Published in final edited form as:

Child Dev. 2018 July ; 89(4): e311–e322. doi:10.1111/cdev.12950.

Black Adolescent Males: Intersections Among Their Gender Role Identity and Racial Identity and Associations With Self-Concept (Global And School)

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Abstract

Intersectional approaches for understanding identity have gained momentum in the social sciences. Black adolescent males are often perceived as threatening, underachieving, and hyper-masculine, which is reinforced through media outlets and psychological research that portray them as a monolith rather than a heterogeneous group with multiple intersecting identities. This cross-sectional study of 70 Black adolescent males between 14 and 18 years old simultaneously explores their race and gender identities together and associations with self-concept (total and school). Results demonstrated that participants reported a combination of feminine and masculine gender roles, rather than hyper-masculine. A canonical correlation analysis found that Black racial identity attitudes and gender roles simultaneously contributed to significant relationships with total and school self-concept. Study limitations and future directions for research and practice are discussed.

Keywords

Social Identity; Racial Identity; Gender Roles; Intersectionality; Self-Concept; School Self-Concept

In the United States adolescents are concerned with identity formation, structuring their sense of self, and exploring educational and occupational possibilities (Erikson, 1968). Social identity theory asserts that social identity and self-concept are intricately connected (McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2007), mutually reinforcing, constituted and reinforced by contexts and interactions that inform how individuals come to know themselves (Spencer, 2007)

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

The author of this paper has no potential conflicts of interest (financial or non-financial) related to the publication of this manuscript. The research involved human participants who were required to obtain consent from a parent(s)/guardian(s) in addition to signing an Assent form, indicating their consent to participate in the study.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in race- and gender-related influences on adolescent adjustment (DuBois, Burk-Braxton, Swenson, Tevendale, & Hardesty, 2002). In particular, the intersection of race and gender accounts for much of the variation in school experience, behavior, and attainment of goals (Jethwani, 2015). Gender and race are broad social identity groups that are often psychologically salient, because they are perceived to be permanent predictors of a person's innate characteristics and behaviors: Knowing that a person is male or female, Black or White, is believed to provide additional information about him or her (Oyserman, Kimmelmeier, Fryberg, Brosh, & Hart-Johnson, 2003; Helms & Cook, 1999). While this is true for everyone, being Black and male in the United States may be particularly challenging in this regard. Black males are connected with a set of stereotypes and assumptions deeply rooted in the history of slavery, reinforced by media portrayals of Black male violence, criminality (Dixon, Azocar, & Casas, 2003; Wong Horn, & Chen, 2013), and government policy—particularly around policing—that perpetuates these stereotypes (Fabricant, 2011; Stoudt, Fine, & Fox, 2011). Black males, for example, are disproportionately affected by “stop and frisk” laws, constructing them as inherently dangerous or suspicious (Stoudt et al., 2011); they are also central in discussions about academic underperformance and the academic achievement gap (Cokely, 2003). Some literature suggests that Black males may respond to these characterizations and stereotypes by engaging in reactive coping strategies (Spencer, 2007) such as hyper masculinity and the “cool pose” (Lazur & Majors, 1995, p. 383), which may be heightened with the emergence of gender role identity in adolescence (Cunningham, Swanson, & Hayes, 2013).

Traditional psychological theory and research often treat race and gender as discrete, homogenous, categories rather than as psychological variables that can differ within group (i.e., race and gender). In contrast, intersectionality theory examines how gender and racial stereotypes as well as expectations intersect to shape identities, developmental outcomes and the meanings that males and females attribute to their experiences (Howard, 2013).

Intersectional Approaches to Theorizing Gender and Race

Increasingly, researchers note the importance of recognizing that multiple identities influence the self and outcomes (Cole, 2009). Intersectionality theory, rooted in Black feminist thought “entails thinking about social reality as multidimensional, lived identities as intertwined, and systems of oppression as meshed and mutually constitutive” (May, 2014, pg. 96). An intersectional framework seeks to mark and map the production and contingency of individuals and their identities rather than render them invisible when convenient or to meet a particular goal (Rosenthal, 2016). By actively marking race, and other dimensions of identity, systems of interlocking oppression can be accurately examined. (Carbado, 2013). For example, although the discourse on gender often operates as a colorblind ideology (Carbado, 2013) it is in fact racialized, with Whiteness considered normative, although it is often unnamed. Similarly, race has been described as gendered with Black males seen as representational for all Black people (Crenshaw, 1989; Carbado, 2013). Consequently, researchers rarely analyze models of Black racial identity development across gender, nor do they make gender-roles comparisons to understand how the experiences of being male or female may interact with the meaning of Black racial identity.

