The Relationship of Racial Identity and Gender Identity Attitudes Among College-aged African-American Women

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE RELATIONSHIP OF RACIAL IDENTITY AND GENDER IDENTITY ATTITUDES AMONG COLLEGE-AGED AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, the author would like to thank GOD almighty, because without him I surely wouldn't be where I am today. I am grateful to my mother, Beverly A. Johnson, for her love, support, and guidance which has help me to stay focused in life. I wish to acknowledge the many African-American women, who have taught me the realities of being a woman and an African-American. My deepest gratitude goes to all of them. I would like to thank Dr. Suzette Speight for serving as director of this thesis and for giving me support and encouragement throughout all of my graduate endeavors. Thanks also go to Dr. Elizabeth Vera for serving on the thesis committee. Thanks and deep appreciation to Valerie Collier, Karen M. Witherspoon, and Alesia Williams for cheering me on. Special thanks to Tammy Dee Jones for without her statistical assistance and knowledge this project might not have been completed.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................. iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS .............................................. iv

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ..................................................... 1

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ............................... 5

   Racial Identity Development .................................. 5
   Gender Identity Development .................................. 9
   Integration of Racial and Gender Identity .................... 12

III. METHOD .......................................................... 15

   Participants ..................................................... 15
   Instruments ..................................................... 15
   Procedure ...................................................... 17
   Analysis of Data ............................................... 18

IV. RESULTS ........................................................ 19

   Demographic Characteristics ................................. 19
       Primary Analysis ........................................... 19

V. DISCUSSION ..................................................... 26

   Relationship of the Data to the Research Questions ........ 26
   Limitations of the Study ...................................... 28
   Implications for Counseling .................................. 29
   Suggestions for Future Research ............................... 30

Appendix

   A. COVER LETTER ............................................... 31
B. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE .......................... 33
C. RACIAL IDENTITY ATTITUDE SCALE ..................... 35
D. FEMINIST IDENTITY SCALE .............................. 39
REFERENCES ................................................... 43
VITA .......................................................... 48
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Means and Standard Deviations for RIAS and Subscales by Income</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Means and Standard Deviations for FIS and Subscales by Income</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Correlation Coefficients for RIAS Subscales, FIS Subscales and Age</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Successful identity development is determined by acknowledging one's identity with a reference group. Sherif (1964) posits that reference group identity is used to denote an individual's psychological relatedness to a particular group (e.g., race, nationality, and gender). A reference group includes those groups to which an individual commits his/her identity. "Identity development is determined by a multiplicity of factors including biological, ethnic, and cultural. These determinants interact over the life span of an individual to form what is known as an individual's personality" (Smith, 1989, p. 281).

The extent to which one's racial membership group is a prominent reference group is important. Racial identity is significant because it gives purpose and direction. It is the sense of group membership that is psychologically important for people (Smith, 1989). Racial identity development is the process describing the degree to which an individual identifies with his/her racial group. Smith (1989) posits that an individual whose racial identity is anchored to his/her membership groups stands a greater chance of being psychologically healthy.

Developmental psychologists have long accepted the notion that a person's identity is composed of many psychological components (Helms, 1989). However, the developmental theories have not examined the multiple layers of diversity of individuals (Highlen, Myers, Hanley, Speight, Reynolds, Adams, and Cox, 1986).
Missing from traditional developmental theories, however, is the question of how racial identity and gender identity simultaneously influence identity development in African-American women.

Gender, race, and culture are critical determinants of an individual’s identity. African-American women’s attitudes, both about being African-American and female, influence their identity development as an African-American woman. African-American women are exposed to racism and sexism which effect their social psychological realities (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994). Racism can complicate the formation of positive racial identity just as sexism can complicate the formation of a positive gender identity. The history of racism affects the experience of gender and may intensify the effects of sexism for African-American women. When negative stereotypes are internalized, it can negatively affect the African-American woman’s sense of self (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994). Thus, both gender and racial factors are central to African-American women’s self-definition (Barret, 1990).

Racial identity models, typically, address the development of positive African-American identity. They do not address, however, the role gender plays in racial identity development. The racial identity models imply that male and female racial identity development is the same. In general, gender has been ignored as a variable in the literature on racial identity. Most identity models have not examined the multidimensional nature of human existence (Myers, Speight, Highlen, Cox, Reynolds, Adams, & Hanley, 1991).
Gender identity models describe the process through which women come to identify with their own gender group (Davenport & Yurich, 1991). Many gender identity models do not address diversity. These models insinuate that gender development is the same for all women regardless of race. The African-American woman's identity development process cannot be described precisely by focusing on each variable (race and gender) separately. Research and theory investigating the relationship between racial identity and gender identity has been scare. In general, gender has been ignored as a variable in the literature on racial identity, and at the same time, race has been greatly ignored as a variable in the literature on gender identity.

