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Relationship Adjustment in African American/White Interracial Couples

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Elizabeth R. Muiño

August 2013

Advisor: Jesse N. Valdez, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Interracial intimate partnerships are at greater risk for relationship dissolution (i.e., divorce or permanent separation in cohabitating couples) than their endogamous counterparts (Bratter & King, 2008). However, a disparity in dissolution rates exists between African American male/White female pairings and African American female/White male pairings. This study sought to elucidate psychological variables that may be related to this sizable discrepancy. It was hypothesized that differences between these pairings exist with regard to color-blindness, empathy, sexism, and relationship adjustment. It was further hypothesized that color-blindness, empathy, and sexism, as controlled for by gender and race, would predict relationship adjustment.

Participants included African American male/White female and African American female/White male partners. Participants were asked to individually complete all surveys and questionnaires (i.e., demographic questionnaire, Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale, Interpersonal Reactivity Index, The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, and The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale) through Survey Monkey. Data were gathered through four internet-based processes: (a) a specially created Facebook® page for the study and additional postings on Facebook® forums; (b) a snowball effect of emailing the study out to all friends and family in present author's email account; (c) the study's link was posted on Craigslist; (d) and finally, an email was sent out to university undergraduate and graduate departments around the United States. Sample sizes varied from n=34 to n=40

for each analysis. African American men were removed from the data analyses, as there were not enough participants from this group. Results of the study did not show statistically significant differences between African American women, White women, or White men among any of the variables, with the exception of empathy. In terms of empathy, African American women and White women scored significantly higher on empathic concern than White men. Furthermore, the variables did not significantly predict relationship adjustment as hypothesized. Implications of the results and recommendations for future research are discussed.

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Chapter One

The percentage of interracial intimate partnerships has increased by more than two-fold since 1980 to the present time (Taylor, Passel, Wang, Kiley, Velsasco, & Dockterman, 2010). Researchers found that 14.6% of all new intimate partnerships in the United States in 2008 were between partners of different races or ethnicities (Taylor et al., 2010). According to the authors, 67% of these partnerships occurred between one White partner and a partner from a racial/ethnic minority group, while the other 33% represented marriages between two non-White partners with differing racial/ethnic minority status.

This topic merits attention, as interracial intimate partnerships are at greater risk for relationship dissolution (i.e., divorce or permanent separation in cohabitating couples) than their endogamous (i.e., same race) counterparts (Bratter & King, 2008). Zhang and Van Hook (2009) reported that over the period of 1990 to 2001, 13.7% of interracial intimate relationships dissolved, with African American/White pairings at the greatest risk for dissolution. In fact, almost 20% of all African American/White intimate relationships ended in dissolution or separation. Contrastingly, 9.9% of endogamous relationships resulted in dissolution. The studies mentioned above examined demographic variables only, specifically, race of partners and its association with relationship dissolution. As research is increasingly progressing toward investigation of psychological

variables, studies that merely examine race only, lack complexity. In other words, psychological variables yield information that can inform prevention and/or intervention.

Interracial couples' research is still in its genesis, revealing the dearth in the knowledge base of salient partner characteristics that can strengthen or weaken this type of intimate partnership (i.e., marital or cohabitating relationship). It is well understood that interracial couples face a myriad of challenges not encountered by their endogamous or same-race counterparts. Namely, interracial couples often experience resistance and/or discrimination by family and friends, employers, and society. The present study serves to illuminate psychological factors on the dyadic level that serve to protect or undermine intimate relationship adjustment (i.e., relationship functioning and satisfaction). These factors include the effects of color-blindness, empathy, and sexism on relationship adjustment.

The current study sought to determine if color-blindness, empathy, and sexism predict relationship adjustment among interracial couples. The following subsections of this chapter will discuss previous research that has examined dyadic factors among interracial intimate partnerships as they relate to relationship dissolution. While past literature has shed light on the challenges faced by interracial/interethnic couples with regard to societal and familial resistance and its subsequent impact on relationship stability, an investigation of dyadic characteristics and behaviors as predictors of relationship adjustment is limited. As changes in societal racism and discrimination take time to effect, focusing on psychological variables within interracial couples can provide valuable information regarding dissolution prevention.

Rationale

While crossing racial lines for sexual or relationship means has historically and in modern times elicited a sense contravening, interracial relationships among African American and White individuals remain most taboo (Forry, Leslie, & Letiecq, 2007). Yu (2003) emphasizes that society's enthrallment with African American/White pairings has largely developed because of anti-miscegenation laws (i.e., laws that proscribed sex or intimate relationships among Whites and racial minorities) and the strong responses of White supremacy groups to the evolving roles of African American communities in the United States.

Leslie and Letiecq (2004) underscore that even at the present time, African American and White couples are at greatest risk among interracial couples for experiencing discrimination. According to Zhang and Van Hook (2009), the forbidden nature of these relationships may be reflected in the overall higher relationship dissolution rate among African American/White pairings when compared to other endogamous (e.g., African American and African American, White and White, Latina/o and Latina/o, Asian and Asian) or combinations of racial or ethnic partners (e.g., Asian and White, Latina/o and non-Latina/o White, Asian and Latina/o, Asian and African American, Latina/o and African American).

However, as Bratter and King's (2008) study demonstrated, this statement provides just a glimpse of the full picture. Dissolution rates are only highest among African American men paired with White women; African American women paired with White men evidence the lowest dissolution rate of any interracial/interethnic (e.g., Latina/o and African American, Latina/o and Asian, Latina/o and White, Latina/o and

American Indian, White and Asian, White and American Indian, African American and Asian, African American and American Indian, Asian and American Indian) or endogamous (e.g., White (non-Latina/o) and White (non-Latina/o), Latina/o and Latina/o, African American and African American, Asian and Asian, and American Indian and American Indian) pairings. It is this unexplained dichotomy that begs for further exploration and therefore provides the basis for the present study. As such, interracial relationships, pairings, and couples; unless otherwise specified, will refer to African American and White heterosexual men and women committed through cohabitation (i.e., may be married or unmarried).

Exclusion of Same-Sex Couples

Given the multitude of other factors and variables that impinge on same-sex couples and the risk of misappropriating or not capturing essential issues (e.g., homophobia, sexual discrimination, etc.), the decision was made to only examine heterosexual couples for the present study. The field of psychology exemplifies such discrimination as evidenced in its pathological viewpoint of same-sex couples until 1986, when homosexuality and its related “disorders” were at last completely removed from the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM; American Psychiatric Association, 1986). Having been viewed as mentally diseased by psychological experts until the last two decades, same-sex couples have experienced severe discrimination (Herek, 2009). Reparative Therapy (i.e., psychotherapy aimed at changing sexual minorities into heterosexuals) is demonstrative that discrimination even within the field of psychology is still alive and well (Shidlo & Schroeder, 2002).

From a legal perspective, states still had the right to enforce laws proscribing consensual sex between same sex partners until 2003, when the Supreme Court declared that such laws were unconstitutional (*Lawrence vs. Texas*, 2003). Safren (2006) enumerates several other institutional inequities faced by gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. These include but are not limited to the military's "don't ask, don't tell policy" (i.e., disclosing a non-heterosexual orientation served as grounds for dismissal from military); lack of recognition of same-sex marriage or civil unions in almost all of the United States; limited or no tax, insurance, or estate rights depending on the state; limited or prohibited child adoption rights; absence or limited visitation rights to one's critically hospitalized partner; etc.

In terms of issues that intersect race and sexual orientation; Lyons, Bieschke, Dendy, Worthington, and Georgemiller (2010) point out that gay, lesbian, and bisexual clients who are also racial minorities are vulnerable to greater stereotypes and discrimination as a result of having double-minority status. Steinbugler (2005) emphasizes that interracial same-sex couples may also be at an increased risk of being violently targeted as compared to interracial heterosexual couples or endogamous same-sex couples. Interracial same-sex couples undoubtedly deal with critical issues that warrant research examination. Furthermore, as same-sex couples appear to represent anywhere from 1 to 10% of the population (figures vary widely according to various sources), (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Hellman & Drescher, 2004; Leff, 2011 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/07/gay-population-us-estimate_n_846348.html), the author recognizes that the present study leaves out a crucial segment of the

population. Nonetheless, the complexity of factors related to discrimination of interracial same-sex couples necessitates analysis beyond the scope of the present study.

Consequences of Relationship Dissolution

Gottman (1993), a leading expert in couple's research and therapy, enumerates the devastating consequences of dissolution. He specifies that these poor outcomes are evident in domains of both mental and physical health. Dissolution is correlated with increased risk of future psychopathology, suicide, automobile accidents, homicide, disease mortality, and physical symptomatology. Amato (2000) indicated that adults with dissolved relationships are also more likely to experience social isolation, poverty or economic difficulties, and dissatisfying sex lives. Furthermore, he reported that more than 50 percent of couples dealing with dissolution have children under the age of 18, a statistic with important repercussions. Dissolved couples are less likely to implement authoritative parenting, a parenting style shown to be predictive of positive behavioral outcomes among children, along with increased tensions on parental roles. Children of dissolved marriages are also at greater risk for varying sequela such as depression, isolation, poor social skills and academic performance, as well as conduct problems (Gottman, 1993). Undeniably, clinical work and research aimed at reducing dissolution rates is critical to partners, their children, and society as a whole.

Higher Rates of Relationship Dissolution: Theories

The Homogamy Theory

Zhang and Van Hook (2009) describe homogamy as the tendency of individuals to court/date and marry other people with shared characteristics. For example, these attributes may be race, culture, ethnicity, religion, economic-standing, education, etc.

Homogamy conjectures that similarities in the aforementioned areas, along with a variety of others, will lead to less conflict and misunderstandings between partners. Moreover, shared attributes invite greater familial and peer support, factors associated with relationship stability. In particular, with regard to interracial couples, homogamy hypothesizes that the larger the racial divide between partners, the greater the risk of relationship dissolution. As crossing the African American/White racial divide is seen as most transgressive, it then follows that among all interracial couples, this group would be most at risk for relationship dissolution.

Ethnic Dissolution Convergence Perspective

The second theory is the Ethnic Dissolution Convergence Perspective, constructed by Jones (1996). Jones proposed that different groups and cultures will have varying values and/or social rules about dissolution. By looking at endogamous dissolution rates, one can surmise how dissolution or relationship maintenance might be viewed in a particular ethnic or racial group. When individuals from two different groups become a couple, their risk of dissolution is likely to fall somewhere between the endogamous risk potentials of each group from which they belong (Jones, 1996). In the case of African American/White couples, inspection of dissolution rates among endogamous African American couples and endogamous White couples would reveal the risk of dissolution among interracial pairings, according to this model (Jones, 1996; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). Overall, rates of dissolution among endogamous African American couples are higher than for endogamous White couples (Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). As such, this model would predict that the dissolution potential of interracial couples would be greater

than the dissolution potential of endogamous White couples and less than the dissolution potential of endogamous African American couples.

Zhang and Van Hook (2009) asserted that their findings on African American/White couples provides evidence for the homogamy theory (i.e., dissolution rate for African American male/White female couples was higher than either endogamous pairing, and was therefore incommensurate with the Ethnic Dissolution Convergence Perspective). However, they also found that African American female/White male couples had a similar or lower risk of dissolution as compared to endogamous White couples. Furthermore, Bratter and King's (2008) study yielded commensurate results (i.e., highest dissolution rates were among African American men paired with White women and lowest dissolution rates were among African American women paired with White men as compared to other interracial or endogamous couples). Therefore, homogamy might account for the highest dissolution rates among African American male/White female pairings but neither model or theory accounted for the lowest dissolution rates among African American female/White male pairings.

These theories are also problematic for other reasons. Both theories rely on simple demographic variables (i.e., race and ethnicity). Current trends in research convey progression toward more sophisticated variables. Examination of race and ethnicity only, reveals little to nothing about reasons for discrepant dissolution rates; it only demonstrates the existence of incongruencies. Rather, today's research argues for investigation of psychological variables, as they provide more extensive information.

Factors Hypothesized to Account for Gender-Race Discrepancy

Color-Blindness

Neville, Spanierman, and Doan (2006) define racial color-blindness as the “the denial, distortion, and/or minimization of race and racism” (p. 276). These authors assert that subtle forms of racism comprise the main racism of today and that color-blind racial attitudes are common (Neville, et al., 2006). This contention is mirrored by Gawranski, Peters, Brochu, and Strack (2008) who affirm a downward trend in overt expressions of racism and an upward trend in more covert prejudice. As social mores have become increasingly supportive of egalitarian stances that argue for equality and racial harmony, acceptance of blatant demonstrations of racism has diminished (Bonilla, Lewis, & Embrick, 2004).

Killian’s (2001; 2003) qualitative studies suggest that color-blindness may play a considerable role in interracial relationships. Results from these studies showed that some interracial couples minimized their racial differences or even denied the presence of any differences. In another study, Thompson and Collier (2006) found that in some cases, White partners attempted to silence their African American partners with regard to discussing racial issues. Such an interaction provides evidence of a major power differential reflective of greater institutional oppression of African Americans.

No studies to date have quantitatively explored the role of color-blindness among interracial couples, despite anecdotal and qualitative accounts implying its important part in these couples’ relationships. It then might follow that if a partner feels a sense of oppression within their relationship, they are more likely to experience barriers to

communication and feeling understood by their intimate partner (e.g., empathy); components that research has shown to be key to healthy romantic relationships (Ickes, 2001).

Empathy

Empathy is regarded as an essential component of healthy intimate relationships (Ickes, 2001; Waldinger, Schultz, Hauser, Allen, & Crowell, 2004) and a predictor of relationship adjustment and satisfaction (Busby and Gardner, 2008). Given the discrimination and racism that interracial couples are likely to experience, understanding how empathy functions in these relationships is critical. Particularly, ways in which White partners provide validation, concern, and understanding or lack thereof to their African American partners dealing with racism or discrimination may signal areas of relationship strength or areas in need of improvement (Foeman & Nance, 2002; Leslie & Letiecq, 2004). For example, a White partner's responses to their partner who may have been passed up for an employment opportunity, treated unfairly by the law, or experienced some type of discrimination during the course of their day, etc. because of their race may have important implications to the health of their relationship (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004).

Color-blindness and Empathy Considered Together: Inferences from the Therapeutic Domain. Research has shown that empathy and color-blindness have important implications in therapeutic outcomes (i.e., positive changes evidenced in clients) (Elliott, Bohart, Watson, & Greenberg, 2011; Thompson & Jenal, 1994; Want, Parham, Baker, & Sherman, 2004). Not surprisingly, empathy is regarded as a critical

component of psychotherapy as well; in fact empathy was found to account for 31 percent of variance in therapy outcome (Elliott et al., 2011).

Research has begun investigating endorsement of color-blindness among clinicians in the psychotherapeutic domain and its dangerous effects on therapy outcomes (Thompson & Jenal, 1994; Want, Parham, Baker, & Sherman, 2004). More specifically, these studies have shown that counselor's avoidance of racial issues in therapy with African American clients inhibited a positive therapeutic relationship despite the counselor's race. Moreover, Neville et al. (2006) found that higher level of color-blindness among counseling trainees and mental health workers was associated with lower multicultural competency.

Burkard and Knox (2004) specifically investigated the relationship between empathy and color-blindness. These authors findings revealed an inverse association between color-blindness and empathy among clinicians, an undoubtedly unnerving finding (Burkard & Knox, 2004). Despite the obvious differences between the psychotherapeutic relationship and an intimate couple, empathy is a chief ingredient of strong relationships in both the therapeutic and romantic realms (Elliott, Bohart, Watson, & Greenberg, 2011; Ickes, 2001; Waldinger, Schultz, Hauser, Allen, & Crowell, 2004). It is therefore important to examine if empathy and color-blindness are related and if they impact relationship adjustment in interracial couples.

Gender Role Attitudes and Sexism

Gender role attitudes refer to one's beliefs, feelings, and opinions about men and women's roles in society and what it means to be male or female (Su, Richardson, & Wang, 2010; Zosuls, Miller, Ruble, Martin, & Fabes, 2011). Measurement of gender role

attitudes typically involves assessment of one's subscription to or endorsement of traditional and/or egalitarian viewpoints about men and women (Su et al., 2010). Manganaro and Alozie (2011) describe traditional gender role attitudes as gender ascriptions that argue for women's subservience and men's superiority. Examples include but are obviously not limited to the belief that women's work is confined to caring for their home and children, women do not belong in leadership positions, men are the breadwinners and should be in charge of household decisions. These notions of gender roles are contrasted with the advocacy for equality between the sexes as defined by egalitarian gender roles (Manganaro & Alozie, 2011). Egalitarian gender roles emphasize that men and women's roles are robust and not limited by stereotypes. Undoubtedly, partners' expectations with regard to gender roles play a paramount part in the functioning (e.g., conflict, satisfaction, affection etc.) of heterosexual intimate relationships (Pasley, Kerpeleman, & Guilbert, 2001).

In fact, Pasley et al. (2001) assert that incongruence between partners' attitudes and expectations about gender roles leads to relationship instability (i.e., increased risk of relationship dissolution). These authors also state that an important interaction exists between gender and attitude with regard to relationship outcomes. Specifically, with regard to women's attitudes, the subscription of traditional gender role beliefs is associated with relationship stability while the subscription of egalitarian gender role beliefs is associated with relationship instability. On the contrary, the opposite trend is demonstrated among men. With regard to men's attitudes, men who are more egalitarian in their viewpoint on gender roles than their female partners have a decreased risk of relationship dissolution. Although traditional and egalitarian gender role attitudes appear

to assist in predicting the success or demise of intimate partnerships, research has progressed toward examination of sexism as a more powerful and sensitive measure of gender expectations and stereotypes (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Glick and Fiske (1996) developed the Ambivalent Sexism Theory. Ambivalence is emphasized in the theory, a concept predicated on the researchers argument that individuals subscribe to sexism in a multifaceted, sometimes paradoxical manner. Specifically, Glick and Fiske (1996) propose the coexistence and interplay of *hostile sexism* and *benevolent sexism*; individuals may experience both hostile and benevolent feelings toward women at the same time.

Glick and Fiske (1996) describe *hostile sexism* as more overt and recognizable citing constrained employment opportunities, sexual harassment, and sexual violence, as examples. Contrastingly *benevolent sexism* is subtle in nature and even positive in tone, rendering it a highly insidious form of prejudice and discrimination. Examples include deference toward women's roles as wife and mother, the belief that it is men's responsibility to take care of women, and women should be placed on a pedestal, etc.

Glick and Fiske (1996) further subcategorize sexism into *paternalism*, *gender differentiation*, and *heterosexuality*. Ambivalence typifies these subcategories where each is comprised by benevolent and hostile continuums. Please see the terminology section for definitions of *paternalism*, *gender differentiation*, and *heterosexuality* and Chapter Two for a more complete discussion of these sexism subcategories.

Ambivalent Sexism and Couples

Although limited in quantity, research suggests that ambivalent sexism may be predictive of relationship adjustment in couples (Overall, Sibley, & Tan, 2011). Research

findings by Overall et al. (2011) reveal that men's endorsement of hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS) as well as the interaction between male and female HS and BS has important implications in relationship adjustment. Expressly, men's greater subscription to (HS) predicted more unsuccessful relationship behaviors (i.e., hostility and resistance) between partners and poorer outcomes related to resolving conflict. Contrastingly, men's greater endorsement of (BS) predicted their own increased successful relationship behaviors (i.e., openness and lessened hostility) as well as greater perception of conflict resolution among both partners. In terms of interactions, high BS in women and low BS in their partners predicted unsuccessful relationship behaviors among the women (i.e., greater hostility and less openness). When men and women were both endorsers of high HS, unsuccessful relationship behaviors among women were not evidenced.

