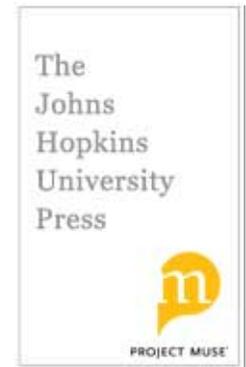# PROJECT MUSE®

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Exploring the Relationship Between Racial Identity and Religious Orientation Among African American College Students

Delida Sanchez   Robert T. Carter

This study examined the relationships between racial identity attitudes and religious orientation among African American college students. The participants were 270 African American college students from 2- and 4–year colleges in the Northeast. Multiple regression analyses were conducted and the results indicated that racial identity attitudes were predictive of religious orientation. Gender also significantly impacted the relationships between these variables.

The interest in religion and spirituality as aspects of human identity development has been reflected in an increase in the number of articles on this topic published in the field of psychology in the past 15-20 years (Ball, Armistead, & Austin, 2003; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Jagers & Smith, 1996; Kelly 1995; Mattis, 2000; Morrow & Beckstead, 2004; Smith & Richards, 2005; Worthington, 1989; Young, Griffith, &Williams, 2003). Religion has been identified as one of the most important areas explored during the self-examination period of adolescence and adulthood (Erikson, 1968; Sciarra & Gushue, 2003). For example, in a study conducted by Earnshaw (2000), it was found that college students turned to religion when searching for answers to important questions related to the meaning and purpose of life. The acquisition of religious belief systems is particularly important for ego identity development in adolescence, because it enables an individual to develop a "world view" (Erikson). The development of a worldview is a central role in identity development and encompasses how one perceives society and feels connected to it (De Haan & Schulenberg, 1997).

Classifying distinguishable definitions between religion and spirituality has often been a source of quarrel and controversy among researchers in the psychological literature (Smith & Richards, 2005 ; Souza, 2002). Religion is often defined as an institutionalized system of attitudes, beliefs, and practices through which people manifest their faith and devotion to an ultimate reality or deity (Kelly, 1995). It is expressed in such world religions as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Terms such as religiosity and religiousness by extension have been defined as oneho:'s degree of adherence to the beliefs, doctrines, and practices of a particular religion (Jagers & Smith, 1996; Mattis, 1997).

Spirituality has been defined as a more inclusive concept for describing an individual's personal relationship with a God or acknowledgement of a higher power (George, Larson, Koenig, & McCullough, 2000). One's spirituality may or may not encompass membership in a particular religious organization (Taylor, Chatters, Jayakody, & Levin, 1996). This study will describe the importance of both religion and spirituality in the identity development of African American college students.

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Religion and Spirituality Among African Americans

For people of African decent, religious beliefs and practices have and continue to be a salient aspect of culture and upbringing (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Many African Americans have been reared with exposure to religion, spiritual convictions, and a belief in God or a higher power (Richardson & June, 1997). Religious denominations provide frameworks from which to practice specific beliefs, rituals, and rites (Mbiti, 1991). These frameworks encompass empowering ideologies about family and communal unity, shared values, and life style behaviors (Ellison, 1993; Moore, 1991).

Throughout much of American history, religious institutions have occupied an important position in African American society (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Moore, 1991). The Black church has been the most enduring institution within the African American community (Billingsely, 1999). It is a prime locale through which service delivery is provided to African Americans to support their educational, social, and economic development. Because churches are among the few institutions controlled by African American's, participation in religious clubs and related activities offer opportunities for social interaction and social status that are not available in White dominated society (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Lincoln & Mamiya). Today, the Black church still constitutes the central institutional sector in many African American communities (Cook, 1993; Ellison, 1993; Lincoln & Mamiya; Richardson & June, 1997). While much of the literature about African American religion and spirituality focuses on the Black church, many African Americans belong to other religious denominations and sects including Judaism and Islam (Lincoln & Mamiya).

The importance of religion and spirituality in the psychological development of African Americans has been described in the psychological literature (Ahia, 1997; Bell & Mattis, 2000; Boyd-Franklin, 2003; J. Carter, 2003). On average, the baseline rate of religious involvement for African Americans is higher than that of the general U.S. population with African American women demonstrating higher rates of religious participation, commitment, and spirituality than African American men (Chatters, Taylor, & Lincoln, 1999; El-Khoury, Dutton, Goodman, Belamaric, & Murphy, 2004; Jagers & Smith, 1996; Taylor et al., 1996).

