

At the Crossroads: Racial and Womanist Identity Development in Black and White Women

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This study explored the hypothesis that womanist identity and racial identity development are related. The racial identity and womanist identity attitudes of 214 women were measured using the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale, the White Racial Identity Attitude Scales (WRIAS), and the Womanist Identity Attitude Scale. Canonical correlation analysis was used to determine the nature of relationships among racial identity and womanist identity attitudes. Results showed that for Black women there was a significant relation between racial identity and womanist identity attitudes. Specifically, Internalization attitudes on the WRIAS were positively related to Level II (Encounter) and Level IV (Internalization) attitudes on the Womanist Identity Attitude Scale. Despite a larger number of White participants, no such relationship emerged for White women. Implications for theory, research, and counseling are discussed.

There is growing evidence that gender identity may develop differently for women of different races (Carter & Parks, in press) and that the effects of race and gender on other variables are additive or even interactive (Adams, 1983; Chester, 1983; Lykes, 1983; Reid, 1988). Brown and Gilligan (1992) noted the differential effect of race in their study of the development of preadolescent girls. Martin and Nagayama Hall (1992) recently reported a negative relationship between immersion-*emersion* racial identity attitudes and feminist attitudes in Black women. The purpose of this study is to explore directly the relationships between the racial and gender components of identity for Black and White women.

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE "OTHER"

The history of discussion of women and visible racial and ethnic group members in the psychological literature is long and varied. However, until fairly recently, the literature was essentially comparative and was critical of those who differed from the White male "norm." Theories of normal psychological functioning and development in a wide range of areas were developed by studying groups of White men (Kohlberg, 1981; Levinson, 1978; Murray, 1938; Perry, 1970; also see Enns, 1991), and women and Blacks were seen as deficient when differences between their experiences and those of White men emerged. Although Sigmund Freud worked extensively with women, he firmly believed them to be inferior to men, and the theories that he built on the basis of his interactions with them were theories of dysfunction (Stagner, 1988). Although there were some exceptions to this pattern, for example, Alfred Adler's contention that women's functioning was influenced by their disempowered place in society (Stagner, 1988), the general image of psychological health was developed from an essentially racist, sexist, and heterosexist frame of reference.

More recently, a variety of cross-cultural and gender-aware counseling approaches have been proposed. There have been attempts to train psychologists to understand the experiences of women and of visible racial and ethnic clients. Although it can be argued that these approaches represent movement toward a more inclusive vision of functioning, many of these theories continue to presume White and male therapists and focus on understanding a client who is "other" (Carter, 1995; Helms, 1984, 1990d). Therapists are much less fre-

quently trained to understand themselves as racial and gendered beings and to explore the effect that these variables have on their work within both inter- and intraracial and gender settings.

Another weakness in many recent theories and treatment approaches is that they assume that racial and gender groups are essentially monolithic. Little attention is paid to the question of the various types of identification an individual might have with his or her race and gender and, in turn, the effect that these attitudes might have on functioning. Many theorists instead present a psychology of women or a Black psychology that is meant to apply to all women or to all Blacks.

A DIFFERENTIAL APPROACH TO RACE AND GENDER

To address these gaps in the literature, several researchers have developed a family of identity models in the past 20 years. Most are modeled on the Black Racial Identity theory of Cross (1971), who proposed a five-stage process he described as a "Negro to Black conversion experience." All these models contend that race and gender cannot be treated merely as demographic or sociological variables but attempt to approach race and gender psychologically, based on the levels of identification with one's race and gender.

Cross's (1971) model highlighted the fact that race per se is not sufficient to describe characteristics of racial group members. His model emphasized that African Americans differ in their degree of identification with African American culture. More recent research (Carter, 1991, 1995; Carter & Helms, 1987; Helms, 1990a, 1990b; Parham & Helms, 1985a, 1985b) has shown that these different types of identification are associated with very different profiles of individual psychological functioning. Cross further suggested that these differing degrees of identification with African American culture and concomitant attitudes toward White culture consist of a sequence of developmental stages (see Table 1). Helms and Parham (in press) operationalized the first four of the stages proposed by Cross and found support for them. Additional research tends to support the Black racial identity development model (Carter, 1991, 1995; Carter & Helms, 1987; Helms, 1990c, 1990d; Helms & Parham, 1990; Parham & Helms, 1981; Pyant & Yanico, 1991).

Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1989) and Sue and Sue (1990) suggested that the catalyst that underlies an individual's progression

through the various stages proposed by Cross (1971) is the experience of societal "oppression." In a similar vein, Helms (1990a) highlighted the crucial role that the experience of the difference in "social power" plays in the process of racial identity development. These authors suggested that insofar as it is the consequences of membership in a nondominant group that drives the process described by Cross (1971), the model may be used to understand the experiences of members of other nondominant groups as well. Recent revisions of the models of racial identity (Carter, 1995; Helms, 1994, in press; Helms & Piper, 1994), however, have shifted from stage-oppression focused development to sequential ego identity statuses and personality integration. Thus, stages have been replaced by statuses, and oppression as the essential feature has been replaced by ego differentiation and personality development (Block & Carter, 1996).

Recently, theorists have developed similar models to explain the psychological development of women. The earliest such theory was Downing and Roush's (1985) Feminist Identity model. More recently, Helms (1990f) developed a four-stage model of women's identity development, which is related to her work on African Americans. In fact, she labeled her stages Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion–Emersion, and Internalization, after the stages in the model (see Table 1). Helms's (1990f) model differs from the Downing and Roush (1985) model in that the focus is on a shift from an externally defined to an internally defined identity, rather than on a transition from a passive stance to an active and feminist one. Helms's first level, Preencounter (Womanist I), is characterized by acceptance of traditional sex roles and denial of societal bias. (Because this article examines the relationship between these attitudes and Black racial

identity attitudes with the same names, the Womanist levels are labeled Womanist I to IV for the remainder of the article.) The second level of Helms's model, Encounter (Womanist II), is characterized by questioning and confusion about gender roles in the society. Transition to this level is typically triggered by an external event or events that challenge the woman's prior worldview. In this stage, the woman cautiously explores alternative solutions to role conflicts. In Helms's third stage, Immersion–Emersion (Womanist III), the woman resolves the discomfort of the Womanist II phase by opting for another diametrically opposed but still externally determined perspective. She rejects traditional gender roles, often becoming quite hostile toward men and idealizing of women. Later in this stage, she seeks positive female role models and may develop intense interpersonal connections with other women. Finally, in the Internalization (Womanist IV) stage of Helms's model, the woman achieves an internally defined and more fully integrated identity. Helms stressed that in this stage the woman is able to develop a view of womanhood without an undue dependence on either the traditional or the feminist viewpoint.

The Womanist model (Helms, 1990f) has recently been used in two empirical studies. In the first, a study of self-esteem and environmental bias perceptions of college women, Ossana, Helms, and Leonard (1992) found that Womanist IV attitudes were positively related to self-esteem, and that Womanist II and Womanist III attitudes were negatively related to self-esteem. They also found that all of the attitudes except Womanist IV were positively related to perceptions of environmental gender bias. The results also suggest that, as Helms (1990f) argued, Womanist IV attitudes represent a more internal standard of womanhood, and that less attention is paid by

TABLE 1
Racial and Womanist Identity Development

Black Racial Identity	White Racial Identity	Womanist Identity
<i>Preencounter:</i> Idealization of Whites and Whiteness. Denigration of Blacks and Black culture.	<i>Contact:</i> Naive denial of racism in current society. Acceptance of White values as "normal." Claims to be "color-blind."	<i>Preencounter (Womanist I):</i> Acceptance of traditional sex roles; denial of societal bias.
<i>Encounter:</i> Rejection of White culture. Beginning of search for Black identity. Confusion and intense affect mark this transitional stage.	<i>Disintegration:</i> Internal conflict caused by recognition of societal racism. Overidentification with or patronizing attitude toward Blacks.	<i>Encounter (Womanist II):</i> Questioning and confusion about gender roles. Tentative exploration of solutions to role conflicts.
<i>Immersion–Emersion:</i> Withdrawal into Black world. Idealization of Blackness. Embracing of stereotypical image of Blackness. Denigration of Whiteness.	<i>Reintegration:</i> Withdrawal into White culture. Denigration of Blacks. Belief in White cultural superiority.	<i>Immersion–Emersion (Womanist III):</i> Externally based feminist stance. Hostility toward men; idealization of women. Intense relationships with other women.
<i>Internalization:</i> Internally defined positive Black identity. Transcendence of racism. Acceptance of positive aspects of White culture.	<i>Pseudo-Independence:</i> Intellectual, but not emotional, acceptance of Blacks. Discomfort with close personal interaction with Blacks. <i>Autonomy:</i> Internally defined nonracist White identity. Openness to an interest in other cultures. Capacity for the interest in close relationships with Blacks as well as with Whites.	<i>Internalization (Womanist IV):</i> Internally defined and integrated female identity without undue reliance on either traditional roles or feminist viewpoint.

