5-4-2015

Black women in the virtual world: Spelman College students and the development of online identity

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Spelman College

"Black Women In the Virtual World: Spelman College Students and the Development of Online Identity"

A Senior Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements for the B.A. Degree in Sociology

Sociology 491 Honors Sociology Thesis

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May 4th, 2015

Submitted by
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Abstract

This study explores the factors that influence how students at Spelman College form their online identities on social media sites (namely Facebook). In consideration of the history of the stereotypical images of black women in the media and the rise of black women creating counter narratives through the use of the web, this study explores how both of these instances effect the development of an online presence for black, female millennials. As an exploratory study, this investigation specifically explores: (1) What factors influence social media usage for black, female millennial students at Spelman College?, (1A) How does perception of the representation of black women in the media influence social media usage for black, female millennial students at Spelman College?, (2) How does the intersectionality of identity (primarily gender, race) affect the development of online identities on social media sites for black, female millennial students at Spelman College?, (3) How do students resist and/or uphold social constructs of gender and race, through their social media profiles? This cross-sectional study uses surveys, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis to explore the aforementioned questions. The results from the study suggest that one’s social location of being a black woman directly influences how one navigates identity on Facebook.
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Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem

In a 2014 interview, Issa Rae stated that in reference to the representation of black women in the media, “the only issue to me is that there is not more of the other stuff. I think that as black women we are always regulated to one image, one impression, one stereotype. That is the issue.” With her multiple web shows and online presence, Rae is responding to her critique of the limited visibility of black women in the media. What is essential about her web shows is that her show is creating multi-dimensional images of black women. She is responding to the dearth of complex and dynamic images with her own creation. Rae’s work is not alone. The web is home to a number of other women who produce content featuring black women and working to expand the representation of black women in the media. For example, Numa Perrier, Ashley Featherson, Hayley Norman, Andrea Lewis, and Francesca Ramsey are all black women creating content concerning black women.

As a result of previous research conducted on web series created by black women, I argue that new media challenges the dearth of the images of black women in the media for it offers a way for black women to create images of black women that are excluded and/or limited in mainstream media. I have noticed that many black female creators of web content are working to expose aspects of their personal narratives that they feel are missing and not illustrated (or are marginalized) in mainstream representations of black women. Additionally, recent studies have shown that “73% of African American internet users—and 96% of those ages 18-29—use a social networking site of some kind” and 74% of all African-American women use a social networking site of some kind (Smith: 2014). In this current investigation, I am interested in exploring if there is a connection between the work of black female creators of web series (such
as Issa Rae and Numa Perrier) and the online presence of other young African-American women of the same generation (the millennial generation). Particularly, I am interested, through the use of survey, semi-structured interviews, and content analyses, in how black women on Spelman's campus form their web identity. Currently, there is not a lot of research focusing on how black women are engaging with the web, despite evidence that black women are engaging with the web in innovative ways.

For the purposes of this exploratory, cross-sectional study, my units of analysis are female, African-American students on Spelman's Campus. I chose Spelman College as my sampling frame due to the convenience of collecting research from my peers, since I am a Spelman student. This investigation has an interaction focus, for I am interested in how black female students engage with social influences (images, racial construction, etc...) and how these engagements are reflected through the creation of their online identities. In this exploratory study, I look at how individual students' engagement with the images of women in the media, self-concept, gender identity, and racial identity affect how they perform, create, or assert their identity on online social media platforms. This study primarily focuses on Facebook due to time constraints. However, this study also considers Instagram and Twitter as social media platforms for online identity formation.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This investigation seeks to understand how Spelman students develop their identities on social media sites. The study is primarily concerned, though, with the historical representation of black women in the media, the performance of race and gender, and the role of new media and the Internet in the creation of identity.

History of the Representation of Black Women in the Media

This research is located within the history of the representations of African-American women with television and film media. Through a consideration of the work by scholars, such as bell hooks (1981), Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Melissa Harris Perry (2011), this study is partially designed to investigate how the representation of black women in mainstream media (namely television and film media) affects the development of the online identity of African-American college women.

Tropes of Black Women in the Media

Since the nineteenth century’s hyper-sexualization of Sara Bartman to the objectifying marginalization of black women during United States’ slavery, black women typically have been reduced to tropes such as the “Mammy”, the “Sapphire”, the “Jezebel”, and the “Tragic Mulatto”. Patricia Hill Collins (2000), a scholar of Black feminist thought, argues that the most prominent image of black women is the image of the Mammy. For, according to Collins, all of the tropes of black women today originated out of the image of the Mammy and are connected to the history of slavery within the United States. It is the work of these images to control and limit the behavior of black women. Under Collins, the Mammy image represents the “faithful, obedient,
domestic servant" (2000:79). The Mammy is an example of how all black women should exist within a white world. They are asexual, and completely devoted to their jobs of caring for white families and preserving whiteness.

In opposition to the Mammy, there is the image of the Black matriarch. While the Mammy serves as an example of the black mother in the white home and as a pillar in the conservation of whiteness, the matriarch represents the black mother in the black home and is seen as a deviant member of society. Not only is she a representation of a bad mother, but also the matriarch image is defined by being “overly aggressive, unfeminine, and emasculating” (2000:83). Collins discusses class based delineations of the image of the matriarch, such as the Welfare Queen, who is described as the poor, working-class black mother who abuses social welfare benefits, and the Black lady, who is described as being “too assertive” with their time consuming jobs, which lead to the emasculation of males and highlights their diminishing femininity (2000:89).

Collins introduces the Jezebel as an image that juxtaposes the asexuality of the Mammy, for the Jezebel serves as the image of the sexually aggressive black women with an excessive and insatiable sexual appetite. The Jezebel serves as justification to the myth that black women cannot be sexually assaulted or raped because under the Jezebel, black women are naturally and uncontrollably sexual (2000:90). Then the image of the Tragic Mulatto represents society’s fear of interracial mating, for the tragic mulatto represents the children of black and white mating. Collins concludes her argument by stating that these objectifying images serve to police black women within society and are becoming more important for they not only work to influence policy within the United States, but, due to globalization, these images are being mass produced and distributed across the world.
Effects of Limiting Representations

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) and bell hooks (1981) argue that the limited representations of black women in the media led to the overall dehumanization of black women in American society. According to bell hooks, "the devaluation of Black womanhood started during the times and slavery and has not been altered in one hundred years" (1981:53). hooks relates the invisibility of black women in traditional media to the invisibility of black women in larger society as a whole. Collins contends that the interlocking systems of oppression (including the intersections of race, class and gender oppression) create a "Matrix of Domination" meant to control black women. Specifically, in reference to the "Mammy", Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, argues that this image has worked to historically uphold hierarchies of race, gender, and class in the United States. The historical oppression of black women has been justified by imagined images, such as the "Mammy". The limited portrayals of black women in the media are a method created within the "Matrix of Domination" to limit the agency of black women.

In more recent years, Political Scientist and MSNBC News Host, Melissa Harris Perry (2011) has commented upon the limitations placed upon black women in the media. As a result of her focus group work, Perry has concluded that even though the black women in her focus groups were of varying economic backgrounds, ages, and locations, the majority, independently, concluded that the three stereotypes most present in the media are the "Mammy", the "Jezebel", and the "Sapphire" (2011:33). However, Harris-Perry suggests that the importance of these limiting archetypes is embodied within her theory of the "Crooked Room". Melissa Harris-Perry, coined the theory from a cognitive psychology experiment that showed how if people are placed in a crooked chair in a crooked room, they can tilt their body as much as 35 degrees and believe
that they were straight. She correlates this tilting to how Black women bend themselves to fit into the dominant images of the “Mammy”, the “Jezebel”, the “Sapphire”, and the “Tragic Mulatto” that plague the media. Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden discovered through their research that “80 percent [of Black women] confirm that they have been personally affected by racism and sexist assumptions” and Harris-Perry’s comments on how the women in her focus groups “offer additional evidence that Black women believe others think negatively about them” (35). Therefore Black women are aware that they are affected by the negative stereotypes (such as the Mammy, the Jezebel, and the Sapphire) in the media. At the same time, the women in the focus group were able to recognize the traits of the stereotypes in other women, illustrating that they have a hand in viewing others within the crooked frame of society.

History of Resistance

At the same time, Harris-Perry notes how some people in the study were able to remain upright in the “crooked room” and correlates this idea to how some black women can do the same thing, such as the Black women involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Harris-Perry is not alone in considering how black women retained and regained agency amidst the dominating narratives heavily present in society. Donald Bogle (1973) comments on how it is crucial to consider how black women, even though historically limited to certain roles, have worked within those roles to highlight an overall humanity of black women.

Historically, some black women respond to this dilemma by creating their own images of black womanhood and asserting their own narratives within the conversation. Even though my work focuses on women within the new technological era, it is located within a history of black women struggling to achieve the same. For example, in independent film, Yvonne Welbon,
creator of the documentary, *Sisters in Cinema* (2003), illuminates on black women who have been the creators of their own images and of their own narratives since the 1920s. From Zora Neal Hurston in the 1920s, to Eloyce Gist in the 1930s, Euzhan Palcy in the 1980s, to Kasi Lemmons in the 1990s, black women have been fighting to have agency over the narrative production of black women’s lived experiences within the film industry. However, Welbon could not find these women within Hollywood. She had to seek them out amongst the Independent Film Industry. One of the limitations of the independent film industry is the lack of publicity and circulation for their films. Their impact tends to only reach a limited audience.

Similarly, in her historical analysis of the intersection between the “Mammy” figure and America’s racial consciousness, Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (2009) speaks of African-American artists who attempt to challenge the stereotypical representations of the “Mammy” by re-imagining her image. For example, Betye Saar in *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* depicts a seemingly happy enslaved southern black woman, who is in the plantation kitchen cooking for her slave master. Next to her is a child, who appears to be the white child of the plantation owners. This image represents the traditional illustration of the “Mammy” and her duties to her slave owners. However, this “mammy” is holding a rifle and at closer inspection the “white” child is actually a mixed child. In this image, Wallace-Sanders argues that Saar is translating “frustration and simmering rage onto a beloved African American woman” (2008:142). Additionally, she is giving the “mammy” image agency to gain freedom for herself by whichever means necessary. By giving the “mammy” image power to control her life, Saar is also arguing that black women, as a whole, also have this power.

Tracy Curtis (2015), in *New Media in Black Women’s Autobiography: Intrepid Embodiment and Narrative Innovation*, explores how black women navigate new media forms in
order to regain agency over their own images. Curtis argues that black women have always resisted the societal representations and portrayals of black women by re-defining themselves in the creation of counter narratives. The practice of doing so requires that black women use innovative forms of “autographical expression and media uses” (2015:10). The same can be said to black women creating content in the new age of media. As Curtis states, “black women’s autographical traditions have been formed by pressure from stereotypes marshaled against them” (2015:25). Black women who are engaging in new media are not separate from this tradition. On the web, black women manipulate online spaces to “their own benefit, creating community, and highlighting its presence” (2015:30). While, Curtis and I have similar arguments, we employ different methods. Additionally, Curtis specifically looks at how black women engage on Instagram to tell personal narratives to create counter narratives. However, my investigation attempts to further examine how black female millennials navigate their online identities as a consequence of their intersectionality.

One of the resistance strategies that Hill Collin’s proposes to the “matrix of domination” is for black women to re-conceptualize community in order to create alternative communities that empower black women and exist separate from dominant groups in society. It is in these spheres that black women are nurtured to combat societal oppression, such as becoming agents of knowledge production (1990:230). Curtis’s argues that in this digital age, black women are using social media and the web to form community amongst themselves, and according to Collins this act is a form of resistance against the interlocking of oppression. Throughout the web, Black women are creating and defining their own communities. For example, the Crunk Feminist Collective, an online blog devoted to black feminist thought, vows to “create a space of support and camaraderie for hip hop generation feminists of color, queer and straight, in the
academy and without, by building a rhetorical community” (Crunk Feminist Collective). As a result of the virtual community of black women, Curtis argues that black women are using Instagram to express their own narratives. This investigation attempts to further examine how individual black women navigate their identities within digital spaces as a result of their intersectionality.

