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## A Definition of Gender Role Conflict among Black Professional Fathers

Ora Robinson

California State University San Bernardino, [orobinso@csusb.edu](mailto:orobinso@csusb.edu)

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## A Definition of Gender Role Conflict among Black Professional Fathers

### Abstract

There is very little literature that depicts the parental role of Black professional fathers positively or that samples Black participants from the upper economic strata. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into how Black professional fathers experience or perceive gender role conflict and identify clinical implications. Grounded in phenomenological methodology and gender role conflict theory, the framework is based on gender role devaluations, gender role restrictions, and gender role violations (O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995). The emerging experiences found in this project were (a) a conflict between the Black and White races and (b) conflict with parental role expectations.

### Keywords

Gender Role Conflict, Parental Role Conflict, Role Theory, Horizontal Abuse, Phenomenology

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## **A Definition of Gender Role Conflict among Black Professional Fathers**

Ora Robinson

California State University San Bernardino, San Bernardino, California, USA

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*There is very little literature that depicts the parental role of Black professional fathers positively or that samples Black participants from the upper economic strata. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into how Black professional fathers experience or perceive gender role conflict and identify clinical implications. Grounded in phenomenological methodology and gender role conflict theory, the framework is based on gender role devaluations, gender role restrictions, and gender role violations (O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995). The emerging experiences found in this project were (a) a conflict between the Black and White races and (b) conflict with parental role expectations. Key Words: Gender Role Conflict, Parental Role Conflict, Role Theory, Horizontal Abuse, Phenomenology.*

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The purpose of this study is to gain insight into how Black professional fathers perceive and experience gender role conflict. This study stems from frustration this researcher experienced at the beginning stages of a literature review on Black grandfathers and their role in raising grandchildren. There is very little literature on the role of grandfathers in general and Black grandfathers specifically. After consulting with my mentor and attending numerous seminars, I narrowed my focus to examine the role of Black fathers. The amount of research about fathers and Black grandfathers is very inadequate. Research about Black fathers is limited by the following conditions: a) most of the articles were generated from a pathological view of inquiry, b) the population sampled was from the lower income bracket, and c) the sampling of the Black population was often compared to a White sample.

This research project, in contrast, examined the contemporary experiences of Black professional fathers. By sampling from a population in a higher income bracket with college educations rather than the population examined in a typical study, this research took a new direction in examining the construction of gender role conflict among Black fathers. For instance, focusing on college educated fathers allowed the research to reflect the extent to which education is a factor in discussions about the lack of participation in the parenting role. This study seeks to identify the positive attributes of Black fathers; identify the resiliency factors that contribute to increased mental health; and share stories of resiliency to interrupt the occurrence of mental health disparities.

The discussion on racism or perceived racism and its impact on mental health and mental health disorder is important in order to gain insight into the resilient characteristics which reduce the negative effects of perceived racism on physical and psychological systems. The focus will be placed on areas of anxiety, depression, and issues of self esteem. This project investigates the concept of gender role conflict from the perspective of professional Black fathers in order to identify resiliency characteristics of Black fathers. The underlying assumption is that the dissemination of new insights of

gender role conflict among professional Black fathers would lead to a clearer understanding of gender role conflict as experienced by this minority group.

Guiding questions included: What are the contributing factors associated with gender role conflict as it affects Black men? What negative effects does this gender role conflict produce? These questions require that we examine the complexity of societal demands and familial demands in a historical context as it relates to the Black professional father. Furthermore, in order for readers to understand “gender role conflict,” the concepts associated with “role theory” will be discussed and narratives will be included to help the reader understand the concepts found in *role theory*. Following the discussion on *role theory* research on *gender role conflict*, the foundation of this research, will be discussed.

As a Registered Nurse in the specialty area of psychiatric nursing and mental health, I have made every effort to set aside personal bias and previous experiences with role conflict. I have an interest in gaining insight into the influencing factors that contribute to gender role conflict, related health disparities and resiliency factors that contribute to adaptive coping strategies because of the increasing number of Black men entering the female dominated nursing profession. There are inherent issues that result in gender role conflict. Intervention strategies generated from this research aim to generate knowledge that can be used to eradicate or minimize the health disparities that occur as a result of Black professional fathers’ experiences with gender role conflict. This is often a result of having to defend their racial group in its totality and combat the negative image of being a Black father.

