

TITLE OF DISSERTATION

RACIAL IDENTITY SALIENCE AND ITS EFFECT ON COLLEGE STUDENTS  
ATTITUDES TOWARD INTERRACIAL DATING: IMPLICATIONS TOWARD  
CHOOSING A POTENTIAL MATE.

by

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**TITLE** Racial identify salience and its effect on college students'  
attitudes toward interracial dating: Implications toward  
choosing a potential mate.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Historically, especially in the United States, interracial relationships have received negative attention. Attitudes toward mixed-race couples, more specifically, Black-White couples were often perceived as taboo and met with open hostility and contempt. Those involved in an interracial relationship received little or no support from their community and were often ostracized by family members, friends, and society. One reason that can be posited in order to explain why these relationships have been so controversial is the contentious history Blacks and Whites have shared throughout American history. Interracial relationships posed a threat to the racial social order that Whites sought to preserve in this country (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). Many states outlawed interracial marriages until the Loving versus Virginia Supreme Court case that determined the laws were unconstitutional (Davidson, 1992). With the advancement of Blacks educationally, occupationally, and socially, contact with Whites increased over time. This increased accessibility has allowed more opportunities for Blacks and Whites to engage in courtships.

Interracial relationships have been of particular significance, because no country except South Africa, with its practice of apartheid, and the United States of America have gone to such lengths to prevent their existence (Gordon, 1964). However, a review of the census data over the last two decades shows a steady increase in Black-White marriages, which suggests that some progress has been made in eliminating the stigma placed on these unions. However, this is not always reflected in people's behavior (Solsberry, 1994). Black-White couples may still find



themselves the victim of discrimination, prejudice, and limited family support (Davidson, 1992, Lewis & Yancey, 1995, Mills, Daly, Longmore, & Kilbride, 1994).

Given the prejudicial and contemptuous attitudes Black-White couples may receive from those who disagree with their relationship the question to ask is why do these individuals choose to engage in these relationships.

Two plausible theories posited for explaining why most individuals may become involved in an interracial relationship are structural theory and racial motivation theory. Structural theory suggests that demographics (i.e., socioeconomic status, education, occupation, residence) and mutual attraction contribute to the initiation of an interracial union (Kouri & Lasswell, 1993). The racial motivation theory posits that individuals choose to engage in an interracial relationship, because they find their racially different partner more appealing because of their race (Porterfield, 1978, Benson, 1981, Kouri & Lasswell, 1993). In light of these theories, and the continued increase in interracial marriages over time, it would prove useful to investigate how important is one's racial identity in today's society. Do people place as much importance on their own racial identity and what influence does this have on their choice for a romantic partner?

There have been a few studies conducted on people's attitudes toward interracial dating and interracial marriage, but there is limited research on the correlation between the importance of one's own racial identity and their attitudes toward interracial dating. This study seeks to add to the existing literature on this subject.

### *Black-White Relationships in America*

An Interracial relationship can be defined as a dating relationship between two parties belonging to different racial groups. Even though strides have been made to improve race relations within the United States interracial relationships are still considered taboo in many parts of this country. It may be that no other country is as race conscious as the United States; nonetheless, history points out that the mixing of races is an ancient occurrence. According to Gordon (1964) the intermingling of people from different ethnicities and races dates back to biblical times and is illustrated throughout scripture. Gordon (1964) also points out that, during the discovery of the New World in 1492, there was an intermingling of races, thus leading to offspring being born from persons of different ethnic and racial backgrounds.

If throughout history there has been an intermingling of people from different ethnicities, this would have led to a mixing of genetics. It is plausible to conclude that there is no pure race that exists in the world. In an attempt to address this point following World War I 12 scientists representing various scientific backgrounds were sponsored by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization to rebut what was termed Nazi-style racism and the notion of a pure race. Their supposition was that race, hatred, and conflict thrive on scientifically false ideas and are nurtured by ignorance (Brattain, 2007). The purpose of this study was to debunk the idea of a pure race and the notion that racial mixing results in biologically inferior offspring. As a result of their study several conclusions were rendered; however, those pertinent to this discussion indicated that no matter how pure mankind was at

the beginning of time races have long since ceased to be free from outside blood strains (Brattain, 2007). They also pointed out that it has never been possible to separate members of two groups on the basis of mental capacity indicating that intelligence tests on those reared in similar environments showed minimal intellectual differences (Brattain, 2007). In cases where psychologists claimed to find differences in intellectual ability between races, these same psychologists also contended that some members of the inferior group surpass average members of the superior group, thus dispelling the notion of a superior intellectual group (Brattain, 2007).

Researchers have continued to investigate differences in intelligence between ethnic groups. Developmental psychologist Philippe Rushton has received a fair amount of attention and criticism for his controversial work on the topic of race differences. Rushton (1999) argues from an evolutionary point of view that there are three biological races of man that he describes as Orientals (Mongoloids), Blacks (Negroids), and Whites (Caucasoids). In his review of previous research on intelligence test scores for these three groups, Rushton (1999) indicates that Orientals' average IQ score is about 106, Whites' average IQ score is about 100, and Blacks' average IQ score is about 85. Rushton (1999) supposes that intellectual ability among these groups is not so much based on social, political, economic, or cultural reasons. He uses research to suggest that there is an evolutionary and genetic pattern that encompasses other complex variables to explain differences in intelligence, such as time spent in the mother's womb, genital size, rate of sexual maturation, frequency of sexual intercourse, sexual hormone levels, gamete

production, marital stability, law abidingness, and mental health. According to Rushton (1999) for each variable the three races fall in a certain order with Orientals always on one side, Blacks on the other side, and Whites in the middle. For instance, in his research that examined brain size to help explain the differences in intelligence, Rushton (1999) concluded that Orientals have one cubic inch more brain matter than Whites, but Whites have five cubic inches more brain matter than Blacks. He argues that a cubic inch of brain matter contains millions of brain cells and connections; therefore, brain size is a factor in explaining race differences in intellectual ability (Rushton, 1999).

Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's work on the difference in intelligence scores among races has also received considerable attention. Like Rushton, Herrnstein & Murray (1994) point out that Asians have mean IQ scores between 101 and 106, while the mean IQ score for Whites is about 100, and the mean IQ score for Blacks is about 85. In addressing the gap between Blacks' and Whites' IQ scores the authors identify that there are plenty of Blacks who score higher than Whites on intelligence tests. However, when evaluating the overall trend of Black-White IQ scores there appear to be a difference of one standard deviation. In their writings on the differences between Black-White IQ scores, they discuss common points that are often made to explain this gap, which are test bias, culturally loaded questions on intelligence tests, lack of motivation among some Blacks, and differences in socioeconomic status (SES). They refute the issue of test bias by indicating, "a test biased against Blacks does not predict Black performance in the real world in the same way that it predicts White performance in the real world" (Herrnstein & Murray,

1994, pg. 281). They identify empirical research, which states that standardized tests used in schools and for job decisions do not under predict Blacks' performance, and no systematic differences have been found in their predictive accuracy (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). In addressing the issue of culturally loaded questions, Herrnstein & Murray (1994) point out that research has shown that Black-White differences are wider on items that are culturally neutral than on items that are culturally loaded. Therefore, they suggest this argument cannot be used as a basis to explain the intellectual differences between Blacks and Whites. In examining the notion that Blacks IQ score may be due to a lack of motivation, Herrnstein & Murray (1994) drew upon research that looked at intellectual subtests like digit span to refute this argument. They indicated that Black respondents performed about the same as White respondents on forward digit span, but on backward digit span White respondents performed exceptionally better than Black respondents (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Therefore, they question how one can argue the rationale of Blacks displaying a lack of motivation when there is such a difference in performance on two parts of the same subtest. There have also been arguments that Blacks score lower on intelligence tests because they are more economically disadvantaged. If this is the case it would be expected that as Black families' SES increases, then their performance on intelligence tests should improve. Herrnstein & Murray (1994) indicate that the research does not support this line of reasoning. They point out that Blacks with higher SES do score higher on intelligence tests, however the gap between Blacks' and Whites' IQ scores remains roughly the same, which is one standard deviation, or a fifteen point difference (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994).

Herrnstein and Murray (1994) also discuss Spearman's hypothesis to explain the difference between Blacks and Whites score on intelligence tests. This arises out of research conducted by Arthur Jensen and Cyril Reynolds. Spearman's hypothesis states that the better an intellectual test is correlated with general mental ability or *g* the larger the difference between races on tests of intellectual ability. They indicate that when you examine Whites from high SES and low SES who have the same overall IQ score, the scores on subtests that measure general mental ability, such as digit span backward and reaction time tests, they are closely the same (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). However, when you apply the same method when comparing Black respondents and White and respondents, the overall IQ score may be the same, but the subtest scores will indicate that Whites score higher on subtests that measure *g* than Blacks (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). According to Herrnstein & Murray (1994) the broadest conception of intelligence is embodied in Spearman's hypothesis, since *g* undercuts the argument of race differences being the result of one's environment, validity issues, or administering bad intellectual tests. According to Herrnstein and Murray (1994), Spearman's hypothesis furthers the discussion to explain the difference in intelligence test scores between Blacks and Whites.

The argument can be made that this type of research may have empirical value; however, it will continue to draw controversy because of the implication that arises from them. There are those who will use this information to continue drawing distinctions between Blacks and Whites in order to support their racial beliefs that Blacks are inferior to Whites. This is an important notion to consider, because this type of research is still being communicated in academic literature, which has the

potential to make its way into popular literature. This allows for the continued focus on differences between Blacks and Whites, rather than ways to continue improving race relations.

As previously mentioned given the history that Blacks and Whites share this may explain why Black-White couples evoke the strongest response from some within society. This is an issue that dates back to the slavery period where Blacks were viewed as less than equal to Whites in America. Blacks were considered property of White slave owners; therefore, they had no citizenship or rights. Despite the inhumane treatment of Blacks there was still a considerable amount of contact between Blacks and Whites. One form of contact was between White indentured servants and slaves, although the practice of keeping indentured servants declined as the practice of slavery increased (Gullickson, 2006). During this transition period the two groups worked in close quarters with each other, which made sexual contact a common practice. Solsberry (1994) draws attention to the plight of Black women indicating that they not only had to serve as workers to their slave masters, but were also given the primary function of “breeding,” because a high birth rate among slaves was desirable for maintaining manual labor. In addition, societal norms maintained that White women exhibit a prudish attitude; therefore, Black women were frequently demeaned, objectified, and sought after for sexual exploitation by White slave owners. In many cases, Black women were raped if they declined or refused to have sexual intercourse. With the vast amount of sexual contact taking place between Blacks and Whites this led to the births of many mixed-race children being born. Gullickson (2006) indicates that these biracial children were perceived

as a problem to the emerging racial system as elites sought to further the institution of slavery. Biracial children were opposed by Whites for being half Black and were not viewed as African American until after the 1850's (Williamson, 1980).

