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Racial and Gender Discrimination by Teachers: Risks for Black Girls' Depressive Symptomatology and Suicidal Ideation

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Abstract

Objectives: The present study examines how race and gender-specific factors (i.e., racial centrality and gender role beliefs) serve as protective assets against the harmful impact of racial and gender discrimination on depressive symptomatology and suicidal ideation for Black girls.

Methods: Our sample included 232 Black girls ages 15–17 years old (M_{age} = 16.85) from a socioeconomically diverse community context.

Results: Our findings revealed that racial and gender discrimination from teachers was associated with higher levels of depressive symptomatology. Perceived gender discrimination by teachers and endorsing traditional gender role beliefs were associated with higher reports of suicidal ideation. Perceiving higher instances of racial discrimination from teachers and reporting lower levels of racial centrality were associated with higher depressive symptomatology.

Conclusions: The findings suggest the need to create safe spaces and to consider the interactions that occur in school settings that impact the mental health of Black girls.

Keywords

racial discrimination; gender discrimination; Black girls; suicidal ideation; depression

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Introduction

Developing an understanding of the negative impact of discrimination is crucial when examining the mental health of United States Black adolescents. English et al. (2020) found that, on average, Black adolescents perceive at least five racial discrimination experiences per day. Racial discrimination has implications for adolescents' psychological adjustment because these seemingly unprovoked and negative encounters are likely to cause distress (English et al., 2014; Hope et al., 2021; Seaton et al., 2014). Unfortunately, racial discrimination experiences within the school context are common occurrences for Black adolescents in the United States (Gale & Dorsey, 2020; Hope et al., 2015; Joseph et al., 2016; Seaton et al., 2014; Mims & Williams, 2021). For instance, Seaton et al. (2014) indicated that approximately 97% of Black students reported experiencing at least one discriminatory event over two weeks among a nationally representative sample of Black American adolescents. Those perceptions of discrimination were associated with an increase in depressive symptoms.

Moreover, there is a growing body of evidence highlighting how gender, in addition to race, significantly factor into the academic and psychological development of Black girls. Many Black girls experience discriminatory treatment in school as a function of both their race and gender (Butler-Barnes & Inniss-Thompson., 2020; Joseph et al., 2016, Wun, 2016), yet a dearth of research explores varied racial and gender-related influences on their adjustment outcomes in school. The adolescent period may be critical to consider in light of the racial and gender identity development among racial and ethnic minority youth during the middle and high school years (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). For Black girls, this includes meaning-making around race and gender, which has implications for their wellbeing (Butler-Barnes et al., 2018).

Yet, an absence of research explores varied racial and gender-related influences on Black girls mental health outcomes. A plethora of research has been on Black women. For instance, research with college students suggests that even when Black women persist academically, they encounter racism and sexism that leave them feeling isolated and alone (Shavers & Moore, 2014). These challenges are related to poorer emotional wellbeing and psychological distress (Winkle-Wagner, 2015). In particular, Winkle-Wagner's (2009) ethnographic work with Black women at predominantly White institutions found that others within the environment (e.g., peers, professors, staff) imposed behavioral constraints on participants' identity based on racialized gender stereotypes about how Black women should interact with and be perceived by others. For example, some women felt unfairly inhibited during interactions in the classroom with others who construed their disagreement or dissent on a topic as confirmation of them enacting the "Angry Black Woman" stereotype. Other research highlights how experiences of sexism may compound experiences with racism-related stress in ways that exacerbate psychological distress, anxiety, and depression (Perry et al., 2013; Thomas et al., 2008). However, less of this work examines Black girls' perceived racial and gender discrimination by teachers and the impact on their mental health outcomes. The primary purpose of this study is to contribute to the dearth of research to examine the direct effects of racial and gender discrimination on mental health outcomes.

We also examine the risk and protective factors that moderate the relationship between racial and gender discrimination and mental health outcomes.

Racial and Gender Discrimination in Classrooms

Yet, despite the negative impact of racism and sexism on Black women's mental health outcomes (Shavers & Moore, 2014; Winkle-Wagner, 2015), very little research has explored the impact of racial and gender discrimination experiences among Black girls. Because Black girls are often labeled as "loud," "talkative," and "disrespectful" (Morris, 2007), this has a detrimental impact on their wellbeing. For instance, Chavous and colleagues (2008) found that classroom discrimination was associated with lower levels of school importance and grade point average (GPA) for Black boys. In contrast, peer discrimination was related to lower levels of school importance among Black girls. Smith-Evans et al. (2014) found that for Black girls, experiences with race and gender discrimination in school included negative stereotyping that depicted Black girls as "angry" and "aggressive." This literature highlights how biased perceptions of Black girls as angry, disrespectful, and deviant (Harris-Perry, 2011) can influence teachers' perceptions and interactions with Black girls (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019; Epstein et al., 2017).

The current study examines the impact of teachers' perceived racial and gender discrimination on Black girls' mental health outcomes (i.e., depressive symptomatology & suicide ideation). Prior literature has documented the deleterious impact of racial discrimination in predicting depression (English et al., 2014; Seaton et al., 2014). Similar findings have been found for suicidal ideation (Assari et al., 2017; Gale & Dorsey, 2020; Madubata et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2017). Yet, very few studies have examined the impact of both racial and gender discrimination on Black girls' mental health outcomes. As an exception, Cogburn, Chavous, and Griffin (2011) examined the impact of Black adolescents' perceived school-based racial and gender discrimination and found that gender discrimination was associated with lower levels of school importance for Black girls. Racial discrimination was also associated with higher depressive symptoms for Black girls. Because Black girls' race and gender identities are socially marginalized, it is important to understand how the racial and gendered experiences within school settings may impact mental health outcomes. Prior evidence examined racism and sexism and found an association with psychological distress and perceived sexism among adult African American women (Szymanski & Stewart, 2010). Yet, there is a dearth of similar research on the effects of perceived racial and gender discrimination experiences on Black girls' mental health outcomes.

Depressive Symptomatology

Depressive symptomatology is having feelings of sadness, loneliness, and hopeless behavior that can be mild, moderate, or severe (NIMH, 2021). It causes acute symptoms that affect how individuals feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working (National Institute of Mental Health, 2016). Depression among Black Americans can stem from numerous risk factors such as low socioeconomic status (SES), trauma, low self-esteem, and marginalization due to gender or racial group membership (Miller & Taylor, 2012). Research suggests that Black Americans who have a positive racial identity

(i.e., positive view of their racial group membership) demonstrate higher self-worth, self-efficacy, and lower levels of depressive symptomatology (Hughes et al., 2015). Hughes and colleagues (2015) conducted an investigation using data from the National Survey of American Life, a study designed to explore racial and ethnic differences in mental disorders and psychological distress among African American and Afro-Caribbean adult populations of the United States. The authors found that racial group identification was associated with higher self-esteem and mastery and lower depressive symptoms (Hughes et al., 2015).