Some researchers argue that intersectional theory has been flattened (e.g., May, 2014; Rosenthal, 2016) by primarily focusing on social identities with less consideration of structural oppression. However, Spencer's PVEST theory (2007) reminds us that human development is formed by interactions and experiences within a social context that has meaning for outcomes, coping, and the nature of identity formation. In fact, Spencer asserts that researchers should expect different outcomes for marginalized as compared to privileged groups. Most American institutions are hierarchical and privilege White patriarchy. In this study, therefore, we are intentional in clarifying that participants are *both* Black and male and we seek to understand how their multiple identities relate to their self-concept.

Gender Schema Theory—Bem's (1974; 1983; 1984) gender schema theory combines aspects of social learning and cognitive theories of sex typing to understand an individual's readiness to use gender as a lens to view the world. Central to Bem's gender-schema theory is a belief that individuals have different thoughts and feelings about gender that influence how they perceive, evaluate and regulate their own and other people's behavior (1974; 1983; 1984). Bem (1981) theorized that gender-typed (masculine males and feminine females) individuals are more likely than nongender-typed individuals to be responsive to gender prescriptions. Accordingly, gender-typed individuals are likely to evaluate themselves in terms of traditional stereotypes that define the gender "appropriateness" of attitudes and behavior (Bem, 1983) – a process informed by learned roles and racial and cultural socialization practices.

Race and Gender Roles—Many researchers have called for additional theorizing and research on Black males' gender roles, recognizing that gender is socially constructed by racial and cultural influences (Cunningham, 1993; Levant, Richmond, Majors, Inclan, Rossello, Heesacker, Rowan, & Sellers, 2003; Littlefield, 2004; Mahalik & Locke, 2001), and because there is a paucity of writing and research about Black boys' gender socialization that limits our understanding of their gender roles (Hill, 2002). In addition, it is important to not generalize findings based on White males to Black males, particularly since integrating racial identity and masculinity is likely to be complicated for Black males in the United States (Mahalik, Pierre, & Wan, 2006) given their disproportionate experiences of, racial profiling, racism, and micro-aggressions (Howard, Rose, & Barbarn, 2013). Indeed, some research has found that Black males and females self-reported gender roles differ from Whites. Some research using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1981) with African Americans has found that adolescents and emerging adults considered some BSRI characteristics defined as feminine and masculine to be equally desirable for both males and females (Author, 2005; Harris, 1996). This pattern is reasonable given the sociocultural traditions of many West African countries from which many enslaved Africans, both men and women were taken from, contributed their labor to the family and broader society (Thompson, 2003). Many of these cultural and social norms were retained within the context of slavery in the US and beyond to ensure the economic survival of the family and community (Collins, 1991; Collins, 2000). This study simultaneously examines Black racial identity development and gender roles to understand how they may work in tandem to influence Black adolescent male's self-concept.

Black Racial Identity Theory—Similar to Bem’s gender-schema theory, Cross’s theory of Black racial identity deconstructs the usual monolithic treatment of race by examining within group differences in racial attitudes, thoughts and beliefs among Black people. It asserts that Black racial identity attitudes are fluid rather than fixed, theorized to evolve as a function of ego development, social context, age, and geographic region (Cross, 1999; Helms, 1991; Helms & Cook, 1999). Accordingly, a Black person can move from having self-degrading to self-enhancing racial identity attitudes, in which they feel positively about their own racial group.

Helms’s (BRIAS; 1990a) measure of Black racial identity attitudes (RIAS-L; Parham & Helms, 1981), used in this study, operationalizes Cross’s theory of nigrescence and includes four subscales or identity statuses that each represent a unique “world view” through which a person is hypothesized to organize racial information about themselves, others, and institutions: Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization (Helms, 1990a). For purposes of this study, we use two Black racial identity attitudes subscales (Pre-encounter and Immersion-Emersion) because the other two subscales (i.e., Encounter and Internalization) had low reliability estimates. A person with a predominance of Pre-Encounter Black racial identity attitudes is characterized as depending on White society for self-definition and approval and exhibits negative attitudes toward his or her own racial group. African American parents can raise their children to have positive racial pride, but this period is usually described as a time of uncritically accepting negative stereotypes and beliefs about African Americans (Phinney, 1989). A person with a predominance of Immersion-Emersion Black racial identity attitudes, the exploration or immersion stage in Cross’s (1991) model, is characterized by a great desire to learn about one’s heritage and connect with members of their group. Individuals tend to focus on the positive stereotypes of their group while downplaying and often reacting to negative stereotypes.

