. Marital status significantly negatively correlated with Preencounter attitudes and positively correlated with Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men ($p < .05$), suggesting that married men were less likely to endorse Preencounter attitudes and more likely to report gender role conflict related to expressing affection to other men. Employment status also significantly negatively correlated with Preencounter attitudes ($p < .05$),

Table II. Correlation Matrix of Demographic and Psychometric Data[a]

Variable	AGE	MS	ES	INC	FRAT	SPC	RE	RAB	CBWF	PRE	ENC	IM	INT
Demographic													
MS	.22[b]												
ES	-.42[c]	-.09											
INC	.26[b]	.16	.18										
FRAT	.35[c]	.10	-.00	.41[c]									
Gender role conflict													
SPC	-.14	-.11	.01	.09	.07								
RE	-.05	.06	.00	.04	.11	.39[c]							
RAB	.16	.26[b]	-.02	.07	.16	.38[c]	.56[c]						
CBWF	-.25[b]	-.11	.19	.04	-.05	.47[c]	.32[c]	.07					
Racial identity													
PRE	.18	-.21[b]	-.21[b]	-.13	-.16	.20	.23[b]	.20	.22[b]				
ENC	-.34[c]	-.11	.18	-.19	-.08	.36[c]	.34[c]	.21[b]	.34[c]	.17			
IM	-.30	.04	.06	-.10	.09	.34[c]	.28[b]	.19	.16	-.00	.72[c]		
INT	-.18	.19	.20	.03	.07	-.01	-.09	-.00	-.04	-.45[c]	.22[b]	.27[b]	

[a]MS = marital status; ES = employment status; INC = income; FRAT = fraternity member; SPC = Success, Power, Competition; RE = Restrictive Emotionality; RAB = Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men; CBWF = Conflict Between Work and Family Relations; PRE = Preencounter; ENC = Encounter; IM = Immersion/Emersion; INT = Internalization.
[b]$p < .05$.
[c]$p < .005$.

suggesting that full-time and self-employed men were less likely to endorse Preencounter attitudes.

Correlations Between Racial Identity Attitudes and Gender Role Conflict

Correlations among the racial identity attitude statuses and gender role conflict patterns are presented in Table II. Significant positive correlations were found between Encounter attitudes and the four gender role conflict scales ($p < .05$). Immersion/Emersion attitudes significantly positively correlated with Success, Power, and Competition and Restrictive Emotionality ($p < .05$). Preencounter attitudes significantly positively correlated with Restrictive Emotionality and Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations ($p < .05$). No significant correlations were found between Internalization attitudes and the four gender role conflict scales.

The significant correlations suggest that men who held Encounter attitudes were more likely to report gender role conflict related to all four patterns. Men who held Preencounter attitudes were more likely to report gender role conflict related to restricting emotions and balancing work and family needs; and men who held Immersion attitudes were also more likely to report gender role conflict associated with restricting emotions, but with success, power, and competition issues as well. Internalization attitudes had no relationship to gender role conflict.

DISCUSSION

In this research the relationships between gender role conflict and racial identity attitudes were explored. The results provide new information about the four patterns of gender role conflict as they relate to the racial attitudes of African American men. More specifically, three of the racial identity attitude statuses (Preencounter, Encounter, and Immersion/Emersion) significantly positively correlated with patterns of gender role conflict, whereas no significant relationship was found between Internalization attitudes and gender role conflict.

Preencounter, Encounter, and Immersion/Emersion attitudes were each positively related to restrictive emotionality. This finding suggests that regardless of one's racial reference group orientation, an externally defined racial identity is associated with discomfort and difficulty with emotional self-disclosure. Immersion/Emersion attitudes, or having a Black reference group orientation while rejecting Whites as such, were associated with gender role conflict related to achieving success, authority or control over oth-

ers, and struggling against others for personal gain. Immersion/Emersion status is characterized by anger at Whites for their role in racial oppression (Helms, 1990). Therefore, it may be that the awareness of institutional barriers to achieving the masculine ideal of career and financial success increases stress and strain in the lives of African American men (Clatterburgh, 1990) with regard to issues of success, power, and competition. The relationship between Preencounter attitudes and Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations suggests that for African American men who have a White reference group orientation and reject Blacks as such, there may be difficulty with balancing work, family, leisure, and health needs.