However, there is a dearth of literature that focuses on the lives of Black girls. Most of the literature emphasizes the experiences of Black male adolescents. This focus may result from Black girls being identified as "uniquely resilient" (Young, Young, & Capraro, 2017, p. 71). As it relates to gender, findings indicate that children understand gender differences by the age of 3. Still, during the adolescent years, individuals understand perceived treatment based on one's gender (Rogers & Meltzoff, 2017). For instance, Rogers et al. (2017) found that Black, White, and biracial children were more likely to rate gender identity than race as being more important in middle childhood. Additionally, with gender identity, children noted inequality in treatment and group differences, and children's responses varied due to their race and gender.

Additionally, a plethora of research has documented the negative impact of racial discrimination on adolescent mental health outcomes (Cogburn et al., 2011; English et al., 2014; Sellers et al., 2006). For instance, English et al. (2014) found that racial discrimination was associated with depression among Black girls. Regarding the impact of gender discrimination on depressive symptomatology, perceived gender discrimination from teachers was associated with perceiving the environment as inequitable and higher depressive symptomatology among a racially and ethnically diverse sample of adolescent females (Bell & Juvonen, 2020).

Suicidal Ideation

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents between 10 and 17 years of age (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCa), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2020a). For Black adolescents, the rates of suicide have increased to 73% from 1991 to 2017 (Lindsey et al., 2019). For Black adolescents between the ages of 15 to 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death (CDC, 2020b). In most recent literature, the correlates of suicide have been well documented. One of these correlates is race-related stressors. For instance, chronic stressors such as race-related stress (e.g., personal experiences of racism) are associated with higher rates of suicidal ideation (Assari et al., 2017; Gale & Dorsey, 2020; Madubata et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2017). Further, the literature suggests that race and gender are risk factors for engaging in suicidal behaviors (Bridge et al., 2018; Joe et al., 2016; Tomek et al., 2015). Joe et al. (2009) found that older Black American female adolescents who reported higher mental health disorders were at risk for higher suicide attempts. Tomek et al. (2015) examined race and gender on suicide attempts and ideation. The findings revealed that Black girls reported higher rates of suicidal ideation in comparison to Black boys. Robinson et al. (2016) found that Black girls in their sample reported higher suicidal ideation than white girls. Lastly, in the latest

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2019), Black girls are higher in suicidal ideation and planning about attempting suicide. Further, Black girls are consistently more likely to report suicidal ideation than Black boys and to report multiple instances of suicidal ideation (Hooper et al., 2015; Joe et al., 2009; Tomek et al., 2015). Yet, there is a dearth of research on gender discrimination and the impact on suicidal ideation.

Racial Identity Beliefs

To date, research has examined racial identity in conjunction with perceived discrimination among Black adolescents. In the present paper, we examined how racial centrality (Sellers et al., 1998), or the extent to which race is a central aspect of Black girls' identity, moderate discrimination and mental health outcomes. The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) (Sellers et al., 1998) drives our conceptualization of Black identity. The MMRI focuses on the importance a Black person places on race in defining herself. In the current study, we use one aspect of the MMRI, racial centrality. Racial centrality is the significance in how one's race is a salient part of who they are and is contextual. Thus, one's race might be more salient in different school and neighborhood settings. Previous research has found racial centrality to serve as a buffer against perceived racial discrimination and depressive symptoms (Caldwell et al., 2004; Neblett et al., 2004; Sellers et al., 2003). For instance, Sellers et al. (2003) found that racial centrality moderated the relationship between racial discrimination and psychological distress among Black young adults. Caldwell et al. (2004) examined violent behavior among Black adolescents. They found that lower levels of racial centrality and experiencing higher levels of racial discrimination were associated with violent behaviors for Black boys. Other studies have shown that Black youth with positive racial identity beliefs are more likely to succeed academically.

In another study, Okeke and colleagues (2009) examined the relationships among academic race stereotype endorsement, academic self-concept, and racial centrality across two 7th and 8th grade Black American youth studies. The authors found that racial centrality served as a buffer between youths' academic race stereotypes and academic self-concept. Additionally, in a nationally representative sample of Caribbean Black adolescents, racial centrality moderated the relationship between perceived racial discrimination by teachers and academic achievement (Thomas et al., 2009). The current study seeks to extend this literature by examining racial centrality as a buffer of suicidal ideation and depressive symptoms of Black girls.

Gender Role Beliefs

For Black families, it is common to socialize children around race-based cultural norms, including, but not limited to, racial pride messages and lessons about how their identity as a Black person may be perceived (positively and negatively) by others in society (Hill, 2001). The latter form of socialization commonly encompasses warnings about racial discrimination to help children process the types of racially biased incidents they encounter in broader peer, school, and community settings (Neblett et al., 2008). However, researchers are beginning to draw more attention to how Black families socialize their children around gender-based cultural norms and expectations (Hill, 2001; Thomas & King, 2007). Prior literature suggests that gender roles and expectations within Black families may be more

flexible and nontraditional (Hill, 2001). In an ethnographic investigation with lower-income Black girls, Froyum (2010) discovered that teachers were socializing participants to adopt more "appropriate feminine behaviors" at school, including stifling their attitude, being emotionally accountable for peers, and distancing themselves from Black students who were deemed, troublemakers. Increasingly, studies are suggesting that more nontraditional gender roles promote healthier psychological wellbeing among Black girls by encouraging them to challenge sexist norms within educational and occupational contexts (Ridolfo et al., 2013; Toyokawa & McLoyd, 2013). For instance, Buckley and Carter (2005) found that endorsing androgynous and masculine characteristics was associated with higher self-esteem for Black girls, and other scholarship also indicates that Black girls who challenge traditional notions of femininity have more positive psychological outcomes (Buckley et al., 2005; Lam, Stanik, & McHale, 2017; Thomas et al., 2013).

Guiding Models

The current study draws on the Integrative Model for the Developmental Competencies of Minority Children (Coll et al., 1996). This model highlights the social position (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, and gender) and environmental influences (e.g., healthcare, school, and neighborhoods) of youth of color and developmental competencies. In this model, because of the social positioning (race, class, & gender) of Black girls, we expect that they will experience racial discrimination and gender discrimination from encompassing two oppressed social identities (Black and female). We also suggest that, because of Black girls' social positioning, they may experience racism and gender discrimination within school settings. Based on previous literature (Cogburn et al., 2011), exposure to racism and gender discrimination can negatively impact Black girls' mental wellness. In this study, we examine the impact of racial and gender discrimination by teachers and the effect on depressive symptomatology and suicide ideation among Black girls.

