Race, Masculinity, and Personality Development: Understanding the Black Male Experience in America

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Understanding the Black Male Experience in America

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Abstract

Although men from all racial backgrounds have several poor health outcomes, most of the research suggests that Black men have even worse health outcomes compared to White men (Bowman, 1989; Watkins & Neighbors, 2007; Williams, 2003). The majority of published research on masculinity, however, has primarily focused on samples of White men. The issue of how racism intersects with masculinity and its impact on Black men remains understudied and is a current area of focus in the field. The present study examined relationships between Black men on the cultural measures of masculinity and self-esteem, Dark Triad (narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism), and self-compassion. Black men (N = 278) were recruited from mTurk to participate in a brief online survey. Structural equation modeling revealed that adherence to traditional/hegemonic masculine norms was more strongly and positively associated with self-esteem, endorsement of Dark Triad traits, and self-compassion. The relationship between Black masculinity and self-esteem and self-compassion was also positive, although these relationships were weaker. Black masculinity was negatively related to endorsement of Dark Triad traits which may serve as a protective factor. These findings highlight the need to better understand the ways in which multiple factors integrate and inherently influence personality as well as adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms in particular contexts among Black men. Intervention and prevention implications include integration of discussion related to masculinity themes in the research and therapy process.

Keywords: Masculinity, Black Masculinity, Black men, personality, Dark Triad, self-esteem, self-compassion.

Race, Masculinity, and Personality Development: Understanding the Black Male

Experience in America

It has been long known that men partake in risky health behaviors and fewer positive health behaviors (Courtenay, 2000; Courtenay et al., 2002; Miller et al., 2005). Researchers suggest this could potentially be due to the development of personality as a function of socialization to a traditional Eurocentric masculine ideology (Galdas et al., 2005) that suggests that men should be self-reliant, emotionally in control, aggressive, dominant, and strong while avoiding behaviors considered to be more feminine (Levant & Richmond, 2007). Research shows, primarily based on samples of White men, that masculine gender role norms are associated with increased psychological difficulties in men including increased stress, depression, and poor social functioning (Wong et al., 2017). Black men face more psychosocial stressors than all other gender and racial groups during the course of their life (Bowman, 1989; Watkins & Neighbors, 2007; Williams, 2003) increasing the likelihood of experiencing poorer mental health and social functioning in comparison to their White counterparts.

The majority of published research on masculinity, however, has primarily focused on samples of White men. The issue of how racism intersects with masculinity and its impact on Black men remains understudied and is a current area of focus in the field. One area of particular interest is the impact of masculine identity on the development of personality among Black men. Research suggests that there is greater pressure and stress related to adhering to traditional masculine norms for men of color, which is also related to health disparities (APA, 2018). Research has yet to examine how

cultural expressions of masculinity may impact social and intrapersonal functioning in comparison to adherence to traditional masculine norms among Black men specifically.

To address this gap, research is needed to explore the relationships between adherence to cultural masculine norms (Black masculinity and traditional masculinity) and "darker" personality traits, self-compassion, and self-esteem in Black men under the current sociopolitical structure that is unforgiving. In this study, personality traits will be discussed as patterns of cognitive and behavioral responses rather than explanations for those patterns. To this end, the current study aims to explore these relationships that are known to impact social functioning from a dimensional approach to provide a more nuanced understanding of how these traits may or may not be adaptive given the current societal positioning of Black men (e.g., Trull, 2013). This study could help inform the future development of interventions specifically for Black men that address intersecting identities and are culturally sensitive.

Definitions and the Social Construction of Masculinity

A masculine ideology refers to the degree to which men within a given society accept or internalize that culture's definition of what it means to express as a man or what has been defined as "appropriate male behavior" (Pleck et al., 1993). In Western culture, the predominant and idealized form of masculinity is largely reflective of White, heterosexual, Christian, and middle-class males (Rogers et al., 2015; Wade & Rochlen, 2013). Throughout their development, men are socialized to demonstrate strength, autonomy, individualism, stoicism, dominance, and aggressiveness while avoiding expressions of emotion or vulnerability deemed more feminine in nature (Courtenay, 2000; Davis, et al., 1999; Mahalik et al., 2003), which is often referred to as hegemonic

masculinity. More specifically defined, hegemonic masculinity reflects a willingness to marginalize and dominate others with a readiness to act aggressively (Parent et al., 2018).

Considerations of Race in Masculine Ideology

Historically, Black men have negotiated their sense of masculine identity within the context of both the historical and present-day sociopolitical environment of the United States which largely adheres to a more Eurocentric ideology of masculinity, often referred to as hegemonic masculinity. Previous research indicates that Black men's definition of manhood does overlap with traditional aspects of masculinity including restricted emotionality, self-reliance, the importance of being a provider, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and ambition (Cazenave, 1984; Hunter & Davis, 1992, 1994; Pierre et al., 2001; Wade, 1995). More recent research, however, has revealed that Black men also define manhood and masculinity through additional aspects including self, human community, family, humanism, and spirituality/religion (Caldwell et al., 2013; Hammond & Mattis, 2005; Hammond, 2012; Hunter & Davis, 1992). A Black man's sense of masculinity may be a product of negotiations between their culture and the dominant White culture in which they must cope with threats to their masculinity resulting from hundreds of years of racial oppression that likely bleeds into and impacts their social functioning.

The influence of socialization on male identity have been proposed to significantly contribute to the mental health of Black men, although usually in negative ways (Wade & Rochlen, 2013). Within the current framework, the pressure to meet dominant European standards of manhood within a sociopolitical structure that also denies equal economic and social privileges may create feelings of inadequacy among

Black men (Wade & Rochlen, 2013). These factors, when met with racism and discrimination, exacerbate the psychological distress of Black men. Staples (1998) theorizes that Black men may be angry over the position they occupy in society, leading to frustration that may cause them to adaptively or maladaptively engage in ways that may affect their relationships both with themselves and others.

A prior study by Levant & Majors (1997) found that Black men endorsed traditional masculine ideology the most followed by White men. The difference, according to the authors, could be understood as a function of the high degree of gender and racial role strain that Black men experience under traditional masculine expectations which marginalizes Black men. In response, Black men may develop a defense mechanism that greatly adheres to traditional male role norms which was termed "cool pose" by Majors and Billson (1992). Over time, these ways of engaging inform the development of personality.

Masculinity in the Context of Ecological Systems

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) (1992) provides a useful framework for understanding masculine socialization, adherence to masculine norms, and the development of personality traits in Black men in America as they navigate this country's White patriarchal sociopolitical structure. The theory suggests that as individuals develop physically and cognitively, the interactions within their environment becomes more complex. Bronfenbrenner was specifically concerned with the extent to which environmental surroundings may help or hinder development. According to his theory, there are five layers that range from the proximal to more distal environments which include the microsystem (family, peers, school, neighborhood, etc.), mesosystem

(links between school and family), exosystem (friends of family, legal services, mass media, etc.), macrosystem (ideologies and attitudes of the culture), and the chronosystem (time of life events as well as the sociohistorical conditions). He argued that in order to understand the development of a child into adulthood, we need to consider their experiences within all of these systems. The development of all humans is a result of interactions with family members, school peers, neighborhood friends, and policies embedded within the institutions of the country, and the point and time in history.

Application of EST to Masculinity

Building from Bronfenbrenner's theory (1992), cultural messages are learned through developmental experiences. As it pertains to developing young boys within American society, they are socialized within all five systems to believe that "big boys don't cry." In turn, crying becomes an unacceptable avenue of expression while suppressing emotions signals strength associated with masculinity. These societal messages are often reinforced over the lifespan by parents, teachers, peers, media, and political structures.

More broadly, males are generally socialized toward characteristics of suppressing and restricting emotions, achievement and independence, and avoidance of characteristics largely reflective of femininity and homosexuality (Good et al., 2005). Further, they are socialized to be physically tough and aggressive, seek status, and achieve sexual conquest. Personality traits such as limited empathy (Jonason et al., 2013), impulsivity (Jones & Paulhus, 2011), and seeking dominance and respect (Semenyna & Honey, 2015) present more commonly in men than in women, perhaps as a function of masculine socialization that may turn toxic. These aspects of personality systematically

function to orient men to pursue a wide range of agentic tasks through characteristics such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and dominance. Although these characteristics are adaptive in achieving upward mobility, it also leaves men feeling emotionally restricted and averse to seeking help during times of hardship (Heath et al., 2017). Masculine socialization often results in engaging in aggressive behaviors (Bhana, 2012), minimizing or avoiding expression of vulnerable emotions that are generally required to nurture oneself and others (Addis & Cohane, 2005), and poor health seeking behaviors (Kupers, 2005), leading to what has been termed "toxic masculinity," first coined by Shepherd Bliss in the 1980's.