One recent attempt to explain the identity development of the African-American woman was an empirical study by Gooley (1989). Gooley (1989) examined the extent to which African-American women are conscious of their identities as women and African-Americans. The researcher suggested that both racism and sexism have effects on African-American women’s identity development. Gooley (1989) suggested that the processes of racism and sexism can be considered as interconnected because of the difficulty in distinguishing between the process as they relate to African-American women. She proposed that identity models move from considering race as the significant component of African-American women’s identity development by including elements related to gender. Gooley’s (1989) findings support the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between African-American women’s race and
gender consciousness. These findings affirm the value of considering African-American women’s identity from a multidimensional standpoint.

Few studies have examined the relationship between racial identity and gender identity among African-American women. Although Gooley (1989) study addressed the relationship between race and gender consciousness, the study did not use Cross (1971) model of racial identity or Downing and Roush (1985) model of feminist identity development. Other variables such as age, educational level, and income were not measured in the study. Gooley (1989) recommended that future research discuss the relationship of racial identity, gender identity, and the extent age and income are variables. Given the extent to which race and gender play a significant role in African-American women’s lives, research is warranted to explore the relationship between racial identity and gender identity.

The purpose of the study is: (a) to examine the relationship among educational level, income, and age to various racial identity attitudes, (b) to examine the relationship among educational level, income, and age to various gender identity attitudes, and (c) to investigate the relationship between racial identity and gender identity. The ultimate goal for the study is to develop a better understanding and provide insight on the issue of African-American women’s identity development by determining the relationship of racial identity attitudes to gender identity attitudes.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The present review will focus on research relevant to the present empirical study. The research is divided into two main areas which are racial identity development and gender identity development. For the purposes of this study, the following operational definitions will be used. "Racial identity refers to the quality of a person's commitment to his/her socially ascribed racial group" (Helms & Carter, 1991, p. 446). "Gender identity is the cognitive, affective, and behavioral orientation of the self as a female towards others and a feeling of close association with womankind" (Rozee-Koker, Dansby, & Wallston, 1985, p. 271). African-American woman's identity alludes to one's being cognizant of being African-American and a woman simultaneously.

Racial Identity Development

There have been many models of racial identity which describes the process in which African-Americans develop healthy racial identity. Each model explains variability in the psychological development of African-Americans (Parham, 1989). Most racial identity models originated in the 1960's and 1970's period characterized by increased activities in the part of the Civil Rights Movement (Cross, 1971; Thomas, 1970; Milliones, 1980). The most recognized racial identity model is William Cross's "Negro to Black" conversion model (Cross, 1971). Cross (1971)
described a changing process that is influenced by individual characteristics as well as environmental factors. He described five states of racial identity that occur in reaction to the experience of resisting oppression.

The first stage, Pre-encounter, is illustrated by attitudes that are very pro-White and anti-Black. The persons reference is usually an Eurocentric/Western view. The second stage, Encounter, is characterized by an individual experiencing a personal or social event that challenges their frame of reference. The individual may experience an incident which makes him/her feel shame about rejecting their race. The third stage, Immersion-Emersion, represents a turning point in the conversion from the old to a new frame of reference. The person immerses themselves into a world of Blackness. Everything the person values is relates to the Black culture. They develop attitudes that are pro-Black and anti-White. Stage four, Internalization, is represented by the individual achieving self-confidence through his/her Blackness. The final stage, Internalization-Commitment, occurs when an individual takes political action to facilitate change.

Cross' four-stage model of racial identity has served as the basis for research examining the extent racial identity attitudes may influence or may be associated with numerous variables. Racial identity attitudes of African-American women have been found to be correlated with psychological well-being, self-esteem, value orientation, and self-actualization (Parham & Helms, 1985a; 1985b; Pyant & Yanico, 1991). Encounter attitudes were positively correlated to self-esteem and self-actualization (Parham & Helms, 1985a; 1985b). Pre-Encounter and immersion-emersion attitudes
were negatively correlated to self-esteem and self-actualization, and positively correlated with feelings of inferiority and anxiety (Parham & Helms, 1985a; 1985b). Additionally, pre-encounter attitudes were negatively correlated to psychological well-being in African-American women (Pyant & Yanico, 1991). Pre-encounter and immersion-emersion attitudes seem to be related to negative mental health. The literature suggests that positive racial identity is associated with positive mental health in African-Americans.