To understand the risk (endorsing traditional beliefs) and protective (racial centrality) processes on moderating the impact of racial and gender discrimination by teachers on the mental health outcomes of Black girls, we use Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) Risk and Resilience model to examine the moderating role of racial centrality (as a protective factor) and traditional gender role beliefs (as a risk factor). For instance, previous literature notes the protective role of racial centrality (Seaton et al., 2014) and endorsing nontraditional gender role beliefs (Ridolfo et al., 2013). Thus, this mechanism could potentially explain the protective roles of racial centrality and the risk of Black girls endorsing traditional gender role beliefs as moderators between racial discrimination and gender discrimination by teachers on suicidal ideation and depressive symptomatology.

The Current Study

The current study includes a cross-sectional analysis of secondary data to examine the fourth wave of the MADICS dataset in which adolescents were in their 11th grade school year. In the current study, we examine Black girls' perceived racial and gender discrimination by teachers and the impact on their reports of suicidal ideation and depressive symptomatology. We were also interested in Black girls' racialized (i.e., racial centrality) and gendered beliefs (i.e., traditional gender role beliefs) and how these factors serve as potential

protective and risk mechanisms. We propose four hypotheses: (a) Perceiving higher levels of racial and gender discrimination from teachers will be associated with higher reports of depressive symptomatology and suicidal ideation, (b) Higher levels of racial centrality will be associated with lower depressive symptomatology and suicidal ideation (c) Endorsing higher levels of traditional gender role beliefs will be associated with higher depressive symptomatology and suicidal ideation, and (d) Racial centrality and endorsing traditional gender role beliefs will serve as a risk (traditional gender role beliefs) and protective (racial centrality) factors between the relationship of teacher racial and gender discrimination on depressive symptomatology and suicidal ideation.

Method

The current study is part of a larger study, the Maryland Adolescent Development in Context Study (MADICS), conducted by Eccles, Sameroff, and colleagues (http://garp.education.uci.edu/madics.html) (Eccles, 1997). Data collection occurred from the years of 1991 to 1998. MADICS is a community-based longitudinal study, starting with 1,480 adolescents and their families in adolescents' 7th-grade year (903, 61% Black; 518, 35% White). This sample is unique in multiple vital respects. It includes a substantial proportion of Black families representing a range of income and family education levels, making it more possible to examine the independent impacts of family income, educational attainment, and racial group membership on development. The sample also is drawn from a United States county that includes several different ecological settings—including low-income urban neighborhoods; middle-class suburban neighborhoods; and rural, farm-based neighborhoods—thus providing ample variation in neighborhood characteristics.

Procedures

The study participants are adolescents in the 11th grade, including 305 Black girls from the fourth wave of the MADICS dataset. For the current study, the target adolescent and parent were individually interviewed for approximately 1 hour each, followed by a self-administered questionnaire that took an average of 45 minutes for participants to complete. The interviewer-interviewee dyads were racially matched. During the youth survey administration, adolescents' parents were present in the home during interviewers' visits. For both data collections, informed consent was obtained from both adolescents and parents. Our study used adolescents' reported discrimination experiences, racial identity beliefs, gender role beliefs, depressive symptomatology, and suicidal ideation. Finally, we used parent's report of family income as a control variable. A review conducted by the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved and determined the study to be compliant with the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects.

Participants

The authors used the fourth wave of the MADICS because of the inclusion of the Black identity variables. These items were not included in other waves of the data set. A total of 305 Black girls were in this wave. The final sample for the present study included 232 Black girls with complete data for all study variables. The mean age is 16.85 ($SD = 1.34$, range = 15.52–18.63). The median annual household income level was \$50,000–\$54,999 (ranging

from less than $5,000, coded 1, to more than $200,000, coded 25). Detailed information about participants' community and school contexts can be found at the study's website: http://garp.education.uci.edu/madics.html.

Measures

Racial Discrimination.—Perceived racial discrimination by teachers was assessed with a measure developed by the MADICS primary investigators. The measure assessed adolescents' perceived encounters with discrimination. The scale consisted of three items: "At school, how often do you feel that teachers call on you less because of your race"; "At school, how often do you feel that teachers discipline you harder because of your race"; and "At school, how often do you feel that teachers believe you are less smart because of your race." Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale, with values ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*every day*). Responses were averaged across items so that higher scores indicate more perceived racial discrimination by teachers. Cronbach's alpha was .80.

Gender Discrimination.—Perceived gender discrimination by teachers was assessed with a measure developed by the MADICS primary investigators. The measure assessed adolescents' perceived encounters of discrimination based on their gender. The scale consisted of three items (i.e., "At school, how often do you feel that teachers call on you less because of your sex," "At school, how often do you feel that teachers discipline you harder because of your sex," and "At school, how often do you feel that teachers believe you are less smart because of your sex") rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale, with values ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*every day*). Item responses were averaged so that higher scores indicated more perceived gender discrimination by teachers. Cronbach's alpha was .88.

Racial Centrality.—To operationalize racial centrality, we used youth self-reported racial centrality beliefs, assessed with a three-item version of the Racial Centrality subscale of the shortened version of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al. 1997). The items included: "In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image," "I have a strong attachment to other Black people," and "Being Black is an important reflection of who I am." This scale has been utilized in prior research (e.g., Chavous et al., 2008). Adolescents answered items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Items were averaged, and higher scores represented higher racial centrality beliefs. Cronbach's alpha for the subscale was .72.

Gender Role Beliefs.—Gender role beliefs were assessed with a measure developed by the MADICS primary investigators. Three items were used that were reflective of this subscale: "It is usually better for everyone involved if the man is the 'bread winner' outside of the home and the woman takes care of the home and family," "Babies and young children are likely to suffer if the mother works outside of the home," and "Having a career takes away from a woman's relationship with her husband." Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha was .70. Higher scores were indicative of endorsing traditional gender role beliefs. Additionally, the scale corroborates previous literature on the items used to assess traditional gender role

beliefs, such as involving husbands being the sole provider and the role of women outside the home (Bielby & Bielby, 1992).