Although currently there is no collective agreement regarding the definition "toxic masculinity," it is generally used to refer to a unified set of norms, beliefs, and behaviors centered around adherence to traditional/hegemonic male gender norms that subsequently stigmatize and suppress the emotions that developing boys and grown men might comfortably express while endorsing the expression of other emotions such as anger. The term "toxic" expresses the harmfulness of dominance seeking behaviors (Kupers, 2005). Societal norms, social pressure, resulting beliefs, and behaviors frequently associated with the idea of toxic masculinity include social dominance, self-sufficiency, hyper-competitiveness, the violence, sexism, chauvinism, misogyny, heteronormativity, rigid ideas of sexual/gender identity and roles, sense of entitlement, and the objectification of women's bodies.

Applications of EST to Black Masculinity

It has been suspected that masculinity looks different for Black men given their experience within U.S. history (e.g., Clatterbaugh, 1990; Majors & Billson, 1992). Black

men, both currently and historically, have experienced racial discrimination and have had fewer economic and social privileges in comparison to their White counterparts (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Wade & Rochlen, 2013). As such, it is imperative to consider the social and systemic constraints, such as incarceration, dominant cultural gendered expectations, racism, and economic inequality when hypothesizing about Black males and demonstrations of masculinity.

Early male socialization is the foundation of several challenges many men face in America. For Black men in particular, they are especially confounding when paired with racism throughout their life course. In her 2004 book *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, Bell Hooks poignantly stated that Black boys, more than any other group of male children in American society, are asked to relinquish their childhoods in pursuit of an elusive patriarchal masculinity. Black scholars have argued that the starting line for young Black boys is well behind that of their White counterparts. This is clearly not due to any inherent deficiencies, but instead due to the current sociopolitical structure that was built and established over 500 years ago to support and promote the success of White men. Hill (2002) argued that due to the societal structure and media influence, Black children are often taught to adhere to Eurocentric gender role norms in effort to assimilate and achieve upward mobility, although it more often leaves them economically impotent.

Throughout the development of young Black men, Wallace (2007) posits that young Black boys, similar to young White boys, are taught that in order to be a considered a "real man," they must be aggressive, dominant, and sometimes violent while simultaneously receiving messages that as Black men in American society, they cannot and should not be too aggressive or dominant because of potential repercussions. In the

end, toxic masculinity does not end up working out well for Black men. If they embrace

and adopt the violent swagger of White American icons who are perceived to project

power and strength, they are more often viewed as thugs instead of heroes. Conversely,

resisting engaging in these performances often leads to experiences of emasculation (e.g.,

"stop being such a punk," "stop acting like a little girl"). Altogether, Black and White

men are equally socialized to behave aggressively, but race[1] seems to color how the

behavior is interpreted.

In addition, negative cultural representations of Black men remain prevalent in the

lexicon of American culture which, when internalized, may impact the emotional well-

being of Black men (Williams & Mohammed, 2013) for which they are left to resolve.

Research on internalized racism and internalized racial oppression has documented

several associated negative outcomes including lowered self -esteem, psychological

distress, depression, anxiety, and self-degradation (Campon & Carter, 2015; Watt-Jones,

2002). It is possible, then, that the negative self-concepts derived from internalized

racism (as a result of structures we live in) can become deeply rooted in the psyche of

Black men potentially distorting developmental pathways (Bryant, 2011) which, in turn,

impacts aspects of personality development.

The Impact of Masculinity on Personality Traits and Social Functioning

Dark Triad. Masculinity in U.S. society is often defined by characteristics

including assertiveness, boldness, dominance, self-sufficiency, and instrumentality that

ultimately informs the development of personality. As mentioned previously, these

underlying dimensions or traits that overlap with the "Dark Triad" (Paulhus & Williams,

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[1] Race is a human-invented classification system created to define physical differences between individuals, but has more often been used as a tool for oppression and violence.

2002) could potentially be the negative overvaluing or utilization of a toxic masculine approach to achieve personal and professional goals. The Dark Triad traits include psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism and have been described as representing the darker side of human nature. A recent study by Waddell et al. (2020) found that hegemonic masculinity was a significant predictor of willingness and perceived ability to emotionally manipulate others. When Dark Triad traits were added to the model, however, hegemonic masculinity's contribution became non-significant. The authors suggest that hegemonic or traditional masculinity appears to share variance with Dark Triad traits, particularly Machiavellianism.

Consistent within the literature of Dark Triad personality traits are findings pertaining to sex differences, such that these traits are deemed less feminine and more masculine (e.g., Jonason & Davis, 2018) and appear to be more common among men than women (Cale & Lilienfeld 2002; Grijalva et al. 2015). A meta-analysis conducted by Grijalva et al. (2015) found that men tended to be more narcissistic than women, and that this finding remained stable over time and across different age groups. Grieve et al. (2019) further found that increased conformity to feminine gender roles norms was associated with a decreased tendency to engage in emotional manipulation. Within the current literature, Dark Triad traits appear to reflect characteristics that are more agentic in nature rather than communal (Jones & Paulhus, 2010), and being agentic within the current sociopolitical structure is considered more desirable for men in achieving personal and professional goals (Rudman et al., 2012).

Narcissism. Narcissism is often described by an overall pattern of grandiosity, inflated self-esteem, dominance, entitlement, superiority, and exhibitionism (Morf &

Rhodewalt, 2001). In a systematic review, Lambe (2018) found narcissism to be

consistently related to increased aggression and violence. This relationship was strongest

following an ego threat. Both psychopathy and narcissism share a common tendency of

interpersonal exploitation and callousness. There is also evidence to suggest, however,

that narcissism in particular also encompasses characteristics of fragility, vulnerability,

difficulty regulating emotions, hypersensitivity to rejection, and dependent self-esteem

(Cain et al., 2008). The vulnerable aspect of narcissism includes feelings of emptiness,

shame, and helplessness (Velotti et al., 2014).

A recent meta-analytic review found that narcissism was related to both

aggression (indirect, direct, displaced, physical, verbal, and bullying), and violence

(reactive and proactive) (Kjaevik & Bushman, 2021). Individuals with high levels of

narcissism tend to be prone to violent and aggressive behavior, particularly when they are

provoked. The relationship between narcissism and aggression was significant for both

males and females, individuals of all ages, and for people from individualistic and

collectivist cultures, although it is important to note that only 12% of the studies were

conducted in collectivistic countries. Further, participant characteristics reported in this

meta-analytic review included gender, age, student sample, and country (individualistic

or collectivistic). Participant race/ethnicity was not reported.

Psychopathy. Psychopathy is often defined as disposition characterized by

deceptiveness, callousness, lack of empathy, lack of remorse or guilt, a tendency to be

irresponsible, and impulsivity (Hare & Neumann, 2008). Those high in psychopathy tend

to lack the ability to form healthy social relationships and are more likely to engage in

crime (Megias et al., 2018). They are also at increased risk for engaging aggressively and violent offending (Glenn et al., 2011; Walters & DeLisi, 2015).

   Machiavellianism. Machiavellianism is defined as a deceitful interpersonal style that is often cynical in nature (Jones & Pauhus, 2009). Those with this personality style often value and prioritize power, money, and competition over meaningful relationships and self-love, using manipulative interpersonal strategies (e.g. flattery) to achieve their goals (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Jones and Weiser (2014) cite research suggesting that individuals who demonstrate Machiavellian traits are generally oriented toward long-term goals, are not easily provoked to anger, have good executive functioning, and diligent to resist cheating in pursuit of long-term investments and rewards. As such, Machiavellianism overlaps with psychopathy and narcissism regarding the unsympathetic interpersonal approach but differs with regard to constructs related to impulsivity.

   Dark Triad Traits as Adaptive Under the Current Ecological Context. Although, several studies have explored gender differences (mostly between White men and White women) in relation to the Dark Triad (e.g., Grivalja et al., 2015, Kjaervik & Bushman, 2021; Waddell et al., 2020), no studies have examined Black men and adherence to cultural masculine norms as it relates to gender socialization under the current system that affords greater privilege and advantage to White men. These traits are likely adaptive under the current ecological context particularly for White men. For Black men, Dark Triad traits could potentially be a normal reaction/coping mechanism, and thus adaptive, to an abnormal societal positioning that has historically disadvantaged and disenfranchised men of color. Nonetheless, these traits may pose long-term professional and interpersonal difficulties.

Self-Compassion as a Protective Factor. Conversely, self-compassion

encompasses being kind and accepting of one's self while experiencing failure,

inadequacy, or sense of suffering (Neff, 2003, Neff, 2009) which could serve as an

adaptive form of relating to oneself and, in turn, relating to others. A strict adherence to

masculine norms, perhaps presenting in the form of dark Triad traits, could potentially

make some men less likely to engage in self-compassionate behaviors since use of this

strategy inherently involves recognizing and validating vulnerable emotions during

difficult times. Traditional/hegemonic masculine norms typically encourage men to face

difficulties and failures by engaging in self-comparisons, self-criticism, self-reliance, and

discounting their emotions (Mahalik et al., 2003). In contrast, individuals who engage in

self-compassion are generally kind to themselves, acknowledge interconnectedness, and

maintain emotional balance when dealing with hardship (Neff, 2003a). Self-compassion

has frequently been described as incompatible with antisocial behavior that can often be a

byproduct of Dark Triad traits (Stosny, 1995), and may provide an avenue to alleviate

suppression of wanted thoughts and negative emotions.