Sexism and Interracial Couples

Sexism may play a particularly profound role in African American male/White female pairings as research suggests greater levels of sexist thinking in African American men as compared to their White male counterparts, a phenomenon based on poverty and lack of status in United States society (West & Rose, 2000; Miller & White, 2003; O'Donnell, Stueve, Myint-U, Duran, Agronick, & Wilson-Simmons, 2006; West 2008). Furthermore, West (2008) describes that African American men are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence victimization and perpetration as compared to White men and that violence perpetration against women is predicted by sexist attitudes and beliefs. In fact, across varying levels of SES and educational levels, approximately 20 to 57% of African American men admitted to perpetrating violence on women (West & Rose, 2000;

O'Donnell et al., 2006). Miller and White (2003) found that African American men in their study asserted that partner victimization was warranted when female partners deviated from their traditional gender roles. Johnson II (2010) observes the internal struggle of African American men rooted in a desire for traditional gender roles (a desire no different from their White male counterparts) superseded by their inability to fully acquire male privilege because of racial discrimination. Accordingly, African American men may feel an increased need to prove their masculinity to society, also known as *hyper-masculinity*; encompassing greater endorsement of sexist beliefs and homophobia (Lemelle, 2010 as cited in Crowell, 2011).

Given that gender roles and sexism pivotally affect intimate relationship adjustment, these factors represent crucial research variables. Chiefly, the disparity in dissolution rates between White male/African American female partnerships and African American male/White female partnerships may be partly explained by sexism.

Relationship Adjustment: An Outcome Variable

Spanier (1976) provides the following definition of relationship or dyadic adjustment:

...a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of: (1) troublesome dyadic differences; (2) interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety; (3) dyadic satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; and (5) consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning (p. 17).

After researching these five components of relationship adjustment, Spanier (1976) modified the original definition by removing troublesome dyadic differences as well as

interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety. This concept was replaced with an empirically validated construct, affectional expression (Spanier, 1976).

Relationship adjustment has long been regarded as a remarkable variable because of its ability to differentiate distressed from non-distressed couples (Lambert, 2004). As relationship distress is predictive of later relationship dissolution, measuring relationship adjustment can help distinguish relationships that are likely to demonstrate stability from those that may be at risk for dissolution (Bouchard, 2006). Understanding how color-blindness, empathy, and sexism impact relationship adjustment may elucidate the reasons for the dichotomy in dissolution rates between African American male/White female pairings and African American female/White male pairings.

Terminology

Indisputably, terminology signifies a critical issue as it pertains to historical implications, pejorative connotations, and superfluous labeling. After reviewing the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2001) (p. 68); Office of Management and Budget (1997) and the National Center for Health Statistics (2004); the terms African American and White were chosen to refer to the racial groups being explored in this study. Clearly, such terms will not be the preferred terminology by all who read this study or by all individuals who comprise these racial groups. Moreover, many of the terms described below have multiple definitions. Nevertheless, the following definitions are provided:

1. *Race and Racial Group* are described by Moya & Markus (in press) as cited in Markus (2008) as the following:

a dynamic set of historically derived and institutionalized ideas and practices that (1) sorts people into ... groups according to perceived physical and behavioral human characteristics; (2) associates differential value, power, and privilege with these characteristics and establishes a social status ranking among the different groups; and (3) emerges (a) when groups are perceived to pose a threat (political, economic, or cultural) to each other's world view or way of life; and/or (b) to justify the denigration and exploitation (past, current, or future) of, and prejudice toward, other groups.

2. *Ethnicity and Ethnic Group* are described by Moya & Markus (in press) as cited in Markus (2008) as the following:

a dynamic set of historically derived and institutionalized ideas and practices that (1) allows people to identify or to be identified with groupings of people on the basis of presumed (and usually claimed) commonalities including language, history, nation or region of origin, customs, ways of being, religion, names, physical appearance, and/or genealogy or ancestry; (2) can be a source of meaning, action, and identity; and (3) confers a sense of belonging, pride, and motivation.

It should be underscored that these terms are often used interchangeably and that there remains a great deal of controversy over definitions of race and ethnicity.

3. *African American* is a racial group living in the United States with African Ancestry; can be of Latina/o or non-Latina/o ethnicity (Bratter & King, 2008; Office of Management and Budget, 1997; National Center for Health Statistics, 2004). The present study will be examining non-Latina/o African Americans.

4. *White* is racial group living in the United States typically of European ancestry; can be of Latina/o or non-Latina/o ethnicity (Bratter & King, 2008; Office of Management and Budget, 1997; National Center for Health Statistics, 2004). The present study will be examining non-Latina/o Whites.
5. *Latina/o* “refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race” (Census Briefs, 2010).
6. *Partnership* is an intimate relationship between people of the same sex or opposite sex. In the case of the present study, partnership refers to an intimate relationship between people of the opposite sex committed to one another through marriage or cohabitation.
7. *Interracial* is a relationship between two people of different races. In the case of the present study, interracial refers to an intimate relationship between African American and White partners.
8. *Endogamous* is an intimate relationship between two people of the same race or ethnicity. In the case of the present study, endogamous refers to an intimate partnership between two African American partners or two White partners (Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 2010).
9. *Dissolution* is the ending of an intimate partnership (e.g., divorce).
10. *Cohabitation* is the act or process of living together.
11. *Colorblindness* is “the denial, distortion, and/or minimization of race and racism” (Neville, Spanierman, & Doan 2006, p. 276).
12. *Unawareness of Racial Privilege* is the unawareness that being White provide political, legal, socioeconomic, educational, etc. advantages over being from a racial minority group (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000).

13. *Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination* is the unawareness that racial minority status is associated with decreased political and legal power (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000).
14. *Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues* is the unawareness that racism still constitutes a major problem in the United States (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000).
15. *Empathy* is “responsivity to the experience of another” (Davis, 1980, p. 3).
16. *Empathic Concern* is experiencing care, concern, and sympathy for others (Davis, 1983).
17. *Perspective Taking* is trying to understand the viewpoint of others (Davis, 1983).
18. *Sex* and *Gender* are discussed by Muehlenhard and Peterson (2011). The authors note that the terms are often used interchangeably and no consensus exists among researchers about the use of these terms. However, historically sex has referred to biological differences between men and women, while gender has referred to socially and/or culturally made attributions about what it means to be male or female. It should be emphasized that neither category is dichotomous.
19. *Ambivalent Sexism* is a multifaceted construct encompassing two chief forms of gender bias, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996).
20. *Benevolent Sexism* is subtle sexism toward women; seemingly positive and chivalrous in nature (Glick & Fiske, 1996).
21. *Protective Paternalism* is the viewpoint that women are weak, and therefore, in need of men’s protection, provision of resources, love, and affection (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

22. *Complementary Gender Differentiation* is the idea that men are dependent on women as partners and mothers, cultivating the conception that women must also have positive characteristics that balance the traits of men (Glick & Fiske, 1996).
23. *Heterosexual Intimacy* is the idea that men seek emotional closeness with women, engendering happiness and even euphoria (Glick & Fiske, 1996).
24. *Hostile Sexism* is overt sexism; antipathy toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996).
25. *Dominative Paternalism* observes women as lacking competence, justifying the need for a governing male force in women's lives (Glick & Fiske, 1996).
26. *Competitive Gender Differentiation* is the desire on the part of men to differentiate themselves from women; allows their movement into governing roles, pushing women into roles of subservience (Glick & Fiske, 1996).
27. *Heterosexual Hostility* is the sexual attraction on the part of men inextricably tied to a yearning to dominate women (Glick & Fiske, 1996).
28. *Relationship Adjustment* is defined by Spanier (1976, p. 17) and Busby, Christensen, Crane, and Larson (1995) as the following:
- A process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of: (1) dyadic satisfaction; (2) dyadic cohesion; and (3) consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning.
29. *Gender Roles* refer to men and women's roles in society predicated on beliefs, feelings, and opinions and what it means to be male or female (Su, Richardson, & Wang, 2010; Zosuls, Miller, Ruble, Martin, & Fabes, 2011).
30. *Traditional Gender Roles* are gender ascriptions that argue for women's subservience and men's superiority (Manganaro and Alozie, 2011).

31. *Egalitarian Gender Roles* advocate for equality between the sexes; emphasize that men and women's roles are robust and not limited by stereotypes (Manganaro & Alozie, 2011).

32. *Hyper-Masculinity* is an increased need to prove masculinity to society; associated with greater endorsement of sexist beliefs and homophobia (Lemelle, 2010 as cited in Crowell, 2011).

33. *Anti-Miscegenation Laws* are laws that proscribed sex or intimate relationships among Whites and racial minorities (Yu, 2003).

34. *Double-Minority Status* is "the psychological state created when two devalued identities interact to influence the individual in a way that is greater than the sum of the independent effects of those identities" (Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002, p. 659).

35. *Homogamy Theory* hypothesizes that the larger the racial divide between partners, the greater the risk of relationship dissolution (Zhang & Van Hook, 2009).

36. *Ethnic Dissolution Convergence Perspective* posits that when individuals from two different racial groups become a couple, their risk of dissolution is likely to fall somewhere between the endogamous risk potentials of each group from which they belong (Jones, 1996).

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Chapter two offers a review of literature with regard to color-blindness, empathy, sexism, and relationship adjustment among interracial couples. This section is comprised of a discussion of the rationale for examination of African American/White pairings only; the historical and societal issues pertaining to these couples; the implications of color-blindness, empathy, sexism on dyadic relationships; and relationship adjustment as a proxy for relationship stability.

This literature review seeks to explicate the research and theoretical frameworks pertinent to understanding the cultural and contextual issues of interracial intimate partnerships in the contemporary and historical United States. A synopsis of African American and White relationships in United States history sets the stage for an analysis of the barriers and obstacles experienced by these trailblazers. History represents an important topic in this chapter as it has assisted in shaping dynamics between different racial groups today. This chapter further elaborates on the implications of relationship dissolution in addition to the paramount interaction of race and gender.

African American/White Interracial Couples

Why should the present research focus on African American/White interracial couples and not other interracial or interethnic couples? Intimate relationships between African American and White partners may experience more societal resistance than other

interracial or inter-ethnic pairings. This section enumerates some of the historical reasons for this phenomenon and in no way intends to minimize the atrocities and discrimination faced by other minority groups in the United States. Yu (2003) outlines factors of assimilation, stereotyping, and passing that have mitigated the proscription of relationships between White individuals and other minority groups from a continental lens, as described below:

European immigrants to the Northeastern United States, including Slavs, Jews, Italians, Irish etc., while initially encountering harsh discrimination, experienced “Whitening” over time during the 20th century (p.1409). Furthermore, the “come one, come all” sentiment of Ellis Island promoted an increasing inclusion of European immigrants into American identity. Although anti-Semitism still constitutes a significant problem in the United States, greater societal acceptance of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews prevails as compared to their African American counterparts.

In the Pacific area of the United States, movement of Mexican and African American individuals to this region prior to World War II lessened the racial divide between White and Asian communities. Despite discrimination toward Japanese United States citizens during and post World War II, Hawaii, as an important military base, increased the rate of interracial marriage and relationships between White military personnel and Asian and Polynesian women, so much so that a ubiquitous term for “half Asian, half White” emerged, “hapa haole” (Yu, 2003, p. 1411). Moreover, Asians in the United States are generally viewed as a “model minority,” a perception founded on

stereotypical thinking, and able to surmount many hardships associated with race (p.1411).

As a final point related to regional factors, the Southwest region has been home to vast Latina/o communities. Yu (2003) underscores that the term “Latino” (Latina) includes a diverse amalgamation of African, American Indian, European, Jewish, and Asian roots, thus making such a distinct category of people fundamentally imprecise and therefore problematic to study (p. 1412). Furthermore, many Latinas/os are White European or have White European mixed ancestry. Consequently, these light complexioned Latinas/os may experience White privilege, markedly minimizing the cultural partition between White and Latina/o individuals. Rather, the difference between real or perceived illegal immigrant or citizen status represents a primary issue in current society, breeding racism and discrimination (Shattell & Villalba, 2008). Although a critical issue to intermarriage, it is beyond the scope of the present paper. Accordingly, overall, crossing cultural boundaries between White and Latina/o individuals carries far less taboo implications compared to White and African American partnerships (Tubbs & Rosenblatt, 2003). Factors pertinent to Southern United States history will be discussed in detail in the History section of this chapter.

Native Americans represent a minority group that has endured genocide and undoubted societal and legal resistance to intermarriage. Nonetheless, Hollinger (2003) distinguishes historical factors and societal attitudes toward African Americans from Native Americans. He describes that even with the enslavement of many Native American individuals by White colonialists, Native American slaves were never

fundamental to the United States economy. Economy signifies an important issue in this sense because the perception of African American people as human property was uniquely different from the problems faced by Native Americans. Moreover, relatively few states incorporated Native Americans into their anti-miscegenation laws and those that did were lenient in such statute implementation. Racial identity with regard to Native American background has also changed dramatically among primarily White Americans who have some Native American ancestry. In the period of 1970 to 1990, the population of Native Americans grew 259%, a statistic representative of Americans who “decided to ‘come out’ as part Indian” (Hollinger, 2003, p. 1366).

Hollinger (2003), quips that “we do not see a multitude of ostensibly White Americans reclassifying themselves as part African American” (p. 1366). In fact, United States society offers little choice with regard to racial identity to individuals of mixed African American heritage, a reality demonstrated by history’s *one drop rule*. Such a norm is still readily exhibited. As an example, discourse about the current president, Barak Obama, makes obvious this finding. Citizens generally refer to the United States leader as *the first African American president*, rather than the *first biracial president*. His half White racial background is subsumed by his having an African father.

African American/White Couples in the United States

History

One could argue that social norms related to interracial unions in the United States among African American and White couples have existed since the inception of slavery on this continent. The slave trade in North America began in 1619 and lasted for

approximately 240 years (Davis, 2011). Hollinger (2003) points out that the United States was unusual among constitutional establishments in allowing slavery until the 1860's and accordingly finding itself with approximately 12% of the population, during the majority of the 20th century, survivors of slavery or immediate descendants of slaves.

It is therefore not that long ago that African American individuals were seen as property; a horribly dehumanizing viewpoint that was not easily shaken even during the 1900's (Hollinger, 2003). President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 abolished slavery and in the years that followed, granted greater civil rights to African Americans up until 1877. In exchange for a more liberal leader, the election of Rutherford B. Hayes allowed the South greater political freedoms and consequently gave rise to Jim Crow laws (Tafari, 2002). These statutes effectively mandated segregation between African Americans and Whites and made interracial sex and marriage illegal.

Fears about interracial sexual relations and between White women and African American men dominated particularly in the southern United States following the Emancipation Proclamation. Wormser (2002) notes The Wilmington Riot of 1898 as an example how many White politicians played upon such fears.

Wormser (2002) explains that the entrance of an African American Republican politician and White Populists in Wilmington catalyzed a smear campaign by Democrats who spread fear over the community that African American men were sexual predators of White women. White feminist, Rebecca Felton, was quoted in a newspaper at the time of stating, "If it requires lynching to protect woman's dearest possession from ravaging,

drunken human beasts, then I say lynch a thousand negroes a week ... if it is necessary" (Wormser, 2002, p. 2).

Wormser (2002) goes on to describe how Alex Manly, an African American editorialist responded by asserting that these alleged rapes and subsequent lynchings were in fact intended to veil consensual sexual acts between African American men and White women. His editorial further incited already furious White men in the community. A riot ensued and at least twenty-five African American individuals were murdered. Undoubtedly, United States' history is marred by times when African American men were falsely accused of raping White women and then lynched (Thompson & Collier, 2006).

Not until approximately 90 years later, would laws prohibiting interracial marriage be deemed unconstitutional. In 1958, police burst into the home Mildred Loving, a woman of African and Native American descent, and her husband, Richard Perry Loving, a White man, with the intent to find them engaged in sex. The couple was charged with felonies for their marriage and ordered to leave the state of Virginia. The couple filed a number of lawsuits; and in 1967, the United States Supreme Court overturned all statutes proscribing interracial marriage. Until this monumental case, interracial marriage between African Americans and Whites was still against the law in almost all states south of the Mason-Dixon line (Hollinger, 2003).

Current Trends

Ashby-Plant and Butz (2006) report on current trends in interracial relations. Although their study did not examine interracial couples specifically, the researchers did

investigate how interactions between interracial and same-race strangers differed. Their results showed that White participants still tended to avoid interaction with African American individuals. Furthermore, when interracial social exchanges did occur between Whites and minorities, the duration and quality of the contact was minimized.

Stereotypes fuel racism and further perpetuate social norms that argue for endogamous pairing. Many such race related stereotypes hit dimensions that concern mate desirability and rarely target Whites. The media is often guilty of depicting minorities in a stereotypical light, portraying members of racial and ethnic minority groups as inferior to Whites on a variety of domains. Minorities are frequently represented in the media as less intelligent, oversexed, undersexed, emasculated, poor, uneducated, lazy, or dangerous depending on their race (Martin, 2008; Timberlake & Estes, 2007). Vorhees, Vick, and Perkins (2007) cited Hurricane Katrina as a more recent major event in which African Americans were portrayed negatively in the media. They describe that attention was primarily focused on African Americans in New Orleans committing acts of looting, violence, and in need of assistance from Whites, rather than showing instances of altruism and power.

Furthermore, Timberlake and Estes' (2007) study elucidated how racial and ethnic stereotypes are also gendered in some cases, a finding which may have further important implications for mate selection. For example, the researchers found that White participants rated African American men as significantly more likely than African American women to be involved in criminal behavior. In fact, African American men were rated the lowest (i.e., more likely to be involved in criminal behavior than any of the

other ethnic/racial sex options) by all ethnic/racial groups involved in the study, a finding which the authors attribute to negative media stereotypes.

Even if on an individual level, people do not personally subscribe to such stereotypes, cultural stereotypes prevail and can impact one's affect and decision-making towards minority groups (Correll, Park, Judd & Wittenbrink, 2007). Clearly, if such stereotypes are readily available to dominant culture then it makes sense that dominant culture sets social norms opposing interracial romantic dyads. Given the abominable manner in which African American men are represented in the media, this proscription may be particularly relevant to African American male/White female pairings.

Statistics

Passal, Wang, and Taylor (2010) indicated that 14.6% of all new marriages in the United States in 2008 were between partners of different races or ethnicities. This 2008 percentage has more than doubled since 1980. The authors attributed the increase in intermarriage to reduction of social norms prohibiting these pairings and also to amplified immigration to the United States from Latin and Asian countries. Passal et al. (2010) go on to report that 67% of intermarriages in 2008 occurred between one White partner and a partner who self-identified as a being from a racial/ethnic minority group. The other 33% represented marriages between two partners with differing racial/ethnic minority status. 11% of interracial or interethnic marriages consisted of African American and White pairings.

Glaring gender differences exist between the likelihood of African American individuals marrying outside of their race (Taylor, Passel, Wang, Kiley, Velasco, &

Dockterman, 2010). In 2008, 22% of new marriages among African American men were to non-African American women. This is contrasted with only 9% of African American women marrying non-African American men during that same year. No gender differences exist between the number of White men and White women entering into interracial marriages; 9% of new marriages among White men and White women were to a partner of a different race or ethnicity. Yet, the rate at which White men marry African American women is staggeringly lower than the rate at which White women marry African American men. In fact, among White men who intermarry, they are least likely to wed African American women than any other racial or ethnic group (Taylor, Passel, Wang, Kiley, Velasco, & Dockterman, 2010). Table 1 provides statistics about intermarriage between African American and White individuals.