Identity and Self-Concept

According to social identity theory, self-concept, which is an individual’s perception of self, is derived, in part, from his knowledge and feelings about being a member in a social group and the importance ascribed to that membership (Tajfel, 1978). Positively identifying with a social group can strengthen and reaffirm an individuals’ self-concept (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosie, 2003; McKay et al., 2007) if that group is important to the individual and affirmed in some of his life domains (e.g., home or school).

Some developmental theorists assert that establishing a clear gender-role identity is the major developmental task of adolescence (Erikson, 1963; Kohlberg, 1966) that impacts self-concept. Race and racial identity development (Cross, 1991; Parham & Helms, 1981) are also important, particularly for adolescents of color who are often confronted with negative race-related interactions that can lead them to question their race and racial identity (Tatum, 2003).

This study used the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale (PHCCS; Piers-Harris, 1969) and their multidimensional theory of self-concept which asserts that it becomes differentiated with cognitive maturity, and includes both a global set of feelings about the self (i.e., how an individual feels about himself in general) and specific feelings (i.e., how an

individual feels about himself in a specific area of functioning). Although global and specific dimensions of self-concept are theorized to be related, multidimensional measures are recognized as producing a more complete profile of a person's feelings about him or herself than one total score (Piers, 1969). For this study we were interested in understanding Black adolescent males' feelings about themselves in general (total) and in the school context, or if he believes he is a valued member of the school community – his ideas matter (Piers-Harris, 1968).

Gender Roles & Self-Concept (General and School)—A substantial amount of research has demonstrated that a positive self-concept is related to psychological androgyny or identifying with both masculine and feminine characteristics rather than the gender role that is congruent with one's sex, referred to by Bem as sex-typed (Author et al., 2005; Calvo-Salguero, Miguel, Garcia-Martinez, & Monteoliva, 2008; Konrad & Harris, 2002), a relationship that has been demonstrated across racial groups.

Scholars have also written about how the school context and social stereotypes related to social identity impact how adolescents construct their identities (Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Spencer, 1995; Way, Hernandez, Rogers, & Hughes, 2013). In particular, researchers have found that the intersection of race and gender stereotypes are connected to harsh discipline for Black adolescent males and promote a widespread belief that they are deficient in terms of academic achievement (Chu, 2002; Glasser, 2011; Way, 2011), which can dampen self-concept. Others have found that gender stereotypes in school tend to characterize the school context as a stereotypically feminine construct that may not be identity-congruent with some boys (and girls) leading them to disengage (Heyder & Kessels, 2013; Oyserman and Destin, 2010; Way, 2011) and possibly reduce their self-concept in this domain. Alternatively, gender norms and masculine stereotypes in particular may discourage some Black adolescent males from engaging in prosocial behaviors (e.g., talking to teachers, appearing engaged in school) that can lead to academic success and boost their school self-concept. A separate set of research looked at how Black racial identity attitudes influenced adolescent psychological well-being and self-concept.

Black Racial Identity Attitudes & Self-Concept (General & School) and—The empirical research on Black adolescents is somewhat inconsistent depending on the measure used, for example, the Multi Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM, Phinney, 1992) or, Racial Identity Attitudes Scale – Long Form (RIAS-L; Parham & Helms, 1981) (Mandara, Harden, Richards, & Ragsdale, 2009). However, many studies have found a positive Black racial identity in Black adolescents to be associated with positive mental health outcomes (Pierre & Mahalik, 2005) including positive self-esteem and low psychological distress (Yasui, Dorham & Dishion, 2004; McMahon & Watts, 2002).

For school self-concept, some research has found that having low regard for being Black (i.e., pre-encounter and immersion-emersion) were negatively associated with school indicators including academic attitudes and performance (Cokley, 2003; Spencer et al, 2001; Chavous et al., 2003) academic self-efficacy, lower grades and educational aspirations (Cort, 2008), and academic achievement (Woodroffe, 2010); less has focused on possible associations with Black racial identity and school self-concept.