Self-Compassion and Positive Psychological Outcomes. Recent research shows

that self-compassion can be effective in reducing self-blame and defensiveness while

increasing the ability to engage in health promoting behaviors (e.g., Dickstein et al.,

2010; Terry & Leary, 2011). In general, the literature on self-compassion suggests that it

offers most of the benefits of increased self-esteem with the less of downsides frequently

observed such as narcissism (e.g., Gilbert, 2009; Leary et al., 2007; Neff & Vonk, 2009).

It also has a significant causal impact on psychological and cognitive well-being (Zessin

et al., 2015). More recent research has linked increased self-compassion with less anger

(Neff & Vonk, 2009), less violence (Stosny, 1995; Murphy et al., 2005), less impulsivity (Morley, 2017) and less authoritarianism (Zarein et al., 2017), traits often associated promoted among men.

Self-compassion Among Men. Research on positive coping mechanisms to negative life experiences has increased but still remains grossly understudied in the psychology of men and masculinity. A recent study in particular found that higher levels of self-compassion were related to lower adherence to traditional masculine norms (Reilly et al., 2014). Another meta-analytic review found that men are more self-compassionate than women, and that ethnic minority status moderated the relationship between gender and self-compassion such that non-White men tend to be more self-compassionate than White men (Yarnell et al., 2015). The authors posit that men who generally hold privilege within their respective traditional cultures might also be comfortable extending compassion to themselves. This study, however, failed to provide a detailed breakdown of race/ethnicity and, instead, recoded ethnicity data into "percent ethnic minority," calculated as 100% minus percent White. In other words, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino/a, and Asian American participants were coded as one group. Thus, differences by race were not accounted for and was noted as a study limitation.

Although still grossly understudied, there is recent research that suggests that self-compassion can be a particularly useful in improving the resilience among Black men. The practice of self-compassion has also led to improved life satisfaction and increased resiliency among Black men who were previously exposed to violence (Bluth et al., 2018). Most research, however, has focused on gender differences instead of cultural differences that might better contextualize psychological outcomes (Kilmartin, 2010;

Wong & Rochlen, 2005). Although a recent study found a weak association between self-compassion and adherence to traditional masculine norms, less shame, and improved self-esteem (Reilly et al., 2014), the sample primarily consisted of White men and does not take into account the Black male experience of continuously having to negotiate their position within a society that has historically (and presently) positioned White males as the symbol of what is "good" and "right."

   Self-Esteem as a Protective Factor. In contrast to self-compassion, self-esteem is a concept that is mostly derived from one's ability to align their behaviors with cultural values in order to feel good about oneself (Fulmer et al., 2010). Prior research proposes that conformity to cisgender norms could potentially increase self-esteem by engaging in socially desirable behaviors and activities (Witt & Wood, 2010) but can also be related to narcissism, disregard for weaknesses, and lack of empathy (Seligman, 1995). Several research studies have found a positive association between self-esteem and overall psychological well-being across several domains including academics, professional careers, and interpersonal relationships (Baumeister et al., 2003; Leary & MacDonald, 2003). Until recently, however, no research had explored how self-esteem may fluctuate among men particularly as a function of being socialized to adhere to traditional masculine in norms. A recent study by Reilly, Rochlen, and Awad (2014) found that greater adherence to masculine norms was associated with high self-esteem for men with higher levels of trait shame. At lower levels of trait shame, adherence to masculine norms was not significantly related to self-esteem. The authors suggest that these findings may point to the fact that men who perceive themselves to fail at living up to traditional masculine ideals may see it as failing in the domain of masculinity and thus might

experience lower self-esteem. This study was the first of its kind to explore adherence to masculine norms and self-esteem, providing valuable insight specifically for White men as the sample primarily consisted of White men.

Conversely, work by Mahalik et al. (2006) found that self-esteem in Black men ages 18 to 25 was negatively associated with conforming to traditional masculine norms. Later work by Ornelas et al. (2009) found that one aspect that negatively impacts the health of Black men was the role and responsibility of being a Black man in America. Everyday discrimination has been found to be associated with poorer self-esteem and, in turn, depressive symptoms in Black men (Mereish et al., 2016). Hammond (2012) also reported that Black men ages 18-29 exposed to greater everyday racism and endorsed greater adherence to traditional masculine role norms related to emotional restraint were more likely to report depressive symptoms.

Despite facing adversity that generally has a tendency of leaving Black men susceptible to negative outcomes related to stress, Black Americans have been reported to use several effective coping strategies that are helpful when navigating hostile conditions (Nobles, 1974; Utsey et al., 2000; Utsey & Ponterotto,1996). Scholars have suggested to advocate for a move toward self-reliance and independence rooted in African sources for their sense of identity, and away from relying on a Eurocentric culture for their sense of identity (Asante, 1980, 1987; Karenga, 1980, 1984, 1988; Pierre et al., 2002; White & Cones, 1999). In this way, endorsing values that are African-oriented (such as interdependence) instead of Eurocentric cultural values (such as individualism) are likely to foster increased self-esteem in Blacks within the United States while reducing psychological distress. Similarly, then, adherence to or identification with Black

masculine norms among Black men may promote a sense of self-reliance independence based on African American sources of identity and consciousness that promotes self-esteem among Black men that is not observed in adherence to traditional masculine norms which is largely predicated on a Eurocentric ideology.

The Present Study

In general, the research within the field of men and masculinities has created and used measures primarily centered around the White male experience which is a culture in and of itself that other men may identify less with. Indeed, research on manhood and masculinity with Black men indicates that their ideas and notion of manhood vary from the "traditional" male characteristics often reported in the literature (e.g., self, family, community, spirituality/religion, and humanism). Nonetheless, current measures used in research continue to solely address "traditional" characteristics and are continuously used to measure a very narrow notion of masculinity with Black men in samples heavily skewed with White men (Hammond & Mattis, 2005; Hunter & Davis, 1992; Mincey et al., 2013).

Although Westcentric research on men and masculinity has provided important findings and insights, African understandings of and approaches to psychology have long been overlooked and marginalized in the after math of European colonialism. The present study aims to explore the relationships between Black men on measures of masculinity, the Dark Triad, self-compassion, and self-esteem within the current social context. This study further seeks to address the gap in the current literature by examining the power and impact of the Black male experience using a more culturally sensitive/specific measure of masculinity (Black masculinity) in relation to the Dark Triad, self-

compassion, and self-esteem, and how these traits may or may not be adaptive within the current sociopolitical context. The results of this study will have implications for practice, the development of gender and culturally sensitive interventions specifically for Black men, and future research examining the intersection of race and gender. Hypotheses for this study are:

H1. Greater adherence to traditional masculinity will be negatively associated with self-esteem.

H2. Greater adherence to traditional masculinity will be positively associated with Dark Triad personality traits.

H3. Greater adherence to traditional masculinity will be negatively associated with self-compassion.

H4. Greater adherence to Black masculinity will be positively associated with self-esteem.

H5. Greater adherence to Black masculinity will be negatively associated with Dark Triad personality traits among Black men.

H6. Greater adherence to Black masculinity will be positively associated with self-compassion.

Method

Participants & Procedures

Data was collected via Turk Prime with a recruitment effort focused on Black men only ages 19-70. Individuals who navigated to the study's webpage completed a screener inquiring about their race and gender. Those who responded with any

combination other than "African American/African/Black" and "Male" were navigated away from the survey. Participants who met criteria for inclusion were directed to the informed consent. Upon indicating agreement with informed consent, participants completed a 30-minute online survey (see Appendices A through G) hosted by the Qualtrics data collection service. After completion of the survey, participants were given a code to enter at the Amazon MTurk website to receive their reimbursement of $1.00 for their time. Compensation required a minimum of 80% completion of the survey items. A total of five reading checks were incorporated throughout the survey. A recent study found that employing rigorous exclusion methods in samples collected from MTurk, including attention checks, consistently increases statistical power without the side effect of substantially biasing the final sample (Thomas & Clifford, 2017). As such, 60% or greater (3 questions or more) was selected as a strict elimination cutoff, which removed a total of 13 participants from the final sample. Further, an additional 22 individuals consented to participate but provided no responses to substantive items and thus were not included in the final sample (N=279). Participants were provided contact information for the investigator and the investigator's faculty supervisor and invited to ask any questions or present any complaints.

Materials

Demographics

Participants were asked to provide demographic information on their age, gender identity, religion, racial/ethnic identity, urban/rural status, relationship status, employment status, household members, childhood household living situation, level of

education completed, state of residence, annual household income, and current social class.