In the United States, there is a history of Black women interacting with, being affected by, and even challenging the presentation of Black women in the media. However, in this current digital moment, this presence of resistance is more visible and accessible due to the development of technology. Resistance work can now be communicated quicker within virtual communities, allowing black women the access to be apart of and create communities of empowerment and resistance. Additionally, there is no denying that Black women on screen have been historically constructed in limiting ways, and that this construction is reflected within the everyday lives and interactions of Black women. By looking at how millennial black women on Spelman College’s campus develop their online identities amidst the legacy of these images of African-American women, this study is looking to expand on how race operates in cyberspace. This study also examines the extent to which black women on Spelman College are resisting and challenging stereotypical representations of black women in the media through their social media profiles.

**Gender and Performance**

Gender Studies scholars, Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987) conceptualized the concept of “doing gender” in their article, “Doing Gender”. They argue that gender is not a result of biology, but rather a result of societal interactions. While sex is a biological category, gender is created, reinforced and performed, through social interactions. However, the performances of
gender relate to one's biological sex. Additionally, Judith Butler (1990), a feminist philosopher, in her development of the concept of gender performativity, asserts that gender is essentially acting. Everyone is socialized to understand the gender binaries between men and women, and in turn, everyone performs gender based upon these socialized understandings. Hence, gender is not a result of biology, but rather a result of socialization and societal influences. Individuals learn how to perform gender.

Sociologist, Charles Horton Cooley (1902) emphasizes that the social self is determined by the "imagined effect" of how individuals believe that they are being viewed in another's mind (1902:189). According to Cooley, the "looking glass self" illustrates that idea that individuals perform their "self" in social situations based upon how they think others are viewing them. Everybody views himself or herself by how others view them or how they think that others view them under Cooley's "looking-glass self". English art critic, John Berger (1972) argues that women view themselves through the lens of a male gaze. He states, "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at" (1972:168). In other words, women see themselves, as they believe men see them and they critique themselves and perform through this same lens.

Navigating gender for black women is further complicated by the politics of intersectionality. Intersectionality is understood by Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) theoretical definition, which defines intersectionality as the effects of the intersection of the cultural categories of identity, such as gender, race, and class on systematic oppression and social inequality (1989:142). Crenshaw's definition originates from the Combahee River Collective's insistence upon an "integrated analysis...[of] "the manifold and simultaneous oppressions tat a women of color face" (1977). Furthermore, Vivian May (2015) states that intersectionality "highlights how lived identities, structural systems, sites of marginalization, forms of power, an
modes of resistance intersect" (2015:21). Thus, all oppressions are intersecting and the eradication of any oppression depends on the eradication of all oppressions.

The performative nature of gender affects how women interact with others in society and for black women this performance is inseparable from the politics of race. Since individuals engage with others through social media sites, gender performance is a factor in the development of online identities. In my investigation, I aim to explore the interactions between gender performance and online identity development through an intersectional lens to further conversations about black women’s engagement on the web.

Social Media and Online Identity Creation

Recent studies have concluded that milennial are “digital natives”, meaning that they do not have to adapt to new technologies, and they are linked by social media (Pew Research Center, 2014). Social media is defined as forms of electronic communication created through exchanges between online communities. For example, 81% of Millennials have a Facebook page, and have an average of 250 friends. Millennials are the “heaviest users of the Internet, cell phones and social media site” in comparison to other generations (Taylor, 2014). Furthermore, Millennials understand social media sites as “the building blocks of social interaction”. Hence the creation of self on online social media sites is crucial to understanding how Millennials interact in society. However, while there are studies that focus on how Millennials develop their online identities on social media sites, there are not studies focusing on how black women develop their online identities on social media sites.

There is no denying the power of the Internet as an interactive space for American society, and the fortitude that young people hold in the development of this space. Media scholar,
S. Craig Watkins focuses on how "the most celebrated Web 2.0 brands- MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube- established a formidable presence in American popular culture" represents this youthful power (2009:210). Even though it is not studied, Black women are also contributors to the development of online spaces. Recent studies have shown that "73% of African American internet users—and 96% of those ages 18-29—use a social networking site of some kind" and 74% of all African-American women use a social networking site of some kind (Smith: 2014).

Media and Critical Race Scholar, Paul Gilroy (2000) comments on how the discourse of race in contemporary America is changing and becoming more neutral and less contentious due to digital technology in his studies on post-racial America. American Studies scholar, Lisa Nakamura (2012) further asserts that the Internet and digitized media texts are becoming a more crucial channel for the discourse about race in her work on the role of the internet in the first election of President Barack Obama. Cultural studies scholar, Ernest J. Wilson (2012), in his article concerning the presence of youths of color on the web, "New Voices on the Net", mentions how "this is a moment of considerable opportunity for people of color to tell their own stories and the stories of their communities, and to be included in the wider discourses of American life" (2012:247).

Hence there is evidence that individuals of color are engaged with social media sites. However, the specifics of their engagement have yet to be studied. Due to the growing prevalence of the Internet within our lives and within societal interactions, it is becoming more crucial to examine how race and gender intersect on the Internet. Therefore, this study works to examine this intersection by exploring how black, female, millennials at Spelman College engage with social media.
Chapter 3: Theory and Research Questions

This research project investigates the factors that influence how black female college students on Spelman College’s campus form their online identities on social media sites. The social media site that this investigation is primarily concerned with is Facebook. The theoretical framework of this project is guided by the following theories: Pierre Bourdieu’s (1981) theory of “habitus” and Patricia Hill Collins’ (1999) theory of “controlling images”.

Bourdieu (1981), in Distinction, argues that “habitus” are the socialized norms that guide the behavior of individuals; it is the way that society imbeds structured ways of functioning in society through the interactions between the individual and social structures, such as race, class, and gender. It is through habitus that individuals are able to form (through an exchange between free will and socialization) their tastes, preferences, and actions. Considering Bourdieu’s theory of habitus (1981), I explore how the preferences of Spelman students, informed by their “postionality” of being both black and female (the intersection of their race and gender), are reflected in how they engage on social media sites (namely Facebook). Furthermore, the web is a space where many perceive online identities to be created partially out of “acts of free will”, but they are just as equally informed by social structures, such as race, class, and gender.

Collins (1999), in Black Feminist Thought, argues that “portraying African American women as stereotypical mammies, matriarch, welfare recipients, and hot mommas has been essential to the political economy of domination fostering Black women’s oppression” (1999:147). “Controlling images” are, what she argues, the certain representations and images that are continually reproduced as a way to uphold the current social hierarchy within the United States. According to Collins (1999), there are controlling images of black women in the media
that influence the oppression of black women in the United States. In this investigation, I examine how Spelman College students' respond to this oppression within the development of their online identity. Arguably, if Spelman students feel as though society views black women in a negative way due to images in the media, then they will be influence to present their selves in certain ways in response to this driving emotion.

In consideration of Bourdieu's theory of "habitus" and Collins' theory of "controlling images", this investigation explores the following research questions:

R1) What factors influence social media usage for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College?

R1A) How does perception of the representation of black women in the media influence social media usage for black, female millennial students at Spelman College

R2) How does the intersectionality of identity (primarily gender and race) affect the development of online identities on social media sites for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College?

R3) How do students resist and/or uphold social constructs of gender and race through their social media profiles?
Chapter 4: Methodology, Scope and Limitations

This chapter explains the specific methodologies that I utilize in this study. This investigation explores the factors that influence how black, female college students on Spelman College’s campus form their online identities on social media sites in consideration of their intersectionality. I explain how each research method was employed to address the four research questions outlined in Chapter 3:

R1) What factors influence social media usage for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College?

R1A) How does perception of the representation of black women in the media influence social media usage for black, female millennial students at Spelman College?

R2) How does the intersectionality of identity (primarily gender and race) affect the development of online identities on social media sites for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College?

R3) How do students resist and/or uphold social constructs of gender and race through their social media profiles?
This exploration uses a triangular or mixed-method methodological approach. Triangular methodologies combine multiple methods (mixed methods) to more comprehensively understand a social phenomenon. Mixed methods allow the research to explore his/her research from a variety of different, yet related angles (Olsen 2004). This research will combine quantitative and qualitative methodological techniques, including an online questionnaire (survey), semi-structured interviews, and content analyses.

For the purposes of this study, social media is defined as forms of electronic communication created through exchanges between online communities. Additionally, online identity is constructed from Charles Horton Cooley’s (1902) theory of the “looking-glass self” and Erving Goffman’s theory of performance. According to Cooley, the “looking glass self” illustrates that idea that individuals preform their “self” in social situations based upon how they think others are viewing them. According to Erving Goffman (1955), everyone in society navigates a “pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which [they] express [their] view of the situation and through this [their] evaluation of the participants” when interacting with others (1955:338). Thus, individuals act by considering how their acts will be interpreted and viewed by others. Hence, online identity is explored through questions concerning the performativity of race and gender on online social media sites, through the demographic section of the survey, through questions asked during the semi-structured interviews, and through the content analyses of Spelman students’ Facebook pages. Intersectionality is primarily understood by Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1989) theoretical definition, which defines intersectionality as the effects of the intersection of the cultural categories of identity, such as gender, race, and class on systematic oppression and social inequality (1989:142). Intersectionality is explored through questions on
the questionnaire, questions asked during the semi-structured interviews, and content analyses of Facebook profiles.

Survey Design and Sampling

The survey (See Appendix B) is used to operationalize Research Question 1 (R1) and Research Question 1A (R1A) by gaining data on social media usage, perceptions of self, attitudes toward the representation of black women in the media, and demographical information and is used to partially operationalize Research Question 2 (R2) with the use of the Stigma Consciousness scale. This survey was designed through Qualtrics, and sent out, through email, to students at Spelman College, a historically black and female university. The email was sent out by a third party (by professors at Spelman College) as to not bias the respondents. Since the survey was emailed to students at a university that I attend, I used convenience sampling. The sample population is 2145 students, according to the most recent data from Spelman College (OIRAP 2013-2014). I aimed to have a sample size of at least 200 students with an approximately equal distribution across all year levels (first year, sophomore, junior, and senior) for my cross-sectional study. Since I am using Spelman College to sample black, female, millennials, this survey was only opened to black females, ages 18-33 (the age range for millennials). I only included survey responses meeting these criteria in my investigation.

The survey is designed into four parts: Engagement with Social Media, Attitudes towards Black Women in the Media, Perceptions of Self (Self-Concept Scale, and Stigma Consciousness Scale), and Demographics.
Engagement with Social Media

The first section of the survey consists of questions on the usage of social media sites (see Appendix B). The social media site primarily being studied in this investigation is Facebook. This study understands social media sites as forms of electronic communication created through exchanges between online communities. The first set of questions explores the average amount of time spent on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The second set of questions appear as an index and measures the amount of time spent devoted to different activities on Facebook (i.e. posting pictures, liking pictures, sharing political articles), and the second (following) index explores the type of content typically posted (and the frequency of posting different types of content) on Facebook by the students (i.e. comical content, political content, etc...).

The third index uses Likert-Scale questions to examine a connection between social media usage and greater social impact. According to Alan Bryman (2012), a Likert-Scale is a multiple-indicator scale, which measures a set of attitudes about a particular concept (i.e. self-esteem). The scale consists of answers to measure the level of agreement (there are normally four to five degrees of agreement). For example, students will be asked if they feel as though their social media profiles matters to society as a whole, and if they feel that their social media profiles affect other black women.

Attitudes towards Black Women in the Media

This section measures Spelman student’s attitudes towards the representation of black women in the media. Media refers to all television, film, and print media. The first part of this section consists of questions regarding how positive/negative the participants feel about the representation of black women in the media, and how the participants feel they are impacted by
the representations of black women in the media. For example, students are asked if they feel as
though the representations of black women in the media affects how society views black women,
and students also are asked if the representations of black women in the media influence how
they engage with their social media profiles.

The second part of this section consists of a scale to measure how warm participants feel
to different representations of black women in the media. For this section, six pictures of
popular, contemporary, images of black women in the media (I do not provide the name of the
image representation) are displayed. Respondents are then asked, on a scale between 1 and 10,
how warm the participant feels toward the image. With 10 representing the highest degree of
warmth and 1 representing a lowest degree of warmth.