Several criticisms of the Cross (1971) model and RIAS scale based on Parham expansion (Parham & Helms, 1981) have been made. Highlen et al. (1986) suggested that Cross (1971) model may reflect elements of a particular time because the model was developed as a result of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's which suggests that racial identity occurs due to negative experiences in the environment. Many Afrocentric psychologists believe that racial identity research dealing with African-Americans should be rooted in an Afrocentric perspective and not based on Eurocentric ideologies (Akbar, 1989; Nobles, 1989). Afrocentric theorists argued that one can only understand African-American from an Afrocentric viewpoint. Nobles (1989) asserted: "the African identity formation and development should be the simultaneous process that characterized actualities which must be gratifies and the potential that can be realized in African people" (p. 25).

Cross (1991) has addressed some of the criticism to the "Negro to Black" Conversion model. He stated that the experience of African-Americans living in America is different to the experience of Africans in Africa. He asserted that racial
identity models are more useful for African-Americans than Afrocentric models due to the history of racism and slavery within America. In defense, Cross (1989) stated that "Nigrescence is present today and will be present in the future. Nigrescence is one of the most powerful interpretive lenses with which to view and comprehend the Black American experience" (p. 294). Despite the criticism of Cross's (1971) model, the research on racial identity is still a vital tool in understanding the attitudes and experiences of African-Americans.

The racial identity models address attitudes, beliefs, and emotions about being African-American but do not address gender issues. The racial identity models make the assumption that African-American women and men development are the same (Speight & Ewing, 1992). While a major source for an African-American woman is her level of racial awareness, the experience of being a woman is meaningful also. Myers et al. (1991) stated that the racial identity and gender identity models many not describe accurately the experience of the African-American woman. There has been little empirical research that examines the experiences, attitudes, and emotions of the African-American woman. Future research needs to focus on how race and gender influences the identity development of the African-American woman.
Gender Identity Development

Recently several authors have focused on gender as an aspect of identity development (Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1987; Jordan & Surrey, 1986). Historically developmental models stressed the importance of separation from the mother at early stages of childhood development and from the family at adolescence. More recent theory, self-in-relation, suggest that the early emotional attentiveness between the mother and daughter aid women in becoming relational beings (Surrey, 1983). These authors suggest that women's identification takes place in a stage-wise process based on the "self-in-relation" theory for women's development (Josselson, 1987). According to Surrey (1983), "the self is a construct that describes the organization of a person's experience and construction of reality which clarifies the purpose and directionality of his/her behavior. Relationship implies a sense of knowing oneself and others through a process of mutual relational interaction" (p.1). The self-in-relation theory of women's development makes a shift in emphasis from separation from the mother to the relationship as the basis for self-experience and development (Erickson, 1963; Mahler, 1975).

According to the self-in-relation theory, the mother-daughter relationship is crucial to understanding the identity development of women. The daughter learns to respond and relate to the needs and feelings of others from the mother (Chodorow, 1978). The daughter through the mother's support and sensitivity develops within that relationship (Surrey, 1983). The theory suggests that the daughter can be empowered through the mother-daughter relationship which in turns creates a sense of
autonomy which is transferred to other relationships. According to Jordan and Surrey (1986), women's connections validate their capacities as relational beings, provide the foundation for autonomy, self-esteem, and are essential for continuing growth.

In many respects, the self-in-relation theory provides extensive information about women's experience and women's identification with their gender. However, these theory's principal focus is how the mother-daughter relationship shapes identity, but deemphasizes how other psycho-social-cultural factors may influence gender identity. Issues such as race are not often acknowledged. For example, Rozee-Koker et al. (1985) suggested that "the primary contributor to female identity is the experiencing of one's female body, its social meaning is attached to the culture and/or subculture to which the female belongs" (p. 270). At the heart of the self-in-relation theory is the concept of the mother-daughter relationship. This concept is defined by the emotional attachment between the mother and the daughter. Yet, the question remains, what influence do other psycho-social-cultural variables have on women's identity development? The self-in-relation theory is based on Western ideologies which may not be able to accurately describe the identity formation in the African-American woman.

Various authors have described a process through which women achieve self-definition (Downing & Roush, 1985; Helms, 1990). Downing and Roush's (1985) Feminist identity model and Helms' (cited in Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992) Womanist identity model are based on Cross' (1971) "Negro to Black" Conversion model. Downing and Roush (1985) stated that the model is based on the notion that
women who live in contemporary society must first acknowledge, then struggle with, and repeatedly work through their feelings as women in order to achieve positive feminist identity" (p. 695). The stages are passive-acceptance, revelation, embeddedness-emanation, synthesis, and active-commitment.