Traditional Masculinity

Traditional masculinity was measured using the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory- 46 (CMNI-46; Parent & Moradi, 2009). This abbreviated version of the CMNI (Mahalik et al., 2003) includes 46 items rated on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The present study used the measure as an observed variable which reflects conformity to traditional masculine norms, comprised of 9 factors: winning (e.g., "It is important for me to win"), emotional control (e.g., "I tend to keep my feelings to myself"), risk-taking (e.g., "I take risks"), violence (e.g., "Violence is almost never justified"), power over women (e.g., "Things tend to be better when men are in charge"), playboy (e.g., "If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners"), self-reliance (e.g., "I hate asking for help"), primacy of work (e.g., "My work is the most important part of my life"), and heterosexual self-presentation (e.g., "It would not bother me at all if someone thought I was gay"). The CMNI-46 has previously demonstrated good internality reliability, with α= .88 (Parent & Moradi, 2009). Reliability for this sample was good, with a α= .95.

Black Masculinity

Black masculinity was measured using the Masculinity Inventory Scale for Black Men (MIS; Mincey et al., 2014). This measure includes 50 items that are reflective of the Black male experience. The measure is comprised of five factors: mainstream society (e.g., "A man makes sacrifices for his family"), Black masculinity (e.g., "It's hard to show that I'm not like other Black men"), primary group (e.g., "My mother gave me the

confidence and strength to keep moving"), mainstream/Black masculinity (e.g., "I have to prove myself in social situations"), and primary peer group (e.g., "When I carry myself like my father or better I'll be a man"). Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) with higher scores indicating greater adherence to a Black masculine ideology. Cronbach's alpha for this measure is .90. For this sample, internal reliability was good, with a α=.95.

Dark Triad

Psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism was measured using the Dark Triad Dirty Dozen (DTDD; Jonason & Webster, 2010). The DTDD is a brief 12-item personality measure that simultaneously assesses narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism with four items per subscale which will be examined as an observed variable. Responses are rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Higher scores are suggestive of Dark Triad traits. Example items for narcissism include, "I tend to want others to admire me," and "I tend to seek prestige or status." Example items for psychopathy include, "I tend to be callous or insensitive," and "I tend to be unconcerned with the morality of my actions." Examples items for Machiavellianism include, "I tend to manipulate others to get my way," and "I tend to exploit others toward my own end." Internal consistency is good, with α=.86 for the overall Dark Triad, α=.84 for narcissism, α=.77 for psychopathy, and α=.79 for Machiavellianism. Internal reliability for this sample was good, with an overall α=.93.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion was measured using The Self-Compassion short form (SCS-SF; Raes et al., 2011). The present study used the overall score from the SCS-SF scale which

includes 3 positive subscales and three negative scales, for a total of 12 items ($\alpha = .86$).

The three positive subscales include mindfulness (e.g., "When something upsets me, I try

to take a balanced perspective), common humanity (e.g., "I see my failings as part of the

human condition"), and self-kindness (e.g., "When I'm going through a very hard time, I

give myself the caring and tenderness I need"). The three negative items include self-

judgment (e.g., "I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I

don't like"), overidentified (e.g., "When I fail at something important to me I become

consumed by feelings of inadequacy"), and isolation (e.g., "When I'm feeling down, I

tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am"). Items are rated on a

6-point Likert scale from 1 (Almost Never) to 6 (Almost Always). Scores were reversed

for items 1, 4, 8, 9, 11, and 12, with higher scores indicating greater levels of self-

compassion. Internal reliability for this sample was good, with $\alpha=.89$.

Self Esteem

Self-esteem was measured using the Self-Esteem Scale (SCS; Rosenberg, 1965).

The present study used the overall score from this 10-item scale which measures both

positive and negative feelings about the self ($\alpha = .91$). Items are measured on a 4-point

Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Positive example items

include, "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself," and "I feel that I have a number of

good qualities." Negative example items include, "At times, I think I am no good at all,"

and "I certainly feel useless at times." Scores were reversed for items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9,

with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-esteem. Internal reliability for this

sample was good, with $\alpha = .79$.

Data Analysis

Missing Data

Prior to conducting the analyses, data were analyzed to ascertain the extent of missing values and to identify any patterns in data loss. All survey items had very low rates of non-response ($< 2.2\%$ missing), and were determined to be missing completely at random, $X^2 = 38.197$, $df(32)$, $p = .21$).

An overall Mahalanobis distance was calculated with the 3 independent variables; six cases were identified as significant at the $p \leq .001$ level. These cases were evaluated using additional Mahalanobis distance calculations between pairs of scales known to relate strongly (i.e., self-compassion and self-esteem). In addition, they were examined for missing data that precluded overall scores of the scale means. Six cases were eliminated following this process; the remaining 279 cases were used for the remaining analyses.

Data Normality

Each scale was then examined for univariate normality and all were found to fall within acceptable skewness and kurtosis ranges of -2 and 2. As previously mentioned, all scales had acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha). Scales were assessed for multicollinearity. A VIF cutoff of 10 was used to identify multicollinear scales; all scales had acceptable multicollinearity (ranged from VIF = 2.173 to 2.943). Overall, assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity do not seem to be violated.

Main analyses

Structural equation model analysis was conducted in AMOS. The single model depicted in Figure 1 (with the relevant covariates) was used to test all hypotheses.

H1. The hypothesis between adherence to traditional masculinity and self-esteem will be examined by assessing path A in Figure 1.

H2. The hypothesis between adherence to traditional masculinity and Dark Triad personality traits will be examined by assessing path B in Figure 1.

H3. The hypothesis between adherence to traditional masculinity and self-compassion will be examined by assessing path C in Figure 1.

H4. The hypothesis between adherence to Black masculinity and self-esteem will be examined by assessing path D in Figure 1.

H5. The hypothesis between adherence to Black masculinity and Dark Triad personality traits will be examined by assessing path E in Figure 1.

H6. The hypothesis between adherence to Black masculinity and self-compassion will be examined by assessing path F in Figure 1.

Power Analysis

In order to have adequate statistical power for path analysis in SEM, there should be between 10-20 cases for every estimated parameter (Kline, 2015; Stage et al., 2004; Streiner, 2005). The hypothesized models have 5 observed variables and 3 regression coefficients, totaling to 8 parameters. There will likely be about three covariates (age, education, and income), each with their own regression coefficients. Thus, for this study, an adequate sample size would therefore be approximately 220 participants.

Figure 1

Model of hypothesized relations between traditional masculinity, Black masculinity, self-compassion, Dark-Triad, and self-esteem
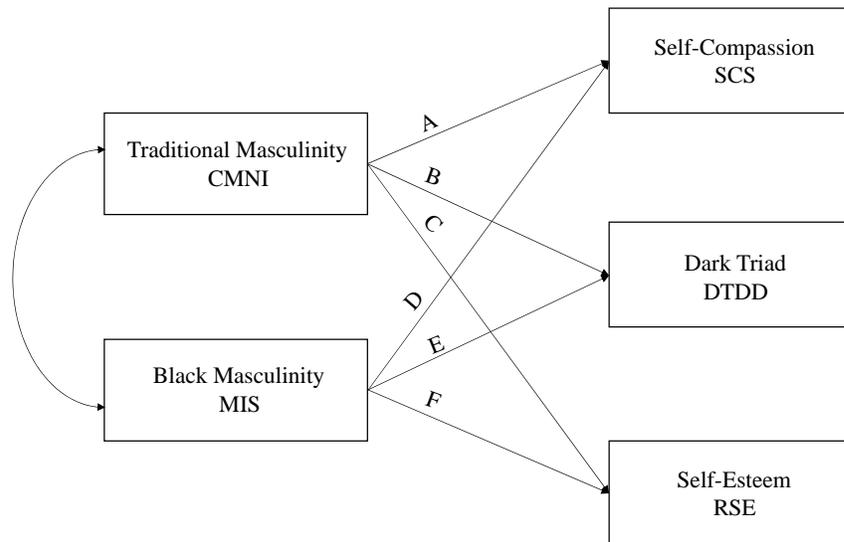
Results

Initial Analyses

Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of 279 individuals that identify as African American/Black ($n = 269$) or African ($n = 10$) and male. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 65, with a mean age of 35.95 and a median age of 32. Of those who reported their highest level of education completed, .4% ($n = 1$) had some high school, 3.2% ($n = 9$) completed high school or earned a GED, 3.2% ($n = 9$) had some college, 4.3% ($n = 12$) had a 2-year college degree, 52% ($n = 145$) had a 4-year college degree, 33.7% ($n = 94$) had a master's degree, and 1.8% ($n = 5$) had professional or doctoral degree (MD, JD, PhD). Reported

combined household income ranged from less than $20,000 to $150,000+, with the mean

income ranging between $40,000 and $59,999 and a median income of $40,000 to

$49,999. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the sample.

