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Racial identity and self-esteem among Black

Brazilian men: Race matters in Brazil too!

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Abstract

The contribution of J. E. Helms's (1990) people of color racial identity model to the collective and individual self-esteem of Black Brazilian men (N = 203) was explored. The relationship between racial identity attitudes and other racial constructs such as skin color, racial group self-designation, and racial mistrust were also examined. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that the set of racial identity attitudes (conformity, dissonance, resistance, and internalization) was significant in predicting self-esteem (collective and individual). Results from a MANOVA also showed an effect for skin color on racial attitudes. In addition, racial identity was significantly related to mistrust of Whites by Black Brazilian men. The implications of these findings are discussed in the context of racial relations in Brazil.

Racial identity and self-esteem among Black Brazilian men: Race matters in Brazil too!

Is racial identity a factor that impacts the sense of personal and collective worth of Black Brazilians? After all, Black Brazilians live in a society that downplays the existence of racism, but in which racial disparities demonstrate the pervasiveness of racial discrimination at the institutional level. Although 70 million out of the 160 million people in Brazil are Black, they are disproportionately underrepresented in positions of power. There are inequalities between Blacks and Whites in income levels, access to education, literacy rates, employment, working conditions, housing, health care, infant mortality, life expectancy, and in the criminal justice system (Beozzo, 1993; Fry, 2000; Hasenbalg, 1992; Nobles, 2000; Winant, 1990). Until recently, many Brazilians were reluctant to believe that these disparities could be attributed in part to racial prejudice and discrimination in their society (Fry, 2000; "Racismo Cordial", 1995).

Racial views in Brazil were shaped by "the myth of racial democracy", the notion that Brazilians lived in a racially mixed society where prejudice and discrimination did not exist (Freyre, 1959; Hasenbalg, 1979, 1992). Unlike the U.S., a multicategory system for identifying race based on skin color also exists in Brazil, making it difficult to determine who is Black and who is not (Corwin, 1974; Nobles, 2000; Skidmore, 1993). Recent research indicates that Brazilians now acknowledge racial discrimination at the societal level, even though the majority still denies having or being the victim of racial prejudice themselves (Buckley, 2000; "Racismo Cordial", 1995). That is, racism is perceived as a phenomenon that occurs at the institutional level, but with very little personal consequence or relevance.

The impact of a racial democracy ideology and a color continuum on the racial identity and self-esteem of Black Brazilians is unknown. According to Helms and Cook (1999) racial identity refers to the quality of one's identification with one's racial group[1] and emphasizes how

individuals come to recognize and overcome the psychological and internalized effects of racism. This study focuses on how Black Brazilian men have responded to and internalized race-related messages from society about their racial group. It represents a preliminary examination of racial identity among Black Brazilian men and their individual and collective self-esteem. We also examine the association between racial identity and mistrust of Whites by Black Brazilian men, as well as the relationship between racial identity attitudes and skin color and racial group categorization.

People of Color Racial Identity Theory

There is a dearth of published theoretical frameworks on how Black Brazilians view themselves racially, process racial information in their social environment, or cope with racism; therefore, we draw from the existing body of literature on racial identity among African-Americans. This study seeks to explore racial identity among Brazilian Black men using *Helms's people of color racial identity attitudes model* (1990). In her view, individuals have at their disposal four different modes (i.e., statuses) of interpreting racial information about themselves, other people, and institutions. Helms (1995) defined statuses as "the dynamic cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes that govern a person's interpretation of racial information in her or his environment" (p. 181). The role that statuses play is one of helping the individual cope with relevant racial material. The statuses follow a certain ascending order of evolution and complexity of expression, although they are not expressed as a simple linear model. At any one time, one status tends to predominate over the others based on its effectiveness in helping the person cope with racial information (Helms, 1990, 1995, 1996; Helms & Cook, 1999).