Collectively these rates of religious involvement are manifested in different ways. In particular, African Americans have been found to report higher levels of attendance at religious services than Whites (Johnson & Matre, 1991), read more religious materials, monitor more religious broadcasts, and seek spiritual comfort through religion more often than Whites across their lifespan (Constantine, Lewis, Conner, & Sanchez, 2000; Johnson & Matre). For African American college students in particular, religious and spiritual issues may represent an integral part of their self-identity (Constantine et al.; Spencer, Fegley, & Harpalani, 2003). African American college men and women tend to score higher than their European American counterparts on measures of spiritual and religious, including the belief in the unique power of God (Mattis, 1997). Religious attitudes have also been found to be related to academic performance and success among African American college students (Johnson, Oates, Jackson, Miles, & Strong, 2003).

While the psychological research on African American religious attitudes identifies the significant role of religion and spirituality in the lives of many African Americans, little

is known about the relationship between racial identity and religious attitudes. In fact, African Americans are often seen homogeneously with regard to religious attitudes. Unidimensional measures such as church attendance and religious affiliation are often used to measure their religious attitudes (Stanfield, 1993). These measures do not account for the complexity of religious and spiritual attitudes among African American college students. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the complex relationships between race and religion among African Americans using two psychological models that explore within racial-religious group difference: racial identity attitudes and religious orientation.

African American Racial Identity

Race has powerful implications for personality development, and mental health (Bruno, 2002; R. Carter, 1995, 2005; McCowan & Alston, 1998). Given the central role of race in American history and sociopolitical life, the developmental processes and the life path of all Americans are affected by race (R. Carter, 1995, 2005; Carter & Cook, 1992). A system of racial meanings and stereotypes exists and seems to be a permanent feature of U.S. culture (Omi & Winant, 1986). Through racial socialization, individuals are infused with messages that determine the appropriateness or inappropriateness of their roles as racial beings (R. Carter, 1995, 2005). A primary identity issue for African Americans and members of other groups of color concerns the development of a positive sense of self as members of a racial group in a racist society (Helms, 1994, 2001). Personal identity development is a central theme for people of color attempting to overcome society's generally negative evaluation of their group (Helms, 1994).

Racial identity theory and racial identity

measurement addresses the psychological consequences to individuals of being socialized in a society in which a person either does or does not have privilege based on his or her racial classification (Helms, 1996, 2005). In U.S. culture Whites are given privilege based on race, and groups of color for the most part are not. Racial identity theories suggest that people's racial identities vary—that is how and to what extent they identify with their respective racial groups—and that a person's race is more than his or her skin color or physical features. Additionally, racial identity theories postulate that a person's resolution of his or her identity is psychological. This is crucial because racial identity seems to guide an individual's feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and level of investment in his or her racial groups' cultural patterns (Helms, 1996) as well as other aspects of his or her identity (R. Carter, 1995; Carter & Pieterse, 2005).

Helms (1990, 2001) discusses racial identity in terms of "ego statuses" (R. Carter, 1995) which serves as a filter for race-based information. The term "ego status" refers to the various differentiations of the ego, which holds and transforms racial identity information. Each ego status has its own constellation of emotions, beliefs, motives, and behaviors, ranging in level from less to more mature. The level of maturity of each racial identity status influences its expression. Helms (1990), explains that "at any one point, an individual has many levels of identity but only one dominant level" (p. 19).

African American racial identity development consists of four statuses as outlined by Helms (1990, 2001). Helms (1990) also refers to the statuses as levels. The *Pre-encounter* level can be expressed as the deliberate idealization of White culture and denigration of African American culture through behaviors as well as attitudes. The *Encounter* status is character-

ized by racially salient experience(s) that provoke awareness of one's racial identity. These experiences can be positive or negative. The *Immersion-Emersion* status is characterized by a strong endorsement of African American attitudes along with the psychological and physical withdrawal from White culture into an African American world. When an individual begins to internalize and integrate one's new African American identity into their personality, the Emersion status becomes more salient (R. Carter, 1995). The *Internalization* status reflects an acceptance and satisfaction with one's African American identity within the larger context of the human race (Helms, 1990; Settles, Cooke, Morgan, & Sellers, 2004). The racially internalized individual becomes socially flexible and able to move comfortably in varied racial contexts (R. Carter, 1995).