While interracial marriages were impossible and nonexistent during this era due to anti-miscegenation laws this did not stop some Whites and some members among free Black populations from engaging in long-term interracial unions. Gullickson (2006) writes that after the emancipation of Blacks in this country, Whites felt threatened and fearful of their emergence as a people. In order to maintain social distance and psychological control over Blacks, states maintained the ideology of their inferiority when compared to Whites by implementing Jim Crow laws in the South and a less formal system in other parts of the country. This oppressive institution, which spanned the years beginning in the 1880's to the 1960's, was utilized to deny Blacks their civil rights and civil liberties for close to 100 years. However, Blacks and Whites continued to engage in civil unions throughout the country. Using data analysis from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, which contains samples of the decennial census from 1850 to 2000, Gullickson (2006) indicates that during the Jim Crow era there was a decrease in the number of interracial unions. While these laws were instituted to promote White supremacy and segregation, it is argued that they were also implemented to alleviate the concern for maintaining the purity of White women and preventing Black men from pursuing them (Gullickson, 2006). Gullickson (2006) also mentions that in addition to Jim Crow laws sixteen States implemented additional laws against interracial marriage; however, this did not prevent Whites and Blacks from engaging in long-term



relationships and civil unions.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau statistics (1998) in 1960 there were 51,000 Black-White marriages recorded. However, Heer's (1974) research raised the question of validity when considering census data during this period. He pointed out possible methodological problems, particularly race classification errors and inaccuracies in information recorded. However, he suggests that if these types of errors did exist it would result in few differences in reported Black-White marriages by type, region, or any other characteristics, and over time would show trends similar to that of all marriages (Heer, 1974). The variations in data by region and sharp divergent trends in number of Black-White marriages did not sustain his hypothesis; therefore, he concluded the data were most likely valid (Heer, 1974). He indicates that, between 1960 and 1970, there was a 26% increase in Black-White marriages. He also indicates that during this period, specifically in the North and West interracial unions increased by 66% and decreased in the South by 34% (Heer, 1974). Further analysis of the data also revealed that when examining race and gender there was a 61.7% increase in the number of married couples where the husband was black and the wife was white, and a 9.1% decrease where the husband was White and the wife was Black (Heer, 1974).

Monahan (1976) conducted a similar study on the increasing number of interracial marriages. Monahan (1976) used sample record data from the U.S. Marriage Registration Area covering the years of 1963-1970. He surmised that marriage records are the most representative source of interracial unions (Monahan, 1976). Although, he also explains that one concern with marriage records is the

limited information they provide (Monahan, 1976). During this period, many states were pushing to remove race from marital records in order to coincide with the civil rights movement (Monahan, 1976). In addition, there were some states that did not have a statewide collection of standardized marriage records; therefore, not all states were included in the study (Monahan, 1976). Out of the 35 States included, Monahan (1976) illustrates that between 1963 and 1970 Black-White marriages increased from 1.4% to 2.6%. Marriages involving Black men and White women increased from 1.0% to 1.9%. Marriages involving White men and Black women increased from 0.4% to 0.6%.

While Heer and Monahan used different methodological approaches, both studies revealed an increase in Black-White unions between the periods of 1960 and 1970. They also revealed that more Black men were engaging in unions with White women than Black women were engaging in with White men. Then in 1967 the Supreme Court case *Loving versus Virginia* declared that all laws against interracial marriage were unconstitutional and invalid (Aldridge, 1978; Davidson, 1992). After this landmark case there was an 86% increase in Black-White marriages between 1970 and 1980 (Census, 1998). Gullickson (2006) contends that the increase in Black-White marriages was not only the result of the *Loving versus Virginia* case, but also the introduction of the Civil Rights era which started the transformation of the racial climate in the United States. These actions allowed for increased contact between Blacks and Whites in this country, which ultimately led to an increase in the frequency of interracial dating and marriages (Gullickson, 2006).

### *Black and White families' response to interracial relationships*

Despite statistics which suggest that there has been a steady increase in the number of Black-White unions, many continue to view these relationships in a negative and disapproving manner. One explanation for this reaction is family members' response to interracial relationships. With an increase in the population of minorities living in the United States, the explicit negative response to an interracial couple may not be as prevalent as it once was, but research has shown that some families continue to have difficulty with accepting this concept. Mills, Daly, Longmore, and Kilbride (1994) conducted a study on family acceptance of interracial friendships and romantic relationships by administering a survey to a group of 142 undergraduate students. Their results indicated that both Black and White students reported that their family's perception of interracial relationships would be negative (Mills, et al 1994). Lewis & Yancey (1995) illustrated in their paper on family member support toward biracial marriage that a higher percentage of White respondents indicated their family members were less supportive of biracial marriage than African American or Mexican American family members. They also pointed out that White respondents who were married to African Americans reported less support from their family members than did African American or Mexican American participants. Golebiowska (2007) conducted a study which investigated the role stereotypes play on the White family's attitudes toward interracial marriage. Golebiowska (2007) indicated that over a third (37.3%) of respondents reported that their families strongly opposed an interracial marriage involving a Black person and a close relative, and 40% indicated they would neither support nor object to a close relative

marrying a Black person. In regards to the latter statistic, she hypothesized that since the disapproval of interracial marriage could be considered prejudicial, those falling in the middle group are likely attempting to hide their opposition (Golebiowska, 2007). When examining White families attitudes toward other ethnic groups, Golebiowska (2007) found the following:

Whites' opposition to interracial marriage involving a close family member to a Hispanic or Asian person is considerably lower (21.5% and 21.8%, respectively) than opposition to marriage involving a Black person (37.3%). Conversely, approval of marriage involving a close family member and a Hispanic or Asian person is considerably higher (31.9% and 30.8%, respectively) than approval of marriage between a close family member and a Black person (23%) pg. 272.

Rosenblatt, Karris, and Powell (1995) pointed out in their interviews with interracial couples that among the White participants' immediate family members there was consistent displeasure and often hostility expressed over an interracial partnership. Whereas, among Black participants' immediate family members some expressed concern with an interracial relationship, they were at least willing to meet the White partner (Rosenblatt, et al 1995). One explanation Rosenblatt et al., (1995) puts forth to explain Whites' opposition toward interracial unions is that their views are rooted in racism of being the dominant group. Whites have maintained negative stereotypes of Blacks throughout history, and these stereotypes reflect Blacks as being poor, uneducated, violent, and lacking in morality (Rosenblatt, et al., 1995; Golebiowska 2007). Some Whites that are adverse to these relationships may base

their argument on these assumptions. In other cases, Whites' display of intolerance toward their family member being involved in an interracial relationship may be their way of protesting the partner's choice, because it stipulates the choice of relative for other members in the family. It is their way of saying we do not accept this person as a relative or potential relative (Rosenblatt, et al., 1995). Within African American families, those who protested an interracial union could not identify any specific reason for their objection, but the general theme of their discomfort centered on "the sense that Whites are the enemy" (Rosenblatt, et al., 1995, pg. 108). Despite some contention expressed by Black families, Rosenblatt, et al., (1995) points out that "they were still able to accept the White partner as a person, rather than react to him or her as representative of a category" (pg. 101).

Within Black families, mothers are often the matriarchs of the family and set the tone for the type of values and beliefs that are instilled within their children. Therefore, for these families the mother's attitude toward her offspring entering an interracial relationship often determines the direction for the rest of the immediate family (Rosenblatt et al., 1995). Within White families fathers often play the key role in determining whether their child's involvement in an interracial union is accepted or rejected, although mothers, siblings, grandparents, and other family members play a role as well (Rosenblatt et al., 1995). Therefore, Blacks who live in single parent households may find it easier to obtain the support of one parent in accepting their involvement in an interracial relationship, unlike those in White families who have to win the support of multiple family members (Rosenblatt et al., 1995).

Despite societal reaction and family members' opposing views toward

interracial couples, Black-White relationships have steadily increased over time. According to U.S. Census Statistics Black-White marriages increased 45% between 1990 and 2000 and 64% between 2000 and 2010 (Census Bureau, 2004; Census Bureau, 2010). As mentioned earlier the increased contact between Blacks and Whites has led to more opportunities for interracial dating situations. The Civil Rights movement was a key moment in history that brought Blacks and Whites together for a common cause. The increased number of Blacks attending Colleges and Universities has also been instrumental in fostering contact between Blacks and Whites, thus providing more opportunities for dating situations. Gordon (1964) points out that social controls used by parents and immediate family members have been challenged by the liberal attitudes expressed in University settings, which have allowed for a greater frequency of races intermingling. Aldridge (1978) indicated that since a large number of interracial couples meet on college campuses, this suggests that young people have dismissed the values instituted by their family and community and rejected the taboos on dating outside their race.

*Attitudes toward interracial dating/marriage*

There have been a few studies focused on the topic of college students' attitudes toward interracial dating. In a study conducted by Knox, Zussman, Buffington, and Hemphill (2000), 620 university students at East Carolina University completed questionnaires designed to assess their attitudes toward interracial dating. 24.2% reported dating someone of a different ethnicity and 49.6% expressed an openness to become involved in an interracial relationship (Knox et al., 2000). Examining differences between the two races, Knox et al. (2000) indicated that 83%

of Blacks and 43% of Whites reported being open to involvement in an interracial relationship.

Harris and Kalbfleisch (2000) conducted a study with 120 students from a large southern university. 60 African Americans and 60 Caucasian Americans were given index cards with varying dating tactics listed on them. The participants were given instructions to imagine they met someone of their same race with whom they would like to start a romantic relationship. The participants were guided through two stages where they divided their index cards into three piles demonstrating tactics they use then read their strategies aloud. The participants were then asked to repeat the same task and sort the cards as if they were attracted to a person from another race and wanted to start a romantic relationship with this person. Results of their study indicated that 65% of men and 65% of women changed their verbal strategies when expected to demonstrate interest in an interracial dating relationship, with males exhibiting slightly more reservation about interracial dating than females (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). Fifty-six percent of African-American females were open to dating a Caucasian male and 56% of Caucasian females were open to dating an African-American male (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). Results also revealed that 87% of African-American males would not consider dating a Caucasian female. The latter part of these results conflict with findings purported by Knox et al., (2000). One explanation may be the region in which the studies were conducted. The Harris and Kalbfleisch study was conducted at a southern university and southern culture has historically demonstrated more concern with race relations between Blacks and Whites. Another explanation that may explain the difference in findings is the lack of

confidentiality. It is possible that some participants may have felt uncomfortable verbally acknowledging their interest in someone of a different ethnicity, particularly the Black male respondents. Statistics indicate that there are more Black men dating outside their race than Black women. Given the disparity between Black women and the number of available Black men to date, Black men are more likely to be criticized or ridiculed for dating outside their race. Therefore, participants may have structured their responses to appear more in favor of dating someone of their own ethnicity.

The regional difference is further revealed in the study conducted by Todd, McKinney, Harris, Chadderton, and Small (1992). Their study focused on attitudes toward interracial dating between African Americans and Caucasian Americans. 400 individuals from the community surrounding California State University completed surveys asking their opinion on interracial dating. Results of the study indicated that men expressed more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than did women (Todd et al., 1992). When examining age differences younger men demonstrated more positive attitudes than did older men (Todd et al., 1992). 75% of younger Black men and 81% of younger White men demonstrated a willingness to date someone outside of their racial group (Todd et al., 1992). Younger Black women demonstrated the most negative attitudes with 44% indicating an unwillingness to date outside of their racial group. Younger White women demonstrated more positive attitudes with 67% indicating they were willing to date outside their racial group (Todd et al., 1992). In comparison to southern states, California is more progressive, culturally diverse, and liberal in terms of values and ideology. The study was also conducted by survey method; therefore, the participants did not have to reveal in any way how they



responded to any of the question, thus allowing them to respond more truthfully. This may explain the difference in attitudes exhibited when compared to Harris & Kalbfleisch (2000) study.