The first status, *Conformity*, is characterized by an internalization of White society's definition of one's racial group, which may lead to a devaluation of one's own racial group and appreciation of White standards. Internalized racism is experienced without the person being aware of it. In order to cope with meaningful racial information in the environment, the person resorts to denial, minimization of events, and selective perception (Helms, 1995; Helms & Cook, 1999; Kohatsu, 1992).

In the second status, *Dissonance*, a certain amount of ambivalence and confusion is experienced. People of color who are governed by this racial status begin to question their commitment to Whites as they become aware of their oppressed condition and begin to show an interest in their own racial group. People of color who predominantly display this status often repress the anxiety evoked by racial information in the environment in order to cope (Helms, 1995; Helms & Cook, 1999; Kohatsu, 1992).

The third status, *Resistance*, involves idealization of one's socioracial group and denigration of White culture. People of color who experience the predominant features of this status show a strong preference and commitment to their group. In order to survive in what these individuals perceive as an oppressive society, they often are hypersensitive toward racial stimuli and engage in dichotomous thinking (Helms, 1995; Helms & Cook, 1999; Kohatsu, 1992).

In the fourth status, *Internalization*, there is a positive racial self and an ability to objectively assess and respond to members of the dominant group. People of color whose racial attitudes are dominated by this status recognize and resist the multiple negative messages and stereotypes about their group. They approach racial information in the environment by using intellectualization and abstraction and can often be flexible and analytic in their style (Helms, 1995; Helms & Cook, 1999; Kohatsu, 1992).

One aim of this study was to assess whether racial identity as conceptualized by Helms's model is useful in understanding the racial experiences of Black Brazilian men. That is, can racial identity be measured in a reliable manner using Helms' approach in Brazil and is racial identity embedded in the expected pattern of relationships to other relevant measures. To this end, the association between racial identity attitudes and other psychological constructs such as individual and collective self-esteem was explored in this population. Furthermore, this study examined whether race-related constructs, such as mistrust of Whites by Blacks, and skin color and racial categorization were associated with different statuses of racial identity.

Racial Identity and Perception of Racism

Racism in Brazil is pervasive in the family, school and judicial systems, workplace, television programming, political arena, and police treatment (De Souza, 1988; Dos Santos, 1981; Figueira, 1988; Moore, 1989; Silva & Hasenbalg, 1992). Racism as defined by Bulhan (1985) is "The generalization, institutionalization, and assignment of values to real or imaginary differences between people in order to justify a state of privilege, aggression, and/or violence" (p. 9). Black Brazilians are likely victims of racism or observe racism expressed against their racial group repeatedly during their lifetime. However, given the tendency of Brazilians to downplay racial problems in their society, this study used an indirect way of assessing the experience of racism. This was accomplished by measuring whether or not Black Brazilian men are suspicious of Whites as opposed to asking them about specific personal encounters with racism. Terrell and Terrell (1981) used the concept of *cultural mistrust* to describe Black mistrust of Whites. For them, the generalized suspicion or mistrust experienced by Blacks is caused by a legacy of racial mistreatment and discrimination by Whites.

From a sample of Asian Americans, Kohatsu (1992) found that in terms of racial identity, resistance attitudes were positively related to awareness of interpersonal and institutional racism, whereas dissonance and internalization attitudes were only positively associated with awareness of institutional racism. Congruently, Alvarez and Helms (2001) found similar relationship between resistance attitudes and awareness of racism, but dissonance and internalization were only negatively related to interpersonal racism. This study examined the relationship between Black Brazilian men's racial identity and their mistrust of Whites. We hypothesized that the first (conformity) and fourth (internalization) statuses of racial identity would be negatively related to cultural mistrust, while the other two statuses would be positively correlated. That is, those that deny or minimize the importance of race or can approach issues of racism in a more objective manner are more likely to experience less mistrust of Whites.