Perceptions of Self (Self-Esteem Scale, Stigma Consciousness Scale)

The first part of this section uses the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg 1989) and
asks the 10 questions from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale. The definition of self-esteem that I
use for this study is taken from the definition of self-esteem used by the Robert Reasoner for the
National Association for Self-Esteem: “Self- esteem is a positive or negative orientation toward
oneself; an overall evaluation of one's worth or value”.

The second part of this section is adapted from Tiffany Mosley and Jerome Rosenberg’s
(2007) study, “Stigma Consciousness and Perceived Stereotype Threat and Their Effects on
Academic Performance”. Even though I use many of the same questions, I use a different
purpose for my analysis. Instead of looking at the role in sigma consciousness and stereotype and
the effects on academic performance, I use this scale to look at the effects of sigma
consciousness and stereotype threat on social media usage and the development of online
identity. The definition of stigma consciousness which I am using for my study is taken from Pinal's article (1999), "Stigma consciousness: The Psychological Legacy of Social Stereotypes". According to Pinal, sigma consciousness "reflects individual differences--either dispositional or situational induced--in the extent to which targets of widespread stereotypes focus on their stereotyped status and believe it pervades their life experiences".

Demographics

The final section of the survey is basic demographic data, such as age, classification, race, and class.

Semi-Structured Interview Design and Sampling

The semi-structured interviews (See Appendix C) are meant to further investigate the themes explored in the questionnaire. They explore Research Question 1, Research Question 1A Research Question 2, and Research Question 3. Participants for the semi-structured interviews were contacted through convenience sampling as well. Only participants who state that they have a Facebook were interviewed. According to Alan Bryman (2012), a semi-structured interview is an interview where the researcher develops a basic interview guide, but allows for the opportunity to respond to general themes within the interview in depth (allowing themselves to go off script based on responses from their participants). The interviews begin with the individuals being asked to tell the researcher about their Facebook profile with their Facebook profile pulled up on a nearby computer. Then the participant is asked to speak about their most recent (10) posts. Students who respond to the survey were asked at the beginning and the end of the survey if they would like to be considered for a semi-structured interview. If they agreed then they would provide their contact information. Their contact information was kept separate from
their survey responses (to remain confidentiality and anonymity). I contacted students to schedule interviews through the email address that they provided. Interviews were conducted in private research rooms in an academic building, Giles, at Spelman College (Psychology Interview Room #4). For this study, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted using grounded theory. The interviews began with the respondents being asked to speak about their Facebook profiles and their thoughts about Facebook. The following questions were asked on the basis on the participant’s responses. The interviews followed similar themes, such as social media usage (in general) and Gender and Racial Performances on Facebook, and example questions can be seen in the interview guide (Appendix C).

Content Analysis Design and Sampling

The content analysis section of my investigation explores Spelman students’ Facebook profiles and uses an inductive approach to examine the prominent themes found in student profiles. According to Bryman (2012), an inductive approach refers to the process of using observations to generate a theory, rather than testing a theory (deductive approach). This section of the investigation seeks to answer R1A, R2, and R4. Profiles selected for the content analysis were also contacted through convenience sampling. Students, who responded to the survey, were asked at the beginning and the end of the survey if they would agree to allow their Facebook profile to be considered for further analysis. If they agreed then they were asked to provide their Facebook name and they were informed that I would be sending them a Friend request on Facebook so that I could conduct my content analysis. Out of the total amount of responses that I received, I randomly selected 10 profiles to examine by pulling names out of a paper bag. For
each profile, I examined the student’s most recent ten posts that they made on their Facebook page. In order to better ensure the reliability and validity of my investigation, I only looked at posts posted before the date that the online questionnaire was sent out (April 6th, 2015). Students’ profile information was kept separate from their survey responses (to maintain confidentiality and anonymity). For this study, I conducted 10 content analyses.

**Operational Definitions: Reliability and Validity**

The major concepts in this investigation are: social media, online identity, intersectionality, self-esteem, stigma consciousness and social distance theory. Each of these concepts is operationalized using established definitions from the field of social science (mostly from Sociology and Psychology). Hence the definitions of the concepts operate under high face validity.

Research Question 1 (R1) is operationalized through the survey, which contains four sections: Engagement with Social Media, Perceptions of Self (Self-Concept Scale, and Stigma Consciousness Scale), Attitudes towards Black Women in the Media, and Demographics. The Engagement with Social Media section and the Attitudes towards Black Women in the media operationalize R1 by exploring how Spelman students use social media and by establishing a connection between social media usage and attitudes towards black women in the media through the questions asked in the section (See Appendix B). To ensure the internal reliability of the survey and the connection between social media usage and attitudes toward black women in the media, I placed the section about social media usage before the section about perceptions of black women in the media to limit bias from the participants. To further increase the internal reliability and validity of these two concepts, I used multiple indicators within each scale. For
example, the attitudes towards black women in the media is measured through questions concerning the topic and through the use of a social distance (warm/cold) scale. Validity was increased by the use of concurrent validity, for I used multiple methods and replication to measure both of these concepts. While these concepts are operationalized by the survey, they are also operationalized by questions in the semi-structured interview. Internal Reliability will be ensured during the interviews by the use of replication and through a consideration of question order (See Appendix C). The ordering of the questions ensured that I did not influence my participants' responses. For example, I asked questions about how my respondent engaged with online media platforms, before I ask her about how she felt being a black woman in these social media spaces. Validity was further ensured since I attempted to comprehensively examine the connections between social media usage and attitudes towards black women in the media, and I will test the correlation by conducting bivariate analysis. According to Bryman (2012), bivariate analysis tests the correlation between two variables.

The two scales used in R1, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Stigma Consciousness Scale have high face validity since both scales are commonly used and accepted by other sociologists and psychologists in the social science field as accurate measures of self-esteem and stigmas consciousness. To ensure the internal reliability of connections made between self-esteem and social media usage and stigma consciousness and social media usage, I placed the social media usage section between both the self-esteem scale and the stigma consciousness scale to limit participant bias. To further increase the reliability and validity of these two concepts, I used multiple indicators and replication within the scale. For validity, I attempted to comprehensively examine the connections between self-esteem and social media
usage, and stigma consciousness and social media usage, and I tested the correlation by conducting bivariate analysis.

Additionally, the survey was preliminarily administered to a convenience sample of Spelman College students to further ensure the reliability and measurement validity. The survey was analyzed using multiple regression analysis through the software system of SPSS. During the data analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha further tested the internal reliability of the survey. The demographics section operates on face validity.

Research Question 3 (R2) is operationalized through the Stigma Consciousness Scale in the survey, and through the semi-structured interviews. In the survey, I attempt to establish a connection between feelings of stigma and marginalization (by factors such as race, class, and gender) and social media usage. I use multiple-indicators and replication to better ensure the internal reliability of this tool. Furthermore, I attempted to comprehensively examine the connections between the stigma consciousness of individuals with intersectional identities and social media usage. During the interview, reliability will be ensured by the use of replication and through a consideration of question order to limit bias from the participants. Since, I am using two different methods to measure R3, I am using concurrent validity to further ensure the generalizability of my investigation.

The ordering of the questions ensured that I do not influence my participants’ responses. For example, I asked questions about how my respondent engages with online media platforms, before I ask her about the role that gender plays in her life and in the development of her social media identity. Furthermore, in my interview, I attempted to not probe or prompt for certain answer questions to further enhance the reliability of these measures. Additionally, I limit social desirability biases and further the reliability and validity of this tool, by asking more personal
questions towards the end of the interview, after I had established a certain level of rapport with my participant, and to limit the participant bias in the investigation. An example of a personal question is questions asked about class and income. Additionally, I attempted to comprehensively examine all aspects of Research Question 2 within the interviews and the content analyses. Furthermore, since I am using two distinct methods to examine R2, I am using concurrent validity to further ensure the generalizability of my investigation.

Research Question 3 (R3) is operationalized through the semi-structured interviews and through the content analyses section. Reliability was ensured during the interviews by the use of replication and through a consideration of question order (See Appendix C). The ordering of the questions ensured that I did not influence my participants' responses. Furthermore, in my interview, I attempted to not probe or prompt for certain answer questions to further enhance the reliability of these measures. Since, I am using two different methods to measure R4, I am using concurrent validity to further ensure the generalizability of my investigation.

Limitations of Study

While this investigation is meant to investigate how black, female millennials and how they develop their online identities on social media sites, it primarily uses convenience sampling on the campus of Spelman College. Therefore, the investigation is limited for it is not representative of all black, female millennials. Furthermore, since I am only examining students at Spelman College, there may be homogeneity to my sample for all of the students attend the same college and have taken many similar classes. My sampling frame is also constructed through the Spelman College email system, which means that I will only receive responses from students who actively and consistently use their Spelman College email. Additionally, due to
time constraints and lack of economic resources, I may not receive enough responses to ensure that my investigation is statistically significant. Furthermore, due to time constraints, I was not able to holistically examine social media usage across multiple platforms.

**Human Subject Considerations and IRB**

The survey and the semi-structured interviews both involve human subjects. Human participants are utilized in the completion of this study. In agreement with the American Sociological Association Code of Ethics, the rights of all human participants will be respected (ASA 2014). All participants, both the survey respondents and the interview participants, were required to read and agree to the details of consent. The consent form conveys the nature of the study and emphasizes their acknowledgement of their voluntary role and expected participation. The consent form also lists all possible risks, and insures both confidentiality and anonymity for the survey participants and confidentiality for the interview participants. The consent form is attached (See Appendix A).

As per the ethical guidelines on the ASA website and Spelman's IRB, I handed out consent forms to both the survey participants and the interview participants, since I am responsible for ensuring that my participants understand what they are signing up for (ASA 2014). The ages (18-33) that I am sampling are not especially vulnerable groups, but they will not be forced into participating in this study. There are unseen pressures, such as the fact that some of the participants will be friends and colleagues of mine. However, there is a very minimal chance for physical harm and emotional harm in the survey and focus groups. After each interview, I held debriefing sessions with each participant so that the participant had the option to
hear more about how the data that they provided me would be used and so that I could answer any concerns that they may have.

In effort to confirm to the ethical standards of the American Sociological Association, the Spelman College Institutional Review Board was consulted and this study was not conducted until I had received approval from the Spelman College Institutional Review Board. For my study to be approved by Spelman College Institutional Review Board, I submitted my proposal, including my consent form, to the board for review, by the first day of Spring Break (www.spelman.edu), and I received approval within two weeks of this date.
Chapter 5: Presentation and Analysis of the Data

The principle aim of this investigation is to explore how Spelman students, as a convenience sample group of black, female millennials, navigate and develop online identity on Facebook and other social media sites. To answer this larger question, I developed four sub questions to explore. In this chapter, I will discuss and analyze the results of my investigation and discuss my success in answering the following research questions:

R1) What factors influence social media usage for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College?

R1A) How does perception of the representation of black women in the media influence social media usage for black, female millennial students at Spelman College?

R2) How does the intersectionality of identity (primarily gender and race) affect the development of online identities on social media sites for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College?

R3) How do students resist and/or uphold social constructs of gender and race through their social media profiles?
Overview of Data

I used mixed methods in order to answer the aforementioned questions. Through the use of mixed methods, I was able to more comprehensively examine these questions, and also enhance the reliability of my investigation. The methods used are survey, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis. I had originally planned for R1 to be answered primarily through the online questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews, for R1A to be answered through all three methods, for R2 to be answered through all three methods, and for R3 to be answered through the semi-structured interviews and content analyses. However, as I analyzed my findings, I noticed that R1 was partially answered through the content analyses as well and R4 was partially answered through the online questionnaire. Thus, R1 and R4 were operationalized through all three methods as well.

Summary of Data Collected: Survey

The survey consisted of a total of 50 questions and 4 sections (engagement with social media, perceptions of black women in the media, perceptions of self, demographics). For the survey, I received a total of 143 respondents. However, not everyone completed the survey. I only had approximately 70 fully completed surveys. All of the respondents identified as female, and as students of Spelman College. When asked their racial identification, participants were allowed to select all that applied. Thus, 97% identified as African-American (Black), 8% identified as Hispanic, 3% identified as Native American, 3% identified as Caribbean American, 2% identified as White (Caucasian), and 1% identified as Asian. Since this study is concerned with black, female, millennial students at Spelman College, only the responses of those who identify as black (African-American) will be considered in the presentation of results.
The majority (46%) of all respondents identified as first-year students; while 18% identified as sophomores, 14% identified as juniors, and 20% identified as seniors. Only 1% identified as other.