Fiebert, Karamol, and Kasdan (2000), conducted a study with 563 students from four ethnic groups at California State University that examined interracial dating experiences and attitudes of African-Americans, Asian Americans, Caucasians, and Latin Americans. Results indicate that Latinos and Caucasians were preferred as romantic partners and more likely to be dated than were African Americans and Asian Americans (Fiebert et al., 2000). Among the four ethnic groups Latinos and Caucasians were preferred more as romantic partners only (Fiebert et al., 2000). When examining actual dating experience their results revealed that African Americans and Caucasians have dated Latinos more than Asian Americans, and Caucasian Americans have dated Latinos more than they have African Americans (Fiebert et al., 2000). The study also revealed differences in romantic preference, which indicated that Asian Americans preferred Caucasians and Latinos to African Americans; and Caucasians preferred Latinos to either African-Americans or Asian Americans; and Latinos preferred African Americans to Asian Americans (Fiebert et al., 2000).

In a study conducted by Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1995), the researchers sought to examine interethnic dating behavior among southern California residents. Data were obtained from a telephone survey conducted with African American, Latino, and White residents. The sample consisted of 176 Black women and 94 Black men, 229 White women and 218 White men, 100 Latino women and 102

Latino men. Results of their study indicated that men belonging to all groups were more likely to date persons outside their own ethnic group than were females (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). Among Black and White women age was a significant predictor of interethnic dating with younger women being more likely to date someone outside of their race than older women (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). Black women and men reported dating more Whites than any other ethnic group, while White men and women reported dating more Latinos than any other ethnic group (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). Latino women reported dating more Black men, while Latino men reported dating more White women (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). When examining the participant's willingness to marry a person of another race, women were less willing than men to date someone of another ethnic group, and White women were the least willing out of all groups (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). The researchers also point out that the most frequently excluded group for marriage among Whites and Latinos were Blacks (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). Black and Latino women most frequently excluded Asian men. They also pointed out that those with higher education were more open to dating someone of another race (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995).

Schoepflin's (2009) study consisted of 70 participants at a predominantly White private university located in a suburban setting in the Northeast. The participants were 35 Black students and 35 White students. This was a qualitative study designed to examine viewpoints and experiences of college students with regards to interracial dating. The research sought to elicit the participant's perspective on interracial dating through a semi-structured face-to-face interview.

Their results indicated that Black men and White women expressed more favorable attitudes toward interracial dating compared to Black women and White men (Schoepflin 2009). The researcher points out that Black women may encounter more difficulty when trying to find a partner, because they do not favor dating outside their race (Schoepflin, 2009). The fact that Black men supported dating White women narrows the selection for Black women, because it places them in competition with White women for a mate. These findings are similar to the results reported by Todd et al., (1992).

### *Sex Ratio Differences*

An imbalance in the sex ratio among Black men and women has been a long-standing issue that is often brought up in discussions to explain some of the difficulties Black women experience in trying to find a suitable mate to date and possibly marry. Estimates dating back to the late 1970s show that Black women outnumbered Black men in the age group 20-24 by 11 percent. This number increases to 16 percent for the age group 25-29, and 19 percent for the age group 30-34 (Spanier & Glick, 1980). In contrast, the ratio of White males to females remained constant until 32 years of age, then there begins a gradual decline in the number of White men to women (Spanier & Glick, 1980). Low sex ratio among African Americans is often due to incidence of crime and imprisonment. During the late 70's Blacks accounted for 26% of all persons arrested and 34% of those arrested for a serious crime. Blacks were also 42% of jailed inmates and 48% of those with death sentences (Semaj, 1982).

According to statistics on the U.S. prison population, during the year 2009 the

imprisonment rate for Black males age 20-29 was 12,266 per 100,000 U.S. residents, whereas White males accounted for 1,887 per 100,000 U.S. residents, and Hispanic males accounted for 5,047 per 100,000 U.S. residents (West & Sabol, 2010). In 2005 Black men accounted for 52% of male homicide victims in the United States (Harrell, 2007). Black men ages 13 to 24 accounted for 36% of homicide victims compared to 26% of White male victims (Harrell, 2007). Black men ages 17-29 accounted for 51% of homicide victims compared to 37% of White male victims (Harrell, 2007). With more Black men committing crimes, being incarcerated, and having a higher mortality rate, this lessens the likelihood that African American women can find a suitable mate within their ethnic group. When this type of imbalance exists the sex in greater supply has more difficulty finding a partner; therefore, when they enter into a relationship they tend to be more dependent and committed to the relationship (James, Tucker, and Mitchell-Kernan, 1996). The sex in less supply has more alternatives; therefore, their level of commitment to the relationship may not be as strong. James et al., (1996), suggests that this would explain some of the social issues within the Black community, such as “single parent mothers, divorce, adultery, less commitment among Black men toward relationships, and lower societal value on marriage and the family” (pg. 23).

In their study, James et al. (1996) examined if the valuation of long-term relationships and marriage, perceived mate availability, and the sociodemographic variables of age, income, and education were predictive of depressive symptomology, loneliness, happiness, and marital relationship satisfaction. When controlling for sociodemographic variables there was no relationship between mate

availability and well-being among single African American women. Among White and Latino women the relationship was significant. They concluded that Black women may view the imbalance in sex ratio for African American men and women as a systemic environmental feature that they have no control over (James et al., 1996). This suggests that Black women do not experience psychological distress over their inability to obtain a mate, because they do not perceive it as a personal failing. This shortage of men is not as pervasive in White and Latino communities. Therefore, White and Latino women may interpret their inability to secure a potential mate as their being inadequate in some way, which could lead to psychological distress (James et al., 1996).

When the sex in lesser supply cannot secure a viable mate it may lead to the decision to date persons outside of their ethnic group (Tucker & Mitchell-Kearn, 1995). Tucker and Mitchell (1995) point out that African American women identify the dating preferences of Black men as having an impact on their own dating opportunities and behavior. However, despite the shortage in the number of Black men, African American women have the lowest intermarriage rates among ethnic groups in the United States (Tucker & Mitchell-Kearn, 1995). This dynamic deserves the attention of those who study dating patterns.

#### *Theories behind why people date interracially*

There have been some early theories that have attempted to explain why people may choose to interracially date. Davidson (1992) points out that those who engage in an interracial relationship may be resentful of their parents, may be pathologically deviant, and may have internalized a significant degree of self-hatred

(as cited in Hullum, 1982). It has also been theorized that Black men who dated White women were preoccupied with possessing the “forbidden White woman,” and Whites who interracially married were rebelling against social norms and exhibiting their liberal point of view (Aldridge, 1978). Exchange theory was proposed by Merton (1941) based upon earlier work done by Davis (1941). This theory suggests that in the case of interracial relationships in order to achieve higher social standing the lower caste person would have to bring extra attributes into the relationship in order to compensate for the higher status of the upper caste person. Race and socioeconomic status were considered status available for exchange. In relation to a Black-White couple the lower caste Black person would have to compensate for their ethnicity by being of a higher socioeconomic status or more physically attractive than their White counterpart in order to attract them into marriage. Murstein (1986) expounded on this theory by suggesting in addition to these variables the lower caste person would have to possess other exchange variables such as power or education in order to attract Whites into marriage.

In an attempt to measure exchange theory, Murstein, Meighi, and Malloy (2001) conducted a study where they proposed to measure the variable physical attractiveness. The researchers chose this particular variable because it is observable and a prime factor in early courtship. Murstein et al. (2001) indicates, “in a racially prejudiced society Whites may require Blacks to be more attractive than themselves to compensate for Blacks’ lesser-valued skin color” (p. 326). They hypothesized that Blacks would exceed their White partners in physical attractiveness. Twenty interracial couples were observed and rated by judges for

physical attractiveness. Their study resulted in partial support of the judges' rating of Black men being more attractive than their White female counterpart. No support was found in regard to Black women being more attractive than White men, which may have been the result of the small sample size for this particular group. In relation to this finding, Davis (1941) noted that lower class White women will exchange their high caste racial status for the higher socioeconomic status achieved through marrying higher class Black men.

More plausible approaches to explaining Black-White relationships are structural theory and racial motivation theory. The increased opportunities afforded to Blacks over time provided a change in the social status for many of them. Structural theory accounts for these structural changes by postulating that the "decrease in prohibitions against mate selection outside one's own group has by default fostered an increase in positive factors in interracial mate selection" (Kouri & Lasswell, 1993, pg. 243). Racial motivation theory proposes that people may choose to marry interracially because of the racial differences of the opposite partner that is found to be more physically appealing (Kouri & Lasswell, 1993; Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). The theory also suggests that individuals may choose to date interracially in order to go against what is perceived to be a social norm; thereby, rebelling or showing a sign of independence (Kouri and Lasswell, 1993).

Kouri and Lasswell (1993) interviewed interracial couples in Los Angeles area to measure why they chose to marry. 44 of the 46 respondents reported being attracted to their partners because of similar values, interests, and overall compatibility, which supports Structural theory. 7 African Americans (1 female and 6

males) and 9 Caucasian Americans (7 females and 2 males) reported being attracted to each other strictly on the basis of their partner's physical makeup, which provides some support for Racial Motivation theory. While the majority of the findings supported Structural theory for explaining why the subjects interracially married, it is possible that the theories may not be mutually exclusive from one another. None of the respondents reported marrying in order to rebel against their family or societal norms concerning race. Therefore, interracial couples may find themselves both physically attracted to the race of their partner while also having similar values and interests.

### *Identity Development*

Before entering into a discussion on racial identification, an overview of the theoretical origins of identity development is presented to provide a framework of how one's identity is formulated over time. This will allow for a better understanding of how racial identification can influence one's sense of self.

In his writings, Freud did not speak specifically about identity development; however, he did speak of ego development. As the child navigates what Freud termed his psychosexual stages of development, Freud believed that it is the parents' ability to limit the amount of frustration the child receives during their development that is the determinant factor in deciding the type of psychosexual development (Oral, Anal, Phallic, Latency, Genital), and the Oedipal period which occurs during the phallic stage of development. Freud (1962) defined these stages as erotogenic zones and believed that the sexual aim of infantile instincts is obtaining satisfaction through the stimulation of the erotogenic zones. Each zone



becomes the focus of the infant's libidinal energy. This energy derives from the primary-process thinking or the pleasure ego, which seeks immediate sexual gratification and arises in each of the erotogenic zones (Freud, 1998, pg. 305). Freud (1998) believed that the goal of healthy ego development is for the infant to resolve each stage with minimal anxiety or frustration. This would result in the ego's ability to adapt secondary-process thinking or the reality-ego in place of primary process thinking. Secondary process thinking utilizes logic and reason as the mode of thinking even if it means delaying gratification. Freud believed that each stage does not begin and end sharply in a person's life, but they fade into and overlap with the next; therefore, they are unconscious and ongoing.

#### *Erikson's Ego-Identity Development*

Erikson first identified the term ego identity when discussing his clinical treatment with military veterans returning from World War II. Erikson (1968) observed what he described as a "central disturbance" in their psychological lives (pg. 17). He concluded that his patients had:

neither been shellshocked nor become malingerers, but had through the exigencies of war lost a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity. They were impaired in that central control over themselves for which, in psychoanalytic scheme, only the inner agency of the ego could be held responsible (Erikson, 1968, pg. 17).