women with high levels of these attitudes to external evaluation. These attitudes appear, as predicted, to represent the healthiest level of self-perception.

In a study of the relationship between womanist identity and mental health based on the data set used in the present study, Carter and Parks (in press) found that Black and White women had different patterns of womanist identity attitudes. White women scored higher than did their Black peers in Womanist II and Womanist IV attitudes. Black women scored higher than did White women on the Womanist I and Womanist III scales. Furthermore, Carter and Parks found that, for White women, womanist identity attitudes are related to mental health. Womanist III, and to a lesser extent Womanist I and II, attitudes were associated with a number of problematic symptoms. Specifically, they were associated with, in order of strength of association, symptoms related to hallucination, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, phobias, paranoia, and alcohol use as measured by the Bell scale (Schwab, Bell, Warheit, & Schwab, 1979) of psychological symptomatology. This does not mean that White women high in Womanist III attitudes have these psychological disorders, but it does indicate that they are more likely to report some symptoms associated with the disorders, and therefore appear to be suffering greater psychological discomfort than other White women. The study did not provide evidence for such a relationship between womanist identity and mental health for Black women.

DEVELOPMENT FROM A POSITION OF POWER: WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

In 1984, Helms proposed a model of White racial identity development (see Helms, 1984, 1990e, in press). In presenting this model, Helms addressed the other side of the dynamic of social power, noted earlier. Helms (1984, 1990e) suggested that, as the socially powerful race in this country, Whites undergo a process of racial identity development that is very different from that of nondominant groups (see Table 1). She described two phases. In the first phase (the abandonment of racism), a White person who has inherited the racist beliefs of the dominant society begins from a position of initial "naïveté" regarding race (Contact). With the advent of cross-racial contacts, a White person becomes aware of his or her own membership in the dominant racial group and grows uneasy as he or she becomes aware of the consequences of racism for himself or herself and for Blacks and other people of color (Disintegration). One frequent way of resolving the dissonance experienced in this status is a "retreat into Whiteness"—a reactive and exclusive valuing of Whites and White culture and a denigration of Blacks and Black culture (Reintegration).

Phase 2 (building a positive [nonracist] White identity) begins after the anger of the Reintegration status dissipates and an individual experiences an intellectual curiosity about race and cultural differences (Pseudo-Independence). Helms (1990e) suggested that this may be followed by a time of rediscovering, in a nonreactive way, positive aspects in White culture (Emersion-Immersion). In the final status of White racial identity development, a person not only tolerates, but actually values, racial and cultural differences (Autonomy).

Helms has described the process of White racial identity in much greater detail elsewhere (Helms, 1984, 1990e), and studies have offered evidence in support of the model (Block, Roberson, & Neuger, 1995; Carter, 1988, 1990a, 1995; Carter, Gushue, & Weitzman, 1994; Carter & Helms, 1990, 1992; Claney & Parker, 1989; Helms & Carter, 1990, 1991; Tokar & Swanson, 1991). The crucial point for this

discussion is that because Whites occupy a different position of social power in this society, their experience of racial identity development also differs greatly from that of members of nondominant racial groups. For instance, as members of the dominant group, Whites are to some extent free simply to disengage from the development process through a change of job or locale, which eliminates their need to interact with members of other racial groups. Although members of both nondominant and dominant racial groups must come to terms with the consequences of racism, exactly what the task will involve will be quite different for each group.