Table 1

Intermarriage Percentages in 2008

Women and Men Who Married Out

<u>African American Women</u>	<u>African American Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
9	22	16
<u>White Women</u>	<u>White Men</u>	<u>Total</u>
9	9	9

Table 1 (continued). *Intermarriage Percentages in 2008*

African American and White Pairings			
	African American Women	African American Men	Total
(White Partner)	58.6	57.2	57.5
	White Women	White Men	Total
(African American Partner)	20.1	6.9	13.6

There are evident regional discrepancies in intermarriage in the United States. Passel, Wang, and Taylor’s (2010) data showed that the highest percentage of intermarriage was found in the West where 22% of all new marriages occurred between partners of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. Interracial marriages accounted for 13% of all new marriages in the South and Northeastern United States, followed by 11% in the Midwestern region of the country. These regional disparities suggest that some states might engage in more overt social norms that discourage intermarriage than others.

Dissolution and Interracial Couples

Predictors and Their Impact

Bratter and King (2008) describe the main predictors of divorce that have been consistently verified in previous research through regression analyses among a variety of racial and ethnic groups. Individuals who marry at younger ages, specifically before the age of 25 in women, are significantly more likely to divorce by ten years of marriage than those who married at 25 or later (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Being a child of divorced

parents has widely been demonstrated as an important correlate of future divorce, along with cohabitation and having a child before marriage (Amato & Deboer, 2001; Amato, 2010; Stanley, Rhoades, Amato, Markman, & Johnson, 2010). Partners who differ from one another along age or ethnicity domains are also more likely to divorce than partners without age gaps or who share similar cultural backgrounds (Heaton, 2002).

Contrastingly, income and educational level is negatively related to divorce (Heaton, 2002).

Given that research suggests that interracial couples are particularly vulnerable to relationship dissolution, Bratter and King (2008) investigated the aforementioned risk factors (e.g., age at marriage, age gap between partners, premarital cohabitation, having a child before marriage, income, education level with regard to interracial couples, etc.). The authors employed a large, nationally representative sample, through use of the 2002 NSFG, Cycle IV (National Health Statistics, 2004). Using a log-log model, their findings revealed that in some models, these predictors did not significantly account for the variance in likelihood of divorce and in other models, even diminished the variance. In fact, the race or ethnicity pairing by itself was the strongest predictor of relationship dissolution. Thus, these results suggest that something beyond the typical predictors of relationship dissolution is at play in interracial relationships. Bratter and King (2008) recommend that future research examines race-gender interactions along with psychological variables to elucidate the overall higher relationship dissolution rates among interracial couples as compared to endogamous couples.

Theories of Relationship Dissolution among Interracial Couples

Zhang and Van Hook (2009) underscore that African American/White interracial couples may experience magnified stressors related to their union, given the more extreme racism targeting the African American population in the United States as compared to other racial or ethnic groups. They describe the two leading theories explicating the greater divorce rates evidenced in interracial couples.

The first theory's basis rests in the concept of homogamy. The term, homogamy, originated from the Greek roots, *homo*, meaning "the same" and, *gamos*, meaning "marriage" (Cohen, 2011, p. 2). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2011), the term homogamy was first written about in 1842 and pertained to botany. By the late 1800's the term was used to reference similarities among human beings (Cohen, 2011). Over the 20th century, homogamy evolved into meaning preference for mate selection predicated on shared attributes (Courtiol, Raymond, Godelle, & Ferdy, 2010). Such similarities might include but are not limited to neighborhood, culture, religion, socioeconomic status, and a variety of biological characteristics such as height, etc.

With regard to culture, the theory of homogamy predicts that partners with similar backgrounds will evidence decreased conflict and miscommunications and increased familial and peer support (Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). As such, the theory recognizes partner similarities and the role of social support or lack thereof as integral to relationship success or demise. Homogamy further hypothesizes a strong positive correlation between the extent of the racial divide governing the two races/ethnicities comprising the couple and dissolution threat (Zhang & Van Hook, 2009).

The theory of homogamy is problematic for a two apparent reasons. First, its use in research and theory on human beings has origins in eugenics (Cohen, 2011). Gerodetti (2006) defines eugenics as “the means to manipulate human heredity or breeding, or both . . . aimed to produce ‘superior’ people” (p. 217). Hence, historically, homogamy was employed as a mechanism for preventing the propagation of non-privileged groups, including racial and ethnic minorities. As awareness with regard to advocacy and social justice steadily increases within the field of psychology, the use of the term, homogamy, within our field should be carefully considered. Secondly, the data on whether mate selection is actually based on partner similarities has been mixed and not well established (Courtiol, Raymond, Godelle, & Ferdy, 2010).

The second theory is the Ethnic Divorce Convergence Perspective, constructed by Jones (1996). This theory proposes that the likelihood of dissolution among an interracial couple is somewhere between each of the dissolution potentials of the racial or ethnic groups that comprise the couple. In other words, with regard to interracial African American/White pairings, relationship dissolution rates are lower for endogamous White couples than for endogamous African American couples (Bratter & King, 2008). Based on this theory, Zhang and Van Hook (2009) hypothesized that the dissolution rate for African American/White pairings would be somewhere between the dissolution rates for endogamous African American couples and endogamous White couples. Thus, by examining rates of dissolution among various racially/ethnically endogamous marriages, hypotheses can be made about the risk of dissolution among interracial/interethnic couples.

The Ethnic Divorce Convergence Perspective (Jones, 1996) is similar to the theory of homogamy in terms of weaknesses. The theory is simply based on two demographic variables (i.e., race and ethnicity). In an age when research is moving toward more sophisticated variables, examination of race and ethnicity only, adds little clarification to important research issues. Rather, today's research argues for a deeper approach that involves investigation of psychological variables. Furthermore, empirical support for the Ethnic Divorce Convergence Perspective has been varied (Dribe & Lundh, 2010).

In order to examine these two theories in action, Zhang and Van Hook (2009) used the 1990 to 2001 data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) to examine marital dissolution among interracial couples, specifically, among combinations of Hispanic, Asian, African American, and White partners. Variable control was employed for differences between partners including age gap, educational level, income, United States nativity versus citizenship, and the number of children in the home (age 0 to 4). Results showed that interracial couples were more likely to reside in the Western United States and earn higher incomes. Furthermore, among the interracially married couples, wives typically married at older ages, more robust disparities in partner age and educational level were present, and marriage between United States natives and immigrants constituted more than 33% of these marriages. Over the period of 1990 to 2001, 13.7% of interracial marriages dissolved, with African American/White pairings at the greatest risk for divorce or separation (i.e., almost 20% of all African

American/White marriages ended). Contrastingly, 9.9% of endogamous marriages resulted in divorce or separation.

Zhang and Van Hook (2009) further describe that the homogamy theory held up for interracial marriages between African American/White pairings and Hispanic/White pairings, revealing a greater incidence of relationship dissolution among these couples than their White/White, African American/African American, or Hispanic/Hispanic pairing counterparts. However, the trend for Asian American/White couples followed the Ethnic Divorce Convergence Perspective, revealing an incidence of divorce approximately seven times higher than endogamous Asian couples and 1.7% lower than endogamous White couples. Once variables known to increase risk of marital dissolution were statistically controlled for, results supporting the homogamy versus the Ethnic Divorce Convergence Perspective were mixed. Thus, results of their study did not appear to provide strong support for either theory.

Overall, their findings appear to support that interracial marriages are at greater risk for dissolution than endogamous marriages, particularly among African American male/White female pairings; however, the authors provide cautious hopefulness that some of the support they found for the Ethnic Divorce Convergence Perspective buttresses the notion that once other confounding characteristics are controlled for, stability of interracial relationships may not in fact be that different from endogamous marriages.

Yet, there are a number of limitations of this study. To begin with, the results from the statistical models that the authors employed are convoluted and their findings

appear to be contradictory from one section to the next. Furthermore, this study only examined married couples. Yet, cohabitation is on the rise (i.e., up by 33% among women, ages 19-44, since 1987) and couples are becoming increasingly less traditional (Fry & Cohn, 2011). By excluding cohabitating couples from relationship studies, an important demographic group that may provide further insight into the stability of interracial couples is missed.

Perhaps most importantly, the two theories do not address the race-gender interaction that clearly constitutes a crucial issue in African American/White pairings. While Zhang and Van Hook (2009) acknowledge the existence of a gender-race interaction among interracial couples, neither homogamy or Ethnic Divorce Convergence Perspective explain why African American male/White female pairings are at greatest dissolution risk while White male/African American female pairings are less likely to dissolve than endogamous couples. Understanding the psychological nuances among partners that contribute to relationship success or demise in African American/White relationships may help elucidate the presence of a gender-race interaction.

Navigating Race

Discrimination and Its Impact on Interracial Couples

Social and familial support has long been considered important factors that contribute to relationship adjustment or satisfaction. Yet, research has demonstrated that interracial couples tend to receive less support from these networks and in some cases, social support is withdrawn altogether by some members (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004). Unquestionably, these couples are likely to experience barriers to both everyday and long

term goals. Simply going to a restaurant for dinner might garner stares or even safety concerns. Employers' reactions to their relationship might result in loss of job or lack of deserved promotion (Killian, 2002).

Their union can also bring to question their sense of racial identity and can heighten discrimination. For instance, Leslie and Letiecq (2004) describe a double bind that often occurs for an African American man in a relationship with a White woman and the sense of discrimination she is likely to feel for the first time from having an intimate relationship with an African American man. He is likely to have experienced discrimination and racism over the course of his life but now in dating a White woman, he may experience increased racism from White individuals and shunning from his own racial group. The reaction from African American individuals in his community may cause him to question his racial identity and/or his sense of commitment to his own racial group, which perhaps leads to feeling caught between nurturing his intimate partnership and trying to regain lost ties with family, friends, and/or his previous sense of racial identity. Certainly, the lack of social support interracial partners face, coupled with deepened identity questioning can grossly impact the quality of the relationship.

Vaquera and Kao (2005) investigated demonstration of affection among interracial and endogamous adolescent couples. Their study examined a sample of adolescents in the United States from a variety of racial and ethnic groups, representative of national demographics. Multiracial respondents, along with participants in same-sex relationships were excluded from the study, so as not to convolute the data, as these participants experience other complex issues and social taboos. Endogamous pairings

were more common among all racial/ethnic groups with the exception of Native American adolescents who were more likely to date White partners. Minority participants who formed a romantic relationship with someone outside of their own racial/ethnic group were most likely to do so with a White partner. Furthermore, interracial adolescent couples were significantly less likely than their endogamous counterparts to hold hands in public, inform others of their couple status, go out together in a group, be introduced to their partner's parents, given their partner a gift, or think of themselves as a couple. However, with regard to intimate affection such as kissing, intimate touching, and sexual intercourse, no significant differences were observed between interracial and endogamous couples. Although demonstration of various types of affection differed along racial and ethnic lines, these differences still did not account for the disparate comparison of interracial and endogamous couples with regard to more public acts of affection.

Qualitative research has largely paved the way for understanding how interracial couples navigate partner differences and societal reactions. Killian's (2001; 2002) studies suggest that the historical relevance and taboo nature of African American/White pairings signifies a greater societal opposition as compared to other racial/ethnic pairings. Results demonstrated that couples entered the relationship with reticence and caution or experienced a sense of excitement early on, related to the idea of being with someone differing in skin tone and background.

Killian's (2003) work suggests that African American/White couples develop a number of strategic responses to negotiate discrimination. Of importance to the present

study, Killian (2003) found that couples denied or played down experiencing racism; however, during individual interviews, African American partners more openly disclosed experiencing acts of discrimination resulting from their partnership. Couples also minimized their racial differences.

Color-Blind Racial Attitudes

Neville, Spanierman, and Doan (2006) define racial color-blindness as “the denial, distortion, and/or minimization of race and racism” (p. 276). They concur with previous commentary, that such an ideology has materialized and evolved with the changing racial organization of the United States (Bonilla-Silva, Lewis, & Embrick, 2004). Furthermore, this ideology serves as the preponderate understanding and justification for racial inequities in this country. Thus, color-blindness comprises a prolific racial attitude of today (Neville, et al., 2006).

Gawranski, Peters, Brochu, and Strack (2008) asserted that while research shows a downward trend in more blatant expressions of racism, also known as explicit racism, forms of more understated prejudice are pervasive. The authors propose that social mores have become increasingly supportive of egalitarian viewpoints that argue for equality and racial harmony. Bonilla, Lewis, and Embrick (2004) point out that social acceptance of “old-fashioned” that advocates repressive community structures such as segregation and conspicuous discrimination has diminished (p. 560). Instead, a much more subtle form of racism has become ubiquitous and is particularly pernicious because of its seeming virtuosity. The disintegration of the Jim Crow era gave way to today’s more discreet racism and color-blindness (Bonilla et al., 2004). Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, and Browne

(2000) make a distinction between color-blind racial attitudes and racism, emphasizing that racism constitutes a belief in racial superiority and argues for sociopolitical structures that disempower racial minorities. Contrastingly, Neville et al. (2000) assert that color-blind racial attitudes signify a lack of awareness regarding the existence and dynamics of racism. Nonetheless, research suggests a positive correlation between the endorsement of color-blind racial attitudes and racism (Neville et al., 2000; Tynes & Markoe, 2010).

Bonilla-Silva et al.'s (2004) study exposed some intriguing findings with regard to color-blindness. In general, White participants made statements about other people they know who are racist, implicitly stating that they themselves are not racist and are equality-minded. Themes that surfaced from the study are described in the next paragraph and may be illustrative of general White society's personal laudation of being non-racist while at the same time justifying stereotypes that in fact enable discrimination and prejudice.

Four important themes related color-blindness materialized from White participants. The first two themes included the following: (a) "The past is the past" and (b) "I didn't own any slaves" (p. 562). Respondents expressed that the racist history of the United States is part of the past and that society should move forward. These participants also voiced that affirmative action simply perpetuates our racist history by reversing racism toward Whites. The next theme was (c) "If Jews, Italians, and Irish have made it, how come African Americans have not?" (p. 565). This theme highlights participants' positive evaluation of assimilation and personal motivation. Respondents cited other minorities' skill at moving forward from the discrimination they faced in the

past, and in so doing, endorsed stereotypes depicting African American people as unmotivated and wallowing in their misfortune. The final theme was (d) “I did not get a job (or a promotion or was admitted to a college) because of a Black man” (567). This theme exemplifies respondents’ blaming of affirmative action when an African American person was given a position over them. Not surprisingly, the respondents’ stories lacked evidence that affirmative action rather than superior merit of their African American competitor led to their having not been hired, promoted, or admitted into job or university. Furthermore, many of their stories were actually about “friends of friends” or some other distant relation rather than a personal story (p. 567). Yet, they readily bought into the notion that affirmative action was to blame.

Undoubtedly, past research punctuates color-blindness as a pervasive form of racism in the modern era. If this type of racism is ubiquitous, then it is unlikely that interracial couples would be invulnerable from its grips. How might such racism play out between White and African American partners?

Killian’s (2001, 2003) qualitative studies suggests that color-blindness plays a striking role in interracial relationships. Results showed that some couples diminished racial differences, a finding exemplified by an African American male partner who declared that “there is only one race-the human race” (p. 6). Furthermore, he regarded his White partner as being “from [his] group” (p. 6). These couples tended to underscore their similarities and compatibility rather than discussing or even acknowledging their racial differences.

Another study found that, in some cases, White partners attempted to silence their African American partners with regard to discussing racial issues and in other cases served as the confirmer that indeed racism had occurred against their African American partners (Thompson & Collier, 2006). These researchers highlight that White partners stand from a position of power and privilege. Not surprisingly, White individuals (i.e., people with power and privilege) are more likely to be color-blind; race is generally not salient in the absence of experiencing discrimination (Neville et al., 2000). In silencing or legitimizing their partners' concerns, White partners' status and privilege is perpetuated in the relationship and such a power differential is likely to impact interpersonal dynamics between the couple. If such power differentials are not examined and an attempt is not made toward shifting these power dynamics, might the relationship then reflect broader institutional oppression and color-blind racism? It then might follow that if a partner feels a sense of oppression within their relationship, they are more likely to experience barriers to communication and feeling understood by their intimate partner (i.e., empathy); components that research has shown to be key to healthy romantic relationships.

Empathy

Researchers and experts in couples work agree that empathy is a primary ingredient in healthy intimate relationships (Ickes, 2001; Waldinger, Schultz, Hauser, Allen, & Crowell, 2004). Busby and Gardner (2008) specifically examined the relationship between empathy and relationship satisfaction and found that self-rated empathy and perceived empathy from partner were important predictors of satisfaction

for both men and women in heterosexual relationships. Sullivan, Pasch, Johnson, and Bradbury (2010) suggest that inefficacies in empathy and validation behaviors between partners were predictive of relationship decomposition. Yet, such research has primarily investigated empathy among White endogamous couples. An important question, therefore, is how might empathy function similarly or differently in an interracial relationship where experiences of partners related to power, privilege, and racial discrimination are fundamentally different?

Theory and research evidence suggest that empathy is comprised of cognitive and affective features (Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Davis, 1980; Davis, 1983; Constantine, 2000) and is therefore a multidimensional construct. However, the extant literature lacks consensus regarding how empathy should be measured in couples (Busby & Gardner, 2008). Many studies have focused on inducing experiential interactions between couples and then garnering one's perceptions of thoughts and feelings of his or her partner (Gottman, 1999; Ickes, 2001; Simpson, Orina, & Ickes, 2003; Waldinger et al., 2004). These perceptions are then coded for accuracy of the partner's actual thoughts and feelings, a construct known as empathic accuracy.

Despite being regarded as an important variable to measure in couples, empathic accuracy has been shown to impact relationships in different ways depending on situation or context (Busby & Gardner, 2008). Simpson et al. (2003) found that empathic accuracy during a conflict catalyzed greater closeness between partners when the topic being discussed was relatively benign; however, when the topic posed a threat to the couple's

relationship, empathic accuracy was associated with decreased closeness between partners immediately following the discussion.

Busby and Gardner (2008) point out that the varying effects of empathic accuracy on relationship outcomes in conjunction with the considerable complexities in measuring it (i.e., videotaping and transcribing of partner interactions), make it a less desirable measure for predicting relationship adjustment. Moreover, Busby et al. (2004) contend that inducing partner interaction in a laboratory setting is inherently artificial and may not be representative of the couple's true interactions or partner thoughts and feelings. What is more, Cramer and Jowett (2010) did not find evidence for a relationship between empathic accuracy and relationship adjustment in their recent study of couples. Given the tenuous support for use of empathic accuracy as a predictor of relationship adjustment, empathic accuracy will not be employed in the present study.

Self-appraisal of empathy through questionnaires has historically and presently served as the most common method for investigating empathy in couples (Ebesu Hubbard, 2001; Busby & Gardner, 2004; Tsang & Stanford, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2009; Peloquin & LaFontaine, 2010; Bakker, Shimazu, Demerouti, Shimada, & Kawakami, 2011). In such research, partners respond to empathy questionnaires by rating themselves on each survey item.

Opponents of self-reports assert that respondents have the ability to misrepresent themselves when making self-evaluations and recommend gathering data about the target individual (i.e., person being assessed) from other sources (i.e., second party) (Hofstee, 1994; Vazire, 2006; Morgeson, Campion, Dipboye, Hollenbeck, Murphy, & Schmitt,

2007). Paunonen and O'Neill (2010) exuberantly challenge this notion. These authors contend that gathering data from a second party as an alternative is also fraught with problems. Notably, second parties simply do not have access to all of the experiences and contexts of the target individual, required to make accurate appraisals. Additionally, self-report surveys measuring thoughts and feelings of the target individual would be unknowable to a second party and therefore it would be contraindicated to give such measures to someone other than the target individual (John & Robins, 1993; Paunonen & O'Neill, 2010). As such, despite its limitations, self-report data collection offers insight into one's perception and internal experience of the self.

