THE EFFECT OF THE RACIAL AND GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS OF A COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT ON THE RACIAL AND WOMANIST IDENTITY OF BLACK FEMALE STUDENTS

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The Effect of the Racial and Gender Demographics of a College Environment on the Racial and Womanist Identity of Black Female Students

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THESIS ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF THE RACIAL AND GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS OF A COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT ON THE RACIAL AND WOMANIST IDENTITY OF BLACK FEMALE STUDENTS

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There may be difficulty associated with the development of a cohesive, functioning personal identity in American society for Black females. Although research on racial and gender identity is increasing, very little focuses upon the intersection between the two for Black women in this society. This study theorizes that a relationship exists between the racial and gender demographics of an educational institution and the racial and womanist identity of its Black female students. *Womanist identity* refers to one's view of the role of women relative to men, and *Black racial identity* refers to one's view of the role of Blacks relative to majority White people.

The womanist and racial identity attitudes were assessed among three different institutions: Auburn University, a predominately White, co-educational university; Clark-Atlanta University, a predominately Black, co-educational university; and Spelman College, a predominately Black, all-female college. Approximately 50 women from each

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Introduction to the problem

Being a Black female in the United States presents certain challenges, especially if Erikson (1968) is correct in claiming that adolescence and young adulthood is important for developing a comprehensive identity. Generalizing Erikson's model to the domains of racial and gender identity, Black women must develop a comprehensive identity using a sense of Blackness as well as a sense of femaleness, but they must do so in the context of a society that devalues both Blacks and women (hooks, 1981; Reid, 1988; Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996). Theoretically, racist and sexist social forces should be a barrier to identity development in Black women, making it difficult for Black women to value core aspects of their overall identity.

Some theorists have concluded that racial issues are more salient to Black women than gender themes (Giddings, 1984; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997). Christian (1989) states that, as a group, Black women have typically been understood as either a masculinized racial group, i.e. Black = Black males, or an Eurocentrized gender group, i.e. Female = White females. This is problematic because Black women can identify with White women on some issues and with Black men on others, but on many issues, they can identify with neither group.

According to Tatum (1997), because it is nearly impossible for Black women to separate Blackness from femaleness, they are always both simultaneously. Yet, very little research has been done on the fusion of the two. Except for a few exceptions,

theories of racial identity development do not address gender and theories of gender development do not address race. This thesis is an attempt to look at the points of intersection between gender and race in understanding the experiences of young Black women in American society, specifically in higher educational institutions. It examines identity as a Black person and identity as a woman among Black female students in different educational environments. Specifically, it examines differences in racial and "womanist" identity between women at an all Black and all female institution; women at an all Black co-ed institution; and Black women at a mostly White co-ed institution, to see if these types of environments and the barriers they possess are related, in a systematic way, to identity development.

Literature Review

Racial Identity

Black racial identity theories began to emerge in the counseling psychology and psychotherapy literature in the early 1970s as a response to the Civil Rights Movement. In developing these models, psychologists were trying to help practitioners be more sensitive to racial issues in therapy. Helms (1990) identifies two major strands in the history of Black racial identity theory. She refers to the first strand as the Black client (or person)-as-problem (CAP) perspective. She calls the second strand the Nigrescence or racial identity development (NRID) perspective. Each of these perspectives has different underlying assumptions and therefore, different implications for conceptualizing Black racial identity.

The Client-as-Problem Perspective (CAP)

The CAP approach characterizes psychologists' initial attempt to explain intra- and inter-racial dynamics in the 1960s. Its underlying assumptions involved wariness of certain Black people. J. Williams (1987) suggests that many Whites and assimilated Blacks reacted negatively to the sudden disruption of Blacks demanding recognition and social acceptance. As a matter of fact, Cheek (1976) found that Black assertion was perceived as Black aggression by White society. In short, the new Black visibility of the 1960s provided more evidence to conservative American society that Blacks were unpredictable, and susceptible to violence and hostility in cross-racial interactions. This view seems to have influenced the theories that were developed.

Much of the literature in counseling and psychotherapy during this era focused on fears that Blacks would express their anger toward White society through mistrustfulness, overt hostility, and/or rioting. Also, since there were not any psychological models describing how Black people could develop healthy non-vengeful personalities regardless of their exposure to racial discrimination, most of the psychological literature involved deficit-modeling. Deficit-modeling described all of the perceived deficiencies but none of the strengths in "the Black personality" (Acosta, Yamamoto, & Evans, 1982; Helms, 1990).

Although in retrospect they are mistaken, some deficit-model theories were actually conceived with good intentions. These theories were initially arguments against the genetic inferiority model, which holds that Blacks are biologically inferior. The concept behind the deficit-model was that Blacks are not innately inferior, they just suffered from a deficient cultural environment. At the time, the deficit model was a major advance over genetically- inspired Social Darwinist models.

As stated, those deficit, or client-as-problem models of racial identity were written from an early 1970s White perspective (Dizard, 1970; Helms, 1990; G. G. Jackson & Kirschner, 1973; Siegel, 1970; Vontress, 1971a, 1971b). They claimed that specific differences in behavior would allow counselors to determine which Black clients were likely to be most problematic. Therapy interventions generally focused upon helping the (usually White) therapist cope with the Black client's negative intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics, which were assumed to be unique characteristics of Black people (Grier & Cobbs, 1968; Helms, 1990).

Vontress' (1971) theory is a good example of a client-as-problem model. Vontress developed a typology that supposedly represented three types of Black people: *Black*, *Colored*, and *Negro*. Clients who described themselves as *Black* supposedly valued their African physical characteristics, understood the suffering imposed upon Blacks, and would be intolerant of Whites who were racist against Blacks. Vontress claimed *Negroes* would be integrationists, predicting that they would accommodate Whites who were not blatantly racist. *Coloreds* were Black people who had internalized White's perceptions of them as their own, such as believing that all Black men are dangerous criminals. Vontress speculated that Negroes would be most agreeable, Coloreds would *seem* to be, and Blacks would be least so.

The general fault with client-as-problem models was the conceptualization of Black identity development primarily as a function of societal pressures, while maintaining the linkage between the client's negative behaviors and their being Black. The central goal of these models appears to have been to relieve counselor anxiety by making the occurrence of negative Black behaviors more predictable. Still, CAP models acknowledged that Black identity comes in multiple forms and they challenged the previous assumption that cultural assimilation was essentially the healthiest method of adjustment for Black individuals.

Nigrescence or Black Racial Identity Models (NRID)

Whereas client-as-problem models were largely developed by White psychologists, Nigrescence models were developed by Black psychologists. Nigrescence is defined as the developmental process by which a person "becomes Black" where Black

is defined in terms of one's manner of thinking about and evaluating oneself and one's reference groups rather than in terms of skin color *per se*. The NRID models tried to separate those aspects of Black identity development that took place as a response to racial oppression such as Vontress' notion of Negro and Colored identities, from those aspects that occurred as a normal part of the human self-actualization process, or the need to be the best Self that one can be. One example of this latter goal is the agenda of the Black Consciousness movement and the stressed importance of a positive personal identity for a Black individual. According to Helms (1990) early Nigrescence thinkers assumed that self-actualization was only achieved at the highest level of racial identity development whereas less sophisticated resolutions were assumed to represent various kinds of reactions to racial discrimination.

The NRID theorists believed that overidentifying with White culture (i.e. having assimilated identities) was a psychologically unhealthy solution to the challenges that result from having to survive in a racist environment (Akbar, 1979; Helms, 1990). The Black consciousness movement was also contrary to the "melting pot" concept that had prevailed in American society until that time—where different racial and ethnic groups became *Americanized* and their traditions were adopted but muted by the larger culture (Hale, 1980; Helms, 1990).

Except for Akbar's (1979) and Gibb's (1974) typologies, the Nigrescence racial identity models were stage models in which the theorists proposed that individuals move from less healthy, White-defined stages of identity, to more healthy, self-defined racial transcendence. The various theorists differed in how they labeled stages (e.g. "Alien-Self

Disorders" versus "Ethnic Psychological Captivity"), in the amount of differentiation proposed within assimilated, Black, and transcendent identities (e.g., Thomas, 1971, proposes 1 or 2 stages of "White" or assimilated identification whereas B. Jackson, 1975, proposes 1), and in the order in which some of the stages were thought to take place.

According to Helms,

> If one examines the summaries of the NRID models,..., one cannot help notice further striking similarities in stage content across the various models. If one were to be particularly investigative, one would also find that even though the models appeared in the literature around the same time, virtually none of the authors cross-referenced the others. Nor were any of the models developed in the same geographical location (p. 18).

In her historical overview of the Nigrescence literature, Helms (1990) attributed these similarities to the fact that dynamics of Black identity change were generally the same across America.