Erikson (1968) surmised that ego identity concerned more than the mere fact of existence, but involved the ego's quality of this existence. It is not solely based on instinctual drives and a proper balance of stimulation and frustration of bodily

functions. It is the ego's ability to integrate steps toward a tangible “collective future” and developing into a well organized ego within a social reality (pg. 49). It involves a sense of unification and cohesiveness within one's self which provides purpose, meaning, and direction, which manifests in competent and achieved functioning for the individual. Therefore, in different places and in different social situations one will have a sense of being the same person.

Through his continued work with military veterans, Erikson (1968) noted that their disturbance later revealed itself to be a “pathological aggravation, an undue prolongation of, or a regression to, a normative crisis belonging to a particular stage of individual development” (pg. 17). Therefore, he inferred that these individuals were experiencing what he termed an “identity crisis” (pg. 17). He stated that the crisis “designates a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshaling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation” (pg. 16). It is through the experience of this identity crisis that identity formation proceeds; whereby, the individual seeks to integrate or reintegrate key aspects of their earlier development into a cohesive personality structure (Erikson, 1968).

In order to explain his theory of development, Erikson constructed an eight stage life cycle of development, which identifies key psychosocial tasks requiring resolution at different stages. Each person must experience conflict and learn to subsume them into a higher synthesis

According to Erikson (1968) Identity versus Role Confusion is the most important stage in terms of his theory on development. At this stage the adolescent

becomes overwhelmed by their genital maturation and conflicted by the adult roles they must assume. The adolescent becomes concerned with establishing an adolescent subculture with what looks like a final rather than a transitory or initial identity formation. Pondering their place in society and the roles they must play within the adult world the adolescent will experience what Erikson called role confusion (he later classified role confusion as identity diffusion). The adolescent will experiment with a variety of behaviors and activities as they try to connect the roles and skills cultivated earlier in life. Erikson (1968) pointed out that it is the adolescent's inability to settle on an occupational identity that disturbs them. They will temporarily over identify with cliques and peers in a manner which looks like a complete loss of individuality. However, Erikson felt that excluding all those who are different from themselves is the adolescent's way of defending against identity confusion (Erikson, 1968). Before the adolescent can integrate lasting idols and ideals, which would comprise their final identity, he or she must reconcile the crises of earlier years (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1963) spoke of the adolescent mind being a "mind of the moratorium," which he described as a "psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child and the ethics to be developed by the adult" (pg. 263). Therefore, identity is the development of a meaningful self-concept in which past, present, and future are formed into a unified whole.

### *Marcia's Identity Statuses*

James Marcia expanded Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, specifically focusing on late adolescent development. He believed that college years

are most valuable in identity development, because it is during this period where individuals begin to explore and settle on various life domains. Marcia (1966) sought to further explain Erikson's theory of identity development by providing a basis of measurement. He developed a semi-structured interview and incomplete sentence blank questionnaire to assess the level of ego identity achievement. Based upon his research, Marcia (1966, 1994) posited that ego-identity achievement is not obtained through identity resolution or identity confusion, but the adolescent's exploration and commitment to an identity in life domains that include vocational direction, political, religious, sex role values, family, and career priorities. Marcia (1994) observed that Erikson's theory of Identity-Identity Diffusion did not adequately capture the variety of styles that his research participants utilized to resolve identity crises when describing themselves. Marcia (1994) noted, "some arrived at an identity by means of an exploratory period; others just became more firmly entrenched in the identities bestowed upon them in childhood, some seemed to have no firm identity resolution and were relatively unconcerned about this, while others, similarly unresolved, were very concerned and struggling to reach some closure on the issue" (pg. 72). This led him to formulate four identity statuses by which those between the age of 18 and 22 may resolve Erikson's Identity-Identity Diffusion stage, which he termed Identity Achievement, Moratorium, Foreclosure, and Identity Diffusion (Marcia, 1994).

The Identity Achievement status is understood as those adolescents who have progressed through the exploratory process and have resolved the Identity-Identity Diffusion stage by making life commitments in various areas (Marcia, 1994). They are able to articulate reasons for their decisions and how they arrived at these

decisions (Marcia, 1994). These commitments are based on “internalized self-constructed values,” but may also contain a variation of parental wishes as well (Marcia, 1994, pg. 76). According to Marcia (1994) differences with family members are acknowledged and accepted but not always reconciled. The Identity Achieved adolescent has reevaluated past beliefs and “feels free to act without feeling overwhelmed by changes within their environment or unexpected responsibilities” (Marcia, 1996, pg. 552). He also pointed out that “initial identity configuration is expected to change at least with every succeeding psychosocial stage resolution, and perhaps even more frequently as life crises arise” (Marcia, 1994, pg. 76). Marcia (1994) believed that Identity Achieved adolescents possessed greater ego strength; therefore, they are able to see more alternatives to life situations and take more risks.

Marcia (1966) defined the Moratorium adolescent as being in a state of crisis. Unlike the Foreclosed subject where a commitment has been made without exploration the Moratorium subject is considered to be in a constant state of exploration and struggling to make a commitment. While their parent’s wishes are still influential they are attempting a compromise among them, society’s demands, and their own capabilities (Marcia, 1966). Adolescents in this status are considered to be anxious and least authoritarian of all the statuses (Marcia, 1994). They tend to have ambivalent relationships with family members, and their relationships with others are often intense but brief (Marcia, 1994). Marcia (1994) indicates that because they perceive their world as unpredictable it is difficult for them to maintain a constant commitment to another person. Marcia (1994) believed that once the

Moratorium adolescent navigates this stage by exploring various alternatives, and begins to make life commitments they will have resolved the Identity-Identity Diffusion stage.

The foreclosure status is seen when the adolescent makes a commitment without exploring alternatives. Adolescents in foreclosure tend to take on their parents' ideas and beliefs without question (Marcia, 1966, 1994). In addition, they are "inflexible in their thought process, set high goals for themselves which they maintain rigidly even in face of failure, and prefer to be told what to do by an acceptable authority rather than determining their own direction" (Marcia, 1994, pg. 74). Foreclosures have little doubt about what is right and choose as friends and partners people who are like themselves. However, Marcia (1991) also stressed that once crisis has been experienced the foreclosed position is left behind and the person will begin exploring life alternatives and moving toward Identity Achievement.

Marcia (1994) explained that Identity Diffusion adolescents have done some exploring but remain uncommitted. He described two types of Diffusion statuses adolescents may experience, those who appear apathetic and socially isolated and those who are like playboys or playgirls (Marcia, 1994). He described the former as those who will avoid contact, and the latter will seek out contact in a compulsive manner (Marcia, 1994). According to Marcia (1994) they express little or no interest in exploring life defining areas. Identity Diffused adolescents have the most difficulty thinking under stress, conform to demands of others, and have the lowest developmental level of moral thought. Marcia (1994) points out that their family relationships tend to be conflictual, and they feel that the "same sex parent can

never be emulated even though that parent may be highly admired” (pg. 77). Once the identity diffused adolescent begins to show more concern they will move into the Moratorium status of exploration.

Researchers have added to Erikson's and Marcia's work on psychosocial development by empirically measuring subjects' exploration and commitment in resolving identity development. Cross's (1978) theory of African American racial identity development seems to reflect the suppositions made by Marcia. His preencounter stage is defined as a period where the adolescent has not began to explore or examine their ethnic identity. This lack of exploration is reflective of Marcia's identity diffused or foreclosed identity statuses. Following an encounter experience which forces the adolescent to reflect on their ethnicity, Cross (1978) proposed that the adolescent will enter into a period of exploration aimed at better understanding their ethnicity, the implications of their race, and its effect on their place in society, which is reflective of Marcia's moratorium status.

In an effort to investigate the beginning of ethnic identity formation, Phinney and Tarver (1988) conducted a study with Black and White eighth graders. The researchers asked open ended questions about the participant's ethnicity and questions presumed to be indicative of ethnic identity search and commitment. They found that both Black and White students reported exploration of their ethnic identity evidenced by their having thought about and discussed the implications of their ethnic group membership. They also found that in discussing issues related to their ethnicity, Black subjects generally focused on their own group, while Whites mostly addressed relations with other minority groups. This difference between the groups

may be the result of Blacks' minority status and having to deal with issues of prejudice in striving to achieve their ethnic identity (Phinney & Tarver, 1988). They also concluded that those who reported exploration scored higher on self-esteem scales than those who had not (Phinney & Tarver, 1988). This finding is a significant one since previous research (Marcia, 1966; Bennion & Adams, 1986) has shown that high self-esteem or self-acceptance has been associated with identity achievement, which is significant to healthy identity development.

Phinney and Alipuria (1990) examined exploration and commitment to ethnic identity among college students. Their sample included 196 undergraduate students from three minority groups (Asian American, African American, and Mexican American) and a comparison White group. Subjects were administered questionnaires to complete. They reported significant findings among the minority groups in exploring their ethnic identity. While there were no differences found among the groups on commitment to an ethnic identity, they did report ethnic identity commitment was significantly related to self-esteem for all four groups, but more strongly within the three minority groups.

Erikson's psychosocial stages of development and Marcia's four identity statuses have added to the literature and research by illustrating the developmental tasks and processes by which adolescents and young adults achieve their identity. While Erikson focused on occupational and ideological commitments as the basis for identity achievement, Marcia stipulated that identity is formed through the exploration and commitments made in various life domains. Since Marcia researchers have shown through empirical studies that racial/ethnic identification is



also an important component in one's formation of their identity. This leads to the following section, which will examine the research on racial identification.

### *Racial Identification*

After the emancipation of African Americans in the United States, the term “race” became a concept used to distinguish the differences between Blacks and Whites. Being the dominant group, Whites used race as a way to further racial ideology in efforts to maintain “hegemonic control” (Takaki, 2008). Stereotypes of Blacks as intellectually stunted, morally corrupt, prone to violence, aesthetically unattractive and animal-like created a divide between Blacks and Whites, and defined African Americans as being inferior to Whites (Smedley, 1998). Whites in American society socially constructed the concept of race as a critical social characteristic and made it the dominant source of human identity (Steck, Heckert, Heckert, 2004; Smedley, 1998). Steck et al., (2004), states that racial identities are mediated by social realities, it is the “psychological attachment to a social category based on skin color, common history, attitudes, and behaviors rooted in that identity “(Sanders-Thompson, 1999, pg. 748). Over the course of history the social context by which African Americans came to view their racial identity has been in an oppressive manner. This has resulted in African Americans being more cognizant of their minority membership (Steck et al., 2004).

In order to combat the negative portrayal being posited by the dominant group, Smedely (1998) points out that some African Americans adopted Afrocentric views, which is to emphasize valuable aspects of African culture in order to elevate Blacks to a position of esteem. There are some who feel Afrocentrism is inherent in

all African Americans and its characteristics set them apart from other people.