The majority of respondents (34%) identified their socio-economic status as middle class; while 9% identified as lower class, 24% as lower middle class, 32% identified as upper middle class, and 1% identified as upper class.

The majority of respondents (50%) identified the place that they grew up as being suburban. 39% stated urban, 7% rural, and 4% other. For region, respondents were allowed to select all that applied. 51% (the majority) identified as being from the East Coast, 34% identified as being from the Southeast, 18% identified as being from the Midwest, 7% identified as being from the West Coast, 5% identified as being from outside of the Unite States, and 2% identified as being from the Southwest. In terms of ethnic breakdown of high school attended, 43% (the majority) identified with attending a predominantly White high school, 27% identified with attending a predominantly Black high school, 23% identified with attending a mixed race high school, 3% identified with attending a predominantly Hispanic high school, and 4% identified as other.

Despite the limited number of responses to the online questionnaire, the data presented still displays diversity across socio-economic identity, region, and year.
Summary of Data Collected through Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted a total of ten semi-structured interviews. All of the participants identified as black and female. Four students were first years, two were sophomores, one was a junior, and three were seniors. In order to maintain anonymity the participants’ names are not be mentioned in this investigation. The interview respondents will be referred to as “Participant”, and each one was given a different letter of the alphabet for identification.

Summary of Data Collected through Content Analyses

I performed a total of ten content analyses of Spelman Students’ Facebook profiles. All of the profiles were from students who identify as black and female. Three of these students were first years, one was a sophomore, two were juniors, and four were seniors. In order to maintain anonymity the participants’ Facebook names are not be mentioned in this investigation. Each profile will be referred to as “Profile”, and each one was given a different letter of the alphabet for identification. The data collected on each profile was collected through the use of the content analysis chart that I developed for this investigation (see Appendix D). Since participants for the semi-structured interviews and for the content analyses were selected separately, five of the profiles analyzed were also the profiles of the interview participants.
Research Question 1: What factors influence social media usage for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College?

As previously stated, R1 for this investigation, is what factors influence social media usage for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College, and the question is examined and analyzed through the results of the online questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and content analyses. This section is divided into four sections: Social Media Usage Between Platforms, Facebook Usage, Virtual Communities, and Presentation of Self.

Social Media Usage Between Platforms

Graph 1

Which of the following social media sites do you spend the most time on?
Graph 1 displays that the majority of respondents (60%) to the survey stated that they spend the most time on Instagram. However, when asked separately how much time they spend daily on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, 98% admit to spending up to 10 hours daily on Facebook, while 94% admit to spending up to 10 hours daily on Twitter and only 90% admit to spending up to 10 hours daily on Instagram (see Graph 2). The discrepancy between these two findings may be a result of question order.

Additionally, participants may not have thought about the amount of time that they actually spend on each site until asked separately and may believe that they spend the majority of time on Instagram. However, not all respondents answered every question. 113 respondents responded to the question, Which of the following social media sites do you spend the most time on?, but only 64 respondents responded to the daily usage question for Facebook, 51 responded to the daily usage question for Twitter, and 86 responded to the daily usage question for Instagram. This may also contribute to the discrepancy between these numbers.

During the interviews, the majority of the respondents (50%) claimed to spend the most time out of all of the social media sites on Twitter. Two participants claimed Instagram, one participant responded with Facebook, one said Snapchat, and one claimed Tumblr. However,
nine out of the ten participants stated that they have Facebook profiles, Instagram profiles, and Twitter profiles. All of the interview participants and survey participants admitted to being active on Facebook. Arguably, though, Instagram and Twitter seem to be the most popular social media sites, even though Facebook is still a highly used social media site. While it is inconclusive which social media site respondents to the study actually spend the most time on, it is clear that students are heavily engaged on social media sites as a whole (especially on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).

During the semi-structured interviews, when asked the question, “What social media site do you think you spend the most time on”, participants automatically began to compare and contrast usage on the different social media sites. One of the most salient themes was that Facebook was primarily used to keep in contact with family members and friends from home or friends from high school. This fact also limited the use of Facebook for many participants for they felt that their family members on Facebook policed their Facebook profiles. For example, Participant D mentioned, “I just do not need my mom and all her friends to know my life like that. I watch what I post so that I do not have to receive a phone call.” Participant G explained, “When I post on Facebook, I imagine that I am posting to my grandmother. What would she want to know about my life? What language would she be comfortable with me using?” Participant K described the struggle of trying to maintain a certain image on her Facebook page because her mom is constantly checking it. “I have to manually approve all of the pictures that my friends post of me, because as soon as a picture goes up that my mom does not approve of, I get an hour long lecture. Because of this, I have to take down some really great pictures of myself.” Participants generally feel that they have to monitor their Facebook profiles in ways that they do not have to for other social media sites as a result of the influx of their family
members using Facebook. Family members, as a whole, seem to be less involved on Instagram and Twitter.

Participants did not spend much time discussing Instagram during the interviews. It was the general consensus that Instagram is mostly used to post pictures and to view the pictures that others post. Participant G stated, “Instagram is really shallow. I just post pictures of when I look pretty to try to get likes”. She exemplified this point during the interview. As she was showing me her Facebook page, she continuously pointed to pictures posted on her page that were linked to her Instagram account, saying, “I just had to post this picture, I just looked too good that day”. For all of the participants, it was common to link pictures that they posted on Instagram to their Facebook profiles. Participant F explained, “You post the best picture on Instagram and the rest you put in a Facebook album”. In terms of the posting of pictures, there appears to be a complimentary relationship between Facebook and Instagram.

Many participants expressed the limitations of Instagram. Participant G also stated, “You can’t really express your opinions or thoughts on Instagram. You could type a note [virtual sticky note] on your phone and then post it as a picture, but that is still a picture. To express yourself you have to use Twitter, Facebook, or Tumblr”. Participant C did not claim Instagram to be shallow, but she stated that she loves Instagram because she “is in love with selfies [when one takes a picture of one’s self]”. Both participant G and participant C used Instagram to post pictures of their outfit combinations so that they can show others their personal sense of fashion. As a whole, all of the participants used Instagram, but they all agreed that it is mainly used for the pictures.

During the interviews, participants spent a lot of time discussing the similarities and differences between Facebook and Twitter. One of the most salient differences between the two
sites is that Twitter is faster and is constantly updating. Participant B stated, “Facebook is boring and only changes maybe like twice a day, but on Twitter I am constantly engaged in conversation and communication with others”. The rationale that on Twitter one has a bigger network and influence was both a positive and negative aspect for participants. Participant C felt more comfortable on Facebook since it is “a community of her friends”. She described Facebook and Snapchat as being more “personal” to her as social media platforms. Other participants appreciated the fact that on Twitter they have a bigger influence and more people can view and appreciate their opinions.

However, since the parents and older relatives of the participants are not active on Twitter, participants feel a greater freedom on Twitter and they appreciate the ability to have more power in what they say. It was also frequently mentioned that since it is socially acceptable to not use your real name on Twitter, participants feel less responsibility for what they say on Twitter. Participant G stated that she stopped using Twitter as much “because people just get so reckless”. She admitted that when she used to use Twitter frequently, she could not help being “reckless” like all of her friends. “The environment just inspires it”, she mentioned. By reckless, Participant G was referring to her tendency to say whatever comes to her mind on Twitter and the fact that the curse word, “Damn” is in her Twitter account name. These are actions that she believes she could never do on Facebook. As she states, “I use Facebook to build my brand. Facebook is the social media account that I would share with future employers”. Participant E actually has two separate Twitter profiles, one is under her real name and one is under a nickname. Participant E wanted to have an account where she was free to post whatever she wanted (the one under her nickname), and an account that she would not mind future employers or teachers looking at. “A lot of teachers now have assignments where you have to use your
Twitter account. I want to make sure that I have an account that is acceptable for those purposes.

What is interesting in these responses is that many of participants feel a separation from their “in-person” identity and their Twitter identity. These same feelings do not hold true for Facebook. I commonly heard participants state “Facebook is connected to your real name. That is something entirely different”. Both Participant D and Participant F described their Black peers on Twitter as “reckless” (not watching what they say) and “ratchet” (acting in a manner that affirms stereotypes associated with lower income black people). Participant D and F, however, did not have a huge problem with this and they did not advise for their peers to change their behavior. They just stated that they do not act these ways on Twitter. However, Participants C, D, E, F, G, and J all had an issue with how some of their Black peers (mostly friends from home, who did not go to college) acted on Facebook. Unlike how they condoned “being reckless” or having little reservations to what is said on Twitter, they all condemned their friends who do not censor what they said on Facebook. Participant E, who also has two Facebook profiles, mentioned “You just cannot act that way on Facebook if you ever want a good job”. She then posted to a friend who posted a fight on her Facebook profile and stated, “See this is what I am talking about. Nobody needs to be posting fights on Facebook. I am going to have to delete this off my profile. I do not need to be associate with this”.

Furthermore, many respondents felt that people should only use their real names (or nick names that resemble their real names) on Facebook and those who do are not concerned with the image that they are presenting on Facebook. Many participants seem to concur that Facebook is a space to represent yourself in the way that you want society to view you. Participant D commented “It is fine to use fake names on Twitter, but doing that on Facebook is
unacceptable”, and Participant G, who identified as attending a predominantly Black high school, agreed and said that she had to “unfriend” (un-Facebook friend) many of her friends because she did not need to see “that mess or nonsense on her timeline”. Participant G was referring to content that upheld stereotypical representations of black people and content where the poster did not consider the negative repercussions to their posts. Both Participant G and D felt as though only those of lower-socioeconomic statuses engaged on Facebook ways, which portrayed themselves in a negative way to society. Participant C explained that there is a clear class divide on Facebook, “you can tell who is not attending college in how they post grammatically incorrect statuses, use numbers as letters, and just post about everything”. The participants generally concurred that the rules on Facebook are different than the rules on Twitter, and they also commented on the fact that those who do not understand this division have less concern for their future and are less likely to be as educated.

Most participants concurred that Twitter was the social media site for self-expression and opinion. Participant A mentioned how Facebook communities are limited to who you already know, but Twitter is “public”. Thus when she tweets, she “is sharing her opinions with the world”. Many participants agreed that they have a larger audience on Twitter. It was explained to me by my participants that this is the reason that young, black people are using Twitter for social activism. Participant A and I mentioned that they receive all of their updates on the Black Lives Matter campaign through twitter, and Participant B stated that issues concerning the Black community and people of color, as a whole, are “left out of mainstream or traditional news outlets. This is why Twitter is so great. Our news gets exposed here”. Even though, Participant D referred to her black peers on Twitter as generally being “ridiculous” and “reckless”, she also admits that she learns a lot from Twitter. Participant G commented, “Twitter is a platform were
we [Black people] can talk about the problems of our communities with a larger and even global audience. While many participants agreed that this type of consciousness happens on Facebook as well, Facebook is a slower form of social media and engages less active conversation. Participant A stated, “I will see something on Twitter on a Monday morning, and I may not see that same information on Facebook until later that afternoon or that evening”.

Despite the pros and cons of each social media site, the participants, all used multiple social media platforms to compliment each other. For example, Participant A uses Facebook to communicate with older friends, but she uses Twitter as a way to communicate with current friends. Many agree that they use Instagram to post pictures, but then they use Facebook to post photo albums, and they use Twitter to express their opinions. It was difficult for participants to answer questions about Facebook without also mentioning how their answers compared to their experiences on Twitter and Instagram. None of the participants used one single social media platform for there are different purposes and regulations for each site.

Participant G, however, described Facebook as the “perfect combination between Instagram and Twitter”, for on Facebook one is able to post pictures and write statuses. It was commonly agreed that Facebook, holistically, has more to offer than Instagram and Twitter. Even participants, who admitted to not actively posting on Facebook, stated that they still check their Facebook page if not daily, then weekly. Additionally, all of the participants agreed that they do not see themselves deleting Facebook. Facebook is a site where they cannot only continue to communicate with old friends and distant family members, but it is also a site where they feel that they can build a stable and lasting image, for they view social meeting sites such as Twitter and Instagram as spaces where they can constantly reinvent their image due to the speed
of interactions on the site. Participant C stated that depending on the day, she could be a different person on Twitter and Instagram, but Facebook is more stable.