Depressive Symptomatology.—Adolescents' depressive symptomatology was measured with items adapted from the Depressive Symptoms Checklist (SCL-90R; Derogatis, 1982). This scale assesses symptoms of psychopathology such as sadness, loneliness, and hopelessness within the past 2 weeks. The items included: "In the past two weeks, I have been sad," and "In the past two weeks, I have felt alone." The scale comprised 13 items rated on a 3-point scale from 1 (*once in a while*) through 2 (*many times*) to 3 (*all the time*). An overall score was calculated by averaging across items such that higher scores indicate more depressive symptomatology. Cronbach's alpha was .86. This scale has previously been used with Black adolescents (Sibinga et al., 2011).

Suicidal Ideation.—Adolescents' suicidal ideation was measured with one item (i.e., "During the last month (including today), how often have you had thoughts of ending your life?"). Response options for this scale ranged from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*).

Data Analytic Strategy

SPSS PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) macros 3.4 version of Model 2 was used to test our primary study hypotheses. A bootstrapping analysis using 5,000 bootstrap samples at 95% confidence intervals was utilized. Interaction effects were plotted with the graphing conditional indirect effects with PROCESS in SPSS PROCESS macros (Hayes, 2013). A total of 305 Black girls were in this wave. The final sample for the present study included 232 Black girls with complete data for all study variables. To obtain the magnitude of differences between Black girls not included in the current sample, t-values and effect sizes were utilized as reflected by Cohen's d. T-test results indicated that Black girls ($N = 232$) included in the study did not differ on the suicidal ideation and depressive symptomatology variables from girls not included in the study.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Means and correlations are presented in Table 1. On average, Black girls reported experiencing some amount of racial and gender discrimination. Black girls reported moderately high levels of racial centrality. On average, Black girls endorsed low levels of traditional gender role beliefs. Black girls also reported moderate amounts of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation, respectively. Correlational analyses indicated that racial discrimination was significantly positively associated with depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation. Gender discrimination was significantly positively related to depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation. Racial centrality was significantly negatively associated with suicidal ideation but was unrelated to depressive symptomology. Racial centrality was significantly positively related to traditional gender role beliefs. Lastly, traditional gender role beliefs were significantly positively related to depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation.

Racial and Gender Discrimination, Depressive Symptoms, and Suicidal Ideation

Depressive Symptoms. In table 2, teacher discrimination (predictors), moderating variables (i.e., racial centrality and traditional gender role beliefs), and four interaction effects (i.e., Teacher Racial Discrimination x Racial Centrality; Teacher Racial Discrimination x Traditional Gender Role Beliefs; Teacher Gender Discrimination x Racial Centrality; Teacher Gender Discrimination x Traditional Gender Role Beliefs), and family income (covariate) were entered in the model. The findings revealed a significant model fit, $F(6,225) = 3.87$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .10$. Teacher racial discrimination was associated with higher reports of depressive symptomatology ($b = .68$), $p = .007$ (model a). For model b, (gender discrimination), there was significant model fit, $F(6,225) = 4.08$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .10$. However, there was not a main effect of teacher gender discrimination on depressive symptomatology ($b = .34$), $p = .195$.

Suicidal Ideation. There was a significant model fit $F(6,225) = 7.133$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .15$. However, there was not a main effect of teacher racial discrimination on suicidal ideation ($b = -.96$), $p = .125$ (model a). In examining whether gender discrimination was associated with suicidal ideation, the findings revealed a significant model fit, $F(6,225) = 9.95$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .20$. There was not a main effect of teacher gender discrimination on suicidal ideation ($b = .31$), $p = .607$ (model b).

Racial Centrality, Traditional Gender Role Beliefs, Depressive Symptoms, and Suicidal Ideation

Racial Centrality.—Racial centrality was not associated with depressive symptomatology ($b = .02$), $p = .330$) (model a) and ($b = .01$), $p = .978$) (model b). For suicidal ideation, racial centrality was not significant ($b = -.02$), $p = .820$ (model a) and ($b = -.02$), $p = .756$) (model b).

Traditional Gender Role Beliefs.—The findings revealed that endorsing higher levels of traditional gender role beliefs was associated with higher levels of depressive symptomatology ($b = .12$), $p = .005$ (model a) and ($b = .09$), $p = .025$ (model b). Additionally, findings revealed that endorsing higher levels of traditional gender role beliefs was associated with higher levels of suicidal ideation ($b = .29$), $p = .006$ (model a) and ($b = .32$), $p = .001$ (model b).

The Moderating Role of Racial Centrality and Traditional Gender Role Beliefs

Depressive Symptomatoloy.—The findings revealed that the addition of the interaction was significant, $F(6,225) = 3.87$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .03$. Findings revealed a significant interaction effect for Teacher Racial Discrimination x Racial Centrality ($b = -.13$), $p = .004$. Simple slope tests revealed that the low ($b = .19$), $p = .032$ slope was statistically significant and the high slope for racial centrality was not statistically significant ($b = -.11$), $p = .081$ (see Table 2a and Figure 1). There were no significant interaction effects for Teacher Gender Discrimination x Racial Centrality for depressive symptomatology.

Traditional Gender Role Beliefs (Risk).—The results revealed no significant interaction effects for Teacher Racial Discrimination x Traditional Gender Role Beliefs and Teacher Gender Discrimination x Traditional Gender Role Beliefs.

Suicidal Ideation.—The findings revealed no significant interaction effects for Teacher Racial Discrimination x Racial Centrality and Teacher Gender Discrimination x Racial Centrality.

Traditional Gender Role Beliefs (Risk).—The findings revealed a significant interaction effect for Teacher Racial Discrimination x Traditional Gender Role Beliefs (b = .57), p = .002. The addition of the interaction was significant, $F_{(6, 225)}$ = 9.67, p = .001, R^2 = .03. Simple slope test revealed that the low (b = −.49), p = .013, slope was statistically significant whereas the high slope was not significant (b = .13), p = .198 (see Figure 2). There was also a significant interaction effect for Teacher Gender Discrimination x Traditional Gender Role Beliefs $(b = .30)$, p = .033. The addition of the interaction was significant, $F_{(6, 225)}$ = 4.566, p = .033, R^2 = .02. Simple slope test revealed that the lower (b = − .19), p = .224, slope was not significant (see Figure 3) and the high slope (b = .13), p = .124 was not significant.

Discussion

The current study examined how Black girls' perceptions of teacher racial and gender discrimination beliefs were associated with depressive symptomatology and suicidal ideation. Additionally, we wanted to understand how youths' beliefs about their racial identity and gender identity moderated the relationship between racial and gender discrimination and mental health outcomes. Overall, the first hypothesis was partially supported. In that, perceiving higher levels of racial discrimination from teachers was associated with higher reports of depressive symptomatology. Racial centrality was not associated with depressive symptomatology or suicidal ideation for our second hypothesis. The third hypothesis was supported, in that, endorsing higher traditional gender role beliefs was associated with higher depressive symptomatology and suicidal ideation. Lastly, our fourth hypothesis was partially supported. The findings indicated that Black girls who perceived higher teacher racial discrimination and endorsed lower racial centrality reported higher depressive symptomatology. Under conditions of higher racial discrimination, endorsing higher nontraditional gender roles beliefs was associated with lower suicidal ideation. However, Black girls who endorsed traditional gender role beliefs and reported higher racial discrimination levels were at risk.