In addition to the mainstream "nigrescence" approaches to the development of Black racial identity, Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin, and Wilson (1998) outlined some underground approaches for conceptualizing Black racial identity. For example, Baldwin (1980, 1981, 1984) and Kambon (1992) suggested that the Black personality is composed of two central components: the *African self-extension orientation* and *African self-consciousness*. The African self-extension-orientation component represents the essential organizing principle of the Black personality system. It is an innate unconscious

psychological characteristic that provides cohesiveness and spirituality to the fundamental behaviors and psychological functioning of Black people. The second component , African self-consciousness, symbolizes the conscious expression of the African self-extension orientation (Baldwin, Brown, & Rackley, 1990).

Baldwin (1980, 1981, 1984) also asserted that African self-consciousness has an important role in defining the normal psychological functioning of the Black personality. The four basic characteristics of African self-consciousness are as follows:

(a) one admits one's African identity and cultural heritage and realizes the value of self-knowledge;

(b) one's top priority becomes African survival and proactive development;

(c) one respects all things African and actively perpetuates these things; and

(d) one recognizes the harmful nature of racial oppression to Black survival and actively resists it (cited in Constantine et al., 1998).

This theory makes an important contribution because it connects all people of African descent, and provides some direction for reconnection with African origins. It also stressed the importance of Blacks learning about their heritage in order to contradict oppression and denigration.

Another underground approach to Black identity development was conceived by Myers (1988, 1993). According to Myers, (a) self-knowledge is the basis of all

knowledge, and (b) human and spiritual networks provide the means through which people of African descent achieve their goals. Myers theorized that, traditionally, African people do not separate the physical and the spiritual world, and in order to achieve optimal functioning, Blacks should abandon Western belief systems that value quantification and competition, in favor of their traditional belief systems.

Mainstream Stages of Black Identity Development

Cross (1971, 1978) developed a stage model of racial identity development with each stage describing a Black individual's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward themselves, other people in their racial group and other people outside of their racial group. Cross proposed his model at a time when developmental stages were considered to both have fixed boundaries and be mutually exclusive with each other.

Helms (1986, 1990) has modified Cross's theoretical model in various ways. First, she suggests that each stage be considered a particular "worldview." By worldview, Helms means the cognitive templates one uses to incorporate information about institutions, other people, and oneself. She also suggests that an individual's cognitive maturation level in interaction with societal forces influences an individual's stage or world view. Secondly, Helms proposes that two people could both be in the same stage yet the stage manifests differently in each individual. Cross (1991) also amended his original conceptualization by expanding his description of each stage to include more diverse experiences (Constantine, Richardson, Benjamin, & Wilson, 1998). Thirdly, Helms modified Cross's Nigrescence model, partly by re-visioning the stages as "ego-statuses" in order reflect a more fluid process of identity development; she proposes

that an internal measure of self-worth and racial identity signifies a more mature ego status.

Although Cross's (1971, 1978) original stages were *Preencounter*, *Encounter*, *Immersion/Emersion*, *Internalization*, and *Internalization/Commitment*. Only four stages of Black racial identity are included in the current model. According to Cross, each person can potentially progress from the least developed stage to the most developed stage. However, Parham (1989) has questioned the concept that everyone enters the developmental cycle at the same place. He also states that people can recycle through the stages as they progress through life.

The first stage in Cross' model is called *Preencounter*. Cross makes a distinction between two major modes of expression in this stage: active and passive. Cross defines *Active Preencounter* as the stage in which a Black person purposely idealizes Whiteness and White culture, and denigrates Blacks and Black culture. Empirical evidence suggests that individuals in the earlier phase of Preencounter are least healthy with respect to their psychological adjustment (e.g., Parham & Helms, 1985a; 1985b; Taylor, 1986).

Passive Preencounter individuals are difficult to pinpoint because their worldview mirrors that of dominant White society. Helms (1989) finds that the passive or assimilating individual believes that the advanced status he or she has gained in his or her own racial group grants entrance into the mainstream culture. These individuals are highly motivated to be accepted by Whites and spend much of their energy to gain this acceptance. Passive Preencounter people also accept negative stereotypes about Blacks

and positive ones about Whites. Some theorists believe that the passive individual is in a state of denial in order to maintain an assumption of racial equality.

According to Helms (1990) when the Preencounter person begins to realize that he or she is not unconditionally accepted in either racial group, the experience of devaluation along with concomitant feelings of alienation begins his or her movement into the second stage.

The second stage is called the *Encounter* stage. At some point in their lives, it becomes impossible for Blacks to deny the fact that they will not be fully accepted into White society. Usually this awareness is aroused by an event that makes it clear to the individual that he or she will always be considered Black and subsequently inferior, regardless of how much effort is put toward assimilation (Helms, 1990). During this phase the person struggles to find a new identity while fluctuating between the recently deserted Preencounter identity and the unincorporated Black identity. Confusion and uncertainty may mark this period because the individual is functionally without an identity for a time.

Empirical evidence suggests that the Encounter stage may have implications for the personal identity and reference-group orientation components of adjustment (McCaine, 1986; Denton, 1986; Helms, 1990; Parham & Helms, 1981; Pomales, Claiborn, & La Fromboise, 1986). One's reference-group is the group with which one most identifies. Specifically, emotionality and sentiment may be most evident during this stage due to the anxiety one may experience during this period. This anxiety often results from the realization that once-held beliefs are inaccurate. Entry into the Encounter stage

might also represent the person's first purposeful recognition of a Black identity (Helms, 1990).

The third stage is called *Immersion/Emersion*. Cross (1971, 1978) initially described the Immersion and Emersion aspects as two distinct phases. In *Immersion,* the person withdraws into their Blackness physically and psychologically. He or she attempts to conform to their "idealistic" racial standards through adopting stereotypic methods of "acting" Black, and adopting an externally defined Black reference-group orientation, i.e. using the standards of others to determine whether or not he or she is "Black" enough. Generalized anger seems to characterize the Immersion stage. The person is angry at Whites for their role in racial oppression, his or herself for participating in it, and at other Blacks who have yet to come to this realization (Helms, 1990). Though Black identity is acknowledged, it is not internalized. These individuals clothe themselves in what they believe to be "Blackness"—almost like a mask or an affectation. This is not a self-defined identity; it is still based upon externally derived notions about what "being Black" entails. Parham & Helms (1985a; 1985b) suggests that Immersion and Preencounter are similar in that they are both reactions to environmental circumstances, but the Immersion stage fosters much more hostility.

The *Emersion* stage involves enveloping oneself in the Black community and engaging in catharsis within a supportive environment. Participation allows the person to develop a positive nonstereotypic Black perspective of the world. Emmersion also includes being involved in political action groups, exploration of Black and African

culture, discussions of racial issues with elder members of the Black community, and basically spending a lot of time with other Blacks.

Eventually the individual does not need "Blackness" to be defined by others in order to maintain his or her self-worth, and begins to decipher the strengths and weaknesses of the Black culture. As the individual starts to experience greater control over him or herself, he or she moves into the Internalization stage (Helms, 1990).

The fourth stage is called *Internalization*. The main theme in this stage is the Internalization of a personally relevant, positive Black identity; one that blends one's personal identity (i.e., what makes one unique) with a Black ascribed identity (i.e., acceptance of the role of Blackness in his or her personal Self) (Helms, 1990).

Blacks become the central reference group to which the person belongs during the Internalization stage, but unlike in the other stages, the quality of one's belongingness is no longer externally determined. Internalization provides the individual an ability to face the world from a position of personal strength. Thus, although a person in the Internalization stage rejects racism and oppression, he or she is also able to reestablish relationships with Whites and analyze Whiteness and White culture for its strengths and weaknesses as well (Helms, 1990).

Initially, Cross (1971, 1978) proposed that an Internalization/Commitment stage follows the Internalization stage. This stage reflected social activism as a central behavioral style. Some theories (e.g., Helms, 1989; Parham & Helms, 1985b) have added the Internalization/Commitment component as a second phase of the Internalization stage because of the perceived difficulty in distinguishing motivation from

behavior. However, others suggest that this is not a distinct stage, it is a political choice that some persons in the Internalization stage make.

According to Neville et al. (1997), nurturing a positive racial identity serves three purposes: 1) promotion of healthier beliefs about being Black and therefore promotion of positive general psychological well-being; 2) stimulation of more multi-faceted thinking about general racial issues (i.e. not basing one's entire comprehension of Blackness in the United States only on the vilification of everything that is White); and 3) facilitation of general problem-solving where racial issues are concerned.

More recently, Helms (1995) has expanded Cross's theory into a People of Color theory. The People of Color racial identity theory generalizes the Black identity theory to all racially marginalized groups in American society. Thompson and Carter (1997) state that in addition to Blacks, the People of Color theory includes Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Latino(a) Americans. In the People of Color theory, the stages have been renamed Conformity, Dissonance, Immersion/Emersion, and Internalization.

