

ABSTRACT

JOHNSON, DEBORAH ELYSE. Racial Identity, Womanist Identity, and Issues Impacting First-Year African American College Women at a Predominantly White University: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study. (Under the direction of Herbert Exum)

The purpose of this study was to investigate relationships between racial identity and gender identity in first-year African American college women attending a predominantly White university and to explore the women's views about the salience of race and gender as well as issues impacting them. The Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (Ossana, Helms & Leonard, 1992) was used to assess Womanist Identity Development—a stage-wise model. The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton & Smith, 1997) was used to assess the ideologies of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)—a model in which there are no qualitative differences between the ideologies nor an optimal level of development. A focus group format was used to gather information for the qualitative component.

Several hypotheses predicting relationships between Womanist identity development and racial identity development could not be addressed due to a lack of representation among most of the Womanist stages. An analysis of descriptive data revealed that, with the exception of one participant, all members of the sample held Womanist Internalization attitudes. Therefore, the hypotheses relating the other three Womanist stages—Pre-encounter, Encounter, and Immersion/Emersion—with the various MMRI ideologies could not be investigated. To investigate the hypothesis predicting a relationship between the Womanist Internalization stage and the Minority Ideology, chi-square analysis was used.

Chi-square analysis comparing actual and expected frequency distributions for the MIBI Ideology subscale scores for participants in the Womanist Internalization stage revealed that there was no evidence to suggest that there might be a relationship between the Womanist Internalization stage and the MMRI Minority ideology.

Information obtained from the focus group revealed that: (1) race is, by far, more salient than gender; (2) skin color matters; (3) prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes still exist; (4) relationships—including dating—with other African American students are a concern; and (5) the women are perplexed about all of these issues.

**RACIAL IDENTITY, WOMANIST IDENTITY, AND ISSUES IMPACTING
FIRST-YEAR AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE WOMEN AT A
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE UNIVERSITY: A QUANTITATIVE
AND QUALITATIVE STUDY**

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Dedication

To my ancestors who paved the way so that I could be at this place at this time.

Special Dedication to the memory of:

Charlotte Daniel Barbour, my grandmother, who raised me for much of my life and taught
me to serve others.

Robert Barbour, my maternal grandfather, who always provided emotional and financial
support.

Louise Church, my great-aunt, who loved me as her own.

Raymond Ellis, my uncle, who provided unconditional love and support.

Bill Moore, my godfather, who was always there and made me feel special.

Special Dedication to:

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responsible, productive, and caring individuals.

BIOGRAPHY

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

African American female college students attending predominantly White colleges and universities bring with them a unique set of circumstances and experiences that may have a profound effect on their adjustment to a college environment, especially when combined with the major developmental task of establishing a coherent identity. Historically, African American women have been devalued in America based on two immutable characteristics: race and gender. In addition to a history of oppression associated with these factors, these women have been consistently deluged with societal messages—especially from the mass media—that often either exclude or denigrate them (Bailey, 1990; Bates, 1994; Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Hargrove, 1999; Jordan, 1991; Okazawa-Rey, Robinson & Ward, 1987; Robinson & Ward, 1991; Sandler, 1993; Tatum, 1992). Although not all African American female students are affected adversely by this history of oppression and its related messages, many may find establishing a coherent sense of self to be especially difficult.

Oppression continues to pervade the lives of African American women. Jordan (1991) submits that because of their history and the resulting devaluation based on the immutable characteristics of race, gender, and often membership in a lower socioeconomic class, African-American women have been labeled as one of the most oppressed groups in the United States. Hargrove (1999) suggests that their oppressed racial and gender statuses place African American women in a position of “double jeopardy.” According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, a little less than half of the 8.7 million African American

families in America—44 percent—were maintained by Black women with no spouse present (McKinnon, 2001). In addition, results of the U.S. Census Bureau's March 1999 Current Population Survey indicate that families headed by African American women were more likely than their White counterparts to have incomes less than \$25,000 (67 percent and 46 percent respectively), and poverty rates were highest in families maintained by African American women (41 percent) compared to families maintained by White women (21 percent) (McKinnon & Humes, 2000). African American women were more likely than their White counterparts to participate in the labor force (McKinnon, 2001), and they were less likely than White women to be employed in managerial and professional specialty positions (24 and 35 percent respectively) (McKinnon & Humes, 2000). With regard to educational attainment, 16 percent of African American women in the March 1999 Current Population Survey had earned at least a bachelor's degree compared to 25 percent of White women and 31 percent of White men. Thus, oppressive conditions and disparities continue to exist for Black women, especially in the areas of employment and educational attainment, and these are the circumstances under which young African American women will be expected to thrive and become self-supporting individuals.

The double burden of racism and sexism along with negative societal messages are difficult for most African American women to handle. This is especially true for young Black women who may have little understanding of their history and the circumstances surrounding their devalued statuses. Robinson and Ward (1991) suggested that unless encouraged to do otherwise, many African American female adolescents in their attempts to survive the negative influences of racism and sexism, may choose inappropriate

psychological “resistance strategies.” These inappropriate strategies may include self-denigration due to their internalizing negative self-images and “quick fixes such as early and unplanned pregnancies, substance abuse, school failure and food addictions” (Robinson & Ward, 1991, p. 89). In response to the constant barrage of media messages promoting standards of beauty different from those associated with their race, some young African American women may attempt to imitate European standards by using skin lightening creams, chemical hair products, artificial hair, and plastic surgery to change facial features (Copeland, 1977; Jordan, 1991; Okazawa-Rey et al., 1987; Sandler, 1993). Robinson and Ward (1991) and Jordan (1991) suggested that such “quick fixes” might adversely affect the self-esteem, self-confidence, and identity development of young African American women.

Significance of the Problem

Being enrolled at predominantly White college campuses adds to the challenges of Black women. In response to developmental issues associated with identity development experienced by most students, along with challenges related to racism and sexism on some predominantly White campuses, some African-American college women may choose inappropriate and self-defeating coping strategies in their attempts to survive. My own professional experiences at a predominantly White college and university, combined with findings in the literature, revealed similar findings.

As an assistant director for an undesignated program for first-year, African-American students and as an academic coordinator for women’s athletic teams, I had an opportunity to observe and learn about many of the issues affecting African-American college women at a large, predominantly White university. Some of the challenges experienced by the young

women that I observed included: (1) isolation due to being either one of the few or the only African American in classes and problems associated with that status; (2) difficulties initially in adjusting to the rigorous academic demands of the institution; and (3) intense competition for the small pool of African-American men on campus. I also observed that in their attempts to cope with many of the challenges with which they were confronted, some of the young women's coping strategies were often self-defeating. Some of the women expressed a lack of confidence in themselves and their abilities to succeed academically during the first year. Others attempted to conform to standards of beauty of the dominant culture by attempting to emulate their physical features and appearance. Several of them engaged in promiscuous behavior to get the attention of the few African-American men on campus. A few of the women experienced bouts of depression.

At a small predominantly White women's college where one of my responsibilities included programming for the African American female students, there appeared to be considerable discord among the African American women on that campus and a distrust of outsiders. I spent considerable time in establishing a rapport with the students as well as getting them to trust me enough to share their concerns and issues. As I watched these young women struggling to survive in these academic environments, I became concerned about their ability to develop a healthy identity in light of the many challenges with which they were confronted.

A review of the literature revealed that issues faced by African American women on predominantly White college campuses have been found to include feelings of loneliness and isolation, concerns about racial incidents, fears relating to competence, concerns about

dating, and feelings of inadequacy about their appearance (Copeland, 1977; Epps, 1972; Exum, 1988; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Fleming, 1984; Hayes, 1993; Tomlinson & Cope, 1988). African-American women frequently find themselves isolated in academic settings when residing on predominantly White college campuses. Even today, they may often be the only African-American student in their classrooms, and they may be called upon as the primary spokespersons for Black issues. Further complicating the problem, these students may neither see nor have the opportunity to interact with African-American faculty members, and the classroom materials they use may not include the contributions that African-Americans and other people of color have made to the subject under study (Mitchell, 1991; Moses, 1989).

Because of the racial climate on some predominantly White campuses, an additional concern for some African American college women and men may be a fear of racial incidents. In their study of the impact of race on the social experience of 120 African American and 120 White students attending a predominantly White university, Fisher and Hartmann (1995) reported that “approximately one-half of all Black students had been the target of other students’ racial prejudice and experienced racial prejudice nearly six times as often as their White counterparts (44% to 7.5%)” (p. 126).

Fleming (1984) found that while African-American women on predominantly White college campuses were somewhat assertive, they still appeared to suffer from emotional pain, social isolation, or fears about their competence. This pain may be caused by their ambivalence about self-assertion, an issue that has been a challenge for Black women throughout history. Fleming suggested that the young women may attempt to stifle their

talents, preferring to lean on dominant men, a finding supported by Copeland (1977). This did not appear to be the case on campuses where African Americans were in the majority.

Dating provides another challenge for African-American women. When conducting seminars on coping strategies for African-American women on predominantly White campuses, Hayes (1993) found that although the women had established themselves as scholars in academic settings, they were concerned about establishing social relationships with young African-American men and about ways that the African-American men perceived and treated them. Because there were often fewer African-American men than women on predominantly White campuses, and because African-American men were more likely to date interracially, African-American women often found themselves competing with women from their own culture as well as women from other cultures for the attention of a relatively small pool of African-American men (Moses, 1989). African American women often expressed feelings of resentment about having to compete with women who were not African Americans as well as feelings of inadequacy about their appearance raised by such competition (Copeland, 1977; Moses, 1989).

Concerns about acceptance, appearance, self-assertion, and external affirmation—especially from African-American men—often place African-American female college students in an extremely vulnerable position. Their desire for acceptance may override their better judgment and cause them to attempt to adopt values, standards, and behaviors that may denigrate them. This pattern often leads the young women to other self-defeating behaviors. In addition, the way that young African American women see themselves and others—the foundation of their personal identity—may be influenced negatively by feelings of

inadequacy related to their race and/or gender. Consequently, unless deliberate attempts are made to facilitate healthy identity formation and to equip the women with strategies for dealing with the repercussions of their devalued statuses, some African American college women may find it difficult to establish a coherent identity and to function successfully in society. An examination of the history of African American women may provide some insight into the source of some of the difficulties faced by this population.

Historical Perspective on African American Women

History has played a significant role in the lives of African-American women and in the way the women perceive themselves and are perceived by others. Copeland (1977) suggested that the behaviors of this group, as well as their self-image, their self-confidence, and their perception of the world, are rooted in their historical backgrounds. In her discussion of minority students' development, Wright (1987) posited that an examination of the impact of factors such as economics, ethnic and cultural background, and racial and gender bias on the student's growth is critical to healthy psychological and emotional development among minority students. Thus, in order to understand the forces that helped shape the self-concept as well as the identity development of African American women, a history of oppression based on race and gender must be considered.

A substantial portion of the history of African-American women involves oppression in the form of sexism and racism. Some of the by-products of the oppression with which African American women have been forced to contend include myths, negative stereotypes, intra-cultural differences and conflicts related to skin color and hair texture, and the promotion of Northern European standards of beauty rather than African standards of beauty.

From the inception of slavery in the United States, systemic factors were largely responsible for casting African-American women in positions that affected not only the way they saw themselves but also the way they were seen by others. The women were forced to exist in an economic system that essentially sought to destroy the Black family structure. Because African-American men were denied the opportunity to provide financial support for their families during slavery, African-American women often found themselves in the position of the primary providers and caregivers (Jordan, 1991). As a result of assuming the role of provider, terms such as “matriarch” and “emasculating” were assigned to African American women by society. The problem with those stereotypes, however, is that the behaviors necessary to fulfill those roles at that time have been taken out of context (Jordan, 1991). There was a mistaken assumption that African-American women wanted to assume the role of head of household when, in reality, their filling in as the primary providers and caregivers was a necessary safety factor to ensure that their families would survive (Grier & Cobbs, 1968). African-American college women continue to be plagued by these stereotypes, and they often appear to stifle their ability and talents for fear of being seen as “emasculating” or as “matriarchal” by society (Copeland, 1977; Fleming, 1984).

Another impact of an oppressive system that negatively affected African-American women’s self-concept centered around the southern plantation system where African-American women were often forced into sexual submission by powerful White men (Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Jordan, 1991; Okazawa-Rey et al., 1987; Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1992; Sandler, 1993; West, 1995). This set of circumstances resulted in the birth of biracial children and in the women being labeled as “promiscuous”—a stereotype that continues to

exist when, in reality, many African-American women were the victims of a cruel, degrading sexual practice. Unfortunately, many African-American women have internalized these stereotypes as truth (Jordan, 1991). West (1995) suggested that when African American women internalize the promiscuous or “Jezebel” stereotype, they might experience confusion and ambivalence ranging from sexual dysfunction and feelings of inadequacy to using their sexuality as a tool to manipulate men. Still others may experience shame and attempt to repress sexual feelings in their attempts to distance themselves from the “promiscuous” label (West, 1995). Consequently, young African-American college women who have internalized the “promiscuous” stereotype may experience some ambivalence over establishing a positive self-image versus living up to the “promiscuous” stereotype.

In addition to coping with the many stereotypes, intra-cultural differences and rivalries based on skin color and hair that came into existence with the birth of biracial children also had a significant impact on the self-concept of African-American women (Okazawa-Rey et al., 1987; Sandler, 1993). Preferential treatment of biracial children by their white fathers often resulted in: (a) some biracial individuals adopting superior attitudes toward other African-Americans; (b) separatism between lighter and darker complexioned African-Americans on plantations; and (c) a class structure within and outside the African-American community where those with lighter skin were afforded more status, respect, and opportunities (Okazawa-Rey et al., 1987). Many in the African-American community also internalized the myth that light skin or white skin was better. Society, in general, and some African-Americans—especially African-American men—continue to promote the myth and to idealize more European features (Bates, 1994; Russell et al., 1992; West, 1995). Further, a

differential opportunity structure based on race and skin color continues to exist with regard to economic opportunities (e.g., housing and employment).

Many African-American men continue to deliberately pursue mates whose complexions and hair are closest to European standards (Bailey, 1990; Bates, 1994; Russell et al., 1992). Consequently, the issue of color presents a paradox for young African-American women. Some dark-complexioned women who receive messages from society—especially young men—that they are too dark or unattractive may begin to feel that way, while some-light skinned women may express concern over whether men are pursuing them based solely on their external features (Okazawa-Rey et al., 1987; Sandler, 1993; West, 1995).

Research on color preferences for African-American adolescents suggests that there may still be some unresolved issues surrounding skin color. In a study of 62 female and 57 male African American adolescents, ages 11-19, from several states, Robinson and Ward (1995) found that a positive relationship existed between satisfaction with skin color and self esteem and that participants who were extremely light or dark were less satisfied with their skin color than students who perceived themselves to be in the middle on a continuum of color. Thus, feelings of inadequacy about appearance and skin color continue to be salient issues for some African American adolescents.

Perhaps one of the most profound effects on the identity development and self-esteem of African-American women—especially adolescent females—centers around the continued promotion of standards of beauty based on European features. One of the primary culprits has been the media, which, through programming, commercials, videos, and magazines, has

often excluded African-American women unless they look biracial (Bailey, 1990; Bates, 1994; Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Robinson & Ward, 1991). When women of a darker hue have been cast, those roles have often been degrading and frequently portrayed them as promiscuous and uncouth.

Because an integral part of identity formation for women includes physical beauty, continued exposure to images different from their own has taken its toll on African-American women (Jordan, 1991). The result of constant exposure to the media messages is that many African-American women have internalized the beauty myth. Some of them continue to try to alter their appearance in their attempts to emulate European features through a variety of methods (Copeland, 1977, Jordan, 1991; Okazawa-Rey et al., 1987; Sandler, 1993).

Thus, the continued subjection to a standard of beauty other than one's own, stereotypes, myths, and intra-cultural conflicts experienced as a result of a history of oppression continue to play a significant role in the way many African-American women view themselves. Young, African American college women are no exception. They, too, are confronted with the enormous task of establishing a healthy identity while coping with the repercussions of a somewhat complicated and, at times, debilitating history. The first step, however, in identifying ways to facilitate healthy psychological maturity in African American college women is to determine which domains may be most useful for understanding the identity formation of this population.

Identity Development in African American Women

While research focusing specifically on identity development in African American women is fairly recent, several theorists have suggested that critical components of identity

formation for Black college women include racial or ethnic identity (Cross, 1978; Helms, 1995; McEwen, Roper, Bryant & Langa, 1990; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; Sedlacek, 1987; Sprinthall, Sprinthall & Oja, 1998) and gender identity formation (Ossana et al., 1992). Because race and gender have historically played such a significant role in their experiences and continue to do, it is perhaps these two domains that are particularly salient for studying identity formation in African American college women.

Racial identity development. Erik Erikson (1968) postulated that attaining a stable identity was the major developmental task of adolescence. Erikson also suggested that adolescents who came from oppressed and exploited groups and who were thus unable to attain the benefits of the dominant group would incorporate negative images of themselves from both the dominant and minority groups. Because devalued groups—including African American women—are often forced to contend with a differential opportunity structure, differential treatment based on race, mainstream cultural values different from their own, and continued prejudice, Phinney and Rosenthal (1992) submitted that the issue of racial or ethnic identity formation is a salient one for them. Further, they suggested that if African-American adolescents are to develop a healthy self-identity in spite of these disparities, a positively valued ethnic or racial identity must be incorporated.

Sprinthall et al. (1998) suggested that adolescents who have not examined their ethnic identity or who have a preference for the dominant culture may go to extremes in attempting to identify with that culture. Further, they submitted that research on color preferences for African-American adolescents suggests that the fact that some of the young women studied

identified a certain skin color as desirable “indicates that there may still be some psychological ambivalence about accepting one’s ethnic background” (p. 177).

Several theorists have alluded specifically to the importance of racial identity development in African American college students. McEwen et al. (1990) identified racial or ethnic identity development as one of the nine developmental tasks that African American college students must negotiate. Fleming (1984) alluded to the importance of African-American college students establishing an ethnic identity and she suggested that failure to do so could lead to identity confusion. Sedlacek (1987) related racial identity to the formation of a positive self-concept which is one of the noncognitive variables he identified as critical in the lives of minority students on predominantly White college campuses.

To date, the majority of research studies on racial identity in African Americans, including college women, have focused on William Cross’ (1971, 1978) model of racial identity development as measured by the various versions of Parham and Helms’ Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) (Tokar & Fischer, 1998; Yanico, Swanson & Tokar, 1994). Tracing the development of African Americans in their search for a Black identity in the late 1960’s and 1970’s, Cross developed one of the first racial identity models to describe the “process of becoming Black,” a process also referred to as the “Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience” (Cross, 1971, 1978, 1995). According to his theory, the development of a Black racial identity can be characterized by movement through a four-stage (initially five-stage) sequence. The four stages, labeled as Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization, explain a process of identity transformation that occurs as the individual moves from viewing the world from a Euro-American perspective while devaluing his/her

Black culture to an acceptance and valuing of one's own culture as well as movement towards a multicultural perspective in the last stage. The Cross (1971) model was initially operationalized with the development of the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) (Parham & Helms, 1981).

Results from studies on African American college women relate Cross' racial identity stages to self-esteem (Parham & Helms, 1985; Watt, 1997), emotional self-awareness (Dinsmore & Mallinckrodt, 1996) and gender or Womanist identity attitudes (Parks, Carter & Gushue, 1996; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997; Watt, 1997).

Although the Cross model has been heralded for its significant contributions to the study of racial identity development in African Americans and for its amenability to measurement, research on the reliability and validity of the RIAS has produced mixed results. For example, internal consistency coefficients for the Encounter scale indicate that there may be problems with some of the RIAS scales and/or the actual stages (Parks et al., 1996; Ponterotto & Wise, 1987). In addition, some researchers submit that questions still exist about whether Cross' model describes a stage-wise process with invariant sequence (Helms, 1990; Parham, 1989). Consequently, although researchers acknowledge the contribution of the RIAS to the body of research on racial identity development, some point to the need for new measures that may include affective measurement indices to assess racial identity (Ponterotto, 1989).

Gender identity development. Historically, gender identity has received less attention in the study of identity development than racial identity, both by researchers and African American women. For African American women, the reality of sexism has centered more

around a lack of economic opportunities rather than the right to work which was initially the complaint of middle-class White women (Jordan, 1991). Therefore, traditional feminist theories may not be effective in explaining the gender identity development of African American women. However, because gender, among other things, does determine one's status in society regardless of ethnicity, it is an area with which young African-American college women must be concerned. One theory that may hold more relevance for African American women is Janet Helms' Theory of Womanist Identity Development (cited in Ossana et al., 1992). This is also the theory that has been used most widely in the study of gender identity formation in African American women.

Similar to the ideology and stages of Cross' racial identity model, Helms' Womanist model describes the development of women in search of their gender identity. The stages describe women's development as they move from an acceptance of societal definitions of womanhood to their own definitions and beliefs about the roles of women. Stages in the Womanist model are labeled as Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization. Helms' Womanist Identity Development model was operationalized with the development of the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) (Ossana et al., 1992).