Racial Identity and Collective Self-Esteem

As stated earlier, Black Brazilians are subjected to societal negative messages and images about their racial group. They are also discouraged from recognizing and dealing with racism in their social environment. The manner in which Black Brazilians deal with this negative conception of their racial group and the reluctance to address racism can contribute to the development of a positive sense of oneself as a member of the Black racial group or not. Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) defined collective self-esteem as those aspects of identity that have to do with membership in social groups (i.e., race, gender, religion) and the value placed on those social groups. Individuals' perceptions of their racial group and the importance of their racial membership to their identity are part of collective self-esteem. Collective self-esteem is conceptualized along several dimensions that can be high or low depending on how individuals perceive their membership in the group.

Alvarez and Helms (2001) reported in a sample of Asian Americans that resistance and internalization attitudes were associated with a positive sense of collective self-esteem, whereas conformity attitudes were associated with a negative sense of collective self-esteem. Canabal (1995) examined the relationship between collective self-esteem and racial identity attitudes among Latino students. Findings indicated that attitudes of the resistance and internalization statuses had a consistent moderate relationship with collective self-esteem.

The relationship between racial identity and collective-esteem among Black Brazilian men was explored in the current study. We hypothesized that attitudes of the resistance and internalization statuses would be positively related to collective self-esteem, whereas attitudes associated with the conformity and dissonance statuses would be negatively related. In other words, Black Brazilian men who use Blacks as their reference group (resistance attitudes) and have an internal positive racial self (internalization attitudes), would perceive their racial group more positively and as an important part of their identity.

Racial Identity and Individual Self-Esteem

How does the way in which Black Brazilians process and incorporate racial information from their environment contribute to the attitudes they hold towards themselves? The importance of race and racial relations to the psychological functioning of people of color has been established. The literature suggests, however, that the association between racial identity and individual self-esteem is not linear. The most conclusive findings show that among African-Americans: 1) racial attitudes associated with the most White-oriented status (conformity) are related to lower levels of self-esteem, and 2) racial attitudes associated with the status that reflects the most secure and positive racial self (internalization) are related to higher levels of self-esteem. Contrarily, findings pertaining to the dissonance and resistance statuses are

less definitive and suggest a more complex relationship between racial identity and self-esteem among African-Americans (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997; Munford, 1994; Parham & Helms, 1985a; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Speight, Vera, & Derrickson, 1996; Wilson & Constantine, 1999).

There have been no systematic attempts to examine the relationship between individual self-esteem and racial identity among Black Brazilian men. This study examined how the attitudes associated with racial identity are related to feelings and attitudes that Black Brazilian men have towards themselves. We hypothesized that the conformity and dissonance attitudes would be negatively related to individual self-esteem, while the resistance and internalization attitudes would be positively related to individual self-esteem. In other words, Black Brazilians who prefer the standards and norms of Whites and are confused and ambivalent about their own Blackness are more likely to have negative feelings about themselves.

Method

Sample

A sample of 203 Brazilian male students of African descent was recruited. They came from two trade schools in two major Brazilian cities, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, both of which have a significant Black Brazilian population. The only criterion for participation was that students have self-reported African ancestry. Participants ranged in age from 14 to 29 years ($M = 19.5$, $SD = 4.4$). About 85% of the participants had a high school education or less. Seventy-five percent identified as being of mixed racial background (e.g., Pardo, Moreno, Mulatto, Mestiço) as opposed to being Black or Negro[2] (25%). Sixty percent of the participants described their skin color as light; the remaining 40% identified as dark skinned. Only those who had complete data were included in the final analyses.

Procedure

Participants completed an anonymous questionnaire in their native Portuguese language. All measures were translated into Portuguese and then back-translated into English to assess equivalence (Brislin, 1986). Several group administrations of the questionnaire were conducted with students who volunteered from different programs offered by the school (e.g. mechanics, electronics, and printing) for an opportunity to win a prize. School teachers and administrators of White, Black, and mixed backgrounds assisted in data collection.