Table 1

Descriptive Sample Statistics

Characteristics	Total (N = 279)	% or M(SD)
Age		35.95(32.00)
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Black	269	96.4
African	8	2.9
Education		
Some High School	1	.4
High School Graduate/GED	9	3.3
Some College	9	3.3
2-Year College Degree (e.g., Associates)	12	4.4
4-Year College Degree	145	52.7
Master's Degree	94	34.2
Professional or Doctoral Degree (MD, JD, PhD)	5	1.8
Self-Rated Social Class		
Lower Class	8	2.9
Working Class	43	15.6
Middle Class	167	60.5
Upper Middle Class	52	18.8
Upper Class	6	2.2
Household Income		
Under $20,000	19	6.8
$20,000-$29,000	18	6.5
$30,000-$39,000	15	5.4
$40,000-$49,000	41	14.7
$50,000-$59,000	60	21.6
$60,000-$69,000	34	12.2
$70,000-$79,000	41	14.7
$80,000-$89,000	15	5.4
$90,000-$99,000	15	5.4
$100,000-$109,000	7	2.5
$110,000-$119,000	2	.7
$120,000-$129,000	3	1.1
$130,000-$139,000	1	.4
$140,000-$149,000	1	.4
$150,000+	6	2.2

Bivariate Correlation

A bivariate correlation confirmed a positive and strong association between all

variables. All correlations among the main variables were statistically significant at the *p*

$\leq$ .01 level. Age was weakly but positively associated at the $p \leq$ .01 level with

traditional masculinity (r = .28), black masculinity (r = .29), Dark Triad (r = .25), self-

compassion (r = .34), and self-esteem (r = .30). Similarly, education was weakly but

positively associated at the $p \leq$ .01 level with traditional masculinity (r = .31), black

masculinity (r = .31), Dark Triad (r = .21), self-compassion (r = .28), and self-esteem (r =

.26). Conversely, income was weakly but negatively associated with the Dark Triad at the

$p \leq$ .01 level (r = -.18), and a weak but negatively associated with self-compassion at the

$p \leq$ .05 level (r = -.14). See Table 2.

Table 2

Correlations Between Main Variables and Covariates

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Traditional Masculinity	1.99	.48	-				
2. Black Masculinity	2.11	.42	.769**	-			
3. Dark Triad	1.88	.70	.785**	.505**	-		
4. Self-compassion	4.40	.83	.782**	.680**	.648**	-	
5. Self-Esteem	2.02	.48	.849**	.757**	.717**	.756**	-
6. Age	35.95	10.26	.277**	.293**	.249**	.343**	.299**
7. Education	4.16	.960	.307**	.311**	.212**	.278**	.275**
8. Income	4.59	2.80	-.094	-.017	-.184**	-.145*	-.066

Note. **p<.01, *p<.05.

Main Analyses

A variety of demographic variables were examined as potential covariates in the

main analyses given the relations to the main variables. Based on variables that were

significant with traditional masculinity and Black masculinity in the preliminary

analyses, the model initially included the following covariates: age, household income,

and education. Education, however, was not significantly associated with outcomes in the

path analysis model and was thus removed from the final model for parsimony.

The original model was approaching adequate fit, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .16,

SRMR = .02, $X^2(4)$ = 32.54, p = .00. Modification indices recommended correlating the

error variances of the endogenous variables, and correlating the age and income with the

exogenous variables. This improved the model such that CFI = .99, RMSEA = .05,

SRMR = .01, $X^2(2) = 3.53$, and $p = .17$. According to the R^2, the final model predicted .75

of the variance for self-esteem, .65 for the Dark Triad, and .65 for self-compassion. See

Table 3.

Table 3

Parameter Estimates for Structural Equation Modeling

Parameter	B(SE)	B	p	95% Confidence Interval
Main Effects				
Black Masculinity → Self-compassion	**.36(.11)**	**.18**	**.001**	**[-.619, -.174]**
Black Masculinity → Dark Triad	**-.40(.09)**	**-.24**	**<.001**	**[-.058, -.211]**
Black Masculinity → Self-esteem	**.28(.05)**	**.25**	**<.001**	**[.175, .387]**
Traditional Masculinity → Self-compassion	**1.05(.09)**	**.60**	**<.001**	**[.856, 1.241]**
Traditional Masculinity → Dark Triad	**1.37(.08)**	**.94**	**<.001**	**[1.212, 1.530]**
Traditional Masculinity → Self-esteem	**.65(.05)**	**.65**	**<.001**	**[.544, .740]**
Correlations				
Black Masculinity & Traditional Masculinity	**.15(.02)**	**.77**	**<.001**	**[.122, .182]**
Age & Traditional Masculinity	**1.34(.30)**	**.28**	**<.001**	**[.749, 1.931]**
Age & Black Masculinity	**1.23(.26)**	**.29**	**<.001**	**[.716, .1.752]**
Income & Traditional Masculinity	-.12(.08)	-.09	.122	[-.272, .032]
Income & Black Masculinity	-.01(.06)	-.01	.849	[-.143, .117]
E1 & E3	**.02(.01)**	**.20**	**<.001**	**[.010, .038]**
E2 & E3	**.02(.01)**	**.22**	**<.001**	**[.010, .034]**
Covariates				
Age → Self-compassion	**.01(.00)**	**.12**	**.001**	**[.004, .016]**
Age → Dark Triad	.00(.00)	.06	.133	[-.002, .010]
Age → Self-esteem	.00(.00)	.05	.127	[.000, .004]
Income → Self-compassion	**-.03(.01)**	**-.08**	**<.050**	**[-.046, -.003]**
Income → Dark Triad	**-.02(.01)**	**-.10**	**<.010**	**[-.042, -.006]**
Income → Self-esteem	.00(.01)	.00	.999	[-.010, .010]

Note. Bolded numbers indicate significant findings at $p<.05$, with Confidence Interval not

containing 0.

More conformity to traditional masculine traits was related to higher self-esteem

($\beta = .65$) and self-compassion ($\beta = .60$), which is opposite the directions predicted for

hypotheses one and three. More conformity to traditional masculinity was more strongly

related to endorsement of Dark Triad traits ($\beta = .94$) supporting hypotheses two. More

conformity to Black masculine norms including the role of being a provider, familial

impact on masculine development, and having to work harder as a Black man compared

to White men was related to higher self-esteem (β = .24) self-compassion (β = .18), and

lower endorsement of Dark Triad traits (β = -.24), supporting hypotheses four, five, and

six. All paths were significant at the $p \leq$ .001. See Figure 2.

Figure 2

Main analysis of the relations between traditional masculinity, Black masculinity, self-compassion, Dark-Triad, and self-esteem
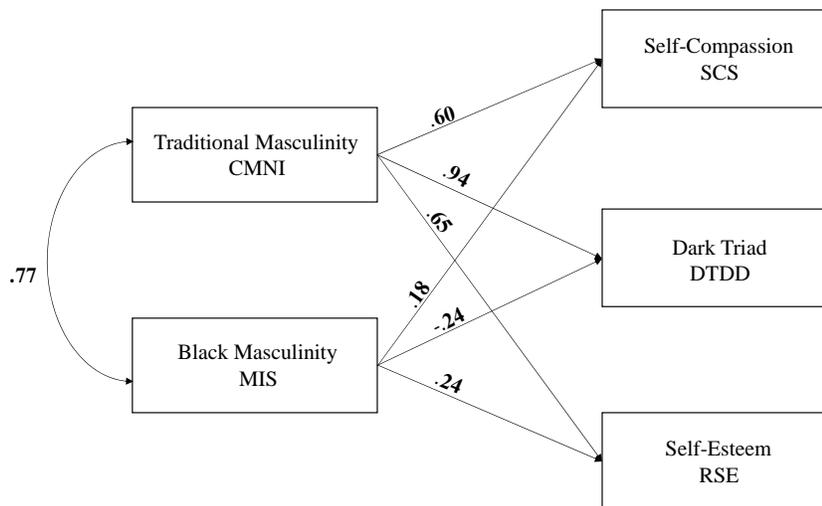
Note. Numbers indicate standardized path coefficients. Significant paths are bolded. Age

and income are controlled for as covariates in the model. Traditional Masculinity:

Winning, emotional control, violence, power over women, playboy, self-reliance,

primacy of work, and heterosexual self-presentation. Black Masculinity: emotional

control, leadership, provider, unequal opportunity, need to prove oneself in society,

proving stereotypes wrong, familial relationships, and friendships.

Exploratory Analyses

Structural equation modeling was conducted post-hoc to further explore the relationships between the subscales of the MIS (Black masculinity) and the Dark Triad given the negative relationship in the main analysis. The original model did not have good fit, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .11, SRMR = .10, $X^2(11)$ = 46.62, p = .00. Modification indices recommended covarying age with all four subscales except primary peer group, and income with both mainstream/Black and primary peer group. The model improved demonstrating adequate fit, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .05, $X^2(5)$ = 11.38, p = .04. All paths were significant with the exception of the relationship between the primary peer group subscale and the Dark Triad, β = .10, p = .16. See Table 4.