Womanist Identity

According to Sherif (1982) "identity" is an individual's psychological relationship to the social systems of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class (Frable, 1997). Lawrence Kohlberg (1966) describes gender identity as the "cognitive self-categorization as 'boy' or 'girl'" (p. 88) and proposes a three-step maturation process: First the child learns to label their own and others' gender accurately (gender identity). Second, the child realizes that girls become women and boys become men (gender stability). Thirdly,

the child accepts that regardless of cultural gender cues, being male or female is permanent (gender constancy).

Gender identity development is a rarely researched concept in developmental literature after early and middle childhood. Exceptions to this rule can be found in the work of Katz (1986), Erikson (1968), Marcia (1980), Sherif (1982), Ashmore (1990), and Fivush (1994). For example, Katz proposed a model of gender identity development with four milestone events: gender labeling, gender constancy, sexual gender (puberty), and reproductive gender (adulthood). Katz's focus here is on the individual's personal recognition and encounter with gender.

For social identity theorists such as Tajfel and Turner (1979), gender identity is men's and women's awareness of and feelings for their gender category. Other researchers focus on how contexts influence the saliency of gender categories, the increase in gender identification, and in the adoption of traditional attitudes and behaviors (Frable, 1997).

Byars and Hackett (1998) found that with respect to gender development, Black women differ from other women in their early gender-socialization. Due to both family makeup and economic conditions, conventional gender roles are not as separated in Black families as they are in White families. For example Tauber (1991) found that Black women historically have participated in the labor force more than European women, even when married. Black women therefore experience more overlap between the roles traditionally held for males and females, i.e. they have been expected to take care of children as well as earn a living. This is a double-edged sword; on one hand, the wider

range of learning experiences to which Black women are exposed may increase the acquisition of varied skills, and consequently, enhance self-efficacy. On the other hand, some learning experiences typical for Black women may undermine efficacy, such as consistently being in a position of servitude.

Holiday (1985) observed that Black women are often unable to predict what is expected of them in different situations. Traditionally, they have needed to be assertive within the household, but submissive outside the household. Black women may operate in a context in which they often face double-binds, coming face-to-face with different standards applied to the same behavior. This discrepancy between behavior and outcomes can result in discrepancies between one's ideal aspirations and expectations about realizing such aspirations.

Rodriguez, Taylor, Rosselli, and Thomas (1997) state that the importance of comprehensive education opportunities for girls and women has always been addressed in feminist literature. However, the importance of education and the unique challenges facing women of color in the educational environment has not been sufficiently recognized.

Based on Alice Walker's definition, the term *womanist* is often used to describe a feminist of color. Historically, Black women have shunned the term feminist because they believed it likened them to White women, who are seen among many Black women as the beneficiaries of institutionalized racism. There is also the issue of race loyalty-a feeling of betrayal toward Black men that influences Black women's participation in

feminist ideals. The concept of womanism creates a unique standpoint for Black women, sometimes absent in both the Black liberation movement and the feminist movement.

Womanism is also a method of resistance for Black women. Conceptually, it addresses the many factors of oppression that Black women face. Womanist scholars have stressed the role of resistance in addressing the core themes of racism, sexism, and economic oppression; and the role of self-definition in rebuking externally defined, limiting categorizations of Black women, i.e. externally-defined identities (Rodriguez, et al., 1997).

Schooling, education, and intellectual pursuits have been the central methods of resistance used by womanist thinkers. Womanist thinkers have historically resisted oppression by refusing to accept the barriers imposed by racism, especially with respect to education and scholarship. Regrettably, far too many young Black women are unaware of the work of womanist scholars and they are also unaware of the power of education as a method of resistance in the struggle against interlocking forms of oppression (Rodriguez, et al., 1997). Fordham (1993) states that this lack of awareness is prevalent in many institutes of education at all levels of the academy, and represents one of the major barriers confronting Black women. She also states that schools are not always welcome places for Black women and girls. Fordham's research indicates that for academically successful girls, "silence and invisibility are the strategies they feel compelled to use to gain entry into the dominating patriarchy" (1993, p. 23; Rodriguez, et al., 1997).

It is more likely that Black women would be exposed to the work of womanist scholars at a school that is geared toward the development of Black women (such as Spelman College). Fordham's research suggests that predominately White universities are unlikely to have either research or curricula that focuses on Black women. Black women in these environments may feel that the only way of succeeding in such an environment may be to accept whatever is taught and promoted without question, and not do anything to "cause trouble."

Womanist Identity Model

Operating under the perception that the minority status of being female is akin to racial or ethnic minority status, Ossana, Helms, and Leonard (1992) conceptualized gender identity development via a Womanist model (the process of rejecting societal stereotypes regarding womanhood and accepting personal definitions of womanhood for women of color). The four stages of their model are akin to the stages of Cross's Nigrescence model (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991). Although Cross's model implies a successive stage progression, Helms (1993) maintains that each person has some attitudes associated with each stage, but the attitudes associated with one stage predominate.

The first stage is called *Preencounter*. Women of color in this stage embrace traditional notions of womanhood. They accept traditional sex roles and deny the existence of societal bias. Preencounter women unconsciously think and behave in ways that both devalue women and esteem men as reference groups. This ego state provides a sense of security because it is unlikely that Preencounter women will have their ideologies challenged by the dominant society.

The second stage is *Encounter*. This stage is initiated by an event that heightens the personal relevance of womanhood and motivates women to reevaluate their externally-derived notions about being a woman. Encounter women begin to question the conventional values and beliefs of the Preencounter stage.

The third stage is called *Immersion/Emersion*. This stage is characterized by the idealization of women, especially those women that expand one's ideas about womanhood. It is also characterized by the desire for more information about, and experiences with, other women. Women in the early part of this stage are attempting to resolve the confusion and discomfort of the Encounter stage by rejecting traditional gender roles and male-dominated definitions of womanhood. The latter part of this stage is characterized by the search for positive female role models and self-affirming definitions of womanhood, as well as intense relationships with other women.

This stage, however, is still characterized by externally defined perspectives. Because it is a stage of rebellion against male-domination, male-domination is the main motivator. It, rather than an internal desire for self-definition, is fueling the desire to acquire more information about women and become more involved with pro-woman

activities. As with the Immersion/Emersion stage of racial identity, the identity of a woman in the Immersion/Emersion stage of womanist identity is still defined by the dominant culture.

The fourth stage is *Internalization*. Women in this stage adopt a self-definition of womanhood. Internalization women develop a more fully integrated identity. This identity incorporates a positive definition of womanhood based on personal experience, the views of other women, and their shared experiences. It is not bound by external definitions of womanhood, whether they be traditional or feminist.

Carter and Parks (1996) speculate about the relationship between the position of a woman in specific womanist stages and her mental health. They state that the acceptance of self-depreciating norms negatively affect Preencounter women. They hypothesized that Preencounter women may experience some mental health symptoms due to their continual self-degradation; but these symptoms may also be mild due to the fact that external stress may be lessened by their compliance with traditional societal expectations.

Even though Encounter women are generally in a positive transition, they also suffer from some psychological stress. This is because they are on the dividing line between two radically different, yet externally defined identities i.e. Encounter and Immersion/Emersion. They are likely to experience environmental pressure from both men and Preencounter women as they begin to reject traditional gender roles.

Carter and Parks (1996) state that Immersion/Emersion women are at the most intense state of the womanist transition process. The have rejected the White male societal norms, yet their new position is not internalized. They are likely to find

themselves the targets of strong reactions from others, coupled with the pressure of their own intense feelings.

Internalization women are no longer searching outside of themselves for validation of their "femaleness." This internal source of self-esteem acts as a buffer from external stresses. Carter and Parks (1996) postulate that since a large degree of autonomy and integration are needed to achieve the Internalization stage, women prone to psychological difficulty would be unlikely to achieve an internalized identity. They also claim that women who have reached the Internalization stage should be less likely to experience mental health symptoms.

Statement of the Problem

In theory, the type of university attended, either a predominately White university or traditionally Black university, should affect Black women. Compared to society as a whole, both predominately White universities and traditionally Black universities have been shown to provide environments in which Black women can explore their understandings of race and gender (Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997) however, Black universities may do a better job. Fleming (1993) found that Black women attending traditionally Black universities have more social and extracurricular opportunities, receive more support in their academic endeavors, and feel more comfortable and supported than students at predominately White universities.

Poindexter-Cameron and Robinson (1997) also called for more research at all-female traditionally Black colleges. They found that according to current literature,

Black women at many co-ed Black universities receive adequate support, but are also less likely to report partaking in discussions about Black womanhood. This suggests that, race issues are maximized and gender issues are minimized at co-ed traditionally Black universities.