Moreover, marginal significance was found for the teacher gender discrimination by nontraditional gender role beliefs interaction effect, such that perceiving higher levels of gender discrimination from teachers and endorsing lower levels of nontraditional gender role beliefs was associated with higher suicidal ideation (risk). Overall, our findings are situated within the Integrative Model for the Developmental Competencies of Minority Children and Fergus and Zimmerman's (2005) Risk and Resilience Framework. Moreover, these findings corroborate previous work noting the negative impact of racial and gender discrimination on adolescent outcomes (Perry et al., 2013), the protective role of racial centrality (Sellers et al.,

2006), and the negative impact of endorsing traditional gender roles beliefs (e.g., Broderick & Korteland, 2002).

Discrimination and Mental Health

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2019) documented an increase in suicide rates among Black girls over the last ten years. Other scholarship has found an elevated risk for suicidal ideation and attempted suicide among Black girls after controlling for depression (Tomek et al., 2015; Valois, Zullig, & Hunter, 2015). More recently, Assari et al. (2017) found that perceived racial discrimination was associated with higher odds of suicidal ideation among a nationally representative sample of Black American adolescents. Walker and colleagues (2017) similarly found that perceived racism was related to suicidal thoughts. Our findings corroborate and extend this previous literature since Black girls who perceived higher racial and gender discrimination reported more depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation. In considering ways to address this, future studies should consider additional protective mechanisms (Brady et al., 2021; Opara et al., 2020; Spates & Slatton, 2017; Talley et al., 2021). For instance, Spates and Slatton (2017) found that social support systems and knowledge of oppressive structures among Black women prepare and protect against suicide. In this case, culturally responsive programming that centers Black girls' voices is warranted to create learning opportunities for Black girls in coping with daily race and gender-related stressors.

Regarding gender discrimination, previous studies have also noted the association with suicidal ideation (Perry et al., 2012; Perry et al., 2013). For instance, Perry et al. (2013) found that racial and gender discrimination was associated with lower employment, financial setbacks and stressors, adult victimization, and social network loss among African American women. Similar findings were also found for perceived gender discrimination from teachers and the impact on depressive symptomatology among Black adolescents (Cogburn et al., 2011; Wong et al., 2003). Thus, overall this study contributes to major gaps in the literature on the negative impact of racial and gender discrimination experiences on the mental health functioning of Black girls.

The Importance of Racial Centrality

Our study corroborates previous research on the important role of racial centrality in buffering the harmful effects of racial discrimination (Caldwell et al., 2004; Neblett et al., 2004; Sellers et al., 2003). We noted the detrimental impact of Black girls endorsing lower levels of racial centrality. For instance, perceiving racial discrimination from teachers and reporting lower levels of racial centrality put Black girls at risk for poorer mental health outcomes. Specifically, we found that Black girls who endorsed lower racial centrality levels and perceived higher racial discrimination from teachers reported higher depressive symptomatology. Noting the importance of racial centrality in the presence of racial discrimination supports previous literature that documents the racialized and gendered experiences of Black women.

For instance, Collins (1990) underscores the importance of placing Black women's racialized and gendered experiences at the forefront and documenting the similarities and

differences in racial and gendered experiences of Black women. Collins (1990) views race and gender not through a hierarchical lens but through multiple levels, which requires a within-group examination and the role of institutional structures that perpetuate inequality amongst Black women and girls. Settles (2006) defined a Black-woman identity as how Black women see themselves as an integrated Black-woman identity that is combined and not additive. In other words, Black women comprise two oppressed identities – being a Black person and being a woman (Crenshaw, 1995). Our study shows the same with Black girls' reports of teacher racial and gender discrimination. For instance, racial and gender discrimination was highly correlated in our sample, suggesting that awareness of racial discrimination might increase awareness in gender discrimination – underscoring a Black-woman identity. Thus, there is a need for measurement that simultaneously captures the racial and gendered experiences of Black girls in hopes to understand better how multiple forms of discrimination impacts mental health and wellbeing.

The Risk of Traditional Gender Role Beliefs

Despite the negative impact of traditional gender role beliefs on the psychosocial adjustment outcomes of girls (Broderick et al., 2002), little research has examined gender role beliefs among Black girls. Our study found that endorsing more traditional gender role beliefs was associated with higher depressive symptomatology and suicidal ideation. We also found that endorsing higher levels of traditional gender role beliefs mitigated the relationship between teacher racial and gender discrimination and suicidal ideation and depressive symptomatology. These findings suggest the important role of traditional gender role behavior for Black girls. Broderick et al. (2002) found that endorsing more feminine gender roles were was associated with a higher incidence of depression in early adolescence. Yet, this sample comprised 3% Black girls. However, Buckley et al. (2005) found that androgynous and masculine characteristics were associated with higher levels of self-esteem among Black girls. Hunt and colleagues (2006) examined gender role beliefs and suicidal thoughts among adults. Results indicated that endorsing higher levels of traditional gender role beliefs (e.g., women rather than men should look after relatives that need care) was associated with higher suicidal thoughts. Our findings contribute to this literature by noting that equalitarian views of gender roles promote healthier psychological wellbeing for Black girls.

Race, Gender, and Black Girls

Our study attempts to understand the racial and gendered experiences that Black girls encounter at school. Our investigation builds upon the work of Cole (2009), Settles (2006), Collins (1990), Crenshaw (1995) and extends current scholarship on Black girls by examining within-group differences regarding how race and gender bias shapes their mental health outcomes. Black girls and women's gendered experiences are often subsumed within the substantial body of research on racial discrimination experiences among Black student populations (e.g., Brody et al., 2006). Centering Black girls provides an opportunity to understand the moderating role of racial identity and traditional gender role beliefs. Regarding the role of gender role beliefs, our research corroborates previous literature in noting the unique experiences of Black girls. Although we did not examine gendered racism in the current study, our findings highlight the importance of examining the intersection of

race and gender discrimination among Black girls. Gendered racism is the combination of racism and sexism – it is not hierarchical or distinct but combined in a hybrid phenomenon that creates a unique form of oppression that cannot be separated (Essed, 1991, p. 31). In an era of highly visible racialized and gendered violence against Black bodies that spawned social movements like #Say Her Name, #Black Lives Matter, and #Me Too; it's important to think about how Black girls are processing negative racialized and gendered experiences. In all, our findings note the negative impact of teacher discrimination on Black girls' mental health outcomes. Additionally, recent policy releases have pointed out how discriminatory practices in schools and disciplinary policies marginalize Black girls in school – often in response to racialized teacher bias that, in effect, criminalize Black girls (Morris, 2015).