Present Study

The primary aims of this study were to examine Black adolescent males' self-reported gender and racial identities, including whether certain racial identity attitudes and gender roles were positively associated with self-concept. Second, it used an intersectional framework to explore if these identities may be mutually reinforcing in contributing to self-concept.

Method

Participants

Participants were 70 Black adolescent male students from three New York City public high schools ($n = 40$) and two after-school programs ($n = 30$). Participants ages ranged from 14 to 18 ($M = 16$; $SD = 1.20$) and grades ranged from 9th to 12th ($M = 10^{\text{th}}$; $SD = 1.12$). Participants were part of a larger dataset collected in 2000 that included Black adolescent girls.

Procedure

Teachers and administrators recruited students for this study. Participants included students whose parent(s)/guardian(s) had provided consent, and who, themselves, signed an assent form indicating their agreement to participate in the study. The surveys were administered during advisory period at each high school and at the beginning of the day for each after-school program, respectively. Consented students were asked by the author who is biracial/Black to fill out the items independently and direct questions to her. Participants completed a questionnaire packet that included: (1) BSRI - short-form, (2) PHCSCS, (3) RIAS-L, and (4) a demographic questionnaire. Packets were counterbalanced to control for order effects. All students completed the surveys within 30 minutes with no incentives for participation.

Instruments

Bem Sex Role Inventory Short-Form: Bem Sex Role Inventory Short-Form (BSRI; Bem, 1981) is a 30-item self-report questionnaire of gender roles. Respondents indicate how well each of the 30 adjectives describes themselves on a 7-point likert scale that ranges from *never or almost never true* (1) to *always or almost always true* (7). There are 10 each of stereotypically masculine, feminine, and neutral items. Bem (1974) reported internal consistency reliability coefficients as femininity $r = .82$ and masculinity $r = .86$. For the present study internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the subscales were femininity $r = .77$ and masculinity $r = .79$.

Black Racial Identity Attitudes Inventory: Black Racial Identity Attitudes Inventory (RIAS-L; Parham & Helm, 1981) is a 50-item self-report questionnaire with four subscales: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization. Respondents used a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5), to indicate agreement with each item. Internal consistency reliability coefficients (r) ranged from .51 to .80. For this sample, the internal consistency reliability scores were: pre-encounter = .84; encounter $r = .57$; immersion-emersion $r = .74$; internalization $r = .54$. Encounter and

internalization subscales were excluded from the analyses because of the low reliability estimates.

Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale: Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (PHSCS; Piers, 1969) is an 80-item self-report questionnaire that yields a total self-concept score and scores for six dimensions of self-concept. For this study we report on total self-concept and intellectual and school status. Respondents rate disagreement (N) and agreement (Y) on each item. A total score is calculated by adding each item in a positively scored direction. Piers-Harris (1969) reported internal consistency reliability coefficients for 6th and 10th grade students total self-concept scores as .90 and for the six subscales it ranged from .73 to .81. For this study, the internal consistency reliability coefficient for the two scales were: total self-concept, $r = .86$; intellectual and school status, $r = .75$.

Demographic Questionnaire: Demographic Questionnaire was designed for this study and asked participants to report information such as race, sex, ethnicity, grade, and age.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Table I displays the mean, standard deviation, internal consistency reliability (alpha), and range for all study variables. Participants' mean age and grade level was 16 and tenth, respectively. Internal consistency reliability estimates (alpha) for all measures were acceptable within a range of .72 and .86. Table II presents Pearson correlation coefficients computed to examine bivariate associations among study variables. In univariate analyses, each gender role was significantly and positively correlated with one self-concept scale: masculinity was significantly positively associated with school self-concept and femininity was significantly positively associated with global self-concept. One Black racial identity attitude scale (pre-encounter) was significantly negatively correlated with both self-concept scales.

Gender Role Distribution

To explore each participant's self-reported gender role, scores were classified into the four standard categories using a median split method. Similar percentages of Black adolescent males were classified as androgynous (31%) (high masculinity and high femininity) and undifferentiated (32%) (low masculinity and low femininity); fewer, but equal percentages (18%) of adolescent Black males were classified as sex-typed masculine and sex-typed feminine, respectively. For the multivariate canonical correlation analyses only the masculine and feminine subscales were used to conform to standard practice.