Overall, racial identity theory is a psychological model that explains the complex ego identity development process for African Americans. Given this premise, it is important to explore how race and racial identity are related to other areas of identity, such as religious and spiritual identity. Although psychological theories specific to racial identity and religion/spirituality have surfaced over the past several decades, few scholars have considered the overlap and interactions between these related sets of variables (Fukuyama & Sevig, 1999). Acknowledging the potential influences and interactions of race and religion/spirituality at both the societal and individual level can facilitate and improve the understanding of African American college students' identity development (Hollinger & Smith, 2002; Miller, Fleming, & Brown-Anderson, 1998).

Like race and racial identity, religion and spirituality are exceedingly complex. This complexity is reflected in the multiple facets of religiosity and spirituality. Religiosity and spirituality are reflected in attitudes and beliefs, behaviors (e.g., orthodoxy, prayer, and worship), and perception of a God image (Smith & Richards, 2005). Thus, the examination of religious or spiritual identity among African American college students warrants a clear focus of the type of religiosity that will be assessed. The focus of this study was on religious orientation, defined as one's psychological attitudes toward religion and spirituality.

Religious Orientation

Religious orientation, defined as one's psychological attitude towards one's particular religious or spiritual beliefs is the construct most widely used in the empirical study of religion in psychology, particularly with college students (Cannon, 2001; Earnshaw, 2000; Mattis, 2002; Smith & Richards, 2005; Young et al., 2003). The Religious Orientation Paradigm, originally pioneered by the work of Allport (1966), suggests that individuals are motivated to be religious in different ways irrespective of religious affiliation. Religious orientation is said to be expressed along the following dimensions: *Extrinsic, Intrinsic,* and *Quest* (Batson et al., 1993).

Extrinsically religious individuals use their beliefs for their own utilitarian means. They have not given much thought to their religious beliefs. They are not necessarily religious because of deep spiritual faith. Persons with an Extrinsic religious orientation may join a religious organization in order to promote their business, to promote a particular cause or activity, to make friends, or to meet a spouse. The actual religious teachings and beliefs is lightly held or else selectively shaped to fit more self-serving needs (Allport, 1966).

Intrinsically religious individuals on the other hand, are influenced primarily by their religious beliefs. They are not religious for

personal gain or for social reasons but have embraced a spiritual belief, internalized it, and follow it "fully" (Allport & Ross, 1967). Intrinsic religious orientation is defined as a more private and expressive way of being religious. These types of individuals are described as religiously sincere or "true" believers. Persons with an Intrinsic religious orientation may at times be perceived as dogmatic in their beliefs and rigid in their thinking (Hill & Hood, 1999).

An individual demonstrating a Quest religious orientation is doubtful and tentative about his or her religion. This type of person sees religion in very complex terms. A Quest religious orientation involves honestly facing existential questions about spiritual beliefs, while still resisting clear-cut, pat answers (Batson & Ventis, 1982).

There have been studies that have explored the relationship between racial identity attitudes and religious orientation among White Americans (Cannon, 2001; Sciarra & Gushue, 2003). However, there are no known empirical studies to date that directly explore the relationship between racial identity and religious orientation among African Americans. Mattis (1997) is one of the few investigators who explored religious orientation among African Americans. Mattis (1997) explored religious orientation and spiritual well-being in African American college students finding that religious orientation was predictive of spiritual orientation and spiritual well-being. Specifically, Mattis (1997) found that Intrinsic religious orientation was associated with higher levels of spiritual practice and contentment with one's spirituality or spiritual well-being. This suggests that a profound personal faith may be positively related to a sense of spiritual connectedness with others (Mattis, 1997).

Gender differences were also found in Mattis' (1997) study with African American males endorsing higher levels of Extrinsic religious orientation and African American women endorsing higher levels of Intrinsic religious beliefs. The difference in religious attitudes between African American men and African American women might suggest differences in their religious and racial socialization that are gender based. The possible influence of gender in the racial and religious socialization process of African American men and women should be considered when exploring the relationship between racial identity and religious orientation. Quest religious orientation was not found to be significant in Mattis' (1997) study.

Johnson et al. (2003) also explored religious orientation among African American college students. In particular, they examined academic performance differences, as measured by grade point averages (GPA), between Intrinsically and Extrinsically religiously oriented college students. They did not measure Quest orientation. They found that African American students who were more Intrinsically oriented had significantly higher GPAs than African American students who were more Extrinsically oriented. This finding suggests that more private, devout, and rigid religious attitudes may be positively related to higher levels of academic performance.

Therefore, there is a need to explore how African Americans experience, express, and use religiosity to construct their identities, relying upon psychological models that take into account the complexity of these aspects of identity. Given both race and religions' powerful implications for personal development, understanding the relationship between racial identity attitudes and religious orientation may offer a unique and significant contribution to identity development research as it pertains to building a more complex view

of identity development among African Americans.