## Background

In order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of gender role conflict that Black professional fathers experience, a historical review of the literature was conducted. This review speaks to the emerging role function of the Black father in America’s society to provide context and to gain an understanding of how gender role conflict has been perceived and experienced by Black fathers. Historic research often compared Black participants with White participants as the control group. As a result, the findings were often skewed because cultural influences were not considered and comparisons were not made within the racial group. In other words, researchers historically compared tangerines to oranges, rather than comparing oranges to oranges or tangerines to tangerines to get the most representative taste of the juice. Although both fruits have similar characteristics, they differ in taste just as there are cultural differences between the societal parental role expectations of Black and White fathers. Furthermore, there have historically been few parental role expectations for professional fathers. The historical review of the literature reveals African-Americans depicted as having an unstable family unit (Frazier, 1949). This perception continues to be relevant as researchers examine Black fathers from the lower economic population and describe Black fathers as being invisible, or absent or a non-participant in the daily parenting role (Grief & Bailey, 1990). In contrast, the sample population for this research project was designed to recruit Black fathers from the upper income population who self-identify as “middle class” to gain insight into the experiences of contemporary gender role conflict

when compared to historic perceptions of the Black father as an unstable unit and as absent from or playing only a minor parenting role.

A decade review of literature showed a gap in both quantitative and qualitative methods used to explore the phenomenon of Black professional fathers' experiences with gender role conflict in their professional and parental roles. A mere decade ago Lilly (1999) recommended that future methods of inquiry include the use of qualitative approaches to examine gender role conflict and its effects on the psychological well being of Black fathers. Subsequent to that study, Cabrera (2003) reported that Black fathers struggled with societal role expectations based on their achieved role of success as it conflicted with ascribed roles based on race, culture, or ethnicity. This is consistent with research conducted by Bryan and Ajo (1992) who reported that Black fathers experienced a dilemma when they were not able to carry out their societal role function because of meeting resistance from co-workers and the mother of their children. This study will fill the research methodology gap by using qualitative research methods to investigate the complexities of the gender role conflict experienced by Black professional fathers.

Because of the lack of literature on positive aspects of Black fathers, seminal research was reviewed to examine how far research has come in using a non-pathologic method of inquiry. Contemporary inquiry does not follow the traditional pathological view of the family. During the late 1970's and throughout the 80's, there was emerging research that reported a positive view of fatherhood among Black fathers. This research reported an increase in parental role functions of the Black father in this role (Daniel, 1975; McAdoo, 1988; Staples, 1988). Similarly, Hyde and Texidor (1988) concluded that Black fathers' experiences with fatherhood were positive. This is in contrast to a study conducted by Meers (1973) who reported that the inability of low income Black fathers to participate in societal role expectations of fatherhood had an adverse effect on their psychological health as they struggled to define their manhood within the contexts of their White counterparts and Black women who had been described as matriarchal. This role ambiguity reduced their ability to provide for their children economically and contributed to their inability to provide sustained emotional support and guidance. The negative psychological and physical effects resulted in the use of substance abuse to cope with the unclear role expectations. Because of using maladaptive coping measures, Black fathers were not able to fully participate in their achieved roles as fathers because they were sometimes limited by the mother who interrupted their parental role responsibilities. This oftentimes was demonstrated in the area of discipline where they were limited by the mother from carrying out their role as a disciplinarian of the family.

Parental role conflict arose when the mother would contradict the father's parenting style, specifically his discipline techniques as applied particularly with the male child, adolescent, or young man. Black fathers often felt disregarded as they tried to implement the societal role expectations of parent, being the protector and provider of the family. Within this past decade there has been more inquiries focused on the positive role aspects of the Black father in the family.

## **Theoretical Framework**

**Gender role conflict.** Gender role conflict is multidimensional and complex. O'Neil (1981) identified a six-part paradigm to illustrate patterns of gender role conflict and postulated that gender role conflict is a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences for the individuals and others. Gender role conflict occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self. Gender role conflict occurs in psychological domains, situational contexts, and personal experiences. For example, the psychological domain includes cognitive, emotional, unconscious, and behavioral responses. The situational contexts include gender role conflict within the man, gender role conflict expressed toward others, and gender role conflict experienced from others. Personal experiences of gender role conflict include gender role devaluations, role restrictions, and gender role violations. Gender role conflict occurs when men experience conflict within themselves, express conflict toward others, and experience conflict from others. The complexity of gender role conflict deepens as we look at the subcategories of personal experiences of role conflict. For example, personal experiences of gender role conflict include (a) gender role devaluations, (b) gender role restrictions, and (c) gender role violations. Gender role devaluations occur when negative critiques are given to others or oneself when conforming or deviating from the stereotypical norms of masculinity. Gender role restrictions occur when one confines oneself to stereotypic norms. Lastly, gender role devaluations occur when the individual either experiences harm from others or directs harm at them because of deviations from stereotypic norms of masculinity. The outcomes lead to psychological and physical pain (O'Neil et al., 1995).