RACIAL AND GENDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

For both Black and White women, both racial and womanist identity development trace an individual's evolution from uncritical acceptance of externally derived beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors to an internally determined stance. However, although Black and White women share many experiences, they also share fundamentally different places in the American social order. Whereas Black women are seen as "other" in both racial and gender terms, White women are in a position of power and privilege in racial terms. In terms of racial and womanist identity, a Black woman begins her development from a position of depreciation by the dominant group. There would seem to be an inherent similarity in the kinds of tasks, challenges, and situations that she will face as she moves to an internally derived set of beliefs and attitudes about her membership in the nondominant group. It might be expected that the similarity of tasks for Black women might allow learning in one area to generalize to the other. For White women, however, this would not be expected. Whereas racial identity development must occur from a position of social power, gender identity is formed from a culturally subordinate position. Thus, their developmental tasks are not only different, but possibly conflicting. It is possible, however, that their dissimilar roles in the gender and racial hierarchies might facilitate identification with White men and/or Black women, which, in turn, might affect racial and gender development in other ways. To better understand the differential effect of such convergent and divergent developmental tasks, we designed this study to explore the relationships between women's gender identity attitudes as conceptualized in Helms's Womanist model (Helms, 1990f; Ossana et al., 1992) and their racial identity attitudes as conceptualized by Helms (1984, 1990e).

METHOD

Participants

A total of 214 women attending a large midwestern university participated in the study. Of these, 67 women classified themselves as African American and 147 women as White. The students had class standing ranging from freshmen to senior and had a mean age of 19.6 years ($SD = 3.6$). The students' self-reported socioeconomic status was predominantly middle class.

Instruments

Womanist Identity Attitude Scale (WIAS). This scale is designed to measure womanist identity as discussed by Helms (1990e). It is a 43-item, Likert-type (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) self-report scale. Subscales for each of the four womanist attitudes (Womanist I, Womanist II, Womanist III, and Womanist IV) are obtained by summing the relevant items. Internal consistency reliability

ties (Cronbach's alphas) have been found to fall in the following ranges: Womanist I, .55 to .59; Womanist II, .34 to .43; Womanist III, .71 to .82; and Womanist IV, .54 to .77 (Carter & Parks, in press; Ossana et al., 1992). For some of the scales, reliability coefficients are low when based on the classical test theory. The low reliability coefficients may limit the generalizability of the study or may reflect environmental effects. Womanist identity attitudes have been shown to be related to self-esteem, perceptions of bias (Ossana et al., 1992), and psychological symptomatology (Carter & Parks, in press).

White Racial Identity Attitude Scale. This scale was designed to assess the attitudes of White individuals toward both Whites and Blacks. Developed by Helms and Carter (1990), it is a 50-item, Likert-type (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) self-report instrument. The measure's five subscales correspond with the five attitudes in Helms's (1984) original model: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-Independence, and Autonomy. As in the WIAS, subscale scores were computed by summing scores for all items associated with a particular scale. Helms and Carter (1991) reported several studies yielding reliabilities in the following ranges: Contact, .55 to .67; Disintegration, .75 to .77; Reintegration, .75 to .80; Pseudo-Independence, .65 to .71; and Autonomy, .65 to .74. In this study, the scales had the following overall internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas): Contact, .65; Disintegration, .80; Reintegration, .82; Pseudo-Independence, .68; and Autonomy, .69. Evidence supporting the validity of the scales has been suggested by studies in which they have been found to be differentially related to psychological functioning (Carter, 1991), cultural values (Carter & Helms, 1990), work values (Carter et al., 1994), self-actualization (Tokar & Swanson, 1991), counselor intentions (Carter, 1990a, 1995), counseling relationship types (Carter & Helms, 1992), mental health (Carter, Sicalides, & Parks, 1995), and racism (Carter, 1990b).

Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS-B). The RIAS-B, developed by Helms and Parham (in press), measures the attitudes of Black individuals regarding their own and other racial groups. This 30-item, Likert-type (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) self-report instrument consists of four subscales. These scales are related to the first four attitudes in Cross's (1971) original model: Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization. Again, raw scores are computed by adding scores for all items in a particular scale. Evidence of validity is given in Helms and Carter (1991). They report reliability data as follows: Preencounter, .69; Encounter, .50; Immersion-Emersion, .67; and Internalization, .80. In the present study, the following overall internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) were obtained: Preencounter, .70; Encounter, .35; Immersion-Emersion, .47; and Internalization, .67. For some of the scales, reliability coefficients are low when based on the scales that show the lowest scores are the transitional ones, such as Encounter. It may be difficult to capture a transition of this nature. The low reliability coefficients may limit the generalizability of the study or may reflect environmental effects. Further research is warranted to clarify the psychometric issues (for a more detailed discussion of these issues, see Helms, in press; Carter, in press). Additional confirmation of the validity of the scales has been provided by studies in which they have been found to be differentially related to cognitive styles (Helms & Parham, 1990), psychological well-being (Pyant & Yanico, 1991), psychological functioning (Carter, 1991, 1995), value orientations (Carter & Helms, 1987), self-esteem (Parham & Helms, 1985a), self-actualization (Parham & Helms, 1985b), satisfaction in supervision (Cook & Helms, 1988), counselor preference (Helms &

Carter, 1991; Parham & Helms, 1981), client satisfaction (Bradby & Helms, 1990), counselor intentions (Carter, 1990a, 1995), counseling relationship types (Carter & Helms, 1992), locus of control, and racial self-designation (Martin & Nagayama Hall, 1992).

Personal data sheet. The personal data sheet was used to obtain demographic information such as age, class standing, and socioeconomic class for each participant.

Procedure

Participants volunteered for the study through a psychology participant pool. Questionnaires were completed in a single sitting. Order effects were controlled by counterbalancing the order of questionnaires. After completing the surveys, participants were given a debriefing sheet that informed them of the study's purposes and hypotheses.

RESULTS

A canonical correlation analysis of the data was conducted. Canonical correlation analysis is a procedure that identifies the relationships between two variable sets (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). It allows a researcher to evaluate the strength of these relationships and to determine which individual variables contributed most strongly to them. The procedure generates pairs of variates, one taken from each set of variables. These pairs more clearly capture the specific relationships between the larger variable sets. The analysis produces as many pairs of variates as there are variables in the smaller set, but not all pairs will be significant. In this study, racial and womanist identity constituted the two sets of variables from which the variates were drawn. For the White women, none of the pairs of variates was significantly related (Wilks's lambda = .82; $p < .117$). For Black women, however, a dimension reduction analysis indicated that the first pair of variates was significant (Wilks's lambda = .57; $p < .004$). The canonical correlation for that pair was .52 (25% of the variance; see Table 2).

To establish which gender and racial identity variables contributed most strongly to the overall relationship between gender and racial identity in Black women, we examined the canonical relations for the significant variate pair. A cutoff of .3 was chosen for interpretation, in accordance with standard practice (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). Among the womanist identity variables, Womanist II (.52) and Womanist IV (.99) attitudes contributed most powerfully to the relationship. Among the racial identity attitudes, only Internalization (.82) attitudes contributed. These three variables were all positively correlated. Thus, Black women with higher levels of Internalization racial identity attitudes also had higher levels of Womanist II and Womanist IV attitudes.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between women's racial and womanist identity attitudes. For Black women, the results reported here indicate a significant relationship between racial and womanist identity attitudes, perhaps indicating an interaction between the processes of racial and womanist identity development. Specifically, higher levels of attitudes associated with the womanist identity Stages II and IV were related to higher levels of attitudes associated with the racial identity status of Internalization. Thus, it would seem that Black women who have attitudes characteristic of the Internalization status regarding race are also more likely

TABLE 2

Womanist Identity and Black Racial Identity Attitudes: Summary of Canonical Correlation Analysis for First Canonical Variate

Variable	<i>r</i>	Standardized Coefficient
Womanist Identity set		
Womanist I (Preencounter)	-.28	0.088
Womanist II (Encounter) ^a	.52	0.117
Womanist III (Immersion-Emersion)	-.11	-0.017
Womanist IV (Internalization) ^a	.99	0.996
Redundancy	.09	
Black Racial Identity set		
Preencounter	-.11	0.453
Encounter	.27	-0.042
Immersion-Emersion	-.21	-0.498
Internalization ^a	.82	1.16
Redundancy	.06	
Canonical <i>r</i>	.52	

Note. Wilks's lambda = 57, $p < .004$.