Measures

Racial identity scale. Racial identity was measured by Helms' (1990) People of Color Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (PRIAS), which was developed to depict racial identity attitudes experienced by minority group members in the United States. The PRIAS consists of 50 items (some reverse coded) rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Higher scores on each of the four statuses are indicative of stronger levels of racial identity attitudes characteristic of that status. Examples of items include the following: "People of my race should learn to think and act like Whites" (conformity), "Sometimes I am proud of the racial group to which I belong and sometimes I am ashamed of it" (dissonance), "I limit myself to activities involving people of my own race" (resistance), and "People of my culture and White culture have much to learn from each other" (internalization). The internal consistencies for this sample were .71 for conformity, .62 for dissonance, .72 for resistance, and .69 for internalization.

Collective self-esteem scale. Identification with racial group was measured using Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) Collective Self-esteem Scale (CSE). Collective self-esteem is conceptualized along four dimensions: (a) membership esteem (e.g., I am a cooperative

participant in the racial group I belong to), (b) private collective self-esteem (e.g., Overall, I

often feel that the racial group of which I am a member of is not worthwhile), (c) public

collective self-esteem (e.g., Overall, my racial group is considered good by others), and (d)

importance to identity (e.g., The racial group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am)

(Luhtanen & Crocker, 1991, 1992). The CSE consists of 16 items (some reverse coded) that

form four separate subscales. Responses were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to

5 = *strongly agree*), instead of the original 7-point scale, to simplify choices for respondents.

Although there are four subscales, we used only the total collective self-esteem score. The

average of all items yields an overall measure of collective self-esteem, and the higher the score,

the higher the collective self-esteem. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall scale in

this sample was .60. One item (number 12) was omitted from the original scale.

Individual self-esteems scale. Individual self-esteem was measured by Rosenberg (1979)

Self-esteem Scale (RSE), consisting of 10 items (some reverse coded) ranging on a 4-point

Likert-type scale (*1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree*). An additive scoring of all items

yields an overall score, with higher scores indicating higher degrees of self-esteem. The internal

consistency coefficient for this sample was .75.

Perception of racism scale. Experience of racism was assessed by the Cultural Mistrust

Inventory (CMI), developed by Terrell and Terrell (1981). The CMI consists of 48 items that

make up four subscales measuring areas where racial mistrust of Whites by Blacks is most likely

to occur. Three subscales of this measure --- political, business, and interpersonal --- were used

(38 items). The word "Black" used in the CMI was replaced by "people (person) of color".

Examples of items used include "White policemen will slant a story to make Blacks appear

guilty (political/legal subscale)", "It is best for Blacks to be on their guard when among Whites

(interpersonal/social subscale)", and "Whites who establish businesses in Black communities do so only so that they can take advantage of Blacks (work/business subscale)". The items in the scale were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (*1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree*) rather than the original 9-point scale. In this study the reliability coefficient for the three subscales included was .74. One item (number 38) was omitted.

<div align="center">Results</div>

The Relationship Between Racial Identity Attitudes and Other Racial Constructs

Separate analyses were performed to examine the relationship between racial identity attitudes and other racial constructs such as self-ascribed racial group and skin color and mistrust of Whites. In all these instances racial identity was the dependent variable and an alpha value of .05 was used.

Self-designated racial group (black vs. mixed) was entered as a predictor of the group of racial identity attitudes in the first Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVA). Results from a Hotelling's T^2 (4, $N = 192$) = 9.57, $p = .06$) test revealed a trend toward statistical significance between the racial group variable and the group of racial identity attitudes. Post hoc examination of the individual racial identity attitudes revealed that resistance was the only one significantly related to racial group. Individuals who described themselves as Black had a higher level of resistance attitudes ($M = 2.72$, $SD = .44$) than those who described themselves as racially mixed ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .54$).

Self-designated skin color (dark vs. light) was the independent variable in the second MANOVA. Skin color had a statistically significant effect on the racial identity construct, T^2 (4, $N = 192$) = 10.88, $p < .05$. Post hoc examination of the separate dependent variables revealed that there was a significant effect of skin color on dissonance attitudes,

$F(1, 191) = 5.06, p < .05$, and on resistance attitudes, $F(1, 191) = 9.02, p < .01$. Darker skinned

participants reported significantly higher levels of dissonance ($M = 2.87, SD = .39$) and

resistance attitudes ($M = 2.72, SD = 2.50$) than lighter individuals ($M = 2.73, SD = .46$) and

($M = 2.50, SD = .57$) respectively.