Table 4

Parameter Estimates for Structural Equation Modeling for the Subscales of the MIS

| Parameter	B(SE)	B	p	95% Confidence Interval
Main Effects				
Primary Peer Group → Dark Triad	.13(.09)	.10	.156	[-.133, .277]
Primary Group → Dark Triad	**-.31(.13)**	**-.19**	**.013**	**[-.566, -.054]**
MS/BM → Dark Triad	**.84(.11)**	**.56**	**<.001**	**[.623, 1.057]**
Black → Dark Triad	**.37(.11)**	**.25**	**<.001**	**[.153, .587]**
Mainstream → Dark Triad	**-.31(.11)**	**-.20**	**.006**	**[-.527, -.093]**
Correlations				
MS/BM & Black	**.14(.02)**	**.67**	**<.001**	**[.100, .179]**
MS/BM & Primary Group	**.13(.01)**	**.67**	**<.001**	**[.110, .150]**
MS/BM & Primary Peer Group	**.15(.02)**	**.62**	**<.001**	**[.111, .189]**
MS/BM & Mainstream	**.14(.01)**	**.67**	**<.001**	**[.120, .160]**
Black & Primary Group	**.13(.01)**	**.69**	**<.001**	**[.110, .150]**
Black & Primary Peer Group	**.13(.02)**	**.53**	**<.001**	**[.091, .169]**
Black & Mainstream	**.13(.01)**	**.64**	**<.001**	**[.110, .150]**
Mainstream & Primary Group	**.12(.01)**	**.65**	**<.001**	**[.100, .140]**
Mainstream & Primary Peer Group	**.14(.02)**	**.58**	**<.001**	**[.100, .179]**
Primary Group & Primary Peer Group	**.15(.02)**	**.66**	**<.001**	**[.111, .189]**
Covariates				
Age → MS/BM	**.77(.22)**	**.17**	**<.001**	**[.337, 1.203]**
Age → Primary Group	**.43(.20)**	**.10**	**.028**	**[.036, .824]**
Age → Black	**.91(.24)**	**.20**	**<.001**	**[.437, 1.383]**

Note. Bolded numbers indicate significant findings at *p*<.05, with Confidence Interval not containing 0. MS/BM = Mainstream/Black Masculinity.

More conformity to traditional masculine norms pertaining to emotional restriction and need to prove oneself was most strongly related to higher endorsement of Dark Triad traits (β = .56). Increased identification with the Black male experience of unequal opportunity was also related to higher endorsement of Dark Triad traits (β = .25). Conversely, adherence to traditional masculine norms pertaining to being a provider (β = -.20) as well as greater familial presence and influence on development of manhood (particularly the influence of women), (β = -.19), were negatively related to endorsement of Dark Triad traits. See Figure 3.

Figure 3

Exploratory analysis of the Dark Triad and the subscales of the MIS
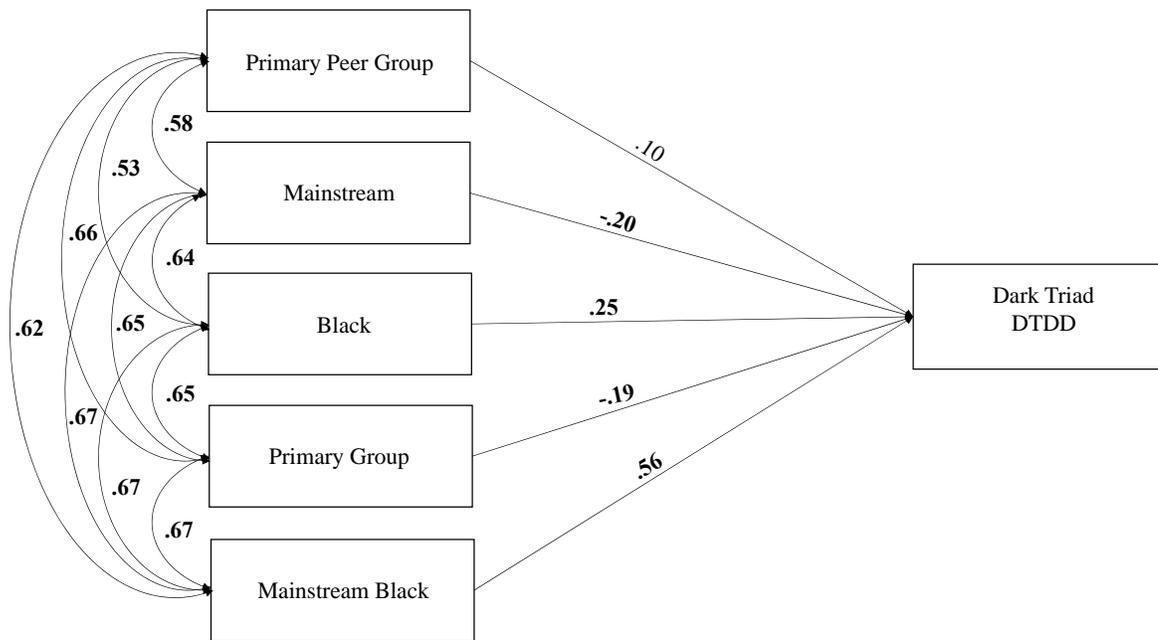
Note. Numbers indicate standardized path coefficients. Significant paths are bolded. Age and income are controlled for as covariates in the model. Primary Peer Group: Influence of men (fathers, grandfathers, male cousins, friends, etc.). Mainstream: Provider, leader,

mentor, and taking care of responsibilities. Black: Unequal opportunity, proving stereotypes wrong, and up against a lot from birth. Primary Group: Influence of family, particularly women. Mainstream Black: emotional restriction and need to prove oneself in society.

Further analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the subscales of the MIS and the subscales of the Dark Triad using structural equation modeling. The original model did not have good fit, CFI = .75, RMSEA = .32, SRMR = .14, $X^2(14) = 404.05$, $p = .00$. Modification indices recommended covarying all three error terms, age with mainstream, age with mainstream/Black, age with Black, and income with both mainstream/Black and primary peer group. These modifications improved the model, demonstrating adequate fit, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .05, $X^2(6) = 16.23$, $p = .01$. See Table 5.

Greater endorsement of traditional masculine norms pertaining to being a provider and mentor was negatively related to psychopathy ($\beta = -.19$) and narcissism ($\beta = -.25$). Greater familial presence and influence (particularly women) on the development of manhood was negatively related to Machiavellianism ($\beta = -.20$) and narcissism ($\beta = -.20$). Greater paternal influence was positively related narcissism ($\beta = .24$). More conformity to traditional masculine norms pertaining to emotional restriction and need prove oneself as a Black man was most strongly and positively related to narcissism ($\beta = .50$), psychopathy ($\beta = .48$), and Machiavellianism ($\beta = .57$). Greater identification with the Black male experience of unequal opportunity in comparison to White men was positively related to narcissism ($\beta = .19$), psychopathy ($\beta = .25$), and Machiavellianism ($\beta = .21$). All other paths were not significant. See Figure 4.

Table 5

*Parameter Estimates for Structural Equation Modeling for the Subscales of the MIS &*

