

Race Differences in the Development of Academic Gender Stereotypes of Black and White Adolescents

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Abstract

The development of academic stereotypes about gender differences in English, math, and science abilities was measured in 426 Black and White high school students, when the students were in the tenth and twelfth grade. As predicted, White students' ratings of the competencies of boys and girls in academic domains reflected traditional beliefs in the twelfth grade (i.e., they favored boys in math and science and girls in English), due to a decrease in their ratings of girls in math and science from tenth to twelfth grade. Black students, on the other hand, continued to favor girls across all three academic domains from the tenth to twelfth grade, despite the increase in their ratings of boys in all three domains. Results suggest that race is an important factor for research on the development of academic gender stereotype endorsement, which itself may influence a range of academic outcomes.

Background and Study Hypotheses

Counter to traditional domain-specific academic gender stereotypes in the United States, which favor girls in verbal domains and boys in math and science (Kiefer & Sekaquaptewa, 2007), ethnic minority youth are more likely to rate girls as more competent than boys in all academic domains (Hudley & Graham, 2002). We have found that White tenth graders favor girls in English but rate boys and girls similarly in math and science (Copping, Skinner, Swinton, Hudgens, & Kurtz-Costes, 2011).

The purpose of the current study was to examine race differences in the development of Black and White high school students' domain-specific gender stereotypes. As students progress in high school, gender-based academic stereotypes may become more salient (Hill & Lynch, 1983).

We predicted that White students' ratings of girls would decrease for math and science from tenth to twelfth grade. Thus we expected White youth to report traditional academic gender stereotypes in twelfth grade, whereas Black youth would continue to rate girls higher than boys in all three domains.

Method

Participants

Participants were 426 Black (167 girls, 113 boys) and White (82 girls, 64 boys) high school students from a southeastern region of the United States, who participated in the study in their tenth and twelfth grade years.

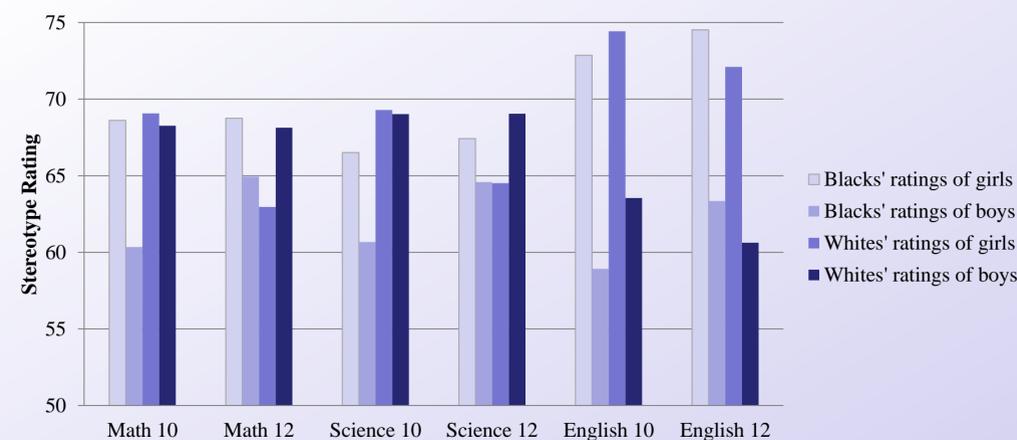
Measures

Gender stereotypes. High-school students rated the competence of boys and girls in math, science, and English on 100-point scales. Following the prompt, "I think that in <domain> girls do this well," the students placed a mark on a 100-millimeter line with anchors set at zero (not at all well) and 100 (very well). Students rated other social groups (e.g., Blacks, Whites) and other abilities (e.g., music, making friends) not reported here.

Results

A 2(Race) X 2(Gender) X 3(Domain) X 2(Group) X 2(Grade) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to test the hypotheses. As predicted, the Race X Domain X Group X Grade interaction approached significance, $F(2,421) = 2.42, p < .10$ (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Mean academic stereotype ratings for girls and boys, by race, domain, and grade.



Results Cont.

On average, White students' ratings of the competence of girls in all three domains decreased from tenth to twelfth grade and decreased for boys in English. Unlike tenth grade reports, White twelfth graders favored boys over girls in math and science. There was no change for the domain of English; Whites continued to rate the competence of girls higher than that of boys in twelfth grade. Thus, as twelfth graders, Whites' ratings of the competencies of boys and girls aligned with traditional gender stereotypes; in contrast, Black students were non-traditional.

Even though Black students' ratings of boys increased from tenth grade to twelfth grade for all three domains, as predicted, their ratings of girls remained higher than their ratings of boys in all domains.

Discussion

These results indicate that domain-specific gender stereotype endorsement is not only different for Black and White students, but it also follows a different developmental course. High school students' beliefs about gender differences in academic competence are important because of their potential influence on self-perceptions (Evans, Copping, Rowley & Kurtz-Costes, 2011), as well as academic interests and pursuits.

References

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