While Black college students at predominately White universities may experience the same basic developmental tasks as other students, they may also encounter additional stressors, such as isolation caused by racial exclusion and racial discrimination (Anderson, 1988; Edmonds, 1984; Henderson, 1998 in Neville, Heppner, & Wang, 1997). Several empirical findings show that a significant number of Black college students attending predominately White universities are subjected to racially insensitive experiences on campus (D'Augellli & Hershberger, 1993; Ehrlich, 1990). Neville and Thompson (1991) found that Blacks readily identify these experiences as stressful events. These findings are part of an increasing body of evidence that show that Blacks encounter racism and discriminatory events in their daily lives.

Most of the research examining racial identity has focused on the relationship between racial identity attitudes and the general psychological well-being of Black college students. Using Helms' (1990, 1995) racial identity developmental theory, many studies have attempted to show why this relationship is important.

For example, several studies have found that Preencounter and Immersion/Emersion attitudes are related to higher levels of distress. Neville et al. (1990) claim that Preencounter attitudes, i.e. the denial of the social import of one's Blackness and, contrastingly, the idealization of one's racial make-up have been found to

be associated with lower levels of both self-esteem and self-actualization. They are also associated with higher levels of anxiety, feelings of personal inadequacy, and hypersensitivity (Parham & Helms, 1985b). Preencounter attitudes also have been shown to be associated with lower levels of general well-being (Carter, 1991; Pyant & Yanico, 1991).

In contrast, persons struggling with encounter attitudes, i.e. the recognition of one's Blackness, have been found to have better psychological health, including a higher level of self-esteem (Parham & Helms, 1985a) and increased self-actualization (Parham & Helms, 1985b). Encounter attitudes also have been associated with lower scores on mental health indices (Pyant & Yanico, 1991). Finally, Neville et al. (1997) suggest that Immersion/Emersion attitudes of Black students at predominately White universities are associated with greater identification of general stressors on campus, a more negative problem-solving approach to dealing with these stressors, and a suppressive coping style.

Delving into details that past researchers have ignored, the current study will examine racial identity and womanist identity differences for women at a predominately White university (Auburn University), an all-Black co-ed university (Clark-Atlanta University), and at an all-Black, all-female college (Spelman College).

Theoretically, because Preencounter attitudes in racial identity involve assimilation into the dominant culture, they are more likely to be present among Black women at predominately White universities, such as Auburn. A woman in this environment may purposely idealize White culture and denigrate Black culture due to both the pressure to fit in, and the lack of encouragement to develop a positive racial

identity. A woman may also accept negative stereotypes about Blacks. She may try her best to gain acceptance into the school's White culture and actually perceive certain accomplishments as a sign of acceptance, or as an indication of racial equality. This can result in positive feelings about oneself in this environment, but negative feelings about oneself in Black environments, hence the hindrance of progressing past the Preencounter stage.

When a Black student is surrounded by "Blackness" and positive attitudes about Black culture, such as at Spelman and Clark Atlanta, Immersion/Emersion racial identity attitudes should be supported. A Black student with an intense dedication to exploring his or her heritage and to diminishing stereotypes held about Blacks should feel better about him or herself in a predominately Black environment.

A woman who enters an all-Black female college, such as Spelman, begins to question stereotypes about Black women. Experiences with Black female colleagues, professors, and administrators provide role models for a Black woman. This initiates a re-analysis of her previous notions about Black women. Remaining in this environment allows for the Black female student to further expand her ideas about womanhood by idealizing women. Theoretically, Immersion/Emersion womanist attitudes should be higher among women at Spelman College because the environment fosters this quest for more information about Black women and the debunking of stereotypes about Black women. Women who have these womanist Immersion/Emersion feelings at Spelman should have higher self-esteem because of this support. Women who have the same Immersion/Emersion feelings at Auburn should have lower self-esteem.

Historically, Black women have had to choose between asserting a female agenda and asserting a Black agenda. For example, Black women have not been allowed to establish an agenda specifically geared toward themselves. Racism has always been promoted and perceived as a more salient issue for Black women than sexism. Black women who call themselves feminists are perceived as race-traitors for supposedly joining forces with White women, a group who benefits from racism.

The presence of Black men can considerably stifle feminist assertions in Black women. Those that do adopt an intense pro-woman viewpoint in co-ed Black environments suffer from lower self-esteem for two reasons. First, because this state of rebellion against male-domination is still characterized by an identity that is the direct result of the opinions of others, rather than an internal awareness. Second, because in a White male environment it is easier to assert one's Black womanhood because there is no perceived connection between the groups. In a Black male environment, Black women are torn by a sense of loyalty to Black men and the pressure of the threat of possible betrayal. Women at Clark Atlanta University who experience Immersion/Emersion womanist attitudes would receive the least perceived support for establishing their identities as Black women.

I predict that:

1. For racial identity, Preencounter attitudes will be higher at Auburn, than at Spelman and Clark Atlanta. Encounter attitudes will be higher at Spelman and Clark Atlanta, than at Auburn. Immersion/Emersion attitudes will be higher at Spelman and Clark Atlanta than at Auburn.

2. For womanist identity, Immersion/Emersion attitudes will be highest at Spelman, lower at Auburn, and lowest at Clark Atlanta. The reason for the discrimination of Immersion/Emersion attitudes between the schools may be due to the issue of loyalty vs. betrayal that Black women face in all-Black, co-educational environments. Preencounter attitudes for womanist identity will be lowest at Spelman.

3. Immersion/Emersion attitudes for racial identity will be positively correlated with self-esteem at Spelman and Clark Atlanta University and negatively correlated with self-esteem at Auburn.

4. There will be a higher correlation between self-esteem and womanist identity Immersion/Emersion attitudes among the Spelman participants than the Clark Atlanta University and Auburn University participants.

Method

Participants

One hundred fifty-six African American female undergraduates participated in the study. Of these, 55 attend Spelman College, 47 attend Clark Atlanta University and the remaining 53 attend the Auburn University system – 13 from AUM and 40 from Auburn University – Main Campus. The students ranged in class rank from freshman to senior with 21.8% of the participants in their freshman year, 16% in their sophomore year, 14.1% in their junior year and 44.9% in their senior year. Sixty-seven percent of the

participants were in the 18-24 year old age range, 27% were in the 25-47 year old range, and 6% did not report their age.

Instruments

The instruments used for the study are the following: (a) the Womanist Identity Attitude Scale (Helms, 1990e), (b) the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Helms & Parham, 1990b), and (c) the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. (See Appendix II)

Womanist Identity Attitude Scale (WIAS). This measure was used to assess the students' womanist identity as described by Helms (1990e). The WIAS is a 43-item Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). It measures four subscales: Preencounter (*In general, women have not contributed much to American society),* Encounter (*I do not know whether being a woman is positive or negative),* Immersion-Emersion (*I reject all male values),* and Internalization (*People regardless of their sexes have strengths and limitations).*

The reliability coefficients for the WIAS stages for this sample are as follows: Pre-encounter, $\alpha = .49$, Encounter, $\alpha = .24$, Immersion/Emersion, $\alpha = .69$, and Internalization, $\alpha = .62$. Evidence that the WIAS is not merely a measure of feminist attitudes is indicated by significant but low correlations between the Attitudes Toward Feminism and both Preencounter and Internalization attitudes in a pilot study of the WIAS (Ossana et al., 1992; Smith, Fernee, & Miller, 1975;). Womanist identity attitudes have been shown to be related to self-esteem, perceptions of bias and psychological symptomatology (Carter & Parks, 1996).

Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-L). The RIAS-L (Helms & Parham, 1990) was used to measure the students' attitudes about their own racial group. The RIAS-L is a 50-item, self-report measure that was designed to assess the attitudes reflective of each of Cross' (1971; 1978) stages of Black identity development. The following are each of the stages and representative items from the measure: Preencounter (*Sometimes, I wish I belonged to the White race),* Encounter (*I am determined to find my Black identity),* Immersion/Emersion (*White people cannot be trusted),*and Internalization (*I feel good about being Black, but do not limit myself to Black activities).*

The reliability coefficients for the RIAS-L stages for this sample are as follows: Preencounter, $\alpha = .71$, Encounter, $\alpha = .49$, Immersion/Emersion, $\alpha = .73$, and Internalization, $\alpha = .61$. Generally, the obtained reliabilities are moderate and compare favorably with those obtained for non-culture specific personality measures (Anastasi, 1982; Helms, 1990).