The first stage, Passive-acceptance, delineates when a woman accepts traditional gender roles. In this stage, the woman usually considers men to be superior to women. The second stage, Revelation, illustrates an event which causes a woman to move from traditional gender roles. It results in a questioning of self and roles. The third stage, Embeddedness-emanation, begins with the strengthening of a new identity for the woman. The woman develops emotional connections with similar women. The fourth stage, Synthesis, describes when the woman values being female and incorporates these positive beliefs in her identity. Women in this stage make choices for themselves based personal values. The last stage, Active-commitment, states that the woman adopts a feminist orientation and should contribute to changing society to a non-sexist world (Downing & Roush, 1985).

Although both Downing and Roush (1985) and Helms' (cited in Ossana, Helms & Leonard, 1992) models are based on Cross' (1971) model, there are differences. First, Helms' model proposes that women must find self-definition from within rather than societal stereotypes of womanhood. Second, a woman's definition of self comes from her own values and beliefs. Lastly, the Womanist Identity model suggests that feminist beliefs may not have to take place for healthy identity development.
Neither model of gender identity development addresses the multiple layers of identity development. Reynolds and Pope (1991) stated that "nature does not create discrete categories and multiple realities" (p. 175). The identity development models may not accurately describe the unique struggle that might be problematic for achieving a positive identity for the African-American woman. Most of these models are based on Eurocentric values which may not explain the unique experience of race and gender for the African-American woman. Gooley (1989) asserts that identity development models must move beyond the monistic view of gender as the most significant component of African-American women's identity by including elements related to race (Gooley, 1989). Therefore, gender identity models should incorporate the process through which African-American women come to identify with their own gender group.

Integration of Racial and Gender Identity

How does the African-American woman achieve a concept of herself as "woman" or "African-American"? What shapes that identity? African-American women's identity formation may be different from most women because they are a double minority. They are African-American and female simultaneously. The racial or gender models may not accurately describe the identity development of the African-American woman. The African-American woman has multiple sources of identity that include race, gender, and culture. Therefore, the interaction between race and gender needs to be explored.
Many researchers have suggested that there is an interactive influence between race and gender (Davenport & Yurich, 1991; Gooley, 1989, & Rozee-Koker et al., 1985). As stated earlier, African-American women's sense of self is based on them being cognizant of being African-American and female simultaneously. Many African-American women's identity have been based on societal values. African-American women have been subjected to oppression and sexism which can undermine their development. Being the target of oppression can create a self-image of inferiority and incompetence which can negatively effect identity development (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994). Such devaluation can complicate the formation of a positive identity. Internalizing negative messages can complicate their sense of self. African-American women most avoid internalizing societal views of self and define oneself. It is important that African-American women incorporate the multidimensional components of self into their identity. Integrating the various components that comprise one's identity is a trying but vital task for African-American women. The African-American woman must seek definition based on internal standards (Speight & Ewing, 1992).

There are many factors to be considered when examining African-American women's identity development. The existing literature on women's identity development suggested that race and gender are important aspects of healthy development (Downing & Roush, 1985; Gooley, 1989). The realities of African-American women reflect the influence of gender, race, culture, and ethnicity. Once researchers understand these variables, their relationships, and meaning, they can also
understand the experience of the African-American woman. In this study, the following variables of racial identity attitudes, feminist identity attitudes, educational level, age, and income were examined. Thus, the specific research questions were:

a) How does racial identity attitudes relate to income, educational level, and age?

b) How does feminist identity attitudes relate to income, educational level, and age?

c) What is the relationship between racial identity and gender identity?
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

This study was part of a larger study that investigated body image dissatisfaction in African-American women. Participants were 72 undergraduate and graduate African-American female students at Loyola University Chicago. Participants were drawn from a list of student enrolled in the university obtained from the Registrar's office. Three hundred names were randomly selected and only respondents who identified themselves as Black or African-American were utilized in this study. Out of 300 questionnaires, 72 were returned completed, resulting in 24% response rate.

Instruments

Data was collected using a demographic questionnaire, the Racial Identity Scale-Short form B (RIAS-B) authored by Parham and Helms (1981) and the Feminist Identity Scale (FIS) developed Rickard (1985).

The RIAS-B scale was developed by Parham and Helms (1981) to measure attitudes associated with the Cross (1971) model of Black identity development. A copy of the measure can be found in Appendix C. The RIAS-B is a 30-item scale with four subscales (pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, and internalization) each corresponding to the four stages of racial identity development. Participants use a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5
= "strongly agree" to indicate how much the statement describes them. A scale score is obtained by summing the responses in a particular subscale and dividing by the number of items in each subscale.