Dark Triad

Parameter	B(SE)	B	p	95% Confidence Interval
Main Effects				
Primary Peer Group → Narcissism	**.32(.09)**	**.24**	**<.001**	**[.143, .497]**
Primary Peer Group → Psychopathy	.04(.11)	.03	.728	[-.177, .257]
Primary Peer Group → Machiavellianism	.02(.10)	.02	.810	[-.177, .217]
Primary Group → Narcissism	**-.32(.16)**	**-.20**	**.016**	**[-.635, -.004]**
Primary Group → Psychopathy	-.27(.11)	-.15	.083	[-.487, -.053]
Primary Group → Machiavellianism	**-.34(.14)**	**-.20**	**.013**	**[-.616, -.064]**
MS/BM → Narcissism	**.76(.12)**	**.50**	**<.001**	**[.523, .996]**
MS/BM → Psychopathy	**.84(.15)**	**.48**	**<.001**	**[.545, 1.135]**
MS/BM → Machiavellianism	**.92(.13)**	**.57**	**<.001**	**[.726, 1.238]**
Mainstream → Narcissism	**-.40(.12)**	**-.25**	**<.001**	**[-.636, -.164]**
Mainstream → Psychopathy	**-.35(.14)**	**-.19**	**.013**	**[-.626, -.074]**
Mainstream → Machiavellianism	-.19(.13)	-.11	.139	[-.446, .066]
Black → Narcissism	**.30(.12)**	**.19**	**.010**	**[.064, .536]**
Black → Psychopathy	**.46(.14)**	**.25**	**.001**	**[.184, .736]**
Black → Machiavellianism	**.35(.12)**	**.21**	**.005**	**[.114, .586]**
Correlations				
MS/BM & Black	**.13(.02)**	**.67**	**<.001**	**[.090, .169]**
MS/BM & Primary Group	**.13(.01)**	**.67**	**<.001**	**[.110, .150]**
MS/BM & Primary Peer Group	**.15(.02)**	**.63**	**<.001**	**[.111, .189]**
MS/BM & Mainstream	**.13(.01)**	**.67**	**<.001**	**[.110, .150]**
Black & Primary Group	**.13(.01)**	**.68**	**<.001**	**[.110, .150]**
Black & Primary Peer Group	**.13(.01)**	**.54**	**<.001**	**[.110, .150]**
Black & Mainstream	**.13(.01)**	**.67**	**<.001**	**[.110, .150]**
Mainstream & Primary Group	**.12(.01)**	**.64**	**<.001**	**[.100, .140]**
Mainstream & Primary Peer Group	**.14(.02)**	**.59**	**<.001**	**[.101, .179]**
Primary Group & Primary Peer Group	**.15(.02)**	**.67**	**<.001**	**[.111, .189]**
E1 → E2	**.23(.03)**	**.60**	**<.001**	**[.171, .289]**
E1 → E3	**.21(.02)**	**.60**	**<.001**	**[.171, .249]**
E2 → E3	**.30(.03)**	**.72**	**<.001**	**[.241, .359]**
Covariates				
Age → MS/BM	**.57(.20)**	**.12**	**.004**	**[.176, 1.964]**
Age → Mainstream	**.82(.20)**	**.19**	**<.001**	**[.426, 1.214]**
Age → Black	**.65(.20)**	**.14**	**.001**	**[.256, 1.044]**

Note. Bolded numbers indicate significant findings at *p*<.05, with Confidence Interval not

containing 0. MS/BM = Mainstream/Black Masculinity.

Figure 4

Exploratory analysis of the subscales of the Dark Triad and the subscales of the MIS
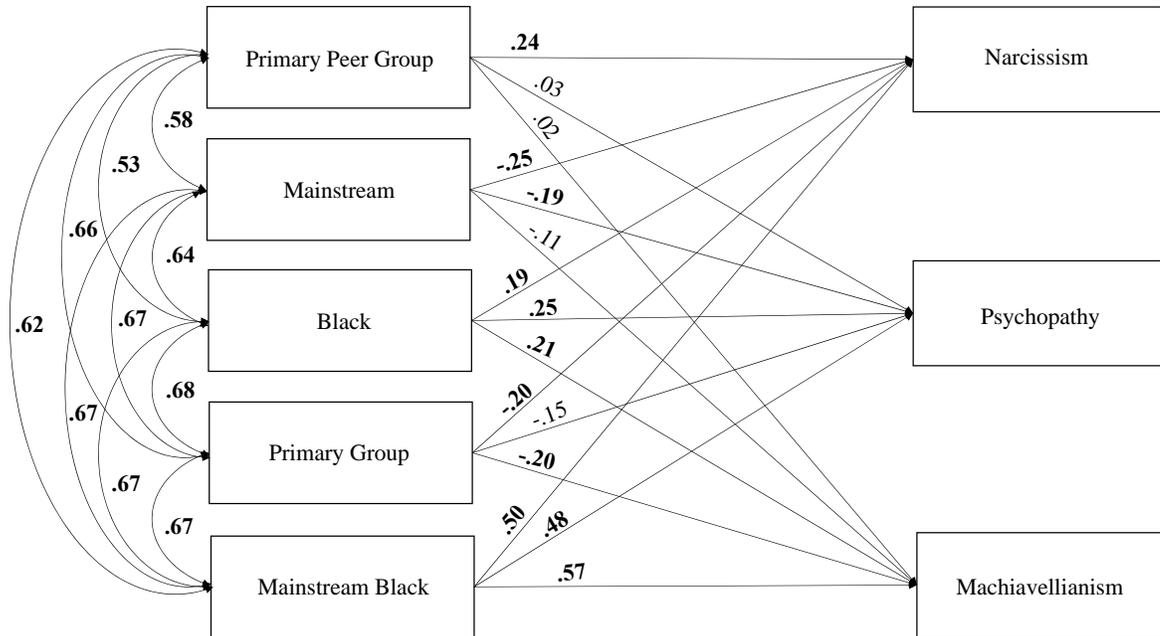
Note. Numbers indicate standardized path coefficients. Significant paths are bolded. Age and income are controlled for as covariates in the model. Primary Peer Group: Influence of men (fathers, grandfathers, male cousins, friends, etc.). Mainstream: Provider, leader, mentor, and taking care of responsibilities. Black: Unequal opportunity, proving stereotypes wrong, and up against a lot from birth. Primary Group: Influence of family, particularly women. Mainstream Black: emotional restriction and need to prove oneself in society

Discussion

To date, there has been minimal research exploring the relationships between adherence to cultural masculine norms and personality traits that may or may not be

adaptive for Black men under the current sociopolitical structure. This study examined the direct associations between cultural measures of masculinity (traditional and Black masculinity) and psychopathy (antisocial behavior and absence of empathy), narcissism (inflated sense of importance and deep need for excessive attention and admiration), and Machiavellianism (use of manipulation and deceit to achieve goals), collectively known in the literature as the Dark Triad. This study also examined direct associations between cultural measures of masculinity and self-compassion as well as self-esteem within the current social context that affords greater privilege to White men. This focus on Black men specifically expands on masculinity research predominantly conducted with White men and is the first to directly examine the relations between conformity to traditional/Eurocentric masculine norms and Black masculinity and self-esteem, Dark Triad traits, and self-compassion among Black men. The findings from this study provides a foundation for future research examining the intersection of race and gender, and the impact of the Black male experience on the development of masculinity.

Although previous studies have found a negative association between self-esteem and conformity to traditional masculine norms in younger Black men (e.g., Mahalik et al., 2006), this study found a positive relationship between conformity to both traditional and Black masculine norms and self-esteem. Interestingly, greater endorsement of traditional masculine norms (e.g., competitiveness, emotional restriction, risk-taking, dominance, self-reliance, importance of work, and having power over women) was more strongly and positively related to self-esteem in comparison to adherence of Black masculine norms (e.g., being a provider, unequal opportunity, need to prove oneself, and the importance of family presence on masculine development). Since self-esteem is mostly derived from

one's ability to align their behaviors with cultural values in order to feel good about oneself, the weaker (but still significant) relationship between Black masculinity and self-esteem may be understood as the impact of the experienced loss of positionality in society. This frustration may motivate Black men to either turn to their racial group for support and compete against the dominant masculine norms or act in accordance to prescribed dominant masculine norms in effort to advance in society which, if achieved, could lead to higher levels of self-esteem. The stronger and positive relationship between traditional masculine norms and self-esteem may also be related to the higher levels of education, employment, and income in this sample, indicating prominent achievement of upward mobility in a society where Black men have traditionally been disenfranchised. For example, prior findings suggest that the educational and economic status of Black men may more strongly influence willingness to adhere to traditional masculine behaviors (in an attempt to advance in society) more so than the barriers they experience (Watkins & Neighbors, 2007).

As anticipated, this study found that more conformity to traditional masculine norms was associated with greater endorsement of Dark Triad traits while conformity to Black masculine norms was associated with lower endorsement of Dark Triad traits. This pattern has been demonstrated in recent research by Waddell et al. (2020) with findings suggesting that hegemonic masculinity was a significant predictor of willingness and perceived ability to emotionally manipulate others, although this sample primarily consisted of White men and women. It appears that hegemonic or traditional masculinity may also share variance with Dark Triad traits within this sample as well. Exploratory analysis revealed that unequal opportunity, emotional restriction, and the pressure to

prove oneself while also disproving stereotypes of Black men in society was positively related Dark Triad traits, particularly Machiavellianism. This supports the notion that endorsement of Dark Triad traits, although adaptive under the current sociopolitical context, could also potentially be the overvaluing or utilization of a traditional masculine approach to achieve personal and professional goals in response to an abnormal societal positioning.

Conversely, exploratory findings suggest that leadership (positive role model, provider, protector) and importance of familial relationships on the development of masculinity were negatively related to endorsement of Dark Triad traits. As such, adherence to Black masculine norms emphasizing the importance of leadership and family may influence the approach to interpersonal and professional relationships in a more communal way as opposed to a more agentic/individualistic approach, serving as protective factors. Prior research exploring Black men's concept of masculinity also revealed themes including leadership (positive role model, provider, protector), structural oppression (systemic barriers and colorblind racism), African American values (religion and spirituality, education, and historical knowledge), traditional masculinity (mental toughness, and physical strength/control of one's body), familial relationships (fatherhood and relationships with women), and self-definition (autonomy and the effects of absent fathers) (Rogers et al., 2015). Findings from Rogers et al. study (2015) also suggests the importance of having, and ultimately becoming, a role model that defies the negative stereotype of Black men to help combat structural oppression, also serving as protective factors.