**Facebook Usage**

**Graph 3**

*How Frequently Do You Perform The Following Activites on Facebook?*

The online questionnaire asked respondents the frequency in which they performed certain activities on Facebook and the frequency in which they post certain types of content (see Graph 3 and Graph 4).
The results of Graph 3 show that the majority of respondents do not spend time playing games on Facebook, rarely post pictures or status updates, and spend the majority of their time on Facebook, “Liking” content, Browsing Profiles, and Reading their Facebook Timeline. I was not able to conclude other trends from this data. This may have been as a result of the limited sample size of this survey. Graph 4 concludes that many respondents do not post about health and beauty, and that it is more common for respondents’ posts to be comical, personal, and about current events. However, there appears not to be many general trends to be seen from the results of Graph 4. As a result, I was not able to conclude any statistically significant correlations between the results of this index and other variables such as stigma consciousness, self-esteem, class identity, and importance of Facebook profile to society. The lack of statistically insignificant data may have been a result of the limited sample size for the survey.
Despite the limited conclusions drawn from two indexes above, Facebook usage and its correlation between other variables, such as stigma consciousness, is further explored within the qualitative aspects of the study and will be discussed in the following sections.

**Virtual Communities**

As I have stated earlier, many of my interview participants mainly use Facebook to update family members and old friends about their lives. Participant H mentioned that she primarily keeps a Facebook so that she can stay in contact with her distant cousins. Survey respondents were asked to identify their primary Facebook “audiences” (who they are posting on Facebook for). Respondents were allowed to check all that applied. As displayed in the graph below (see Graph 5), even though the topic of maintaining a "respectable" Facebook profile came up frequently during the interviews, the survey shows that the majority of respondents consider their
primary Facebook audiences to be Family, Distant/Old Friends, and Current/Nearby Friends. These findings suggest that posting on Facebook is an important form of communication within a virtual community.

Both Participant C and Participant G mostly use their status updates on Facebook to update distant relatives and friends about their lives at Spelman. Participant C states, “I want to let them know that I am doing well, and I want them to see that I am doing well, too. That is why I always include pictures in my status updates”. Participant G mentioned, “It is important to me that my friends from high school, see how I am doing and see how I am transforming”. Both participants are “speaking” to their online audience on their Facebook profile through their status updates and the sharing of pictures.

Using Facebook as a space to virtually document one’s life is a theme that I also observed through my analyses of students’ Facebook profiles. Profile B updated her status on Facebook, approximately once a week, and in her updates she would describe events such as going to the Atlanta Zoo, celebrating a friend’s birthday at a restaurant, and performing community service with the Miss Maroon and White Court. Profile I is a current student studying abroad. The sample of posts from her Facebook profile mostly consisted of posted pictures of her time during her study abroad experience. It was also extremely common for Facebook users to post statuses detailing accomplishments, such as reciting their first Easter speech on Easter Sunday, receiving a merit based scholarship, or announcing acceptance into a PhD program. Through posts, these Facebook users are documenting their lives and sharing it with their primary audiences.

Furthermore, many of the profiles analyzed, illustrate other ways in which Facebook users appear to be communicating with their Facebook community. In many regards, these Facebook users blur the lines between public and private spheres. For example, Profile C wished
a Happy Birthday to both her older sister and her nephew on her profile. She did not directly post her message on their pages. Instead she posted her message as a status update (including a picture of each in the post as well). Even though, her Happy Birthday messages were personally directed at both her older sister and her nephew, she chose to post the messages, publicly, on her own Facebook profile. Thus, these messages would appear to everyone on her timeline. Profile J similarly posted statuses on her page where she celebrated the accomplishments of her friends. By posting these statuses on her profile, she is sharing seemingly private congratulations to her friends with all of her Facebook friends. These personally directed messages shared within the more public arena of one’s Facebook profile are common types of status update for many Facebook users studied in this investigation.

The analyses of Facebook profiles also revealed many users who use their statuses to have direct conversations with their community of Facebook friends. For example, multiple profiles examined included a post that said, “Happy Easter!” The Facebook users were telling their Facebook friends to have a Happy Easter, and in response many of their Facebook friends would comment on the status responding with, “Happy Easter”. Since Facebook users use their profiles to document their lives at Spelman and highlight their accomplishments, the interactions between their announcements and their Facebook community is displayed within the comments to the posts. If a user posts an accomplishment, they are likely to have comments stating, “Congratulations”, “Good job”, and “I am so proud of you”. Additionally, some users will post statuses about a current situation that they are in, such as, “I should be doing work right now, but I chose to enjoy this beautiful Atlanta weather instead”. This profile is obviously posting this status for a community of her peers that would understand and relate to her post. In the comments of her post, her Facebook friends commented, “Me too, girl”, “It’s senior year, you
better enjoy yourself. Work will always be there”, “We all procrastinate, but we might as well enjoy this little bit of sunshine as we do so”. The posting of statuses and the receiving of comments from their community of friends are critical elements to the virtual community of Facebook. Arguably, post response is a factor that contributes to what and how Facebook users post on Facebook.

During the interviews, many participants noted that the gaining and sharing of information (through articles, picture posts, etc…) on Facebook was not only a major proponent of their Facebook experience, but also how Facebook is transformed into a space for activism. Participant A comments on how she actively shares information concerning the Black Lives campaign on her Facebook profile. Participant B does the same and she further asserts that she learns a lot about different social justice issues through her Facebook Timeline (specifically through articles that other people post). Many participants note that they read political and activist articles on Facebook, and then in turn share those articles so that they can pass along the knowledge that they received to others. While there are many types of articles and pictures that are shared on Facebook, many respondents spoke of their affinity towards reading and sharing articles relating to the social justice concerns of people of color, specifically those of black men and women in the United States. The results of the content analyses illustrate that out of the ten profiles sampled, seven of the users posted material relating to spreading awareness on social injustices and marginalized communities. Topics ranged from raising minimum wage to raising awareness about Black women and mental health to valuing the intelligence and contribution of women to society.

Only three of my participants considered themselves to be activists (Participants H, I, J). However, seven of my respondents spoke of the power of Facebook to communicate and
disperse information regarding the concerns and issues of the black community and people of color globally. Many viewed being informed about what is happening as just as important and meaningful as being an activist. There was a shared consensus that the voices of black people are limited in traditional media outlets, but Facebook is one avenue where these voices can be heard and shared. Participant A considers the use of social media for activism to be a quality of “the new Civil Rights era”. “In the 60s”, she states, “we marched in the streets, but now we post on Facebook and Twitter”. Participant B argues, “Black people use Facebook and other social media outlets to get our voices heard”. Participant C notices that her friends of other races, especially her white friends do not use Facebook the same way that her black friends do. She commented, “They [her white friends] just post about normal things, like going to the gym and going shopping. My black friends and I post about real issues: police brutality, cultural appropriation of black culture, issues of racism, in general”. The posting and sharing of articles and other media forms, which raise awareness about the oppression of marginalized communities, is also a critical part to how users are engaging on Facebook. Furthermore, the reading and the sharing of these media items promote a sense of empowerment and pride for the users (conclusion drawn from interviews conducted) and reinforce the virtual communal aspect of Facebook.

From using Facebook posts to communicate information to family and friends, to sharing personal messages in public posts to directly engaging with one’s Facebook friends through status updates to participating in social justice awareness and activism through the sharing of articles, the Facebook users of this investigation are actively participating within a virtual community. It is clear that these users consider their involvement in this virtual community to be real. Participants speak to the real benefits that they gain from their Facebook community, such as
knowledge about global issues, and they spend time writing comprehensive and detailed updates of their lives to members of their personal Facebook community. These users are sharing their accomplishments and publicly congratulating the accomplishments of their friends. These virtual connections and methods of communication may be as real as face-to-face interactions for many of these users.

Eric Kleinberg (2012) explores the authenticity of web communities in *Going Solo*. Kleinberg, in his study on the rise of individuals living alone, points out that due to the instantaneous nature of web communication, "the Internet affords [those who want to live alone] rich new ways to stay connected" (2012:15). Thus, the web is an optimal place for the creation of "communities of limited liability", for Internet users "can not only communicate instantly, at all hours, with friends and strangers, they can also express themselves to a potentially unlimited audience via a blog, a homemade video posted on YouTube, or a social networking site" (2012:15). Hence, community is no longer necessarily contingent upon face-to-face interactions. Interactions that happen on the web can be as real, if not more real, for many Internet users. The virtual community that the Facebook users involved in this study participate in is an example of how the web can be used to create actual communities. According to Erving Goffman (1955), everyone in society navigates a "pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which [they] express [their] view of the situation and through this [their] evaluation of the participants" when interacting with others (1955:338). Thus, individuals act by considering how their acts will be interpreted and viewed by others. As a consequence of being involved in a community, even though it is a virtual one, I would suggest that the way that these users post and how they post are influenced by how their posts and presentation will be viewed and accepted by others within their virtual communities.
As discussed earlier, Family, Old/Distant Friends, and Current friends are the primary audiences for many of the survey respondents. However, the majority of respondents ranked their biggest influencing factor to what they post on Facebook as themselves, with professional reputation ranked second and family ranked third (see Graph 6). Additionally, Participants A, C, F, and G all stated during their interviews that they post on Facebook, mostly for themselves. Participants A, C, F and G suggest that they only post content on Facebook that interests them; they claim that they are in complete control of the content that they post. Furthermore, over 50% of the online questionnaire respondents stated that they felt as though their Facebook profile was an accurate presentation of themselves (see Graph 7). However, Erving Goffman (1955) argues the social self is dependent on how individuals think others will perceive them. Goffman states that individuals put on different faces to navigate through social spheres (1955:338). All of the
participants of the interviews support Goffman’s argument. Even though some believed themselves to be in complete control of how they engage with Facebook, they also admit to considering the opinions of their family members (i.e. feeling policed on Facebook because so many of their family members have joined), the opinions of society (i.e. expressing that there are certain ways to present oneself on Facebook in comparison to Twitter), and their professional reputations. (i.e. many express the fact that future employers may view their Facebook profile as a determination for a job).

Graph 7

![Graph 7](image)

Participant G even admitted to creating her Facebook identity. She views her Facebook profile as “building her brand”. She forces herself to post at least one status update on Facebook every week, and she ensures that she only highlights the “positive” aspects of herself. By “positive”, Participant G explains that she only posts content on Facebook that will highlight her
is a positive light. For example, she posts about her awards, Spelman College, and her community service. It is important to her that people see her in a certain way. Participant B is not as formulaic about how she approaches her Facebook profile, but she mentions how "when people see my profile, they should see my interests. View me as an intellectual, someone who likes to travel, also, as a student, who attends Spelman College". Participant E actually has two separate Facebook profiles so that she can preserve a "professional" image on one of her profiles and be more of herself on her other profile. She is also friends with different people through each profile. For example, Facebook friends who post content which she considers to be inappropriate are regulated to her more personal page and not her more professional one. These cases are examples of Facebook users creating and manipulating representations of themselves through their Facebook profile. While, they are not presenting false images, they are very careful about what impressions others will have of their profile pages. It is possible that both the participants and the survey respondents were not fully aware of all of the societal forces that influence how and what they post on social media. Goffman (1955) mentions that navigating one's performance of identity is not
necessarily a conscious decision, but it is a process that everyone goes through.