Internal consistency reliabilities for the subscales have been found to range from .37 to .69 for the Pre-encounter scale, .37 to .72 for the Encounter scale, .66 to .67 for the Immersion scale, and .35 to .79 for the Internalization scale (Parham & Helms, 1981). In this study, the reliability coefficient for the overall RIAS scale was .65. The subscales reliability coefficients were .74, .61, .67, and .40, respectively. Ponterotto and Wise (1987) found strong support for pre-encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization attitudes. Although studies show the RIAS needs further work, there has been consistent evidence for the validity of the scale. The RIAS is one of the most widely used measurement of racial identity development. Racial identity attitudes have served as the basis for an extensive number of studies on how racial identity influences value orientation, self-esteem, self-actualization, and counselor preference (Helms, 1990; Parham, 1989).

The FIS was developed by Rickard (1987) to measure attitudes associate with Downing and Roush (1985) feminist identity model was utilized. This measure is located in Appendix D. The FIS consists of 37-item scale with four subscales (passive-acceptance, revelation, embeddedness/emanation, and synthesis) each corresponding to the four stage model of feminist identity development. Participants used a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly
agree". A scale score is obtained by summing the responses in a particular subscale and dividing by the number of items in each subscale.

Internal consistency reliabilities for the subscales are: passive-acceptance, .93; revelation, .90; embeddedness-emanation, .84; and synthesis, .83 (Rickard, 1987). In this study, the reliability coefficient for the total FIS scale was .81. Subscale reliabilities were .56, .81, .68, .48, respectively. Rickard (1989) study found that dating behaviors displayed by women at different FIS stages were consistent with differing gender role behaviors that accompany feminist identity development. Rickard studies have found that the FIS scale is a valid measure of feminist identity development.

**Procedure**

Participants were mailed a survey packet. The survey packet consisted of a cover letter and a demographic questionnaire. The cover letter explained the nature of the study, the fact that the study was voluntary, and that the study was confidential. This cover letter can be found in Appendix A. The demographic questionnaire was a brief questionnaire asking participant's age, educational level, family income level, and ethnicity/race. A copy of the demographic questionnaire can be found in Appendix B. A self-addressed envelop was provided to respondents, so they could mail the questionnaires to the researcher's address.
Analysis of Data

Various statistical procedures were used to analyzed the data. Analysis of variance tests (ANOVAS) were computed to determine if mean differences occurred on racial identity (RIAS) and feminist identity attitudes (FIS) subscales according to income level. In order to determine the relationship of racial identity variables, feminist identity variables, and age, a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed. Then a multiple regression was conducted to determine the relationship between the predictor variable of the racial identity attitudes and the criterion variable of the feminist identity attitudes. All statistics were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The findings reported in this study are divided into two sections: a) demographic characteristics and b) primary analysis.

Demographic Characteristics

Demographically the population ranged from 18 to 62 years old with 30.60 as the mean age and 23 as the mode (S.D. = 9.4). More undergraduate (77%) than graduate students (23%) responded to the survey. Seven percent of the sample estimated their income level between $0 and $11,999, 28% between $12,000 and $24,999, 16% between $25,000 and $34,999, 7% between $35,000 and $44,999, 16% between $45,000 and $59,999, and 17% estimated over $60,000.

Primary Analysis

One-way analysis of variance tests were conducted to ascertain significant differences in racial identity according to income levels. No significant differences were found for income. Table 1 lists the mean scores of racial identity attitudes by income.
Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for RIAS and Subscales by Income

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One-way analysis of variance tests were conducted to examine significant differences in feminist identity according to income. Significant differences was found for embeddedness/emanation and income, F=3.91, p < .001. Tukey’s HSD post-hoc test indicated that women at income levels ranging from $12,000 to $24,999, $35,000 to $44,999, $45,000 to 59,000, and over $60,000 differed from women at income levels ranging from $0 to 11,999 and $25,000 to $34,999. Planned comparisons using Tukey’s HSD indicated that women in incomes ranging from $35,000 to $44,999 possessed higher embeddedness-emanation ratings than women in incomes from $25,000 to $34,999 (M=3.80 vs M=2.78). Table 2 lists the mean scores of feminist identity attitudes by income.
Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for FIS and Subscales by Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Passive Acceptance Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Revelation Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Embeddedness/Emanation Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Synthesis Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0 to $12000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$12000 to $25000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25000 to $35000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35000 to $45000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$45000 to $60000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60000 and Over</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to determine the relationship of racial identity variables, feminist identity variables, and age, Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were computed. Correlations ranged from a low of -.01 to a high of .78. Preencounter attitudes had a significant positive correlation with passive-acceptance attitudes ($r = .30, p < .05$). Encounter attitudes and a significant positive correlation with revelation attitudes ($r = .27, p < .05$). Immersion-emersion attitudes had a significant positive correlation with embeddedness-emanation attitudes ($r = .39, < p.01$). Internalization attitudes and synthesis attitudes significantly correlated in a positive direction ($r = .26, p < .05$). There was no significant relationship found with age. The correlation matrix is displayed in Table 3.