METHOD

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from psychology, sociology, history, and African-American studies classes, as well as from college cafeterias and lounges, in 2-year community colleges and 4-year colleges in the New York City and New Jersey metropolitan area. Three hundred seventeen students were administered questionnaires and asked to volunteer to take part in a study of student attitudes towards certain social, cultural, and political topics. Students were asked to read and sign a consent form before completing the questionnaires. Participants were given a questionnaire packet that included the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale (Parham & Helms, 1985a), the Three Dimensional Measure of Religious Orientation-Simplified Procedure (Batson & Ventis, 1982), and a personal data sheet. Measures in the packet were ordered differently to control for order effects. Participants were asked to complete the packet in one sitting and to provide a response for each item. Participants who were not able to complete the packet in one sitting were provided a self-addressed stamped envelope. The participants were also given the contact information of the researcher in the event that they had any additional questions about the study, which was included in the consent form. A final subject pool of 270 self-identified African American college students were included in the study after 47 incomplete response forms had been discarded. Demographic information for the final subject pool is included in Table 1.

Instruments

Three instruments were used in this study: (a) the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale-L Long Form RIAS-B, (b) the Three Dimensional Measure of Religious Orientation–Simplified Procedure, and (c) a personal data sheet.

The Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale-B Long Form (Parham & Helms, 1985a). The Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale-L Long Form (RIAS-B) is a 50-item scale that measures attitudes reflective of four of the five statuses of racial identity as conceptualized by Cross (1971). The four subscales comprising the measure are: Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, and Internalization.

Participants were asked to answer questions using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5), to indicate the extent to which each item was descriptive of them. Respondents could obtain a score on each of the four racial identity subscales: Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion and Internalization. These scores were calculated by adding together the scale values chosen by subjects, for appropriately keyed items, and dividing by the number of items to maintain the scale metric. Internal consistency reliability coefficients for the study participants were .76 for Preencounter, .51 for Encounter, .69 for Immersion-Emersion, and .80 for Internalization.

Validity of the RIAS-B has been demonstrated in several studies. African American racial identity attitudes have been found to be related to measures of counselor preference (Parham & Helms, 1985a, 1985b), self-esteem, anxiety, and self-actualization (Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997; Munford, 1994).

The Three Dimensional Measure of Religious Orientation–Simplified Procedure (Batson & Ventis, 1982). The Three Dimensional Measure of Religious Orientation (ROS) (Batson & Ventis, 1982) is a 32-item scale that measures attitudes reflective of three dimensions of religious motivation as conceptualized by Batson & Ventis (1982). The three sub-

TABLE 1.

Sociodemographic Variables (*N* = 270)

Variable	*n*	Percent	Variable	*n*	Percent
Age			*Religious Denomination*		
17-20	84	31.1	Catholic	24	8.9
21-24	97	35.9	Protestant/Baptist/Methodist	119	44.1
25-29	23	8.5	Spiritual	36	13.3
30-35	31	11.5	None	39	14.4
36+	35	13.0	Christian	35	13.0
Gender			Other	17	6.3
Male	73	27.0	*Member of a Religious Organization*		
Female	197	73.0	Yes	71	26.0
Socioeconomic Status			No	199	73.7
Lower Class	23	8.5	*Religious Attendance*		
Working Class	121	44.8	Not at all	55	20.4
Middle Class	109	40.4	A few times a year or less	104	38.5
Upper Middle Class	13	4.8	About once a month	19	7.0
Upper Class	4	1.5	Two to three times a month	29	10.7
Education Level			Once a week or more	63	23.3
Freshman in college	84	31.1	*Institution Type*		
Sophomore	52	19.3	2-Year Community College	75	27.8
Junior	71	26.3	4-Year College/University	195	72.2
Senior in 2-Year College	28	10.4			
Senior in 4-Year College/University	18	6.7			
Graduate Student	17	6.3			

scales comprising the measure are: Extrinsic, which measures the external social environment dimension of religious orientation, the degree to which an individual is influenced by others; Intrinsic, which measures an individual's personal beliefs; and Quest, which measures the degree to which an individual's personal religion/spiritual beliefs involve an open-minded exploration.

Participants were asked to answer questions using a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (9), to indicate the extent to which each item is descriptive of them. Respondents could obtain

a score on each of the three religious orientation scales. The scores were calculated by adding together the scale values chosen by subjects and dividing by the number of items to maintain the scale metric (i.e., *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Internal consistency reliability scores for the ROS for the study participants were .68 for Extrinsic, .83 for Intrinsic, and .69 for Quest.