In a review of the literature, Helms (1990) states that the scale generally predicts characteristics that should be related to racial identity according to theory, but does not predict those that should not be related. Examples of the former are self-esteem, affective states, and preference for a therapist's race. This indicates both convergent and discriminant validity. A factor analytic study conducted by Helms and Parham (1990b) provides direct evidence about the validity of the RIAS. In several separate analyses, they found that four orthogonal factors essentially explained the RIAS items, and these factors appeared to reflect the four types of racial identity attitudes.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) (Rosenberg, 1979) was used to measure the participants' self-esteem levels. The scale has 10-items that measure self-acceptance on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. Some of the items on the RSE scale were reverse scored. Higher scores correspond with higher levels of self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale has been proven to be a reliable and valid measure of self-esteem in African Americans (Hoelter, 1983; Hughes & Demo, 1989; Rowley, Sellars, Chavous, & Smith, 1998). The Cronbach's alpha for the current sample is $\alpha = .80$.

Silber and Tippet (1965) reported the test-retest reliability for the RSE, based on a 2-week interval, to be .85. These authors also found that the RSE was significantly related to other measures of self-esteem, including self-ideal discrepancy scores on the Health Self-Image Questionnaire and interviewer ratings of self-esteem, providing evidence of construct validity. Rosenberg (1965) reported that construct-related validity has been demonstrated by several studies that showed correlations in appropriate directions between RSE scores and several other variable (e.g., depression, anxiety) with which self-esteem theoretically may be expected to relate.

Demographic Data Sheet. The demographic data sheet asked participants to provide general data about age, classification, school attended, and familial, educational, and socioeconomic background.

Procedure

Participants volunteered through a psychology participant pool at each institution. All of the measures were distributed to the participants at one sitting. The scales were

counterbalanced by presenting them in three different orders: Form 001 → RIAS-L, WIAS, RSE, Demographic Sheet; Form 002 → WIAS, RSE, RIAS-L, Demographic Sheet; and Form 003 → RSE, RIAS-L, WIAS, Demographic Sheet. They were given an informed consent form stating that their participation is voluntary and confidential, and they may withdraw at any time without penalty. Names of participants did not appear on any of the measures or answer sheet used. All participants from Auburn University were given extra credit in their respective introductory psychology courses for participating.

Results

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for all variables in the study.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for All Variables (N = 156)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Preencounter RI	**36.28**	7.44
Encounter RI	**16.12**	3.57
Immersion/Emersion RI	**32.01**	6.49
Internalization RI	**56.29**	5.78
Preencounter WI	**17.08**	3.69
Encounter WI	**23.52**	3.27
Immersion/Emersion WI	**38.51**	6.78
Internalization WI	**44.72**	4.86
Self Esteem	**41.68**	5.77

Note. RI= Racial Identity Attitude Scale; WI = Womanist Identity Attitude Scale

Table 2 presents an intercorrelation matrix of the racial and womanist identity scales.

Table 2
Correlations of racial and womanist identity subscales

	Preencounter RI	Encounter RI	Immersion RI	Internalizaiton RI	Preencounter WI	Encounter WI	Immersion WI	Internalization WI
Preencounter RI	1.000	.098	-.028	.329***	.386***	.291***	351***	-.324***
Encounter RI	.098	1.000	.427***	-.155	-.025	.280***	.401***	-.161*
Immersion RI	-.028	.427***	1.000	.136	-.007	.179*	.404***	-.056
Internalization RI	.329***	-.155	.136	.000	-.220**	-.035	-.182*	.543***
Preencounter WI	.386***	-.025	-.007	-.220**	1.000	.126	.246**	-.380***
Encounter WI	.291***	.280***	.179*	-.035	.126	1.000	.420***	-.044
Immersion WI	.351***	.401***	.404***	-.182*	.246**	.420***	1.000	-.199*
Internalization WI	.324***	-.161*	-.056	.543***	-.380***	-.044	-.199*	1.000

Note. RI = Racial Identity Attitude Scale; WI = Womanist Identity Attitude Scale
*p< .05. **p< .01. ***p<.001.

As shown in Table 2, many of the subscale identity stages are correlated with each other. The Preencounter stage for racial identity is positively correlated with womanist Preencounter, (r = .39); racial Encounter is correlated with womanist Encounter (r = .28); racial Immersion/Emersion is positively correlated with womanist Immersion/Emersion (r = .40); and racial Internalization and womanist Internalization are positively correlated (r = .54). Both Internalization stages are negatively correlated with the Preencounter stages: Womanist Internalization and womanist Preencounter (r = -.38); womanist Internalization and racial Preencounter (r = -.32); racial Internalization and womanist Preencounter (r = -.22); and racial Internalization and racial Preencounter (r = -.33). Racial Encounter is positively correlated with both racial and womanist Immersion/Emersion, (r = .43, racial) and (r = .40, womanist). Womanist Encounter is also positively correlated with both racial Immersion/Emersion, (r = .18), and womanist Immersion and Emersion, (r = .42).

Because the first set of hypotheses involved running several univariate analyses of variance to examine the differences between Spelman, Clark Atlanta, and Auburn University, a multivariate analysis of variance was run to check for overall differences between the groups on all of the dependent variables in the study. According to the MANOVA, there are overall differences between the schools on the racial and womanist identity variables. Wilk's Lambda and Hotelling's Trace were significant at $p<.001$.

The results for hypotheses 1 and 2 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Analysis of Variance with School as the Group Variable and Identity Stages as the Dependent Variables

Stages	Spelman M(SD)	CAU M(SD)	Auburn M(SD)	df	SSBG	SSWG	F
Preencounter RI	**34.84**(7.62)	**3.83**(5.56)	**39.94**(7.50)	2,152	1108.075	7480.996	11.257**
Encounter RI	**16.75**(3.86)	**16.98**(3.46)	**14.74**(2.98)	2,152	157.702	1817.717	6.594**
Immersion/ Emersion RI	**31.75**(6.41)	**33.96**(6.77)	**30.47**(6.02)	2,152	307.383	6207.559	3.763*
Internalization RI	**55.62**(5.77)	**55.98**(6.29)	**57.26**(5.32)	2,152	79.673	5090.262	1.190
Preencounter WI	**15.15**(3.43)	**17.60**(3.57)	**18.49**(3.35)	2,152	301.219	1805.001	12.683**
Encounter WI	**23.98**(2.70)	**22.91**(3.27)	**23.62**(3.75)	2,152	29.461	1619.094	1.383
Immersion/ Emersion WI	**39.02**(7.65)	**37.53**(4.56)	**38.60**(7.30)	2,152	58.534	6885.363	.646
Internalization WI	**45.16**(4.07)	**44.68**(4.55)	**44.43**(5.79)	2,152	14.880	3592.759	.315

Note. RI = Racial Identity Attitude Scale; WI = Womanist Identity Attitude Scale

*p< .05. **p< .002.

According to Table 3 there were significant differences between the schools on Preencounter racial identity attitudes (F (2,152) = 11.26, p<.001), Encounter racial identity attitudes (F (2, 152) = 6.59, p=.002), and Immersion/Emersion racial identity attitudes (F (2,152) = 3.76, p=.025). For hypothesis 2, womanist Preencounter attitudes were significantly different among the schools (F (2, 152) = 12.683, p<.001). No significant difference was found between the schools on the Immersion/Emersion scale.

Taking the between groups sum of squares and dividing it into the total sum of squares indicates that differences between the groups accounts for 14% of the variance for Preencounter, 7% of the variance for Encounter, and 4% of the variance of Immersion/Emersion attitudes. For womanist Preencounter, differences between the groups accounts for 14% of the variance.

To test for specific differences between groups, Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons were run. According to the Tukey tests, students at Spelman (M = 34.84, SD = 7.62) and Clark Atlanta (M = 33.83, SD = 5.56) were not significantly different on Preencounter racial identity attitudes, but both groups scored significantly lower on Preencounter attitudes than Auburn students (M = 39.94, SD = 7.50). Spelman (M = 16.75, SD = 3.86) and Clark Atlanta (M = 16.98, SD = 3.46) students were not significantly different on Encounter racial identity attitudes but both groups scored significantly higher on Encounter attitudes that Auburn students (M = 14.74, SD = 2.98). Both of these findings support hypothesis one. Spelman students (M = 31.75, SD = 6.41) were not significantly different on Immersion racial attitudes from Clark Atlanta (M = 33.96, SD = 6.77) or Auburn students (M = 30.47, SD = 6.02), but Clark Atlanta students

scored significantly higher than Auburn students on Immersion/Emersion attitudes, partially supporting hypothesis one. The Tukey tests also showed that Spelman (M = 15.15, SD = 3.43) students scored significantly lower on womanist Preencounter attitudes than Clark Atlanta and Auburn, supporting hypothesis two.