Several descriptive studies using the WIAS have been conducted on women—including African American college women—that indicate significant positive relationships between higher stages of Womanist identity development and self-esteem (Ossana et al., 1992; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997). Differential relationships have also been found between stages of Womanist identity and stages of racial identity (Parks et al., 1996; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997; Watt, 1997).

Research on the relationship between racial and gender identity development. Results from some descriptive studies have indicated that African American college women at higher stages of racial identity development may also be at higher stages of gender identity development (Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997; Parks et al., 1996; Watt, 1997). Findings from one of the aforementioned studies (Parks et al., 1996), however, also indicated that women may develop their racial identity before their gender identity since relationships were found between the highest stage of racial identity development (Cross' Internalization) and a lower (Womanist Encounter) and the highest stage (Womanist Internalization) of gender identity development. Parks et al. (1996) suggested that these findings may mean that African American women may recognize racism before sexism.

To date, most of the research on racial and gender identity in African American college women has been descriptive and most of these studies have used as their theoretical base Helms' stages of Womanist identity development and Cross' stages of racial identity development—both of which have been described as stage-wise theories with the goal of reaching an optimal level of development. No studies were found, however, focusing on Helm's Womanist model and theories of racial identity that are not considered stagewise theories, but that focus primarily on the student's own feelings and perceptions of race and its importance at a particular period of time. In addition, very little qualitative research exists on whether race or gender is more salient for African American college women attending a predominantly White university.

Only one qualitative study was found that focused on African-American college women's perceptions of the importance of race and gender in their lives. Shorter-Gooden

and Washington (1996) conducted a qualitative study of ego identity in 17 African American college women attending a southwestern community college with a 10 percent Black student population. The sample ranged in age from 18 to 22. Specifically, the authors solicited information on the women's perception of their identity and the level of importance they placed on seven ego identity domains or characteristics—race, gender, sexual orientation, relationships, career, religious beliefs, and political beliefs. The findings indicated that racial identity was the most important with gender identity being important also but less salient than race. The authors speculated that perhaps participants were unevolved or foreclosed regarding gender issues. An unexpected finding in the study was the emergence of the notion of “strength,” a personal characteristic the women felt they needed in order to survive in a sexist and racist society. No such study was found that investigated the perceptions of African American female college students attending a predominantly White university regarding the salience of race and gender.

Based on the findings in the literature, it appears that racial identity and gender identity are critical components of identity development for African American women. Understanding the relationship between racial and gender identity for African American women may assist student development practitioners in designing proactive models for promoting healthy identity formation. For example, should an intervention designed to promote gender identity also include a focus on racism?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to increase the body of literature on racial identity formation, gender identity development, and issues impacting first-year, African American

women attending a predominantly White university. In addition, findings from this study will eventually be used in the design of a proactive intervention to help facilitate healthy identity formation and to equip African American college women with healthy strategies for dealing with their devalued statuses. Although gender identity historically has received less attention than racial identity formation, sexism continues to affect the lives of African American women. Therefore, one goal of the proposed intervention would be to focus on gender identity and related issues. As part of this study, however, racial identity was also assessed to determine whether information on an individual's feelings and perceptions about race at a particular point in time would be useful in determining how to facilitate healthy identity development in first-year, African American female college students attending a predominantly White university.

The specific research questions and issues that were addressed in this study are as follows:

- 1) What is the relationship between racial identity and gender identity in first-year, African American college women attending a predominantly White university?
- 2) Is race more salient than gender for first-year African American college women?
- 3) What is the impact of race being more salient than gender or vice versa on first-year African American college women?

Chapter Organization

Chapter Two contains a theoretical perspective for understanding racial and gender identity development in African American female college students and a review of related literature. Specifically, the theories presented are the Multidimensional Model of Racial

Identity (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous, 1998) and Helms' Womanist Identity Development Theory (cited in Ossana et al., 1992). Chapter Three is comprised of the research design and methodology used for this study. In Chapter Four the results of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis are presented. Included in Chapter Five are a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for use of the findings.

Chapter Two

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter contains an overview of two theories that may provide a theoretical basis for understanding the identity development of African-American female college students and a selected review of related literature. These theories include Janet Helms' Theory of Womanist Identity Development and the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity. Included in the overview are a description and critique of each theory. Following the theoretical perspective section are a review and critique of the research related to the theories and the population of interest.

Gender Identity Development

Janet Helms' theory of Womanist Identity Development. One model of gender identity development that may be more applicable to African American women than traditional feminist paradigms is Janet Helms' Theory of Womanist Identity Development (cited in Ossana et al., 1992). One of the major premises of the Womanist identity model is that in order to develop a healthy gender identity, a woman must move from an orientation that allows her womanhood to be determined by external and societal definitions to her own definition of womanhood based on her beliefs and values (Ossana et al., 1992). This development may or may not be accompanied by feminist beliefs or social activism. A derivative of minority and gender identity theories, the development of a Womanist identity can be understood within the context of a stage-wise progression through four distinct stages. The stages (Ossana et al.) are identified as follows:

- 1) **Pre-encounter** – the woman holds traditional views about gender and the role of women. Her thoughts and behaviors are reflective of attitudes that devalue women and esteem men.
- 2) **Encounter** – Usually as a result of an encounter or new information that is inconsistent with her current frame of reference regarding her womanhood, the individual begins to question her previously held views.
- 3) **Immersion-Emersion** – During the early part of this stage, the woman begins to heighten her regard for women, while actively rejecting male chauvinist attitudes. In the latter part of this stage, the individual searches for a positive definition of womanhood and relishes information about and affiliations with women.
- 4) **Internalization** – The woman defines for herself a positive definition of womanhood and refuses to accept societal stereotypes of women.

A critique of Helms' Theory of Womanist Identity Development. Although Helms' Womanist Identity Model is a relatively recent one and only recently have empirical studies begun, there are several strengths and weaknesses that appear to exist at this stage. Those observations are identified as follows:

Strengths

- 1) Helms' model seems more useful for women from diverse racial backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses than the traditional feminist models. Heretofore, the feminist models have had little appeal to the masses of African-American women because of the differential opportunity structure in America. The Womanist model, however, identifies a process of gender identity development that may be more applicable to a diverse group

of women regardless of socioeconomic status and race. In designing her model, she acknowledges the impact of sexism on the identity development of women.

- 2) Helms' theory adds significantly to the body of literature on identity development in women. Helms suggests that identity development for women may involve multiple domains of development, one of which is gender identity development.
- 3) The Womanist identity model is amenable to measurement. The model was operationalized with the development of the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) (Ossana et al., 1992). The WIAS measures the four stages of Helms' Womanist model.

Weaknesses

- 1) Helms suggests that development occurs through a stage-wise developmental process. Little evidence exists to support this assertion. Helms does not provide information on the other properties of her theory and related stages (i.e., invariant sequence). As in the case of racial identity development, one wonders whether women recycle through stages.
- 2) Reported internal consistency reliabilities for the Encounter subscale scale of the WIAS have been low. This finding may indicate that there are problems with the Encounter scale or perhaps with the concepts underlying that stage.

Racial Identity Development

Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). A recent racial identity formation theory that appears to focus on the individual's feelings and perceptions about race is the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) (Sellers, Smith, et al., 1998). In their model, Sellers, Smith, et al. attempt to integrate the strengths of the underground and mainstream approaches to racial identity in African Americans. They describe the

mainstream perspective as one that views African American racial identity in the context of other identities that individuals may possess. Further, they suggest that the mainstream approach, with its focus on identity development in different groups, ignores the unique experience of each group. The underground perspective, which includes the Cross model (1971), emphasizes the unique sociopolitical experiences of African Americans, and it provides a developmental framework for understanding movement toward the process of developing their Blackness.

The MMRI takes a phenomenological approach to the study of racial identity by providing a framework for assessing how African Americans, as individuals, perceive the meaning and significance of race in their lives (Shelton and Sellers, 2000). Sellers, Chavous, and Cooke (1998) suggest that the MMRI specifically addresses “(a) the significance of race in the individual’s self-concept and (b) the individual’s subjective meaning as to what it means to be Black” (p. 12).

According to Sellers, Smith, et al. (1998), there are four basic assumptions underlying the MMRI. The first assumption of the MMRI is that racial identities are situationally influenced but also serve as stable properties of the individual. Second, individuals have a number of different identities (e.g., gender, occupational) that are hierarchically ordered based on the importance that the individual places on race in defining him or herself. A third assumption is that the individual’s self-perceptions of his/her racial identity are the most valid indicators of his/her racial identity. For this reason, the MMRI places more emphasis on self-perceptions than behavioral indicators. A final assumption is that the MMRI focuses primarily on the status of the individual’s racial identity at a particular point in time as

opposed to placing the individual in a particular stage along a developmental continuum. Although the MMRI focuses on a particular point in time, the model allows for change in the significance and meaning of race over the life span.

Along with the four underlying assumptions, Sellers et al. (1997) and Sellers, Smith, et al. (1998) outline the following four dimensions of racial identity that explain the importance and meaning of race for African Americans and their individual perceptions of what it means to be Black.

- 1) **Salience** – refers to the extent to which race is a relevant part of one’s self concept in a particular situation or at a particular moment in time. This is the only stage that is situationally influenced. This dimension is instrumental in predicting behavioral responses to specific situations.
- 2) **Centrality** – is a measure of the importance of race in the person’s self-concept. This dimension is relatively stable across situations. The concept of hierarchical ranking of different identities by the individual is also implicit in this stage.
- 3) **Ideology** – refers to the way that the individual feels African Americans should live and interact with other people. This dimension consists of four ideologies described as Nationalist, Minority, Assimilationist, and Humanist. A *Nationalist* ideology recognizes the uniqueness of the African American experience as well as supports a philosophy of Blacks being in control of their own destinies. Although an individual with a *Minority* ideology recognizes the Black struggle, he or she also sees commonalities between African Americans and other oppressed groups. An *Assimilationist* ideology is characterized by an emphasis on the commonalities between African Americans and

other Americans. The *Humanist* philosophy focuses on commonalities among all human beings regardless of race, gender and/or other characteristics.

- 4) **Regard** – refers to how positive or negative an individual feels towards his or her race and membership in that group. The individual is also concerned with how others view African-Americans.

In summary, there are several major differences between the developmental models of racial identity and the MMRI. Sellers, Smith, et al. (1998) suggest that one of the major differences is the MMRI's focus on racial identity at a given point in time. Another distinguishing feature of the MMRI is that there is no assumption of an optimal level or stage of racial identity development (Sellers, Chavous, et al., 1998; Sellers, Smith, et al.). Finally, Sellers, Smith et al. see the MMRI as a complementary model that can be used in conjunction with developmental models of racial identity to provide a more comprehensive understanding of racial identity development in African Americans.

A critique of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity. The MMRI is one of the more recent models of racial identity development. Therefore, more time is needed to fully assess its usefulness and psychometric properties. A few insights about the strengths and weaknesses are listed below:

Strengths

- 1) The MMRI is amenable to measurement and the model has been operationalized with the development of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers et al., 1997).

- 2) Ponterotto (1989) critiqued Parham and Helms' Racial Identity Attitude Scale, suggesting that researchers needed to develop new measures that included affective measurement indices to assess racial identity. The MMRI does appear to hold promise as a complement to existing stage models because of its focus on racial identity at a particular point in time. In addition, the model allows for the individual's own feelings and perceptions about race. The MIBI has been developed to measure self-perceptions.
- 3) In conceptualizing their model, Sellers, Smith, et al. (1998) recognized that the oppressive experiences of African Americans are unique to their group. Therefore, the model is designed primarily to assess the racial identity of African Americans based on their unique history rather than attempting to apply the model to all racial or ethnic groups.
- 4) The MMRI researchers acknowledge that the individual's perspective toward race may change over the life span rather than assuming that it remains the same.

Weaknesses

- 1) Several psychometric studies of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) have indicated that the Regard subscales may be problematic. The researchers may want to investigate further to determine whether a problem exists with this particular dimension.
- 2) More research is needed to assess the usefulness and psychometric properties of the MMRI.
- 3) The authors do not provide practitioners with many suggestions for ways to operationalize the MMRI.

- 4) The MMRI appears to be a fairly complicated model for practitioners to understand and operationalize in terms of interventions due to the number of dimensions it encompasses (e.g., ideology, centrality, private regard, public regard). Dixon-Saxon (2002) suggests that the considerable number of possible MMRI identity combinations that could be ascribed to each individual limits the usefulness of the MMRI in the design of interventions.

Review of Related Research on Womanist Identity Development

Four studies related to gender identity development are included in this review. All of the studies were conducted on college women—some of them solely on African American women and others included African American women in their sample. In addition, Womanist identity and racial identity measures were used in three of the studies. Although no studies were found specifically relating Womanist identity with racial identity as identified by the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity, the studies in this review are of particular relevance because they may shed light on the notion of multiple identity development—specifically in the domains of racial and gender identity formation—in African-American women.

The Ossana et al. (1992) study. A study was conducted by Ossana et al. (1992) to investigate the relationships among Womanist identity attitudes, perceptions of the campus environment, and self-esteem. The sample consisted of 659 undergraduate female students ranging from first-year students through seniors at a large eastern university. Approximately 13 percent ($n = 85$) of the sample consisted of African-American women. Instrumentation

included the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), the Campus Environment Survey (CES), and the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS).

The researchers found that Pre-encounter, Encounter, and Immersion-Emersion attitudes were positively related to perceptions of gender bias, but all three Womanist attitudes were negatively related to self-esteem. Internalization attitudes were negatively related to perceptions of gender bias, but they were positively related to self-esteem. Ossana et al. (1992) suggest that the findings “may support other research that has shown a highly developed identity enhances one’s self-esteem” (p. 406). In regard to the findings that women in the Internalization stage perceive less gender bias, the researchers speculated that women in higher stages of Womanist identity development may need less nurturing from the environment or they may have developed better coping strategies.

There were several limitations that may impact the generalization of the results. The researchers cautioned that because the WIAS is in the early stages of development, more psychometric studies conducted on diverse populations are necessary. They also expressed concerns about the CES instrument used to measure gender bias suggesting that it measures perceptions only, and not how the individual feels about those perceptions. Another limitation of the study in terms of generalizing the results to African American women is that the percentage of Black women studied is relatively small. In addition, the women studied were all college students, which limits making generalizations to non-college women.

The Poindexter-Cameron and Robinson (1997) study. In a study of African American college women, Poindexter-Cameron and Robinson (1997) investigated the relationships among racial identity attitudes, Womanist identity attitudes, and self-esteem.

The sample was comprised of 46 African American women enrolled at a predominantly White university (PWU) and 38 African American women from an historically Black university (HBU). The PWU sample consisted of sophomores and seniors with most majoring in physical and life sciences and a few in education. Students from the HBU were mostly seniors and a few sophomores, majoring primarily in education and fewer in physical and life sciences. Constructs were assessed with the Racial Identity Attitude Scale – Long Form (RIAS), the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE).

Results of the study indicated a significant, positive relationship between self-esteem and both the RIAS and WIAS Internalization subscales. Thus, their first hypothesis was confirmed. With regard to the second hypothesis that racial identity and Womanist identity attitudes would be positively related, mixed results were found. The RIAS and WIAS Pre-encounter subscales were positively correlated, and the RIAS and WIAS internalization subscales were positively related. No significant, positive relationships were found between the RIAS and WIAS Encounter and Immersion-Emersion subscales.

As hypothesized, HBU group means for the RIAS Pre-encounter scores were higher than PWU group means for the same scale. With regard to the hypothesis that PWU group means for subsequent RIAS stages would significantly exceed the HBU means, the researchers found that RIAS Internalization scores were significantly higher for PWU students. However, The RIAS Immersion/Emersion scores were similar for both groups. No significant differences were found between the two groups on any of the WIAS subscales.

Finally, the fourth hypothesis, predicting that self-esteem would differ between the HBU and PWU, was confirmed. Self-esteem scores for the PWU participants were significantly higher than at the HBU. The researchers suggested that the differences between the two groups could be attributed to the support systems offered at this particular PWU to aid students in dealing with challenges posed by racism and sexism. This type of support could perhaps help facilitate healthy racial and Womanist identity development in African American women at other PWU's.

There were several limitations to the study. The size of the samples at both the HBU and PWU were fairly small. The instruments were not administered in a controlled environment. Finally, the authors expressed concerns that the RSE-40 produces extremely high scores, in general, for African American women. Perhaps there are some psychometric issues that need to be addressed with this particular instrument.

The Parks et al. (1996) study. In a study of the identity development of African American and White women, Parks et al. examined the relationship between racial and Womanist identity. The Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS) was used to measure the four stages of Cross's 1971 model of racial identity development. The Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) measured Helms' (1990) stages of Womanist identity development. A total of 214 women—67 African American and 147 White—enrolled at a large midwestern university comprised the sample. Academic classifications ranged from first-year to senior.

For African American women, the researchers found a significant, positive relationship between racial identity and Womanist identity attitudes. More precisely, both

Womanist Encounter and Internalization attitudes were positively related to racial identity Internalization attitudes. The authors suggested, then, that African American women with higher levels of racial identity will have either Encounter or Internalization attitudes regarding gender identity. No significant relationships were found for White women.

These findings hold significance for African-American women in several ways. The authors speculated, based on their findings, that:

- 1) Racial identity and gender identity are related for African-American women;
- 2) The two processes of identity development—race and gender—may not occur simultaneously based on the fact that racial identity Internalization attitudes were related to Womanist Encounter and Internalization attitudes; and
- 3) Racial identity development may begin before the process of gender identity development. If this is the case, African-American women may be confronted by and recognize racism before sexism.

These speculations and findings suggest that, in addition to the development of a coherent identity, African American college women are confronted with two additional components of identity development—race and gender.

A small sample size, especially in the case of African American women, limits generalization of the results of the study. In addition, the fact that all participants for the study were volunteers who were part of a psychology participant pool may prohibit generalizing the results to other college women as well as non-college women who do not have characteristics in common with the participants. The researchers expressed concerns about the weak reliability coefficients obtained in their study for some of the RIAS subscales.

Suggestions for future research include studying the relationship of racial and Womanist identity to other constructs such as self-esteem and mental health to determine their simultaneous influence.

The Watt (1997) study. Watt (1997) conducted an exploratory study of the development of multiple identities in African American college women attending two historically Black colleges. The domains of development and constructs studied included racial identity, Womanist identity, self-esteem, and faith development. The sample consisted of 64 African American female students from a coeducational college and 57 from a single-sexed college. All academic classifications—first-year, sophomore, junior, and senior—were represented. Ages of 93.8% of the sample ranged from 18 – 23 years. The study included quantitative and qualitative components. Instrumentation for the quantitative component included the Racial Identity Attitude Scale – Long Form (RIAS-B), the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS), Thinking About the Bible Instrument (TAB), the Watt Spirituality Development Scale (WSDS) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE).

The first hypothesis that there would be a relationship between comparable stages of racial identity and Womanist identity was confirmed. There were significant, positive relationships between the racial identity and Womanist Pre-encounter stages and the racial identity and Womanist Internalization stages for the entire sample and for each college. A significant, positive correlation was also found between the racial identity and Womanist Immersion/Emersion stages. As expected, there was a significant negative, relationship between the racial identity Pre-encounter and the Womanist Internalization stage for the entire sample. The researcher suggested that college women possessing positive attitudes

about their race also had positive attitudes about their womanhood. In addition, Watt submitted that African American college women who were immersed in their racial culture were also immersed in learning about women.

In two other related hypotheses, the researcher predicted that there would be a positive relationship between higher stages of racial identity (as measured by the RIAS-B) and self esteem, and there would be a positive relationship between higher stages of Womanist identity and self esteem. Findings indicate that no positive relationships were found between the racial identity Internalization stage and self-esteem or between the Womanist Internalization stage and self-esteem. There was a significant, inverse relationship between the racial identity Pre-encounter stage and self esteem for the entire sample and the coeducational institution, suggesting that women high in racial identity Pre-encounter attitudes were low in self-esteem. There was also a significant, negative relationship between the Womanist Pre-encounter attitudes and self-esteem for the entire sample. Findings also revealed significant, negative relationships between racial identity Encounter attitudes and self-esteem, between Womanist Encounter attitudes and self-esteem, and between the Womanist Immersion-Emersion attitudes and self-esteem for the entire sample. The researcher submitted that women who were either thinking about or were in the process of exploring their culture and womanhood were also low in self-esteem. With regard to the hypothesis regarding the relationship between higher stages of Womanist identity development and abstract faith development, no significant positive relationships were found. Thus, that hypothesis was not confirmed.