Additionally, Pierre Bourdieu argues, through his theory of “habitus” that interests are informed socialized norms. Thus, people’s affinities, tastes, and behaviors are all informed by how there are socialized. This does not mean that they lack free will, but rather the socio-location of their position in the world informs how they make choices. On the online questionnaire and through the interviews, respondents and participants were asked if they thought that their Facebook profile has changed since coming to Spelman College. On the survey, 41% of the respondents felt that their profile has changed, 30% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 28% of respondents disagreed (see Graph 8). During the interviews, nine out of ten participants stated that they felt that their Facebook profile has changed since coming to Spelman College. The nine participants all felt that they had discovered more about themselves as people and as black women since coming to Spelman College. Participant A stated that she has more opinions to express on Facebook, and that she is more politically aware and that affects the type of content that she posts. Recently, she has posted a lot about the Black Lives Matter campaign, the judicial cases of black men murdered by police officers, and how white celebrities appropriate blackness. Participant C explained that she grew up in a predominantly white area, and she did not know how to express thoughts about race until she came to Spelman College. This knowledge changed how she interacts on Facebook, because she feels as though she is more racially aware. Participant G stated that, “Spelman just drills it in to you – to think about race and gender all the time. It naturally has changed what I post on Facebook.” These findings suggest that Spelman College as an institution has had an affect on how these students participate on Facebook.
**Research Question 1A:** How does perception of the representation of black women in the media influence social media usage for black, female millennial students at Spelman College?

As previously stated, R1A for this investigation is how does perception of the representation of black women in the media influence social media usage for black, female millennial students at Spelman College, and the question will be examined and analyzed through the results of the online questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and content analyses. Since this question is a sub question of R1, this question also partially operationalizes R1.

On the survey, respondents were asked to rank the following images of contemporary black women in the media on a scale of 0 – 10. 0 represented the lowest degree of warmth, while 10 represented the highest degree of warmth that they felt towards each image.
Graph 9 displays the average rating that each picture posted above received on the survey. The graph shows that the picture of Oprah, Michelle Obama, and Kerry Washington as Olivia Pope received higher scores, with Michelle Obama receiving the highest score. The image of Megan Goode received an average rating at 5. The images of Nene Leakes from Real Housewives of Atlanta, and the image of Kimberly "Sweet Brown" Wilkins from the "Ain't Nobody Got Time For That" viral video received lower ratings, with Wilkins receiving the lowest at an average of 1.66. These results suggest that the respondents of the survey feel more "warm" towards the images of black women, who are typically revered as more positive representations of black women in the media. However, images of black women who fit into the more stereotypical representations of black women in the media are rated significantly lower.

These results could suggest that many respondents of the survey would express negative viewpoints of African-American women in general. However, the survey also finds that approximately 70% of respondents disagree with the statement "As a whole, I have a negative
viewpoint on most Black women”. Thus, the results from the images above do not suggest that the respondents have a negative viewpoint of black women, as a whole. Actually, the survey finds that 67% of respondents feel as though society, as a whole, has a negative viewpoint of black women.

**Chart 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree nor Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a whole, society has a negative viewpoint on black women</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes about black women portrayed in the media have not affected me personally</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When other races watch the representations of black women in the media, they view me differently</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think a lot about the representation of black women in the media</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see more negative images than positive images of black women in the media</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, the survey found that 70% of respondents feel personally affected by stereotypes of black women in the media, 57% of respondents feel that the representations of black women in the media influences how other races view them, and 75% of respondents agree that they see more negative representations of black women in the media than positive representations (see Chart 1). A bivariate correlation between the following questions, “When you decide to post...
on Facebook, how often do you think about the representation of black women in the media?" and "I almost always think about the fact that I am black and female when I interact with people" reveals that those who think more about the fact that they are black and female when they interact with people are more likely to think about the representation of black women in the media when they decide to post on Facebook (see Chart 2). As Chart 2 illustrates, these questions are positively correlated since the correlation coefficient is .313. Since the coefficient is positive (above 0) and less than one, these two variables increase in the same direction. Furthermore, since significance is noted at .007 and is less than .01, this result is statistically significant (as represented on the chart with the ** symbol). This relationship shows that those who are more aware of how their race and gender influence how they interact in society, are more likely to consider the stereotypical representations of black women in the media when they are on Facebook. These findings suggest that respondents of the survey feel negatively towards certain representations of black women in the media, not as a result of negative feelings toward black women, but as a result of how they are personally affected by the stereotypical representations of black women in the media and how these representations influence how others in society view them.
Furthermore, the interviews reveal that the stereotypical portrayals of black women in the media influence how they interact on Facebook. During the interview, I neither specifically asked participants about their opinions of the representation of black women in the media nor if the representations of black women in the media influenced their Facebook usage. Even though they were never specifically asked, the topic of the representation of black women in the media came up in nine of the ten interviews. Each of these participants commented on the fact that they personally police their Facebook pages as a result of the negative representations of black women in the media. Participant A mentioned that she makes sure that her Facebook profile illustrates her in a positive way so that others will not associate her with the stereotypical images of black women that dominate the media. She stated, “Black women are just not like that. We have so much more to offer and I want to show that on my Facebook page”. Participant D agreed

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
and commented, “I just have to be cautious about what I post, all Black people do. Otherwise we will be automatically grouped with those negative images on TV, especially black women. They [others in society] think we [black women] are all hypersexual and angry”. Participant G mentioned “No one needs to be thinking that I am a future Real Housewife of Atlanta or video vixen when they see my Facebook profile”. Participant I said “We all know the stereotypes, the “Mammy”, the “Jezebel”, the “Sapphire”. There is no way around it. That is how we are viewed and I make sure I do not uphold those representations on my Facebook page.” Participant H agreed and commented, “I just have to present something different, show the world that we [black women] are something different. We [black women] are something more. That is our [black women’s] struggle.”

One of the reasons why Participant G and Participant E felt so strongly about how some of their black peers posted on Facebook was not just out of concern for their peers’ professional careers or reputations, but because of how society will view their peers’ profiles. Participant E said “It’s too easy for us [black people] to be associated with everything negative”. She furthered her statement with “We can’t just act like white kids and post whatever we want. There is just a double standard”. Actually, 5 of the participants felt that there are different rules for black people on Facebook than for other races, especially in comparison to white people. Participant D stated, “They [her white peers] just post pictures with red cups and pictures of them going to parties. They don’t have any regard for their image, but they also don’t have too”. Participant G mentioned, “I mean everyone, regardless of race, have to be careful about what they post. We [all people] all cannot get a job or get fired because of content on our Facebook pages. But for black people, it’s just stricter. We [black people] are always held to a different standard. It’s not fair, but that is the way that it is.” The interviews concluded that as a whole, on Facebook,
participants desire to present a non-stereotypical image of themselves as black women and feel as though they have less freedom then other racial groups as a result of these representations.

The results of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews conclude that the participants feel a connection between the representation of black women in the media and how black women are viewed in society. Many participants felt as though black women are negatively affected in the media and this influences how black women are negatively viewed in society. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) illustrates a similar connection and argues that the limited portrayals of black women in the media contribute to the lack of value that black women are perceived to have in society. She further contends that the interlocking systems of oppression (including the intersections of race, class and gender oppression) create a “Matrix of Domination” meant to control black women. Thus, the limited portrayals of black women in the media are a method created within the “Matrix of Domination” to limit feelings of agency within black women.

Melissa Harris Perry’s theory of the “crooked room” contests that black women bend themselves to fit into the dominant images of the stereotypical representations of black women in the media (the “mammy”, “the jezebel”, the “sapphire”, and the “tragic mulatto”). It is evident that the majority of the participants in this study understand Perry’s theory and their understanding of her “crooked room” theory is a crucial factor in how they engage on Facebook, as a whole. By consciously not posting content that would contribute to a stereotypical representation, these participants are, in some ways, resisting the “Matrix of Domination” and Perry’s “Crooked Room”. However, the participants also mention that there are different regulations that black people, especially black women should follow when on Facebook. Even though, they view themselves as resisting societal representations by not posting certain content,
they are still allowing their decisions to be guided by the "Matrix of Domination". Collins argues that the "Matrix" is meant to control black women, and the participants are allowing themselves to be controlled, even as they attempt to resist.
Research Question 2: How does the intersectionality of identity (gender, race, and class) affect the development of online identities on social media sites for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College? Research Question 3: How do students resist and/or uphold social constructs of gender and race through their social media profiles?

As previously stated, R2 for this investigation is how does the intersectionality of identity (primarily of gender, race) affect the development of online identities on social media sites for black, female, millennial students at Spelman College, and R3 for this investigation is how do students resist and/or uphold social constructs of gender and race through their social media profiles. These questions will be examined and analyzed through the results of the online questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and content analyses. This section is divided into two sections: The Effects of Stigma Consciousness and The Presence of Resistance.

The Effects of Stigma Consciousness

The stigma consciousness scale was the primary instrument used in this study to address R3. The stigma consciousness scale used in this study was adapted Tiffany Mosley and Jerome Rosenberg’s (2007) study, “Stigma Consciousness and Perceived Stereotype Threat and Their Effects on Academic Performance”. Since I adapted the scale, I wanted to test is reliable. Through SPSS, I tested its reliability and found that it is a reliable scale since it Cronbach’s Alpha is .782 (above .7) (see Chart 3). Thus, this adapted stigma consciousness scale is a reliable
Even though multi-regression tests and bivariate correlation tests were run between the results of the stigma consciousness scale and variables such as class identity, self-esteem, opinions towards the representation of black women in the media, opinions towards how influential one views their Facebook profile, no statistically significant results were found. However, the Stigma Consciousness scale still revealed the following results, which proved useful to this study (see Chart 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I almost never think about the fact that I am black and female when I interact with people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as a stereotypically black woman's behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My being black and female does not influence how people act with me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other races have a problem viewing black women as equals.</td>
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</table>
To further investigate how the intersectionality of identity affects the development of online identity on Facebook, interview participants were asked, "how often do you think about your race and gender when on Facebook?". In response to this question, nine out of ten participants agreed that they think about their race and gender as black women often while on Facebook and other social media sites. Participant G responded, "I am a black woman. There is not way that I cannot think about my race and gender when on Facebook". Participant I commented, "It affects what I post, the content that I share, how I respond to the posts and comments of others". Participant G, also mentioned, "I become hyperaware of the fact that I am a black woman when I see posts that relate to black women on Facebook. For example, this post [she pulls up an example] that my friend shared that talks about white supremacy and trans women of color".

Many of the profiles analyzed showed content posted on the topic of race and gender. For example, three of the profiles advertised events on Spelman College's campus sponsored by Spelman's Chapter of the National Council for Negro Women. Profile F posted articles on Jada Pickett-Smith's opinions of the degradation of women in society, Black women and their rise of in entrepreneurship, and Michelle Obama's declaration that black girls rock, and Profile H shared articles about depression amongst black women, and the Black Girls Rock campaign. The results of the content analyses revealed that this sample of Facebook users often posted content concerning black women.
Results from the online questionnaire show a bivariate correlation between the variables "I almost always think about the fact that I am black and female when I interact with people" and "I think a lot about the representation of black women in the media" that reveals that survey respondents who think more about the fact that they are black and females when they interact with people think more about the representation of black women in the media. As Chart 5 illustrates, these questions are positively correlated since the correlation coefficient is .435. Since the coefficient is positive (above 0) and less than one, these two variables increase in the same direction. Furthermore, since significance is noted at .000 and is less than .01, this result is statistically significant (as represented on the chart with the ** symbol). Additionally, when asked about how often they think about their race and gender when on Facebook, interview participants mentioned how the representation of black women in the media affects how they interact on Facebook. Even though, on the survey, when asked, "how often do you think about the representation of black women in the media when posting on Facebook, only 54% of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>I almost never think about the fact that I am black and female when I interact with people.</th>
<th>I think a lot about the representation of black women in the media.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I almost never think about the fact that I am black and female when I interact with people.</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think a lot about the representation of black women in the media.</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.435**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
respondents admitted that they at least sometimes think about the representation of black women in the media when posting on Facebook, nine out of the ten interview participants admitted to thinking about the representation of black women in the media when posting on Facebook. This discrepancy may be a result of sample size or researcher response bias. However, the results of the interviews (as stated previously) conclude that the majority of participants desire to present a non-stereotypical image of themselves as black women on Facebook as a result of the stereotypical representations of black women in the media.