**Role conflict.** Role conflict is a condition in which existing role expectations are contradictory or mutually exclusive (Hardy & Conway, 1978). For example, in this study the participants expressed conflict in two areas: a) as a professional in the workplace and b) as a father at home. This research on Black professional father's experiences of gender role conflict continues to reflect conflicting role expectations that are contradictory or mutually exclusive. For example, some participants indicated they experienced conflicting role expectations with fathers at the lower income level. This is exemplified by statements that reference "Uncle Tom" which implies that the Black individual is acting like White individuals in that same role. This perception can be associated with the form of language articulation and the choice of residence. For example, one participant stated:

I was raised around Whites and that was the norm for me. So I can remember in high school years of being verbally attacked, okay you are White, or how you carry yourself you must be gay. I don't want to say far more Blacks do this than anyone else, because I don't want to stereotype that, but I'll say I see it far more in Blacks because that is what I'm in tune with. For example, if I can't find success, then I don't want that brother finding success because he will be better than me.

Another aspect of role conflict also occurs when a person occupies multiple positions within a role (Burchard, 1954; Getzels & Guba, 1954; Gullahorn, 1956; Kahn & Wolf, 1964). For example, the participants in this study experienced gender role conflict while in their professional “achieved” role in corporate America while being in their “ascribed” role as Black. For instance, one participant said, “I work with a lot of Anglo Saxon, White-type professionals in non-African-American communities, and I find myself not only having to defend myself, but defend my race.”

### **Methodology**

Because of the complexity of examining gender role conflict, a qualitative approach was used to guide this study. A phenomenological study attempts to understand the complexity of human experiences through perceptions, perspectives, and lived experiences (Creswell, 2006). A phenomenological study design was used here because it allows the researcher to collect narratives and explore individual participant’s thoughts, feelings, actions, intentions, conditions, and environments in a natural setting (Polit & Hungler, 1999). This study was designed to look at the specific phenomenon of gender role conflict among Black fathers and investigate their gender role experiences within real-life contexts in which boundaries are not clearly evident (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The sample was a purposeful sample of Black fathers born in the United States. They were recruited from a professional organization. Permission was granted from the president of the organization and emails were sent to the identified participants to explain the purpose of the study as well as the institutional review board (IRB) information regarding their right to withdraw from the study at any time. A snowball sampling approach was also used. The participants were asked to refer a colleague who may be interested in participating in this study. This process was repeated until the required number of participants was obtained, with a final sample of  $N=10$ . Upon receipt of names, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers, members who showed interest were contacted in order to set up meeting times for the interview sessions. I informed them that the meeting place had to be free of distractions and interruptions. At this time, the informed consent was forwarded electronically and sent by standard mail for review. A returned stamped envelope was included. I informed the participants to review the form for understanding and contact the researcher, mentor, or IRB about any questions relating to the informed consent and participation in the study. I instructed the participants to bring the informed consent to the interview session.

The procedural steps included the introduction of the primary investigator and thanking the participants for participating in the study. I collected the informed consent and instructed the participants to fill out the demographic questionnaire which consisted of age, ethnic group identification, level of education, current marital status, religious affiliation, and annual income. When participants were asked about ethnic group identification they were asked which of the following they most closely identified with: Black, American born of descendents of slaves brought to America; African-American, American born of descendents brought to America; African-American, born of descendents directly from Africa; Biracial, Black mixed with other; and Black, Caribbean born. The demographics were important to the study in order to discern if there were any differences between those who identified with a select ethnic group and their definition of

gender role conflict. The next procedural step was to explain the purpose of the interview questions. They were informed that their narrative responses would be recorded and their responses compared to the other participants in order to identify themes and categories of gender role conflict. Following this, we explained that the questions were formulated in order to capture the complexity of the gender role conflict and how four psychological domains, three situational contexts domains, and three personal experiences operationally define it.