Bivariate correlations indicated that Black Brazilian's racial identity attitudes were

significantly related to mistrust of Whites. Conformity ($r = .32, p < .0001$), dissonance ($r = .31$,

$p < .0001$), and resistance ($r = .48, p < .0001$) attitudes were all significantly related to mistrust

of Whites. Higher internalization attitudes were correlated with lower mistrust of Whites

($r = -.22, p < .01$).

The Relationship Between Racial Identity and Self-Esteem

The intercorrelations, mean scores, standard deviations, and ranges for racial identity

attitudes, collective and individual self-esteem are included in Table 1. Because of high

intercorrelation among the four racial identity statuses, hierarchical set regression analyses were

conducted to determine whether the set of racial identity statuses was related to self-esteem, after

controlling for the demographic variables. The relationships among the four racial identity

attitudes (i.e., conformity, dissonance, resistance, and internalization) and collective and

individual self-esteem were examined. The demographic variables of racial group, skin color,

city, and age were entered in the first step and racial identity attitudes in the second step (See

Table 2).

The results of the first regression analysis revealed that the set of demographic variables

was not significant in predicting collective self-esteem. On the other hand, the addition of the set

of racial identity statuses significantly increased the prediction of collective self-esteem, after

controlling for the demographic set, ($\Delta F^2 (8,165) = 5.03, p < .01$). The model including both

sets of variables had an R^2 (8, N = 178) = .21, p < .0001. Of the four individual statuses, only

internalization attitudes, ß = .42, p < .0001, significantly predicted collective self-esteem in the

hierarchical set regression. The higher the internalization attitudes, the higher the collective

self-esteem.

The second hierarchical regression analysis revealed that the set of demographic

variables was significant in predicting individual self-esteem R^2 (4, N = 181) = .06, p < .05. The

second step involved the addition of the set of racial identity attitudes and resulted in a

significant change in R^2, (ΔF^2 (8,168) = 5.67, p < .01). The proportion of variance accounted for

by this model was R^2 (8, N = 181) = .27, p < .0001. Post hoc examination of individual

predictors showed that of the four demographic factors, only age significantly predicted

individual self-esteem ß = .25, p < .001. Those who were older had higher self-esteem. Of the

four individual racial identity statuses, conformity attitudes were inversely related to individual

self-esteem ß = -.18, p < .01 . Thus, as conformity increased, participants' individual

self-esteem decreased. In addition, internalization attitudes and individual self-esteem were

positively related ß = .35, p < .0001. Thus, the higher the internalization, the higher the

individual self-esteem.

Discussion

This exploratory study examined Black Brazilian men's racial identity, self-esteem, and

perceptions of racism. This study also examined self-designated skin color and racial group

among Black Brazilian men. Findings indicated that racial identity attitudes were moderately

related to collective and individual self-esteem, as well as mistrust of Whites and the race-related

self-ascribed characteristics of skin color and racial group. Independent of skin color and racial

group, however, racial identity attitudes made a unique contribution to the prediction of

collective and individual self-esteem. The implication is that racial identity, as conceptualized by Helms (1990), has some relevance to Black Brazilian men since the way that they feel about themselves and their racial group membership is influenced by their racial identity attitudes.

Self-Esteem

Racial identity attitudes associated with the internalization status were predictive of collective self-esteem. Black Brazilian men with high internalization attitudes were more likely to think highly of their racial group and their status within it and to believe that others have a favorable impression of their racial group as well. Furthermore, they were more likely to believe that their racial membership is an important self-defining characteristic. This is similar to other findings in the literature which suggest that as individuals use more mature statuses of racial identity to interpret racial events in their environment, they experience a higher level of collective self-esteem (Alvarez & Helms, 2001; Canabal, 1995).