Validity of the ROS has been demonstrated by Batson et al. (1993). Religious orientation has been found to be related to prejudice (Watson, Morris, Hood, & Biderman, 1990), self-esteem, self-actualization,

psychological functioning (Watson et al.), cognitive complexity in thinking, and responding to religious existential matters (Batson & Raynor-Prince, 1983).

Personal Data Sheet. The personal data sheet requested the participants to indicate their age, gender, socioeconomic status, level of education, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, religious attendance, religious and racial organizational membership, fraternity/sorority membership.

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations for Black Racial Identity Attitude Statuses and Religious Orientations subscales are presented in Table 2. Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine if there were differences on the mean scores of racial identity and religious orientation by select demographic variables. Two multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were conducted for gender, age, social class, education level, religious denomination, religious attendance, membership in a religious organization, and institution type for the RIAS-B subscales (Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization) and the ROS subscales (Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Quest). The multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) for RIAS-B and ROS showed no significant effects for age and RIAS-B (Wilks' lambda = .94, F = .93, p = .53) and ROS (Wilks' lambda = .93, F = 1.45, p = .14) subscales; social class and the RIAS-B (Wilks' lambda = .94, F = .80, p = .68) and ROS (Wilks' lambda = .95, F = .92, p = .53) subscales; education level and the RIAS-B (Wilks' lambda = .89, F = 1.39, p = .12) and ROS (Wilks' lambda = .95, F = .76, p = .71) subscales; membership in a religious organization and the RIAS-B (Wilks' lambda = .99, F = .27, p = .89) and ROS

(Wilks' lambda = .98, F = 1.04, p = .37) subscales; as well as institution type and the RIAS-B (Wilks' lambda = 99, F = .67, p = .61) and ROS (Wilks' lambda = .99, F = .15, p = .92) subscales.

However, MANOVAs revealed significant findings for religious denomination and the RIAS-B (Wilks' lambda = .92, F = 4.84, p < .05). Univariate F's for individual measures revealed significant difference between religious denomination and Encounter, $F(5, 264)$ = 4.64, p < .05, and Immersion, $F(5, 264)$ = 2.73, p < .05, subscales. While there were significant findings for religious denomination and racial identity attitudes, the significant findings were not interpretable due to a significant difference in subsample sizes, which affected Type I Error (i.e., Catholic = 24, Protestant/Baptist/Methodist = 119, Spiritual = 36, None = 39, Christian = 35, Other = 17).

MANOVAs revealed significant findings for religious attendance and the ROS (Wilks' lambda = .75, F = 5.91, p < .05). Univariate

TABLE 2.

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations for the Racial Identity Attitudes and Religious Orientation Subscales (N = 270)

Variable	M	SD
Black Racial Identity Attitudes		
Preencounter	24.98	7.06
Encounter	8.01	2.15
Immersion-Emersion	19.96	5.87
Internalization	45.01	5.93
Religious Orientation Scales		
Extrinsic	50.92	11.31
Intrinsic	33.82	11.99
Quest	55.51	11.83

TABLE 3.

Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analysis for
RIAS Variables Predicting ROS Extrinsic Subscale (*N* = 270)

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β	*t*	*sig.*
Gender	32.70	15.34	1.28	2.13	.03
Preencounter	−0.04	0.12	−0.00	−0.03	.97
Encounter	0.30	0.39	0.05	0.78	.43
Immersion-Emersion	−0.40	0.16	−0.20	−2.48	.01
Internalization	0.12	0.14	0.06	0.81	.41
Gender x Preencounter	−0.15	0.12	−0.33	−1.22	.22
Gender x Encounter	−0.08	0.39	−0.05	−0.22	.82
Gender x Immersion-Emersion	−0.02	0.16	−0.04	−0.17	.86
Gender x Internalization	−0.22	0.14	−0.80	−1.52	.12

Note. R^2 = .07, df(9, 260), *F* = 2 .13, *p* ≤ .05.

F's for individual measures revealed significant difference between religious attendance and Intrinsic scales, $F(4, 265) = 14.32$, $p < .05$. Post hoc tests revealed that students who attend religious services a few times a year or less or do not attend religious services at all had higher means of Intrinsic religious attitudes (*M* = 35.82 and 43.62, respectively). Students who attend religious services once a month, 2-3 times a month, or weekly had lower means of Intrinsic religious attitudes (*M* = 33.24, 24.59, and 28.52, respectively). These findings support the notion of religious orientation theory that Intrinsic religious attitudes—more private, devout, and rigid religious attitudes—are associated with lower levels of religious attendance. Given the evident overlap in the significant findings for Intrinsic religious orientation and religious attendance, religious attendance was not controlled for in subsequent analyses.