Canonical Correlation Analysis with Gender Role, Black Racial Identity Attitudes and Self-Concept (School and Total)

The overall model was significant. A dimension reduction analysis revealed the first of two canonical variates to be significant (variate 1: Wilks Lambda .79, $p < .05$). For the first factor, the canonical correlation was .43 (18% of the variance). To establish which gender role and Black racial identity attitudes subscales contributed most strongly to the overall

relationship with total and school self-concept, the canonical variate loadings were examined. A cutoff of a .30 loading in the structure matrix was used for interpretation, following convention (cf. Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). The gender role and Black racial identity attitude subscales scores that contributed most to the canonical correlation were pre-encounter (−.75), masculine (.60), and feminine (.56). Black racial identity attitudes associated with pre-encounter might be termed “externally defined”, espousing negative feelings about being Black, and this subscale loaded negatively on this dimension. According to the Bem’s gender schema, if a person scores positively on both gender role subscales masculinity and femininity, which loaded positively on this dimension, it suggests that he has a flexible or more androgynous gender role identity.

The two self-concept scores contributed strongly to the relationship between pre-encounter Black racial identity attitudes and feminine and masculine gender roles. Among the self-concept subscales, total self-concept contributed most strongly to the relationship (.97) followed by school self-concept (.83). The loadings on the self-esteem canonical variate might be termed “positive feelings about the self”. The overall relationship demonstrated by this canonical variate suggests that both masculinity and femininity and Black racial identity attitudes (pre-encounter) were associated with Black adolescent males’ feelings of importance in the school context and their overall feelings about themselves. That is, Black adolescent males who report both a flexible gender role that includes masculine and feminine characteristics and who do not express low regard for being Black reported feeling positively about themselves, overall and in the school context. The second canonical variate was not significant (see Table III).

Discussion

Many researchers have called for additional research on Black adolescent males’ gender role identity and psychological well-being (e.g., Wade, 1996, 2013; Levant, Richmond, Majors, Inclan, Rossello, Heesacker, Rowant, & Sellers, 2003). Research on Black adolescent males’ racial identity, is plentiful, but almost none simultaneously explores both their racial and gender role identity as we do in this study, with one exception (e.g., Rogers, Scott, & Way, 2013). This omission is striking because intersectionality has been recognized as important in psychology and other social sciences.

Gender Roles

Some work has suggested that Black males adopt a “hyper-masculine” or “cool pose” (Majors & Billson, 1992) as a reactive strategy to offset the demands of a European American normative masculine ideal that may be difficult to attain (Franklin, 1984; Spencer, 1999). This study did not find support for this strategy among these Black adolescent males. A large percentage and almost equal numbers endorsed an androgynous (high scores on femininity and masculinity) or undifferentiated gender role (low scores on femininity and masculinity); fewer of them endorsed a stereotypical sex-typed feminine or masculine role.

The gender-role distribution is consistent with some research among African Americans’ in which they reported an androgynous, rather than sex-typed masculine or feminine gender role (Author et al., 2005; Konrad & Harris, 2002; Littlefield, 2004; Molloy & Herzberger,

1998). These characteristics contrast sharply with the hyper-masculine or sex-typed masculine gender role that often gets attached to Black males. In reality it is likely that black adolescent males perform a variety of gender identities in response to different contexts and experiences. A study with Black adolescent males found that they adopted a hyper masculine gender role as a reactive coping strategy to negative experiences in community and school contexts (Cunningham, Swanson, & Hayes, 2013) – a finding that suggests it may be defensive, rather than normative.

These findings support an intersectional analysis, which recognizes that race and racial identity influence how individuals make sense of their gender roles (Carbado, 2013, Crenshaw, 1999); they also contribute to questions about whether the BSRI actually measures what was intended for Black participants (Author 2005; Harris, 1994, 1996).

Black Adolescent Males': Total Self-Concept and Association with Gender Role Identity and Black Racial Identity

In this study pre-encounter and immersion-emersion Black racial identity attitudes were simultaneously examined with the masculinity and femininity subscales using a canonical correlation analysis. Pre-encounter Black racial identity attitudes (low regard for being Black) were significantly negatively associated with total self-concept. Black racial identity theory asserts that a person with high pre-encounter racial identity attitudes has internalized a racial narrative that depicts Black people as inferior to Whites, and subsequently has strong negative feelings about himself and others who are Black (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1990). Many studies have found a negative association between pre-encounter Black racial identity attitudes and self-regard in adolescents and adults (Author et al., 2005; Oyserman, Harrison, & Bybee, 2001; Phinney & Kohatsue, 1997; Zaff, Blount, Phillips, & Cohen, 2002).