Individual self-esteem was significantly related to all four racial identity statuses at the bivariate level. Only conformity and internalization, however, were predictive of individual self-esteem when all four racial identity statuses were entered as a set after controlling for demographics. Conformity attitudes were negatively associated with individual self-esteem. The finding that high conformity attitudes were associated with low individual self-esteem is congruent with findings from other studies conducted among African-Americans (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997; Munford, 1994; Parham & Helms, 1985a; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Speight et al., 1996; Wilson & Constantine, 1999). These findings suggest that Black men who devalue their own racial group and embrace White values and standards tend to have a more negative attitude toward themselves.

Black Brazilian men who scored high on internalization held positive attitudes about themselves. This result is consistent with other findings in the literature in which internalization attitudes were positively related to individual self-esteem among African-Americans (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997; Munford, 1994; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Speight, et al., 1996; Wilson & Constantine, 1999). The finding that the least sophisticated of the four racial identity statuses (i.e., conformity) is associated with a negative view of the self, whereas the most mature (i.e., internalization) is related to a positive attitude of the self is an important to note. First, it highlights the crucial connection between a person's view of the racial aspect of the self and personal well-being. Second, it suggests that those Black Brazilian men who have a positive racial self and strong connection to their group, while being flexible and objective in their approach to White culture and people, are more likely to feel good about themselves than those who hold negative stereotypes about their own racial group and idealize Whiteness.

Awareness of Racism

Another significant contribution of this study is the evidence supporting the validity of the racial identity measure developed by Helms (1990) in a different cultural setting. Findings revealed that all four racial identity statuses were significantly associated with mistrust of Whites. The conformity, dissonance, and resistance statuses were positively related to mistrust of Whites, whereas internalization was negatively related.

The finding that both resistance and conformity attitudes were associated with greater mistrust of Whites may seem incongruent at first, given that these statuses represent opposite racial attitudes. This finding was expected for resistance. Individuals who are high on the resistance status tend to value their own racial group and denigrate White people and culture.

They may be likely to engage in dichotomous thinking and to be hypervigilant about racial issues

(Helms, 1995). Therefore, it is not surprising that Black Brazilian men who were high in

resistance were more likely to be mistrustful of Whites. It is possible that Black Brazilian men

who report high levels of cultural mistrust have previously experienced racial discrimination or

prejudice and consequently tend to deal with racial information in their environments in a more

polarized manner. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Kohatsu (1992)

and Alvarez and Helms (2001), who found that attitudes associated with the resistance status

were positively associated with mistrust of Whites by Asian Americans.

On the other hand, the association of conformity attitudes and mistrust of Whites was

unexpected. Individuals who have high conformity attitudes tend to deny or minimize the

importance of race and value White people and culture. Therefore, one may assume that

individuals who are high in conformity attitudes would likely be oblivious to racism and trusting

of Whites. However, internalized racism does not necessarily translate into blind faith. One may

prefer the standards and norms of White culture, but still be suspicious of White people's intents

and actions.

In addition, results revealed that when Black Brazilian men used the internalization status

in approaching racial information in their environment, they were less mistrustful of Whites in

general. This finding is consistent with results from another study (Alvarez & Helms, 2001).

One possible explanation for the finding that internalization attitudes were negatively related to

mistrust of Whites among Black Brazilian men is that the hostility and antagonism toward

Whites so characteristic of the resistance status have not been experienced among those high in

internalization attitudes. Accordingly, individuals high in internalization approach Whites in a

more open and flexible manner, despite recognizing that there is racism perpetrated against

Blacks in society. Thus, a secure and positive Black racial identity contributes to less mistrust of Whites. On the other hand, the realization of the existence of racism accompanied by anxiety and confusion regarding one's racial identity (dissonance) was related to greater mistrust of Whites in this study. These findings suggest that racial identity attitudes characterized by internalized racism, ambivalence, or anger are more likely to generate mistrust of Whites by Black men in Brazil, than are those racial attitudes that reflect a positive and secure Black identity.