As feminist identity attitudes were found to differ significantly according to income, a stepwise multiple regression was conducted with income and educational level of participants in order to determine the amount of variance within RIAS-B and FIS attitudes that can be accounted for by income and educational level. Income and educational level did not contribute to the predictor equation.

The dependent subscale variables of the RIAS-B scale, preencounter, encounter, immersion, and internalization attitudes and the independent subscale variables of the FIS scale, passive-acceptance, revelation, embeddedness, and synthesis were entered into a stepwise regression analysis. The best predictor models of racial identity, including preencounter, encounter, immersion and internalization, are as follows. Embeddedness accounted for 18% of the variance in encounter attitudes ($F = 13.33, p < .0005$). Embeddedness is also predictive of immersion, accounting for 14% of the
variance ($F=10.39$, $p<.0020$). Lastly, both embeddedness and synthesis are predictive of internalization attitudes. Combined these two variables account for 18% of the variance ($F=6.8$, $p<.0021$). Specifically, 11% of the variance can be attributed to embeddedness and the remaining 7% belongs to synthesis.
Table 3

Correlation Coefficients for RIAS Subscales, FIS Subscales and Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RIAS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Pre Encounter</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.0670</td>
<td>.0102</td>
<td>-.231</td>
<td>* .2976</td>
<td>* .2973</td>
<td>-.0758</td>
<td>-.0150</td>
<td>.1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Encounter</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.7795</td>
<td>* .3582</td>
<td>.0369</td>
<td>.2718</td>
<td>* .4093</td>
<td>* .0387</td>
<td>-.0304</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Immersion/Emersion</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.3886</td>
<td>* .0055</td>
<td>.3165</td>
<td>* .3867</td>
<td>-.0433</td>
<td>.0611</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Internalization</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-.0435</td>
<td>.1235</td>
<td>.2637</td>
<td>* .2924</td>
<td>.0148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Passive Acceptance</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.3095</td>
<td>* .1260</td>
<td>.1265</td>
<td>.0942</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Revelation</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.4503</td>
<td>* .3389</td>
<td>.0084</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Embeddedness/Emotion</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.1098</td>
<td>.0002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Synthesis</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.2160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05,  ** p < .01
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore a number of issues related to racial identity and gender identity of African-American women. Specifically, this study examined the relationship between African-American women’s racial and gender identity attitudes. Additionally, the relationship among income level, educational level, and age were examined. The following discussion focuses on the interpretation of the significant findings. Limitations of the study, implications for counseling, and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Relationship of the Data to the Research Questions

Question 1, what is the relationship between various racial identity attitudes with income, educational level, and age? The results showed that how African-American women feel about being African-American does not relate to income, educational level, and age. The literature regarding the relationship between racial identity and socioeconomic status (e.g., income, educational level) have been inconsistent. One study found that socioeconomic status related to racial identity attitudes (Wilson, 1980) and another found no relationship between the two variables (Carter, 1984). Carter (1984) hypothesized that racial identity attitudes were two separate constructs making them unrelated (Carter, 1984). This study found results similar to Carter’s study. There was no significant relationship found between income, educational level,
and age with pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, or internalization attitudes.

Question 2, what is the relationship between various gender identity attitudes with income, educational level, and age? The results showed that gender identity attitudes did not significantly relate to educational level and age. However, there was a significant relationship between embeddedness-emanation attitudes and income. The results indicated that middle class women (35,000 to 44,999) possessed higher levels of embeddedness-emanation attitudes. In the embeddedness-emanation stage, the woman begins to strengthen her new identity as a woman. She develops emotional connections with similar women. It is possible that middle class women are in environments with challenge their concept of womanhood such as the workplace. This relationship could also be a fluke, hence only 5 participants were included in the $35,000 to $44,999 income bracket.