Several limitations exist for this study. The author suggested that there may have

been problems with instrumentation that could have affected the results of the study. For example, the author reported low reliability coefficients for the WSDS, a newly created instrument designed to measure the type of cognitive processing (e.g., abstract or cognitive) an individual uses in thinking about religion or spirituality. Also, low internal consistency scores have been reported for both the WIAS and RIAS Encounter subscales. Another factor that may have impacted the results was the number of instruments—five—administered in one setting. The author suggested that the participants may have experienced fatigue, thus impacting their responses. Another limitation of the study relates to the sample sizes, which were relatively small.

Review of Related Research on Racial Identity Development

One study related to racial identity as defined by the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity was included in this review. This study included a fairly large sample of African American women as well as first-year students. In addition, the Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity—the same scale that was used in the present study—served as one of the assessment tools.

The Sellers, Chavous, et al. (1998) study. Sellers, Chavous, et al. (1998) conducted an exploratory study to investigate the relationship between racial identity and academic performance in African American college students. The sample consisted of 163 students from a public, predominantly White university (PWU) and 85 students from a private, historically Black university (HBU) located in the mid-Atlantic region of the country. Approximately 175 women were included in the sample. All four undergraduate academic classifications were represented including 121 first-year students.

The Centrality Scale and the Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) were used to assess racial identity. The Centrality Scale measures the extent to which race is an important component of an individual's self-concept. The Ideology Scale, which is comprised of four subscales designed to measure the four ideologies (Nationalist, Minority, Assimilationist, and Humanist), assesses an individual's feelings about how African Americans should live and interact with other people. Grade point average (GPA) was obtained by asking participants to report their current GPA.

The researchers wanted to test the validity of two different schools of thought on the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement. One group of theorists suggests that persons, for whom race is not a central part of their self-concept (low race Centrality) and whose ideology emphasizes commonalities among all human beings regardless of race (Humanist) or focuses on the similarities between African Americans and other Americans (Assimilationist), should have higher GPA's. This hypothesis was not confirmed. No significant relationships were found between the Humanist and Assimilationist Ideology subscales and academic performance for students with low race centrality.

Another group of theorists suggests that persons with high race Centrality and whose ideology emphasizes the uniqueness of African Americans (Nationalist) or the similarities between African Americans and other oppressed groups (Minority) should have higher GPA's. This hypothesis was partially confirmed. For students with high race Centrality, a relationship was found between the Minority ideology and higher GPA's. However,

Assimilationist and Nationalist ideologies were related to lower academic performance for high race-central persons.

Finally, Sellers, Chavous, et al. (1998) hypothesized that there should be a significant relationship between racial ideology and GPA only for those students for whom race is a central part of their self concept. As mentioned above, only the Minority ideology was positively related to GPA for high Centrality students.

Though no further hypotheses were presented, several other findings were reported. In a correlational analysis of bivariate relationships between the primary variables—GPA, racial centrality, and racial ideology—researchers found that there was a significant, negative relationship between the Assimilationist (ideology that emphasizes the similarities between African Americans and other Americans) subscale and GPA. The researchers suggested that this finding indicates that “individuals with higher GPA’s were less likely to endorse Assimilation attitudes” (p. 17). No other significant bivariate relationships relating GPA to the other three ideologies or the Centrality scale were revealed.

In the same analysis, relationships were also found between racial Centrality (extent of importance of race to one’s self-concept) and the four racial ideologies. Specifically, results of the study indicated significant, negative relationships between racial Centrality and the Assimilationist and Humanist ideologies, and significant, positive relationships between racial Centrality and the Minority and Nationalist ideologies. With regard to the MIBI, these findings appear to suggest that participants for whom race is not a central part of the self concept (low race Centrality) were likely to possess ideologies that stress similarities between African Americans and mainstream society (Assimilationist) or all human beings

(Humanist). On the other hand, participants for whom race is important (high race Centrality) appeared to endorse ideologies that emphasize the uniqueness of African Americans (Nationalist) or similarities to other minority groups (Minority).

Another finding from this study was that significant differences in the racial Ideology subscales existed between the PWU participants and the HBU participants. PWU participants had significantly higher Assimilationist and Humanist scores, and significantly lower scores on the Nationalist subscale as compared to HBU students. HBU participants, however, reported significantly higher GPA's than the PWU GPA's.

The researchers also used regression analysis to determine whether racial centrality scores, racial ideology scores, and school could be used to predict GPA. Regression analysis results revealed a significant, positive relationship between GPA and racial Centrality and a significant negative, relationship between GPA and the Assimilationist and Nationalist subscales. These findings suggest that individuals for whom race was a central (high Centrality) aspect of their self-concept reported higher GPA's and persons with Assimilation and Nationalist ideologies reported lower GPAs. Type of school did not appear to be a predictor of GPA in this study.

Several limitations of the study exist. Sellers, Chavous, et. al. (1998) provided limited information on the data collection procedures and population at the PWU. For example, the authors advised that the instruments were administered to PWU participants during a mass pre-testing session for which they received course credit. No mention was made of the type of course for which the participants received credit. For the HBU students, the instruments were administered during an introductory psychology class period. Thus, if

all participants from both universities were recruited from introductory psychology courses, this sample may not be representative of African American women who have not taken the course. However, with limited information, it is difficult to determine the characteristics of the population at the PWU. Another area of concern that may prohibit generalizing the results of the study is the self-report method for assessing academic achievement. The authors acknowledged that using self-report measures for obtaining GPA's could prohibit generalizing the results beyond this group. With regard to implications for practitioners, the authors suggested that based on the findings regarding the moderating effect of centrality on the relationship between racial identity and GPA, that the topic of racial identity might be included in an intervention for students with high racial centrality only. No suggestions were provided regarding the actual content of the session on racial identity or what the goal of the session or an intervention should be especially considering that one of the underlying tenets for this theory is that there is no optimal level of racial identity development.

Summary

One of the major developmental tasks of adolescence—including the college years—is the development of a coherent identity. Results of studies conducted on African American college women appear to suggest that gender and racial identity formation are two critical components of identity development for young Black women. In addition, studies have revealed that these two components of identity development—racial and gender—may be related to each other as well as to other constructs (i.e., self-esteem, academic achievement). Since one's identity, to a large extent, influences an individual's feelings about him- or herself as well as an individual's decisions, the formation of gender and racial identity may

well be areas for practitioners to consider in understanding as well as promoting healthy identity development in African American female college students.

To explore this research, a comprehensive review and critique of Helms' theory of Womanist Identity Development (cited in Ossana et al., 1992) and the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity Development (Sellers, Smith et al., 1998) along with a review and critique of related literature were presented in this chapter. However, since most of the research conducted to date has focused on stage-wise theories of racial and gender identity development, there still appears to be a need to broaden the research base on African American women. One way to help achieve this would be by examining other racial identity theories that may provide additional insight.

Chapter Three

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter contains the research design and methodology. Specifically included are the rationale for the study, formal hypotheses, the design of the study, a description of the sample, the instrumentation and focus group format used, data collection procedures, and the statistical analysis techniques.

A review of the literature suggests that establishing a coherent identity may be especially difficult for some African American college women unless deliberate attempts are made to facilitate healthy identity development (Johnson-Newman & Exum, 1998). In order for student affairs practitioners to develop strategies for facilitating healthy identity development, however, researchers suggest that they will need more comprehensive information on the needs and identity formation of African American women (Watt, 1997). Although research on racial and gender identity development in young African American women has increased in recent years, research on those attending predominantly White universities is still sparse, and it has been limited to one or two theoretical models. The intent of this study was to expand the body of knowledge on racial and gender identity development by using a fairly popular stage-wise model of gender identity and a newer model of racial identity development on which little research exists. The results of the study will provide descriptive data on racial and gender identity formation in first-year, African American college women attending a predominantly White university. First-year, African American college women were the focus of this research since they may likely be the group

of college students most susceptible to societal pressures to conform to values and norms that devalue them and less likely to be equipped with healthy strategies for combating the repercussions of a history of oppression. Through a qualitative component, this research was also intended to capture the women's own views on the importance of race and gender as well as issues impacting them.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

1) What is the relationship between gender identity and racial identity in first-year, African American college women attending a predominantly White university.

Hypothesis. There will be significant relationships between stages of Womanist (gender) identity as measured by the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) and the ideologies of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) as measured by the Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). More specifically, the following relationships will exist:

- A. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Pre-encounter stage and MMRI Assimilation ideology.
- B. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion-Emersion stage and the MMRI Nationalist ideology.
- C. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Pre-encounter stage and the MMRI Humanist ideology.
- D. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion/Emersion and Internalization stages and the MMRI Minority ideology.

- 2) Is race more salient than gender for first-year, African-American college women?
- 3) What is the impact of race being more salient than gender or vice versa on first-year African American college women?

Since questions two and three are research issues and qualitative in nature, no hypothesis testing was involved.

Research Design

The intent of this study was to provide descriptive and qualitative data on first-year, African American college women attending a predominantly White university. The research design employed for the quantitative portion of the study can be described as somewhat passive in nature. Heppner, Kivlighan, and Wampold (1999) described a passive design as one used to explore relationships among variables and as one in which the researcher “neither forms groups or conditions through random or nonrandom assignment, nor actively manipulates an independent variable.” (p. 221). For this study, the researcher did not actively form groups nor manipulate an independent variable through any type of treatment. Rather, the participants for this study were already in intact classes, and they were selected from the population for which the study was intended. Using this passive design, the researcher investigated possible relationships as well as the strength and direction of any relationships between stages of gender (Womanist) identity development and ideologies related to a racial identity development model. The Womanist Identity Model is described as a stage-wise model with each successive stage representing a higher level of gender identity formation. With the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity, however, there are no

qualitative differences between the four ideologies. In other words, there is no optimal ideology of racial identity development with this model.

The second part of this study consisted of a qualitative component designed to explore the participants' views on whether race was more salient than gender for them. The focus group techniques of Greenbaum (2000) and Morgan (1998a, 1998b) were used as guides in designing the group. In addition, the qualitative analysis techniques suggested by Gay (1996) and Maxwell (1996) served as guides for the qualitative analysis aspect of the study.

Sample

The sample for the study was initially comprised of a total of 113 first-year, African American women attending North Carolina State University. Data for four of the participants, however, was not used due to incomplete assessments, leaving the total number of participants at 109.

North Carolina State University (NCSU), a research and land-grant institution located in Raleigh, NC, is a member of the University of North Carolina System. The total enrollment at NCSU consisted of approximately 29,700 students, with a 9.7% African American student enrollment and a 42.8% female enrollment as of the Fall 2002. Of the 3,732 first-time, degree seeking students admitted in the Fall 2002 semester, 10.8% of them was classified as "Black, non-Hispanic" (NC State University Planning & Analysis, 2003). The university is comprised of 10 colleges that include Agriculture and Life Sciences, Design, Education, Engineering, Natural Resources, Humanities and Social Sciences, Management, Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Textiles, and Veterinary Medicine. The

university also has two programs that are housed in the Division of Undergraduate Studies for undesignated students.

With regard to support programs for African American students, the University offers a variety of services including Coordinators who coordinate and provide support services for African Americans along with other students in most of the colleges, university orientation courses designed specifically for African American students, and a Multi-purpose Center in which the African American Cultural Center is housed. All participants for this study were enrolled in a university orientation course designed specifically for African American students in their respective colleges or programs.

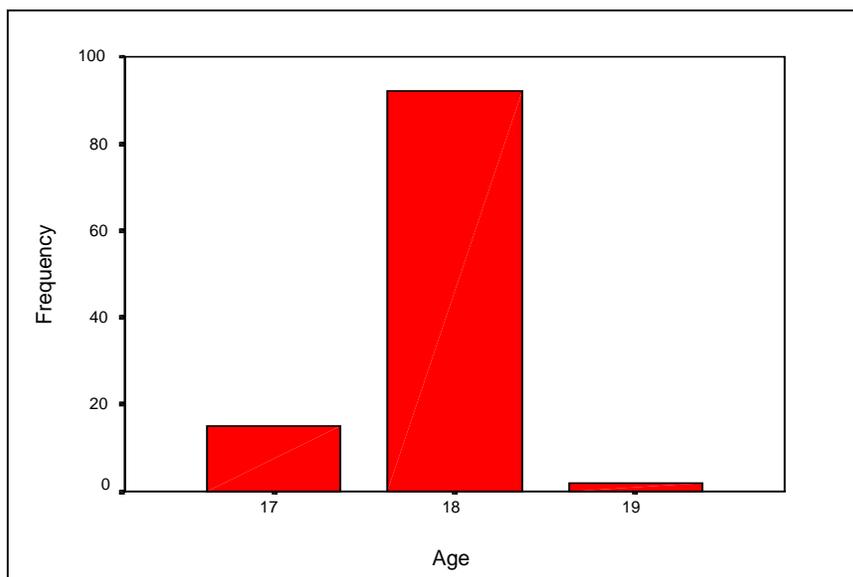


Figure 2.1 Participants by Age

As indicated in Figure 2.1, the sample ranged in age from 17 (13.8%) to 19 (1.8%), with a mean age of 17.88. The majority of participants (84.4%) were 18 years of age.

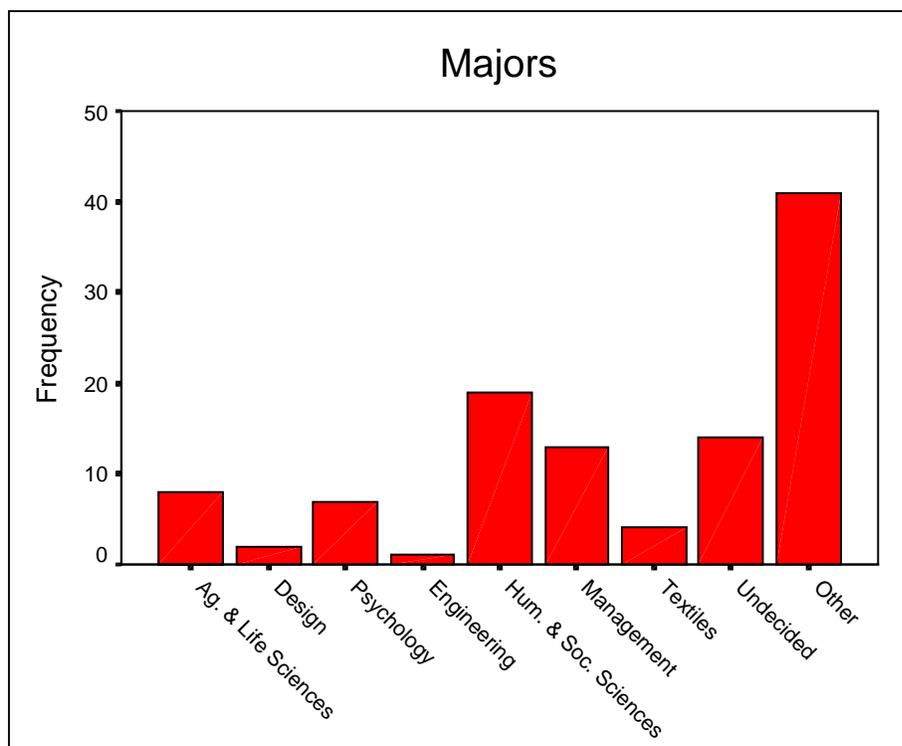


Figure 2.2 Participants by Major by College

Participants were enrolled in various colleges and programs within the university as indicated in Figure 2.2. Majors represented were as follows: 8 students (7.3%) in Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2 students (1.8%) in Design, 7 students (6.4%) in Psychology, 1 student (.9%) in Engineering, 19 students (17.4%) in Humanities and Social Sciences, 13 students (11.9%) in Management, 4 students (3.7%) in Textiles, 14 students (12.8%) Undecided, and 41 students (37.6%) Other. Approximately half the sample (50.4%) (n=55) classified themselves either as “Undecided” or “Other.” The majority of students in those two categories, however, were enrolled in either of two programs for undesignated students. There may have been some confusion over the appropriate category for undecided students

due to the wording on the demographic data sheet. Because there was an “Undecided” and an “Other” category, some of the participants indicated “Undecided” while others indicated “Other” and wrote in the name of the respective undeclared program in which they were currently enrolled. One of the undeclared programs—a first-year experience program— included students eligible for admission to majors within the university but who chose instead to participate in a one-year program that would allow them to explore various majors with the intent of declaring a major at the end of the first year. The other undeclared program—a transition program—consisted of students who were not accepted into their first or second choice of a major within the university. In this program, however, they were provided an opportunity to participate in a deliberate psychological education intervention designed to prepare them for admission into one of the majors within the university by the end of their first year.

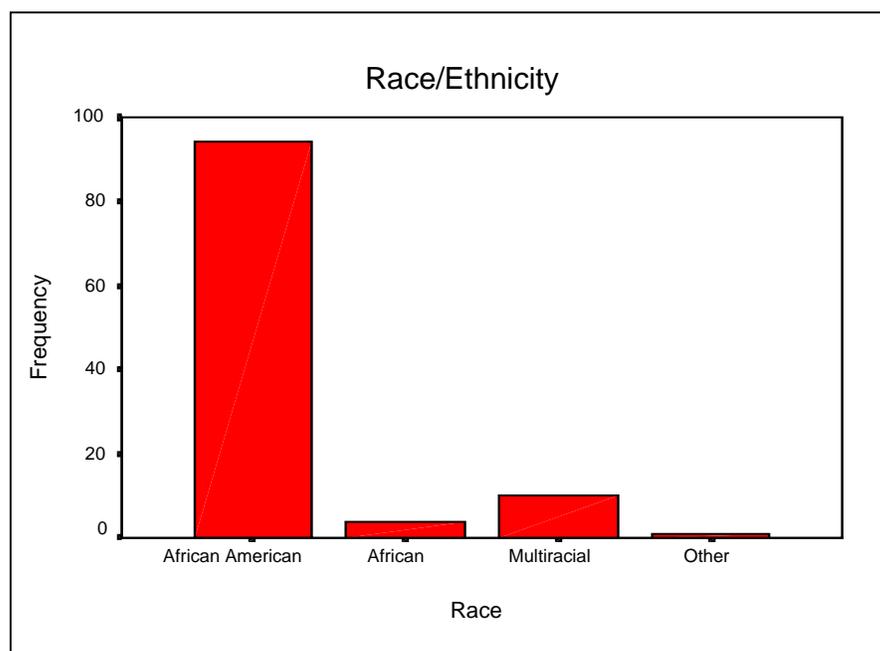


Figure 2.3 Participants by Race/Ethnicity

With regard to racial/ethnic representation as indicated in Figure 2.3, 86.2% (n=94) of the sample identified themselves as African American, 3.7% (n=4) identified themselves as African, 9.2% (n=10) identified themselves as Multiracial, and .9% (n=1) identified herself as Other. Racial background indicated by students in the multiracial category included African American/White, African American/African, African American/Puerto Rican, African American/Hispanic, African American/Philippine, and African American/Indian. The participant who selected “Other” identified herself as African/Native American. Thus, all participants appeared to have at least one African American or African parent or descendant.

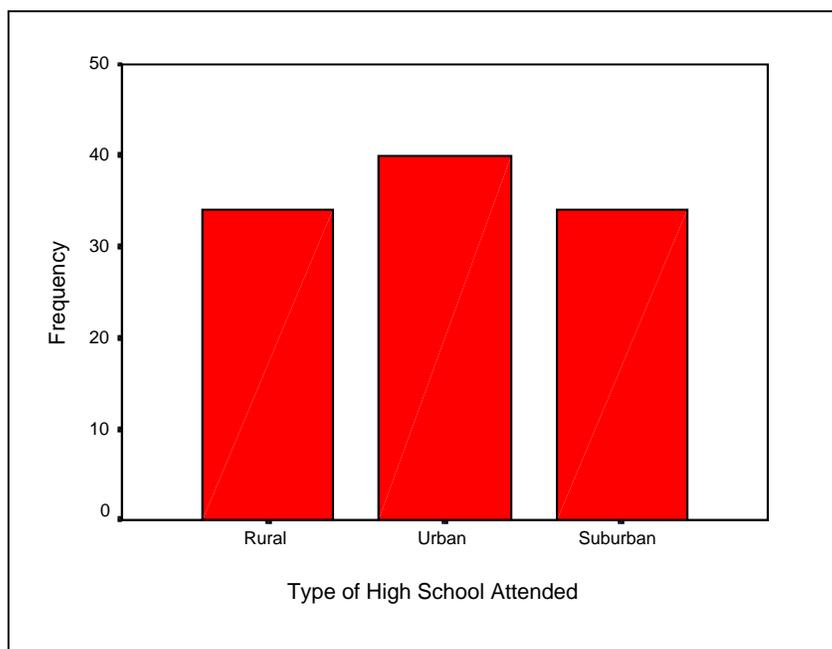


Figure 2.4 Participants by Type of High School Attended

As Figure 2.4 indicates, the sample was almost evenly distributed across the three types—rural, urban, or suburban—of high schools attended prior to entering the university. The majority of the sample (36.7%) or 40 participants attended an urban secondary school, 31.2% (n=34) attended a rural secondary school, and 31.2% (n=34) attended a suburban high school. One (.9%) participant did not respond to this item.