Hypothesis 3 and 4 were tested with Pearson product moment correlations. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlations of Identity Subscales with Self-Esteem by School

	Self-Esteem			
	Overall	Spelman	Clark Atlanta	Auburn
Preencounter RI	.505**	-.534**	-.399**	-.522**
Encounter RI	.230**	-.082	-.519**	-.314*
Immersion/ Emersion RI	-.001	.124	.100	-.277*
Internalization RI	.485**	.474**	.606**	.479**
Preencounter WI	.288**	-.159	-.401**	-.322*
Encounter WI	.313**	.242	-.310*	-.350*
Immersion/ Emersion WI	.326**	-.380**	-.287	-.335**
Internalization WI	.547**	.536**	.487**	.616**

Note. RI = Racial Identity Attitude Scale; WI = Womanist Identity Attitude Scale
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

According to Table 4, overall, self esteem was negatively correlated with racial identity Preencounter (r = -.51, p<.001) and Encounter attitudes (r = -.23, p= .004) and

positively correlated with racial identity Internalization attitudes ($r = .49$, $p<.001$). Self-esteem was negatively correlated with womanist identity Preencounter ($r = -.29$, $p<.001$), Encounter ($r = -.31$, $p<.001$), and Immersion/Emersion attitudes ($r = -.33$, $p<.001$) and positively correlated with womanist identity internalization attitudes ($r = .55$, $p<.001$).

Hypothesis three was partially supported: racial identity Immersion/Emersion scores were negatively correlated with self-esteem for Auburn students ($r = -.28$, $p<.05$), but the correlations for Spelman and Clark Atlanta were not significant. Hypothesis 4 was not supported by the Pearson correlation; no significant differences were found between the schools on womanist Immersion/Emersion.

Discussion

The unique nature of the Black woman's situation in America is fundamental to this study. The participants in this study are all members of a group that has traditionally been marginalized in the arena of economic, political, and social power because of their race and their gender. Racial and gender identity should therefore be salient aspects of their overall identity. I have proposed that the salience of racial and womanist identity for Black female college students is correlated with the racial and gender make-up of school they attend.

Racial Identity

Preencounter

As I predicted, participants from Auburn University reported significantly more Preencounter racial identity attitudes. These attitudes reflect an endorsement of

stereotypes about Blacks and an idealization of Whites. Individuals in the Preencounter stage may either purposely glorify White culture and deprecate Black culture, or they may embrace the concept of assimilation in order to maintain a false assumption of racial equality.

Ninety-four percent of Auburn University students are White. Less than 11 percent of the faculty at Auburn are minorities, which include all non-White ethnicities. Sixty-five percent of AUM students are White and AUM's faculty is 91% White. Such environments may not challenge Black women to deconstruct negative stereotypes about Blacks. The lack of exposure to Black role models, Black-oriented activities, and a diverse curriculum may contribute to the feeling of detachment from the Black community.

Students attending predominately Black colleges may be afforded more opportunities to explore and express racial identity while Black students at predominately White schools may find that assimilating into the dominant culture is an appropriate coping mechanism to deal with the surroundings.

Encounter

As predicted, attitudes endorsing a desire to further explore aspects of Black culture and deconstruct negative stereotypes were stronger at Spelman and Clark Atlanta than at Auburn University. The findings from these first two analyses mirror each other. The Auburn environment includes higher Preencounter attitudes. The Spelman and Clark Atlanta environments include higher Encounter attitudes and lower Preencounter attitudes.

Black environments may inspire an individual's interest in exploring her racial heritage and culture. The Encounter stage of racial identity is often characterized by the confusion and disparity that results from encountering a racially poignant incident. Although exposure to an almost all-White environment like Auburn University may provide experiences that may spur an individual into the Encounter stage, exposure to an all-Black environment may do the same, but in a different fashion. All-Black institutions may provide an environment that promotes free discussion and exploration of the historical and current oppression of Black Americans, and thus, students get exposed to racially poignant incidents vicariously.

Although Cross' (1971) original model assumed that the Encounter stage relates to exposure to racial discrimination, other theorists state that an encounter can also entail the realization that previously-held stereotypical ideas about Blacks are not pervasive truths about the Black community (e.g. Akbar, 1979, 1981; Baldwin, 1981, 1984; Nobles, 1976). Curricula at predominately Black institutions are more likely to include positive coverage of Black individuals and Black experiences. Predominately Black institutions are also more likely to provide more culturally relevant and culturally sensitive social situations and have more Black instructors of mainstream courses (Edwards, 1971; Jarvis, 1992; Wagener & Smith, 1993.

Immersion/Emersion

As predicted, Immersion/Emersion racial identity attitudes were higher at Clark Atlanta than at Auburn, but unexpectedly, Spelman students did not score significantly higher on Immersion/Emersion attitudes than Auburn students. This is an interesting

finding, leading to questions about the interface between Black identity and female identity in different environments.

At first glance, it may seem that the Immersion/Emersion stage of racial identity is merely characterized by bitterness and anger, and a divulgence into "Blackness" that is just a reactionary defense mechanism. Although, those adjectives can characterize an individual in this stage of the model, surrounding oneself in Black environments can be correlated with positive esteem about one's social identity as well (Akbar, 1989). The Immersion/Emersion stage is hypothesized to be correlated with the belief that Black people should participate in solely Black-oriented activities and that they should devalue the dominant White culture.

It may be possible that, as some theorists suggest (e.g. Giddings, 1984; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997), when in the presence of Black men, Black identity becomes more salient for Black women than Womanist identity, and an immersion into a more extremist racial identity can prove racial loyalty. Just as it is hypothesized that Black female students at Auburn may do more to assimilate into the White dominant population, female students at Clark Atlanta may do the same, with respect to the male population.

Womanist Identity

Preencounter

I predicted that because Spelman is an all-female institution, students from Spelman would be less likely to report Preencounter attitudes concerning womanist identity. This hypothesis was confirmed. Spelman students did report significantly fewer

endorsements of traditional sex roles and ideas about the inferiority of women than students at Clark Atlanta and Auburn.

Auburn University stands out as a public university that is not following the trend of having a majority female population. It is 46 percent female and 54 percent male. Black females comprise less than 4 percent of the student body. Women make up 24 percent of the faculty and only 9 percent of faculty with full professor status. All-female environments may allow college women to challenge the concept of male superiority. Co-ed environments and the presence of male-dominated activities, may not encourage women to express their gender as a social identity. Male populated environments may serve as a threat to a woman's exhibition of pro-woman ideals. She can deal with this perceived threat in many ways, one of which is represented by the presence of Preencounter Womanist identity attitudes.

Immersion/Emersion

At the other end of the spectrum of reactive response to perceived threat, is the Immersion/Emersion stage in which a woman chooses to envelop herself in female-oriented activities. I predicted that women at Spelman would report higher attitudes in this stage of womanist identity than the other two schools. There are a number of ways to explain why this hypothesis was not confirmed.

Women at Spelman did not report more anti-male, female-idealization than women at Clark Atlanta or Auburn. It was expected that the all-female environment would be more likely to correlate with extreme feminist views than the co-ed environment. There are a number of explanations for why this hypothesis was not

supported. First, the feminist movement itself is conceptualized differently by Black and White women. For example, Reid (1984) discusses the "double jeopardy" of being Black and female in the United States. It is possible that Black women do not fully participate in the feminist movement because of their concern for racism. It may also be harder for Black women to embrace feminism because many White women in the feminist movement do not reject the superiority granted to them by their race.

Second, Reid (1984) expounds upon Frazier's (1939) archetype of the "Black matriarchy;" the concept that Black women already hold powerful positions in their households and communities and therefore have no need to revolt against male culture. So it is possible that many Black women do not feel that the White feminist struggle for equal rights does not relate to them.

In a society that historically devalues women and persons of African decent, an institution such as Spelman College provides a unique experience for Black women trying to weave an identity within this context. Within such surroundings, Black women may not encounter the experiences necessary to push them into the Immersion/Emersion stage for racial or womanist identity.

Self-Esteem

As predicted, racial identity Immersion/Emersion views were negatively correlated with self-esteem only for Auburn students. Immersion/Emersion attitudes in all-Black environments may be less likely to promote the defensiveness and anger that result in low self-esteem. I hypothesized that individuals committed to the Black community and Black culture, even in an excessive manner, are more likely to be

supported socially at Black institutions and therefore feel less criticized about their choices and ideologies. It may be easier for Black women to immerse themselves in Black identity in Black schools and therefore not suffer from lower self-esteem because of it. Self esteem is not positively correlated with Racial identity Immersion/Emersion for Spelman and Clark Atlanta students, but Spelman's p value of .08 and Clark Atlanta's p value of .10 do suggest a trend in this direction. This finding suggests that even in all-Black environments, the anger and hostility associated with the endorsement of Immersion/Emersion views may still hinder the attainment of optimal self esteem.