MANOVAs also revealed significant findings for gender and the RIAS-B (Wilks' lambda = .92, *F* = .82, *p* < .05) and the ROS (Wilks' lambda = .95, *F* = 4.29, *p* < .05) subscales. Univariate *F* statistics revealed that statistical differences between men and women on the Preencounter RIAS-B subscale, $F(1, 268) = 17.90$, $p < .05$; and the Intrinsic ROS subscale, $F(1, 268) = 4.41$, $p < .05$. Since gender related to both the independent (RIAS) and dependent (ROS) variables in the current study, this variable was controlled for in subsequent analyses.

Three simultaneous multiple regression analyses (one for each religious orientation subscale) were used to explore the relationship between racial identity attitudes and religious orientation. Racial identity statuses were used as predictor variables for each of the three religious orientation subscale variables. Gender was also explored in relation to the RIAS-B predictor variables by including interaction variables as predictors in the simultaneous multiple regression analyses. The results of the analyses are presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Findings showed that RIAS-B significantly predicted scores on the ROS Extrinsic sub-

scale, R^2 = .07, $F(9, 260)$ = 2.13, $p < .05$; ROS Intrinsic subscale, R^2 = .12, $F(9, 260)$ = 3.99, $p < .05$; and ROS Quest subscale, R^2 = .07, $F(9, 260)$ = 2.21, $p < .05$. An analysis of the beta weights in the regression analyses show that RIAS Internalization racial identity attitudes were significantly related to Intrinsic religious orientation attitudes. These differed significantly for women and men (β = −1.3, t = −2.62, $p < .05$; Table 4). Internalization racial identity attitudes were negatively correlated with ROS Intrinsic religious orientation for women (r = −.21) and positively correlated for men (r = .14).

Internalization racial identity attitudes were also significantly related to Quest religious orientation attitudes as seen in Table 5. Scores differed significantly for women and men (β = −1.47, t = −2.81, $p < .05$). RIAS-B Internalization racial attitudes were negatively correlated with ROS Quest for women (r = −.13) and positively correlated for men (r = .13). Thus, as Internalization racial attitudes increased Quest religious

orientation scores decreased for African American women, and Quest orientation scores increased for African American men.

Racial identity status Immersion-Emersion attitudes were significantly related to the ROS Intrinsic subscale, however, significant differences were found for women and men (β = .58, t = 2.25, $p < .05$; Table 4). In particular, Immersion-Emersion racial identity attitudes were positively correlated with ROS Intrinsic orientation for women (r = .14) and negatively correlated for men (r = −.13). Thus, as Immersion-Emersion racial attitudes increased, Intrinsic religious attitudes for women decreased and Intrinsic religious attitudes for men increased.

RIAS Immersion-Emersion attitudes for both African American men and women were significantly inversely related to the Extrinsic religious orientation subscale (β = −.04, t = −1.52, $p < .05$; Table 3), indicating that as Immersion-Emersion racial identity attitudes increased, Extrinsic orientation decreased. Gender was also found to be significantly

TABLE 4.

Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analysis for
RIAS Variables Predicting ROS Intrinsic Subscale (N = 270)

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β	*t*	*sig.*
Gender	19.54	15.80	0.72	1.23	.21
Preencounter	0.19	0.13	0.11	1.46	.14
Encounter	−0.81	0.40	−0.14	−2.02	.04
Immersion-Emersion	0.05	0.16	0.00	0.03	.97
Internalization	0.11	0.15	0.05	0.77	.44
Gender x Preencounter	−0.02	0.13	−0.05	−0.21	.83
Gender x Encounter	−0.09	0.40	−0.05	−0.22	.81
Gender x Immersion-Emersion	0.37	0.16	0.58	2.25	.02
Gender x Internalization	−0.39	0.15	−1.30	−2.62	.01

Note. R^2 = .12, df(9, 260), F = 3.99, p ≤ .05.

TABLE 5.