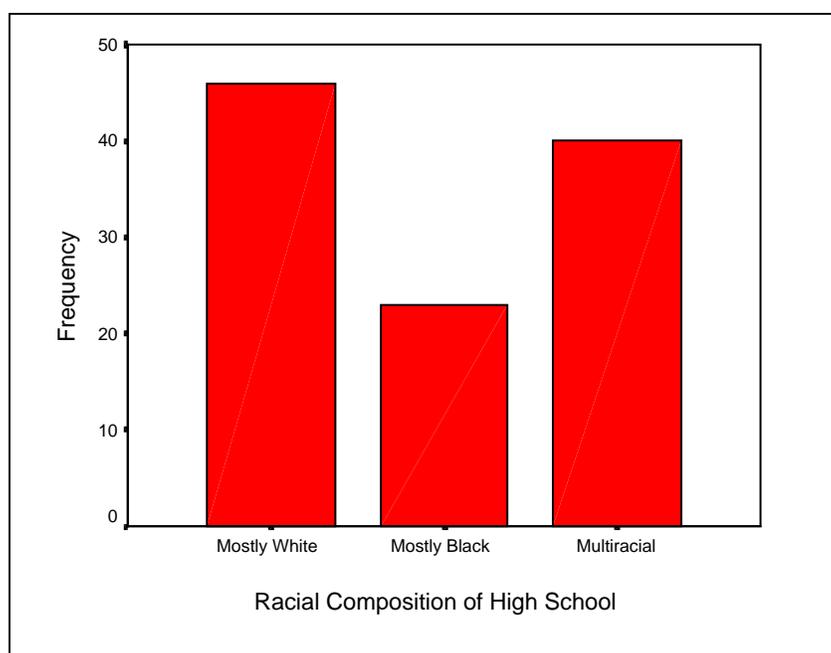


Figure 2.5 Participants by Racial Composition of High School

The racial composition of the high schools, however, was more varied. As illustrated in Figure 2.5, the three categories from which the participants could select included “mostly White (80% or more),” “mostly Black (80% or more),” and “Multiracial (lower than 60% of any racial group).” Forty six individuals (42.2%) attended mostly White; 23 individuals

(21.1%) attended mostly Black, and 40 individuals (36.7%) attended multiracial high schools.

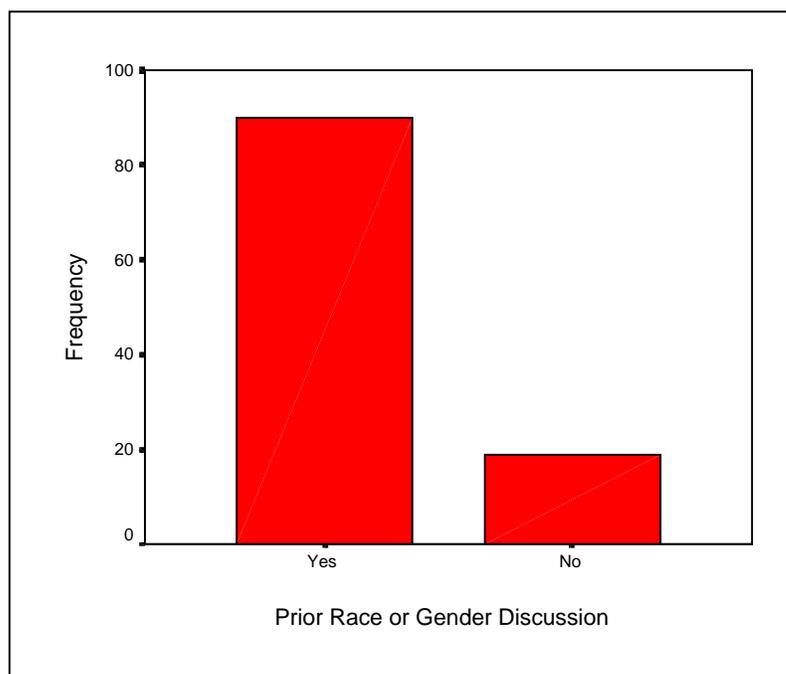


Figure 2.6 Prior Exposure to Race or Gender Discussions

As indicated in Figure 2.6, a fairly large majority of the sample (82.6%) (n=90) had engaged in classroom discussions pertaining to race or gender within the three months preceding their participation in this study. Only 17.4% (n=19) of the sample had not participated in race or gender discussions prior to this study.

Instrumentation

Data collection consisted of quantitative and qualitative techniques. Two instruments were used to collect the quantitative data for this study. The Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (Ossana et. al, 1992) was used to assess gender identity and the Ideology Scale of the

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et. al., 1997) was used to assess racial identity. Other descriptive data including age, major, race, gender, type of high school attended, racial composition of high school, and prior exposure to classroom discussions on race and/or gender were collected with a demographic data sheet. The qualitative component of the study was conducted through a focus group format.

Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale. Helms' Womanist Identity Development model was operationalized with the development of the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) (Ossana et al., 1992). The WIAS consists of 43 items with four subscales (Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization) that are designed to assess the attitudes associated with each of the four stages of Womanist identity. An example of an item in the Pre-encounter subscale reads, "In general, I believe that men are superior to women." An Encounter item might say, "Sometimes I think men are superior and sometimes I think they are inferior to women." An example of an Immersion/Emersion item reads, "When I think about how men have treated women, I feel an overwhelming anger." An item included in the Internalization subscale reads, "People, regardless of their sex, have strengths and limitations."

Respondents indicate their response to each item using a Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Scoring consists of summing the numerical values assigned by the respondents for all items in each subscale, with higher scores indicating levels of respective attitudes or stage of Womanist identity (Ossana et al., 1992). For this study, scores for each subscale were then averaged for comparison purposes.

Although the psychometric properties of the WIAS are still under investigation, some information on the reliability and validity does exist. Ossana et al. (1992) reported coefficients for the internal consistency of the RIAS as Pre-encounter = .55, Encounter = .43, Immersion-Emersion = .82, and Internalization = .77. Carter and Parks (1996) in their study of Womanist identity attitudes and mental health for 218 women reported Cronbach's alphas for the four scales respectively as .55, .43, .82, and .77. With respect to the construct validity of the instrument, relationships have been found between Womanist identity attitudes and self-esteem, perceptions of bias, and mental health symptoms (cited in Parks et al., 1996).

Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity. Sellers et al. (1997) constructed the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) for the purposes of empirically investigating the concepts of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). This 56-item instrument consists of three scales designed to match and measure three of the four MMRI dimensions—Ideology, Centrality, Regard—considered to be stable. No scale was developed for the Salience dimension because of its susceptibility to situational influences. In the development of the MIBI, the researchers adapted items from other measures and developed other items themselves. Responses to all items on the MIBI are rated using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Scoring for the Ideology Scale is done by summing the scores for each of the items within a particular subscale and then calculating the average for that subscale. For the Ideology Scale, the highest subscale score determines the individual's ideology.

The Ideology Scale, consisting of four subscales (Nationalist, Minority, Assimilationist, and Humanist), assesses an individual's personal beliefs about how African Americans should interact in society. The Nationalist subscale assesses the extent to which the individual endorses attitudes that emphasize the uniqueness of African Americans and support a philosophy of Blacks being in control of their own destinies. An item such as, "It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music and literature" is included in Nationalist subscale. The Minority subscale assesses the extent to which the person endorses attitudes that emphasize the Black struggle and similarities between African Americans and other oppressed Americans. An example of a Minority subscale item reads, "The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups." The Assimilationist subscale measures the extent to which the individual holds attitudes that focus on commonalities between African Americans and other Americans. An item such as "Blacks who espouse separatism are as racist as White people who also espouse separatism" is included in the Assimilationist subscale. The Humanist subscale assesses the extent to which the individual endorses attitudes that emphasize commonalities among all human beings regardless of race, gender or other characteristics. One of the items in the Humanist subscale reads, "Blacks would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on Black issues." Although not used in this study, two other components of the MIBI include the Centrality Scale and the Regard Scale.

Consisting of one scale only, the Centrality Scale measures the extent to which African Americans consider race a part of their self-concept. The Regard Scale is comprised

of 2 subscales (Private Regard and Public Regard). The Private Regard subscale assesses the extent to which a person feels positively or negatively about African Americans and his or her membership in that group, while the Public Regard scale assesses the extent to which the individual feels others possess positive or negative feelings about African Americans.

In a study of reliability and construct validity of the MIBI using a sample of 474 African American college students from a predominantly White university and a predominantly Black university, results from a factor analyses suggested that the MIBI measures three interrelated empirical constructs and that these constructs “are consistent with the MMRI’s conceptualization of the centrality, ideology, and regard dimensions” (Sellers et al., 1997, p. 811). In the same study, Sellers et al. also found evidence of predictive validity. Consistent with their prediction, results from a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated that participants with an African American best friend had higher scores on the Centrality Scale and the Nationalist subscale, but lower scores on the Assimilation, Humanist, and Minority subscales than participants without an African American best friend. With regard to enrollment in Black studies courses, MANOVA results indicated that students who had enrolled in at least one African American studies course had higher scores on the Centrality Scale and the Nationalist subscale. These findings appear to suggest that the Centrality and Ideology subscales are related to race-related activities including enrollment in Black studies courses and social relationships (Sellers, Chavous, et al., 1998).

In a recent study of the relationships between racial identity, perceived ethnic fit, and organizational involvement for 164 African American college students, Chavous (2000)

reported reliability internal consistency coefficients for the MIBI subscales ranging from .66 to .85. Shelton and Sellers (2000), in their investigation of the situational stability and variability in African American college women's racial centrality, regard, and ideology, reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all subscales—with the exception of the regard scales—in the range of .61 to .81. The Private Regard coefficient was .12 and the coefficient for Public Regard was .28. Thus, the Regard subscales appear to be problematic.

Focus Group Format

The qualitative component of the study was designed to explore the participants' views on the salience of race and gender as well as issues impacting them as first-year, African American college women at a predominantly White university. The focus group was also designed to assess the impact of those findings on the women studied. The primary researcher, with assistance from her faculty advisor, developed the focus group questions. The primary and secondary questions used for the focus group were as follows:

- 1) What types of challenges have you faced as a first-year, African American student at North Carolina State University?
- 2) Have you ever experienced prejudice or discrimination? If so, please explain.
- 3) What impacts your life the most? Is it being an African American or is it being a woman?
- 4) What do you like most about yourself in terms of the way you look? What do you dislike about your appearance?
- 5) What do you think about the issue of skin color (i.e., light-complexioned, medium-complexioned, dark-complexioned)? Do you think that women are judged differently

- based on skin color? Do you think that the larger society treats African American women differently based on their skin color?
- 6) What do you think of the images of African American women in music videos?
 - 7) What is the dating situation on this campus? How do the African American college men on this campus treat African American college women?

Data Collection Procedures

The sample for both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study consisted of first-year, African American college women who were enrolled in a one-semester university orientation course designed specifically for African American students in their respective colleges within the university. The participants were recruited through the Coordinator for the university orientation courses for first-year, African American students and instructors for those courses. To begin the recruitment process, the researcher contacted the Coordinator, explained the purpose of her study, and asked if she would be willing to provide a list of all instructors who taught the courses in the various colleges—including programs for undesignated students—within the university. All MDS instructors for those courses were then contacted and asked if they would be willing to allow their students to participate in the study. Before the instruments were administered, all potential participants were provided an informed consent form and they were asked to sign the form if they agreed to participate in the study.

The primary researcher and/or the orientation instructors administered the instruments to participants during a regularly scheduled orientation class. The gender and racial composition of the test administrators included one African American male and six

African American women, one of whom was the primary researcher. In addition, all administrators held at least a Master's or doctoral degree. Each test administrator received a packet with specific written instructions for administering the instruments—including a script explaining the purpose of the study—and debriefing the participants. Each student's packet consisted of an introductory letter, an informed consent statement, a demographic data sheet, the MIBI, and the WIAS, in that order. One hour was allotted for administration and debriefing. After the researcher collected the completed packets from the test administrators, she separated the consent forms from the instruments and stored the forms in a confidential and secure location.

The participants for the qualitative component of the study consisted of a subset of those students who completed the assessments for this study. Assessment administrators were asked to solicit several volunteers from their groups. From this list, volunteers were randomly chosen for participation in the focus group.

Statistical Procedures

Descriptive statistics were used as a method for summarizing the demographic data for the sample. This data included age, race, college major, type of high school attended, high school racial composition, and prior exposure to race and/or gender discussions.

The first research question focused on investigating the absence or presence, strength, and direction of any relationships between stages of gender (Womanist) identity and racial identity in first-year, African American college women. The initial plan was to use nonparametric analysis, using the Spearman rank correlation as the primary statistical technique for investigating the relationships. A significance level of .01 would be used to

test for the presence of a positive or negative correlation between the variables. The Womanist Identity Development model is described as a stage-wise model with each successive stage considered a higher level of development. However, there are no qualitative differences between the four race ideologies of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity nor is there an optimal level of development. Since it was not appropriate for the raw data for both instruments to be treated as interval scale data, the Spearman rank correlation was chosen initially. There would be a total of eight variables with four representing the sample's scores on each of the subscales of the WIAS—the instrument used to assess Womanist or gender identity—and four representing the scores on the four Ideology subscales of the MIBI—the assessment instrument for the Ideology dimension of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity. The data for each of the variables would then be converted into ranks, and 16 Spearman rank correlation coefficients would be computed. A two-tailed test would be used to determine if statistically significant correlations (positive or negative) were present. An analysis of the descriptive data for scores on both instruments, however, revealed that a different statistical technique would be more appropriate. The revised statistical analysis methodology is presented in Chapter Four.

Summary

This study was designed to explore the absence or presence of relationships between racial identity and gender identity in first-year, African American college women as well as the women's own views about the salience of race and gender for them. The Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al., 1997) was the assessment tool for racial identity and the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (Ossana, et. al, 1992) was

used to assess gender identity. My initial plan for the quantitative portion of the study was to use nonparametric analysis using the Spearman rank correlation as the primary statistical technique for investigating the relationships. However, an exploratory analysis of the data revealed that a different statistical approach might be more appropriate for addressing the quantitative research question and related hypotheses. The statistical analysis methodology will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. To determine the salience of race and gender in the lives of first-year, African American college women as well as issues impacting the women, a focus group was also conducted.

Chapter Four

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter contains the results of a quantitative and qualitative study designed to assess gender and racial identity development in a group of first-year, African American college women attending a predominantly White university. Presented in the first part of the chapter are the results from the two instruments—the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (Ossana et al., 1992) and the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (Sellers et al., 1997)—that were used to assess gender and racial identity development, respectively. Also included are the results of the statistical analysis that was conducted to investigate the absence or presence of relationships between gender and racial identity. The latter part of this chapter consists of a qualitative analysis report based on the results from a focus group designed to gather information on the women’s views on the salience of race and gender as well as issues impacting them. A subset of the sample served as focus group participants.

The chapter begins with a restatement of the research questions and related hypotheses followed by a summary of descriptive statistics for the two instruments used in this study. This section is followed by the quantitative analysis report including a description of the statistical procedures used, a restatement of the research hypotheses, and related statistical analysis results. The qualitative section includes a description of the qualitative techniques and a qualitative analysis report.

The research questions and hypotheses are restated as follows:

- 1) What is the relationship between stages of Womanist (gender) identity and racial identity in first-year, African American college women attending a predominantly White university.

Hypothesis. There will be significant relationships between stages of Womanist (gender) identity as measured by the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) and the four ideology dimensions of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) as measured by the Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). More specifically, the following relationships will exist:

- A. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Pre-encounter stage and MMRI Assimilation ideology.
 - B. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion-Emersion stage and the MMRI Nationalist ideology.
 - C. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Preencounter stage and the MMRI Humanist ideology.
 - D. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion/Emersion and Internalization stages and the MMRI Minority ideology.
- 2) Is racial identity more salient than gender identity for first-year, African-American college women?
 - 3) What is the impact of race being more salient than gender or vice versa on first-year, African American college women?

Since questions two and three are research issues and qualitative in nature, no hypothesis testing was involved.

Quantitative Analysis Report

Descriptive Statistics

The information included in Table 4.1 reflects the range, means, and standard deviations for the participants' scores on the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) and the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS).

Table 4.1
Range, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Sample's Scores on the Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) and the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) (N=109)

Scales	Scores			
	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
MIBI (Ideology)				
Assimilationist	4.00	6.89	5.43	0.67
Humanist	2.67	7.00	5.50	0.77
Minority	2.67	6.78	4.87	0.73
Nationalist	1.78	6.78	3.81	0.93
WIAS				
Pre-encounter	1.63	3.75	2.39	0.40
Encounter	1.88	4.25	2.93	0.49
Immersion/Emersion	1.25	3.56	2.44	0.41
Internalization	3.45	4.91	4.30	0.35

Note: Scores on the MIBI Ideology subscales can range from 1 to 7. Scores on the WIAS subscales can range from 1 to 5.

Statistical Analysis

This section provides the rationale for using chi-square analysis rather than Spearman rank correlation analysis as originally planned for hypothesis testing. As described in Chapter Two of this study, the researcher had initially planned to conduct nonparametric analysis using the Spearman rank correlation coefficient with a significance level set at .01 to test the hypothesis that there would be significant positive relationships between stages of Womanist identity development—a stage-wise model—and the ideologies of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity—a model in which there were no qualitative differences between the ideologies. Gender or Womanist identity was assessed with the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) and racial identity was assessed with the Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). There was an assumption, however, that there would be diversity among the Womanist developmental stages and the MIBI ideologies across the sample. An analysis of the descriptive data for the WIAS, however, revealed that 99% (n=108) of the sample placed in the Womanist Internalization stage—the highest developmental stage for that theoretical model. This meant that with the exception of one person, none of the other participants, based on their highest WIAS score, placed in the other three Womanist developmental stages. Thus, it was decided that the Spearman rank correlation analysis would not be the most appropriate technique for testing the hypotheses related to relationships between specified stages of Womanist and racial identity. Out of curiosity, though, nonparametric analysis using the Spearman rank correlation was conducted on the 109 participants. The results of this analysis are presented in Appendix F.

Test of Hypotheses

Given the absence of representation across three of the Womanist stages, the three hypotheses relating to those stages could not be addressed. Those three hypotheses, all of which were designed to address the first research question, are restated as follows:

- 1A. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Pre-encounter stage and MMRI Assimilation ideology.
- 1B. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion-Emersion stage and the MMRI Nationalist ideology.
- 1C. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Pre-encounter stage and the MMRI Humanist ideology.

Only a portion of the fourth hypothesis (1D)—the part related to the relationship between the Womanist Internalization stage and the MMRI Minority ideology—could be investigated further. Again, the relationship involving the Womanist Immersion/Emersion stage could not be explored since there were no participants whose highest WIAS score placed them in that stage. The hypothesis that was investigated is restated below:

- 1D. There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion/Emersion and Internalization stages and the MMRI Minority ideology.

The first step in exploring the above hypothesis was to examine the descriptive data for the four MIBI scales to determine the number of participants—based on their highest score—placing in the various ideologies. The expectation was that among those participants placing in the Womanist Internalization stage, there would be a higher incidence of

participants scoring in the MMRI Minority ideology. The frequencies for the MIBI ideologies are illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Score Distribution by Frequency and Percentage for the MIBI Ideology Scale for Participants Placing in the Womanist Internalization Stage

MIBI Ideology Scale	N	%
Ideology Subscales		
Assimilationist	37	36.6
Humanist	49	48.5
Minority	11	10.9
Nationalist	4	4.0
Total	101	100

Note: * Of the 108 participants whose highest score placed them in the Womanist Internalization Stage, 7 of them were dropped from this phase of the analysis because their scores on the MIBI tied on 2 or more of the Ideology subscales.

As illustrated in Table 4.2, the MIBI Minority ideology was not the first or second ideology in which the largest number of individuals scored; rather it was the third.

However, further analysis in the form of chi-square was conducted to determine whether individuals scoring at the higher end of the Womanist Internalization stage would be more likely to score in the Minority Ideology than those scoring at the lower end of the Womanist Internalization stage or in any of the other ideologies. In other words, the frequency distribution for individuals scoring at the higher end of the Womanist Internalization stage and scoring in the Minority Ideology would be significantly different

from the expected or normal distribution. For this analysis, three of the MIBI ideologies (i.e., Assimilationist, Humanist, and Nationalist ideologies) were collapsed into one category, leaving the Minority ideology in a separate category since the expectation was that there would be a greater likelihood of the Womanist Internalized individuals being associated with the Minority ideology than with any of the other ideologies. In addition, those three ideologies—Assimilationist, Humanist, and Nationalist—had no bearing on the hypothesis being tested. Table 4.3 provides the Chi-square results.