African American philosopher Dr. Molefi Kete Asante has written extensively on the subject of Afrocentrism. He believes that “Afrocentricity is a philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location, and actualization of African agency within the context of history and culture” (Asante, 2003, pg. 3). Dr. Asante (2003) continues by suggesting that Afrocentricism is a mode of thought and action, and the implementation of it begins an alteration in people’s attitudes, values, and behavior that predominates and leads to a “revolutionary perspective on all facts” (pg. 4). Verharen (1995) suggests Afrocentrism is a “holistic” philosophy that does not place any one group at the center for all humanity like Eurocentric philosophy. Like Asante, Verharen (1995) points out that “Afrocentrism emphasizes an all encompassing path to knowledge rather than the displacement of the other” (pg. 66). He stipulates that while Africans are the point of origin for humanity they are not at the center of humanity (Verharen, 1995). There will continue to be discussion on the philosophical differences of Afrocentrism. However, this does not diminish the positive aspects of Afrocentric points of view, which is to restore a sense of pride and dignity to Africans and African Americans, by dispelling the negative and denigrating view of this group that has been put forward by the dominant culture in this country.

Caucasian Americans can be viewed as being oblivious to issues of race, mainly because their status as the dominant group is encapsulated in American culture. Unlike minorities in America, Whites do not have to contend with being placed in positions where they have to experience racism and prejudice simply because of their skin color. Whites generally do not consider race or racism to be an

issue that directly affects them; therefore, they often do not think in terms of race and they fail to see the connection between the privileges and opportunities their race affords them (McDermott & Samson, 2005). There are even some Whites who claim that being White has led to discriminatory practices against them. Social issues such as Affirmative Action have resulted in some Whites feeling that they have been disadvantaged. While Affirmative Action was created to address historical problems like racial discrimination and inequality that many minorities and women have incurred, such as when attempting to apply for jobs or pursue educational opportunities, there are those who claim this policy rewards people who are lazy or do not work as hard (Steck et al., 2004). Scott and Robinson (2001) write that White men perceived these kinds of policies as attempts to economically control them and provide others the ability to challenge them for power and privilege. Being the dominant group, if some Whites do have a tendency not to consider issues of race, because it does not affect their lives in the way it does minorities, then their feeling of discrimination may have some validity at least within the context of how they perceive their place within society.

### *Racial Identity Salience*

Stryker and Serpe (1994) identified the self as being composed of a hierarchical ordering of identities, which is based on identity salience. Identity salience says that identities are organized “by the probability of their being involved in a given situation” (pg. 17). The level of commitment toward an identity will determine the salience of one's identity. Stryker and Serpe (1994) point out that a professor who lectures his children or grandchildren is displaying a salient

professorial identity. A young woman who discusses her studies and grades during interactions with friends who are not in school or with co-workers is evidencing a highly salient academic or student identity.

In an attempt to measure the issue of racial-ethnic identity, Jared and Reitzes (1999) conducted a telephone survey where they questioned 533 respondents on the importance that they place on their own racial-ethnic identity. Their results indicated that African Americans are more likely than Whites or Multiracials to say that their racial-ethnic identity is central to their self-concept, which is consistent with the supposition posited by Steck et al., (2004). Their findings also revealed that Blacks found racial-ethnic identity more essential in various social settings (public, work, home, and neighborhood) than Whites and Multiracials. Issues of race and racial identity have often been an important concept for Blacks given that these issues are often at the forefront of many discussions involving Blacks in this country. Therefore, issues of race are more salient for Blacks than Whites. Because Whites often do not think in terms of race they do not place as much emphasis on their race, which makes it less of an issue to their overall self-concept.

In their study of racial identity salience among White and Black students at four American Universities, Steck et al., (2004) found that racial identity salience for White students at predominantly White universities was significantly lower than racial identity salience among Black students in the same setting. The study also revealed that racial identity salience among White students at historically Black universities was lower than racial identity salience exhibited among Black students at these universities. Their findings also revealed that White students at the historically Black

universities were not more likely to exhibit racial identity salience than White students at predominately White universities. Steck et al., (2004) results suggests that Whites are often far less likely to think of themselves in racial terms than people of color; therefore, they are less likely to think about or analyze society in a racial context.

Sanders-Thompson (1999) conducted a study that measured racial identity salience among African Americans. A sample of 409 African American adults was surveyed to test three hypotheses. 1. Racial socialization and interaction with other African-Americans are predictive of the salience of African American racial identity. 2. Reports of discriminatory experiences are predictive of the salience of African American racial identity. 3. The salience of racial identity is a stronger predictor of African American racial group identification. Results of the study supported the 1st and 3rd hypothesis, which supports the argument of racial identity salience being a meaningful component to African Americans, even without personal experience of discrimination.

Individuals who are involved in an interracial relationship will encounter situations that involve their racial identity and its impact on their relationship. It is likely a challenging experience for some, and feeling challenged by society and one's family may cause those involved to question their own racial identity. Blacks involved in an interracial relationship may experience moments where their blackness is challenged by other Blacks, whereas Whites involved in an interracial relationship may experience a loss of their White status, while also having their awareness of being White heightened (Luke, 1994, Rosenblatt et al., 1995).

Hill and Thomas (2000) addressed the issue of racial identity development of Black and White women in interracial partner relationships using an in depth individual interview. They found that the participants described three strategies by which the participants were active in their racial identity development, which are blocking strategies, transforming strategies, and generating strategies. Blocking strategies utilized by participants were direct confrontation, whereby the participants directly confronted the negative discourse being directed at them. The second blocking strategy of discrediting was expressed through thoughts and comments that invalidated negativity directed at them. The third blocking strategy of screening is the process of associating with people who support their decision to be in an interracial relationship. Transforming strategies were those that took negative narratives and converted them into an empowering situations by redefining the meaning and changing the function of social interaction patterns. Lastly, generating strategies developed independently as a result of surrounding themselves with supportive family and friends and other interracial couples. The researchers concluded that by employing these strategies the women were actively defining their racial identity development.

In a study on interracial dating and racial identification, Gafford (2001) conducted a study with 389 undergraduate students at the University of North Texas that measured attitudes toward interracial dating and racial identity salience. The sample consisted of 224 males and 164 females. 70.6% were White, 10.3% were African American, 8.2% were Hispanic, 4.4% were Asian, and 6.4% were classified as Other, which constituted bi-racial students. Results of the study indicated that

10.8% of the respondents strongly agreed with the research statement “I would prefer to only date someone of my race” and less than 1% of the participants agreed with the statement “I would object if a close friend started to date someone of another race.” There was no significant difference found between student’s gender and their attitudes toward interracial dating. However, women obtained higher mean scores, which suggests they held more accepting attitudes toward interracial dating than did men. A statistically significant difference was found between those with previous interracial dating experience and those without previous experience. Those with previous interracial dating experience showed a greater acceptance of interracial dating than those without previous dating experience. When examining race and interracial dating attitudes there was a significant difference between mean scores of White and Other racial category. This finding means that the higher mean score of the other category indicates favorable attitudes toward interracial dating. Lastly, results found a significant negative correlation between racial identity salience scores and interracial dating attitudes scores, which indicates that as racial identity salience scores increase acceptance of interracial dating decreased.

#### *Statement of Purpose*

In his writings on acculturation, Milton Gordon (1964) hypothesized a seven stage structural assimilation process in order to deal with race relations. His theory communicated the acceptance of minorities into social clubs, institutions, and as marriage partners among the dominant group. He surmised that through interracial marriage the minorities’ separateness would wane, thus reducing the prevalence of issues such as discrimination, prejudice, and racism. Even though racial disparities

still exist today interracial marriages have steadily increased. Between the years 2000 and 2010 interracial marriages between Blacks and Whites have increased from 307,000 to 504,000 (Census, 2010). This statistic suggests that there is an increasing number of Blacks and Whites who are choosing to date and ultimately marry despite any disagreement they may receive from family, friends, or segments of our society. This raises the question of how important is one's race to them, and if race is a determining factor in one choosing to date outside of their own ethnicity.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the importance of racial identity among college students and their attitudes toward interracial dating. As Marcia (1966) pointed out, the college years can be a pivotal time in one's life, because it is during this period when young adults begin making decisions in various life domains that will shape their identity. One area of exploration that young adults begin to engage in is dating. Dating is an essential component because it can lead to choosing a mate, and ultimately lead to one's decision for a marriage partner. This study focuses on the interracial dating attitudes of Blacks and Whites because of the traumatic history these two groups share, and because Black-White couples still seem to provoke the strongest response from those who oppose interracial unions, more than any other ethnic group.

This study will be conducted at a university located in the Midwest. It is located in the city of Detroit, which is a diverse metropolitan city; however, the communities surrounding the university are the most racially segregated in the United States.

Farley, Steech, Krysan, Jackson, and Reeves (1994) discussed the issue of



stereotypes and residential segregation in the Detroit area. Using data between 1976 and 1992 the researchers conclude that stereotypes of Blacks as being criminals, uneducated, and violent resulted in Whites using discriminatory real estate practices in order to distance themselves from Blacks (Farley et. al., 1994). When examining direct questions posed to Whites about Blacks moving into their neighborhoods, the majority of Whites expressed that they would reside in a minimally integrated neighborhood. When examining residential statistics the researchers indicated that the more integrated a neighborhood became there was an increase in the number of Whites who moved out of the area (Farley et. al., 1994). Farley et. al., (1994) indicated that a majority of Black respondents preferred neighborhoods that were more than minimally integrated except among Black elites. It was unclear why Blacks preferred to reside in mostly Black neighborhoods. The researchers hypothesized that this response could have been a result of Blacks ideological commitment to develop and live in largely Black communities, apprehension about White hostility toward Blacks, or the belief that integration offered few benefits (Farley et. al., 1994). Their findings suggest that both Blacks and Whites have contributed to the racially segregated communities that exist in the Detroit Metropolitan area.

The majority of students participating in this study reside within these communities. Their responses will identify college students' attitudes toward Black-White dating relationships. Previous studies on interracial dating have been conducted in the south and California. The results of these studies have demonstrated an incoherent pattern in subjects' attitudes toward interracial dating.

This study will add to the existing literature by investigating participant's responses in the Midwest an area of the country that has not been examined.

Based upon previous research this study hypothesizes that those with previous interracial dating experience will report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating (Gafford, 2001). When examining one's willingness to date outside of their race, it is predicted that students will show more willingness to date within their own ethnicity than someone from another ethnicity (Fiebert et al., 2000; Gafford, 2001). Black students will report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than White students (Gafford, 2001; Knox et al., 2000). Male students will report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than female students (Todd et al., 1992). When examining race and gender, it is predicted that Black males and White females will report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than White males and Black females (Schoepflin, 2009; Todd et al., 1992). Those with greater racial identity salience will show less favorable attitudes toward interracial dating (Gafford, 2001).

Hypotheses to be examined are as follows:

- H1: Students with previous interracial dating experience will show more positive attitudes toward interracial dating.
- H2: Black students will report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than White students.
- H2 (a): Male students will report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than female students.
- H2 (b): Black males and White females will report positive attitudes toward interracial

dating. White males and Black females will report less favorable attitudes toward interracial dating.

H3: Black students will report more of a willingness to date within their own ethnicity than someone from another ethnicity.

H3 (a): White students will report more of a willingness to date within their own ethnicity than someone from another ethnicity.

H4: Students who report positive attitudes toward interracial dating will report less racial identity salience.