Question 3, what is the relationship between racial identity attitudes and gender identity attitudes? Racial identity attitudes seem to impact feminist identity attitudes. It was hypothesized that there was a relationship between racial identity and gender identity. This finding was supported in the correlation matrix and the regression analysis. In this study, immersion-emersion attitudes were found to significantly relate to embeddedness-emanation. Internalization attitudes were found to significantly relate to synthesis attitudes. This suggests that women with strong internalization attitudes valued being female and African-American and incorporated these beliefs in their self-concept. The findings also indicate that the racial and
gender identity stages are parallel processes. The current study demonstrates the importance of considering African-American women’s identity from a multidimensional standpoint.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study provides insights on the issue of African-American women’s identity. However, there are several limitations to the study. First, the study is limited by the use of self-report measures. One difficulty with self-report measures is that participants may have given answers that were viewed as socially acceptable. The second limitation concerns the location from which participants were selected. The sample was obtained from a predominately white university in an urban area. The generalizability of the study may be restricted. The response rate of 24% is a limitation. Seventy-six percent of the women did not return the questionnaires. It is possible that the study addressed emotional issues the women did not want to discuss.

The major limitation with the study was the RIAS-B scale. The reliability coefficients in the study were lower than those previously found. The racial identity scale was normed with college students ages 18-25 years, whereas the sample in this study were college and graduate students ages 18-62. The results from this study may indicate that the RIAS-B is best suited for a college-aged sample. In addition, the intercorrelation coefficients found in the study differed from those obtained in past studies. Encounter was found to be significantly correlated to immersion-emersion attitudes and internalization attitudes. Immersion-emersion attitudes was found to be significantly correlated to internalization attitudes. Helms (1990) stated that encounter
is the attitude that must exist before one can enter the next stage immersion-emersion, therefore the intercorrelation between encounter and immersion-emersion attitudes are consistent with theoretical descriptions of the relevant stages. As the RIAS-B had low reliability, the measure may need to be revised.

**Implications for Counseling**

The implications of the present study’s findings are important for those therapists who work with African-American women. First, most psychotherapeutic theories ignore racial and gender interaction. Counselors must realize that issues such as race, culture, and gender are crucial factors in therapeutic treatment. "African-American women’s racial and gender identity should be a routine part of treatment considerations" (Comas, Diaz, & Greene, 1994, p. 27). Therapists working with African-American women should provide a supportive environment. It is important that the counselor communicate to the African-American woman that they recognize the extent racism and sexism may play a role in her life. Comas-Diaz and Greene (1994) state "failure to recognize the combined influence and impact of racial and gender parameter can seriously compromise the effectiveness of mental health treatment" (p. 27). Additionally, Olmedo and Parron (1981) stated "due to the combined effects of gender and ethnicity, they are often in double jeopardy with respect to their mental health status" (p. 25). These authors stress the importance of working with African-American women from a multi-dimensional standpoint. In conclusion, traditional psychotherapeutic theories need to be expanded and integrated to encompass the experience of African-American women in order to be effective.
Integrating the various components that comprise one’s identity is a trying but vital task for African-American women.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Since research on the relationship between African-American women’s racial identity and gender identity is scarce, future studies are needed to clarify the relationship between racial identity, gender identity, and the measures that are used to assess the relationship. Also, the sample in this study was primarily middle class, and the results may not be generalizable to lower or upper class African-American women. Future studies should attempt to include participants from various backgrounds. Additionally, the study utilized college-aged women in an urban university in the midwest, future studies should attempt to include women from a variety of backgrounds.

In summary, this study provides evidence that there is a relationship between racial identity and gender identity in African-American women, indicating that both are important for positive identity development. This study has help increase the understanding of African-American women’s identity development by demonstrating that race and gender are important components in the development of positive identity for the African-American woman. It is hoped the results of this study will prompt other research in an area just beginning to be examined.
Dear Participant:

My name is Debora Esty, and I am a graduate student in the Counseling and Educational Psychology Department at Loyola University of Chicago. I am writing to request your participation in my Master's Thesis study. My study is examining the relationship between Black women's feelings about themselves and their bodies. Four questionnaires are contained in this envelope which will take you about forty minutes to complete. This study is completely voluntary, but your participation is needed to make this study successful. I hope you will choose to participate!

Before you do answer the questionnaires, let me point out two things. First of all, the questionnaires are completely anonymous and are identified only by a code number. THEREFORE, PLEASE DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME TO ANY OF THE PAGES! Your responses are strictly confidential. The results of this study will be reported only in terms of the whole group, not in terms of individual responses.

Finally, some of the questions may feel personal and may stir up some uncomfortable feelings. If any uncomfortable feelings do arise, please consider contacting Loyola University's Counseling Center to talk with someone.

If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me or Dr. Suzette L. Speight at (312) 915-6034.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

Debora Esty
APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
Instruction: Circle the best choice. Some questions ask you to respond in the blank provided. This information is to be used for sample description and data analysis purposes. You do not need to answer any information which you feel is inappropriate.