Table 4.3

Frequency Table Illustrating the Relationship Between the Distribution of Participants Scoring Highest on the WIAS Internalization Subscale (Categorized by HIGH and LOW) and the MIBI Ideology Subscales

WIAS Internalization	Collapsed MIBI Ideologies	MIBI Minority Ideology	Total
HIGH	42 41.58%	5 4.95%	47 46.53%
LOW	48 47.52%	6 5.94%	54 53.47%
TOTAL	90 89.11%	11 10.89%	101 100%

Note: Cutoff score for WIAS Internalization HIGH Category was >4.3 ; Cutoff for WIAS Internalization LOW Category ≤ 4.3 . Collapsed MIBI Ideologies included the Assimilationist, Humanist, and Nationalist Ideologies.

Chi-Square Statistics for Table of WIAS Internalization by MIBI Ideologies

	Value	df	Probability
Chi-Square	0.006	1	0.939
N of Valid Cases	101		

As indicated in Table 4.3, no statistically significant differences were found between the actual and expected distributions for the Minority Ideology or the collapsed MIBI Ideologies for the participants whose highest scores placed them in the high or low categories of the Womanist Internalization stage ($p=.939$). Therefore, analysis was stopped at this point since there was no evidence to suggest that there might be a relationship between the Womanist Internalization stage and the MIBI Minority ideology.

Qualitative Analysis Report

A focus group was conducted to elicit responses for the second and third research questions that were designed to explore whether race or gender was more salient in the lives of first-year, African American college women and the impact of one being more salient than the other. Another purpose of the focus group was to gather information on the students' perceptions of issues impacting them as African American women.

The investigator for this study, an African American woman, facilitated the focus group. She possesses extensive experience in working with African American college women representing all undergraduate academic classifications. More specifically, she has been employed as an assistant director for women's basketball, soccer, and volleyball and as an academic coordinator for a transition program for at-risk African American students at a large, predominantly White university. In these positions, she provided counseling, academic advising, programming, and instructional services to many African American college women. The investigator also completed a graduate internship in the Dean of Students office at a small, predominantly White women's college where she counseled, planned programs, and conducted workshops specifically for African American college

women. The investigator gained further experience in working with diverse populations of women—including African Americans—as an instructor at one community college and as a counselor at another. Her community service work has included conducting personal development workshops for African American female adolescents and women in an inner-city setting. Her personal experiences as a college student include attendance at a small predominantly White college and three predominantly White universities. She has also published an article on facilitating healthy identity development in African American female college students (Johnson-Newman & Exum, 1998). Thus, the investigator has considerable knowledge of and experience with the issues affecting African American women.

Focus group participants consisted of six first-year, African American college women at North Carolina State University. The participants were all 18 years of age. With regard to college majors, three of them were undecided, two were Humanities and Social Sciences majors, and one was a Management major. All of the participants identified themselves as African American; however, during the focus group discussion, one individual advised that both her parents were from mixed racial backgrounds. Three group members graduated from suburban high schools; one graduated from a rural high school; and one attended an urban high school. The racial composition of the high school attended by four of the participants was “mostly White”; for one participant the racial composition was “mostly Black”; and one student attended a “Multiracial” high school. Within the three months preceding their participation in the focus group, all six participants indicated on the demographic data sheet that they had participated in classroom discussions pertaining to their race and/or gender.

The focus group participants were recruited through the test administrators for this study. The administrators were asked, in writing, to either recommend and/or recruit volunteers from the group to whom they administered the racial and gender identity assessments. The researcher then randomly selected eight individuals from the list of names submitted, contacted the students, and explained the purpose of the study. Of the eight individuals who agreed to participate in the focus group, six women actually came to the focus group meeting.

The focus group session was held in one of the meeting rooms in the African American Cultural Center, a center that is housed in a relatively new building located in a centralized part of the campus. The researcher introduced herself to all group members as they entered the room. Pizza dinner was provided prior to the beginning of the session. Inviting the participants to dinner prior to the start of the session allowed them time to familiarize themselves with the environment, to get acquainted, and to become comfortable with the facilitator and each other prior to the start of the focus group discussion (Gay, 1996).

Following the moderator's guide that she had developed, the researcher began the session by introducing herself as the facilitator for the group and explaining that her role would be primarily to ask questions, rather than participating in the discussion. She then thanked the students for agreeing to participate in the group and explained the purpose of a focus group and this group, in particular. The facilitator explained that the sessions would be audiotaped and videotaped and that she would later transcribe the tapes. After obtaining permission from each group member regarding the taping procedure, she introduced the graduate student who would be videotaping the session. Issues of confidentiality were

discussed and participants were given the consent form. The facilitator asked them to read the form and to sign if they agreed to participate. Demographic data sheets were then passed out, completed, and returned to the facilitator. Following the collection of appropriate forms, each participant was asked to introduce herself by first name only. Finally, the facilitator shared the rules of the group (e.g., providing honest responses, focusing on the question, and turning off cell phones).

The facilitator began the discussion by starting with general questions and eventually presenting more specific ones. Even though the facilitator allowed the group to flow naturally, she tried to ensure that each participant responded to each question before proceeding to the next question. Her only other participation in the group was to paraphrase or clarify responses to ensure that she fully understood their comments. Following the discussion, the facilitator ended the session by debriefing the participants—explaining in more detail the actual purpose of the study—and entertaining any questions the group members presented. She then thanked the participants for their time, their participation, and their contribution to the body of research on identity development in African American female college students.

The actual focus group session, which consisted of one two-hour session, was videotaped and audiotaped. This method of triangulation helped to ensure the collection of accurate data and served as a way to verify impressions based on the data (Gay, 1996). The use of recording devices also served as a backup should problems arise with either the audiotape or the videotape, which is what occurred with this study. Due to technical difficulties with the audiotape (i.e., muffled sound), the researcher transcribed verbatim from

the videotape. In addition, videotaping served as a way for a qualified reviewer to have an opportunity to observe the group.

Using a reviewer, another triangulation method, was another way to help promote the accuracy of data and to verify impressions (Gay, 1996). The reviewer for this study was Dr. Herbert Exum, an associate professor with the Department of Counselor Education at North Carolina State University. Dr. Exum, an African American, has 29 years of teaching experience in higher education, with areas of specialization in community mental health, counselor education supervision, and cognitive developmental theory. He has also taught qualitative research courses at North Carolina State University and abroad in Finland.

The investigator employed thematic analysis as the analytic option for this study. To begin the analytic process, the investigator transcribed the videotape—a process that required numerous hours, thus providing considerable time for her to listen for, reflect on, and identify themes. Although the researcher made brief observation notes during the session, transcribing from the videotape also allowed her an opportunity to observe the setting and the participants more closely and to verify observation notes taken during the actual focus group session. After completing the transcription, the investigator went through the transcript to summarize—in the margins—the major points in each major sentence. She then coded the participants' statements according to the major and secondary themes under which they appeared to fall. If, through the process, she identified another theme or a more appropriate one, she made revisions. After the coding process for each question was completed, the investigator wrote the draft of the analysis report using excerpts to illustrate themes. Based on the question-by-question analysis, she then identified the overall themes for this study.

The investigator and the reviewer conducted their analyses separately. A copy of both the transcript and the videotape were sent to the reviewer. Any major discrepancies in the thematic analyses were discussed in detail by the investigator and the reviewer.

Due to the unique nature of the subject matter and the scarcity of available literature on first-year, African American college women, the investigator, with the assistance of her advisor, developed the questions. In an attempt to address the research issues regarding the salience of race and gender, the following areas were investigated in the qualitative portion of the study: 1) challenges faced by first-year African American college women; 2) experiences with prejudice and/or discrimination; 3) the salience of race and gender; 4) physical appearance; and 5) the dating situation.

Specific Themes by Question

Question 1: Challenges

What types of challenges have you faced as a first-year, African American student at North Carolina State University?

Themes that emerged from this question centered around concerns over relationships with White roommates, relationships with African American students, a lack of unity among African American students, and adjustments. More specifically, the primary challenges encountered by participants included difficulty in adjusting to roommates who were racially different, concerns about being ostracized by African American students, and concerns about finding resources and adjusting to the demands of the academic environment.

Adjusting to White roommates. Both negative and positive relationships appeared to exist between the focus group members and their White roommates. Several participants

experienced considerable discomfort in their attempts to live with a White roommate whose values and behaviors were different from their own. They also related their uneasiness with entertaining their African American friends and having discussions with them in the presence of their White roommates. Frankly, the group members feared that their White roommates might find their discussions offensive. The following excerpts illustrate several of the students' frustrations and reservations:

My biggest challenge is my roommate. I don't have a problem with it but she's White and I'm not used to the types of things that they do and that's my biggest challenge because like personally I'm not a nasty person and like to see, just to see how she operates with things, that's my biggest problem. And like you know when you'll feel like you want to be comfortable and like talk to your friends and you know just have different discussions and you can't have that discussion because you feel like you might offend her. (B, p. 5)

My living situation is horrible. I don't know my roommate and I...we like right now don't communicate at all. She's also a White female and I (pause) we have some similar problems that she was speaking of. Like she is very (pause) like I'm not the most organized person but I am tidy and I don't...and she just throws her things and I feel like when we're together and my friends come over that my space has been invaded. Like I don't feel comfortable bringing my friends there and so that's kind of hard for me. Like I said and I don't think it's just because she's White we have these problems maybe but I think that has something to do with it because some of the things like my parents would call and she will know where I am and she won't tell them." (Kr, p. 7)

Although participants acknowledged that not all of the roommate problems they experienced were related to their roommate's race, several group members clearly felt that race had a significant impact on their adjustment to their living situation. Surprisingly, those students who reported having good relationships with their White roommates were confronted with and concerned about other relationship issues—primarily with African American students.

Relationships with African American students. While some of the participants were frustrated with their White roommates, others who got along well with their Caucasian

roommates felt ostracized by African American students when seen in public with them. As one related:

My living situation is I live in the situation in like my roommates, well both of them are White, but it's the opposite. Like I'm really comfortable with them at home but I live off campus and when I come on campus if I'm walking with one of them like you won't get anyone to say anything to me, but if I'm walking by myself, the Black people are like "Hey, how you doing." you know without them being there but when I'm with them they're like [looks away mimicking the way African American students look at her]. (S, p. 7)

In the case of another participant who got along well with her White roommate, she, too, felt ostracized sometimes by African American female students even when not with someone who was racially different.

What she was saying [referring to another group member] when you're walking down the street and I'm a friendly person. I love to speak to everybody "Hey, how you doing?" I might not know you but I'm gonna speak. And some people, some Black females you speak to them they look at you like "Who are you?". And I'm like okay....(C, p. 9)

Lack of unity among African American students. In response to the experiences of being excluded, some of the participants were disappointed over what they perceived as a lack of unity among the African American students—especially women—on campus. As one participant responded when asked by the facilitator if Black women ignored her only when she was with a White roommate:

If I'm walking by myself or with another group of girls and I feel it shouldn't be like that. We're all on the same campus and if we can't interact and get along.... (C, p. 10)

The following excerpt illustrates a similar experience with African American women:

...let's talk about what C was saying about females [referring to African American women on campus]...and sometimes it's like you feel the unity and it's there but then

you walk in another spot and it's gone. I think that's really hard because I'm a friendly person and I speak and communicate with everybody. That's just the way I am and like I know I can be with a couple of people and they're like "No, we don't want to go over there and talk to them." I'm just like...[looks perplexed and throws her hands in the air] it's like you're making boundaries for people you don't even know. (Kr, p. 11)

This same participant also related her perplexities over what she perceived as a lack of unity among African Americans on campus.

You would think you know being that minorities have experienced so much in the past you would think that that would bring us closer together but the fact that we're both Black and we can't even carry on a conversation you know that hurts me to think that you know another one of my people is carrying on that way. And so I don't know I think we should be unified. (Kr, p 12)

Thus, a desire for unity among African American students appeared evident from the participants' comments.

Finding resources and adjusting to the university environment. With regard to adjusting to the university environment, the participants verbalized their concerns about making the right decisions and finding resources. The following excerpt illustrates one participant's concerns about adjusting to the college environment and making the right choices:

...but a challenge for me I think is like adjusting, basically, because like I mean by the school being so big it's like so, so overwhelming, you know, you have so much you have to do to get adjusted. When I was at home I went to school, I worked, and that was my life everyday but it's like there's so much around you to do that you could let yourself fall down or mess up." (M, p. 10)

Several other participants expressed concerns about finding resources.

I am thinking my biggest challenge so far is like getting someone to help you. Like you...I asked one of my teachers about you know the MAPLE Program in the Math Department? I asked him where I could go for help with anything...if he could show me something. He sent me to someone else who didn't even exist. He was like go to a math consultant and at the time there weren't any. (K, p. 6)

But anyway some other challenges that I have faced on campus kind of like she was saying like finding resources you know and things that you know that I need or maybe people that can help me you know and they're there. (Kr, p. 8)

The group members acknowledged that their African American coordinators were extremely helpful and that the resources existed, but as one student stated, "It's just a matter of you taking the initiative to go and get help." (Kr, p. 8)

Question 2: Prejudice and Discrimination

Have you ever experienced prejudice or discrimination?

Every focus group participant shared what she perceived as an experience with prejudice and/or discrimination in some form. The primary theme for this question was prejudice and/or discrimination based on race and/or gender. Secondary or sub-themes included stereotypes and emotional pain—both by-products of prejudice and discrimination.

Racial and/or gender discrimination. Although the majority of the experiences involved racial issues, some of the women had also experienced prejudice based on gender.

The following excerpt illustrates an experience with gender discrimination:

I've been in situations where I've been discriminated against all around. Based on gender, in high school I played football and I was the only female on the team and my coaches they was like "You're not supposed to be here on the team or whatever." Even though I was one of the best, I was still not allowed to kind of play and like they would make comments like "You don't need to be here and if y'all hit her, y'all better put the fear of God in her. Y'all need to hit her and say welcome to the NFL." or just doing things just to try to put me in my so-called place. Like the first couple of years, they would just say things to kind of make me feel like I didn't even belong there. So that's based on gender I was discriminated against. (B, p. 18)

Here the participant shares an incident involving racial discrimination.

And me being discriminated by race, I come from a White school—it's majority White, I think it's a good 85 percent White. My school, year after year, they don't have anything for February. They don't do anything for African Americans and I went up and like a couple of years back the students got mad and they just walked out of class because the principal was like you're not going to have it—not going to have

a program or anything. So this year I said okay you know let's do something. And at first he told me "No". And I said "I'm going to tell you something. Now I have a lot of support behind me and if we don't have any type of program, something bad is going to happen. You're going to have kids walking out, you're going to have lawsuits, you're just going to experience a lot of things." He was like well okay you can have it. So I put together, well me and a lot of people, we put together a program and before our program was going to take place he was like "Well you can have your program but White people are not gonna...they don't have to come." (B, p. 20)

The student went on to describe other obstacles she encountered from the principal before the Black History Month program finally occurred. Another participant described an incident in which she felt a White male demonstrated his biases based on race and gender. In this particular situation she argued with a White male over derogatory comments he made about an African American male counterperson at a fast food restaurant.

And there was a Black guy who was working at the Taco Bell and he was going around, he was like "Is it 10:30 yet? Can we start? Is it 10:30?" And he repeated that several times you know...and so he was waiting for a response from his manager who wasn't responding and so he just continued saying that. The White guy behind me began to say stuff you know. He didn't call him like okay he began to say things like you know calling him stupid you know just very vulgar things that even if that wasn't a Black man I would have still been offended because you're talking about somebody who is defenseless because this man didn't hear him saying these things. So me, you know I turn around and look you know. I told the man I was like you know you just need to be quiet, that's rude. I was like you know it is 10:30 but you're gonna eat, just calm down, it's not that serious. And then so he and I started arguing you know. We had a little argument or whatever so I just went on. And so when I got to the register I told the Black guy "Don't take his order. If I were you I would not take his order." And so he was like he asked me what was he saying about him. And then the White guy he got upset...and then so when the Black guy confronted the White guy about what he was saying "Oh, I didn't say a thing." you know and I just felt like he was trying to—just because I'm...was a woman he was all up in my face like this you know. He was imitating me which I was not doing this because I don't carry on that way...And he was you know I just felt like just because I was a Black woman, he thought he could say anything to me. (Kr, p. 14)

Not only was the participant upset about the comments made by the White male about the counterperson, but she also felt that his prejudices based on race and gender were apparent in the manner in which he communicated with her.

Stereotypes. The concept of stereotypes emerged as the participants shared their experiences involving prejudice and/or discrimination. The types of stereotypes that surfaced were related to body size and eating habits, the promiscuity label, and the role of women. In addition, a stereotype about Black males being criminals was also discussed.

Stereotypes about body size and related eating habits caused considerable frustration for one group member who constantly defended her size to individuals who assumed that she starved herself. In other words, she found herself challenging the stereotype that the size of individuals at either end of the size or weight continuum was based on their eating habits.

I'm tired like people are always coming up to me. Like I can see people and they just automatically assume that you might not eat, you must starve yourself or something like that. And just last week, I have 12 meals per week and I like ran out on Thursday because I was eating so much. And I just don't understand like...it's just automatically a stereotype of small people not eating and big people eating too much and I'm just tired of that. (K, p. 18)

Another stereotype with which some of the participants had to contend was the “promiscuity label.” In this case, other African American students on campus labeled them as promiscuous if the women were seen in public with a variety of male students—especially male student athletes. The following excerpt illustrates one participant's frustrations:

But my thing is what gives a person the right to automatically assume that I'm like that at all because if a person really knew me, they would know that I'm not like that at all. I respect myself to the utmost and I don't appreciate it when people put stereotypes or labels on me like I do this or I do that because that's not my style. I'd never throw myself out there like a tramp or whore; I just got a lot of male friends. (C, p. 26)

Another group member who admitted to judging Black women based on the company they kept also related her own experiences with being stereotyped as well as her method for coping.

“We all do to a certain extent [referring to African American women judging one other] but I can understand where you’re coming from because I talk to a basketball player. See you have to get to a point where you could care less. I could care less. It really is not about me because what they have to say...so they get upset because I talk to a basketball player. I play basketball; therefore, that’s why we get along. You know what I’m saying? We can communicate about basketball. I can understand what he’s talking about, you know. I could care less. (M, p. 24)

When asked by the facilitator to explore reasons why people might respond to them in this way, the participants gave the following possible reasons: (1) jealousy; (2) stereotyping; or (3) concern by others who might be attempting to protect the participants and their reputations. Of these three reasons, the participants resented being stereotyped most, especially by individuals from their own race. As one individual stated, “... it’s bad that we have a stereotype in our own race.” (Kr, p. 27)

Two stereotypes involving the role of the women emerged from the discussion. One stereotype suggested that women should be at home or in the kitchen. Another assumption was that all African American women could cook. Following are excerpts illustrating these stereotypes:

And then he [referring to the “Preacher Man”, a White male who frequents the Brickyard, an outdoor gathering spot on campus] made the comment that he feels that women should go back to the kitchen; they shouldn’t be like out in the workforce and stuff like that. He was trying to relate it to the Bible you know because the Bible says that wives should be submissive to their husbands but that’s not what he’s talking about. He’s [I think she’s referring to God here] not telling us stay in the kitchen and you know shut up and be quiet. But that’s not what he was saying. And I was like “Oh my God this is awful and like for this Black woman to be standing over there like on his side, it was making her look so ignorant because she was not really listening to what he was saying.” (M, p. 16)

Yeah and then when it came time for our homecoming they [referring to the coaching staff for the high school football team of which she was a member] looked at me with like “Are you going to cook us something.” I can’t cook. All because I’m “sista-girl” that don’t mean I can cook. I mean...No first, the Coach was like “B since you’re on the team we have allowed you to be on the team this long, are you going to cook for us?” Then one other coach was like “You know she can cook because you know most Black women can cook.” And I said, “Well I’m sorry but I can’t cook. I may be ‘Sista Girl’ but I can’t cook.” (B, p. 19)

Finally, the stereotype of all African American males being criminals emerged as one student shared an incident involving prejudice.

One day it was like a couple of boys like little D you know he’s a DJ and some other people and they were out like...They were across the Brickyard [an outdoor gathering spot on campus] and they were playing some music and I don’t know why they had like their turntable set up or whatever. I don’t know what was going on there with them. But like the White male [an individual referred to as the “Preacher Man”] was like...it’s a song that says “Come on. Put your hands up. Naw stop that. Put your hands up.” like that right. And the White man was like...what’d he say...he was like “Yeah, keep your hands up. Put a gun in your back cause that’s where they’ve been. They’ve all been in jail.” Now this is supposed to be a religious man, right? And he said “They’ve all been in jail.” What does that mean?...And there was this Black woman standing over there who was like “Yeah, yeah, yeah, all on his side. (M, p. 16)

Emotional Pain. The feelings evoked by all of the incidents of prejudice, discrimination, and/or stereotyping covered a wide spectrum of emotions including anger, frustration, resentment, and stress from constantly defending themselves, their race, their reputations, and/or their size. At times, the pain was visible in their facial expressions, especially in relating racial incidents. The following excerpts illustrate some of the pain:

Yes, and it was awful because I mean for him to use religion behind it. I mean I know that back in slavery that’s how they justified it but I mean I’ve never been in a situation like that you know so it really made me feel kind of uncomfortable to hear him say those things . (M, p. 17)

I mean I was angry first off because I mean we have plenty of successful Black people who haven’t been to jail you know and for him to come out and say they’ve all

been there...It was awful; it was really awful. [Participant was visibly upset.] (M, p. 17)

Question 3: Salience of Race and Gender

What impacts your life the most? Is it being an African American or is it being a woman?