The definitions of gender role devaluations were defined as negative critiques of others or oneself when conforming to or deviating from or violating stereotypic gender role norms of masculinity. Participants were informed that this results from erosion of status, social standing, or respect. They were also informed that gender role restrictions occur when there is a confining of others or oneself to stereotypic norms of masculinity. This results in a limiting one's behavior, personal potential and human growth. Lastly, gender role violations were described as harming oneself or being harmed by others when deviating from or conforming to gender role norms of masculinity (O'Neil et al., 1995). The following example was given: some Blacks are referred to as Uncle Tom when they do not conform to the Black male view of masculinity and instead follow the traditional Eurocentric view of male masculinity development. The final procedural step was informing the participants that their responses to the questions would help researchers gain insight into gender role conflict among professional Black fathers.

### **Data Collection**

The demographic characteristics of the participants ranged from age 25 to 60, actively working as employee, self employed and retired. They held upper management positions in private and governmental agencies including the military. Marital status ranged from single, single with significant other, widowed and married. Children ranged in age from six to 25. The participants were excited to participate in this study to share their experiences with gender role conflict in their parental and professional roles. Data collection was achieved by using a structured schedule of interview questions. The questions were developed to capture the participants' knowledge of gender role conflict and their opinions and feelings toward the topic of gender role conflict. This is consistent with Patton (2001) who did extensive research on the development of interview questions and found that knowledge questions aim at factual information the participants have; in this case, knowledge questions ascertained the participants' definition of gender role conflict. Opinion questions are aimed at understanding the cognitive and interpretive processes of the participant, and feeling questions are aimed at understanding the emotional responses to experiences and thoughts. The schedule of interview questions should capture the participants' cognitive understanding and how their emotional responses would impact their psychological well-being and resultant mental health. The schedule of interview questions was developed in order to stay focused on the specific topic of the research question. This approach is consistent with Rapley (2004) who claimed the strength of a schedule of interview questions is to serve as a reminder of what to cover during the interview. A weakness of this approach was that inquiry into further phenomena presented could not be conducted because of the protocol of the research design. This was evident when additional information was shared by the participants that



could not be further investigated due to the design of the survey questions. This additional information was recorded in the memo section of the research process.

The questions developed were open-ended in order to make the participants feel comfortable, and there were introductory guiding questions that allowed the participants to tell how they understood the topic (Krueger & Casey 2000). The questions emphasized brevity, clarity, open-endedness and had one topic area in each question. This questioning route was in complete sentences in order to foster consistency in questioning and allow for improved data analysis (Krueger & Casey). The data collection was achieved through in-depth tape recorded interview sessions and from memo writing during the sessions. The purpose of memo writing was to capture nonverbal reactions and anecdotal data that were not specific to the survey question. This is consistent with J. Lofland and Lofland (1995) who say the purpose of memo writing is to allow the researcher to define and explain the relationships between the codes or elaborate on coding categories during analysis. Each interview proceeded according to this sequence of procedural steps to ensure internal consistency. A script of the interview session was used in order to maintain consistency and increase validity of the research process. The ultimate goal of the questions was to address the research question of “How do professional Black fathers define gender role conflict?” See table 1 for the conceptual framework used to guide the interview questions.

Table 1. *Schedule of Interview Questions*

Conceptual framework	Interview questions
Knowledge Cognitive	What is your understanding of gender role conflict (GRC)?
Opinion Situational context	In what areas do you experience gender role conflict? Have you experienced conflict within oneself? Have you experienced conflict toward others? Have you experienced conflict experience from others?
Gender role role restriction	What circumstances contributed to your experience with gender conflict? What do you think caused gender role conflict?
Feeling & Guiding Emotional Restrictive Violation	Think back to a time when you experienced gender role conflict. How did that feel? What type of adjectives can you used to describe those feelings? Can you describe, if any, the type of physical complaints you experienced? Can you describe, if any, the type of behavior you displayed while experiencing gender role conflict? Have you wanted to harm yourself or others while experiencing gender role conflict?

In summary, the data collection occurred as follows: a) fill out the demographic questionnaire, b) explain the purpose of the study, c) explain the formulation of the questions, d) administer the survey question and record verbal responses using a tape recorder and , e) record nonverbal responses with memo writing.

### Data Analysis

The data consisted of narratives which were transcribed and analyzed. Data was analyzed line by line for thematic categories from the narrative responses of each participant. Key phrases were identified and placed in a thematic category; see Table 2 for a detailed description of the excerpts and corresponding themes. A phenomenological inductive approach was used to conduct data analysis. The induction process involves epoche where I identified any preconceived ideas or bias toward the project or participants that may contaminate the data. First level analysis included identifying key phrases that spoke to the questions. Every phrase was viewed from a horizontalization approach where every phrase has equal value. Second level analysis included organizing the data into meaningful categories and thematic clusters. Third level analysis consisted of categorizing the themes into the areas of cognitive, opinion, situational context, gender role restriction, feeling and guiding questions. Additionally, themes were categorized based on emotional, restrictive and violation questions. The responses were coded with actual words and in some cases a more general label was used to identify the categories. A bottom-up analysis was used to analyze the data, for example, I did not have a set of themes going into the data analysis. The data was read and reread for themes to emerge. The fourth level analysis included the description of the experiences. The fifth level of analysis included the development of a structural synthesis to understand the true meaning of the experience. As I collected and analyzed the data from the preliminary observations, a field notebook was kept to record hunches, personal bias that may have emerged and categories for invariant qualities that emerged from the data.