The Presence of Resistance

A common theme that was mentioned during the interviews was the desire to present a presentation of self that resisted the stereotypical representations of black women in the media. Part of how the participants accomplished this was through self-policing their Facebook profiles. Another way many participants navigated this desire was to share their accomplishments on Facebook. As I discussed earlier, many respondents posted their accomplishments on Facebook as a way to communicate with distant family members and friends. However, many participants also admitted to posting their accomplishments on Facebook as a way to resist the stereotypical representations of black women in the media, and to combat society’s negative opinion of black women. When commenting on her Facebook page, Participant D mentioned, “it is important to me that I show the world that black women are smart. They are going to college, and they are making significant contributions to society”. Participant E agreed and stated, “I just have to show the world that black people can be more. I don’t actually post that much on Facebook, but when I do post, I am posting my accomplishments so that I can show them [other black women] that they can do this too. Its possible for black women to do great things”. Participant B
mentioned, “This is why I love Facebook. Society only likes to show black women in a limited way, but on Facebook I can see all the amazing things that black women are doing. That means something”.

Many of the participants did not just see the posting of their accomplishments as a way to challenge society’s portrayals of black women, but as a way to inspire and influence other black women. Participant G said, “I mean if they [other black women] see that I can do it, then maybe they will believe that they can do it too”. Participant I argued “society does not believe that we [black women] can do anything great. I feel like it is my job to help present a different representation for black women. There needs to be another image that they [black women] can look up to”.

Participant C concurred with the following participants when she mentioned, “I paint myself in a positive light on Facebook so that I can encourage other black women”.

Similar to Participant B’s response, Participant C furthered her statement by saying, “I am just so inspired by all that I see black women doing when I am on Facebook. I just want to be a part of the inspiration as well”. For the black women interviewed, posting their accomplishments on Facebook is not just an act of informing others, but it is also an act of resistance to how they believe society views black women.
Many of the participants expressed the idea that they do not think that society values black women and the survey found that 67% of respondents feel as though society, as a whole, has a negative viewpoint of black women. These findings are supported by Patricia Hill Collin’s (1990) argument that black women are dehumanized in society. As the findings above conclude, many participants use their Facebook profiles to resist societal portrayals of black women and to influence and inspire other black women. Another way in which the participants of this study seem to resisting societal portrayals is through the practice of affirmation. The content analyses of Facebook profiles revealed that many of the users use Facebook as a space for self-affirmation, affirmation of their peers, and affirmation of black women as a whole.

The findings of this investigation have shown that posting pictures on Facebook and on social media, as a whole, is a prevalent way in which many of the participants engage with social media. Even though, this topic was not addressed on the online questionnaire or during the interviews, the results of the content analyses suggest that some of the Facebook users post pictures to Facebook as a way to resist beauty standards and self-affirm their beauty. Naomi Wolf (2002) argues that all women in western society suffer from the effects of the beauty myth, and she describes the beauty myth as being the un-obtainable ideal of beauty and femininity which glorifies thinness, youth, White-ness, flawlessness, and submissive-ness. Beauty is an ideal that is constructed to be unobtainable, and these ideals are even more unobtainable for women of color, including black women. Furthermore, Berger (1972) introduces the idea of how women view themselves through the lens of a male gaze. He states, “Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at” (1972:168). Women are socialized to see themselves through the male gaze of others. Both Wolf and Berger support the claim that women perform gender.
The sample of profiles reveals black women who are posting pictures on Facebook which self-affirm their own beauty despite society’s beauty standards and the “male gaze”. For example, Profile G posted a picture of herself, wearing her natural hair, with a caption declaring that day to be a good day with a “#naturalhair” hashtag. In this post, Profile G was highlighting the fact that she was wearing her natural hair and she was also celebrating it. Despite the fact that society upholds certain beauty ideas, such as long, straight hair and whiteness, the owner of Profile G posted a picture of herself with a short, natural afro as a picture of beauty. Profile H posted a similar picture of herself while studying at the park and her caption read, “#crazyhairstudytime #StillBeautiful”. In this caption, this Facebook user was admitting that her hair seems a bit unkempt, but that did not affect her beauty and she posted the picture on both her Facebook and Instagram, regardless. Both of these examples illustrate black women who are celebrating their own beauty despite societal standards or how others (including men) may view their pictures.

Additionally, the profiles showed that many of the users use Facebook to affirm their friends, who are also black women. Earlier in the virtual community section, it was discussed that many of the Facebook users use their profiles to send private messages to their friends in public spaces. Many of the messages shared were messages congratulating their friends on their accomplishments, and generally uplifting them. For example, Profile J made a post declaring one of her friends to be “the greatest person ever, and the world is graced by her presence”. Another example of the use of affirmation is Profile C’s post of a photo of herself with her friends. In this post, Profile C captions the picture, “#wcw I love my friends”. #WCW stands for Woman’s Crush Wednesday. By including her friends and herself as her “crushes”, Profile C is not only affirming herself and her existence, but she is also affirming her friends (other black women) and
their existence. Additionally, many of the profiles share content concerning and celebrating black women and their existence. By sharing articles, which focus on black women and their accomplishments (i.e. an article on the growing number of black female entrepreneurs), and struggles (i.e. an article on black women and depression), and by sharing articles, which honor and celebrate black women (i.e. the Black Women Rock articles), these Facebook users are using their Facebook profiles to affirm the overall existence of black women in society and to resist societal construction of black womanhood.

As a strategy for the resistance of the “Matrix of Domination”, Collins suggests that black women have historically created spheres of influence to not only provide a rest from the interlocking systems of oppression, but to also nurture black women on how to combat these oppressive systems. Many of the interview participants spoke of Facebook as space where they can be inspired and inspire other black women, despite how black women are negatively portrayed and thought of in society. The majority of the respondents felt like it was their responsibility to present certain narratives through their Facebook profiles, in order to present alternative narratives of black womanhood to society. Additionally, by sharing and posting information on the concerns and struggles of black women in society that tend to be overlooked and by practicing in the public affirmation of black women (including themselves), many of the participants are working to create the space that they participate in. This space works to not only empower other black women, but also the process of engaging and creating the space is empowering for the individual Facebook user. The findings seem to suggest that black women create a community on Facebook to promote an environment, which emphasizes the importance of black women. By working to resist the “Matrix of Domination”, this space also works to assert the humanity of black women that society attempts to dismiss.
Even though, these findings conclude that many of the participants practice resistance strategies while on Facebook, they are also still creating and performing identity. In the practice of attempting to create a space, which inspires other black women, many of the participants are inherently concerned with how their Facebook profile will be viewed by others. This influences how they engage within the space. In practicing this work as a form of resistance, however, many are performing what Goffman (1955) refers to as “Face Work”. Goffman states that individuals put on different faces to navigate through social spheres. As a result, even though people tend to desire to be “in-face”, this does not always happen and people are sometimes “out of face”. Working in resistance to the interlocking systems of oppression within society requires one to be “out of face”. Thus, by resisting the “controlling images” created with society’s “Matrix of Domination”, many of the participants in this study are presenting a “face” to society that is “out of face”. In conclusion and in consideration of Bourdieu’s theory of “habitus”, this study suggests that one’s positionality of being a black woman directly influences how one navigates identity on Facebook.
Chapter 6: Implications

Out of this study emerged two major implications. The first implication revolves around how black women are viewed in society. This study found that not only did many of the black women involved in this study feel as though black women are negatively stereotyped in the media, but they also felt that black women were negatively viewed in society. Research has shown that historically black women have been negatively viewed in society, and this investigation illustrates that the black women in this study still feel that they are negatively viewed in society. This finding suggests that holistically black women feel undervalued and negatively viewed in society. The fact that this finding does not seem to have changed since the era of American slavery shows that this is symphonic of a larger issue in society. Ultimately, this study highlights the racial and gender oppression of black women and highlights how black women navigate through feelings of oppression. However, this navigation is a consequence of systems in society that oppress black women, and would not be necessary if the larger issues in society were addressed.

The second major implication of this study comments upon how black women in this study are using social media sites as forms of resistance. As a result of feelings of marginalization by society, black women in this study are using social media sites as spaces of resistance and empowerment. My study suggests that if society refuses to change its views on black women, then black women will change society’s views by challenging them. Furthermore, by using social media as sites of resistance, the black women of this study are not only challenging the representation of black women in the media, but also are attempting to push society towards a state of existence were the historical tropes no longer matter. This study suggests that black women are fighting for a society where black women would no longer feel
hindered and limited by racial and gender oppression, including stereotypical representations of black women in the media.

To further explore these implications, a more comprehensive study needs to be done which focuses on all of the major social media sites and includes a larger sample of black, female millennials (not all from Spelman College).
Chapter 7: Conclusion and Summary

This investigation was interested in exploring if there is a connection between the work of black female creators of web content (such as Issa Rae and Numa Perrier) and the online presence of other young African-American women of the same generation (the millennial generation). I attempted to explore this connection by exploring how Spelman students develop their online identities. Since this study was an exploratory study, I did not develop any hypotheses, but rather I simply explored my four research questions. To explore my research questions, I employed a mixed-methods approach to this investigation. By using mixed methods (survey, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis), I hoped to comprehensively examine how Spelman students navigate their social media identities.

As a result of my limited sample size, I was not able to obtain many statistical significant correlations between the variables in my data set. However, due to the fact that I used mixed methods, I was able to gain data from my other methods. Thus, I did not feel the effects from the lack of findings from the online questionnaire. The questionnaire did allow me to better understand the attitudes and opinions of black women toward social media, as a whole, and how they understand their intersectionality as being black women in society. I was able to further engage these themes through my semi-structured interviews and my content analyses.

In this study, I was also not able to address how socioeconomic status impacted social media usage, or what factors specifically influence specific actions on Facebook. However, I was able to address all of my research questions with significant findings.

This study concludes that there are a number of factors that influence how Spelman students interact on social media sites. The most salient of these factors are opinions of family members, attitudes towards respectability, and desires to create a "respectable" image of self
through their social media profiles. Additionally, attitudes towards the representation of black
women in the media greatly influenced how participants engaged with social media. The
majority of participants desired to present a non-stereotypical image of themselves as black
women on Facebook as a result of the stereotypical representations of black women in the media.
The findings suggest that black women create a community on Facebook to promote an
environment, which emphasizes the importance of black women. It is in this space that black
women feel empowered and have a voice. It is also in this space that black women are working
to challenge and resist stereotypical representations of black women and prove black women’s
value to each other and to society as a whole.

Ultimately, this study suggests that one’s positionality of being a black woman directly
influences how one navigates identity on Facebook. Many of the participants seemed to speak
directly towards the racial and gender oppression of black women in society as they navigated
their Facebook pages. Many viewed their social media profiles as having a voice to uplift
marginalized communities, especially for black women. Furthermore, this study suggests that
there is a connection between the work of black female media creators on the web, and
individual black women of the millennial generation in using the web as space to present
alternative narratives of black womanhood. To more completely answer the questions asked in
this study, a more comprehensive study needs to be done which focuses on all of the major social
media sites and includes a larger sample of black, female millennials.
References

(http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.com)


IF YOU ARE UNDER AGE 18, PLEASE DO NOT COMPLETE THIS FORM!

September 10, 2014

Purpose

This survey is a part of a larger study concerning how Black Women create online identities and community on the web, and what factors contribute to this creation. You have been asked to participate in this study because you belong to the study body at Spelman College and Spelman College has a predominantly female African-American population. The results of this study possibly could be used within a research paper for publication in a scholarly journal or within a presentation at a scholarly conference. This study has three objections:

1. To better understand how Black female students at Spelman College engage and interact with social media (i.e. what sites do they use for which purposes) (specifically on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter)

2. To better understand what factors significantly contribute to the development of identity on the web for Black female students at Spelman College.

3. To gain a more holistic idea on how marginalized and intersecting identities (i.e. Black Women) engage on social media sites.
For the Purpose of this study, social media refers to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The survey should only take about 30 minutes to complete. Its results will only be used to provide data on a group that will be analyzed and published in a research report. I ask that you do not write your name on any of the forms provided. Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary and you have the option to skip any questions, which make you feel uncomfortable. The survey will not be used to try to identity the individual identities of the participants. I encourage you to be as honest as possible so that the objectives of the study can be realized.

**Description of Procedures**

You will be given a consent form (this form) to read over to understand your role in the study. If you agree to be a part of the study, you will sign the consent form and hand it in to the researcher who gave you the form. After that, you will be given a survey of approximately 50 questions. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes. After you complete the survey, you can turn it in to the researcher in the room.

**Risks**

There are only minimal risks in participating in this study. You have the right to not answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You can skip them without a penalty. **Your survey responses are anonymous, and your identity will not be known.**

**Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the survey; however, we feel that your response will benefit understanding how images of Black women in the media affect Black women in college. Hopefully, this can influence the future of the images of Black women in the media, and possibly encourage new types of media to be created.