Skin Color and Racial Group

Skin color self-designation was assessed in this study and results indicated that a majority of the sample preferred to be called "Moreno" or some variation of this term when asked to define skin color in their own words. This finding is similar to that found in a national survey recently completed in Brazil, in which 43% of the sample preferred the term Moreno ("Racismo Cordial", 1995).   Regarding racial group self-designation, participants expressed a propensity towards terms that reflected some type of mixture of different racial groups such as "Mulatto", "Mestiço", or "Moreno". These results perhaps reflect the manner in which Black Brazilian men prefer to view themselves. In other words, they consider themselves as a mixture of White and Black, rather than seeing themselves as being either White or Black as is often the case in the United States.

Self-designated skin color tone was related to racial identity attitudes, but not to collective self-esteem, individual self-esteem, and cultural mistrust. Results revealed that higher levels of dissonance attitudes were experienced among self-designated darker skinned Black Brazilian men than among lighter ones. The dissonance status is characterized by a new awareness of oppressed condition that leads to confusion. Accordingly, it is more likely that a dark Black Brazilian man would have encountered a situation in which he becomes the object of

racism than would a light skinned one. Many light skinned individuals can pass as Whites and in doing so avoid encounters with racism. Therefore, darker skinned individuals may be more susceptible to the anxiety and confusion associated with the dissonance status because they are more likely to be forced to face the reality of racism and create alliances with their own racial group.

In addition, dark skinned Black Brazilian men reported significantly higher levels of resistance attitudes than did their light skinned counterparts. The resistance status is marked by an idealization of one's own racial group and rejection of White people and culture. One could argue that because dark skinned individuals are probably more often a target of racism than are light skinned ones, they are more likely to develop anti-White sentiments. Moreover, Black Brazilian men with a dark skin pigmentation are clearly identifiable as Black and may be more likely to immerse themselves in their own culture and feel connected to their own racial group. Participants that chose to identify themselves as of Black as opposed to Mixed racial background also displayed higher resistance attitudes. One implication of this finding is that perhaps Black Brazilians who identify themselves as Black experience a higher level of racial consciousness than those who consider themselves to be mixed. This heightened racial consciousness could be accompanied by a hypersensitivity towards racial stimuli, a need to embrace symbols of Blackness, and a tendency to be Pro-Black and anti-White, which are characteristics often associated with the resistance status.

Conclusions

This study, which represents a first look at how race plays an important role in the self-concept of Black Brazilian men, has several limitations. The sample was a convenience sample of men coming from a variety of trade school classes. Therefore, one limitation of this

study is that the sample may not be representative of all Brazilian males of African descent.

Moreover, because the sample was restricted to men, results cannot be generalized to Black

Brazilian women. Future studies ought to use representative sampling and include women in the

sample to determine whether gender differences exist in the way racial identity is socially

constructed or manifested in Brazil and to assess the impact of gender on self-esteem. In

addition, not all factors that are known to influence self-esteem (e.g., mental health, social

support) were included in this study. Further research could examine the interplay of racial

identity attitudes and other psychosocial factors. Socioeconomic status, age, educational levels,

and geographic representation were also restricted in this sample. Another limitation concerns

language: even though a standard translation was done, some items did not appear to have

conceptual equivalence in Brazil. For example, some students could not comprehend terms such

as "minorities" or relate to concepts like "White activities" in the racial identity measure.

Notwithstanding, the results of this study showed that there are connections between the

part of identity that relates to race and the psychological functioning of Black Brazilian men.

The significance of this finding is especially noteworthy in a society that tends to minimize the

importance of race as a psychological construct. In the absence of a racial identity model

developed in Brazil, Helms' racial identity model provided a framework for understanding how

Black Brazilians cope with racial information in their environment and how Black Brazilians

identify with their racial group. These findings could help set the stage for the development of a

theoretical model indigenous to the Brazilian experience. Research of a qualitative nature could

provide valuable information on how race is socially constructed in Brazil and how internalized

racism is experienced among Black Brazilians. Particular attention should be paid to the cultural

context, which includes uniquely Brazilian attitudes about skin color, the ideology of racial

democracy, as well as a reluctance of Brazilians to create racial polarization and animosities. Quantitative research could further explore the relationship between racial identity attitudes and psychopathological or adaptive measures of behavior.