Going along with the same logic that environments replete with similar individuals are more supportive, and that these supportive environments may be correlated with passionate ideas about the ingroup, I hypothesized that Immersion/Emersion womanist attitudes would be positively correlated with self-esteem among Spelman students. This prediction was not supported. Womanist Immersion/Emersion attitudes were negatively correlated with self-esteem for each school. This may also be explained by the notion that Black women are in a state of conflict as it concerns the expression of strong racial and womanist views.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to analyze the relationship between the racial and gender demographics of a school environment and the racial and womanist identity stage of its Black female students. A limitation of this type of design is that it cannot determine whether any differences between groups are a result of collegiate environment or whether differences existed beforehand and therefore affected a student's choice of

institution. For example, the Preencounter racial identity attitudes were highest at Auburn. It is possible that the Auburn University environment is a causal factor that prevents identity development, but it is also possible that Black students who are in the racial identity Preencounter stage may choose to attend a predominately White environment, and those Black students who are no longer in Preencounter may refuse to attend a predominately White environment.

Several questions were asked on the demographic data sheet in an attempt to identify differences among the participants other than school attended. Participants from Spelman College reported higher socio-economic statuses than Clark Atlanta and Auburn participants. They also reported higher levels of income and education for their parents. Much of the racial and womanist movements that began in the 1960s and 1970s had roots within the framework of the "Black intelligencia;" i.e. Black college students at large universities. These people may be more likely to send their children to predominately Black schools.

Also, it is likely that most respondents from Auburn hail from Alabama or a neighboring Southern state. Spelman College and Clark Atlanta University are members of the largest Black educational consortium in the U.S., the Atlanta University Center, which attracts students from all over the U.S. and abroad. It is possible that Black students from more liberal Northern and Western states come to these schools already having thought about issues of being Black in America, Black oppression, and other initiates of racial identity development.

The measures used for this study present another limitation to this research. Some investigations (e.g. Fischer, Tokar, & Serna, 1998; Yanico, Swanson, & Tokar, 1994) have found threats to the discriminant validity of the RIAS-L. Fischer et. al. (1998) suggest that individual differences in people's willingness to respond nondefensively may influence their attitudes about the test itself, and therefore, their responses to the items. This calls into question the validity of the RIAS-L and the previous research based on the measure, especially those involving Preencounter or Immersion/Emersion as factors. The items that correlate with these stages are socially undesirable statements that may, due to their very nature, not be endorsed by individuals who should appropriately be categorized as Preencounter or Immersion/Emersion.

Although some improvement in reliability has been shown in the Racial Identity Attitude Scale—Long Form, the reliability coefficients were still undesirably low. The low reliability for some subscales can be attributed to the dynamic changeable nature of these attitudes. As Helms (1990) has stated, it is difficult to measure a phenomenon consistently if the phenomenon itself is not consistent.

The Womanist Identity Attitude Scale also suffers from low reliability alphas, especially for the Encounter stage. The Encounter stage has low internal consistency and its low reliability coefficient, .24, decreases the ability to confirm the predictions made in this study. The low alphas may result from, as Ossana, Helms, and Leonard (1992) suggest, the fact that womanist stages are conceptualized as "ego-statuses" and reflect a more fluid process of identity development. Individuals may progress through the stages or revert back to earlier, less advanced stages, or they may even adopt attributes of

different stages at the same time. As is hypothesized, for the racial scores people may be in more than one ego state at a time.

The low alphas, however, especially for the womanist Encounter scale, constrain psychometric usefulness. Although coefficient alpha is a lower-bound estimate of a scale's reliability, it is always a limiting factor on how highly that scale can be correlated with another measure. If there is such a thing as womanist Encounter attitudes or racial Encounter attitudes, the instruments used in this study are not measuring them effectively. Finding anything with these scales depends on picking other measures that are psychometrically adequate. The alphas for these scales are an inhibiting factor on their intercorrelation. If the womanist Encounter stage exists as an integrated psychological unit, the WIAS does not measure it efficiently.

Future Directions

Racial identity Immersion/Emersion views were found to be positively correlated with womanist identity Immersion/Emersion views for Auburn and Spelman students. Future research may involve including Black participants from an all female, predominately White institution such as Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, GA to assess the salience of race when gender is held constant. Possibly racial identity Immersion/Emersion views would be present among Black students at Agnes Scott, or maybe their attitudes mimic those exhibited by the Spelman participants, or the Auburn participants in this study. Or Black students at Agnes Scott may exhibit higher racial Preencounter and lower racial Encounter attitudes than students at Spelman and Clark Atlanta. Womanist Immersion views may be higher at Agnes Scott than at Spelman

College. More information and positive discussion about the feminist movement may circulate at Agnes Scott creating a safer environment for the expression of womanist Immersion opinions.

Studies such as this raise issues about the possible advantages of mono-racial and mono-gender schools. More research should be done focusing on the overall benefits of the healthier racial and womanist identity stages and what environments foster and support these identities. The correlations with self-esteem suggest that the internalization stages are the healthier stages. This study also begs the question of what factors are involved in the disassembling of Black women's negative views about their race and gender. Possibly the presence of Black female mentors and instructors, as well as a focus on Black womanhood, fosters mental health components other than self-esteem. This environment may increase Black female students' self-efficacy.

Future analyses of Black female identity and college demographics could involve interviewing women within the different stages at different institutions and finding out what they perceive are contributors to their beliefs. Immersion/Emersion views for an Auburn student may differ from Immersion/Emersion views for a Spelman students. Also, one's school demographics do not necessarily dictate the demographics of the persons with whom one associates. Black students at Auburn may not have many White friends, those that do may differ in some way from those who do not.

Conclusions

The model used in this study does not assume that the identity formation process is a static one comprised of exclusive stages through which every Black woman

progresses. It does, however, contend that there are some general, fluid categories with which individuals with certain attitudes can be associated. In a broader sense, the goal of this study is to explore the nature of Black female identity development as a entity, not as merely a component of female or Black identity.

Gender identity in psychological literature historically referred to the mere sense of being male or female. Katz (1986) was one of few theorists to address the concept of gender identity for adults focusing on one's recognition and encounter with gender as a construct (Frable, 1997). If the literature on the gender identity of women is sparse, then the literature on the gender identity of Black women can be considered almost non-existent.

Helms' (1990; 1993) conceptualizations and attitude assessment instruments are the foundations for this study. Black women's racial and womanist identity were assessed in three different collegiate environments: mostly White and co-ed, mostly Black and co-ed, and mostly Black and female. I hypothesized that there would be differences between the identity attitudes of Black in these environments. I found that there are differences in stage of racial and gender identity among these populations and differences in level of self-esteem associated with each stage. It is possible that certain environments are barriers or contributors to the development of racial and womanist identity for Black women.

Although these models imply a successive stage progression, every Black woman most likely has attitudes that can be associated with every stage, but usually one stage proves to be dominant over the others. More research on the positive contributions of

historically Black colleges and universities and single sex schools should be done to shed light on the unique experiences they can provide their students. Black women in America are products of a distinctive system of societal forces and the development of their identity deserves to be analyzed in a tailored, contextual nature.

Studies such these that focus on the individual identity of being Black and female in the United States are rare but essential to understanding what contributes to the healthy adjustment of this population. When Black Americans are studied and/or researched, it is often in comparison to their White counterparts. Black are rarely analyzed with their own contexts. The same can be said for the female population. Women are generally compared to men in scientific research and analysis. This type of comparison research lends to the belief that women's attitudes and behavior are at the other end of the psychological continuum from men, and that the attitudes and behavior of Blacks are at the opposite end of the continuum from Whites. It limits the examination of attributes that may be particular to women and Blacks specifically, and excludes the examination of specific attributes of Black women.

From this study I learned that the development of racial and womanist identities does not necessarily occur simultaneously. Nor do they appear to have the exact same impact upon one's overall self-esteem. I also learned that there is likely some truth in a notion that is commonly held by racial and gender identity theories: that the healthiest individuals have personally relevant, self-defined identities.

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Appendix I

Statement of Informed Consent

You are being invited to participate in a study I am running to complete my master's degree at Auburn University Montgomery. The purpose of this study is to investigate attitudes toward one's identity as a Black person and one's identity as a woman.

The total time to participate is about 30 minutes. Your responses to the test questions will remain confidential. Some of the questions in the following survey are quite personal and certain conscious choices may be offensive to some participants. There is no foreseeable harm that will be caused by participation in this study. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

For any questions or concerns about your participation in this study please contact Dr. Peter Zachar, at Auburn University Montgomery at (334) 244-3349.

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in this study.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE, HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____

Graduate Student – Auburn University Montgomery Date

Information Letter

You are being invited to participate in a study I am running to complete my master's degree at Auburn University Montgomery. The purpose of this study is to investigate attitudes toward one's identity as a Black person and one's identity as a woman. I hope to learn more about how a person's college environment influences their identity development. You are being asked to participate in this study because of the specific kind of college you attend and because you are a Black female.