Couples research methodology has generally reflected the standpoint taken by Paunonen et al. (2010) as evidenced in the widespread use of self-report surveys (Ebesu Hubbard, 2001; Busby & Gardner, 2004; Tsang & Stanford, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2009; Bakker, Shimazu, Demerouti, Shimada, & Kawakami, 2011). In fact, each of these studies showed evidence that self-rated empathy significantly predicted one's relationship adjustment.

Finally, perceived partner empathy (i.e., perception of partner's level of empathy) has also demonstrated strengths as a reliable predictor of relationship adjustment (Busby & Gardner, 2008; Cramer & Jowett, 2010; Larson, Blick, Jackson, & Holman, 2011). Busby and Gardner (2008) advised that empathy in the context of relationship adjustment should be examined through self-ratings and partner-ratings using structural equation modeling, an analysis common when dealing with multiple perspectives. Overall, findings from their study supported self-rated empathy and perceived empathy of partner

as being similarly important in predicting relationship adjustment. However, the results from Busby and Gardner's (2008) research suggested that examination of similarities and differences between self-ratings and partner-ratings lacked predictive power. Rather, analysis of within person effects (i.e., self-appraisal and perception of partner) was most predictive of relationship adjustment.

While perception of partner-empathy shows promise of predicting relationship adjustment, this assertion has not been as widely examined or buttressed as compared to self-assessed empathy (Ebesu Hubbard, 2001; Busby & Gardner, 2004; Tsang & Stanford, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2009; Bakker, Shimazu, Demerouti, Shimada, & Kawakami, 2011). As such, the present study will only examine self-appraisal of empathy. Furthermore, given the dearth of empirical evidence to support making between comparisons of partners (i.e., comparing the ratings of one individual to his or her partner's ratings); the present study will analyze each partner's ratings individually and not as a couple.

Color-Blindness and Empathy in Psychotherapy: How it Relates to Interracial Couples

Color-blind racial attitudes are increasingly being explored in the domain of psychotherapy with clients of color as well as its relationship to multicultural competency among counselors. These studies have shown that counselor's ignoring or avoidance of racial issues in therapy with African American clients appeared to hinder the therapeutic relationship despite the counselor's race (Thompson & Jenal, 1994; Want, Parham, Baker, & Sherman, 2004). Moreover, Neville et al. (2006) found that higher level of

color-blindness among counseling trainees and mental health workers was associated with lower multicultural competency.

Burkard and Knox (2004) investigated the relationship between color-blindness and empathy among therapists. Participants included 247 psychologists primarily of European American White descent. Participants were given measures of empathy, color-blindness, attribution of responsibility, social desirability, and given counseling vignettes in which the race of the client was manipulated. Social desirability was controlled for and three key discoveries surfaced. Chiefly, an inverse relationship was found between color-blindness and empathy among the psychologists. No interaction was yielded with client race. In other words, regardless of the client's race, psychologists who scored lower on color-blindness demonstrated greater empathy toward the client. Attribution of client responsibility by the psychologist participants was not found to significantly interact with the other variables.

Although the psychotherapeutic relationship between a counselor and client is highly different from the relationship between intimate partners, there is certainly one remarkable similarity. Empathy is a principal component to alliance and positive outcomes in both the psychotherapeutic and intimate relationship (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Elliott, Bohart, Watson, & Greenberg, 2011). As previously described, color-blindness was found to be inversely related to empathy among psychologists. It is predicted that this same inverse association holds true for intimate partnerships and that empathy and color-blindness interact with gender and race, helping to explain the disparity in relationship stability of White male/African American female couples and

African American male/White female couples. Hence, color-blindness and empathy appear to be important variables in the functioning of interracial relationships.

Furthermore, the discrepancy between White male/African American female and African American male/White female relationship stability, merits examination of gender issues.

Sexism and Gender Roles

Gender Roles and Couples

Pasley, Kerpelman, and Guilbert (2001) characterize gender roles and identity as a critically embedded aspect of couple and family life. Using Gottman's (1993) Model of Marital Dissolution and Stability, they contend that incongruence between partners' attitudes and expectations about gender roles leads to relationship instability. However, they specify two necessary conditions for instability. First, disparities in individual beliefs become perceptible to each partner. Second, the incongruence potentiates negativity, which may include behaviors such as defensiveness, criticism, or stonewalling.

Pasley et al. (2001) further report that relationships in which female partners endorse egalitarian gender role beliefs are more likely to dissolve than relationships comprised by women who advocate for more traditional gender roles. Interestingly, the authors point out that the opposite is true among men; intimate partnerships in which men are more egalitarian in their viewpoint on gender roles than their female partners evidence decreased risk of separation or dissolution.

The disparity of dissolution rates between African American male/White female couples and African American female/White male couples suggests interplay of socially

normed gender roles and race at work. Shedding light on this interaction and its complexities is paramount to understanding the layered difficulties partners in these relationships face. In the United States, women and minorities are viewed as lower status members of society (Myers, 2004). In heterosexual relationships, women typically have less power than their male partners across races (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Myers, 2004). However, in interracial heterosexual relationships, in which there is a White female and a minority male, partner status can become convoluted (Wade, 1991).

Wade's (1991) study explored White men and women's gender ascriptions of African American male/White female couples. This research specifically investigated the predictive nature of female attractiveness and male status on participants' ratings on a variety of the partners' characteristics (i.e., intelligence, laziness, friendliness, honesty, etc.). Participants were also asked to rate their behavioral propensities toward the couple on a number of hypothetical scenarios (i.e., inviting the couple over for dinner, advising them to have children, selling the couple a home in the neighborhood, etc.).

Results showed that female partners received the most positive ratings when she was attractive and when her partner was White and of high status. Male partners were rated the most positively when he was White and of high status; surprisingly, attractiveness of his female partner was not found to be an important factor. Status of African American male partners was not found to be a significant predictor of positive or negative ratings.

In terms of ratings as a couple, female attractiveness predicted higher ratings on all positive couple characteristics (i.e., intelligence, friendliness, honesty, etc.) among

endogamous White couples only. Interestingly, female attractiveness predicted low morality of African American male/White female interracial couples but high morality of White endogamous couples. With regard to hypothetical scenarios, participants were generally less likely to behave prosocially toward the interracial couple as compared to the endogamous couple; however, this effect was greater among male participants. Female attractiveness among the interracial couples predicted discouragement of procreation whereas female attractiveness among endogamous couples predicted procreation encouragement.

Generally, interracial couples were more accepted by participants when the White female was unattractive. Wade (1991) theorizes that this finding suggests that participants may see an unattractive White female/African American male pairing as a more equitable exchange of assets as compared to an attractive White female/African American pairing, regardless of his status. Unfortunately, this study did not examine African American female/White male couples and therefore, it is not possible to know how this pairing would have fared in Wade's (1991) rating system. However, the fact that White men were rated positively according to his own merits (i.e., being of high status and being White) may suggest that his partner's race might have little to do with public opinion of him. Obviously, this would be in stark contrast to the experience of African American male/White female couples.

As described earlier, Bratter and King's (2008) study, overall, yielded higher dissolution rates among interracial couples when compared to same race couples. Yet, this finding was not established among interracial heterosexual couples with a White

man. In fact, relationships between White men and African American women were no less likely to result in dissolution than endogamous couples. Given the large sample size involved in this study and the Zhang and Van Hook (2009) study, which produced similar results, strong evidence is provided for the existence of a race-gender interaction.

The implications of these findings, however, are unclear. It may be that status and roles of partners are more clearly defined in interracial relationships with a White man but may be more ambiguous in interracial relationships with an African American man. On the other hand these findings may extend back to historical issues. Anti-miscegenation laws in the South prohibited sexual relations between African Americans and Whites (Yu, 2003). Yet, Yu (2003) emphasizes that sexual relations between White men and African American women were not uncommon and anti-miscegenation laws were rarely enforced among this gender-race dyad as compared to their counterpart. Hence, social norms related to interracial sex and relationships may still be less rigid among White men and African American women as compared to African American men and White women. Yet, the question remains regarding how race and gender play out within the partners of the dyad itself.

Forry, Leslie, and Letiecq (2007) investigated the implications of gender role attitudes among African American/White pairings. The researchers administered measures of relationship quality, sex role ideology, and perceived unfairness of their relationship among 76 African American/White married heterosexual couples in the Northeastern United States. The results of their study showed that women, regardless of

race, subscribed to more egalitarian sex role ideology and perceived their relationship as more unfair than African American men and White men.

Forry et al. (2007) findings showed that African American men reported the most ambivalence about their intimate relationship as compared to the other gender-race combinations (i.e., White women, African American women and White men). Furthermore, White women's perception of unfairness in the relationship significantly predicted relationship conflict. While sex role ideology was not found to be a significant predictor of relationship quality among either racial group of women or White men, it was found to be a significant predictor of relationship conflict among African American men. In other words, African American men who held traditional gender role beliefs tended to perceive their relationships as unfair and reported higher levels of relationship conflict. The authors acknowledge their study's limitations primarily as small sample size and unequal sample sizes (i.e., larger sample of African American male/White female pairings than African American female/White male pairings).

Despite evidence of a gender-race interaction among African American/White couples with regard to relationship dissolution, simply looking at gender role attitudes may not be a strong enough variable to explain the race-gender discrepancy in dissolution rates. Rather, research has progressed toward examination of sexism as a more powerful and sensitive measure of gender expectations and stereotypes (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Ambivalent Sexism

The online Oxford English Dictionary (2011) defines the word, *ambivalent*, as “entertaining contradictory emotions (as love and hatred) towards the same person or

thing.” Glick and Fiske (1996) developed the Ambivalent Sexism Theory. These researchers argue that sexism is a multifaceted construct encompassing two chief forms of gender bias, *hostile sexism* and *benevolent sexism*. The theory punctuates the concept of ambivalence, asserting the coexistence of hostile and benevolent feelings toward women in any given individual person.

Glick and Fiske (1996) adapted Allport’s (1954) definition of ethnic prejudice to define *hostile sexism* toward women as “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization” (as cited in Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 491). Glick and Fiske (1996) describe this dimension of sexism as more overt and recognizable. These authors cite examples of hostile sexism, which include constrained employment opportunities, sexual harassment, and sexual violence, to name a few.

Glick et al. (1996) emphasize that although still pervasive; limiting the acknowledgement of sexism to hostile sexism only, fails to recognize another, more subtle form of sexism. These authors coined the term, *benevolent sexism*, and defined it as the following:

interrelated attitudes toward women that that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive in feeling tone (for the perceiver) and also tend to elicit behaviors typically categorized as prosocial (e.g., helping) or intimacy seeking (e.g., self-disclosure) (p. 491).

Although certainly not an exhaustive list, examples of benevolent sexism include commenting on a female co-worker or employee’s attractive appearance, deference

toward women's roles as wife and mother, and the belief that it is men's responsibility to take care of women. As women's roles are continuing to change in modern society and as societal acceptance of hostile sexism has diminished, the face of sexism has been somewhat altered (Glick & Fiske, 1996; McHugh & Frieze, 1997). Benevolent sexism, covert and seemingly virtuous, can have destructive consequences (e.g., restricting women's roles and sense of self-efficacy) and therefore constitutes a pernicious problem in today's society (Glick & Fiske, 1996; McHugh & Frieze, 1997; Chen, Fiske, & Lee, 2009).

It is understood that some scholars may find Glick and Fiske's (1996) label, *benevolent sexism* concerning or perhaps even offensive, a reaction predicated on the question that how can something as noxious as sexism be preceded by the word, benevolent. Therefore, the pairing of these two terms warrants some additional discussion. Undoubtedly, sexism is an oppressive and disempowering phenomenon, with devastating consequences for women. Contrastingly, benevolent as defined by the online Oxford English Dictionary (2011), means "desirous of the good of others, of a kindly disposition, charitable, generous." Without question, these two word meanings are antithetical and as such, there is an air of irony and satire in the label chosen by Glick and Fiske (1996). Furthermore, the label demonstrates the insidiousness of sexist behaviors and beliefs that appear loving, kind, and protective of women. While the pairing of these two words may evoke some concern, in keeping with the terminology created by Glick and Fiske (1996), the present study will use the term, *benevolent sexism*, with the recognition that this label may elicit some or even sizable uneasiness in scholars. This

decision on the part of the present author is further based upon a lack of previous studies or research to suggest that the term has received unpopular attention. Nonetheless, it is recommended that readers carefully consider the appropriateness and/or meaning of the term, *benevolent sexism*.

Types of Ambivalent Sexism: Paternalism, Gender Differentiation, and Heterosexuality. Glick and Fiske (1996) describe *paternalism* as a sub-category of sexism characterized by a dominative and protective stance toward women (i.e., the intimate relationship between heterosexual partners is analogous to a father-child relationship where men are like fathers and women are like children). According to these authors, *dominative paternalism* observes women as lacking competence, justifying the need for a governing male force in women's lives. On the other hand, *protective paternalism* sees women as weak, and therefore, in need of men's protection, provision of resources, love, and affection. Like a father with his child, men are likely to feel both dominant and protective in relation to female partners, reflecting the ambivalence inherent to sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Glick and Fiske (1996) explain *gender differentiation* as fundamental to group identity and self-categorization. They partition gender differentiation into *competitive* and *complementary* classifications. Although gender differentiation may be catalyzed by awareness of physical differences, the desire on the part of men to differentiate themselves from women is much more psychological in nature (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Men see that status can be gained through this differentiation and move into governing roles, pushing women into roles of subservience (i.e., *competitive gender differentiation*).

Contrastingly, men are dependent on women as partners and mothers, cultivating the conception that women must also have positive characteristics that balance the traits of men (i.e., *complementary gender differentiation*). Stereotypical in form, these complementary traits may include women's sensitivity to others and nurturance. Thus, men are likely to perceive women as both competitors who must be put in their place and at the same time idealize them as individuals who possess wondrous traits devoid in men.

Finally, Glick and Fiske (1996) elucidate *heterosexuality* as another source of sexism. Their theory divides heterosexuality into *intimate* and *hostile* categories. Heterosexual men seek emotional closeness with women, engendering happiness and even euphoria (i.e., *heterosexual intimacy*). Yet, men's dependence on women for this closeness produces a situation in which a dominant group (i.e., men) is reliant on a lower status group (i.e., women), an objected vulnerability. Glick and Fiske (1996) emphasize that women are generally viewed as the gatekeepers of sex. Women are habitually depicted in literature, film, and theater as manipulators of men, who use sex to get what they want; a viewpoint that provokes hostility toward women. For some men, sexual attraction may be inextricably tied to their yearning to dominate women (i.e., *heterosexual hostility*). Hence, men may long to emotionally and/or sexually connect with women while at the same time crave emotional or physical control over them (Glick & Fiske, 1996). (See Figure 1 on next page for Ambivalent Sexism continuum).

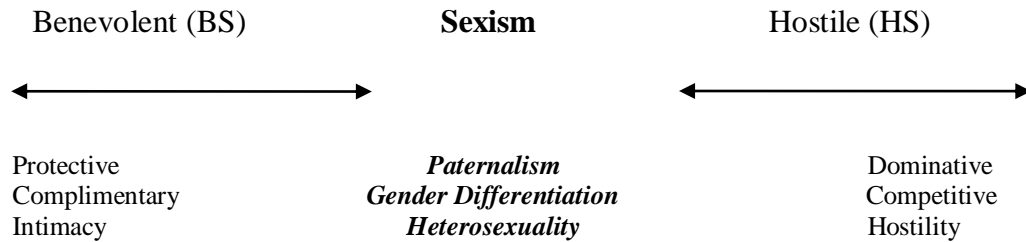


Figure 1. Ambivalent Sexism Theory

Ambivalent Sexism and Couples

In general, men score higher than women on *benevolent sexism* (BS) and *hostile sexism* (HS) across cultures, except in places where overall sexism remains relatively high (Chen, Fiske, & Lee, 2009). Developing countries are demonstrative of this effect as evidenced by women’s internalization of sexism and consequently higher endorsement of benevolent sexism as compared to their male counterparts. However, men still subscribe more greatly to hostile sexism in developing countries relative to women (Chen et al., 2009). Even in countries that seem to value more egalitarian gender roles, higher levels of BS among women is associated with their greater preference for men with increased resources and status (Overall, Sibley, & Tan, 2011; Eastwick, Eagly, Glick, Johannesen-Schmidt, Fiske, Blum, Volpato, 2006).

Overall, Sibley, and Tan (2011) investigated the implications of BS and HS in conflictual interactions and perceived relationship adjustment among heterosexual couples. Findings indicated that men’s greater subscription to HS predicted higher levels of hostility and resistance among both male and female partners during conflict; and

consequently, poorer conflict resolution outcomes. Contrastingly, men's greater endorsement of BS predicted their increased openness and decreased hostility during conflict as well as greater perception of conflict resolution among both men and women. Men's endorsement of BS however was not related to women's openness or hostility.

Women's subscription to HS and BS was not in and of itself predictive of conflict related behavior of successful conflict outcomes. However, an interaction was yielded between women's and men's sexism. Generally, when women were high endorsers of BS and their partners were not, women showed greater hostility and less openness. Not surprisingly, these women also perceived decreased conflict resolution success. Also, as mentioned earlier men's HS predicted decreased openness and increased hostility in their female partners except when women endorsed higher levels of HS themselves. Finally, men's endorsement of BS was related to their perceived relationship adjustment. HS was not associated with perceived relationship quality among men or women.

A major limitation of Overall's et al. (2011) study includes the use of a relationship adjustment measure lacking the rigorous reliability and validation research conducted with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). Furthermore, aside from reporting New Zealand residence of participants, the authors do not include cultural demographic information.

Sexism and African American Men

Gianettoni and Roux (2010) assert that gender literature excludes issues related to race and race literature excludes issues related to gender. These authors argue that research should co-examine race and gender, as inequities and discrimination imbue both

categorizations. The rationale for the focus of this sub-section on African American men is two-fold. 1) Previous literature demonstrates that men's endorsement, more than women's, of sexism is particularly important to relationship adjustment (Overall et al., 2011). 2) Research suggests greater levels of sexist thinking in African American men as compared to their White male counterparts (West & Rose, 2000; Miller & White, 2003; O'Donnell, Stueve, Myint-U, Duran, Agronick, & Wilson-Simmons, 2006; West 2008).

An explanation of discrepant relationship dissolution rates among African American male/White female pairings as compared to African American female/White male pairings may be related to the disproportionate intimate partner violence associated with African American men as both victims and perpetrators compared to their White male counterparts (West, 2008). Violence perpetration against women is predicted by sexist attitudes and beliefs. West, (2008) asserts that as a result of economic and status deprivation, African American men are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence commission and victimization. In this case, victimization refers to verbal, emotional, sexual, or physical abuse.

In fact, in research that has examined various SES groups and educational levels, approximately 35 to 53% of African American men reported that they have been the victim of intimate partner violence (Clark, Beckett, Wells, & Dungee-Anderson, 1994; Howard & Wang, 2003; Holt & Espelage, 2005; O'Donnell, Stueve, Myint-U, Duran, Agronick, & Wilson-Simmons, 2006). Similarly, among varying levels of SES and educational levels, approximately 20 to 57% of African American men admitted to perpetrating violence on women (West & Rose, 2000; O'Donnell et al., 2006). Miller and

White (2003) found that African American men in their study asserted that partner victimization was warranted when female partners deviated from their traditional gender roles. Furthermore, Johnson, Fratarolli, Campbell, Wright, Fields, & Cheng (2005) found increases in male self-confidence and empowerment following victimization of female partners.