1. Age: __________

2. Last year in school you completed: ______________________________

3. Estimated Family Income:
   a. 0-11,999
   b. 12,000 - 24,999
   c. 25,000 - 34,999
   d. 35,000 - 44,999
   e. 45,000 - 59,999
   f. over 60,000

4. What is your mother’s occupation? ________________________________

5. What is your father’s occupation? ________________________________

6. Race/Ethnicity: ________________________________________________
APPENDIX C

RACIAL IDENTITY ATTITUDE SCALE
This questionnaire is designed to measure people's social and political attitudes.

Please circle the appropriate number corresponding to your opinion of each statement as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2. Disagree</th>
<th>3. Agree</th>
<th>4. Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I believe that being Black is a positive experience.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I know through experience what being Black in America means.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I feel unable to involve myself in White experiences and am increasing my involvement in Black experiences.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I believe that large numbers of Blacks are untrustworthy.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I feel an overwhelming attachment to Black people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I involve myself in causes that will help all oppressed people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I feel comfortable wherever I am.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I believe that White people look and express themselves better than Blacks.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I feel very uncomfortable around Black people.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I feel good about being Black, but do not limit myself to Black activities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I often find myself referring to White people as honkies, devils, pigs, etc.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I believe that to be Black is not necessarily good.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I believe that certain aspects of the Black experience apply to me, and others do not.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 though there are no other Blacks involved.  
17. I believe that Black people should learn to think 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.  
20. I feel excitement and joy in Black surroundings.  
21. I believe that Black people come from a strange, dark, and uncivilized continent.  
22. People, regardless of their race, have strengths 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 a 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.
APPENDIX D

FEMINIST IDENTITY SCALE
The statements below describe attitudes you may have toward yourself as woman.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please circle the appropriate number corresponding to your opinion of each statement as follows:


1. I like to refer to my female friends as "the girls".

2. I like being a traditional female.

3. Men believe and act as if they are superior, but women are really the superior gender.

4. I like to look up to the man with whom I am romantically involved.

5. My female friends are like me in that we are all angry at men and the ways we have been treated as women.

6. I am very interested in women artists.

7. I prefer to think of myself and my female peers as "girls" as opposed to "women".

8. I am very interested in women's studies.

9. It is especially important to me to feel accepted by the men in my life.

10. I never realized until recently that I have experienced oppression and discrimination as a woman in this society.

11. I feel like I've been duped into believing society's perceptions of me as a woman.

12. Relationships with most men stunt my personal growth.

13. I feel angry when I think about the way I am treated by men and boys.
14. Men receive many advantages in society and because of this are against equality for women.

15. Gradually, I am beginning to see just how sexist society really is.

16. Regretfully, I can see ways in which I have perpetrated sexist attitudes in the past.

17. Only women can truly understand what it means to be a woman in this culture.

18. I am very interested in women musicians.

19. Women's ways are much superior to men's ways of living.

20. I am very interested in women writers.

21. I enjoy the pride and self-assurance that comes from being a strong female.

22. I choose my "causes" carefully to work for greater equality for all people.

23. I owe it not only to women but to all people to work for greater opportunity and equality for all.

24. I presently experience a much greater understanding of the connectedness of the women's movement and other movements against injustice and oppression.

25. I believe my consciousness is being raised about what it means to be a woman in this society.

26. Women have less political and personal power than men.

27. Women earn less than men in this society because of discrimination.

28. In my interactions with men, I am always looking for ways I may be discriminated against because I am female.

29. I find myself much more willing to trust my perception of events than I have been in the past.
30. It is more important that I feel good about the choices I make for my life style than that I make the "right" choice.

31. As I have grown in my beliefs I have realized that it is more important to value women as individuals than as members of a larger group of women.

32. I am concerned that if we become less vocal about women's oppression and more vocal about oppression in general, women will suffer.

33. I feel less conflicted about my role as a woman that I used to.

34. I am proud to be a competent woman.

35. I feel like I have blended my female attributes with my unique personal qualities.

36. Discrimination is one cause, but not the only cause, of women's lower pay rates in the workforce.

37. I have incorporated what is female and feminine into my own unique personality.
REFERENCES


VITA

Samoan C. Johnson was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1972. In 1989, She entered Dillard University, New Orleans, Louisiana, and received her B.A. in psychology. She enrolled in the Master of Arts program in Community Counseling at Loyola University Chicago in August, 1993. She has worked with adolescents in various inpatient and outpatient settings. Currently, she is working as an adolescent therapist in Chicago.
APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Samoan C. Johnson has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Suzette Speight, Director  
Assistant Professor, Counseling Psychology  
Loyola University Chicago  

Dr. Elizabeth Vera  
Assistant Professor, Counseling Psychology  
Loyola University Chicago  

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Nov 21, 1995  
Date  

Suzette Speight  
Director's Signature