### Results

Themes emerged from the data collected in response to the schedule of interview question #1 which asked, “What is your understanding of gender role conflict?”

Table 2. *Contact Summary Form: Themes*

Accumulation of Narratives	Emerging themes of a definition of gender role conflict
IQ1. What is your understanding of gender role conflict?	
Difficult being a Black male in the military and in corporate America.	Difficulty being a Black male “cognitive knowledge”

Confusion or conflict that arises from unclear expectations, lack of communication, principally lack of communication between male and female.	Confusion, unclear expectations “opinion” “situational context”
Relationships as to what perceived or expected behaviors are and what the actual behaviors are.	Expected versus actual behavior “gender role restriction”
Typically the male figure acts as the dominant figure or the father figure, and the female acts as the other or support figure in typical family relationships when there are two.	Domination; support family relationships “cognitive knowledge”
My understanding of gender role conflict would be in a parenting situation where the mother has different ideas than the father has about raising the child.	Different ideas of parenting “gender role restriction”
I would see it from society’s point of view whereby what’s seen as traditional roles as gender is now taken on by the opposite gender.	Traditional roles “Cognitive knowledge”
Gender role conflict is a compromise in an individual authority due to restrictions placed by another.	Compromise “cognitive knowledge”
I would define it as a conflict between the sexes or either a conflict between races.	Gender and race “opinion” “situational context”
I would describe it as what society believes you should be doing based upon your gender and a conflict would be something that goes against what society says you should be doing.	Societal expectations “opinion” “situational context”

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The following narrative is an example of the participants’ understanding of gender role conflict and their definition of gender role conflict:

Typically the male figure acts as the dominant figure or the father figure, and the female acts as the other or support figure in typical family relationships when there are two. My understanding of gender role conflict would be in a parenting situation where the mother has different ideas than the father has about raising the child. I can also see it from society’s point of view whereby what is seen as traditional roles as gender is now taken on by the opposite gender. I would describe it as what society believes you should be doing based upon your gender and a conflict would be something that goes against what society says you should be doing.

The following narrative is an example of participant's definition of gender role conflict in response to schedule of interview questions 2 which asked, "What is your definition of gender role conflict?"

Confusion or conflict that arises from unclear expectations, lack of communication, principally lack of communication from the male and female. Gender role conflict is a compromise in an individual's authority due to restrictions placed by another. A conflict between the sexes or a conflict between races.

Second level analysis for the identification of themes included a) difficulty of being a Black male, b) confusion and unclear expectations, c) expected behavior versus actual behavior, d) domination in the area of family relationships, e) different ideas of parenting styles, f) traditional roles versus nontraditional roles of gender, g) compromise, h) issues of gender and race, and i) societal expectations.

The thematic categories of gender role conflict emerged as physical manifestations, behavioral manifestations, and feeling manifestations Table 3. Terms were reviewed and analyzed for patterns. For example, physical manifestations or signs and symptoms of a potential illness were identified as increases in high blood pressure which may lead to hypertension and increase anxiety levels. Behavioral manifestations or signs and symptoms of behavioral responses were associated with being confused, withdrawn, and taking no prisoners which could lead to violence in the workplace or decreased work productivity. Signs and symptoms of feeling manifestations were identified with feeling pissed off, disappointment, anger, and the use of humor as a coping mechanism. These manifestations, if not addressed, could be precipitating factors that lead to further deterioration of health or be precursors to violence in the workplace. See Table 3 for a detail list of manifestations in these areas. For example, one of the participants' spoke of feeling pissed off and angry which led to his behavioral response of verbal aggression which could lead to violence in the workplace. Another participant spoke of feeling upset which led to his behavioral response of taking no prisoners which could lead to workplace violence. Lastly, a participant had feelings of being upset which led to a behavioral response of assuming a defensive posture which led to the physical manifestation of anxiety. These are just a few examples of how this researcher envisioned the interrelatedness of the categories.