Encounter attitudes represent an "identity-less" status with regard to racial identity (Helms, 1990). The individual is struggling with giving up Whites as a reference group and accepting Blacks as such. Consequentially, it may be that one is also struggling with self-definitions of masculinity, in terms of identification with White versus Black male role norms. This state of confusion or conflict with regard to one's racial identity appears to be associated with all four patterns of gender role conflict, suggesting that conflict with racial identity is associated with conflict with traditional male gender role norms. This result lends some support to Hunter and Davis's (1994) assertion that African American men may experience stress or strain associated with conflicting gender role expectations because they are expected to conform to the gender role expectations of traditional masculinity of the dominant culture as well as meet the often conflicting culturally specific requirements of the African American community.

Although no significant relationships were found between Internalization attitudes and gender role conflict, the general trend of the relationships was as expected. Internalization attitudes represent a Black identity that is internally defined. Blacks are the reference group but there is an openness to the strengths of White culture as well. Therefore, men who hold these attitudes may likewise have an internally defined masculinity and an openness to the strengths of what are stereotypically considered feminine gender role traits. Based on Hefner, Rebecca, and Oleshansky's (1975) cognitive stage model of gender role development, men who strongly hold Internalization attitudes may be men who are more likely to be at the level of gender role development where gender role salience is low and individuals are able to separate their own identity from their conformity to the social and cultural order (Stage III) (Rebecca, Hefner, & Oleshansky, 1976). Men who hold Preencounter, Encounter, and Immersion/Emersion attitudes, which represent an externally defined racial identity, would be men who are more likely to be at the level of Stage II where gender role salience is high, there is a polarized oppositional view of gender roles,

and conformity to the gender role standards for one's gender is high. Such an interpretation would suggest that there may be an underlying psychological construct that links racial identity and gender role identity; and, that the Internalization status and Stage III represent the expression of an internally defined identity with regard to race and gender.

The results of this study support the position of theorists who argue that African American men are influenced by mainstream society's definitions of masculinity, and that they experience psychological strain in trying to live up to traditional male role norms (e.g., Cazenave, 1984; Franklin, 1987). However, the results expand our understanding of the possible underlying psychological dynamics contributing to men's experience of the male role; in particular, with regard to adherence to aspects of traditional masculinity considered to be a source of stress, strain, and conflict. For African American men, the extent to which traditional masculinity may be a source of internal conflict, may be related to one's racial reference group orientation and the extent to which one's racial identity is personally vs. externally defined.

There are several limitations to the study that should be taken into account when drawing conclusions about the results. Reliability was an issue in terms of implementing the procedures. Because there were two different methods for administering the questionnaire, susceptibility to error variance was increased. Another limitation relates to the method of selecting participants for the study. Because participants were only those African American men who chose to return the questionnaire packet, there may be differences in the characteristics of the men who chose to participate and those who chose not to participate. For example, Heppner (1995) noted the difficulty some men have with disclosure, particularly around sensitive topics, which may be a factor in response biases in collecting data from men, especially noncollege men. Nevertheless, because participation was anonymous, it cannot be ascertained what those characteristics might be. As such, this also limits the generalizability of the results.

Another limitation relates to the validity of the constructs in the study. The relatively low reliability estimates of the RIAS-B begs the question of whether the scale items are consistently measuring the construct reliably. However, Helms (1989, 1993) has argued that racial identity constructs presume curvilinearity, whereas classical test construction procedures rely on linear relationships among items. As such, it is not clear what reliability indices mean when they are low. With regard to the gender role conflict construct, based on the literature and previous research, the assumption is made that gender role conflict exists in African American men and is related to psychological functioning. However, because there was no measure of psychological functioning included in this study, this cannot be asserted.

Future research should investigate whether or not, and if so how, racial identity attitudes and gender role conflict relate to psychological functioning in African American men.

Lastly, a limitation that relates to the external validity of the study is the characteristics of the sample. The study was limited in terms of the types of African American men studied: mostly college educated, middle class, fraternity men. This limits the generalizability of the results because the relationships between the variables may differ in African American men with different demographic characteristics. Future research should examine the relationships between gender role conflict and psychological functioning in African American men and among men from different socioeconomic groups, as well as adolescent men, college age men, Black men of different ethnicities, and larger samples of men from different life stages. Such information can provide counselors and therapists with another perspective or framework by which to understand and address the issues and concerns of African American men in counseling or psychotherapy.

As central and critical components of the self-concept in African American men, racial identity and gender role identity are regarded as identity aspects of the Self that affect psychological functioning and mental health. This study provides new information on the relationship between these two aspects of identity, and lends support to the importance of the need for further research in this area. As such, researchers and practitioners will be better able to develop research strategies and counseling interventions that address the issues and concerns that are unique to African American men.

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