Limitations and Future Directions

Overall, the strength of the current study is the significant contribution to the gap in research examining the impact of teacher racial and gender-based discrimination on the mental health of Black girls. We also examined the risk and protective role of racial centrality and traditional gender role beliefs in reducing the negative impact of teacher racial and gender-based discrimination on mental health. However, this study does have a few limitations. First, although we assessed Black girls' perceptions of gender and racial discrimination, we did not know the teacher's race and gender. Secondly, we did not have information on the type of school in terms of racial/ethnic composition of the classroom setting– predominately White, predominately Black, and racial/ethnically diverse classroom settings. Third, because of the double jeopardy (race & gender), it might be helpful to know the type of class Black girls perceive gender and racial discrimination (e.g., math or science) because of the hybridity of their social identity.

Additionally, gender stereotyping significantly impacts female adolescents' academic performance in areas such as math and science (Beilock et al., 2010; Gunderson et al., 2012). For instance, several studies have noted the negative perceptions of Black girls within the classroom (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Joseph et al., 2016; Wun, 2016). Other studies have noted that Black girls encounter race and sex-based stereotypes (Ispa-Landa, 2013; Lattimore, 2017). Regarding teacher demographics, cultural mismatch theory suggests that racial stereotyping is associated with higher office referrals (e.g., Ferguson, 2001; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005).

Also, the scale we used to assess Black girls' depressive symptomatology might not have captured their unique racialized and gendered experiences. There is increasing literature indicating the importance of culturally appropriate mental health scales (Lu et al., 2017; Opara et al., 2021). For instance, Lu et al. (2017) found that the items typically used to assess depressive symptoms did not capture Black adolescents' depressive symptoms. Thus, we acknowledge that this scale might not have adequately captured Black girls' experiences. Lastly, in measuring suicidal ideation, we based this on a one-item response. Future research should consider the use of suicidal ideation scales (Osman et al., 2001; Reynolds & Mazza, 1999). Thus, knowledge about the experiences within the classroom, teacher demographics, and comprehensive scales will provide further information on the unique experiences of Black girls experiences in the school.

Future research needs to consider how school environments promote or inhibit healthy emotional development among Black girls, which may entail comprehensive assessments of school-based racial and gender discrimination experiences. Prior literature has documented that racial discrimination impacts academic and psychosocial adjustment outcomes (Cogburn et al., 2011). However, our findings also note the harmful impact of racial discrimination from teachers and the negative impact of perceived gender discrimination. We posit that comprehensive assessments of school-based racial and gender discrimination should include workshops on how the perceptions of peers, staff, and teachers inform Black girls' school experiences. These assessments could then inform prevention and intervention methods that would better inform educators, activists, and policymakers on creating more equitable and inclusive learning environments that ensure positive learning outcomes for all children and adolescents. As we know, Black girls– similar to other female adolescents of color (e.g., Latinx & Native American) comprise two oppressed social identities that have been actively maligned in mainstream school settings across the country. Longitudinal analyses are warranted to understand how Black girls' racial and gendered experiences impact their developmental competencies. Also, the findings of this study should not be generalized. Understanding the within-group variation of Black girls that reside in different regions of the United States will increase our knowledge of Black girls' lived experiences and has implications for developmental science. Lastly, although this data was collected over a decade ago, understanding how Black girls' racial and gender status impacts mental health and the work we do to assist Black girls in the present is critical. To date, few studies have examined the impact of racial and gender discrimination on the mental health outcomes of Black girls. Moving forward, we hope that when examining chronic stressors that put youth at risk, an intersectional lens for Black girls is used.

Practice Implications

The findings from our study contribute significantly to the literature on gendered and racialized discriminatory experiences among Black girls. It extends our understanding of these experiences within the classroom and the adverse effect these encounters have on Black girls' mental health outcomes. Accordingly, our findings have implications for teachers and human service professionals, particularly mental health practitioners in educational settings. Given the results of the current study, teachers must begin their practice by recognizing personal biases. Additionally, school districts should mandate ongoing anti-bias/anti-racist professional development sessions. Scholars have underscored the importance of anti-bias and anti-racist training within educational settings and the need for structural transformation (Brown, 2014; Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Wilson & Kumar, 2017). This effort acknowledges where teachers are, educates them on recognizing, addressing, and managing biases, and provides practical tools and theoretical skills teachers need to improve their relationships with students. Encouragement of culturally inclusive teaching practices at the school district level may also be beneficial in setting the school's expectations. Recognition, respect, and support of different cultures can ultimately make the school safer and more inclusive.

The findings from our study also offer important implications for human service professionals, particularly mental health practitioners in educational settings. For instance,

school counselors and school social workers are responsible for the mental health needs of students. Therefore, they may be liable for any or all aspects of suicide prevention/ intervention (Maple et al., 2017). Thus, practitioners should utilize culturally appropriate screening and prevention/intervention strategies when working directly with adolescents. This coincides with literature encouraging practitioners to conduct work in diverse contexts, understand one's lived experience based on their racial/ethnic background, and incorporate effective tools that address race and racism (Gilbert et al., 2009). Given this, our study findings, and current attention around racial and gender-discrimination experiences in the media, practitioners can design or incorporate strategies that highlight positive teacher-student interactions in racial and ethnically diverse schools.

Furthermore, interventions that focus simultaneously on race and gender discrimination will be helpful to recognize if the school has a crisis team and what tools are in place for suicide risk. A culturally tailored screening tool for Black girls and other females of color and protocols for students who screen positive for suicide risks are warranted. If the practitioner conducts crisis intervention, they must ensure that all staff and teachers are aware of students' experiences that might be impacting their behaviors. Thus, a more comprehensive assessment that assesses school climate would also be informative for practitioners and educators (Opara et al., 2020; Spates & Slatton, 2017; Talley et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Overall, this study underscores the importance of examining the experiences of Black girls, which can be further highlighted by the use of an intersectional lens. Racial and gender discrimination hurt Black women (Thomas et al., 2008) and Black girls' mental health outcomes (Cogburn et al., 2011). This study offers support that preventive interventions must take into account Black girls' lived experiences at the intersections of their racialized and gender identities. Awareness of these hybrid social identities situates Black girls to speak their truth through their lens (Clonan-Roy et al., 2016). For instance, Clonan-Roy et al. (2016) highlight the importance of critical race feminism, ecological (context), and phenomenological approach in promoting positive youth development in Black girls allowing for resistance to negative cultural narratives about Black girls and promoting resilience, which corroborates the resistance strategies noted that Black girls endorse (Butler-Barnes et al., 2018).