Summary of Standard Multiple Regression Analysis for
RIAS Variables Predicting ROS Quest Subscale (*N* = 270)

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β	*t*	*sig.*
Gender	46.39	16.03	1.74	2.89	.00
Preencounter	−0.01	0.40	−0.09	−1.21	.93
Encounter	−0.49	0.40	−0.09	−1.21	.22
Immersion-Emersion	−0.21	0.16	−0.10	−1.27	.20
Internalization	0.08	0.15	0.04	0.54	.58
Gender x Preencounter	−0.26	0.13	−0.54	−2.00	.06
Gender x Encounter	0.24	0.40	0.15	0.60	.54
Gender x Immersion-Emersion	0.15	0.16	0.24	0.90	.36
Gender x Internalization	−0.43	0.15	−1.47	−2.81	.00

Note. R^2 = .07, *df* (9, 260), *F* = 2.21, $p \leq .05$.

related to the Extrinsic religious orientation subscale (β = 1.28, *t* = 2.13, *p* < .05). While there were no significant gender interaction effects found for Gender × Immersion-Emersion, the significant finding for gender and ROS Extrinsic does not allow for an accurate interpretation of the significant relationship between RIAS Immersion-Emersion and ROS Extrinsic subscales. Thus, this significant finding will not be addressed in the discussion.

Finally, RIAS-B Encounter attitudes for both African American men and women were significantly inversely related to ROS Intrinsic orientation (β = −.14, *t* = −2.02, *p* < .05; Table 4), indicating that as Encounter attitudes increase, Intrinsic orientation decreased.

DISCUSSION

Given the powerful implication of both race and religion for personal development among African Americans (J. Carter, 2003; Sanders,

2002), the complex relationship between racial identity attitudes and religious orientation was explored in this study. It was found that significant relationships exist among the racial identity statuses and religious orientation. Moreover, some of the relationships between racial identity statuses and religious orientation differed by gender (Mattis, 2002). These findings suggest that racial and religious issues are an integral part of self-identity processes for African Americans during college. Racial and religious identity development processes are also complex and may vary for African American college students.

For example, findings revealed that Immersion-Emersion racial identity attitudes were differentially related to Intrinsic religious orientation and the pattern varied by gender. Immersion-Emersion attitudes were predictive of lower levels of Intrinsic religious orientation for African American men and higher levels of Intrinsic religious orientation for African American women.

For African American men, the psychological withdrawal into an African American world may also include distancing from any private, devout religious beliefs that one may have endorsed before having immersed into an African American world. During Immersion-Emersion, African American men may feel the need to reevaluate their previously held religious beliefs in the search for new beliefs that are more consonant with their newly emerging African American identity. For African American men, their newly found African American racial identity may provide a source of support, guidance, and assurance, albeit temporary. This may also be associated with a distancing from one's Intrinsic religious attitudes. It is also possible that Immersion-Emersion attitudes are related to religious doubt in response to perceived racial injustices by Whites resulting in a lessening of devout religious beliefs. It may be that for African American men, deeper spiritual forms of religion cannot be acknowledged through this intense period of racial exploration.

For African American women however, the psychological withdrawal into African American culture during Immersion-Emersion status may be associated with the reliance on private religious prayer and faith. Private, devout religious beliefs may provide African American women with a powerful coping mechanism when faced with life stress associated with establishing an African American identity (Brega & Coleman, 1999). Private devotional activities, such as prayer, are a concrete strategy for coping with stress and anxiety providing African American women with emotional and moral support (Mattis & Jagers, 2001; McAdoo, 1995). Thus, an Intrinsic religious orientation may positively affect African American women by providing them with a religious system of meaning through which the racial events of life can

be interpreted and understood (Blaine & Crocker, 1995; Brega & Coleman; Ellison, 1993).

Internalization racial attitudes were also differentially related to Intrinsic and Quest religious orientations, respectively, and these patterns varied by gender. Specifically, African American males with high levels of Internalization racial identity attitudes reported higher levels of Intrinsic and Quest religious orientation.

For African American men, the adaptation of a mature, complex internalized racial worldview may also be related to the adaptation of more complex religious attitudes and values. African American men with Internalization attitudes may no longer perceive their racial and religious environment as hostile or overtly racist, as they might have during Immersion-Emersion status, and are free to interpret their faith from a less racially charged lens. Moreover, an internalized racial identity and integration of religious beliefs may reflect a personal resolution regarding these aspects of identity for African American men. African American men may not view their religious beliefs as a source of coping during intense periods of racial exploration as might African American women. Rather, it may be that for African American men, resolving racial issues may reinforce their religious or spiritual faith and provide them with a sense of security to be open to future racial and religious exploration.