Race before gender was overwhelmingly the primary theme that arose in response to this question. Incidents involving racial prejudice, coping responses, and emotional pain and frustration emerged as secondary themes.

Race before gender. Even though some of the members were aware of some of the history of gender-related roles and issues in the lives of African American women, they still identified race as more salient than gender.

Yes, because we come from a history where our history is not like White people's history because White people, they try to have their women in the house and their women are behind. But when we look at our history, women are on the sidelines with their men you know not the sidelines but on the front lines with their men or whatever. So being a woman, that plays a role like when I look at the world through an open view but as an African American my experience is being an African American first. (B, p. 28)

Across the board, all participants identified race over gender as the characteristic that impacted their lives most and by which they were identified most. For some, the importance of race was instilled by family values.

I say being an African American because my family just instilled it in me. It's not about you, it's about your people. Whatever you do, it's for your people. That's how my family raised me. Like I'm not going to school to get...yeah I'm going to school just to get an education and get ahead of the game but what is your education going to do for your people. (B, p. 27)

I mean it's like what B [referring the above student's comments] was talking about. I mean that's just how my family is. My great grandparents told my grandparents, we have this story in our family that we came from the Zulu tribe in Africa. I mean it's just crazy but...it's in the Savannah library. In my family it's just how we are. We love Black people. They weren't upset when I came here but I mean they could

understand why I came here but they were wanting to know why I came here. They thought I was trying to separate myself from other Black people. (M, p. 28)

Other participants felt constantly reminded by society of their race first and then their gender. The following excerpts illustrate this point.

I don't know. That's kind of a hard question. I mean if I would have to say I would have to say African American because when people see you they don't see you as a woman, they see you're Black regardless. (M, p. 28)

I think more African American as far as society because there are a lot of women out there and I don't think that women from different races are all that different. I think we all have a lot of things in common. I think it's more of a racial thing. (K, p. 28)

It is a very hard question to distinguish between the two but because of society I feel like I'm constantly reminded of race before that I am a woman. And I think that being a woman is hard too. And being Black is definitely hard—I mean I love being Black don't get me wrong—but I do feel that in society if you're Black, automatically you're this, this, and this. (Kr, p. 29)

For one participant who was of mixed racial heritage, the decision was even more complicated. Again, however, because of society's emphasis on her race, she felt that race was more salient than gender in her life. Although her parents' racial background was mixed, how she was perceived by society was determined by the color of her skin. She relates the complexities of her decision as follows:

For me, it's race before gender. Well from society it's hard [pause] yeah, I put race first. As far as family-wise, I come from a very diverse family. I've got everything mixed into my family. So as far as dealing with my heritage, I've got a lot of different heritages. Both my parents are mixed so I can't neglect one side from the other so I've got an equal balance. But because of what I look like [points to her skin which is light brown], I'm perceived as a Black person. So that's what I have got to deal with first rather than dealing with being a woman first. (C, p. 30)

When asked by the facilitator how she perceived herself regardless of societal influences, the group member stated:

I'm Black [nervous laughter] but even though...It's complicated because my dad is Indian and Black but if you ask him what he is he'll tell you he's Black. My grandmother is full-blooded Indian but he says that's the way society looks at him so he's not going to separate the two. So I look at myself as being Black but when I get around my family I can't say...I mean I have White cousins, Indian cousins, Spanish cousins so I can't like say okay I'm Black. I can't look at them as being [pause] you understand what I'm saying....It's hard but as far as when people look at me, I'm Black. I put on a piece of paper I'm Black, you know...[threw her hands up in the air in a gesture of frustration]. (C, p. 30)

Racial prejudice and/or discrimination. The issue of racial prejudice and/or discrimination resurfaced in the group members' responses to this question regarding the salience of race and gender. One participant in reflecting on the characteristic of which she was reminded most shared that neither [referring to race and gender] was an issue for her while growing up as a young girl in New York—rather she learned to be an individual first. The concept of racism, however, only became apparent to her after moving to Sampson County in North Carolina. She described her first experience with racism.

I never knew what racism was until I moved to Sampson county...It was everywhere. You go to the store and people [referring to White people] were like shrugging their shoulders at you and putting their noses up in the air...Like this one time my friend [who is White], the girl I live with now, she was a lifeguard for a long time and it was one of the years that I first moved down and I went to see her at the pool and they were having a birthday party for one of the little kids out there and I was talking to her you know. I didn't think anything of it—we were just talking—and the lady [a White woman] comes up to me. She didn't even say anything to me. She said, "Well Jessica do you know that this is a private party?"...And I looked at her and I don't know my neck must have done that little thing we do you know like [moves her head and neck around] and I turned around and I looked at her and Jessica kind of put her hand on my back and escorted me out the pool. She knows I couldn't say anything to her and I was like "Ooh!" And that was the first time I...(S, p. 32)

The following excerpt illustrates another incident involving prejudice:

We were in cheerleading camp and we had an all star team and a regular team and I made the all start team and she didn't particularly care for me because I was the only Black girl and she didn't make it and she thought that she should be in my place. So she made a comment on me being one of the all-star cheerleaders and so that's what it

was about...Yeah [it was a racial comment] because the squad was all White and I was the only Black girl and she felt that she should have been in that spot. (C, p. 36)

Coping strategies. Another theme that arose as the women responded to this question was that of coping responses to overt acts of prejudice and/or discrimination based on their race. These coping responses included: (1) choosing not to respond; (2) allowing others—including friends from the dominant culture—to speak up for them; (3) ignoring the perpetrator rather than feeding into the stereotypes of Black people; and (4) confronting the perpetrator. Considerable discussion ensued, however, over what they thought was the most appropriate response to racial incidents. An illustration of being unable to respond follows:

I was shocked. I didn't know how to deal with it. I know I was angry—she was bout to...yeah [head going up and down] [group laughter] but you know I didn't even have time to react to it. It wasn't something that I was used to and it was just like I don't know what would have come out of my mouth. It probably wouldn't have been nice. (S, p. 34)

Allowing someone from the dominant culture to respond to a racial incident was another method for coping.

Well yeah, yeah it did [have something to do with race] but Jessica—that's my ace, my friend [who is White] she's the one. She walked me to my car because she didn't want me to say anything. Later I found out that she had said something to the lady and because she was the lifeguard on duty, she shut the pool down and the little girl didn't have her party and that angered her...I guess she didn't want me to feed into the stereotype. (S, p. 35)

Ignoring the perpetrator to avoid being stereotyped was yet another coping mechanism suggested. The following excerpts illustrate this point:

I don't know, I think in a way it's good that you didn't react because like to me I been around a lot of White people myself and they want you to react that way so they can call you a “nigger” [puts hands up to denote quotes]—you know they want you to get upset. Not saying that all White people are like that because they aren't. I mean we know that because we're here at a predominantly White school but it's good you didn't because she could have went and said see “She's acting just like a nigger.”

You know she could have went and said something to the effect of she didn't mean it like that but you took it the wrong way and you got an attitude because we all have attitudes. I mean you know how stereotypes go. So it's kind of good that when we're in situations like that don't react with an attitude. I know it's better said than done but we shouldn't react; we should just you know go on about your business and become successful—the successful persons that we are going to be. (M, p. 34)

Like in my family like I've always been taught to be humble and like respect other people regardless of whether it's wrong so therefore when situations like...that's why I said what I said because my family we have Christian values you know what I'm saying and I'm not trying to preach to nobody. I mean Jesus was spit in the face you know so I mean we dwell upon that because we're trying to be like that. So therefore, when situations come upon me like that I don't react. It's not because I'm being you know not defending my culture or my heritage because I feel like that's already defended itself. Black people have done so many things for this country and if people can't realize that now then me arguing with somebody is not going to help. (M, p. 42)

Finally, verbal confrontation was another coping strategy used by some of the group members.

And you know how you were talking about how not to retaliate and everything but I think it's good to fight your own battles but you just have to fight them with your mind and what you say. You don't want to pick up a brick at anybody but I do think that...yeah because I'm gonna say what I've got to say. (Kr, p. 35)

I think there should never be a time when we don't speak out for ourselves and maybe that's because like I said again, I'm a dominant person. There has never been a time in my life where I would just sit back and not say anything...So often our people have been taught well we're going to overcome something. Let's overcome it now! Let's start with one person because you know if you say something to that one person, that one person might say like hey maybe what I said wasn't good or maybe I need to think about what I say next. And if that one person is gonna teach their kids well maybe baby you don't need to say that to that person that way or you don't need to say what I said to them people. (B, p. 27)

In the same light, one participant related her difficulty in calmly responding to racial incidents as follows:

Yes, I do feel that if something we don't like is said or done, we should react to it. But if you're a person like me no words involved, I'm very feisty and if the words don't come out [moves her fists in the air as if she's fighting] [group laughter]. That's just me so I got to step back...What I'm saying is if someone says something

out of the way before even trying to talk about it trying to explain their view, I'm already feisty, I'm upset and I'm ready to go so I've got to step back and say "C, calm down. That's not the way you do it. You think about the situation. Calm down, relax, relate, release and then tell them how you feel." (C, p. 39)

Another participant acknowledged feeling the same way, but she agreed that violence was not the way. An excerpt illustrating this point follows:

That's exactly right. You do step back because you're fighting these battles honey not with your mind because I know many times I have wanted to [punches her arm straight out] [group laughter], but I...Yes [she wants to punch them], but I'm not physically violent but I will, not in a violent way, I'm not going to say violent, but I will openly express how I feel in a very passionate way because you just have to be passionate about what you speak (Kr, p. 38)

Emotional pain and frustration. Emotional pain was apparent throughout their responses. Some participants were bothered and frustrated by having to constantly defend their race. An illustration of this point is apparent in the following excerpt:

I was going to say even now I don't mind defending my rights. That doesn't bother me but in certain situations and circumstances that come up, it bothers me that I always have to justify the Black race. Like if something comes up and somebody was like oh you know Black people this or Black people that, here I am then I have to step in and correct you where you have made errors all over the place. And you know that's okay but you just...I don't see any White people justifying their race all the time...Yes, I just get exhausted. And I'm proud that I'm knowledgeable enough to defend my race but why all the time does it have to be a racial issue. (Kr, p. 38)

Question 4: Physical Appearance

What do you like most about yourself in terms of the way you look? What do you dislike about your appearance?

Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with their appearance. Features they were dissatisfied with included the size of their eyes, the size of one's hand, and one individual's facial shape.

Question 5: Skin Color

What do you think about the issue of color (i.e., light-complexioned, medium-complexioned, dark-complexioned)? Do you think that women are judged differently based on color? Do you think that the larger society treats people differently based on color?

Overwhelmingly, the primary theme that emerged was that for African American women their skin color matters to individuals both within and outside of the Black community. Several secondary themes surfaced. The general consensus of the group appeared to be that light-complexioned women were afforded more opportunities by society. In addition, they appeared to be the dating preference for many African American men. An interesting paradox, however, emerged as the participants discussed their views on color. Although the group members expressed considerable dissatisfaction over the color preferences of African American men in their selection of Black women, they, too, had their own color preferences. The women also felt that African Americans whose skin color placed them at either end of the color continuum—whether very light complexioned or dark complexioned—were subject to ridicule.

Society affords more opportunities to light-complexioned women. Group participants suggested that African American women with light complexions were afforded more opportunities by society, particularly by the media in the form of commercials, movies, and music videos. They were especially upset and offended by the constant use of light-complexioned women and/or White women in music videos featuring African American male rappers. For the group members, they could not understand the media's refusal to provide the same opportunities for women with darker complexions. The following excerpts

illustrate the participants' resentment over the use of light-complexioned and White women primarily by the media, and especially in Black videos:

...if you look at commercials who do you see in commercials? Who do you see? I see light-skinned girls in commercials you know. And then in music videos, who do y'all see? Light-skinned girls with long hair...I mean that's all I see. Occasionally, you'll see a you know earth-toned shade [ends comments with hands up in the air]. (C, p. 52)

We all know that there are people different colors—different shades of Black and for them to put all light women in the videos, it just doesn't make sense. (K, p. 52)

I hate videos like that video by JaRule "Livin' It Up." To me in his video it's all White women and he suggests that living it up means that you have reached the status where you can actually get a White woman. That's what it means living it up. You no longer have a sister. (B, p. 53)

Yeah, I agree with her about within us it's like an issue to be light or Black. But by society I think they do accept light-skinned people better than they do dark-skinned people. If you notice like in the movies and things I mean there's no really dark-skinned people...But you think about all the light-skinned people—light, light, light. (S, p. 55)

Many Black men are more likely to pursue light-complexioned women. The participants felt that many African American men have, historically, and continue to pursue African American women whose skin color is of a lighter hue and who possess a certain hair texture (e.g., long and straight). The following excerpts illustrate this point.

Because most men like lighter women or Black men like the lighter women. It's just obvious." (K, p. 48)

I mean as far as I was talking about when I was little and I got picked on, it was this thing like where I grew up it was always like a boy trying to chase down a light-skinned girl with long hair. (M, p. 49)

I think it's sad because I think that our men—meaning African American men—have yet to come to the point where they appreciate their women and I see what they value [pause] it's like a slave mentality. They still carry that mentality where light is right or White is right." (B, p.52)

Black women have color preferences too. Ironically, the participants who clearly expressed frustration and hurt over the color preferences of African American men had color preferences of their own, ranging from light-complexioned to dark-complexioned Black men.

The following excerpts illustrate this point:

As far as like the opposite sex, for instance, when I look at a guy I'm looking more for complexion first. Yeah, I'm looking for darker...you know, like dark brown, medium, you know. (K, p. 48)

Light [referring to her color preferences in a mate] [holds her head down while speaking] I mean it was Black boys who were saying this to me [taunted her about her dark complexion when she was young]. I guess that's why I don't like them now...I like Black men, but not dark men...I mean they're [referring to light complexioned men] so cute. (M, p. 48)

I mean a lot of my boyfriends have been of the lighter hue not saying that I'm not interested in any brown-skinned guys because I am but a lot of them have been...[shrugs shoulders while appearing slightly uncomfortable] (C, p. 56)

I'd probably say light skinned [referring to her color preferences for men] and it's not intentional though. I don't know it's just what I end up with...I never thought about it until a couple of minutes ago but I'm thinking I guess I'm just attracted to light-skinned guys because all of them have been her complexion [points to group participant who is light brown], every single one of them—same build, same style, same everything. (S, p. 56)

African American women at either end of the color continuum may be ridiculed. In examining their views about color, several focus group participants with medium to dark-brown complexions shared painful experiences in which other African Americans as well as individuals from the dominant culture had either taunted or made negative remarks to them about their skin color.

...when I was little I got picked on so bad and I don't think I'm that dark but I mean they used to call me like Darth Vader, Midnight, I mean y'all laughing at me but "Midnight?" [Kr who was sitting next to her rubbed her back demonstrating empathy]...It made me feel so awful. I mean it was like you know Black boys who

were saying this to me. I guess that's why I don't like them [referring to dark men] now. (M, p. 49)

But growing up like my sister was is high yellow like the crayon and everybody thinks that we are twins but I'm just darker than she is. So I was always constantly compared—and like she's younger than me—like “Oh if you were light Kristin, then y'all really would be twins or y'all could be identical twins.” And I'm like what if she was darker? Why I got to be the lighter one? (Kr, p. 50)

Hurtful comments regarding skin-color also came from White individuals.

And then my four best friends—two were White and two were also high yellow. So I was like the little brown girl and I have even been...I actually went to a conference one time with two of my White friends and two girls who were really light and I actually had a [White] lady who I was staying in her house say “Oh, you're just the little colored girl.” (Kr, p. 50)

Finally, in spite some of the young women's negative experiences related to their brown or dark skin color, they acknowledged that African American women with light-complexioned skin might also experience ridicule from other African Americans based on their color. In fact, African Americans from either end of the color continuum could experience ridicule. The following excerpts illustrate this point:

I think it goes all the way back to slavery time because I mean where were the light-skinned women, where were they? In the house—you know what I'm saying. The Black dark purple women were out in the hot sweaty sun. I mean and therefore, the legacy just continues. I mean it's not so much like that now because we don't have slavery but like to a certain extent...like it still is based on that like between them and us you know because we kind of look down on people who are either lighter or darker. (M, p. 51)

Because we ridicule. Some people ridicule really light people and some people ridicule really dark people. Because sometimes if you're too light, they think you want to be White and if you're too Black, you're just too Black, you're just too African. You're just too Afrocentric. It's terrible that we do it, but some of us...(Kr, p. 51)

Thus, skin color, an immutable characteristic that is determined by one's race, still affects African American women—not only in the way they see themselves but also in the perceptions of others from both within and outside of the African American community.

Question 6: The Dating Situation

What is the dating situation on this campus? How do the men on this campus treat African American women?

Themes that emerged from this question were concerns regarding interracial dating and an absence of African American males seeking quality relationships with African American college women.

Interracial dating. One of the first responses to the question on the dating situation on campus involved the issue of some African American male students' preferences for interracial dating. Although some participants initially stated that they were not bothered by the men's preferences for interracial dating, their comments suggested otherwise. The following excerpts illustrate this point:

It doesn't bother me at all. I would prefer that a Black man date a Black women but I could never say that I wouldn't date outside of my race. You know what I'm saying. I couldn't say that I wouldn't do that. That's why I couldn't say that I disagree with Black men dating White women. (Kr, p. 58)

I mean I don't disagree with that at all because I have a lot of White friends so I mean that doesn't matter. It's just that I'm like Kristin I would really prefer that we understand that if we all just stick together you know, I mean I don't know. I don't know. (M, p. 58)

I mean I don't have a problem with it [referring to African American men dating White women] it's just that I see it and I'm like "Stop!"... It's not that I look at them and say "You're wrong for doing that." But I mean...like...(S, p. 60)

You wonder what he's thinking. When I go to the mall and I see it [referring to an interracial couple], I'm like...[Looks over shoulder as she would do at a mall and throws her hands up] (C, p.60)

The participants were quite perplexed over why Black would choose to date White women rather than Black women. The following excerpts illustrate this point.

I don't like that because I am a strong, confident Black sista who has herself together and am not demanding and I don't understand why they kind of lean over to the other side of the road. (C, p. 57)

I mean like my friend, one of my suitemates, she has in common what she said like when she sees interracial couples, she says "Another one bites the dust." I mean it's just like...I don't know why...because we have the full lips, the hips, you know just everything. (M, p. 58)

I mean Black women are just so beautiful...I don't see why Black men...would want to deviate the way they do. (Kr, p. 59).

It doesn't actually bother me to the extent of "Yeah I'm burning up inside, you'd better not"...you know but at the same time I think about it like "Why, why not a Black girl?" (K, p. 65)

For Wesley Snipes to make that comment...he was like "I don't date Black women because they all have attitudes." I mean he was just going on and on and on. I was like oh my God, that was so awful [pained expression on face]. Ooh! [Hits her leg in frustration] I'm emotional about that! (M, p. 59)

One participant concluded that some African American men date White women because the men have unresolved issues.

You know I get in trouble for this statement but I will probably say it until the day that I die but I don't too much care for interracial relationships because every time I see a brother with a White girl or a brother with any other type of girl, the first thought that comes to my mind is that's one less brother that a sister got to deal with. Because that is just me. That is one less sorry brother that any sister got to deal with. That brother has issues. He has issues that he has yet to iron out because he does not know what beauty is. So that's...[throws out hand] (B, p. 59)

When asked whether they would date interracially, the majority of the participants suggested that they preferred to date within their own race for various reasons.

I don't think that I would ever date anybody...yeah, anybody outside the Black race but I see other you know Black guys dating maybe White women, any other race, or whatever. (K, p. 65)

For one member, the decision was based on a prior experience with dating a White male and the reaction of others.

See I say that because I've been in that situation before [referring to dating a White male] and it was a traumatic...I mean we started off as friends you know because I have a lot of friends and I never was the type to say "Oh yeah I'll date a White guy today." you know and it happened. And when his parents actually found out that I was Black by me going to his house—that's how it happened—I [pause] uhm, uhm, uhm [shaking head from side to side]. If I had known what I was going to go through upon arriving there because he always assumed that his parents knew I was Black and I always assumed that they knew I was Black. And so when I got there and I'm not White, it was just an awkward situation and I will never...I wouldn't want to ever be put in that situation again because I felt ostracized the whole time I was there [visibly upset]. And like when I called before the mother ever met me she was all nice and friendly and then when I got there the tables were turned. (Kr, p. 66]

For others, their hesitancy in dating a White person was influenced by their father's objections regarding the matter.