While perpetration of abuse was still evidenced among middle-class and college educated African American men, West (2008) underscores that poverty and witnessing or being a victim of community or family violence increases risk of future perpetration. West (2008) also cautions that research showing disparate proportions of African American men as perpetrators of intimate partner violence perpetuates stereotypes and fuels racism; at the same time, the author declares that the higher rates of intimate partner violence perpetration among this population should not be ignored or minimized.

Many authors emphasize reducing sexist beliefs among African American men as a means of preventing intimate partner violence in African American communities (McCall, 1994; Williams, 1998; Salazar & Cook, 2006; West 2008). Although it might intuitively make sense that African American men's experience of racism might enable them to empathize with women's experience of sexism, McCall (1994) and West (2008) express that sexist behavior perpetrated by African American men may be a symptom of displaced aggression stemming from the discrimination and oppression that they themselves have experienced. Adu Poku (2001) asserts that as a person with male privilege, the experience of African American men acquiring feminist beliefs is similar to White individuals acquiring anti-racist beliefs; it requires major transformation.

Johnson II (2010) comments on the internal struggle African American men experience based on their inclination toward traditional gender roles as conflicted with their inability to fully attain societal privilege associated with being male. The frustration engendered through societal and cultural expectations of what it means to be masculine coupled with the impossibility of obtaining male privilege leads to feelings of powerlessness (Johnson II, 2010). Lemelle's (2010) book (as cited in Crowell, 2011) asserts that as a result, African American men may feel an increased need to prove their masculinity to society, also known as hyper-masculinity; a type of masculinity associated with greater endorsement of sexist beliefs and homophobia.

Given the criticalness of gender roles and sexism in intimate relationship adjustment, these variables represent essential research variables. Moreover, the disparity in dissolution rates between White male/African American female partnerships and African American male/White female partnerships; elucidates the strong possibility that an interaction between partners' endorsement of sexism and race will shed light on some of the reasons for this discrepancy.

Relationship Stability

Relationship Adjustment

In general, relationship adjustment or satisfaction is considered the gold standard in couples' research for differentiating distressed from non-distressed couples (Lambert, 2004). As relationship distress is predictive of later relationship dissolution, measuring relationship adjustment can help distinguish relationships that are likely to enjoy stability from those that may be at risk (Bouchard, 2006). Dyadic adjustment was defined by

Spanier (1976) as “a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of: (1) troublesome dyadic differences; (2) interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety; (3) dyadic satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; and (5) consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning” (p. 17). However, he later modified this definition to include dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression (Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie, & Berrett, 2009). A paucity of information exists regarding what factors are predictive of relationship adjustment in interracial couples given that this segment of the population faces challenges to their relationship not evidenced in their endogamous counterparts. Yet, general research on endogamous couples and the existing research on interracial couples would suggest that color-blind racism, empathy, and sexism signify integral predictive variables.

Summary

Thus, color-blind racial attitudes, empathy, sexism, and relationship adjustment appear to play vital roles in relationship stability/dissolution among interracial couples. Previous studies have examined empathy, sexism, and relationship adjustment among endogamous couples, indicating the importance of these variables in relationship stability. Yet, little is understood about how these factors relate to dyadic processes in interracial couples.

The marked discrepancy in relationship dissolution rates between African American male/White female and White male/African American female couples clearly provides evidence for a race-gender interaction. However, the differences between these couple compositions leading to this major disparity have not been established. Color-

blindness has been cited as a relationship dynamic among interracial couples in qualitative research and in psychotherapeutic dyads. Nevertheless, whether this dynamic represents a considerable and pervasive issue in interracial couples has not been determined. Furthermore, whether color-blindness constitutes a major threat to relationship stability is also not yet understood.

Many studies have focused on married couples at the exclusion of cohabitating couples who represent a chief constituency of American couples. Therefore, the present study attempted to understand how color-blind racial attitudes, empathy, and sexism impact relationship adjustment among cohabitating or married couples. Specifically, the following research questions were posed: 1. Are there group differences by race and gender (i.e., African American women, African American men, White women, and White men) with regard to (a) color-blindness, (b) empathy, (c) ambivalent sexism, and (d) dyadic/relationship adjustment? 2. Do color-blindness, empathy, ambivalent sexism, as well as race and gender predict dyadic adjustment?

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter explains the methodology that was used to investigate the research questions and hypotheses in this study. Details of the participants, measures, and data analyses are provided. This study involved five primary objectives. The purpose of the present research was twofold: 1. to gain insight into whether there were differences in levels of color-blindness, empathy, ambivalent sexism, and dyadic adjustment between African American women, White women, African American men, and White men; 2. to illuminate whether or not color-blindness, empathy, ambivalent sexism, gender, and race predicted relationship adjustment as controlled for by race and gender.

Participants

An *a priori* power analysis using a moderate effect size, an alpha level of .05, and a power ($1-\beta$ error probability) of 0.80, along with 11 predictor variables (i.e., 3 CoBRAS subscales, 2 IRI subscales, 2 sexism subscales, gender, race, and gender by race) recommended a sample size of approximately 173. Therefore, the study set out to recruit one hundred seventy three heterosexual partners to participate in this study. Participants included African American male/White female and African American female/White male partners. Inclusion criteria for study participation were the following: (a) Partners were married and currently living together or were non-married and currently cohabitating, (b)

At least one or preferably both partners of the couple were willing to complete a one-time demographic questionnaire and four additional measures, (c) One partner identified as “best described” as “Black or African American” and the other partner identified as “best described” as “White” with regard to race (Office of Management and Budget, 1997; National Center for Health Statistics, 2004), (d) and finally, neither partner identified as “Hispanic or Latino” (Latina) with regard to ethnicity (Office of Management and Budget, 1997; National Center for Health Statistics, 2004).

Procedure

Partners were asked to individually complete all surveys and questionnaires (i.e., not in the presence of their partner) through Survey Monkey. It was requested that participants email the link to their partner, as the study aimed at gathering participation from preferably both partners in a couple. The first partner who completed the questionnaire was asked to make up a password for the study that they submitted to their partner along with the link for the website. Passwords were used in order to match partners to one another in the data set for future possible research. Although partners were not analyzed as a couple in this study, this step in the procedure was added for future studies that might employ this dataset. Survey Monkey is a web-based data collection site that allows for anonymous responses from participants.

Data were gathered through four internet-based processes: (a) the present author made an announcement on Facebook®, indicating that a link to the Survey Monkey questionnaires had been posted on a specially created Facebook® page for the study and the study was posted on a variety of Facebook® forums related to interracial

couples; (b) an email was sent out to all friends and family in present author's email account requesting participation in the study and that friends and family forward the study's link to their own social and familial networks; (c) the study's link was posted on Craigslist; (d) and finally, an email was sent out to university undergraduate and graduate departments around the United States requesting that department secretaries or heads forward the study's link to their graduate students (e.g., law, business, social work, psychology students, etc.) This third group was targeted as previous research has demonstrated, although modestly, that interracial coupling tends to occur with greater educational levels (Taylor, Passel, Wang, Kiley, Velasco, & Dockterman, 2010). It should also be noted that attempts were made to gather data through Aurora Parks and Recreation and through churches in the Denver and Aurora areas of Colorado. Unfortunately, each of these locations declined to participate in data collection.

The link included a project information/informed consent form that was administered prior to completion of the measures. This form included the purposes of the present research, along with any potential risks related to participation in the study. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study is to better understand what factors may be associated with relationship functioning. Informed consent made clear that all information will be kept confidential and anonymous but that overall findings may be published for professional and public consumption. At the end of the measures, participants were redirected to a new web page where they could provide their email address for entry into a drawing for one of five \$100 gift cards to Amazon.com. Email

addresses were matched to a random number. Numbers were selected at random indicating the winners of the drawing.

Measures

Independent Variables

Demographics. Partners were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire in which they reported their own and their partner's race and ethnicity. Participants were also asked to report the race and ethnicity of their own mother and father. Race and Ethnicity categories were modeled after Bratter and King's (2008) study in which researchers employed the standards of the United States Census Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics (Office of Management and Budget, 1997; National Center for Health Statistics, 2004). Race was categorized according to the 1997 United States Census Bureau standards (i.e., most recent) as follows: "American Indian or Alaska Native"; "Asian"; "Black or African American"; "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander"; and "White." Multiracial respondents were able to select a Multiracial category; however, the demographic questionnaire reflected the National Center for Health Statistics policy by directing respondents to then indicate the race that "best describes" them and/or their partner. Ethnicity was also categorized according to the 1997 United States Bureau standards and was classified as the following two options: "Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino" (Latina).

Finally, participants were asked to report their own and their partner's age, birth month and day, gender, level of education, occupational status and occupation, and

number of children in the home. The demographic questionnaire also requested the length of time they have been living with their partner and/or married to their partner.

Colorblindness: Each partner filled out the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000). The CoBRAS is a self-report measure consisting of 20 items, presented in a 6-point rating scale format. Participants were asked to rate each item from one (“Strongly Disagree”) to six (“Strongly Agree”).

According to Neville et al. (2000), the CoBRAS assesses one’s overall level of color-blindness along with one’s (a) *Unawareness of Racial Privilege* (i.e., unawareness that being White provides political, legal, socioeconomic, educational, etc. advantages over being from a racial minority group). An example of an item from this subscale includes “Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.” (b) *Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination* (i.e., unawareness that racial minority status is associated with decreased political and legal power). An example of an item from this subscale is “White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.” Finally, the CoBRAS measures one’s (c) *Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues* (i.e., unawareness that racism still constitutes a major problem in the United States). An example of an item from this subscale is “Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.”

According to Neville et al. (2000), CoBRAS items were developed based on Schofield’s (1986) and Frankenberg’s (1993) descriptions of color-blindness, consultation with experts, and through communications with racially and ethnically diverse students and people in the community (Neville, et al., 2000). According to

Schofield (1986), color-blindness is grounded in the ideas that race is invisible, a taboo topic, and does not account for one's circumstances (as cited in Neville et al., 2000). Frankenberg (1993) posited that color-blindness is demonstrated by people's attempts to underscore sameness in an effort to deny the existence of White privilege; and the belief that race has no impact on one's opportunities for success (as cited in Neville et al., 2000). Content validity of the original 17 items was assessed through ratings of five people with expertise in either racial/ethnic studies or psychological measurement. Items receiving low ratings for clarity or appropriateness were removed or modified. Based on this initial content validity check, the scale was revised to include 26 items.

Neville et al. (2000) indicated that the CoBRAS was developed using a preliminary sample of 86 male, 212 female college students and community members, ranging from 17 to 52 years of age. The sample included White, African American, American Indian, Asian American, and Latina/o respondents. A principal components analysis suggested that a three factor-solution yielded the most psychometrically sound solution (i.e., Racial Privilege, Institutional Discrimination, and Blatant Racial Issues). Twenty items were kept (these items loaded at .40 or above on only one of the three factors).

Neville, et al, (2000) assessed the reliability and validity of the CoBRAS on a sample of 304 female and 289 male college students and community members and later on a sample of 74 female and 28 male undergraduate students. The samples included White, African American, American Indian, Asian American, and Latina/o respondents. Confirmatory factor analysis supported the three factor model for the scale. A split-half

reliability estimate of .72 was generated and a Cronbach's alpha of .70 to .86 was yielded for the entire CoBRAS and its three scales. The Racial Privilege and Institutional Discrimination subscales yielded 2-week test-retest reliability coefficients of .80. The Blatant Racial Issues subscale generated a low test-retest reliability estimate of .34. The more obvious and overt nature of the items on this subscale are purported to have led to lower mean scores than the other subscales and may account for the lower test-retest reliability of this subscale in comparison to the other subscales (i.e., Racial Privilege and Institutional Discrimination) (Neville et al., 2000). Furthermore, these authors describe that unbeknownst to them, the participant sample received a prejudice reduction seminar between test administrations, which may have altered the test-retest reliability. Finally, the test-retest estimate for the entire (total) CoBRAS was .68.

Furthermore, based on this sample, Neville et al. (2000) reported that the total CoBRAS and its three scales demonstrate concurrent validity with the Global Belief in Just World (GBJW; Lipkus, 1991) and the Multidimensional Belief in a Just World (MBJW; Furnham & Procter, 1988). Correlations between the three CoBRAS subscales and the GBJW and MBJW ranged from .39 to .61, $p \leq .005$. Concurrent validity was also demonstrated with the Quick Discrimination Index (QDI; Ponterotto, Burkard, Rieger, Grieger, D'Onofrio, Dubuisson, Heenehan, Millstein, Parisi, Rath, & Sax, 1995) and the Modern Racism Scale (MRS; McConahay, 1986) on a sample of 74 female and 28 male college students (predominantly White sample). Correlations between the CoBRAS and the QDI ranged from -.25 to -.83, $p \leq .005$ (higher QDI scores suggest more positive attitudes toward racial diversity and women's rights). Correlations between the CoBRAS

and the MRS ranged from .36 to .55, $p \leq .005$ (higher MRS signify greater endorsement of racist attitudes toward African Americans). Evidence of discriminant validity was found by lack of association between the subscales of the CoBRAS and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS; Reynolds, 1982).

Multivariate analysis of variance with univariate follow-up tests established criterion-related validity by race/ethnicity and gender. Findings revealed that Latinas/os scored significantly lower than Whites and African Americans on the Racial Privilege and Blatant Racial Issues subscales. In other words Latinas/os were more aware of issues related to racial privilege and the existence of racism than Whites and African Americans. Whites also scored significantly lower than African Americans on the Blatant Racial Issues subscale, suggesting greater awareness among Whites in the sample of racism as a continued and pervasive problem. However, African Americans scored significantly lower than Latinas/os and Whites on the Institutional Discrimination subscale, implying a greater awareness among African Americans of political and legal discrimination toward racial and ethnic minorities. Finally, women scored significantly lower than men across all three subscales. This finding puts forward that women in the sample were more aware of racism across each of these domains as compared to their male counterparts (Neville et al., 2000).

Empathy: Each partner completed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1983). The IRI is a self-report measure consisting of 28 items, presented in a 5-point rating scale format. Participants are asked to rate each item from zero (“does not describe me well”) to four (“describes me very well”). Total scores on each subscale are computed

by summing the seven items that comprise it and can range from 0 to 28. Higher scores reflect higher levels of empathy.

According to Davis (1983) the IRI assesses global empathy and also contains the following four subscales, which can be measured individually: (a) Perspective-Taking (i.e., trying to understand the viewpoint of others), (b) Empathic Concern (i.e., experiencing care, concern, and sympathy for others), (c) Personal Distress (i.e., feeling anxiety and distress related to interpersonal exchange or viewing another's negative experience), and (d) Fantasy (i.e., the inclination toward imagining the feelings of a character in a film, book, or play). Theory and research evidence suggest that empathy is comprised of cognitive and affective features (Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Davis, 1980; Davis, 1983; Constantine, 2000) and is therefore a multidimensional construct. Perspective-Taking was derived from the cognitive component of empathy while Empathic Concern, Fantasy, and Personal Distress subscales tap into the affective dimension of empathy (Davis, 1980).

Mirroring past studies, the decision was made to only include the Perspective-Taking and Empathic Concern subscales (Peloquin & Lafontaine, 2010; Constantine, 2000; Burkard & Knox, 2004). Peloquin and Lafontaine (2010) warn against using the Fantasy subscale for studying empathy in close interpersonal relationships, as it lacks conceptual fit with these types of relationships. Furthermore, Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright (2004) contend that the Fantasy subscale may be a better measure of imagination than empathy as it includes items such as "I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me." With regard to Personal Distress,

researchers have emphasized that it is a “self-oriented process,” meaning that the subscale assesses one’s own feelings of distress rather than being an “other-oriented process,” which focuses on the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of others (Peloquin & Lafontaine, 2010; Constantine, 2000; Burkard & Knox, 2004). Therefore, as empathy is conceptually an “other-oriented” construct, Personal Distress may in fact be antithetical. Still, other researchers have proposed that the Personal Distress subscale may actually be measuring emotional self-control rather than empathy as demonstrated by items such “In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill at ease” (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004)

According to Davis (1980), the IRI was developed using a preliminary sample of 201 male and 251 female respondents and 50 items. Factor analysis produced four major factors and reduced the number of items to 45. This second version of the IRI was administered to a sample of 221 male and 206 female respondents. Factor analysis was again performed and reduced the number of items to 28. A random undergraduate sample, at the University of Texas at Austin, of 579 male and 582 female respondents completed the final 28-item version of the IRI. Factor analysis yielded strong evidence for using the four subscales for both male and female populations.

Davis (1980) reported that the IRI has been shown to have an internal consistency reliability (alpha coefficients) ranging from .70 to .78 and a test-retest reliability ranging from .61 to .81. Reliability results for the Perspective-Taking subscale, specifically, are as follows: internal consistency reliability coefficients (alpha coefficients) were .75 among male and .78 among female participants; test-retest reliability correlations were

.61 for male and .62 for female participants. Reliability results for the Empathic Concern subscale, specifically, are as follows: internal consistency reliability coefficients (alpha coefficients) were .72 among male and .70 among female participants; test-retest reliability correlations were .72 for male and .70 for female participants.

Furthermore, Davis (1983) reported that the four subscales of the IRI have demonstrated support for construct, discriminant, and concurrent validity. Participants of Davis' (1983) validation study included 677 male and 671 female undergraduate students at the University of Texas at Austin. The Perspective-Taking subscale demonstrated an inverse relationship with measures of social dysfunction (r ranged from $-.10$ to $-.30$ for men, $p \leq .05$; r ranged from $-.12$ to $-.28$ for women, $p \leq .05$) and a positive relationship with a measure of unselfish sensitivity to others ($r = .37$ for men, $p \leq .05$; $r = .33$ for women, $p \leq .05$) illustrating construct validity. No statistically significant relationship between the Perspective-Taking subscale and intelligence was found, showing support for discriminant validity. Construct validity for the Empathic Concern subscale was exemplified by its negative correlation with a measure of socially undesirable characteristics such as arrogance and boasting ($r = -.37$ for men, $p \leq .05$; $r = -.35$ for women, $p \leq .05$) and positive correlation with a measure of unselfish sensitivity to others ($r = .58$ for men, $p \leq .05$; $r = .55$ for women, $p \leq .05$). A lack of relationship between the Empathic Concern subscale and self-esteem showed support for discriminant validity.

The IRI also demonstrated concurrent validity, yielding statistically significant correlations between the Perspective-Taking subscale and the Hogan Empathy Scale (Hogan, 1969) ($r = .42$ for men, $p \leq .05$; $r = .37$ for women, $p \leq .05$) as well as the

Mehrabian and Epstein Emotional Empathy Scale (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972) ($r = .22$ for men, $p \leq .05$; $r = .17$ for women, $p \leq .05$) (Davis, 1983). In terms of the Empathic Concern subscale, concurrent validity was shown by statistically significant correlations with Hogan Empathy Scale ($r = .11$ for men, $p \leq .05$; $r = .25$ for women, $p \leq .05$) as well as the Mehrabian and Epstein Emotional Empathy Scale ($r = .63$ for men, $p \leq .05$; $r = .56$ for women, $p \leq .05$). As predicted by Davis (1983), the Perspective-Taking subscale correlates more strongly with the Hogan Empathy Scale, as both were designed to measure the cognitive domain of empathy; contrastingly, the Empathic Concern subscale correlates more strongly with the Mehrabian and Epstein Emotional Empathy Scale, as both were intended to assess the affective domain of empathy.