## Chapter 2

### Methods

#### *Participants*

This study was conducted at a predominately White university located in a large Midwestern city. The university population consists of approximately 5,600 students (59% female, 41% male). The breakdown by racial group is roughly 62% White/Non-Hispanic, 12% Black/Non-Hispanic, 3% Hispanic, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% Non-Resident Alien, 16% race unreported. While all students regardless of ethnicity were allowed to participate in this study, the evaluation of the data was restricted to African American and Caucasian students since this was the population being researched.

#### *Procedure*

The researcher contacted professors in the psychology department and other programs within the liberal arts department in order to obtain participants for this research study. The experimenter visited the classrooms of professors who agreed to participate and explained the purpose of the study. Participants were instructed that there are no right or wrong answers and that all responses are anonymous and confidential. They were also informed that their participation is completely voluntary, and they must be at least 18 years old and never married in order to participate. Participants completed an informed consent form online before being allowed to access the survey.

The online survey tool used for this study was Survey Gizmo ([www.surveygizmo.com](http://www.surveygizmo.com)). This survey tool provided a customization option, which

allowed for the paper survey form to be completed exactly the same online. Survey Gizmo provided multilevel privacy protection for respondents. It allowed data to be exported into SPSS, which minimized the potential for any errors during data entry. It also provided mechanisms to prevent participants from partially completing a survey, and provided real-time tracking of completed responses and results.

### *Measures*

The survey consisted of a demographic questionnaire, racial identity salience questionnaire, and interracial dating questionnaire.

*Demographic Questionnaire.* The demographic characteristics studied were age, gender, and race. Participants were asked for their age in years and gender was coded as 1=female and 2=male. Racial groups were listed as 1. African American/Black, 2. Caucasian/White, 3. American Indian/Alaska Native, 4. Hispanic/Latino, 5. Asian Indian, 6. Chinese, 7. Filipino, 8. Japanese, 9. Korean, 10. Vietnamese, 11. Native Hawaiian, 12. Guamanian/Chamorro, 13. Samoan, 14. Some other race. Five additional questions asked subject's to indicate their ethnic identity, their parent's race, sexual orientation, previous interracial dating experience, and willingness to date someone of another race. Participants were instructed to write in their ethnicity. Parent's race was coded 1=Same race, 2=Biracial, and 3=Other. Sexual orientation was coded 1=Heterosexual and 2=Gay/GLBTQ. For the purposes of this study those who indicated a gay orientation were excluded from the data analysis. Participants respond yes or no to the item "Have you ever dated someone outside of your race?" Responses were coded 1=yes and 2=no. Participants will also be asked if they would consider dating someone of a different

ethnicity. Racial/ethnic groups were listed as 1. African-American/Black, 2. Caucasian/White, 3. Multiracial, 4. Hispanic/Latino, 5. Asian, and 6. Arab American/Middle Eastern. Responses were coded using a 4 point likert scale with 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

*Racial Identity Salience.* The racial identity salience scale was adapted from existing instruments (White & Burke, 1987; Sander-Thompson, 1999; Gafford, 2001). To measure this dimension three items were indexed. The first item asked respondents "How important is it that your friends view and accept you according to your race?" The second item asked "How important is it that people in general view and accept you in terms of your race?" The third question asked, "How important are race and racial identity to you?" The respondent's answers were rated on a 3 point likert scale with 0=not very important, 1=somewhat important, 2=important, and 3=very important. The scores from each response were added together with 0 being the lowest possible score and 9 being the highest score. A high score indicated a strong racial identity salience, whereas a low score indicated a weak racial identity salience. There is no existing literature on this scale's validity or reliability.

*Interracial Dating Scale.* Whatley (2008) designed the Attitudes Toward Interracial Dating Scale. He developed 99 sample items to assess attitudes toward interracial dating. The items were scored on a likert scale (1 Strongly Disagree to 7 Strongly Agree) with higher values reflecting negative attitudes toward interracial dating. He administered the survey to 313 graduate and undergraduate students (113 male and 200 female). 20 items were identified from the initial factor analysis. The coefficient of variation was .51 and the reliability (internal consistency) of the

scale is .96.

The 20 scale items are coded on a 7-point likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). All items are negatively worded except for items 18, 19, and 20. These items are positively worded and reverse scored with higher scores representing more negative attitudes toward interracial dating. The scores are then added together and divided by 20 to obtain an average score. Possible scores range from 1 to 7 with 1 representing more positive attitudes toward interracial dating and 7 representing more negative attitudes toward interracial dating.

A correlation analysis was conducted on attitudes toward interracial dating and likelihood of dating interracially as a check of the scale's validity and revealed a significant result of  $r(313)=-.62, p<.01$ . Therefore, participants who reported positive attitudes toward interracial dating were more likely to interracially date (Whatley, 2008).

Whatley (2008) conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if any gender bias was reflected in participants' attitudes. Results indicated no significant findings; however, male participants ( $M = 2.97, SD = 1.58$ ) displayed more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than women ( $M = 2.84, SD = 1.42$ ).

An ANOVA was conducted to examine differences between ethnicities; however, according to Whatley (2008) only the sample of Black and White students was used because the samples of other ethnicities were too small. The analysis revealed a significant finding  $F(1, 297) = 49.84, p<.05 (r=.38)$ , indicating that White participants ( $M = 3.33, SD = 1.48$ ) held more negative attitudes toward interracial

dating than Black participants ( $M = 2.15$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ).

The Attitudes Toward Interracial Dating Scale is a fairly new scale. Aside from the statistical analysis conducted by Whatley (2008) no other data analysis of the scale's validity or reliability has been conducted.

In the following chapter the results of the study will be reported. This will consist of a review of the hypotheses and findings from the quantitative analyses.



## Chapter 3

### Results

This chapter examines the characteristics of the sample and findings as they pertain to each research question.

The study consisted of 258 undergraduate students. The racial breakdown of the sample was comprised of Caucasians/White (67.8%), African American/Black (15.9%), Hispanic/Latino (5.4%), American Indian/Alaska Native (0.4%), Asian Indian (1.6%), Chinese (1.9%), Korean (0.8%), and some other race (6.2%). After omitting the other races, the subjects in this investigation consisted of 175 Caucasian/White students and 41 African American/Black students. Within these two groups there were 52 White men, 123 White women, 14 Black men, and 27 Black women. This is presented in Table 1.

#### Previous Interracial Dating Experience and Attitudes

Hypothesis 1 predicted that students with previous interracial dating experience would report a more positive attitude toward interracial dating by demonstrating a lower interracial dating mean score. An independent t-test was conducted comparing the interracial dating mean score of students with previous interracial dating experience and the mean score of those without previous interracial dating experience. A statistically significant difference was found between the means of the two groups ( $t(214) = -3.4, p < .01$ ). The mean score of students with interracial dating experience was significantly lower ( $m = 1.62, sd = .78$ ) than the mean score of students without interracial dating experience ( $m = 2.08, sd =$

1.02). This finding supports the hypothesis that students with previous interracial dating experience demonstrate more positive attitudes toward interracial dating.

#### Race/Gender and Interracial Dating Attitudes

Hypothesis 2a predicted that Black students would report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating by demonstrating a lower interracial dating mean score than White students. Hypothesis 2b predicted that male students would report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating by demonstrating a lower interracial dating mean score than female students. Hypothesis 2c predicted that Black males and White females would report positive attitudes toward interracial dating by demonstrating a lower interracial dating mean score than White males and Black females. A 2 (Race) x 2 (Gender) factorial ANOVA was calculated comparing the interracial dating score of Black and White students, which is presented in Table 2. A significant main effect of race was found ( $F(1, 212) = 6.43, p < .05, \eta^2 = .029$ ), which supports hypothesis 2a. Black students reported a lower mean score ( $m = 1.63, sd = .852$ ) than White students ( $m = 2.01, sd = .99$ ) indicating a more positive attitude toward interracial dating. The main effect of gender was not significant ( $F(1, 212) = .085, p > .05, \eta^2 = .000$ ). This result does not support hypothesis 2b and indicates that there was no difference between male students and female students' attitude toward interracial dating. Finally, the interaction was also not significant ( $F(1, 212) = 1.20, p > .05, \eta^2 = .006$ ). This result does not support hypothesis 2c and indicates that there was no difference between Black males and White females attitude toward interracial dating compared to White males and Black females.

#### Willingness to Date

Hypothesis 3 predicted that when presented with dating choices from six different racial groups (Black, White, Multiracial, Hispanic, Asian, and Arab American), Black students would report more of a willingness to date Blacks by ranking their racial group higher than any other racial group. White students would report more of a willingness to date Whites by ranking their racial group higher than any other racial group. In order to evaluate this hypothesis a 2 (Race) x 6 (Dating Choice) mixed factorial ANOVA was conducted. A significant Race x Dating Choice interaction was present ( $F(5, 1070) = 36.64, p < .01, \eta^2 = .178$ ). This means that the effect of the students' race influenced how they ranked their dating choice. In order to determine where these differences resided a simple effects analysis of Black students dating choice was conducted and found that the mean score for the six different dating choices were significantly different ( $F(5, 200) = 28.17, p < .01$ ). Pairwise comparisons were conducted to further determine the nature of the difference and revealed that Black students ranked dating Blacks higher ( $m = 4.76, sd = .699$ ) than dating Whites ( $m = 3.63, sd = 1.29$ ), Multiracial ( $m = 3.90, sd = 1.13$ ), Hispanic ( $m = 3.71, sd = 1.14$ ), Asian ( $m = 3.00, sd = 1.32$ ), and Arab American ( $m = 2.93, sd = 1.12$ ). A simple effects analysis of White students dating choice was also conducted and found that the mean score for the six different dating choices were significantly different ( $F(5, 870) = 101.11, p < .01$ ). Pairwise comparisons were conducted to determine the nature of the difference and revealed that White students ranked dating Whites higher ( $m = 4.54, sd = .684$ ) than dating Blacks ( $m = 3.02, sd = 1.11$ ), Multiracial ( $m = 3.66, sd = .975$ ), Hispanic ( $m = 3.40, sd = 1.01$ ), Asians ( $m = 2.86, sd = 1.13$ ), and Arab American ( $m = 3.03, sd = 1.12$ ). The findings

from the interaction analyses support the hypothesis that Black students would report more of a willingness to date Blacks, and White students would report more of a willingness to date Whites. This result is presented in Figure 1.

#### Racial Identity Salience and Interracial Dating Attitudes

Hypothesis 4 predicted that students who report positive attitudes toward interracial dating by demonstrating a lower score on the interracial dating scale would report less identity salience by demonstrating a lower score on the racial identity salience scale. A Pearson's product-moment correlation observed that the relationship between students racial identity salience score and interracial dating score was not significant, ( $r(216) = .086, p > .05$ ). This result does not support the hypothesis and indicates that racial identity salience and interracial dating attitudes are not significantly related.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion

The current study examined attitudes toward interracial dating and the importance of racial identity salience among college students attending a private university located in the Midwest. The findings of this study will be discussed as they pertain to each research question.