As far as the interracial dating issue, I have never dated an all White guy. I've dated a mixed guy. I don't see myself dating a White person, not that I'm saying I will never do it; I just can't see myself. Now would I date a mixed person? Yeah. But knowing how my father is maybe that's what keeps me from dating a White person because he already told me a White guy can't step in the house. And even though we got White people in our family he just prefers that his daughters not date an all White man. (C, p. 66)

And my father is the exact same way but being that he wasn't directly in our household you know... No, my father didn't live with us and so it was just me and my mother and my little sister but like I said I never expected that to happen and I don't...I hate the experiences that came with it [referring to interracial dating] because I just ended up getting hurt even more after that. As far as being in school and everything like the people around me like his friends treated him differently; my friends treated me differently and so...(Kr, p. 67)

Difficulties in obtaining quality relationships with Black men. Although there appeared to be a lot of African American men on campus, finding the ones who were looking

for a quality relationship presented a challenge for most of the participants. Based on some of their experiences thus far, some of the participants suspected that the men they had encountered were not looking for committed, quality relationships. The following excerpts illustrate this point:

But the ones I have seen them hollering at me then I turn the corner and they're hollering at another girl. We got the same line and I'm like okay "I got you." (C, p. 63)

It's a constant let me see how many people I can pick up in an hour...Like I know most of my friends we'll be somewhere okay. One week a dude is like "Come over here Kr and let me holler at you." And so we're talking you know but it's very rare that I'll give out my telephone line but if I do, he must have some pretty teeth or something [group laughter]. So I may give the dude my number or whatever and then I turn around and I walk next door and the dude I gave my phone number to is on the phone with this other girl. I mean something's not right and that's happened and I don't care because I'm not...(Kr, p 63)

Some group members thought that that the men were interested more in purely physical relationships. Consequently, some of the women chose not to participate in those types of relationships, and they thought it best to wait awhile. The following excerpts illustrate this point.

And then if you're around someone and they don't see that happening and they kinda go like look, hey. And I'm like okay that's fine with me—bye. (Kr, p. 61)

Yeah but back to the question that you asked. I do think that there are a lot of available men here. Yes, there are a lot of beautiful men here, but I wouldn't tamper with them...not just yet. (Kr, p. 64)

Not just yet...I'm a tell you. We're all freshmen right?...New girls...Yeah that's exactly what it [agreeing with another participant who referred to first-year college women as "fresh meat"] is. As soon as you know December comes then you'll see the real guys who really want to talk to you. (C, 64)

Anything worth having is worth waiting for. (M, p. 65)

Another participant suggested that some of the good men on campus were perhaps hesitant to approach them because they were scared.

I think a lot of the Black men on this campus are scared. A lot of them look but they don't say anything. (K, p. 64)

Overall Themes

In a final analysis of the 11 primary themes and four secondary or sub-themes in the qualitative portion of this study, five overall themes emerged that appeared to be interwoven throughout the focus group discussion. These overall themes are identified as follows: (1) Race Is More Salient Than Gender; (2) Prejudice, Discrimination, and Stereotypes Still Exist; (3) Skin Color Matters; (4) Relationships With Other African Americans Are A Concern; and (5) The Woman are Perplexed About All of These Issues.

Overall Theme 1: Race Is More Salient Than Gender. By far, race was much more salient than gender for the participants of this group. The theme of race or race-related issues permeated the entire focus group discussion. Whether the participants wanted to think about race or not, societal reminders were forever present in their lives. The issue of race affected their relationships with women from the dominant culture (e.g., adjusting to White roommates) and their relationships with African American men (e.g., interracial dating). Race also affected the way the participants saw themselves and the way they were perceived by society. Further, the women's race influenced the opportunities afforded or not afforded to them by society. Society's constant reminders of race also brought about much frustration and anxiety as the women found themselves constantly either trying to justify their race or cope with the impact of racism in their lives. While the women acknowledged their gender

and gender-related matters, issues related to their race simply superseded those related to their gender.

Overall Theme 2: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Stereotypes Still Exist.

Experiences with prejudice and discrimination along with related stereotypes were very real and disturbing for group members. Although most of their experiences centered on what they perceived as racial prejudice and discrimination, other experiences included prejudice based on their gender. Prevalent also in the discussion was the topic of stereotypes—an area that caused considerable frustration for the participants. Stereotypes related to body size, the promiscuity label, and their gender as well as the stereotype of African American men as criminals were concerns for the participants. At times, the participants appeared to suggest that in addition to society, even their own people—other African Americans—were guilty of perpetuating the myths and stereotypes (e.g., the promiscuity label). Determining appropriate or healthy strategies for coping with the incidents of prejudice and discrimination appeared to be a challenge for this group.

Overall Theme 3: Skin Color Matters. Just as race was a prevalent theme throughout the discourse of the group, skin color, a closely related concept, was prevalent also. The participants were quite aware that skin color has long been an issue both within and outside of the Black community and that associated with it are certain benefits and burdens depending on the tone of their skin (i.e., light, medium, or dark complexioned or even White). They were particularly disturbed by society's influence—especially, the media—in promoting light-complexioned or White women over darker-complexioned African American women. Further, they were disturbed by the color preferences of many

African American men for light-complexioned or White women—both to date and to use in their music videos. Perhaps one of the most surprising themes that emerged related to skin color, however, was that the participants, too, had their own color preferences regarding African American men.

Overall Theme 4: Relationships with Other African American Students Are A Concern. Another recurring theme throughout this focus group and one about which they appeared perplexed involved the women's relationships with other African American students and what they perceived as a lack of unity among Black students. In their perceptions, Black college women, in particular, often seemed to judge and shun them. Perhaps, these behaviors could be related to competition on campus. Further, while some of the group members had friendships with African American men on campus, identifying those men who were not dating interracially and who wanted quality relationships with them was more difficult. Consequently, the women voiced a desire for more unity among all African American students on campus.

Overall Theme 5: The Woman Are Perplexed About All of These Issues. The participants were constantly asking themselves "Why" regarding issues related to their race? Why do I feel like I have to do 100% better? Why am I considered loose and in heat? Why am I not considered beautiful? Why is my image not promoted as positive by the mainstream media? Why am I ridiculed if my skin is too dark or too light? Why am I afforded fewer opportunities by society as well as my own people if my complexion is not light enough? These questions reflect a state of mind that is continually perplexed about issues related to race and skin color.

Summary

Presented in this chapter were the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses for a study designed to assess the absence or presence of relationships between gender identity and racial identity development. For the quantitative component, stages of Womanist (gender) identity development were assessed with the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS), and ideologies of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) were assessed with the Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). Included in the latter part of the chapter was a summary of the qualitative analysis that was designed to determine whether race or gender was more salient for first-year, African American college women. Chapter 5, the final chapter, will consist of a discussion of the results from Chapter 4, limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and implications for practice.

Chapter Five

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter is comprised of a summary of the findings in Chapter 4 and conclusions related to those findings. Since this was a quantitative and qualitative study, both a quantitative and qualitative summary will be included. The chapter will begin with a restatement of the purpose of the study, the methodology followed, the findings and conclusions. Following this information will be a discussion of limitations, recommendations for future research, and recommendations for student affairs practitioners.

The purpose of the study was to investigate racial and gender identity development in first-year, African American college women attending a predominantly White university and to explore the women's views on the salience of race and gender for them. The primary reason for conducting this study was to broaden the base of knowledge on identity development in first-year African American college women—a specific population on which little quantitative or qualitative research has been done. The second intent of the study was to provide student development practitioners, educators, and other mental health professionals with implications for counseling and suggestions for proactive interventions to help facilitate healthy identity development.

Quantitative Summary

The quantitative portion of the study was designed to determine whether there were relationships between stages of gender identity and ideologies associated with racial identity in first-year, African American college women. Womanist (gender) identity—a stage-wise

developmental model with each successive stage representing a higher level of development—was assessed with the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS). The ideologies of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)—a model in which there are no qualitative differences between the ideologies—were assessed with the Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI).

There were four hypotheses predicting positive relationships between various stages of Womanist identity and racial identity ideologies. Three of the hypotheses, however, could not be addressed due to the distribution of scores on the WIAS. With the exception of one individual whose highest WIAS score placed her in the Womanist Encounter stage, 99% (n=108) of the sample scored in the Womanist Internalization stage. In other words, the hypotheses relating the three Womanist stages—Pre-encounter, Encounter, and Immersion/Emersion—with the various MMRI ideologies—Assimilation, Nationalist, Humanist, or Minority—could not be investigated since, with the exception of one individual, none of the other participants placed in those three Womanist identity stages based on their highest WIAS score. The expectation was that there would be variation in the distribution of scores across all the Womanist identity stages for the sample. Therefore, the fact that almost the entire sample would be operating primarily in the Womanist Internalization stage was somewhat perplexing, especially since the participants were first-year, first-semester, college women. Individuals operating primarily at the Womanist Internalization stage—the highest developmental stage—hold attitudes that allow them to define for themselves a positive definition of womanhood and refuse to accept stereotypes of

women. Several speculations related to the distribution of scores on the WIAS warrant consideration.

First, 90% of the sample indicated on the demographic data sheet that they had been exposed to race and/or gender discussions within the three months preceding their participation in this study. All of the women were enrolled in a university orientation course designed specifically for African Americans and taught by African American instructors. Perhaps many of the participants had been exposed, in those classes, to discussions related to sexism and racism, thereby raising their level of consciousness in the domain of gender identity.

Another factor that warrants consideration is the instrument itself. Since the WIAS is still considered a fairly new instrument, the psychometric properties are still under investigation. Perhaps there could be problems with the stages or with the wording of the statements.

The only hypothesis that could be partially addressed in this study—the part relating the Womanist Internalization stage to one of the MIBI ideologies—predicted a significant, positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion/Emersion and Internalization stages and the MMRI Minority ideology. Chi-square tests were conducted to determine whether the frequency distribution for individuals scoring at the higher end of the Womanist Internalization stage (as opposed to the lower end of that stage) and scoring in the MMRI Minority Ideology would be significantly different from the expected or normal distribution. Findings revealed that no statistically significant differences were found between the actual and expected distributions for the MMRI Minority ideology for participants placing in the

high or low categories of the Womanist Internalization stage. Analysis was stopped at that point since there was no evidence to suggest that a relationship might exist. Since an examination of the distribution of scores on the MIBI indicated that only 11% of the sample scored in the MMRI Minority ideology, it was not surprising that no significant findings were revealed.

Another interesting revelation in examining the distribution of MIBI scores was that over 86% of the sample endorsed ideologies that de-emphasized the uniqueness of the African American experience. Specifically, the Assimilationist ideology—in which 37% of the sample scored—emphasizes the commonalities between African Americans and other Americans. The Humanist ideology—in which 49% of sample scored—focuses on commonalities among all human beings regardless of race, gender, and/or other characteristics. In looking at the distribution of scores for both the WIAS and the MIBI, it seemed odd that women who were internalized regarding their gender would endorse racial ideologies that de-emphasize the African American struggle and experience. These findings, however, appear to lend some support to the research of Sellers, Chavous et al. (1998) who found that participants from a predominantly White university (PWU) had significantly higher Assimilationist and Humanist scores, and lower scores on the MIBI Nationalist subscale as compared to participants from an historically Black university (HBU). In that study, however, the participants from the HBU reported significantly higher GPA's than those reported by the PWU students. Several possibilities may offer some understanding of the participants' MIBI scores in the present study.

One factor that may warrant consideration is the racial composition of the high schools the sample attended. Approximately 79% of the sample attended high schools whose racial composition was either “mostly White” (defined as 80% or more) or “Multiracial” (defined as lower than 60% of any racial group). Since the MMRI Ideology dimension refers to the way that an individual feels African Americans should live and interact with other people, the participants may have been provided little opportunity to learn about or focus on the struggle of African Americans historically. Further, they may have been forced to learn to interact with racially different individuals in order to survive in their environment.

Another factor that warrants consideration concerns the age of this group. Because of their age, these students were born many years after the civil rights movement and, thus, they may not be aware of the history of the African American experience and the struggle. In addition, because of the civil rights struggle, this generation has had far more opportunities than any other generation of African Americans. Therefore, the struggle may hold little relevance for them.

Although the quantitative analysis did not yield any support for the relationships between gender identity and racial identity, the distribution of scores on the WIAS and the MIBI did provide some insight into the women’s attitudes toward gender and the racial ideologies they endorsed. The qualitative component, however, provided more insight into the racial and gender identity formation of this group as well as issues impacting them.

Qualitative Summary

The second and third research issues were addressed through the qualitative component of this study. The second research issue sought to explore whether race or gender was more salient for this group of first-year, African American college women. The third research issue was designed to determine the impact of these findings. The overall themes obtained from the focus group session revealed that: (1) race is, by far, more salient than gender; (2) prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes continue to plague them; (3) skin color matters; (4) relationships—including dating—with other African American students are a concern; and (5) the women are perplexed over all of these issues. Many of these findings appear to lend support to the sparse literature that exists on African American adolescents and women. These findings also provide some insight into the challenges encountered by the women in this study as they attempt to cope with the repercussions of a history of oppression.

For this group, race was much more salient than gender and for most of them, the salience of race was influenced largely by societal determinants and their own personal experiences with racism. In other words, the constant societal reminders of their race were always present, and thus, the participants were never allowed to forget the impact of their race. These findings appear to support the research of Shorter-Gooden and Washington (1996) who conducted a qualitative study of 17 African American community college women and found that race was more salient than any other area of self-definition for the women studied and that racial identity was a central aspect of the women's self-definition.

Although the participants in the present study appeared to be aware of sexism and gender-related issues, race was still more salient than gender, another finding supported by Shorter-Gooden and Washington (1996). They found that after race, the domain of gender was the second most salient area of identity for their group. While the women in the present study related a few experiences with sexism, their experiences with racism and the constant societal reminders of their race appeared to supersede or take precedence over the gender issue. Ossana et al.'s (1992) study may offer yet another explanation. In their study of the relationship between Womanist identity, self-esteem, and perceptions of the campus environment for a sample 659 undergraduate college women—including first-year and African American women—they found a significant negative relationship between WIAS Internalization attitudes and perceptions of gender bias. Ossana et al. speculated that women in higher stages of Womanist identity development may be less likely to perceive gender bias, may need less nurturing from the environment in that area, or may have developed better coping strategies. Since 99% of the students in the present study held Womanist Internalization attitudes, perhaps these speculations may also offer some explanation for the salience of race over gender for this group. For whatever reason, however, most of the participants' energies appeared to be focused on coping with racism and the by-products of a history of oppression in the form of differential treatment based on skin color; negative stereotypes; and intra-cultural conflicts among African Americans.

This group of first-year, African American college women felt that skin color continues to be an issue and that their skin color matters to other African Americans as well as members of the dominant society. They were appalled and perplexed over the ridicule

received by some African American women—including themselves—when falling at either end of the skin color continuum—but especially if at the darker end, and the preferential treatment afforded by some African American men and some members of society to African American women with lighter skin color and straight hair. The women were especially upset over the preferences of African American male rap artists and the mainstream media to use women who were either very light-complexioned with long hair, or White in their videos and television programming. The paradox, however, was that the women studied had their own color preferences in their selection of African American men, with the majority of them preferring light complexioned men. In their study of 119 African American adolescents, Robinson and Ward (1995) found a positive relationship between satisfaction with skin color and self esteem and that participants who were extremely light or dark were less satisfied with their skin color than students who perceived themselves to be in the middle on a continuum of color. Sprinthall et al. (1998) submitted that this research on skin color preferences for African-American adolescents suggests that the fact that some young women studied identified a certain skin color as desirable “indicates that there may still be some psychological ambivalence about acceptance of one’s ethnic background” (p. 177). Thus, even in 2003, the issue of skin color—an issue that arose during slavery as a result of the birth of biracial children—continues to present formidable challenges for this group of first-year, African American college women, especially those who least resemble the European standard of beauty.

Another theme or challenge that arose from this group involved the existence of stereotypes by which they were labeled and judged. The stereotype, however, about which

they appeared most resentful was being labeled as “promiscuous” based on their associations with male friends. Being stereotyped by other African Americans was even more disturbing, especially when the participants felt that they were being judged unfairly. It was important to them that people not make assumptions that they were sexually active with men when they were not. Thus, the “promiscuity label”—a stereotype that emerged during slavery as a result of African American women being forced into sexual submission by powerful White men—continues to haunt some of the participants in this group.

Finally, relationships with other African Americans were a concern. Some of the participants were bothered by what they perceived as a lack of unity among African American women on campus. The relationships about which they were most concerned, however, involved the dating preferences of and lack of commitment exhibited by African American men. Consistent with the findings of Hayes (1993) and Moses (1989), the participants found themselves competing with women from their own culture as well as White women for the African American men both on and off campus, and they expressed feelings of resentment about having to compete with women who were not African American. The participants were particularly perplexed over some African American men’s preferences for dating White women in lieu of Black women. Finally, finding African American college men who sought quality relationships was yet another challenge. Consequently, rather than settling for less, the majority of the focus group participants chose to delay dating until they met men with values similar to their own.

In spite of the considerable challenges with which the participants were faced and in spite of being perplexed about all of these issues, the group participants still appeared to feel

positively about being African American women, a finding supported by Shorter-Gooden and Washington (1996) in their study. At the same time, however, the women acknowledged that being an African American woman was not easy. As one student so eloquently stated:

It is a very hard question to distinguish between the two but because of society I feel like I'm constantly reminded of race before that I am a woman. And I think that being a woman is hard too. And being Black is definitely hard—I mean I love being Black; don't get me wrong—but I do feel that in society if you're Black, automatically you're this, this, and this. (Kr, p. 29)

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. These limitations are related to the demographic information collected, the assessment instruments used, and the use of volunteers for the focus group.

The demographic data collected in this study included age, college major, race/ethnicity, type of high school attended, high school racial composition, and prior exposure to race and/or gender discussions. The inclusion of more information, however, may have provided more insight into the participants' backgrounds and exposure. In hindsight, additional information could have included the parents' educational levels, size of household, marital status of parents, and socioeconomic status of the family based on income. This type of information may have provided a broader description of the sample, and according to Dixon-Saxon (2002), these types of variables might influence the participants' experiences and perceptions regarding race and gender.

Another limitation with the demographic data sheet involved the categories used to identify majors in which undesignated students were currently enrolled. As explained in Chapter two, undesignated students could have chosen either of two categories. One

category was “Other” and the second category was “Undecided.” In addition, students who were already in a major but were really undecided could also have selected the “Undecided” category. To eliminate the ambiguity caused by listing two categories, each of the undersigned programs should have been listed as selections, leaving the undecided category for participants who were in majors but undecided. The wording of the this portion of the demographic data sheet provided limitations with regard to examining Womanist identity stages or racial identity ideologies for the sample by college major.

The third limitation of this study regards the limited research on the psychometric properties of the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) and the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). Because both instruments are still fairly new, more research needs to be done to investigate those properties. The fact that all participants, with the exception of one person, held Womanist Internalization attitudes still raises some questions about the instrument.

Finally, the use of volunteers may limit generalizing the results of the study. Volunteers, who tend to be more verbal and outgoing than some other college women, may or may not be representative of the sample from which they were chosen.

Suggestions for Future Research

Quantitative and qualitative research focusing solely on racial and gender identity development in first-year, African American college women attending predominantly White universities has been somewhat sparse prior to the current study. Although this study adds to the body of literature on this population, more research needs to be done. Some suggestions for future research studies that arose out of findings from the current study are listed below:

- 1) Conduct a qualitative study on racial identity development in interracial college women attending predominantly White and historically Black universities. Interracial college women with a least one African American parent comprise a group on which little research exists. Identity development for this group of young women, however, may be even more complicated because of their heritage and the racial climate in the United States. For example, how do these young women identify themselves with regard to their race/ethnicity? With what racial group, if any, do they feel most comfortable? How do the women feel about societal definitions about their race, especially when those definitions may be based on their skin color? How do societal messages impact the way the way that interracial women see themselves? What do the women identify as their challenges as interracial women? Results from this type of study could help student affairs practitioners determine whether proactive measures such as interventions are needed to help facilitate healthy identity development in this group.
- 2) Conduct an extensive quantitative and qualitative study on the impact of music videos on the racial identity, gender identity, and self-esteem of African American adolescents and college women. Perhaps relationships could be explored among those three variables and types of music videos viewed as well as number of hours spent watching music videos by the young women. As indicated by the participants in this study, media images may have a significant impact on the way that African American college women view themselves and the way that others see them.

- 3) Since some of the concerns of first-year, African American college women were focused on their relationships or lack thereof with African American men, perhaps conducting a quantitative and qualitative study of racial identity formation in Black men could add some insight into their identity development. Racial identity could be assessed with the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS), a racial identity assessment designed to measure Cross' stages of racial identity development. Since there is an assumption of an optimal level of development with the Cross-racial identity model, interventions to facilitate identity development, if needed, could be more easily designed. One of the goals of the qualitative component could be to explore, among other things, the dating preferences of African American men as well as the reasons for their selections.
- 4) Conduct more qualitative research focusing on racial identity development in African American college women at predominantly White and historically Black universities. This type of information could provide invaluable insight into the challenges experienced by this population based on their race, their coping or resistance mechanisms, and ways to help ensure the development of a coherent identity in spite of the challenges.