Sexism. Each partner filled out the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996). The ASI is a self-report measure consisting of 20 items, presented in a 5-point Likert scale format. Participants are asked to rate each item from one (“Disagree Strongly”) to five (“Agree Strongly”).

According to Glick and Fiske (1996), the ASI assesses one’s overall endorsement of sexism as well as one’s endorsement of *Benevolent Sexism* (BS) (i.e., subtle sexism; seemingly positive) and *Hostile Sexism* (HS) (i.e., overt sexism; antipathy toward women). An example item of the BS subscale is “In a disaster, women ought to be rescued before men.” Contrastingly, the HS subscale is exemplified by the item “Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually puts him on a tight leash.”

ASI items were developed based on Glick and Fiske’s (1996) theory of Ambivalent Sexism. Items were designed to capture the benevolent and hostile

continuums of *Paternalism, Gender Differentiation, and Heterosexuality*. Item development and establishment of validity and reliability evidence occurred with 2,250 participants (approximately 80% White, 20% racial/ethnic minorities, 60% female, 40% male) divided among six college or community samples (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The original ASI questionnaire consisted of 140 items, which were pared down through factor analysis to the final 22 items (i.e., 11 items load onto BS and 11 items load onto HS). Confirmatory factor analysis provided support for the two factor model. Factor structure was also found to be similar for both men and women.

The internal consistency reliability estimate for HS and BS ranged from .37 to .74 among the samples. The lower bound estimate (i.e., .37) of internal consistency reliability appears to be exceedingly lower than the other estimates (i.e., .58, .62, .71, .74) and therefore is likely not reflective of the true internal consistency reliability. Alpha coefficients yielded for the ASI total (ranged from .83 to .92), HS (ranged from .80 to .92), and BS (ranged from .73 to .85). Sex differences in mean scores were found where men scored significantly higher than women on the ASI total and on the HS and BS subscales. This effect was more extreme with regard to HS than BS.

With regard to convergent validity, Glick and Fiske (1996) reported that the ASI demonstrated convergent validity with other measures of sexism. Correlations between the ASI and the AWS (Spence & Helmreich, 1972), the Old-Fashioned Sexism scale (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995), the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995), and the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980) ranged from .38 to .68, $p \leq .01$. Evidence

of discriminant validity was found by lack of association between the ASI and the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1988).

Dependent Variable

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Each partner completed the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995; Spanier, 1976). The RDAS is based on Spanier's (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale, which although widely used did not meet the standards of construct hierarchy (Busby et al., 1995). The RDAS is considered a psychometrically improved version of the original DAS (Busby et al. 1995; Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie, & Berrett, 2009). The RDAS is a 14-item, self-report measure that employs a 6-point rating scale. Participants are asked to rate each item from zero ("Always Disagree") to five ("Always Agree") in section 1; from zero ("All the Time") to five ("Never") in section 2; from 0 ("Never") to 4 ("Everyday") in section 3; from 0 ("Never") to 5 ("More Often") in section 4. Scores range between 0 and 69. Higher scores suggest greater relationship adjustment. A criterion score of 48 differentiates distressed from non-distressed couples (i.e., scores of 1 to 47 signify distressed; scores of 48 to 69 signify non-distressed) (Crane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000).

Busby et al. (1995) indicated that RDAS items were developed on a sample of 242 heterosexual couples. Of the couples, 98 were seeking couples therapy due to relationship difficulties. Data were gathered prior to the commencement of therapy. Items from the DAS were removed based upon parsimony (e.g., in cases where more than two items seemed homogeneous, these "extra" items were removed). Dichotomous style questions (i.e., yes/no responses) were also removed as this format did not match the

rating-scale items comprising the rest of the measure. Questions that were designed to assess global adjustment (e.g., “how happy are you in your relationship”) were removed on the basis that such a question elicits too much response bias or social desirability. These modifications pared the RDAS down to 16 items. Factor analysis further winnowed the items down to 14 and suggested a three factor model (i.e., Consensus, Satisfaction, and Cohesion).

Busby et al. (1995) reported strong evidence of reliability for the RDAS. A split-half reliability coefficient of .94 and a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .90 were yielded. According to Busby et al. (1995), the RDAS also demonstrated construct validity. A correlation coefficient of .68, $p \leq .01$ was established between the RDAS and the Lock-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Lock & Wallace, 1959). A correlation coefficient of .97, $p \leq .01$ was yielded between the RDAS and the DAS, suggesting that the RDAS taps into the same construct but has superior psychometric properties and is shorter in length. Tests of criterion validity revealed that the RDAS and the DAS are equally able to classify couples as distressed or non-distressed with 81% accuracy.

Table 2, as shown on the following page, provides an overview of the present study’s hypotheses, along with the measures used, and the statistical methods that were employed to test these hypotheses.

Table 2

Hypotheses for the Study

Hypotheses	Measures to be Used	Statistical Test
1. Groups (by race and gender) will be homogeneous with regard to age, length of time in relationship, and educational level.	Demographic Questionnaire	ANOVAs and chi square
2. There will be group differences by race and gender (i.e., African American women, African American men, White women, and White men) on (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege, (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, and (c) Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues.	CoBRAS (a) URP subscale (b) UID subscale (c) UBRI subscale	MANOVA Follow-up post hoc tests
3. There will be group differences by race and gender (i.e., African American women, African American men, White women, and White men) on (d) Empathic Concern and (e) Perspective Taking. Specifically, listed in descending levels of EC and PT, the following order is expected: African American women, White women, White men, African American men.	IRI (d) EC subscale (e) PT subscale	MANOVA Follow-up planned contrasts
4. There will be group differences by race and gender (i.e., African American women, African American men, White women, and White men) and effects of the interaction between race and gender on (f) Benevolent Sexism and (g) Hostile Sexism. Specifically, listed in descending levels, the following order is expected with regard to (f) BS: White women, White men, African American women, and African American men. (g) HS: African American men, White men, White women, and African American women.	ASI (f) Benevolent subscale (g) Hostile subscale	MANOVA Follow-up planned contrasts
5. There will be group differences by race and gender (i.e., African American women, African American men, White women, and White men) and the interaction between race and gender in (h) Dyadic Adjustment. Specifically, White men and African American women are predicted to have higher levels of dyadic adjustment than African American men and White women.	RDAS (h) RDAS total	ANOVA Follow-up planned contrast

Table 2 (continued) *Hypotheses for the Study*

<p>6. It is predicted that, Model 1, comprised of (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege, (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, (c) Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues, (d) Empathic Concern, (e) Perspective Taking, (f) Benevolent Sexism, (g) Hostile Sexism, (i) gender, and (j) race will predict (h) dyadic adjustment. It is also hypothesized that Model 2, which contains the same variables as Model 1 with the addition of (k) gender by race will predict (h) dyadic adjustment. Finally, it is hypothesized that Model 2 will be superior to Model 1, as the interaction between gender and race will account for more variance in Model 2.</p>	<p>CoBRAS (a) URP subscale (b) UID subscale (c) UBRI subscale IRI (d) EC subscale (e) PT subscale ASI (f) Benevolent subscale (g) Hostile subscale Demographic Questionnaire (i) gender (j) race (k) gender by race</p> <p>RDAS (h) RDAS total</p>	<p>Hierarchical Regression</p> <p>Block 1 (a - g, i, j)</p> <p>Block 2 (k)</p> <p>Dependent Variable (h)</p>
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Data Analyses

Data analysis was performed in two stages. The first stage consisted of data screening to manage both missing data and outliers and additionally to ensure assumptions were met for each statistical analysis. Boxplots and Mahalanobis Distance were employed to identify outliers. Table 3, as seen on the next page, enumerates the statistical tests that will be used in stage two, their assumptions, and the procedure for testing those assumptions in stage one of data analysis.

Table 3

Statistical Tests and Assumptions

Statistical Tests (Stage 2)	Assumptions	Testing Assumptions (Stage 1)
ANOVA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Normality 2. Homogeneity of variance 3. Independence 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skewness and kurtosis values 2. Levene's Test 3. Assumed, not testable
Chi-Square	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adequate cell sizes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5 or more cases expected per cell (no cells with zero count)
MANOVA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Homogeneity of Subgroup Variance-Covariance (VC) matrices 2. Linearity 3. No multicollinearity 4. Normality 5. Adequate Cell Sizes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Box's M 2. Examination of scatterplots 3. Bivariate correlations and variance inflation factor (or tolerance) 4. Skewness and kurtosis values 5. More cases than DVs in each cell
Hierarchical Linear Regression	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adequate sample size 2. No strong or extreme multicollinearity 3. Lack of outliers 4. Normality 5. Homoscedasticity 6. Independence 7. Linearity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Between 10 and 20 cases per IV 2. Tolerance check ($1-R^2$), variance inflation factor 3. Mahalanobis distance 4. Skewness and kurtosis 5. Scatterplot of the residuals against the predicted data points 6. Scatterplot of residuals 7. Method of data collection

Chapter Four

Results

Overview

This chapter enumerates the findings of the statistical analyses executed for this study. Specifically, (a) the process used for screening the data is explicated, (b) descriptive statistics are presented, and (c) finally, the assumptions and results from statistical analyses associated with each hypothesis are provided. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Software (SPSS-IBM) was used to perform all data analyses. All statistical procedures employed two-tailed tests of significance with an alpha level set at .05.

Data Screening

Response Rate and Exclusion Criteria

The initial sample consisted of 72 participants. Of these, nine cases were removed because the participants identified being in endogamous (i.e., same-race) partner relationships. Another case was removed because the participant identified as multiracial but did not specify the race that best describes them. Seven cases were removed because the participant did not identify their partner's race. An additional case was removed because the participant indicated that their partner was the same gender. Seven cases were removed because they represented other configurations of interracial couples (i.e., White and Asian, African American and Asian, Native American and African American,

Native American and White). Four cases were removed because they did not complete any of the questionnaires. Finally, only two African American men completed the study and given their exceedingly small representation in the study as compared to their counterparts (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men), the decision was made to remove those cases from the analysis. Accordingly, please note that African American men were removed from consideration in all hypotheses. After removal of all 31 aforementioned cases, 41 cases remained for analysis.

Missing Data and Outliers

The data set was examined for missing data. The demographic variables used for analysis, which included Age, Level of Education, and Time Living Together, contained no missing data. A visual inspection of the data revealed that almost all cases of missing data resulted from participant discontinuation of the survey. This outcome refers specifically to seven cases and their attrition occurred in various places throughout the survey. As such, these cases presented usable data for some analyses but not others. Cases were kept in which the participant completed greater than 50% of the questionnaire. To account for missing data, mean scale scores were created for each variable. Missing mean scale scores were computed by summing completed items and dividing this sum by the total number of completed items for that particular scale or subscale. Creating mean scale scores for missing and non-missing data prevented further reduction in sample size. The remaining instances of missing data occurred on six items with up to three missing cases per item. This latter type did however result in missing

data for all of the scales except for the RDAS. All variables had less than 10 percent missing data.

The following paragraphs more specifically detail the aforementioned procedure for mean scale score creation. With regard to the MANOVA related to the CoBRAS subscales, one case was removed because the participant completed less than 50% of the CoBRAS questionnaire. Two other cases had missing data but met the requirement for mean scale score calculation for all three subscales. This resulted in a sample size of $n = 40$ for this particular analysis.

Four cases were removed for the MANOVA related to the IRI subscales because the participants completed less than 50% of the IRI questionnaire. One other case had missing data but met the requirement for mean scale score calculation for both subscales, resulting in a sample size of $n = 36$ for this analysis.

One case was removed for the MANOVA related to the ASI subscales because the participant completed less than 50% of the ASI questionnaire. Five cases had missing data on the Benevolent Sexism subscale and four of these same cases had missing data on the Hostile Sexism subscale. Each of these cases met the requirement for mean scale score calculation, resulting in a sample size of $n = 35$ for this analysis.

One case was removed for the ANOVA related to the RDAS scale because the participant completed less than 50% of the RDAS questionnaire, resulting in a sample size of $n = 34$ for this analysis. A mean scale score was calculated for the RDAS as well, in order to maintain consistency across the analyses. Finally, the hierarchical regression

analysis had a sample size of $n = 34$ because participants who discontinued the survey did not have a score for the dependent variable, Dyadic Adjustment.

Univariate outliers according to group (i.e., African American, White Women, and White Men) were identified through use of boxplots and histograms for each variable being examined. Three univariate outliers were discovered among African American Women. However, their removal actually increased problems with multivariate outliers (i.e., Mahalanobis Distance values) and did not change any of the results in the main analyses. As such, given those findings coupled with the small sample size, the decision was rendered to retain those cases. As mentioned earlier, multivariate outliers were investigated again by group through use of Mahalanobis Distance. This was achieved through use of a linear regression, inputting Case ID as the dependent variable and all variables being examined as the independent variables. Mahalanobis distances ranged from 6.13 to 11.74. According to Field (2009), Mahalanobis distance values greater than 15 are of concern. Accordingly, no multivariate outliers were considered in the problematic range.

Descriptive Statistics

Tables are included throughout this chapter and provide descriptive statistics related to each questionnaire and hypothesis used in the study. Table 4 (as shown below) provides bivariate correlations for each of the psychological variables investigated in the study. These correlations will be addressed later in this chapter with regard to the assumption of multicollinearity.

Table 4

Correlation Coefficients

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. URP	1.00							
2. UID	.66**	1.00						
3. UBRI	.60**	.46**	1.00					
4. EC	-.04	-.13	.24	1.00				
5. PT	-.17	-.30	.03	.38*	1.00			
6. BS	.13	.46**	.40*	-.02	-.39*	1.00		
7. HS	.37*	.53**	.29	-.07	-.18	.67**	1.00	
8. RDAS	.00	-.11	-.43*	.02	.05	-.21	.02	1.00

Note. URP = etc.

* $p < .05$ level, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$ level, two-tailed.

Listwise N = 34

*Assumptions and Results**Hypothesis 1*

Hypothesis 1 stated that groups (by race and gender) are homogeneous with regard to age, length of time living together, and level of education. The following ANOVA assumptions were examined for the variables, Age and Length of Time Living Together: 1. normality, 2. homogeneity of variance, and 3. independence. The assumption for normality was examined using skewness and kurtosis. Age was in the appropriate range for skewness (-1 to 1) and kurtosis (-3 to 3). However, Length of Time Living Together was higher than expected for both skewness (2.1) and kurtosis (5.8), suggesting deviation from normality. Homogeneity of variance was assessed through Levene's test and results were not significant for age or length of time in relationship, therefore, meeting the assumption. Independence, as not testable, was assumed for both variables given the method of data collection. ANOVAS were run for age and length of

time in relationship. No significant differences were found between groups (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) on age $F(2, 38) = 0.22, p = .80$, partial $\eta^2 = .011$ or on length of time living together $F(2, 38) = 1.13, p = .34$, partial $\eta^2 = .056$.

Adequate cell size was examined for a chi square, as related to level of education. Five or more cases were not present for each cell, therefore, the assumption was not met. The sample size constraint was the likely culprit of inadequate cell size. Since this issue could not be further addressed, the decision was made to proceed with conducting a chi square for level of education and no significant differences were found among the three groups $X^2(10, N = 41) = 5.73, p = .84$. Thus, the three groups were not significantly different with regard to these demographic variables. See Table 5 for descriptive statistics. Please note that values listed in Table 5 were derived from the scale score means.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 1

Total Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Age	41	35.73	10.16	21	64	.94	.71
Length of Time Living Together	41	5.37	6.08	.00	30	2.10	5.80
Highest Level Of Education	41	4.59	1.48	2	7	.24	-1.27

Table 5 (continued). *Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 1*

African American Women							
Variable	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Age	18	36.72	10.33	25	64	1.04	1.36
Length of Time Living Together	18	4.15	4.82	.00	17	.17	-1.57
Highest Level Of Education	18	4.67	1.50	3	7	1.49	1.58
White Women							
Variable	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Age	12	35.75	9.70	21	61	.28	-.41
Length of Time Living Together	12	7.50	5.15	.25	16	2.24	5.44
Highest Level Of Education	12	4.60	1.50	3	7	-.10	-.85
White Men							
Variable	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Age	11	34.09	11.11	21	61	1.63	2.93
Length of Time Living Together	11	5.05	5.15	.25	16	1.10	.37
Highest Level Of Education	11	4.45	1.57	3	7	.76	-.94

Note. Highest Level of Education: 1 = Some High School, 2 = GED or High School Diploma, 3 = Some College or Associate's Degree, 4 = Bachelor's Degree, 5 = Some Graduate School, 6 = Master's Degree, 7 = Doctoral Degree

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that there are group differences by race and gender (i.e., African American women, African American men, White women, and White men) on (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege (URP), (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination (UID), and (c) Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues (UBRI).

The following conditions for MANOVA were examined: 1. homogeneity of subgroup variance-covariance (VC) matrices, 2. linearity, 3. no multicollinearity, 4. normality, and 5. adequate cell sizes. Results from Box's M showed that the assumption for homogeneity of subgroup variance-covariance (VC) matrices was met for all three variables. Linearity was assessed through an examination of scatterplots of the residuals against the predicted data points. Random scatter for URP, UID, and UBRI were suggestive of linearity. Bivariate correlations were not suggestive of strong or extreme multicollinearity. Finally, tolerance values were above 0.1 for all three variables. All three variables were in the appropriate range for skewness (-1 to 1) and kurtosis (-3 to 3) demonstrating that the next assumption, normality, was met. Lastly, the assumption for adequate cell sizes was met in that more cases than dependent variables were present in each cell.

As such, a MANOVA was performed, where race/gender group served as the independent variable (IV) and URP, UID, and UBRI served as the dependent variables (DVs). Pillai's Trace was interpreted and no significant effect of race/gender group on any of the three CoBRAS variables were found (i.e., URP, UID, or UBRI), $V = .18$, $F(6, 72) = 1.15$, $p = .34$. Separate univariate ANOVAS revealed no significant effect of

race/gender group on URP, $F(2, 37) = .46, p = .63$, partial $\eta^2 = .024$; UID, $F(2, 37) = 1.45, p = .25$ partial $\eta^2 = .073$; or UBRI, $F(2, 37) = .41, p = .67$, partial $\eta^2 = .022$. Thus the null hypothesis was not rejected for this analysis. As such, no follow-up tests were conducted. See Table 6 for descriptive statistics. Please note that values listed in Table 6 were derived from the scale score means.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 2

Total							
CoBRAS	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
URP	40	3.08	1.04	1.00	5.43	.20	-.10
UID	40	3.06	.90	1.17	5.29	.44	.30
UBRI	40	2.55	1.38	1.00	5.50	.86	-.65
African American Women							
CoBRAS	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
URP	17	2.90	.82	1.29	4.00	-.47	-.77
UID	17	3.06	.79	1.71	4.29	.01	-1.16
UBRI	17	2.34	1.41	1.17	5.50	1.43	.64
White Women							
CoBRAS	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
URP	12	3.18	.73	2.14	4.71	.55	.38
UID	12	2.76	.66	1.71	4.14	.37	.70
UBRI	12	2.82	1.33	1.17	5.17	.48	-1.10

Table 6 (continued). *Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 2*

White Men							
CoBRAS	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
URP	11	3.26	1.57	1.00	5.43	.04	-1.43
UID	11	3.39	1.19	1.17	5.29	.05	.15
UBRI	11	2.59	1.47	1.00	5.33	.75	-.65

Note. CoBRAS = Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale, URP = Unawareness of Racial Privilege, UID = Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that there are group differences by race/gender group (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) on (d) Empathic Concern (EC) and (e) Perspective Taking (PT). Specifically, listed in descending levels of EC and PT, the following order was expected: African American women, White women, White men.