^aSurpassed cutoff of .3.

to exhibit Womanist II or Womanist IV attitudes regarding gender. These findings suggest a number of possibilities.

Racial and Womanist Identity for Black Women

In light of the earlier discussion of social power, it seems entirely plausible that at some level there is an affinity between the processes of racial and womanist identity for Black women but not for White women. In this study, the relationship between Internalization racial identity attitudes and Womanist II and IV attitudes suggests that a Black woman's experience of the process of racial identity development may, in fact, affect how she experiences the process of womanist identity development. The significant relationship reported would seem to indicate that the processes of racial and womanist identity development are, to some extent, related for Black women.

However, the fact that for Black women, Internalization racial identity attitudes were found to be associated with both Womanist IV and Womanist II attitudes may suggest that for these women, the two developmental processes, while similar, are not simultaneous. The relation of attitudes from the final status of racial identity to attitudes associated with both the second and final stages of womanist identity may suggest that some Black women begin the process of racial identity development before beginning the process of womanist identity development. If this is the case, it might suggest that for Black women, race becomes a catalyst for change at an earlier point in their overall development than does gender. It would not seem implausible that Black women feel the effects of racism in their lives before becoming aware of the effect of sexism. This finding is consistent with data reported by Martin and Nagayama Hall (1992) in which Immersion-Emersion racial identity attitudes were found to be negatively related to feminist attitudes in Black women.

The connections between racial and womanist attitudes that emerged, though not perfect parallels, fit well with theory. For example, as was observed earlier, the Internalization status of the racial

identity model represents the culminating point in a person's development at which she or he is able to value Black culture and values and, at the same time, maintain a critical appreciation of White culture and values. Such a person is no longer unduly influenced by external idealizations of either Black or White culture. It seems unlikely that a Black woman could pass through this process without it influencing her awareness and attitudes about gender and sexism. Thus, it would make sense that attitudes and cognitive flexibility associated with the final status of racial identity development are related to similar attitudes about gender (Womanist IV) or attitudes that express an active questioning of previous assumptions and an increasing discomfort with a sexist status quo (Womanist II).

Similarly, although it makes sense that Internalization racial identity attitudes are not associated with womanist identity attitudes associated with naïveté about gender (Womanist I), it also seems plausible that those attitudes were not found to be associated with Womanist III gender identity attitudes which, while more advanced, also represent an external definition of womanhood. A Black woman who has attained a high level of racial identity development is less likely to be oblivious to societal sexism, and she may also be less likely to embrace external definitions of womanhood such as those expressed in the Womanist I or Womanist III stages of identity development. It may be that passage through the process of racial identity development facilitates or serves as a catalyst for the formation of an internally defined womanist identity, but not necessarily for the assumption of an explicitly profeminist stance. This observation also seems to be supported by Martin and Nagayama Hall (1992), who also found that racial identity attitudes were not significantly related to feminist attitudes in Black women.

Racial and Womanist Identity for White Women

In keeping with the preceding theoretical discussion, for White women, despite their larger number in this sample ($n = 147$), no significant relationship emerged between womanist identity development attitudes and racial identity development attitudes. This suggests little overlap between the processes of womanist identity development and racial identity development for White women, perhaps because for White women the two processes are in some ways conflicting rather than parallel. In both racial identity and womanist identity development, an essential task is moving from externally defined to internally defined attitudes toward one's group membership. However, it seems entirely plausible that whether one begins as a member of the dominant or of the nondominant group will have consequences for the particular ways in which that development occurs (or does not occur). Racial identity development and womanist identity development pose two very different sets of tasks for White women.

To speculate, for purposes of further research, about why no relationship was found between racial and womanist identity for White women, one may explore several lines of inquiry. For instance, as racial beings, White women belong to the socially dominant group in this country. As Whites, they must come to terms with their own inherited racist attitudes and with the consequences for themselves and for others of being White in a racist society. Racially, they belong to the dominant (oppressive) group and may engage, as was noted earlier, in the processes of the abandonment of racism and of forging a positive White identity. However, they are also free, as members of the socially powerful race, to withdraw and to stop the process at any point.

On the other hand, when it comes to gender, White women find themselves in virtually the opposite position in terms of social power.