Implications for Practice

Findings from the current study, especially the qualitative component, appear to suggest that although the first-year, African American college women studied were aware of their gender and gender-related issues, it was their race that presented the most challenges. Results from a gender assessment instrument revealed that the majority of the women appear

to have developed their own definitions and beliefs about the roles of women rather than accepting societal definitions. With regard to racial identity attitudes, however, results from the racial identity instrument revealed that the majority of the women studied held racial ideologies that de-emphasize the African American experience and struggle. At the same time, the qualitative analysis revealed that the focus group participants continued to be plagued by the repercussions of a history of oppression, especially in the form of racism and race-related issues. Thus, although gender identity was a component of identity development for the women studied, racial identity appeared to be the area that presented the most challenges for them as they seek to establish a coherent identity—a major developmental task for all students. How successful some of them will be in establishing a healthy identity, however, may depend on the level of support they receive from counselors and student development practitioners in academic settings. For the participants in this study, considerable support systems in the form of proactive programs and services for African American students were already in place at this particular university. For African American college students, however, who are not enrolled at campuses providing this level of support, proactive measures may need to be taken to facilitate and help ensure the development of a coherent identity.

Several factors need to be taken into consideration when providing support services for African American college women. Some of these considerations are related to the practitioner's knowledge about issues related this population of women. Other considerations and suggestions are related to the types of strategies and interventions that

might be useful in empowering and promoting identity development in Black college women.

Some of these considerations are listed below.

- 1) Counselors and/or student affairs practitioners who provide services for African American college women should be knowledgeable about the history of this group of women.
- 2) Practitioners must also be willing to acknowledge that a history of oppression in the form of racism and sexism has existed for African American women and that continued exposure to oppression has a significant impact on Black college women.
- 3) Practitioners and counselors should be familiar with the types of challenges African American college women may face. For example, issues related to their skin color; prejudice and discrimination; negative stereotypes; and their relationships with other African Americans, especially Black men, challenged the women in the current study.
- 4) Counselors and practitioners should avoid automatically assuming that all African American women have the same issues or any issues at all for that matter. Although some Black women may be adversely affected by a history of oppression, others may not.

Based on the findings from the current study, the following suggestions are related to programming and services that may help facilitate healthy identity development in African American college women.

- 1) Student affairs practitioners could conduct an intervention program designed specifically to facilitate racial identity development in African American college

women. One way to help facilitate healthy identity development in specific domains may be through the use of role-taking experiences. For example, African American college women could be trained to conduct workshops designed to promote racial identity formation for African American female adolescents in middle school.

Research on deliberate psychological education employing role-taking has demonstrated that adolescents—including college students—in roles such as peer counselors and cross-age teachers showed increases in various domains of cognitive development, including ego development (Exum, 1980; Faubert, 1992; Sprinthall & Collins, 1988; Zimmerman, 1989). Johnson-Newman and Exum (1998) outlined a role-taking program designed to promote ego development in African American college women. This program, however, might prove useful in facilitating racial identity development since the proposed curriculum addresses many of the issues raised by the women in the current study.

- 2) Practitioners should encourage African American women to participate in Black campus organizations and programs for African American students that affirm women.
- 3) Practitioners should facilitate support groups and workshops that are designed to provide a forum for African American women to discuss their concerns as well as to develop healthy strategies for coping with their devalued statuses based on their race and gender. Although the women studied had developed some coping and resistance strategies, they appeared to struggle with the appropriateness of those strategies, a finding supported by Watt (1997) in her study of African American college women.

Further, some of them admitted to being exhausted with constantly having to defend their race to others. Therefore, an emphasis on healthy coping and resistance strategies should be included in these types of workshops. Help the women to understand that they have a voice and enlighten them on avenues of recourse that can be used to address racism and sexism. These strategies might include lobbying for legislation (e.g., Affirmative Action) and initiating non-violent protests such as letter-writing, emailing and calling campaigns to various media outlets to protest the negative images of African American women in their programming and music videos. Other strategies for effecting change might include boycotting various types of media by personally refusing to purchase their products (e.g., CDs, tapes, and videos) and refusing to subscribe to their cable channels. Further, encourage the women to learn about Equal Opportunity Employment regulations and the status of Affirmative Action legislation so that they can become more politically aware.

- 4) In any programming or workshops designed to promote identity development in African American college women, practitioners should include a discussion of the history of African Americans so that the women can begin to understand the origin of many of the issues impacting them as well as the significant contributions of African American women. Sprinthall and Collins (1988) suggested that “developing pride in one’s origins is an important part of achieving an adult identity” (p. 162), while Malveaux (1993) recommended that young African American women must be encouraged to celebrate their ideology, their struggles, their feminism, and their vast contributions to society.

- 5) To encourage healthy communication between African American college men and women, practitioners should conduct classes or workshops with the two groups so that they can explore some of their concerns together. Relationship issues could be one of the topics covered.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine whether relationships existed between gender and racial identity for first-year, African American college women attending a predominantly White university and to solicit the women's views on the salience of race and gender for them. No significant relationships were revealed—through the quantitative component of the study—between racial identity and gender identity. An analysis of the focus group discussion, however, suggested that overwhelmingly, race was more salient than gender for the women studied. Although this group of African American college women were aware of their gender and related challenges, the gender issue appeared to take a backseat to the race issue. One impact of race being more salient than gender is that student affairs practitioners and counselors can never discount the importance of race in their work with African American college women. In addition, the impact of race must be included in any intervention that impacts the psychosocial development of the women studied.

Have we come to a point where African American college women can see themselves as women before being African American? The answer is “No.” Are some African American college women still affected by the vestiges of slavery? The answer is “Yes.”

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

FORM MIBI

Instructions: The following statements represent various beliefs and views about race and being Black. There are no right or wrong answers. Use the scale below to respond to each statement. Beside each statement, circle the number that best describes how you feel.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree

(Circle here)

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 1) Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 2) It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music and literature. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 3) Black people should not marry interracially. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 4) I feel good about Black people. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 5) Overall, Blacks are considered good by others. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 6) In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 7) I am happy that I am Black. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 8) I feel that Blacks have made major accomplishments and advancements. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 9) My destiny is tied to the destiny of other Black people. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 10) Blacks who espouse separatism are as racist as White people who also espouse separatism. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 11) Blacks would be better off if they adopted Afrocentric values. |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | 12) Black students are better off going to schools that are controlled and organized by Blacks. |

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree

(Circle here)

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 13) Being Black is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 14) Black people must organize themselves into a separate Black political force.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 15) In general, others respect Black people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 16) Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from other Black businesses.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 17) Most people consider Blacks, on the average, to be more ineffective than other racial groups.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 18) A sign of progress is that Blacks are in the mainstream of America more than ever before.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 19) I have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 20) The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 21) A thorough knowledge of Black history is very important for Blacks today.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 22) Blacks and Whites can never live in true harmony because of racial differences.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 23) Black values should not be inconsistent with human values.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 24) I often regret that I am Black.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 25) White people can never be trusted where Blacks are concerned.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 26) Blacks should have the choice to marry interracially.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 27) Blacks and Whites have more commonalities than differences.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 28) Black people should not consider race when buying art or selecting a book to read.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 29) Blacks would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on Black issues.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 30) Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as Black.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 31) We are all children of a higher being, therefore, we should love people of all races.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 32) Blacks should judge Whites as individuals and not as members of the White race.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 33) I have a strong attachment to other Black people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 34) The struggle for Black liberation in America should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 35) People regardless of their race have strengths and limitations.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 36) Blacks should learn about the oppression of other groups.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 37) Because America is predominantly white, it is important that Blacks go to White schools so that they can gain experience interacting with Whites.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 38) Black people should treat other oppressed people as allies.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 39) Blacks should strive to be full members of the American political system.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 40) Blacks should try to work within the system to achieve their political and economic goals.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 41) Blacks should strive to integrate all institutions which are segregated.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 42) The racism Blacks have experienced is similar to that of other minority groups.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 43) Blacks should feel free to interact socially with White people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 44) Blacks should view themselves as being Americans first and foremost.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 45) There are other people who experience racial injustice and indignities similar to Black Americans.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 46) The plight of Blacks in America will improve only when Blacks are in important positions in the system.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 47) Blacks will be more successful in achieving their goals if they form coalitions with other oppressed groups.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 48) Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 49) Blacks should try to become friends with people from other oppressed groups.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 50) The dominant society devalues anything not White male oriented.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 51) Being Black is not a major factor in my social relationships.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 52) Blacks are not respected by the broader society.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 53) In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 54) I am proud to be Black.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 55) I feel that the Black community has made valuable contributions to
this society.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 56) Society views Black people as an asset.

Appendix B

SOCIAL ATTITUDES INVENTORY (Form W)

Instructions: This questionnaire is designed to measure people's social and political attitudes. There are no right or wrong answers. Use the scale below to respond to each statement. Beside each statement, circle the number that best describes how you feel.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree

(Circle here)

- 1 2 3 4 5 1. In general, I believe that men are superior to women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 2. I think women blame men too much for their problems.
- 1 2 3 4 5 3. I believe that being a woman has caused me to have many strengths.
- 1 2 3 4 5 4. Women should not blame men for all of women's social problems.
- 1 2 3 4 5 5. I do not know whether being a woman is positive or negative.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6. I feel more comfortable being around men than I do being around women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 7. I feel unable to involve myself in men's experiences, and I am increasing my involvement in experiences involving women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 8. I am comfortable wherever I am.
- 1 2 3 4 5 9. Maybe I can learn something from women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 10. Sometimes I think men are superior and sometimes I think they are inferior to women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 11. In general, women have not contributed much to American society.
- 1 2 3 4 5 12. When I think about how men have treated women, I feel an overwhelming anger.

- 1 2 3 4 5 13. People, regardless of their sex, have strengths and limitations.
- 1 2 3 4 5 14. Sometimes I am proud of belonging to the female sex and sometimes I am ashamed of it.
- 1 2 3 4 5 15. Sometimes, I wish I had been born a man.
- 1 2 3 4 5 16. I am determined to find out more about the female sex.
- 1 2 3 4 5 17. Being a member of the female sex is a source of pride to me.
- 1 2 3 4 5 18. Thinking about my values and beliefs takes up a lot of my time.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 19. I do not think I should feel positively about people just because they belong to the same sexual group as I do.
- 1 2 3 4 5 20. I would have accomplished more in this life if I had been born a man.
- 1 2 3 4 5 21. Most men are insensitive.
- 1 2 3 4 5 22. Women and men have much to learn from each other.
- 1 2 3 4 5 23. I am not sure how I feel about myself.
- 1 2 3 4 5 24. Sometimes I wonder how much of myself I should give up for the sake of helping other minorities.
- 1 2 3 4 5 25. Men are more attractive than women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 26. I reject all male values.
- 1 2 3 4 5 27. Men have some customs that I enjoy.
- 1 2 3 4 5 28. Men are difficult to understand.
- 1 2 3 4 5 29. I wonder if I should feel a kinship with all minority group people.

- 1 2 3 4 5 30. Women should learn to think and act like men.
- 1 2 3 4 5 31. My most important goal in life is to fight the oppression of women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 32. I enjoy being around people regardless of their sex.
- 1 2 3 4 5 33. I feel myself replacing old friends with new ones who share my beliefs about women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 34. The burden of living up to society's expectations of women is sometimes more than I can bear.
- 1 2 3 4 5 35. I limit myself to male activities.
- 1 2 3 4 5 36. Both sexual groups have some good people and some bad people.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 37. I feel anxious about some of the things I feel about women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 38. I feel like I am betraying my sex when I take advantage of the opportunities available to me in the male world.
- 1 2 3 4 5 39. I want to know more about the female culture.
- 1 2 3 4 5 40. I think women and men differ from each other in some ways, but neither group is superior.
- 1 2 3 4 5 41. I find that I function better when I am able to view men as individuals.
- 1 2 3 4 5 42. I limit myself to activities involving women.
- 1 2 3 4 5 43. Most men are untrustworthy.
- 1 2 3 4 5 44. American society would be better off if it were based on the cultural value of women.

Appendix C

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

Please respond to all of the items listed below. For Item #1, you will write in your age. For all other items, please write in the number that corresponds to your answer.

- 1) _____ Age
- 2) _____ What is your college major?
- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1=Agriculture & Life Sciences | 8=Management |
| 2=Design | 9=Computer Science |
| 3=Education | 10=Physical and Mathematical Sciences |
| 4=Psychology | 11=Textiles |
| 5=Engineering | 12=Undecided |
| 6=Forest Resources | 13=Other, please indicate_____ |
| 7=Humanities & Social Sciences | |
- 3) _____ Race
- | |
|-------------------------------------|
| 1=African American |
| 2=African Caribbean |
| 3=African |
| 4=Multiracial, please indicate_____ |
| 5=Other, please indicate_____ |
- 4) _____ Gender
- | |
|----------|
| 1=Female |
| 2=Male |
- 5) _____ Was your high school **rural, urban, or suburban?**
- | | |
|--|------------|
| | 1=Rural |
| | 2=Urban |
| | 3=Suburban |
- 6) _____ What was the racial makeup of your high school?
- | |
|---|
| 1=Mostly White (80% or more) |
| 2=Mostly Black (80% or more) |
| 3=Multiracial (lower than 60% of any group) |
- 7) _____ In the past 3 months, have you participated in any classroom discussions pertaining to your race or your gender?
- | |
|-------|
| 1=Yes |
| 2=No |

Appendix D

CONSENT TO SERVE AS A PARTICIPANT IN RESEARCH

The purpose of this research study is to examine identity development in African-American college students. Information collected from this research project will be used in the design of programs for African American students in the future. Therefore, your honest responses are needed. Should you consent to participate in this study, you are agreeing to the following:

- 1) I consent to participate in the study of identity development in African American college students conducted by Deborah Johnson, a doctoral candidate, under the supervision of Dr. Herbert Exum, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Research and Leadership and Counselor Education, North Carolina State University.
- 2) I understand that my participation consists of completing the attached two inventories and a demographic data sheet, which should take approximately 45 minutes.
- 3) I understand that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions and that my honest responses are solicited.
- 4) I understand that my identity will be kept confidential and that my name will not appear on any of the forms except this consent form which will be kept separate from the packet.
- 5) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty for refusal to participate. If at any time I have questions about any of the procedures in this project, I understand that I may contact Deborah Johnson at (919) 515-2244 or Dr. Sam Snyder, Associate Dean of Research, College of Education, at (919) 515-5901.

By signing below, I am stating that I understand and agree to the statements above and that I am willing to participate in the study.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E

CONSENT TO SERVE AS A PARTICIPANT IN RESEARCH (Focus Group)

The purpose of this research study is to examine issues related to being an African-American woman on a predominantly White college campus. Information gained from this research will be used to develop programs for African American women in the future. Therefore, your honest responses are needed. Please read the following statements and sign below.

- 1) I consent to participate in the research study conducted by Deborah Johnson, a doctoral candidate, under the supervision of Dr. Herbert Exum, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Research and Leadership and Counselor Education. As part of my participation, I agree to be a member of the “Important Issues and A Meal” Focus Group.
- 2) As a participant, I understand that I will have an opportunity to share my views on issues that impact me as an African American woman attending a predominantly White university.
- 3) I understand that the group will be videotaped and audiotaped. By signing below, I am granting permission for the tape recording and transcription of interviews or conversations.
- 4) I understand that the results of this research will be coded in such a manner that my identity will not be attached physically to the data I contribute. I will not be identified by name at any time in the report of this study.
- 5) I understand that a qualitative research auditor may review the data collected. I also understand that my name will be kept confidential and no other person will be allowed to view the tape without my prior consent.
- 6) I agree to be honest and open, and to respect the opinions of the others in the group.
- 7) I agree that I will not discuss or share with anyone the confidential information shared by other group members.

- 8) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty for refusal to participate. If at any time I have questions about any procedures in this project, I understand that I may contact Deborah Johnson at (919) 515-2244 or Dr. Sam Snyder, Associate Dean of Research, College of Education, at (919) 515-5901.

By signing below, I am stating that I understand and agree to the statements above and that I am will to participate in the study.

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix F

Results of Nonparametric Analysis Using Spearman Rank Correlation

As described in Chapter Two of this study, the researcher had initially planned to conduct nonparametric analysis using the Spearman rank correlation to test the hypothesis there would be significant positive relationships between stages of Womanist identity development—a stage-wise model with each stage representing a higher level of development—and the ideologies of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)—a model in which there were no qualitative differences between the ideologies and no optimal level of development. The Ideology Scale of the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) was used to assess the ideologies of the MMRI. The MIBI Ideology Scale, consisting of four subscales, measures an individual's personal beliefs about how American Americans should interact in society. The Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) was used to assess the stages of gender or Womanist identity. The Spearman rank correlation analysis was chosen since it was not appropriate for the raw data for both instruments to be treated as interval scale data. There was an assumption, however, that there would be diversity among the Womanist developmental levels and the MMRI ideologies across the sample. An analysis of the descriptive data for the WIAS, however, revealed that the highest score for 99% of the sample placed them at the WIAS Internalization stage—the highest developmental stage for that instrument. This meant that with the exception of one person, none of the sample's scores placed them in the other three WIAS stages. Thus, it was decided that the analysis using the Spearman rank correlation might not be the most appropriate technique for testing the hypotheses related to relationships between specified

stages of gender and racial identity. Out of curiosity, though, nonparametric analysis using Spearman rank correlation was conducted on the 109 participants.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One stated that there would be significant, positive relationships between stages of Womanist (gender) identity and the four Ideology dimensions of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI). More specifically, the following relationships will exist:

- A) There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist stage and MMRI Assimilation ideology.
- B) There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion-Emersion stage and the MMRI Nationalist ideology.
- C) There will be a significant relationship between the Womanist Pre-encounter stage and the MMRI Humanist ideology.
- D) There will be a significant positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion/Emersion and Internalization stages and the MMRI Minority ideology.

Nonparametric analysis using the Spearman rank correlation with a significance level set at .01 was used to test for the presence or absence of relationships between the variables. Scores on each of the WIAS and MIBI variables were ranked from lowest to highest. Spearman correlations were calculated based on these ranks. A positive correlation would indicate that persons scoring higher on the WIAS variable would also tend to score higher on

the MIBI variable. A negative correlation would indicate that persons scoring higher on the WIAS variable would tend to score lower on the MIBI variable.

Table 6.1

Results of Spearman Rank Correlation Analysis for the Womanist Identity Attitudes Scale (WIAS) and the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (N=109)

	WIAS Pre-encounter	WIAS Encounter	WIAS Im/Emersion	WIAS Internalization
MIBI Assimilation	0.04651	-0.04148	-0.20790*	0.33701**
MIBI Humanist	-0.02253	-0.18413	-0.26076*	0.18270
MIBI Minority	-0.20123*	-0.02850	0.05052	0.14553
MIBI Nationalist	0.09202	0.23020*	0.44338****	0.04714

Note: * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$. **** $p \leq .0001$

Table 5.1 details the results of the nonparametric analysis using the Spearman rank correlation. For Hypothesis 1A, which stated that there would be a significant, positive relationship between the Womanist Pre-encounter stage and the MMRI Assimilation ideology, no positive relationship was found. Hypothesis 1B stated that there would be a significant, positive relationship between the Womanist Immersion-Emersion stage and the MMRI Nationalist ideology. The data from Table 5.1 indicated that the WIAS Immersion-Emersion subscale was positively correlated with the MIBI Nationalist subscale ($r = .44$, $p \leq .0001$). Hypothesis 1C stated that there would be a significant relationship between the Womanist Pre-encounter stage and the MMRI Humanist ideology. No significant relationship was found between the WIAS Pre-encounter subscale and the MIBI Humanist subscale. For Hypothesis 1D, which predicted a significant positive relationship between the Womanist

Immersion/Emersion and Internalization stages and the MMRI Minority ideology, no significant correlations were found for either of the pairs or variables.

Although not included in the hypotheses, several relationships were significantly correlated at the .05 significance level. The WIAS Pre-encounter Subscale and the MIBI Minority Subscale were negatively correlated ($r = -.20, p \leq .05$). The WIAS Encounter subscale and the MIBI Nationalist Subscale were positively correlated ($r = .23, p \leq .05$). There was a significant, negative relationship between the WIAS Immersion/Emersion Subscale and the MIBI Assimilation Subscale ($r = -.21, p \leq .05$). There was a significant, negative relationship between the WIAS Immersion/Emersion Subscale and the MIBI Humanist Subscale ($r = -.26, p \leq .05$). Only one of these relationships was related at a significance level of .05 and .01. The WIAS Internalization Subscale and MIBI Assimilation subscale were positively correlated ($r = .34, p \leq .01$).