In general, there is a need for more research and programs that examine the incidence and prevalence of mental health issues, diagnostic patterns, and treatment approaches among Black Brazilians, with an emphasis on race at all levels of inquiry. The results of the current study could be used to develop programs that target the Black Brazilian population. The link found in the study between racial identity and self-esteem highlights the importance of culturally sensitive educational programs for Black children that foster a positive identity by combating racial stereotypes prevalent in Brazilian society. Moreover, training programs for counselors ought to emphasize how race is an integral psychological aspect of every person and is crucial to the appropriate diagnosis and treatment of people of color.

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Footnotes

[1]   An important distinction between the concept of race and ethnicity should be drawn here. In this study ethnicity is defined as the national, regional, or tribal origins of one's ancestors and the customs, traditions, and rituals handed down by these ancestors which, among the ethnic group members, are assumed to be their culture (Helms & Cook, 1999). Race in this study has a sociopolitical connotation. In other words, race is viewed in the context of the history of domination and subordination of racial groups in the society. People are assigned to racial groups usually on the basis of their phenotype or physical appearance (i.e., skin color, hair texture, facial features). Ethnic groups may exist within societal racial groups, but the two are not necessarily the same (Helms, 1994; Helms & Cook, 1999). In other words, Latinos who are perceived to be Black may share a similar cultural socialization with White Latinos, however their Blackness rather than their ethnicity will most likely determine the kind of experiences they will be exposed to in their social environment.

[2]   In Brazil both terms "Preto" (Black) and "Negro" (Negro) are used when referring to Black Brazilians. The term Negro does not necessarily have a pejorative connotation. Both words are used interchangeably to mean one's race or skin color. In addition, the term "Pardo" in Portuguese is used by the Brazilian Census to mean "brown or mixed" and the dictionary defines the term as both "gray" and "brown". The term "Moreno" means "the color of wheat when it is mature", "Mulatto" is the "mixture of Black and White", and "Mestiço" is the "racially mixed" (Nobles, 2000).

Table 1

Intercorrelations, Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Racial Identity Attitudes,

Collective and Individual Self-esteem

Variables	RI-1	RI-2	RI-3	RI-4	CSE	ISE
Racial identity status						
Conformity (RI-1)						
Dissonance (RI-2)	.36****					
Resistance (RI-3)	.32****	.50****				
Internalization (RI-4)	-.18***	-.005	-.04			
Collective self-esteem (CSE)	-.13	-.007	-.01	.43****		
Individual self-esteem (ISE)	-.27***	-.20**	-.13	.38****	.37****	
M	1.89	2.78	2.60	4.19	3.45	3.26
SD	.51	.44	.52	.45	.40	.39
Range	1.0-3.7	1.6-3.9	1.2-4.3	2.6-5.0	2.5-4.6	2.0-4.0

Note. ****$p < .0001$ ***$p < .001$ **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Set Regression Analyses Using Racial Identity Attitudes to Predict

Collective and Individual Self-esteem

Step	Collective self-esteem				Individual self-esteem			
	β	*SE*	*t* (178)	*R²*	β	*SE*	*t* (181)	*R²*
1. Demographics								
Racial group	-.05	.08	-.63	.02	.02	.08	.29	.06*
Skin color	-.09	.07	-1.13		.07	.03	.40	
City	.09	.06	1.22		.05	.06	.69	
Age	-.04	.007	-.60		.25***	.007	3.4	
2. Racial attitudes								
Conformity	-.08	.06	-1.05	.21****	-.18**	.06	-2.48	.27****
Dissonance	.002	.08	.03		-.14	.07	-1.77	
Resistance	.004	.07	.06		.02	.06	.30	
Internalization	.42****	.06	5.94		.35****	.06	5.19	

Note. **** *p* < .0001   *** *p* < .001   ** *p* < .01   * *p* < .05