Conversely, African American women who exhibited high levels of Internalization attitudes reported lower levels of Intrinsic and Quest religious orientation. For African American women, however, it appears that Internalization attitudes are associated with low levels of devout spiritual beliefs, as well as little interest in religious questioning, search, and exploration. Perhaps for African American women, the establishment of a mature racial

identity may be associated with the distance from their religious beliefs as a coping mechanism. During Internalization African American women may not be motivated to use their religious beliefs as they might have during Immersion-Emersion. In fact, the negative relationship between Internalization and Intrinsic and Quest statuses may be an indicator that African American women endorse devout spiritual beliefs as coping mechanisms during more difficult periods of racial exploration that are no longer necessary when an internalized racial identity has been incorporated.

The gender differences found in the relationship between racial identity attitudes and religious orientation may reflect differences in racial and religious experiences between African American men and women. Differences in racial and religious socialization for African American men and women may also lead to variations in how they internalize and express more private spiritual beliefs, including how they value the open-ended search for truth.

Finally, Encounter attitudes were predictive of lower Intrinsic religious orientation for both African American men and women. The transitional nature of Encounter status may be predictive of religious doubt in African American students and the distance from previously held devout religious beliefs. Perhaps the abandonment of devout religious beliefs during the Encounter status is related to African American students effort to search for the "true" meaning underlying racial matters and answering the existential questions that these encounters bring due to the reality that race does matter. Students going through the Encounter status may question their faith and ask more existential questions due to disappointment with God or the realization that the world is not an equitable and just

place, and perhaps God is not equitable either.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this exploratory study should be interpreted with caution. First, The Three Dimensional Religious Orientation Scale was validated on a predominantly White, Judeo-Christian population (Hyland, 2000; Sciarra & Gushue, 2003). Very few studies exist (Johnson et al., 2003; Mattis, 1997) that use the measure to explore religious orientation among African American college students. Thus, it is possible that African American students in the current sample may interpret the items on the Religious Orientation in a different way than the normalization sample, resulting in elevated levels of some orientations and deflated levels on other orientations. Future research should try to assess the potential problem with a more in-depth, interview-based study testing the validation of this instrument with African Americans.

Secondly, the R^2 for the regression of RIAS and ROS extrinsic and quest subscales ($R^2 = .07$ and .07, respectively) are small. Caution must be used when interpreting the findings given that the RIAS subscales contribute so little to the overall prediction of extrinsic and quest religious attitudes.

Finally, there are considerations regarding internal and external validity that necessitate the use of some caution when interpreting the results of this exploratory study and generalizing the results to other populations. Continued research is called for to see if similar findings are to be found with larger samples, with African American college students attending schools in different geographic areas, and with different demographic profiles.

Suggestions for Future Research

Since the relationship between racial identity and religious orientation has not been explored

previously among African American college students, future research should be conducted to attempt to replicate the findings with other samples. Future research is necessary to further clarify and consider the ways in which racial identity provides insight about religious orientation in African Americans. Thus, one research implication is that racial identity is a viable construct that might better equip us to examine patterns of religious development of African Americans in the U.S.

Religious orientation is also a viable construct that will allow researchers to examine patterns of religious development among African Americans in the U.S. The current study, however, is an initial attempt that shows how the virtually unexplored concept of religious orientation among African Americans relates to psychological variables such as identity development. Thus, future research might apply religious orientation theory to psychological theory among African Americans.

Suggestions for Practitioners

Understanding the influence of race and religion/spirituality in the identity development of African American college students may assist mental health professionals to facilitate student development. Traditional psychotherapy does not have an explicit spiritual focus (Sciarra & Gushue, 2003), and the current study suggests that religiosity and spirituality are integral to African American identity development. By providing a context within which students can engage in racial and religious/ spiritual exploration (e.g., outreach and consultation to student groups, therapeutic interventions, counseling, programming), psychologists can provide some support and guidance as students begin to make commitments to new ways of being in the world.

The recognition of how both race and religion/spirituality impact the therapeutic relationship is of great importance to practitioners. It is important for mental health professionals to recognize that racial and religious/spiritual issues are often embedded in the issues that African American clients bring to counseling (Constantine, 1999). Counselors and educators should be aware of their own racial and religious/spiritual identities and be comfortable discussing racial and religious/spiritual issues within their clients. Moreover, it is important to understand how the client makes sense of his/her racial and religious/spiritual identity, than to simply know to what racial or religious group the student belongs (R. Carter, 2005; Smith & Richards, 2005). This may help African American college students to feel understood by their counselors, particularly those students coping with adversity.

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