Although the current study found a negative relationship between greater familial presence (particularly the influence of women on the development of manhood) and Machiavellianism and narcissism, a positive relationship was found between greater paternal influence and narcissism. As research has become increasingly interested in the study of the Dark Triad, recent studies have shown that narcissism, although often conceptualized as maladaptive which it certainly can be, can also be adaptive (Ackerman et al., 2011; Back et al., 2010, Sedikides et al., 2004). For example, narcissism has been found to be positively associated with confidence, assertiveness, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and higher self-esteem (Miller & Maples, 2011; Russ et al., 2008; Sidikides et al., 2004), traits often associated with achieving upward mobility. It is possible then that some degree of self-interest may be associated with positive paternal influence. Consistent with recent findings, Black fathers may engage in racial socializing practices to prepare their sons for encounters with racism in both personal and professional environments by demonstrating confidence, assertiveness, conscientiousness, and higher self-esteem (Allen, 2016). In this way, Black fathers may be modeling to their sons how to navigate racialized spaces as Black men.

Finally, although more conformity to both traditional and Black masculine norms were positively related to self-compassion, the relationship was stronger for traditional masculine norms. This is new, as only White men have been previously examined demonstrating that greater adherence to traditional masculine norms was related to lower levels of self-compassion (Reilly et al., 2014). This study is the first, however, to demonstrate a positive relationship between adherence to masculine norms and self-compassion among Black men specifically. Black male identity sits at the intersection of

America's history of slavery, segregation, the New Jim Crow (Alexander, 2011), and narrowly defined understandings of masculinity accepted in a dominant White culture (i.e., power, dominance, along with educational, economic, and social advantages) (Wade & Rochlen, 2013). Moreover, America has often been threatened by and fearful of Black men, regardless of how they express their masculinity. As a result, Black men have faced ongoing violations and threats to their existence. From this perspective, a Black man's sense of masculinity may be a product of negotiations between their culture and the dominant White culture in which they must cope with threats to their masculinity resulting from racial oppression in the systems we live within (Orelus, 2010). In this way, Black men may practice self-compassion by recognizing the pressure and stress related to a lifetime of adhering to masculine gender norms that inherently involves experiences of racism while prescribing to the dominant/traditional norms.

Age was identified as a significant covariate in this study and was controlled for, warranting further discussion in light of the findings previously discussed. Possible explanations for this finding include potential shifting views and expressions of masculinity throughout the lifespan such that certain needs may become stronger or weaker in the context of achieving personal and professional goals (e.g., Dweck, 2021). Another plausible explanation is the fact that age may impact the way in which men experience and express their masculinity within the context of social norms and expectations (e.g., Dweck, 2021). Given the cross-sectional design of this study, however, it is impossible to disaggregate chronological age from generational cohort effects regarding views and expressions of masculinity in relation to the Dark Triad, self-esteem, and self-compassion. Although a larger sample size in this study would have

allowed for examination of age as a moderator to assess for shifting patterns among participants of different ages, it would still confound age and generational cohort effects. As such, a longitudinal research design would be required to study these patterns over time and should be considered for future research.

Limitations

This study has a few limitations. First, this study employed a cross-sectional design with self-report measures. As such, causal claims cannot be made. It is certainly possible and likely that other variables contribute to self-esteem, Dark Triad, and self-compassion that were not included in the model within this study. It is also possible that the direct effects could be reversed such that self-esteem, Dark Triad, and self-compassion could predict adherence to traditional and Black masculine norms. Future research should utilize other methods of research such as experimental or longitudinal repeated measures designs, which have the potential to identify causal relationships between variables.

Additionally, the inclusion criteria for this research project required participants to identify as Black/African American or African and male. Although this is viewed as a study strength that contributes to the current body of literature, these categories may fail to recognize the layers of racial identity that are both personal and nuanced including ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. For example, Black individuals who were not born in the United States might identify as Black and not African American, and those who were born in America might identify as African American and not Black. Given the small number of men who identified as African ($n = 10$), it was determined to analyze the data altogether. Also, sexual and gendered minorities may experience and express their

sense of masculinity in ways that may not be heteronormative. Future research should explore perceptions of masculinity in minority populations to gain a better understanding of gender expressions across various intersecting identities and its impact on self-esteem, Dark Triad, and self-compassion.

Further, the recruitment source (mTurk) provided highly educated Black men who were mostly employed full-time and had higher than national average household incomes and may not be generalizable to all Black men. For example, the degree to which environmental social indicators influence younger Black men are likely different from those that influence middle aged and older Black men. Therefore, knowledge regarding the risk and protective factors related to masculinity influencing Black men of different ages is needed to inform age-appropriate and culturally sensitive research and practice.

Last, this data was collected between September 2021 and October 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic that has disproportionately impacted Black communities across the country. Black men, in adhering to masculine norms, may experience an increased sense of responsibility as a provider and protector, to uphold their families and communities which may have impacted the findings in this study. Examining the impact of COVID 19 was outside the scope of this study, although future research should examine the specific impacts of the pandemic on Black men and their sense of masculinity.

Implications and Future Directions

Research on treatments for Black men's masculinity-related problems is in its infancy. Currently, very few interventions have been evaluated for their effectiveness. Recognition within mainstream psychology regarding clinical theory about conceptions

of Black masculinity, masculinity-related problems, and potential treatments are needed. Virtually all problems that have been associated with masculinity for Black men warrant further investigation with corresponding assessment and treatment development through clinical trials. There is a need for intervention-based studies to address how to improve Black men's willingness to seek help, as well as for studies to integrate discussions of masculinity themes (leadership, emotional restriction, familial presence, inequality and the need to prove oneself in society etc.) in the research and therapy process. More specifically, research is needed to explore how masculinity norms operate in tandem with social byproducts of race to impact Black men's help seeking behaviors. Efforts focused in this direction could help in sensitively creating efficacious evidence-based treatments specifically for Black men.

Although methodologically challenging, it is important for research to consider an intersectional approach to understanding the mental health of Black men and the impact of masculinity. This type of approach would address the intersection of multiple aspects of their existence including race, ethnicity, gender, SES, socially constructed identity, and context to name a few. Much of the research presented in this study also elucidates the need to better understand the ways in which multiple factors integrate and inherently influence personality from a dimensional approach that considers the adaptiveness of the Dark Triad in particular contexts, despite the presence of other maladaptive traits (e.g., Trull, 2013). It is also important to examine this dimensional approach to masculinity and personality development in particular contexts and its influences on mental health.

Currently, most research on Black men and masculinity is conducted in the field of social psychology and is mostly qualitative in nature, a methodology which is

particularly helpful in providing information about the meaning and experiences of Black men as it relates to their masculinity, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Future research should continue to quantifiably examine how conceptions of Black masculinity and Black male experience are associated with different mental health outcomes related to personality, adaptive coping styles, and coping styles that although adaptive in the short term, may pose long-term interpersonal and intrapersonal difficulties.

Last, research should focus its efforts toward creating psychological assessment tools that are culturally sensitive. Regarding the creation of evidence-based treatments (EBT's), efficacy should be categorized to include *well established*, *probably efficacious*, or *possibly efficacious* (Association of Black Psychologists, 2011). Researchers should also establish specific criteria to assess the efficacy of specific treatments for Black men (i.e., at least 75% of sample, conduct separate analysis for that group, or confirm that race/ethnicity is not a moderating variable between treatment and outcomes) (Association of Black Psychologists, 2011). Future research should also incorporate more practice-based evidence that includes a variety of treatment approaches that include positive cultural attributes and have been accepted by the local community. When using EBT's with racial/ethnic minorities, mental health practitioners should consider and incorporate, when appropriate, practices that community members have traditionally used and have found helpful (Association of Black Psychologists, 2011). It will also be critical to identify strengths and protective factors among Black youth instead of mostly relying on deficit models.

Conclusion

Findings from this study provides evidence that more conformity to both traditional and Black masculine norms was related to increased self-esteem and self-compassion, although these relationships were stronger for traditional masculinity. For Black men, their experiences within our current ecological systems have led to both connections within the smaller communities while encountering racism and discrimination within the larger systems such as the New Jim Crow, for example. It is quite challenging, if not impossible, to understand the life trajectories and experiences of Black men without considering the impact of the systems we live within. Many black men identify with the role of protector and mentor within their homes and communities while also facing disproportionate racism, police brutality, and economic inequality which may increase their sense of pride in caring for their community while also increasing self-compassion given the current political structure they are operating within. This reality may create conflicting expectations of the role of Black men as protectors of their communities, yet unequipped to protect themselves within the structures they live in and may lead to increased utilization of Dark Triad traits to achieve personal, professional, and communal goals.

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