If you decide to participate, you may pick up a survey from Thach Hall room 206 and return it to the mailbox of Kanika Bell in the Thach Hall mailroom. The total time to participate is about 20 minutes. Your responses to the test questions will remain anonymous. There is no foreseeable harm that will be caused by participation in this study. By participating in this study you will contribute to psychology's understanding of the psychological development of Black women.

You will receive two extra-credit points for completing the survey. There is a voucher attached to this packet that is to be returned attached to a completed survey. YOU MUST ATTACH THE VOUCHER TO A COMPLETED SURVEY TO RECEIVE CREDIT FOR PARTICIPATING. Fill in the section identifying your GTA and lab time. DO NOT PUT YOUR REAL NAME ON THE VOUCHER. Put your U103 code name in the place designated for your name. Your GTA will receive the voucher and assign your extra credit points based on your code name and will not see your responses to the survey.

The information that you provide will not be used to identify you personally. Your responses to the test questions will be anonymous. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not prejudice you future relations with Auburn University. You have the right to withdraw at any time by not returning the survey, however once you have submitted anonymous information you will be unable to withdraw your data since there will be no way to identify the data you have submitted.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study please contact Kanika Bell at (334) 502-3393 or Dr. Peter Zachar, at Auburn University Montgomery at (334) 244-3349. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study please contact the Office of Research Programs, Ms. Jeanna Sasser at (334) 844-5966 or Dr. Leane Lamke at (334) 844-3231.
Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in this study.
YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. THE DATA YOU PROVIDE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

_____ _____

Kanika Bell Date
Graduate Student – Auburn University

Appendix II

Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale – RIAS-L

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.

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

1. I believe that being Black is a positive experience.
2. I know through experience what being Black in America is.
3. I feel unable to involve myself in white experiences and am increasing my involvement in Black experiences.
4. I believe that large numbers of Blacks are untrustworthy.
5. I feel an overwhelming attachment to Black people.
6. I involve myself in causes that will help all oppressed people.
7. I feel comfortable wherever I am.
8. I believe that White people look and express themselves better than Blacks.
9. I feel very uncomfortable around Black people.
10. I feel good about being Black, but do not limit myself to Black activities.
11. I often find myself referring to White people as honkies, devils, pigs, etc.
12. I often find that to be Black is not necessarily good.
13. I believe that certain aspects of the Black experience apply to me, and others do not.
14. I frequently confront the system and the man.
15. I constantly involve myself in Black political and social activities (art shows, political meetings, Black theater, etc.)
16. I involve myself in social action and political groups even if there are no other Blacks involved.
17. I believe that Black people should learn to think and experience life in ways which are similar to White people.
18. I believe that the world should be interpreted from a Black perspective.
19. I have changed my style of life to fit my beliefs about Black people.

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

20. I feel excitement and joy in Black surroundings.

21. I believe that Black people came from a strange, dark, and uncivilized continent.

22. People, regardless of their race, have strength and limitations.

23. I find myself reading a lot of Black literature and thinking about being Black.

24. I feel guilty and/or anxious about some of the things I believe about Black people.

25. I believe that a Black person's most effective weapon for solving problems is to become part of the White person's world.

26. I speak my mind regardless of the consequences (e.g., being kicked out of school, being imprisoned, being exposed to danger).

27. I believe that everything Black is good, and consequently, I limit myself to Black activities.

28. I am determined to find my Black identity.

29. I believe that White people are intellectually superior to Blacks.

30. I believe that because I am Black, I have many strengths.

31. I feel that Black people do <u>not</u> have as much to proud of as White people do.

32. Most Blacks I know are failures.

33. I believe that White people should feel guilty about the way they have treated Blacks in the past.

34. White people can't be trusted.

35. In today's society if Black people don't achieve, they have only themselves to blame.

36. The most important thing about me is that I am Black.

37. Being Black just feels natural to me.

38. Other Black people have trouble accepting me because my life experiences have been so different from their experiences.

39. Black people who have White people's blood should feel ashamed of it.

40. Sometimes, I wish I belonged to the White race.

41. The people I respect most are White.

42. A person's race usually is not important to me.

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

43. I feel anxious when White people compare me to other members of my race.

44. I can't feel comfortable with either Black people or White people.

45. A person's race has little to do with whether or not he/she is a good person.

46. When I am with Black people, I pretend to enjoy the things they enjoy.

47. When a stranger who is Black does something embarrassing in public, I get embarrassed.

48. I believe that a Black person can close friends with a White person.

49. I am satisfied with myself.

50. I have a positive attitude about myself because I am Black.

Womanist Identity Attitude Scale (WIAS)

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.

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

1. In general, I believe that men are superior to women.
2. I think women blame men too much for their problems.
3. I believe that being a woman has caused me to have many strengths.
4. Women should not blame men for all of women's social problems.
5. I do not know whether being a woman is positive or negative.
6. I feel more comfortable being around men that I do being around women.
7. I feel unable to involve myself in men's experiences, and I am increasing my involvement in experiences involving women.
8. I am comfortable wherever I am.
9. Maybe I can learn something from women.
10. Sometimes I think men are superior and sometimes I think they are inferior to women.
11. In general, women have not contributed much to American society.
12. When I think about how men have treated women, I feel an overwhelming anger.
13. People, regardless of their sexes, have strengths and limitations.
14. Sometimes I am proud of belonging to the female sex and sometimes I am ashamed of it.
15. Sometimes, I wish I had been born a man.
16. I am determined to find out more about the female sex.
17. Being a member of the female sex is a source of pride to me.
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

19. I do not think I should feel positively about people just because they belong to the same group as I do.

20. I would have accomplished more in this life if I had been born a man.

21. Most men are insensitive.

22. Women and men have much to learn from each other.

23. I am not sure how I feel about myself.

24. Sometimes I wonder how much of myself I should give up for the sake of helping other minorities.

25. Men are more attractive than women.

26. I reject all male values.

27. Men have some customs that I enjoy.

28. Men are difficult to understand.

29. I wonder if I should feel a kinship with all minority group people.

30. Women should learn to think and act like men.

31. My most important goal in life is to fight the oppression of women.

32. I enjoy being around people regardless of their sex.

33. I feel myself replacing old friends with new ones who share my beliefs about women.

34. The burden of living up to society's expectations of women is sometimes more than I can bear.

35. I limit myself to male activities.

36. Both sexual groups have some good people and some bad people.

37. I feel anxious about some of the things I feel about women.

38. I feel like I am betraying my sex when I take advantage of the opportunities available to me in the male world.

39. I want to know more about the female culture.

40. I think women and men differ from each other in some ways, but neither group is superior.

41. I find that I function better when I am able to view men as individuals.

42. I limit myself to activities involving women.

43. Most men are untrustworthy.

44. American society would be better off if it were based on the cultural values of women.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Use the scale below to respond to each statement.

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

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Demographic Data Sheet

The following are background questions that will be used to help us understand the answers you gave earlier.

1. Your Classification
   a. FRESHMAN
   b. SOPHOMORE
   c. JUNIOR
   d. SENIOR

2. Your School
   a. AUM
   b. SPELMAN COLLEGE
   c. CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
   d. AUBURN UNIVERSITY

3. What is your mother's race?
   a. BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN (NON-HISPANIC)
   b. WHITE/EUROPEAN AMERICAN (NON-HISPANIC)
   c. HISPANIC
   d. ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER
   e. BI-OR MULTI-RACIAL

4. What is your father's race?
   a. BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN (NON-HISPANIC)
   b. WHITE/EUROPEAN AMERICAN (NON-HISPANIC)
   c. HISPANIC
   d. ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER
   e. BI-OR MULTI-RACIAL

5. What was the annual household income of the home in which you were raised?
   a. BELOW $10,000
   b. $10,000 - $25, 000
   c. $25,000 - $50,000
   d. $50, 000 - $100,000
   e. OVER $100,000

6. What was the racial make-up of your high school ?
   a. MOSTLY BLACK (70%OR MORE)
   b. MOSTLY WHITE (70% OR MORE)
   c. MOSTLY HISPANIC (70% OR MORE)
   d. INTEGRATED.

7. If you belong to a sorority please describe its racial make-up:
   a. MOSTLY BLACK (70%OR MORE)
   b. MOSTLY WHITE (70% OR MORE)

8. Mother's education
   a. LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL
   b. HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
   c. SOME COLLEGE
   d. COLLEGE DEGREE
   e. GRADUATE DEGREE (MASTERS/DOCTORATE)

9. Father's education
   a. LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL
   b. HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
   c. SOME COLLEGE
   d. COLLEGE DEGREE
   e. GRADUATE DEGREE (MASTERS/DOCTORATE)