Table 3. *Clinical Manifestations of Gender Role Conflict*

Behavioral	Feelings	Physical
Confusion	Demeaning	Hypertension
Defending	Upset	Anxiety
Going inward	Regret	
Taking no prisoners	Pissed off	
Withdrawn	Anger	
Acceptance	Humorous	
Speak up	Disappointment	
Control	Disbelief	
Confront		
Verbal aggressive		

## Verbal Expressions of Gender Role Conflict

**GRC: Black/White (difficulty being a Black male/traditional roles).** Other areas explored included experiencing conflict from Whites and from non-Black minorities. The following narrative describes this experience:

I think Caucasian males were envious because I was in an environment where there were very few African Americans and there were Caucasian women that were attracted to me. I was able to go out and have social relationships with these people, that other males were not to have, and part of their response to that was to say, “Well how can you like this guy? Look how he keeps his place” and all of these things that would say did you know he was . . . because I was able to have friendships with a variety of different people. I have friends that were homosexual and gay, so being seen with them, you can associate that in terms of relationships. I didn’t have anything to do with that, but because of those associations the perception, people challenged my masculinity based on those kinds of perceptions.

Narrative: (societal expectations)

For example, I’m a physician, and one evening I went on the floor and I didn’t have my lab coat on. I was asked who I was. They started from the bottom, who was I. They went through housekeeping, x-ray tech, etc. They did not mention a physician once.

**GRC: Black/Black (societal expectations/gender and race).** An additional area of gender role conflict emerged as a function of race. The following excerpt describes this experience:

I was raised on a military base where we were the only Black family in the area. So I think that kind of put a shelter over me because I was always aware of my Blackness. When I moved to [town omitted], I saw a whole different aspect; I didn’t kind of blend in at first within the Black community. Because I was raised where you held yourself in a certain esteem, so a lot of it was an okay, who do you think you are attitude, you think you’re better, you think you’re White. I mean, I was raised around Whites and so that was the norm for me. So I can remember in high school years of being verbally attacked, okay you’re White, or how you carry yourself you must be gay. So a lot of it I held in and tried to say it didn’t bother me, when actually it did.[Participant sighs] . . . I think being a cause of conflict is race, the lack of understanding between people out of fear, out of the unknown, and that they don’t know how to interact with that particular type of person.

**GRC: Spouse/significant other (traditional roles/different ideas of parenting).**

Married participants expressed conflict when the mother disciplined the children, especially the male child, without consulting the father about the method and consequences to be given to the child. This excerpt describes this experience:

Parenting is difficult, especially when you have senior family members that are involved in your immediate family and a wife that is also heavily involved in the family. Again, it is a societal thing. I was brought up to think that in a family you should be doing A, B, C, and D. For instance, a man in the family should handle all of the discipline, especially if a young man is involved. When there is a young lady involved, you handle the discipline only if the mother can't deal with it. I experience conflict with my wife because of the way she wants to, you know, to discipline my son, or congratulate my son, or give him rewards versus the way I would do it, and that kind of conflict we deal with. Sometimes she will provide the discipline without talking to me first, and then we will talk about it afterwards and get it resolved like that. I guess I have to go within my own family where sometimes my wife would take charge of a certain situation when I thought about taking charge. I felt slow, not on top of things [pause], not competent, or not feeling confident that my wife was secure in and confident in my ability to handle the situation.

Single participants expressed conflict with their significant other over taking on the responsibility of the traditional male role of being the provider at the same time as the woman proclaims her independence. The following narrative describes this experience:

My gender conflict come in finding partners or companions that are wanting a partnership or shared responsibilities to grow together versus some that in wanting to get to know you, you know, it feels that I'm the one that is doing all of the work in the development of the relationship. I believe in reciprocity, so if I'm doing some things that allow you to know me, and you are not giving me responses or feedback that are supporting my continuing to do that, then the likelihood of us getting together is going to be nil.

Definitions of gender role conflict based on data analysis emerged as:

- a. A struggle between the two races, African American and Caucasian, which has caused and continues to cause distress within the minds of the African American males in meeting their role expectations.
- b. A struggle with parental role expectations within the family.

The following narratives support these definitions and answer the first research question. "How professional Black fathers defined gender role conflict in the military?"