The first hypothesis stated that students with previous interracial dating experience would report a more positive attitude toward interracial dating. The findings of this study supported the hypothesis. A significant difference was found between those with previous interracial dating experience and those without prior dating experience. This is consistent with the study done by Gafford (2001) who found that students who reported previous interracial dating experience expressed a more positive attitude toward interracial dating. Gordon (1964) posited that the liberal attitudes expressed within university settings have challenged parental attitudes and societal stigmas against interracial dating. The notion here is that the increased exposure to other races allows for more contact and interacting with people of different ethnicities. Further examination of this study's data revealed that half of the students reported no experience with dating outside their race. This is likely the result of the area in which this study was conducted. While the metropolitan area where this study was conducted is diverse with people from many different ethnic backgrounds, it is also a racially segregated area. Therefore, it is possible that this group of students is expressing values and attitudes embodied in

the surrounding community for many years. Those students who reported previous interracial dating experience have likely rejected the social stereotypes and taboos associated with dating outside their race, which allows them to feel more comfortable with entering into an interracial relationship.

The second hypothesis stated that Black students will report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than White students, and male students will report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than female students. Also, Black men and White women will report more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than White men and Black women. A significant difference was found between Black and White students attitude toward interracial dating. Black students reported a lower mean score than Whites, indicating a more positive attitude toward interracial dating. This finding was similar to the results found by Gafford (2001). Even though the race difference was not significant in the Gafford (2001) study, the researcher still found that Blacks reported a higher mean score, which was consistent with more positive attitudes toward interracial dating. It was also consistent with the Knox et. al. (2000) study, which found that Blacks reported more openness to interracial relationships. One possible explanation for Black students' openness to interracial relationships is Gordon's (1964) contact theory, which posits that interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce racism and prejudice between the minority and majority group. Blacks being the minority group have very little choice on whether they want to interact with Whites in social settings, such as their neighborhood, where they attend school, and where they work. Whites being the majority group generally have more choice in whether they want to interact with

minorities in social settings. Using the National Survey of Black Workers, Irizarry (2012) found that Blacks who grew up in racially diverse neighborhoods tended to perceive Whites as being less prejudiced and racist compared to Blacks who grew up in mostly Black or mostly White neighborhoods. Emerson, Kimbro, and Yancey (2002), found that Blacks and Whites who grew up in racially diverse neighborhoods, or went to racially diverse schools, associated with diverse social groups and had more diverse friendships than those who did not. This suggests that perhaps Blacks' early exposure to Whites' lessens their negative perceptions, thus making it easier for them to interact with Whites and even date outside of their race. Whites who have not had early exposure to Blacks do not have a frame of reference about them. This allows for negative stereotypes to shape their opinions about Blacks. This undoubtedly would produce more uneasiness and apprehension about interacting with Blacks. Therefore, it is unlikely White students in this position would seek out Blacks in social situations much less date someone who is a Black.

The study did not find any significant difference between males' and females' attitudes toward interracial dating. This finding was consistent with the studies done by Gafford (2001) and Knox et. al. (2000). Even though no significant gender differences were found, in reviewing the data from this study Black men demonstrated more accepting attitudes than White men, and Black women demonstrated more accepting attitudes than White women. This is presented in table 3. These non-significant trends are inconsistent with the research conducted by Mills et. al. (1994), which indicated that women reported more negative attitudes toward interracial relationships than men. It is also inconsistent with previous research

conducted by Todd et. al. (1992), which indicated that Black women were more opposed to interracial relationships. It is also inconsistent with research conducted by Harris & Kalbfleisch (2000) and Schoepflin (2009), which found that White women demonstrated more positive attitudes toward interracial relationships. One explanation that may explain this difference was posited by Rossenblatt et. al. (1995), which indicated that White families tend to display more displeasure when family members date outside of their race than Black families. As Mills et. al. (1994) indicated racial attitude is likely a product of social conditioning. Therefore, students in this study may be expressing ideas and values that have been passed on to them by their parents or immediate family. This may explain why White students demonstrated less favorable attitudes toward interracial dating than Black students. It may also suggest that students do not personally have negative attitudes toward interracial dating, but may question how their family would respond to them if they dated outside of their race.

The third hypothesis predicted that Black students would report more of a willingness to date someone who is Black, and White students would report more of a willingness to date someone who is White. A significant difference was found between the choices of Black and White students that supported the hypothesis. In reviewing the additional choices of students in this study, the data revealed that both Blacks and Whites rated the Multiracial group as second highest among their choices to date. Perhaps students feel that by dating someone who is multiracial lessens the stigma or taboo associated with dating someone who appears to be entirely of African or European descent. By dating someone who is multiracial may



allow the individual to feel more comfortable dating outside of their racial group, because they can explore dating outside of their race with someone who potentially shares similar values and beliefs. This lends support to structural theory. Research conducted by Kouri and Lasswell (1993) supported this theory, which reported that interracial couples expressed they were attracted to each other because of similar values, beliefs, and overall compatibility. This idea was also expressed in a USA Today article where a Chinese female college student expressed that she never thought she would date someone Hispanic until she realized the similarities between their cultures, values, and family background (Kao, 2012). A female student attending Wesley College stated that she and her African American boyfriend have many similarities, suggesting that their cultures are more similar than different, and both value getting good grades and spending time with family (Kao, 2012). A female college student attending Northwestern University stated that she began dating her biracial fiancé because of the many similarities in values they shared (Kao, 2012).

The fourth hypothesis stated that students who report positive attitudes toward interracial dating would report less racial identity salience. The correlation between racial identity salience and interracial dating attitudes was not significant. This was not consistent with the findings by Gafford (2000). Students in this study may not have placed racial identity high within their hierarchy of identities. Therefore, they may not have placed as much emphasis on their racial identity when thinking about their feelings on interracial dating. This lends support to the notion that students less favorable attitudes toward interracial dating may be the result of how one will be perceived by others, rather than them having racist views. In addition, it

may also suggest that students do not feel that dating someone of a different race is a threat to their racial identity.

### *Clinical Implications*

Findings from this study indicate that race had an impact on students' attitude toward interracial dating. It is likely that in some cases interracial couples will have to contend with other forces that may not share the same opinion about their relationship. Therefore, therapists in university settings should assist students in interracial relationships with developing ways to cope with negative perceptions they may receive. It is also possible that some students in interracial relationships may find themselves at odds with significant people in their lives because of their relationship choice. These individuals may need help working through their feelings regarding the situation and determining an approach that is best for themselves and their partner.

In order to ensure the best possibility for a healthy relationship, clinicians may want to consider each partner's level of acculturation and explore if there are any racial pre-conceptions one partner may have about the other. Clinicians may also want to explore what attracted the couple to each other, and their perception of support from family and friends.

Another issue that may arise is the lack of understanding within an interracial couple regarding the racism they may receive. In some instances one partner may be more sensitive to negative perceptions of their relationship. For example, a White partner who has not experienced racism may respond more passively than their Black partner to negative opinions about their relationship. This passivity may be

misinterpreted as apathy resulting in discord within the relationship. When working with an interracial couple therapists need to be sensitive to this type of issue.

Discussing racial issues can be a difficult for some; therefore, therapists should consider that some couples may unknowingly disguise their concerns as some other type of relationship problem.

University clinicians are also likely to encounter multiracial students who may be struggling with their identity formation. This is an important concern, especially in a society that has a proclivity to label individuals based on the group they most likely would fit into. These individuals may need help adjusting to how they are perceived by others, and in some instances being treated unfairly, or even ostracized by members of their family because of their multiracial heritage.

It is also important for teachers and parents to continue working toward reducing racial stereotypes and prejudice by educating young children on issues of race and racism. By discussing race relations at an early age parents and educators can counteract negative perceptions about other racial groups. Parents of mixed race children should prepare them for the questions they may receive from peers and teachers about their racial background. By educating their mixed race child on how to respond to questions such as, “what are you” or “are you adopted” can empower the child, thereby, allowing him or her to feel more confident in responding to such questions.

### *Limitations*

Previous studies covering this topic had sample sizes that ranged from 300 to 400 participants. The goal for this study was to obtain 300 subjects but the

researcher was only able to obtain 216. Among the 216 subjects there were only 14 black men and 27 black women, which are considered a small sample. This small participant sample has implications on the findings of this study. For example, the 2 (Race) x 2 (Gender) Factorial ANOVA that was conducted in this study has limitations. Even though there was a significant race effect, the low effect size of .029 indicates that only 2.9% of attitude variance is accounted for by race. Therefore, given the disparity between the numbers of subjects between the two groups the findings of this study should be interpreted cautiously.

The sample size in this study was limited because the study was conducted at a university with a small African American population. In order to compensate for the disparity between Black and White students, data collection will continue in order to obtain a better understanding of students response to the hypotheses raised in this study.

Another limitation to this study is the Racial Identity Salience scale, which consisted of only three questions. This scale was obtained from previous research (Sander-Thomson, 1999; and Gafford, 2001) because no similar scale that measures identity salience with validity and reliability data has been produced. The three questions asked were 1. "How important is it that your friends view and accept you according to your race?" 2. "How important is it that people in general view and accept you in terms of your race?" 3. "How important are race and racial identity to you?" Some may interpret these questions as vague and too simplistic to obtain an understanding of how subjects perceive themselves in terms of their race, and if their race impacts the quality of their social relationships, romantic relationships, group

affiliations, and the like. For example, a person responding to the second question may say that it's not important that people view or accept them according to their race, because they do not care about peoples' opinion of them. Would this imply that the person does not feel their race is important to them? I don't think we can draw that conclusion. Therefore, a better instrument to measure this construct of identity salience is needed.

### *Future Research*

Results of this study revealed that racial identity salience had no effect on students' attitude toward interracial dating. One explanation may be that young adults, particularly young black adults are starting to move beyond the issue of race and take a more progressive view of the world around them. This does not imply that a person's race would not influence their choice to date, but suggests that young people may be considering other more relevant aspects to choosing a dating partner, such as overall compatibility. Research into how Black and White students' racial identity influences their perception of themselves in relation to other races may illuminate how salient race is to their identity.

This study revealed that Black students held more positive attitudes toward interracial dating than White students. The implication of this finding suggests that race had an impact on students' attitude toward interracial dating, particularly among White students. Some students may feel that finding someone with similar values and interests is easier within their own race. Therefore, young adults may ascribe to racial homogamy in dating relationships to ensure the greatest potential of finding someone with the attributes they desire. Interestingly, in this study both Black and

White students rated multiracial as the next group they were willing to date. One explanation for this may be that students are gradually becoming more open to considering other races for those relationship qualities they desire in a mate. By dating someone who is multiracial the individual can rationalize their partner having some familiarity to their own race, which may also lessen the scrutiny one may receive from family and peers. In order to gain more insight into the thought process behind students' choice for a dating partner, research examining students' perceptions of their family's and friend's attitude toward interracial dating may lend useful information on how their opinions have shaped the students' beliefs. With the increased number of mixed race entertainers, celebrities, and couples depicted on television, it may prove beneficial to investigate the impact pop-culture and the media has on students' perceptions of interracial relationships. Future research should also examine students' attitude toward interracial dating when presented with a casual dating relationship versus a long-term dating relationship to determine if there is a difference.

### *Conclusion*

Some may argue that we are living in a post-racial society where racism and prejudice is no longer an issue. Even census data indicates that interracial relationships have increased over the years with 4 million married couples reporting to be interracially married in 2000 and 5.3 million couples reporting to be interracially married in 2010 (Census, 2010). White-Hispanic couples made up the majority of interracial couples at 38%, while Black-White couples represented only 7.9% (Census, 2010). These numbers suggests that more than four decades after the

Loving v. Virginia case in 1967, which ruled anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional, we still find Black-White relationships to be relatively rare and viewed critically.