The following conditions for MANOVA were examined: 1. homogeneity of subgroup variance-covariance (VC) matrices, 2. linearity, 3. no multicollinearity, 4. normality, and 5. adequate cell sizes. Results from Box's M showed that the assumption for homogeneity of subgroup variance-covariance (VC) matrices was met. Linearity was assessed through an examination of scatterplots of the residuals against the predicted data points. Random scatter for EC and PT was suggestive of linearity. Bivariate correlations were not indicative of strong or extreme multicollinearity. Finally, the tolerance showed that tolerance values were above 0.1 for both variables. Skewness values were in the

appropriate range (-1 to 1) for PT and kurtosis values were in the appropriate range (-3 to 3) for EC. However, EC had a slightly larger than expected value for skewness (-1.18), suggesting deviation from normality. Lastly, the assumption for adequate cell sizes was met in that more cases than dependent variables were present in each cell.

A MANOVA was performed, where race/gender group served as the independent variable (IV) and Empathic Concern (EC) and Perspective Taking (PT) served as the dependent variables (DVs). Pillai's Trace was interpreted and there was a significant effect of race/gender group on one or both empathy related variables (i.e., EC and/or PT), $V = .27$, $F(4, 66) = 2.54$, $p = .048$. Separate univariate ANOVAS on both empathy related variables revealed a significant effect of race/gender group on EC, $F(2, 33) = 4.68$, $p = .016$, partial $\eta^2 = .221$. A simple contrast showed that EC among both African American women and White women was statistically significantly higher than for White men, $F(2, 33) = 4.68$, $p = .016$, partial $\eta^2 = .221$, with no significant difference between African American and White women. No significant effect was found for race/gender group on PT, $F(2, 33) = 0.25$, $p = .78$, partial $\eta^2 = .015$. A simple contrast did not show significant differences between these three groups with regard to PT, $F(2, 33) = .25$, $p = .783$, partial $\eta^2 = .015$. See Table 7 for descriptive statistics. Please note that values listed in Table 7 were derived from the scale score means.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 3

Total							
IRI	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
EC	36	3.12	.66	.86	4.00	-1.18	2.50
PT	36	2.98	.56	1.71	4.00	.02	-.33
African American Women							
IRI	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
EC	16	3.26	.59	2.29	4.00	-.37	-1.15
PT	16	3.05	.61	1.71	4.00	-.83	.54
White Women							
IRI	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
EC	12	3.32	.43	2.29	4.00	-1.05	2.42
PT	12	2.90	.50	2.29	4.00	1.21	1.10
White Men							
IRI	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
EC	8	2.55	.81	.86	3.57	-1.33	2.66
PT	8	2.95	.62	2.14	4.00	.66	-.45

Note. IRI = *Interpersonal Reactivity Index*, EC = *Empathic Concern*, PT = *Perspective Taking*

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that there are group differences by race/gender group (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) on (f) Benevolent Sexism (BS) and (g) Hostile Sexism (HS). Specifically, listed by descending level, the following

order was expected with regard to (f) BS: White women, White men, and African American women and (g) HS: White men, White women, and African American women.

The following conditions for MANOVA were examined: 1. homogeneity of subgroup variance-covariance (VC) matrices, 2. linearity, 3. no multicollinearity, 4. normality, and 5. adequate cell sizes. Results from Box's M showed that the assumption for homogeneity of subgroup variance-covariance (VC) matrices was met for both variables. Linearity was assessed through an examination of scatterplots of the residuals against the predicted data points. Random scatter for BS and HS was suggestive of linearity. Bivariate correlations were not indicative of strong or extreme multicollinearity. Finally, the tolerance values were above 0.1 for both variables. Both variables were in the appropriate range for skewness (-1 to 1) and kurtosis (-3 to 3) demonstrating that the next assumption, normality, was met. Lastly, the assumption for adequate cell sizes was met in that more cases than dependent variables were present in each cell.

A MANOVA was performed, where race/gender group served as the independent variable (IV) and BS and HS served as the dependent variables (DVs). Pillai's Trace was interpreted and no significant effect of race/gender group on either Ambivalent Sexism variables were found (i.e., BS or HS), $V = .09$, $F(4, 64) = .75$, $p = .56$. Separate univariate ANOVAS revealed no significant effect of race/gender group on BS, $F(2, 32) = .79$, $p = .46$, partial $\eta^2 = .047$; or HS, $F(2, 32) = 1.50$, $p = .24$, partial $\eta^2 = .086$. A simple contrast did not show significant differences between these three groups with regard to BS, $F(2, 32) = .79$, $p = .463$, partial $\eta^2 = .047$ or HS, $F(2, 32) = 1.50$, $p = .238$, partial $\eta^2 = .086$. Thus the null hypothesis was not rejected for this particular analysis.

See Table 8 for descriptive statistics. Please note that values listed in Table 8 were derived from the scale score means.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 4

Total							
ASI	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
BS	35	2.83	.85	1.36	4.10	-.27	-1.14
HS	35	2.62	.98	1.00	4.64	.34	-.64
African American Women							
ASI	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
BS	15	2.80	1.00	1.36	4.10	-.12	-1.69
HS	15	2.52	1.02	1.18	4.55	.32	-.61
White Women							
ASI	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
BS	12	2.65	.70	1.36	3.45	-.83	-.69
HS	12	2.39	.83	1.00	3.64	.14	-1.00
White Men							
ASI	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
BS	8	3.14	.76	2.00	4.10	-.53	-.74
HS	8	3.13	1.07	1.64	4.64	.22	-1.30

Note. ASI = Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, BS = Benevolent Sexism, HS = Hostile Sexism

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated that there are group differences by race/gender group (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) on (h) Dyadic Adjustment

(RDAS mean scale score). Specifically, White men and African American women were predicted to have higher levels of dyadic adjustment than White women.

The following assumptions for ANOVA were examined: 1. normality, 2. homogeneity of variance, and 3. independence. The assumption for normality was examined using skewness and kurtosis. Values were in the appropriate range for both skewness (-1 to 1) and kurtosis (-3 to 3). Homogeneity of variance was assessed through Levene's Test. Results were not significant, therefore, meeting the assumption. Independence was assumed, given the method of data collection.

An ANOVA was performed with race/gender group as the independent variable (IV) and Dyadic Adjustment served as the dependent variable (DV). No significant results were found, $F(2, 31) = 1.52, p = .24, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .089$. A simple contrast did not show significant differences between these three groups with regard to Dyadic Adjustment, $F(2, 31) = 1.52, p = .235, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .089$. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected for this analysis. See Table 9 for descriptive statistics. Please note that values listed in Table 9 were derived from the scale score means.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Hypothesis 5

Total							
RDAS	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
	34	3.56	.57	2.21	4.71	-.55	-.11
African American Women							
	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
	14	3.73	.49	2.57	4.43	-1.18	1.30
White Women							
	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
	12	3.35	.60	2.21	3.86	-.86	-.93
White Men							
	n	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
	8	3.60	.63	2.79	4.71	.63	-.17

Note. RDAS = Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Hypothesis 6

In Hypothesis 6, it was predicted that Model 1, comprised of the mean scale scores for (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege, (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, (c) Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues, (d) Empathic Concern, (e) Perspective Taking, (f) Benevolent Sexism, and (g) Hostile Sexism would predict (h) Dyadic Adjustment. It was also hypothesized that Model 2, which contained the same variables as Model 1 with the addition of (i) gender/race group would predict (h) Dyadic

Adjustment. Finally, it was hypothesized that Model 2 would be superior to Model 1, as the addition of gender/race group would account for significant incremental variance in Model 2.

The following conditions for hierarchical regression were examined: 1. adequate sample size, 2. no strong or extreme multicollinearity, 3. lack of outliers, 4. normality, 5. homoscedasticity, 6. independence, and 7. linearity. The assumption for adequate sample size was not met in that there were less than 10 and 20 cases per IV. A tolerance check ($1-R^2$) demonstrated that there was no strong multicollinearity. Mahalanobis distance showed that there were no multivariate outliers. Skewness and kurtosis values indicated that criteria were met for normality with the exception mentioned earlier in which EC had a slightly more extreme value for skewness (-1.18), suggesting deviation from normality for this particular variable. Homoscedasticity was assessed through an examination of a scatterplot of the residuals against the predicted data points; random and even distribution suggested that the assumption was met (Field, 2009). Linearity was examined through a scatterplot of the residuals, which suggested that this assumption was met (i.e., random scatter). Independence was met based on the method of data collection.

A hierarchical regression was performed and did not yield significant results. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected for this final analysis. Table 10 provides the results of this analysis.

Table 10

Hierarchical Regression of URP, UID, UBRI, EC, PT, BS, HS, and Race and Gender on Dyadic Adjustment

Variable	Dyadic Adjustment (RDAS Scores)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Block 1.			
URP	.29	.15	.52
UID	-.09	.15	-.14
UBRI	-.34	.12	-.78
EC	.13	.16	.15
PT	.12	.21	.12
BS	.02	.19	.02
HS	.09	.14	.15
Block 2.			
URP	.30	.16	.53
UID	-.08	.16	-.12
UBRI	-.34	.11	-.78
EC	-.07	.17	.12
PT	.14	.22	.13
BS	.02	.19	.03
HS	.09	.15	.15
Race/Gender Group	-.03	.09	.10

Note. Dyadic Adjustment: $R^2 = .36$ for Block 1 ($p = .088$); $\Delta R^2 = .003$ ($p = .721$) for Block 2, Model 2 $R^2 = .36$ ($p = .138$)

Summary

Chapter Four provided the results of the statistical analyses for the six hypotheses in this study. The first hypothesis, positing homogeneous groups, was not rejected, as no significant differences were yielded among the three groups (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) for the demographic variables. Evidence for Hypothesis 2 was not found as there were no significant differences among the three groups on URP, UID, or UBRI. Hypothesis 3 was supported as there was a significant

effect of race/gender group on empathy related variables (i.e., EC and/or PT). Separate univariate ANOVAS on both empathy related variables revealed a significant effect of race/gender group on EC. A simple contrast showed that EC among both African American women and White women was statistically significantly higher than for White men. No significant differences were found between the groups with regard to PT. Hypothesis 4 was not supported, as the three groups were not significantly different from each other on BS or HS. Evidence for Hypothesis 5 was not rendered; the three groups were not significantly different from each other in Dyadic Adjustment. Finally, with regard to Hypothesis 6, URP, UID, UBRI, EC, PT, BS, and HS did not significantly predict Dyadic Adjustment. Furthermore, adding Gender/Race group to the model did not significantly account for more variance in predicting Dyadic Adjustment. Chapter Five provides an interpretation of these results with their practical and research implications, enumerates the limitations of this study, and offers suggestions for future research related to this topic.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Summary of Study

This chapter provides a (a) summary of the study, (b) discussion of the results for the six research hypotheses, along with their implications, (c) limitations of the study, (d) recommendations for future research, and finally, (e) conclusions. As described previously, the percentage of interracial intimate partnerships has increased by more than two-fold since 1980 to the present time (Taylor, Passel, Wang, Kiley, Velsasco, & Dockterman, 2010). This topic merits attention, as interracial intimate partnerships are at greater risk for relationship dissolution (i.e., divorce or permanent separation in cohabitating couples) than their endogamous counterparts (Bratter & King, 2008). Previous quantitative studies examining interracial couples have focused on demographic variables only, at the exclusion of psychological variables that might shed more light on reasons such relationships assume greater risk with respect to dissolution. Particularly, little is known about salient partner characteristics that can strengthen or weaken this type of intimate partnership (i.e., marital or cohabitating relationship).

While exploration of variables related to relationship dissolution among all interracial and interethnic couples warrants attention, the decision was rendered to focus on African American/White interracial couples in this study, as this intimate partner pairing remains most taboo (Forry, Leslie, & Letiecq, 2007) and at risk for instability

(Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). However, dissolution rates are only highest among African American men paired with White women; African American women paired with White men evidence the lowest dissolution rate of any interracial/interethnic or endogamous pairings (Bratter & King, 2008). The present study set out to begin to elucidate the reasons for this unexplained dichotomy.

Relationship dissolution has devastating effects on partners, families, and society. It is correlated with increased risk of future psychopathology, dangerousness to self and others, medical problems, poverty, social isolation, and significant parenting strains among partners, and academic, mental health, and conduct problems among their children (Gottman, 1993; Amato 2000). As such, research aimed toward understanding the underpinnings of relationship dissolution, serves a critical role in preventing its numerous associated problems.

The two leading theories that serve to explain relationship dissolution among interracial couples are Homogamy (Zhang & Van Hook 2009) and the Ethnic Dissolution Convergence Perspective (Jones, 1996). Homogamy is described as the tendency of individuals to court/date and marry partners with shared characteristics, such as race, culture, ethnicity, religion, economic-standing, education, etc. Homogamy conjectures that partner similarities are associated with reduced inter-partner conflict and greater familial and peer support. It further hypothesizes that the larger the racial divide between partners, the greater the risk of relationship dissolution. The Ethnic Dissolution Convergence Perspective proposes that when individuals from two different groups become a couple, their risk of dissolution is likely to fall somewhere between the

endogamous risk potentials of each group from which they belong (Jones, 1996). Overall, rates of dissolution among endogamous African American couples are higher than for endogamous White couples (Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). As such, this model would predict that the dissolution potential of interracial couples would be greater than the dissolution potential of endogamous White couples and less than the dissolution potential of endogamous African American couples. However, neither theory adequately explains the apparent race and gender interaction wherein African American women paired with White men show similar or lower dissolution potential and White women paired with African American men show higher dissolution potential as compared to other endogamous and interracial or interethnic couples.

The present study served to illuminate psychological factors on the dyadic level that serve to protect or undermine intimate relationship adjustment (i.e., relationship functioning and satisfaction). As discussed in previous chapters, these factors include the effects of color-blindness, empathy and sexism on relationship adjustment. Color-blindness may play a considerable role in interracial relationships, as couples tended to minimize or deny their racial differences or even silence their partners with regard to discussing racial issues (Killian, 2001; Killian, 2003; Thompson & Collier, 2006). Empathy is regarded as an essential component of healthy intimate relationships (Ickes, 2001; Waldinger, Schultz, Hauser, Allen, & Crowell, 2004) and a predictor of relationship adjustment and satisfaction (Busby and Gardner, 2008). Given the discrimination and racism that interracial couples are likely to experience, understanding how empathy functions in these relationships is critical. Although limited in quantity,

research suggests that ambivalent sexism may be predictive of relationship adjustment in couples (Overall, Sibley, & Tan, 2011). Research findings by Overall et al. (2011) reveal that men's endorsement of hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS) as well as the interaction between male and female HS and BS has important implications in relationship adjustment. Finally, relationship adjustment has long been regarded as a remarkable variable because of its ability to differentiate distressed from non-distressed couples (Lambert, 2004). As relationship distress is predictive of later relationship dissolution, measuring relationship adjustment can help distinguish relationships that are likely to demonstrate stability from those that may be at risk for dissolution (Bouchard, 2006).

Results of Hypotheses and Implications

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that groups (by race and gender) are homogeneous with regard to age, length of time living together, and level of education. ANOVAS were run for age and length of time in relationship and a Chi Square was conducted for level of education. No significant differences were found between groups (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) with regard to these three variables. As such, this hypothesis was supported in that the three groups were similar across these domains. Please see Table 5 in previous chapter for enumeration of statistics. Notably, these similarities suggest that any differences between groups along the psychological variables

examined in this study are not attributable to differences among these three groups along age, length of time living together, or level of education.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that there are group differences by race and gender (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) on (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege (URP), (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination (UID), and (c) Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues (UBRI). A MANOVA was performed, where race/gender group served as the independent variable (IV) and URP, UID, and UBRI served as the dependent variables (DVs). No significant effect of race/gender group on any of the three CoBRAS variables, taken together, was found (i.e., URP, UID, or UBRI). Furthermore separate univariate ANOVAS revealed no significant effect of race/gender group on URP, UID, or UBRI. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected for this analysis. Please see Table 6 in previous chapter for enumeration of statistics. These results are somewhat surprising. Research from Neville et al. (2000) would have suggested that White participants in the sample would have scored significantly lower than African American participants on the Blatant Racial Issues (UBRI) subscale and that African American participants would have scored significantly lower than White participants on the Institutional Discrimination (UID) subscale. However, the fact that the African American sample in the present study only comprised women may explain the lack of significant results for this analysis as women scored significantly lower than men across all three subscales in previous research (Neville, 2000). Furthermore, the sample from the present study largely comprised members of online forums/communities based

on interracial relationships. It would make logical sense that individuals who would join these types of online forums/communities may be more aware of issues related to racism and oppression than individuals unlikely to seek out this type of online venue.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that there are group differences by race/gender group (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) on (d) Empathic Concern (EC) and (e) Perspective Taking (PT). Specifically, listed in descending levels of EC and PT, the following order was expected: African American women, White women, White men. A MANOVA was performed, where race/gender group served as the independent variable (IV) and Empathic Concern (EC) and Perspective Taking (PT) served as the dependent variables (DVs). Results showed a significant effect of race/gender group on one or both empathy related variables and separate univariate ANOVAS revealed a significant effect of race/gender group on EC. A simple contrast showed that EC among both African American women and White women was statistically significantly higher than for White men. No significant effect was found for race/gender group on PT. As such, this hypothesis was partially supported. Please see Table 7 in previous chapter for enumeration of statistics. Past research has shown that women tend to score higher than men on empathy constructs (Davis, 1980; Constantine, 2000). Accordingly, the EC results of the present study were consistent with previous research, while the PT results were not. At face value, it appears that PT (i.e., being able to see another's point of view/put oneself in another's shoes) would be a critical component to successful

interracial relationships. It is not known how African American men would have scored on these two subscales.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that there are group differences by race/gender group (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) on (f) Benevolent Sexism (BS) and (g) Hostile Sexism (HS). Specifically, listed in descending levels, the following order was expected with regard to (f) BS: White women, White men, and African American women; and (g) HS: White men, White women, and African American women.

A MANOVA was performed, where race/gender group served as the independent variable (IV) and BS and HS served as the dependent variables (DVs). Results showed no significant effect of race/gender group on either Ambivalent Sexism variables, taken together, and separate univariate ANOVAS revealed no significant effect of race/gender group on BS or HS. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected for this particular analysis. Please see Table 8 in previous chapter for enumeration of statistics. The fact that African American women and White men did not significantly differ from one another on level of BS or HS may help explain relationship adjustment in these couples. High levels of HS in men and discrepant levels of BS between men and women (i.e., higher level of BS in women than men) is associated with relationship conflict (Overall, Sibley, & Tan, 2011). It should be noted, that this author is not aware of any past research that has specifically examined racial differences in endorsement of BS or HS. However, sexism may play a particularly profound role in African American male/White female pairings. Research

suggests greater levels of sexist thinking among African American men as compared to their White male counterparts, a phenomenon based on poverty and lack of status in United States society (West & Rose, 2000; Miller & White, 2003; O'Donnell, Stueve, Myint-U, Duran, Agronick, & Wilson-Simmons, 2006; West 2008), as well difficulty fully acquiring male privilege because of racial discrimination (Johnson II; 2010), and consequently, an increased desire to prove their masculinity to society (Lemelle, 2010 as cited in Crowell, 2011). Unfortunately, as African American men were not included in the analysis, it is unknown whether or not their BS and HS scores would have been different from the other groups in the study. Chiefly, any discrepancies between their scores and those of White women could have provided particularly informative data.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated that there are group differences by race/gender group (i.e., African American women, White women, and White men) on (h) Dyadic Adjustment (RDAS mean scale score). Specifically, White men and African American women were predicted to have higher levels of dyadic adjustment than White women. An ANOVA was performed with race/gender group as the independent variable (IV) and Dyadic Adjustment served as the dependent variable (DV). No significant results were found. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected for this analysis. Please see Table 9 in previous chapter for enumeration of statistics. These results are surprising. Given the higher dissolution rates among African American male/White female pairings (Zhang & Van Hook, 2009) and the lower rates among African American female/White male pairings (Bratter & King, 2008), White women would have been expected to score lower on

Dyadic Adjustment than African American women and White men. As was the case with the other hypotheses, African American men were not included in the analysis. If they had scored lower than the other groups, this finding may have assisted in explaining the disparity in dissolution rates between the two pairings.