I found it difficult being a Black male in the military, in terms of how you dealt with a military environment. For instance, when I became an officer, I went to officer's candidate school and completed it. There was sometimes difficulty, whereas some of the older gentleman, who had been there, White males, was taking orders from an African American Black male officer. Oftentimes, that presented a challenge for you. How do you deal with people that don't want to accept you, not because you don't know what you are saying as an officer, but as a Black male [participant sighs]. When a White officer walked in and whatever he had on his collar, his rank would follow. Oftentimes as a Black officer, they are suspect if you know what you are doing, so . . . [participant sighs].

“How do professional Black fathers defined gender role conflict in corporate America?”

There are times that I will be meeting with a firm, Fortune 500 firm. I come into the room. The look is like one of, so you're Mr. X. I wasn't expecting that to happen. I don't stop to go, well you weren't expecting a Black man to walk into the room. I don't stop to do that, but those are just mental observations that I make to myself. Does racism exist? Yeah, yeah. Is it as blatant as it was? No, I guess it depends where you are. “expected versus actual behavior”

Another narrative

Conflict at work, a little different for me because I'm in my own business. There is definitely a conflict when I know what needs to be done and how it needs to be done, and someone who is less knowledgeable, less experienced, think that there is a better way. I always have conflict when I have to spend an additional amount of time trying to convenience someone that not only do I know what I'm doing, your way is the wrong way and there are different reasons why. So I do have conflict, but I have to go through that, but I'm not afraid to go through that, but I do have some conflict with that every once in a while.

## Discussion

Although this research did not explore the racial identity of the participants, it is relevant based on evidence that gender role conflict is based on racial orientation. For example, Wade (1996) found that racial identity development correlated with some patterns of gender role conflict. These findings are consistent with this research study which reported that Black men with external racial orientations, for example, self-perception and other racial group perceptions based on race, exhibited three patterns of gender role conflict. These patterns are marked by success, power and competition; restrictive emotionality; and conflict between work and family relations Wade (1995, 1996). Those men who were grounded in their Blackness tended to have less evidence of gender role conflict.

Lastly, Parham's (1993) findings suggest that racial discrimination continues to impact Black males as a group, making it difficult to become successful in the United States while in their ascribed role as Blacks. This group continues to experience the negative effects of racial discrimination. However, this study did not support overwhelming evidence of adverse effects from acts of racism on physical and mental health.

The findings seem to indicate that participants expressed gender role conflict in their parental role and in their professional role and the feeling of being invisible. The results appear to lead to the conclusion that manifestations of gender role conflict produced divergent viewpoints among the participants. For example, in the area of feelings, there were differences in attitudes from using humor as a coping mechanism and having feelings of regret as compared to feelings of having been demeaned which led to feelings of being pissed off, upset, and angry which resulted in disbelief and disappointment. Physical manifestations of gender role conflict were expressed as increases in blood pressure, which could lead to hypertension or further impacts on cardiovascular health, and as increasing levels of anxiety in the area of psychological well being. Generally, participants expressed satisfaction in their parental role but expressed conflict with the significant other when it came to disciplining their children in particular the male children. Participants expressed a high level of self-esteem in spite of their experiences with gender role conflict. Participants experienced stereotypic attitudes from both non Blacks and Blacks in the work place. Interestingly, these professional fathers were able to channel their negative attitudes of being upset, pissed off, angered, and disappointed into using positive coping measures to deal with their experiences of gender role conflict. The following coping measures reflect adaptive coping measures used to counteract the experiences of gender role conflict: a) humor, b) playing and learning from their children and c) direct confrontation. The use of positive coping measures was related to the developmental stage of the participant. The concept of gender role conflict is multidimensional and complex. Gender roles for Blacks have been revised and relearned through societal trends, and, therefore, the gender role conflict phenomenon is complex and individualized. For example, those participants who have an Afrocentric view of the world versus a European view of the world may have varying degrees of gender role conflict or no conflict at all. It is imperative to continue to investigate this phenomenon in order to develop a tool to identify at-risk susceptibility to gender role conflict as well as those susceptible to overtly or covertly demonstrating acts that lead to feelings of gender role conflict. Overall, most Black men have the same views of masculinity as their White counterparts, and they aspire to be the provider for the family. A decade ago, Wade (1995, 1996) respectively sampled 95 middle-class black men and found that Black men viewed traditional masculinity traits as desirable and racial identity defined internally was not related to gender role conflict.