In this case, they are members of the nondominant (oppressed) group. Their attitudes may reflect a societal sexism that depreciates the group of which they are members and values the other (dominant) group. Unlike the situation with race, it is difficult for White women to avoid cross-gender contact with the socially dominant group and so remove the stimuli for womanist identity development.

Thus, it is not surprising that, for White women, no significant relationship was found between womanist and racial identity attitudes. Negotiating the very different kinds of demands involved in these two processes may be one factor contributing to Carter and Parks's (in press) finding that Womanist I, II, and especially III identity attitudes were related to psychological symptomatology in White women but not in Black women. Integrating such divergent developmental tasks may cause White women to experience the anxiety and depressive symptoms reported, and may even cause them to feel that their experience of reality is not consensual (hence the symptoms on the hallucination and paranoia scales). The conflict between the two processes might be most stressful at Womanist Stage III, when strong, but not yet internalized, proud feelings about one's identity as a member of an oppressed group and rage at the oppressor could conceivably clash with any sense of oneself as member of the oppressing racial group.

In summary, the results obtained in this preliminary investigation seem to suggest that Black women and White women may experience the processes of womanist and racial identity development differently. For White women, there may be little or no relationship between these two processes, perhaps owing to the radically different contexts of social power in which their racial and womanist identity development take place. On the other hand, for Black women, the processes of racial and womanist identity development may progress together, perhaps owing to the similar nature of the tasks and challenges involved. It may be that, for some Black women, the experience of racial identity development influences the process by which they arrive at an internal definition of womanhood.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

The results of this study indicate that counselors who work with women might benefit from being aware of the differences in the developmental tasks for Black and White women. Some Black women may move through the process of womanist identity development more quickly, or even bypass certain stages, given the additional experiences acquired through the analogous process of racial identity development. Others may require assistance in sorting out these two similar, but distinct experiences. Still others may require assistance in coming to terms with yet an additional form of societal prejudice. Counselors may be helpful to their clients by making these connections explicit and by assisting the clients in using insights in one domain to facilitate understanding in the other.

For White women, on the other hand, it would seem that racial and womanist identity development pose very different sets of challenges, and that the radically different demands entailed in these two processes may even prove highly stressful. In this case, a counselor may need to help a client hold on to the simultaneous experience of being both the oppressor and the oppressed. Such a client might well experience a pull to jettison the tasks of one or the other of these processes (probably racial identity), yet ultimately an individual's psychological health and optimal development would call for her to "own" both race and gender as important dimensions of her personality. The results of this study suggest that even if the issues that are

salient for a client seem explicitly focused in one domain, the influence of the other cannot be discounted.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this preliminary investigation must be interpreted with caution. Further research is needed both to confirm the findings reported here and to specify with greater precision the exact patterns of the coevolution of womanist and racial identity development in Black women and the nature of the differential effects of these two processes in White women. The relationship between racial identity and womanist identity in Black women may actually be stronger than it appears in this study. Although past studies have shown strong reliabilities for the RIAS-B, in this study, reliabilities for several attitudes were somewhat weak. Thus, several of the attitudes may not be well reflected in this data set. The relationships that did emerge were related to a subscale that was found to be one of the more reliable.

Further research using racial and womanist identity as independent variables and other variables such as self-esteem and mental health as dependent variables might shed further light on the question of whether the identity variables contribute in additive or in interactive ways to other phenomena in the lives of Black and White women. Although studies based on the current data have suggested that womanist identity is important in the mental health of White women but not of Black women (Carter & Parks, in press) and that racial identity is important to the mental health of Black women but relatively unimportant to that of White women (Carter, 1991, Carter et al., 1995), no studies have yet looked at their simultaneous influence on mental health.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, a number of attempts have been made to understand the role of gender and race in human development. This study has sought to extend that research by exploring the relationship between racial and womanist identity development. The results revealed a significant relationship between the processes of racial and womanist identity development for Black women, but no relationship was found for White women. This may be because, given the context of social power prevalent in this society, the processes of racial and womanist identity are structurally consistent for Black women, whereas they present White women with essentially different tasks. Although additional research is needed to confirm and further specify the nature of these relationships, the results obtained from this sample do suggest that researchers and clinicians could benefit from attending to the differences in the process of womanist identity development for Black and for White women.

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