Moreover, this work sets the stage for future research in areas of social work, public health, and education to consider the social positioning of Black girls and identifying the risk and protective factors when examining not only Black girls lived experiences in classrooms but in the healthcare and the criminal justice system (Quinn et al., 2021). While the need for continued efforts in using intersectionality when examining Black girls' experiences is crucial, persistent steps through education policies are also needed to address discriminatory experiences within the school setting (Neal-Jackson, 2018). Thus, professional development opportunities for teachers promoting an equity lens must be embedded within professional development workshops to reduce racist and gendered experiences. Additionally, workshops should promote positive youth development using an equity lens in advancing educational

policies. Our work suggests that the racialized and gendered experiences of Black girls intersect in ways that warrant further research.

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Public Impact Statement:

Given the current study's findings, school districts should mandate ongoing anti-sexist and anti-racist professional development. This effort acknowledges where teachers are, educates them on recognizing, addressing, and managing biases, and provides practical tools and theoretical skills teachers need to improve their relationships with students. Recognition, respect, and support of different cultures can ultimately make the school safer and more inclusive.
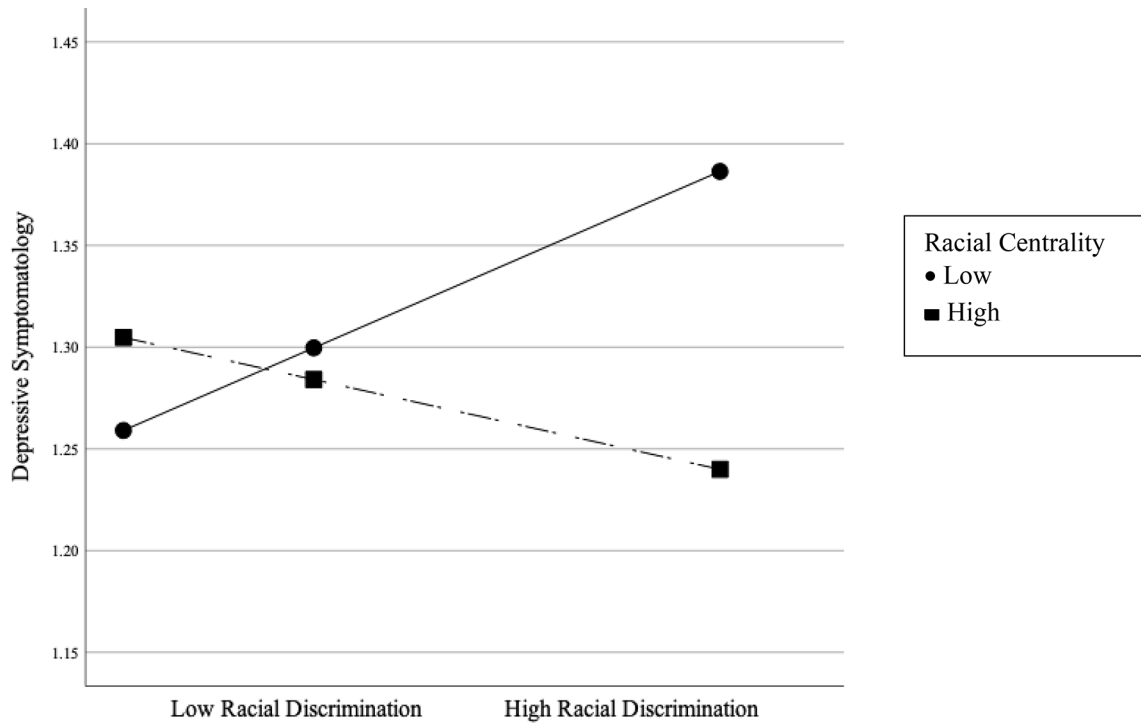
Figure 1. Teacher Racial Discrimination x Racial Centrality