Similarly, the pattern of results supports Bem's (1974) gender schema theory asserts that psychological androgyny or masculinity and femininity in males and females is associated with psychological well-being (Bem, 1979). Internalizing a flexible gender role is considered to be advantageous because a person can feel equally comfortable performing instrumental and communal roles and functions (Powell & Branchfield, 1989). For this study both the masculinity and femininity subscales were almost equally and significantly positively associated with total self-concept, which suggests that having a combination of both gender roles, sometimes referred to as psychological androgyny, is positively associated with self-concept. This finding is consistent with other research that demonstrated that both traditionally defined masculine and feminine characteristics are associated with positive self-esteem and self-concept (Author et al, 2005; Cunningham et al, 2013; Molloy & Herzberger, 1998).

These findings also add support to questions about the fit of the BSRI with Black people. In other words, it remains unclear if Black people identify with both masculine and feminine characteristics, or if this finding is an artifact of the scale that was normed on a White sample. On the one hand, given the history of West African gender roles, it may be more likely that have flexible gender roless, with less division in gender roles inside and outside of the home (Collins, 1991; Collins, 2000). This hypothesis suggest that the scale may

accurately capture their gender roles. Conversely, perhaps because gender roles have been saturated with White normativity, Black adolescent males react very differently to the scale than Whites. Future research might tease apart these competing hypotheses.

Black Adolescent Males: School Self-Concept and Associations with Gender Role Identity and Black Racial Identity Attitudes

The role of Black racial identity development in academic engagement and achievement has been a source of debate, with some theorizing that a positive Black racial identity decreases academic engagement (Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and others seeing it as promoting the same (Chavous et al., 2003; Cokley, 2003; Phinney, 1990). Still others have complicated this dichotomy by highlighting “individual-context fit” (Spencer, 2007). The adolescent Black males in this study who adopted externally defined White or Eurocentric racial identity attitudes (pre-encounter) reported low school concept scores, suggesting they do not perceive themselves to be capable or important in this context. This finding is consistent with research that has found high pre-encounter racial identity attitudes to be negatively correlated with school indicators such as academic attitudes and performance (Cokley, 2003; Spencer et al., 2001; Chavous et al., 2003; Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin & Cogburn, 2008). It is possible that a Black adolescent male with high pre-encounter racial identity attitudes has internalized mainstream stereotypes suggesting that he lacks intelligence (Aronson, 2002), which may contribute to low engagement in the school context. Stated another way, without protective factors, marginalized youth of color, in this case Black adolescent males, with low levels of racial identity development can fall into social stereotypes associated with poor academic achievement and underperforming in school, a widely held belief for people of color (Steele, 1997; Steele, 2004).

When adding a gender role analysis, both masculinity and femininity and Black racial identity attitudes contributed to significant differences in school self-concept. That is the Black adolescent males in this study who reported having characteristics often associated with masculinity such as independence and confidence and femininity such as nurturing and caring also had positive school self-concept scores. Given that Black adolescent males are often perceived as threatening and problematic in a school context (hooks, 2004; Noguera, 2003), those who present both their assertive and independent selves and their communal and relational selves may fare better. In organizational research, Black male leaders were rated higher when they displayed “nonthreatening” characteristics (Livingston & Pearce, 2009) such as passivity and non-aggressive behavior, rather than more assertive behaviors often associated with masculinity. In essence, Black adolescent males who report an androgynous gender role may experience fewer gender and racial stereotypes that can impact school self-concept and school performance.

These results indicate that Black racial identity is important for understanding total and school self-concept among Black adolescent males, but so is gender role identity; when combined they provide a more nuanced understanding about self-concept in this sample.

Limitations and Future Directions for Research

Several limitations of the present study should be considered when interpreting the data. First, the study utilized a cross-sectional design and self-report measures, which limits our ability to investigate causal relationships among variables. Second, the sample size is small and two subscales were not included, which may have limited the variance expressed on all three measures and the possibility of significant interactions that may have existed if it was larger. For example, Black racial identity attitudes, results are attenuated because two subscales (Encounter and Internalization) were not included due to poor reliability estimates (Chronbach alphas). Again, this may be a function of the small sample size. Nonetheless, future research of Black racial identity attitudes may consider using other measures such as the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997) that includes a measure of racial salience to assess how important race is to overall identity. In addition, all participants attended either a public high school or an after-school program, which may limit the generalizability of the results to students attending other types of institutions outside of New York City. Finally, data were not collected for certain demographic items, including socioeconomic status and family or origin, nor did it look at person-environment influences – both of which may enhance understanding how about how socio-contextual factors influence these processes (Chavous, et. al, 2008; Cunningham et. al, 2013).