Hypothesis 6

In Hypothesis 6, it was predicted that Model 1, comprised of the mean scale scores for (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege, (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, (c) Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues, (d) Empathic Concern, (e) Perspective Taking, (f) Benevolent Sexism, and (g) Hostile Sexism would predict (h) Dyadic Adjustment. It was also hypothesized that Model 2, which contained the same variables as Model 1 with the addition of (i) gender/race group would predict (h) Dyadic Adjustment. Finally, it was hypothesized that Model 2 would be superior to Model 1, as the addition of gender/race group would account for significant incremental variance in Model 2.

A hierarchical regression was performed and did not yield significant results. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected for this final analysis. Please see Table 10 in previous chapter for enumeration of statistics. This result was surprising as past research, specifically with regard to Empathy and Ambivalent Sexism, has shown that these variables are predictive of Dyadic Adjustment (Ickes, 2001; Waldinger, Schultz, Hauser, Allen, & Crowell, 2004; Busby and Gardner, 2008; Overall, Sibley, & Tan, 2011). While neither Model 1 nor Model 2 was statistically significant, the p value for Model 1 (.088) approached statistical significance. This finding suggests that a larger sample size may

have resulted in a statistically significant regression model. Accordingly, the psychological variables, (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege, (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, (c) Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues, (d) Empathic Concern, (e) Perspective Taking, (f) Benevolent Sexism, and (g) Hostile Sexism may in fact significantly predict (h) Dyadic Adjustment, given a larger sample size.

Overall Results

The lack of significant results across most of the hypotheses is surprising, as these variables were carefully chosen based upon past research. All four variables have not been previously researched together; however, past studies have examined pairs of these variables. Significant relationships have been rendered between color-blindness and empathy (Burkard & Knox, 2004), empathy and dyadic adjustment (Busby and Gardner, 2008), and sexism and dyadic adjustment (Overall, Sibley, & Tan, 2011). Furthermore, previous qualitative research suggests that color-blindness plays a pivotal role in interracial relationship functioning (Killian, 2001; 2003; Thompson & Collier 2006). As such, there appeared to be a strong likelihood that these variables, taken together, would have yielded significant results.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are numerous and were a likely culprit of the lack of significant results. The small sample size represented the primary problem with this study; possible reasons for the small n are enumerated. Access to African American/White couples proved more difficult than expected. While this pairing constitutes a growing couples' sector, their rate of marriage remains lower than many

other racial or ethnic pairings and certainly lower than endogamous pairings (Passal, Wang, & Taylor, 2010), resulting in fewer individuals meeting criteria to participate in studies like this one. This issue may be evident by the large number of qualitative versus quantitative studies in this area. A Power Analysis, using G-Power, was conducted following data collection and analysis to determine the sample sizes that would have been necessary to yield significant results, given the achieved effect size and observed power for each analysis. The Power Analysis showed that a minimum of 129 (as indicated for the ANOVA) to 606 participants (as indicated for the hierarchical linear regression), would have been needed to obtain significant results. These participant requirements obviously far exceed the sample size actually obtained in this study.

Another likely impediment to recruiting this population involves healthy distrust among groups who have historically and presently experienced discrimination and abuse, especially within research and/or treatment contexts. Research such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, The Moynihan Report (1965), and *The Bell Curve* (Murray & Herrnstein, 1994) are just a few of the egregious examples in which African American research participants have been abused, exploited, and used to perpetuate oppression and myths of inferiority (Huang & Coker, 2010). Studies such as these have catalyzed warranted distrust among African Americans, thereby reducing their interest and confidence in research participation (Huang & Coker, 2010; Earl & Penney, 2001). Moreover, research has indicated that individuals from African American communities tend to associate participation in mental health studies and/or treatment with stigma; rather, individuals in these communities are more likely to address any personal problems or difficulties with

religious authorities (Coker & Bryant, 2003). While the present study also sought White participants, in general, both African American and White partners from interracial couples may be more concerned about risks of study participation because their pairing has long been the object of discriminatory practices.

Although small sample sizes are noted across each of the four groups targeted for the present study, only two African American men participated. While this reduced participation is not surprising given the aforementioned reasons involving distrust of research, it is interesting that this group had demonstrably fewer participants than their African American female counterparts. This outcome may have been a fluke or may reflect greater levels of healthy suspiciousness among African American men with regard to research participation as opposed to the other three groups. Nonetheless, the fact that there were not enough African American male participants in the study to effectively analyze their data represents a serious limitation to this research.

Next, online data collection allowed for more readily available access to participants on a national level, provided increased participant anonymity, and allowed for more specific targeting of potential participants through online interracial forums and communities. Nonetheless, online data collection may have comprised another barrier to research participation and may have restricted the range of participants from varying levels of SES. Although many households are equipped with computers with internet access, individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may not have had access to computers and/or internet and would have therefore been precluded from study participation. As such, convenience of online research should be weighed against

potential for an inadvertent elitist study and restricted range of participants from varying levels of SES.

The online data collection was also problematic for another reason. A large portion of sample was recruited through online communities and forums about interracial couples. Is it possible or even likely that individuals who would seek out joining such an online community or forum would have greater awareness of issues related to race? Furthermore, given that past research has suggested that Color-Blindness is inversely related to Empathy (Burkard & Knox, 2004), might such individuals also be more empathic? Accordingly, it is difficult to ascertain whether the individuals who participated in the present study are truly representative of the population. Perhaps if more individuals had participated from other recruitment sources, the sample may have held greater representation of the population and perhaps an increased number of the hypotheses would have yielded significant results.

One other limitation deals with norming of the questionnaires. It should be noted that none of the questionnaires have been normed on interracial partners. As such, this makes difficult any determination of the applicability of these measures to the population examined in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are offered for future research examining African American/White interracial couples: (a) additional variables and control group, (b) examination of benefits to risk ratio of measurement of psychological variables in this

population, (c) use of qualitative versus quantitative research, and (d) researcher community involvement.

Two added variables and a control group would likely strengthen future studies on this topic. Although the present study emphasized the importance of investigating only partner variables, due to the fact that societal – related variables pose a greater challenge with regard to prevention/intervention, certainly social support may play an important role in moderating or mediating the effects of partner variables on dyadic adjustment. In other words, to what extent do partners feel supported by their family members, friends, place of employment, peers, etc.? Another issue deals with social desirability. Many of the questionnaire items are transparent (i.e., variable being measured is clear to participant). Consequently, despite steps taken to ensure anonymity, participants might feel compelled to respond in socially appropriate ways that may not be reflective of their true attitudes or beliefs. As such, implementing a social desirability scale into the study would assist in determining participants' truthfulness in responding to items. Furthermore, adding a control group would provide important information regarding how partners in interracial couples compare to partners in endogamous couples along the examined psychological variables. In other words, do partners from interracial couples differ from endogamous White and African American couples with regard to colorblindness, empathy, sexism, or dyadic adjustment?

Future research should determine whether the benefits of researching reasons for the disparity between stability of African American female/White male partnerships versus White female/African American male relationships outweigh possible risks,

particularly to White female/African American male partnerships. The present study sought to determine whether differences in these four groups along the investigated psychological variables might predict relationship adjustment. However, Wheeler (2003) highlights the necessity of a researcher seeing population differences as “‘difference,’ and not jump to the conclusion that differences are pathological” (p. 67). While the intention of the present study was to produce data that might inform future courses of prevention and intervention aimed at reducing relationship dissolution among the latter group, it is important to recognize that discovery of group differences, particularly with regard to African American men has the potential to be responsible for continued pathological stereotypes. This issue may be specifically relevant to quantitative studies that find more limits to acquiring participant context and perspective. The next section discusses ways in which qualitative research may prove more fruitful in mitigating the aforementioned problems and in recruiting this population.

Previous studies examining African American/White couples have largely been qualitative in methodology (Mc Nerney, 2009). Although studies have not explicitly cited challenges to accessing this population as a reason for utilizing qualitative over quantitative methodology, the requirement for larger sample size in quantitative research may make studying this particular population a better fit with qualitative approaches. More importantly, qualitative approaches with interracial couples may be more culturally sensitive (Huang & Coker, 2010). Tillman (2006) recommended qualitative methodology in research with African American participants, noting that these approaches “capture a holistic contextualized picture of the social, political, economic and educational factors

that affect the everyday existence of African-Americans” (p. 269). She further emphasized that qualitative research allows for relationship development between participant and researcher, an approach which is vastly dissimilar from most quantitative research. This type of relational connection and focus on story and holism serves as an approach more commensurate with African American culture (Tillman, 2006).

Given the history of abuse of researcher power and exploitation of minority research participants, building trust with prospective participants is essential. Mason (2005) suggested that researchers attempting to recruit African American participants should become involved in African American communities and establish relationships with leaders in these communities. Hatchett et al. (2000) suggest that teaming up with another researcher or consultant who is a member of the African American community in which participants are being sought can help promote trust and greater willingness to participate. Moreover, Hatch et al., 1993 proposed even further nontraditional outreach by involving participants/community members in the study’s design and implementation. These authors posit that this approach provides participants with a vested interest in the study and promotes trust and connection with the researcher. It is also essential for researchers to periodically assess participants’ perceptions or concerns about racism within the research in order to ensure culturally sensitive practices (Mason 2005; Huang & Coker, 2010). Smith et al. (2007) underscore that while online study advertisement and data gathering may serve an important function, its use should be limited and diminutive in comparison to face to face participant recruitment and data collection.

The psychological variables examined in this study were well-researched and taken together, likely predict relationship adjustment. The quantitative approach used in conjunction with the small sample size was a serious limitation that could be remedied by the options suggested above. Thus, it is recommended that future research on African American/White interracial couples continue to explore the effects of color-blindness, empathy, and sexism on relationship adjustment. However, at the very least, methods should focus on building in person relationships with these couples in their communities and with other members of their communities, use qualitative approaches, and assess and address participants' concerns about racism in the study (Hatch et al., 1993, Mason 2005; Tillman, 2006; Huang & Coker, 2010).

Conclusions

The present study served to illuminate psychological factors on the dyadic level that serve to protect or undermine intimate relationship adjustment (i.e., relationship functioning and satisfaction). These factors included the effects of color-blindness, empathy, and sexism on relationship adjustment. Group differences were explored between African American women, White women, and White men. Although the study intended to include African American men in these analyses, there were not enough participants in this group to effectively analyze their data. Results indicated that the three groups were similar in age, length of time living together, and highest level of education. These similarities suggest that any differences between groups along the psychological variables examined in this study are not attributable or related to differences among the three groups along these demographic variables. No significant differences were found

between the three groups on variables related to color-blindness, sexism, or relationship adjustment. African American women and White women endorsed higher levels of empathy as related to one of the two empathy subscales (i.e., Empathic Concern) but the groups were not significantly different from one another on the other subscale (i.e., Perspective Taking). Finally, color-blindness, empathy, and sexism approached statistical significance in predicting relationship adjustment. The addition of the gender/race group did not improve the model in predicting dyadic adjustment.

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Appendix A

Project Information Sheet/Consent to Participate in Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study about interracial couples. This study's aim is to better understand what factors impact relationship functioning in interracial couples and results will be used to inform counselors how to better serve interracial couples. Your participation in this research study is requested if you are involved in an interracial intimate relationship. You must either be married to your partner and living together or not married and living together.

This study is being conducted by Elizabeth Muino, M.A. as part of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Counseling Psychology at the University of Denver. Elizabeth Muino can be reached at 720-281-4030 or Lizzie.Muino@yahoo.com. This project is supervised by the dissertation chair, Dr. Jesse N. Valdez, (Counseling Psychology Department), University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, (303-871-2482), (Jesse.Valdez@du.edu).

You will be asked to complete five short questionnaires, which in total, should take approximately 20 to 30 minutes of your time. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue your participation at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

The first questionnaire is a demographic questionnaire where you will be asked to provide specific information about yourself, your parents, your partner, and your family. The other questionnaires will ask you to provide information about your attitudes regarding race and gender, your general thoughts and feelings toward other people, and finally your thoughts and feelings about your relationship with your partner. Your responses will be anonymous. That means that no one will be able to connect your identity with the information you give. Please do not type your name anywhere in the questionnaire. Please fill out the questionnaire by yourself (do not fill out the questionnaire with your partner in the room with you) in order to maintain your confidentiality. Clicking the submit button at the end of the questionnaire will signify your consent to participate in this project.

At the end of the study, you may choose to enter your email address for a \$100 Amazon.com gift certificate drawing but this is not required for participation in the study. If you provide your email address for the gift certificate drawing, it will in no way be linked to the answers you submitted in the questionnaire.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during this study, please contact Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call 303-871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may save or print this page for your records.

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your gender from the following list:

Female

Male

Transgender

2. Please indicate your partner's gender from the following list:

Female

Male

Transgender

3. Please indicate your race from the following list:

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

Multiracial

4. If you selected multiracial, please indicate the race that best describes you:

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

5. Please indicate your ethnicity from the following list:

Hispanic or Latino

Not Hispanic or Latino

6. Please indicate the race that best describes your mother from the following list:

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

Multiracial

7. Please indicate your mother's ethnicity from the following list:

Hispanic or Latino

Not Hispanic or Latino

8. Please indicate the race that best describes your father from the following list:

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

Multiracial

9. Please indicate your father's ethnicity from the following list:

Hispanic or Latino

Not Hispanic or Latino

10. What is your age in years? _____

11. Please indicate your highest level of education

- Some high school
- GED or high school diploma
- Some college or Associates Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Some graduate school
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

12. Please indicate your occupational status

- Homemaker
- Part-time employment
- Full-time employment
- Not employed

13. Please type in your occupation

14. Please indicate your partner's race from the following

list:

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Multiracial

15. If you selected multiracial for your partner, please

indicate the race that you think best describes

your partner:

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

16. Please indicate your partner's ethnicity from the following list:

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

17. What is your partner's age in years? _____

18. Please indicate your partner's highest level of education

- Some high school
- GED or high school diploma
- Some college or Associates Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Some graduate school
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

19. Please indicate your partner's occupational status

- Homemaker
- Part-time employment
- Full-time employment
- Not employed

20. Please type in your partner's occupation

21. Please indicate in months and years the amount of time

you have been living with your partner.

_____ months _____ years

22. Are you and your partner married?

- yes
- no

23. If you answered yes, how long in months and years have
you been married to your partner?
_____months _____years

24. Please indicate the number of children below the age of
18 currently living in your home.

Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale SCORING INFORMATION

Neville, H. A., Lilly, R. L., Duran, G., Lee, R. M., Browne, L. (2000). Construction and Initial Validation of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS). Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47, 59-70.

Directions. Below is a set of questions that deal with social issues in the United States (U.S.). Using the 6-point scale, please give your honest rating about the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with each statement. Please be as open and honest as you can; there are no right or wrong answers. Record your response to the left of each item.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree

1. Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.
2. **Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S.**
3. It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian American.
4. **Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.**
5. **Racism is a major problem in the U.S.**
6. **Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.**
7. Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.
8. **Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S.**
9. White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color their skin.
10. Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.
11. **It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems.**

12. **White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.**
13. Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of the U.S.
14. English should be the only official language in the U.S.
15. **White people are more to blame for racial discrimination in the U.S. than racial and ethnic minorities.**
16. Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.
17. **It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.**
18. Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
19. Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.
20. **Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.**

The following items (which are bolded above) are reversed score (such that 6 = 1, 5 = 2, 4 = 3, 3 = 4, 2 = 5, 1 = 6): item #2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 15, 17, 20. Higher scores should greater levels of “blindness”, denial, or unawareness.

Factor 1: Unawareness of Racial Privilege consists of the following 7 items: 1, **2, 6, 8, 12, 15, 20**

Factor 2: Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination consists of the following 7 items: 3, **4, 9, 13, 14, 16, 18**

Factor 3: Unawareness to Blatant Racial Issues consists of the following 6 items: **5, 7, 10, 11, 17, 19**

Results from Neville et al. (2000) suggest that higher scores on each of the CoBRAS factors and the total score are related to greater: (a) global belief in a just world; (b) sociopolitical dimensions of a belief in a just world, (c) racial and gender intolerance, and (d) racial prejudice. For information on the scale, please contact Helen Neville (hneville@uiuc.edu).

Interpersonal Reactivity Index
Emotional Concern and Perspective-Taking Subscales

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: A, B, C, D, or E. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter on the answer sheet next to the item number. **READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING.** Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE:

A	B	C	D	E
DOES NOT				DESCRIBES ME
DESCRIBE ME				VERY
WELL				WELL

2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me. (EC)
3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view. (PT) (-)
4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (EC) (-)
8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision. (PT)
9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them. (EC)
11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective. (PT)
14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (EC) (-)
15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (PT) (-)
18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (EC) (-)
20. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen. (EC)

21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. (PT)
22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. (EC)
25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while. (PT)
28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. (PT)

NOTE:(-) denotes item to be scored in reverse fashion

PT = perspective-taking scale

FS = fantasy scale

EC = empathic concern scale

PD = personal distress scale

A = 0

B = 1

C = 2

D = 3

E = 4

Except for reversed-scored items, which are scored:

A = 4

B = 3

C = 2

D = 1

E = 0

The 22-Item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996)
Relationships Between Men and Women

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree
strongly	somewhat	slightly	somewhat	strongly

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."
3. In a disaster, women ought to be rescued before men.
4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.
5. Women are too easily offended.
6. People are not truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
7. Feminists are seeking for women to have more power than men.
8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.
11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.
12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
13. Men are incomplete without women.
14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.
15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.

16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.
17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
18. Many women get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.
19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.
21. Feminists are making unreasonable demands of men.
22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

Scoring:

Total ASI score = average of all items.

Hostile Sexism = average of Items 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21.

Benevolent Sexism = average of Items 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 22.

Note. Items 3, 6, 7, 13, 18, and 21 are reverse-worded in the original version of the ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996),

though not in the version that appears here because reverse-worded items did not perform well in translation to other languages (other than lower factor loadings for reversed items, similar results have been obtained in the United States and elsewhere when both reversed and non-reversed wordings have been administered; see Glick et al., 2000, footnote 2). B = benevolent sexism; I = heterosexual intimacy; H = hostile sexism; P = protective paternalism; G = gender differentiation. Copyright 1995 by Peter Glick and Susan T. Fiske. Use of this scale for nonacademic purposes (i.e., activities other than nonprofit scientific research and classroom demonstrations) requires permission of one of the authors

The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) (Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995; Spanier, 1976)

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Agree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
5	4	3	2	1	0

1. Religious matters
2. Demonstrations of affection
3. Making major decisions
4. Sex relations
5. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)
6. Career decisions

All The time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
0	1	2	3	4	5

7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?
8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?
9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?
10. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"

Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
0	1	2	3	4	5

12. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas

13. Work together on a project

14. Calmly discuss something