### **Clinical Implications**

The concept of gender role conflict is multidimensional and complex. Gender roles for Blacks have been revised and relearned through societal trends, and, therefore, the gender role conflict phenomenon is complex and individualized. For example, those participants who have an Afrocentric view of the world versus a European view of the



world may have varying degrees of gender role conflict or no conflict at all. We need to develop psycho educational workshops on strategies to minimize the effects of gender role conflict and, lastly, include this phenomenon. There is a multitude of information on cultural diversity, but it is not specific to race relations. Black psychology is focused on combating negative assumptions about Black fathers who have been viewed from a deficit model of inquiry. Registered nurses are in a unique position to holistically examine the human response to illness and analyze physical and psychosocial data that may precipitate feelings of gender role conflict. Early identification will minimize the psychological and physical effects of gender role conflict. It is imperative that nursing takes an active role in using the appropriate nurse theorists to identify stressors that may precipitate feelings of gender role conflict. These participants acknowledged feelings of aggression but had developed positive coping strategies in order not to act on these feelings.

Therefore, early intervention will minimize the effects and may help in decreasing violence in the family, academic settings, and the workplace. In addition, through the identification of precipitating events, psycho educational workshops can be developed and presented to organizations, family systems, and health care providers in order to facilitate the identification of events that may led to feelings of GRC and to minimize the negative effects that are oftentimes exhibited in behavioral manifestations.

### **Recommendations**

This researcher recommends that further studies be conducted using quantitative methods using the gender role conflict scale and parental role satisfaction scale in order to get statistical data on reliability and validity of the responses. Further exploration of the psychometric properties of the GRC scale among Black men across the life span need to be investigated. Using mixed methods approach to explore the relationship between verbal expressions and quantitative expressions of gender role conflict using O'Neil's gender role conflict scale should be conducted to get a holistic picture of the dynamics of gender role conflict among this population and to assess the potential for the development or adaptation of a gender role conflict scale that reflects a specific minority group that is less concerned with the properties of homophobia than the properties of gender role conflict in the areas of their restrictive roles, devaluation, or violation of self or others.

This study looked at a homogeneous group of participants and additional studies which use focus groups among and between different minority groups are needed in order to increase the reliability and validity of the response items. Participants with military background verbalized devaluation in their achieved role as evidenced by rank and this could lead to a decreased willingness to participate in security activities in the United States while being restricted in their roles. It is further recommended that focus groups be conducted with White men to explore their feelings of gender role conflict toward Black men and its impact on their physical and psychological health. These findings may contribute to a research program that focuses primarily on the development of intervention strategies and the evaluation of their effectiveness. An additional roadmap includes examining those individuals who demonstrate acts of racism toward others in order to identify behavioral characteristics and their impact on physical health and psychological well-being. Lastly, further research is needed in resiliency factors used by

Black participants experiencing gender role conflict in order to identify positive adapting coping measures used to minimize the effects of gender role conflict in the workplace and at home in their familial role as father. Limitations of the study include the use of scheduled interview questions. The researcher could not explore expressions not directly related to the phenomenon of gender role conflict but had an indirect relationship due to the structure of the study which did not include probing questions. The small sample size of ten was a limitation as the findings cannot be generalized to the general population of Black professional fathers. Another limitation was the researcher who was of the same race and ethnicity who had to “bracket” personal bias or opinions to counteract inherent bias when reviewing the data. Lastly, the narratives were open to interpretation by the researcher and there was a potential source of error related to inaccurate interpretations and accuracy of transcription.

This study was able to address the research goal of gaining insight into Black professional fathers’ experiences with gender role conflict and aims of identifying thematic categories of gender role conflict, resiliency characteristics, and clinical implications.

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### Author Note

Ora Robinson, R.N., Ph.D. currently holds the position of assistant professor at California State University, San Bernardino. Her Ph.D. is in Human Services, received at Capella University. Research areas of interests include areas of gender role conflict and minority nurse role conflict. Particularly, racism within nursing and its impact on cardiovascular health and psychological well-being among minority nurses. Dr. Robinson has published in the Journal of Cultural Diversity and authored a book chapter on "Essential Communication Skills". She has conducted research in the area of racism among nursing students and presented findings at the American Psychiatric Nursing Association. She was awarded 2<sup>nd</sup> place at the APNA poster presentation

conference in 2007 on gender role conflict among professional Black fathers. She has over 18 years in academia at the various levels of nursing programs. Dr. Robinson uses simulation role play to engage the learner in the use of therapeutic communication and communicating with culturally diverse patients. Her goal is to “inspire-motivate-educate” one nurse at a time. She has provided consultation services to enhance the understanding of transcultural communication. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed to: Ora Robinson, R.N. CNE, PhD., Assistant professor nursing, California State University, San Bernardino 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407-2393; Phone: 909-537-7798 and Email:orobinso@csusb.edu

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