**Voluntary Participation**

Once again, Participation is voluntary. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to. There are not any consequences if you do decide to not participate in the survey or refuse to answer some of the questions.

**Confidentiality**

Since the survey is anonymous, your identity as a participant will be kept anonymous.

**Questions**
If you have questions about your rights as participants in this study, you may contact Dr. Carmen Sidbury, Associate Provost of Research, whose office oversees the protection of human research participants. She can be reached at 404-270-5706 or IRB@spelman.edu

I agree to participate in this research study.

I do not agree to participate in this research study.

Participant's Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Participant's Signature ___________________________

Researcher's Signature ___________________________
Appendix B: Survey

Below are the questions used to design the survey in Qualtrics. This is not a copy of the Qualtrics survey that was sent out. However, the same questions were asked and the same instructions were displayed.

What Factors Influence the Development of Black Women’s Social Media Identities at Spelman College

This survey is a part of a larger study concerning how Black Women create online identities and community on the web, and what factors contribute to this creation. You have been asked to participate in this study because you belong to the study body at Spelman College and Spelman College has a predominantly female African-American population. This study has three objections:

1. To better understand how Black female students at Spelman College engage and interact with social media (i.e. what sites do they use for which purposes) (specifically on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter)
2. To better understand what factors significantly contribute to the development of identity on the web for Black female students at Spelman College.
3. To gain a more holistic idea on how marginalized and intersecting identities (ie Black Women) engage on social media sites.

For the Purpose of this study, social media refers to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Please do not write your name on the survey.

Part 1: Engagement with Social Media

Carefully read the following questions and check the appropriate box that corresponds to your answer. Please complete all questions, but please feel free to skip a question if you feel uncomfortable.

Section 1

1. Which of the following social media sites do you spend the most time on?

   - Facebook
   - Twitter
   - Instagram
   - Other
   - N/A

2. How often do you use Facebook?

   -
   -
   -
   -

3. If selected "Daily" above, how many hours do you spend a day?
   0-2  2-4  4-6  Other___________

4. How often do you use Twitter?
   Never  Monthly  Weekly  Daily

5. If selected "Daily" above, how many hours do you spend a day?
   0-2  2-4  4-6  Other___________

6. How often do you use Instagram?
   Never  Monthly  Weekly  Daily

7. If selected "Daily" above, how many hours do you spend a day?
   0  1  2  3  4  5 or more  Other___________
## Section 2

### Engagement with Facebook

How frequently do you perform the following activities when you are on Facebook?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>0 (Never)</th>
<th>1 (Rarely)</th>
<th>2 (Somewhat Frequently)</th>
<th>3 (Somewhat Frequently)</th>
<th>4 (Very Frequently)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Posting Status Updates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Games (Farmville, Mafia Wars, etc...)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing Article Links (Posting Article Links)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Commenting (on statuses, wall posts, pictures, articles, etc...)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clicking “Like” (on statuses, wall posts, pictures, articles, etc...)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checking to see what someone is up to (Browsing Profiles)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading your Facebook Timeline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Posting Pictures</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Approximately, How many Facebook friends do you have? ____________

9. How often are your posts (statuses, articles, videos, pictures) ____________ ?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0 (Never)</th>
<th>1 (Rarely)</th>
<th>2 (Sometimes)</th>
<th>3 (Somewhat Frequently)</th>
<th>4 (Very Frequently)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political</td>
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<tr>
<td>About Popular</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(celebrity) news</td>
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<tr>
<td>About Current</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>For activist</td>
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<tr>
<td>purposes</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To promote events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Health and Fitness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Beauty (Clothes, Hair)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section 3**

10. I feel as though my Facebook profile matters to society?

- Strongly Disagree ______
- Disagree ______
- Neither Disagree nor Agree ______
- Agree ______
- Strongly Agree ______

11. I feel as though my Facebook profile is an accurate presentation of myself?

- Strongly Disagree ______
- Disagree ______
- Neither Disagree nor Agree ______
- Agree ______
- Strongly Agree ______
12. I feel as though my Facebook profile has changed since attending Spelman College?

Strongly Disagree ________
Disagree ________
Neither Disagree nor Agree ________
Agree ________
Strongly Agree ________

13. When you decide to post on Facebook, how often do you think about the representation of black women in the media when on Facebook?

Strongly Disagree ________
Disagree ________
Neither Disagree nor Agree ________
Agree ________
Strongly Agree ________

14. Who is your primary audience for your Facebook profile? (Check all that apply)

Family ________
Distant/Old Friends ________
Current/Nearby Friends ________
Colleagues (Professional Networks) ________
Self ________
15. When you decide to post on Facebook, how important is _________ in your decision?

Family _________
Distant/Old Friends _________
Current/Nearby Friends _________
Colleagues (Professional Networks) _________
Self _________

End Part 1

Part 2: Individual Reactions to Images of Black Women in the Media

Section 1

Carefully read the following questions and check the appropriate box that corresponds to your answer. Please complete all questions, but please feel free to skip a question if you feel uncomfortable.

Working Definitions for the survey:

Positive: Affirmative elements and characteristics, good.
Negative: Lack of affirmative elements and characteristics, bad.
Media: For this study refers to television, film, web (new) media (YouTube, Blogs, etc...).

1. I think a lot about the representation of Black women in the media.

   Strongly Disagree _________
   Disagree _________
   Neither Disagree nor Agree _________
   Agree _________
   Strongly Agree _________
2. I see more positive images than negative images of Black Women in the media:

   Strongly Disagree
   Disagree
   Neither Disagree nor Agree
   Agree
   Strongly Agree

3. I see more negative images than positive images of Black women in the media:

   Strongly Disagree
   Disagree
   Neither Disagree nor Agree
   Agree
   Strongly Agree

4. There is a diversity of images of Black women in the media.

   Strongly Disagree
   Disagree
   Neither Disagree nor Agree
   Agree
   Strongly Agree
5. The lives of real Black women are reflected on screen.

   Strongly Disagree ________
   Disagree ________
   Neither Disagree nor Agree ________
   Agree ________
   Strongly Agree ________

11. As a whole, I feel as though I am reflected in the media:

   Strongly Disagree ________
   Disagree ________
   Neither Disagree nor Agree ________
   Agree ________
   Strongly Agree ________

18. I feel as though the fate of other Black Women is linked to my own fate?

   Strongly Disagree ________
   Disagree ________
   Neither Disagree nor Agree ________
   Agree ________
   Strongly Agree ________

Section 2

Carefully examine the following images and check the appropriate box that corresponds to your answer. Please complete all questions, but please feel free to skip a question if you feel uncomfortable.
For each image, circle how warm you feel towards the image. Feelings of warmth range from 1 to 10, with 1 being the least warm and 10 being the most warm.

1. [Image of a person]  
   (Google Images)  
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. [Image of a person]  
   (Google Images)  
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. [Image of a person]  
   (Google Images)  
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Part 3: Perceptions of Self

Section 1: Self-Esteem Scale
Check the category of the option that most honestly defines your response to the statements. Please answer all the questions, but feel free to skip a question if you feel uncomfortable.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Questions 1 -10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
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<tr>
<td>At times I think I am no good at all</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Section 2: Sigma Consciousness Scale

Sigma Consciousness
Carefully read the following questions and circle the number that corresponds to your answer. Please complete all questions, but please feel free to skip a question if you feel uncomfortable.

For the following questions, please use a scale from 0 to 6 to answer.

0 strongly disagree
1 disagree
2 somewhat disagree
3 neither agree nor disagree
4 somewhat agree
5 agree
6 strongly agree

1. Stereotypes about African American women portrayed in the media have not affected me personally.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as a stereotypically black woman’s behavior.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6

3. When interacting with men, I feel like they interpret all my behaviors in terms of the fact that I am a woman.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. Most men do not judge women on the basis of their gender.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6

5. My being female does not influence how men act with me.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6

6. I almost never think about the fact that I am black and female when I interact with people.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. My being African American and female does not influence how people act with me.
8. Most men have a lot more sexist thoughts than they actually express.
9. I often think that whites are unfairly accused of being racist.
10. Most men have a problem viewing women as equals.
11. When people watch African-American in the media that influences how they see me.
12. When men watch the representations of Black women in the media, they view me differently?
13. When other races watch the representations of Black women in the media, they view me differently?
14. My race influences how men interact with me?
15. Other races have a problem viewing Black women as equals.
16. My race influences how other races interact with me?
17. As a whole, society has a negative view point on Black Women.
Part 4: Demographics

Carefully read the following questions and circle the answer choice that corresponds to your answer. Please complete all questions, but please feel free to skip a question if you feel uncomfortable. Remember the Survey is Anonymous.

Race:
Black  White  Hispanic  Asian/Pacific Islander  Native American  Bi-Racial  Other

Ethnicity: _______________________

Age: __________

College, currently attending:
Spelman  Morehouse  Clark Atlanta  Other

Gender: Female  Male  Other

Sexual Orientation: Heterosexual  Homosexual  Bisexual  Other  Refuse

Religious Preference:
Christianity  Catholic  Islam  Judaism  Buddhist  Hindi  Other
Marital Status: Single  Divorced  Married

Class Identity:
Lower Class  Lower Middle Class  Middle Class  Upper Middle Class  Upper Class

Parent's Income:
> 30,000  30,000-50,000  50,000 - 70,000  70,000-150,000  >150,000

Ethnic Breakdown of High school Attended:
Mostly Black  Mostly White  Mostly Asian  Mostly Hispanic  Mixed Raced  Other

Hometown Location: Rural  Suburban  Urban  Non-American/Foreign

END OF SURVEY
THANK-YOU!
Appendix C: Interview Schedule

This section of the interview will concentrate on your social media usage. *(Read Definition of Social Media before starting the questions in this section)*

Social Media refers to the websites that allow for participants to create and share content and to participate in social networking. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are 3 examples of social media sites.

Part 1:

Open up the Facebook profile of the participant.

1. Tell me about your Facebook Profile?
2. Why do you use Facebook?
3. How often do you use Facebook?
4. Why do you think other people use Facebook?
5. Discuss the participant's most recent 20 activities on Facebook?

Part 2:

1. What social media sites do you participate on?
2. You mentioned that you participate in the following sites *(insert the sites that they listed)*, how would you rank the time spent on each site in order of least amount of time to most amount of time?
3. Why do you spend less time on some sites than others?
4. How would you rank your favorite social media sites in order of least favorite to most favorite?
5. Why do you favor some sites more than others?
6. What are your principle activities on Facebook? An activity could mean anything for looking at other people's profiles to posting statuses to communicating with family members to posting articles.
a. Why do you choose to engage in those activities?

b. Why do you choose to not engage in certain activities?

c. If picture posting comes up:
   i. Why do you post pictures, in general?
   ii. What type of pictures do you post?
   iii. Do you post different types of pictures for different social media platforms?
      1. If yes, Why?

d. If status writing comes up:

7. How many years have you participated on Facebook?
   a. Why did you originally join?
   b. Why have you stayed?
   c. Do you think that your Facebook profile has changed since attending Spelman college?

8. Recently, there has been a lot of talk about Black Twitter. What are your thoughts about Black Twitter? Do you think that it exists?
   a. What would be your definition of it?

9. Do you think people of different races use Facebook differently?
   9a. How so?
   9b. What about class?
   9c. What about gender?

10. Do you feel that certain social media platforms are more suitable to certain races?
    a. How about class?
    b. How about gender?
11. Considering the social media sites that you mentioned previously, (insert list of sites), why do you think others use these sites?

12. What are you biggest considerations when deciding to engage on Facebook?

**Demographic Questions**

1. How would you racially identify?

2. What class status do you consider yourself?

3. What was the ethnic make-up of your home high school?

4. What is the highest degree held by each of your parents?

5. What region of the US did you grow up?

6. In what type of neighborhood did you grow up in (i.e. rural, urban)?
Appendix D: Content Analysis Chart

Most Recent Facebook Posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Date Posted</th>
<th>Type of Post</th>
<th>Content of Post</th>
<th>Comments on Post</th>
<th>Additional Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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Demographic Information

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