Note. The relationship between perceived racial discrimination by teachers and adolescents' depressive symptomology is moderated by students' racial centrality. Teacher racial discrimination and racial centrality are plotted at low (−1 *S.D.*) and high (+1 *S.D.*) levels.
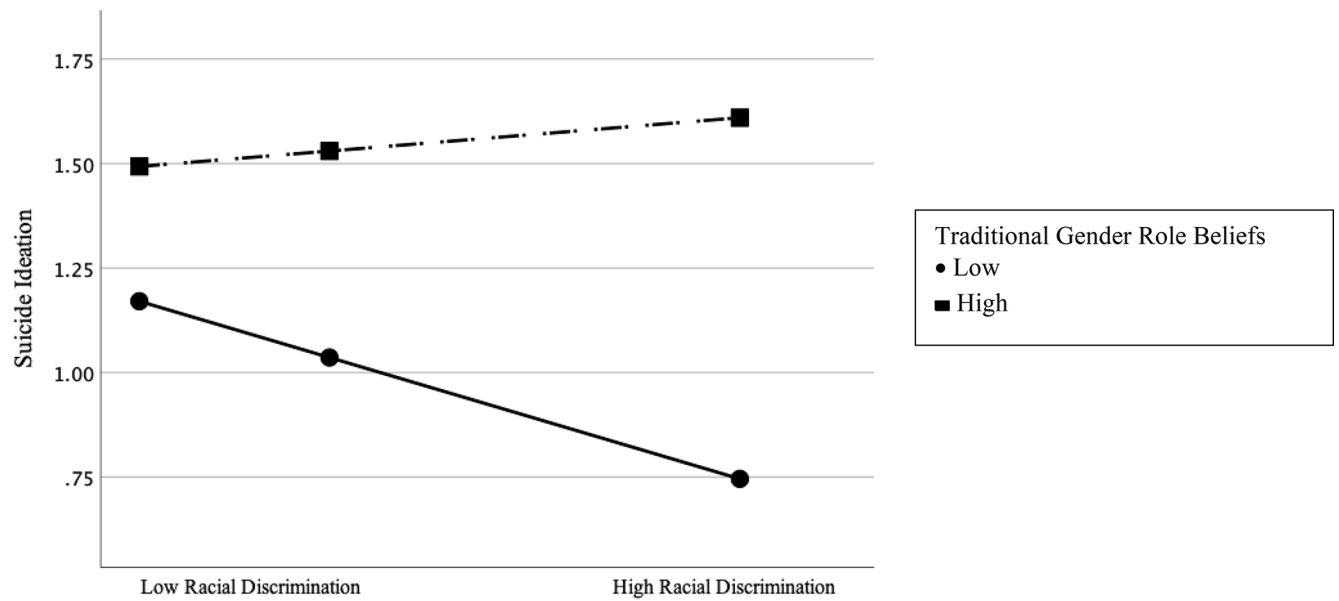
Figure 2. Teacher Racial Discrimination x Traditional Gender Role Beliefs
Note. The relationship between perceived racial discrimination by teachers and adolescents' suicidal ideation as moderated by students' traditional gender role beliefs. Both teacher racial discrimination and traditional gender role beliefs are plotted at low (−1 *S.D.*) and high (+1 *S.D.*) levels.
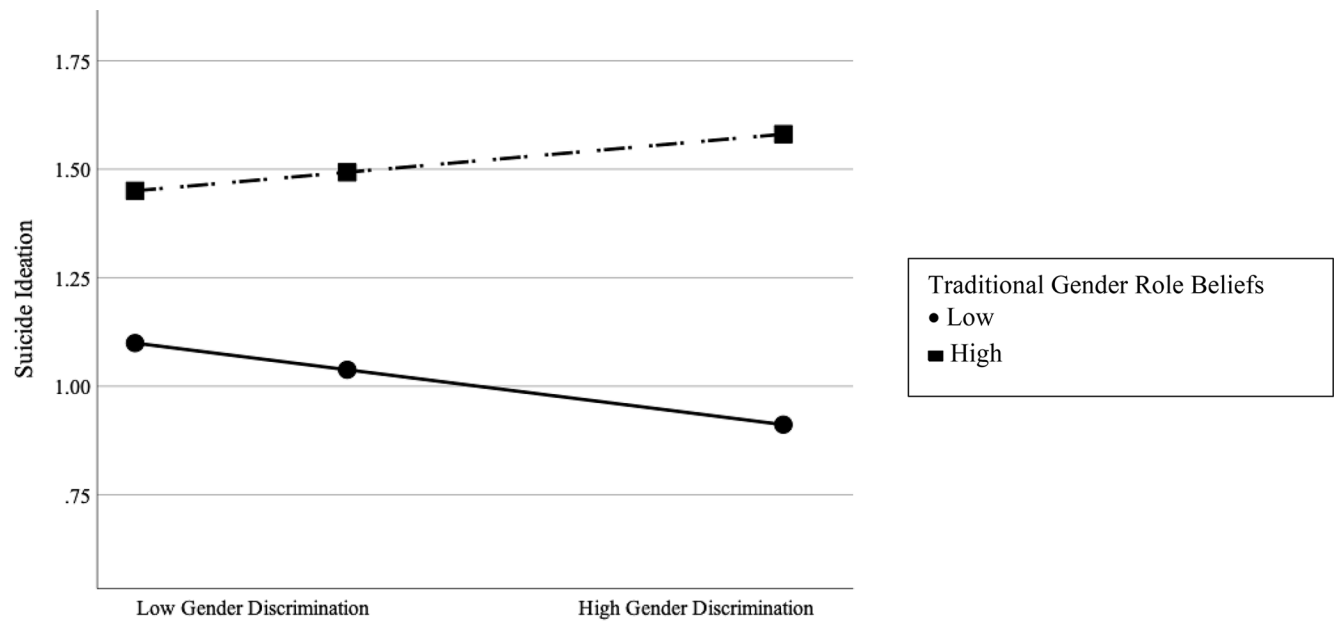
Figure 3. Teacher Gender Discrimination x Traditional Gender Role Beliefs
Note. The relationship between perceived gender discrimination by teachers and adolescents' suicidal ideation as moderated by students' traditional gender role beliefs. Teacher gender discrimination and traditional gender role beliefs are plotted at low (−1 *S.D.*) and high (+1 *S.D.*) levels.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	Correlations					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Family Income	11.51	5.69	--					
2. Racial Discrimination	.27	0.58	-.12*	--				
3. Gender Discrimination	.30	0.62	-.10	.58**	--			
4. Racial Centrality	3.64	0.78	19**	-.08	-.07	--		
5. Traditional Gender Role Beliefs	1.67	0.54	-.04	.28**	.32**	-.14*	--	
6. Depressive Symptoms	1.27	0.32	-.11	.16*	.22**	-.08	.25**	--
7. Suicidal Ideation	1.30	0.79	-.15*	17**	.25**	-.14*	.33**	.48**

Note. Coded average annual household income was 11.51, falling into the range of $50,000 to $54,999.

*
$p < .05$.

**
$p < .01$.

Table 2

Moderating Effects of Racial Centrality and Traditional Gender Role Beliefs on the Relationships between Teacher (a) Racial and (b) Gender Discrimination with Depressive Symptomatology and Suicidal Ideation

	Depressive Symptomology			Suicidal Ideation		
	b	S.E.	t	b	S.E.	t
(a) Perceived Racial Discrimination by Teachers						
Family Income	−0.01	0.01	−1.32	−0.01	0.01	−1.78
Racial Discrimination (RD)	0.68	0.25	2.68**	−0.96	0.62	−1.53
Racial Centrality	0.02	0.03	0.97	−0.02	0.07	−0.22
Traditional Gender Role Beliefs	0.12	0.03	2.79**	0.29	0.10	2.77**
RD × Racial Centrality	−0.13	0.04	−2.85**	−0.04	0.12	−0.40
RD × Gender Role Beliefs	−0.08	0.07	−1.10	0.57	0.18	3.11**
	R^2	F	p	R^2	F	p
Increase in R^2 due to interaction	0.03	8.164	.004**	0.04	9.676	.002**
(b) Perceived Gender Discrimination by Teachers						
Family Income	−0.01	0.01	−1.02	−0.01	0.01	−1.40
Gender Discrimination (GD)	0.34	0.26	1.29	0.31	0.61	0.51
Racial Centrality	0.01	0.02	0.02	−0.02	0.06	−0.31
Traditional Gender Role Beliefs	0.09	0.04	2.24*	0.32	0.10	3.19**
GD × Racial Centrality	−0.08	0.05	−1.46	−0.21	0.12	−1.84
GD × Gender Role Beliefs	0.01	0.06	0.03	0.30	0.14	2.13*
	R^2	F	p	R^2	F	p
Increase in R^2 due to interaction	0.01	2.138	.14	0.02	4.566	.033*

*
$p < .05$.

**
$p < .01$.

***
$p < .001$