Despite the limitations several findings are notable. First, both gender role identity and Black racial identity were associated with their self-reported total and school concept. Black males' gender roles are often minimized with more attention on their racial identity in the psychological literature. Second, among this group of Black adolescent males, there is variability in their constructions of gender roles; one of the largest groups was androgynous, endorsing both stereotypically defined feminine and masculine characteristics, and smaller numbers were categorized as sex-typed masculine or feminine. These findings suggest that this group of Black adolescent males' endorsed expansive rather than restrictive gender roles, although literature often casts them as hyper-masculine. The range of responses suggests that researchers, educators, counselors, and family members involved with Black adolescent males might be cautious about ascribing particular gender roles to this group simply because they are Black and male. Finally, the strong relationship between Black racial identity attitudes and self-concept is important. Black adolescent males who did not feel positively about their racial group (i.e., Pre-Encounter) had low levels of both total and school self-concept. This finding provides support for school-wide and classroom activities that focus on building a positive Black racial identity. Similarly, the significant relationship between both the feminine and masculine subscales suggest that youth involved adults expose Black adolescent males to various educational and career options, rather than draw on well-worn stereotypes and possibly outdated notions of their gender roles as strictly hyper-masculine.

Acknowledgments

Partially funded by the National Institutes of Health, Health Disparities Research Loan Repayment Program (# L60MD000331-01).

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Table I

Summary of Mean Values, Standard Deviations, Internal Consistency Reliabilities and Range for the Bem Sex-Role Inventory Short-Form (BSRI), Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS-L), and Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale – Total Self Concept (PHSCS). N = 70

	M	SD	Internal Consistency Reliability (Alpha)	Possible Range
Age	16	1.30		14–19
Grade	10 th	1.09		9–12
Bem Sex Role Inventory				
Masculine	4.78	.91	.72	1–7
Feminine	4.59	1.10	.85	1–7
Black Racial Identity Attitudes Scale *				
Pre-Encounter	1.96	.60	.82	1–5
Immersion/Emersion	2.54	.68	.74	1–5
Select Scales of Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept **				
School Self-Concept	12.69	2.40	.75	1–17
Total Self-Concept	63.56	7.59	.86	1–80

* Black Racial Identity Attitudes Scale does include two subscales (Encounter and Internalization) because of low internal reliability estimates.

** Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale includes six separate factors that together make up total self-concept.

Table II

Intercorrelations among Measured Subscales of Bem Sex Role Inventory, Pre-Encounter & Immersion-Emersion (Black Racial Identity Attitudes Subscales) & Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale (Total Self Concept) (N=70)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. MAS	1.0				
2. FEM	.39**	1.00			
3. PRE	-.05	-.11	1.00		
4. IMM/EM	.07	-.10	.57**	1.00	
5. SCHOOL SC	.26*	.19	-.32*	-.11	1.00
6. SELF CONCEPT	.18	.27*	-.24*	-.08	.66**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Note. For Bem Sex Role Inventory: FEM = Feminine; MAS = Masculine. For Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale: PRE = Pre-Encounter; IMM/EM = Immersion-Emersion. For Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale: School SELF CONCEPT = School SC; SELF CONCEPT = Total Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale.

Table III

Canonical Correlation Analysis – Bem Sex Role Inventory, Black Racial Identity Attitudes (Pre-Encounter and Immersion-Emersion) and Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale (Global and School) (n = 70)

Standardized	<u>First canonical variate</u>		<u>Second canonical variate</u>	
	Standardized Correlation	Standardized coefficient	Standardized correlation	Standardized coefficient
Black Racial Identity				
Pre-encounter	-.75	-.83	-.19	-.17
Immersion-emersion	-.26	.23	-.11	-.17
Bem Sex Role Inventory				
Feminine	.56	.33	-.73	-1.04
Masculine	.60	.41	.26	.68
Self-Concept				
School	.83	.33	-.56	-1.29
Total	.97	.75	.25	1.10
Canonical correlation	.43		.18	
Wilks Lambda	.79 (p < .05)		.97 (p = .52)	