Recent news stories have demonstrated the negative perception Black-White relationships tend to attract from some in our society. In 2009, Keith Bardwell a Justice of the peace in Louisiana refused to perform a marriage ceremony for an interracial couple because in his experience interracial marriages do not last, and he was concerned for the children that may have been born as a result of the marriage (Nottingham, 2009). In 2011, a Kentucky Baptist church voted to ban interracial couples from attending any church services, or related functions after a Black man and his White fiancé sung during church service (NG, 2011). The church's pastor Melvin Thompson met with the couple after the service and informed them that they could no longer attend the church because members of the congregation threatened to leave the church (NG, 2011). In a recent survey conducted by Public Policy Polling among registered republican primary voters. 54% of Mississippi voters believe interracial dating should be legal, while 29% of voters believe it should be illegal, and the remaining 17% were uncertain (Jensen, 2011). Stories such as these that are still occurring within our society suggest there is still resistance to Black-White relationships.

This study sought to investigate college students' attitudes toward interracial dating to determine how these young adults perceive dating outside of their race. This study focused on Black and White students because of the difficult history these two groups have shared in the United States. It also adds to the existing literature by

focusing on a region of the country that has not been discussed in previous literature. The findings of this study confirmed that Black students tend to view interracial dating in a more favorable manner than White students. The data also revealed that White students reported that Blacks were the second least favorable group they were willing to date. This suggests that among White students dating someone who is Black may still be perceived as something that is taboo. Even though formal laws restricting such relationships have been repealed there are still informal regulations interracial couples may have to contend. The negative attitudes and opinions interracial couples may receive from family, friends, and their communities are reminders of the long history of racial tension these two groups share.

Choosing a dating partner can be an important first step in choosing a long-term mate. Everyone has a personal preference for a dating partner, but it's beneficial to understand if one's selection process is based on racist and prejudiced perceptions, or a more logical form of mate selection, such as structural theory. In today's ethnically diverse and continuously changing society, it is useful that we consider the implications of these questions. By continuing to examine these questions through research, we can gain more insight into the thought process and determining factors that influences people's selection of a dating partner.



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Table 1

## Demographics

Group	N	Mean Age
White Women	123	22
White Men	52	22
Black Women	27	25
Black Men	14	23

Table 2

## ANOVA result for Race and Interracial Dating

Source	df	F	p	ES
Race	1	6.43*	.012	.029
Gender	1	.085	.771	.000
R X G	1	1.12	.275	.006
error	212	(.934)		

Note. Value enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.

\*p < .01

Table 3

## Mean and Standard Deviation for Race and Interracial Dating

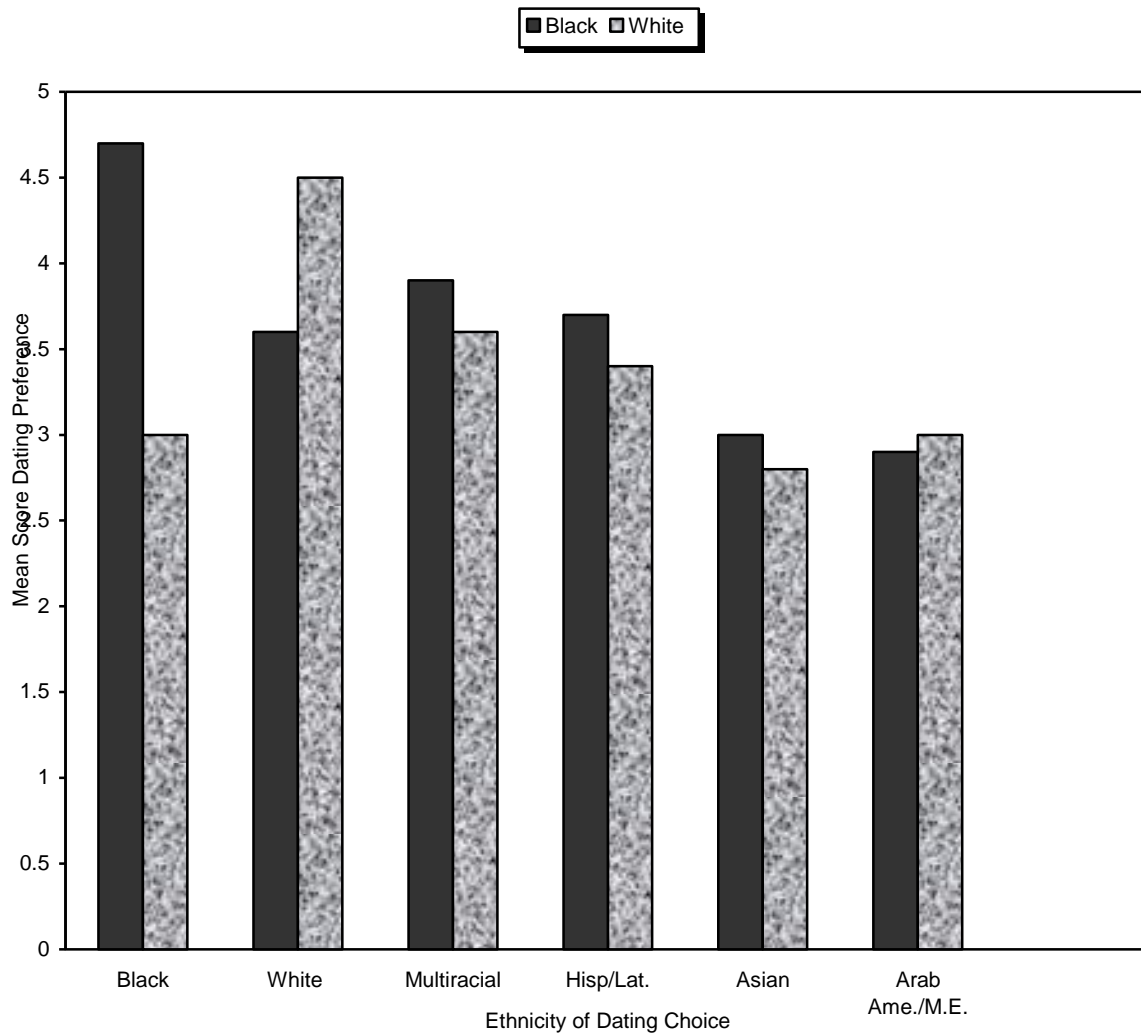
<u>Race</u>	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
African-American/Black	1.46	.33	1.71	1.01	1.62	.85

Caucasian/White	2.11	1.13	1.96	.92	2.01	.98
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## Figure Caption

Figure 1. Mean score of Black-White students dating preference among racial groups.



## Appendix A



## Demographic Questionnaire

The following questions ask for information about you so the researcher will have a general picture of people filling out this questionnaire. This information will not identify you in any way.

1. Please indicate your gender by circling one of the following.

1=Male 2=Female

2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Please indicate your race by circling one of the following.

a. African American/Black, b. Caucasian/White, c. Hispanic/Latino, d. American Indian/Alaska Native, e. Asian Indian, f. Chinese, g. Filipino, h. Japanese, i. Korean, j. Vietnamese, k. Native Hawaiian, l. Guamanian/Chamorro, m. Samoan, n. Some other race, Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your ethnic identity? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please indicate if your parent's are:

1=Same race, 2=Biracial, 3=Other, Please Specify \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your sexual orientation?

1=Heterosexual 2=Gay/GLBTQ

7. Have you ever dated someone outside of your race?

1=Yes 2=No

8. Would you consider dating someone belonging to one of the following racial groups? Please respond using the following scale.

1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

- a. African American/Black\_\_\_\_
- b. Caucasian American/White\_\_\_\_
- c. Multiracial\_\_\_\_
- d. Hispanic/Latino\_\_\_\_
- e. Asian\_\_\_\_
- f. Arab American/Middle Eastern\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

## Racial Identity Salience Scale

Below is a list of questions that measure how important your race is to you. Please circle the number that reflects how important the matter in each statement is to you. Each number indicates a level of importance.

0=Not very important, 1=Somewhat important, 2=Important, 3=Very important

1. How important is it that your friends view and accept you according to your race? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How important is it that people in general view and accept you in terms of your race? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How important are race and racial identity to you? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Interracial Dating Scale

Interracial dating or marrying is the dating or marrying of two people from different races. The purpose of this survey is to gain a better understanding of what people think and feel about interracial relationships. Please read each item carefully and consider how you feel about each statement. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these statements. Please read each statement carefully, and respond by using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

- \_\_\_ 1. I believe that interracial couples date outside their race to get attention.
- \_\_\_ 2. I feel that interracial couples have little in common.
- \_\_\_ 3. When I see an interracial couple I find myself evaluating them negatively.
- \_\_\_ 4. People date outside their own race because they feel inferior.
- \_\_\_ 5. Dating interracially shows a lack of respect for one's own race.
- \_\_\_ 6. I would be upset with a family member who dated outside his/her race.
- \_\_\_ 7. I would be upset with a close friend who dated outside his/her race.
- \_\_\_ 8. I feel uneasy around an interracial couple.
- \_\_\_ 9. People of different races should associate only in non-dating settings.
- \_\_\_ 10. I am offended when I see an interracial couple.
- \_\_\_ 11. Interracial couples are more likely to have low self-esteem.
- \_\_\_ 12. Interracial dating interferes with my fundamental beliefs.
- \_\_\_ 13. People should date only within their race.
- \_\_\_ 14. I dislike seeing interracial couples together.
- \_\_\_ 15. I would not pursue a relationship with someone of a different race regardless of my feelings for him/her.
- \_\_\_ 16. Interracial dating interferes with my concept of cultural identity.
- \_\_\_ 17. I support dating between people with the same skin color, but not with a different skin color.
- \_\_\_ 18. I can imagine myself in a long-term relationship with someone of another race.
- \_\_\_ 19. As long as the people involved love each other, I do not have a problem with interracial dating.
- \_\_\_ 20. I think interracial dating is a good thing.

### Abstract

Until the 1967 Loving v. Virginia case interracial unions between Blacks and Whites were outlawed. Even after the Supreme Court ruled on this case there were many who strongly opposed Blacks and Whites dating or marrying one another. Despite these negative perceptions census data shows that interracial marriages between Black-White couples have steadily increased. While some may argue that race relations between Blacks and Whites have improved in this country, there are those who still oppose this particular interracial union and view these relationships with contempt. The purpose of this study was to investigate university students' attitude toward interracial dating, and examine if the level of importance they place on their race has an effect on their attitude. Previous studies on this topic have been conducted in the southern United States and California. This study adds to the existing literature by surveying students attending a university located in the Midwest. The study consisted of three questionnaires that subjects completed online. Results from this study found that having previous interracial dating experience is associated with positive attitudes toward interracial dating. It also found that students' race was associated with more positive attitudes but not gender. The variable racial identity salience did not correlate with students' attitude toward interracial dating. Clinical implications and the direction of future research are discussed.

## Autobiographical Statement

### Education

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Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology, January 2015  
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Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology, August 2007  
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Bachelor of Arts in Developmental Psychology (Magna Cum Laude), May 2004  
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### Practicum Experience

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Practicum Student • Oakland University Graham Health Center, Rochester, MI  
August 2007 – August 2008

Practicum Student • Third Judicial Circuit Court –The Center for Child Study, Detroit, MI  
August 2006 – August 2007

Practicum Student • University of Detroit Mercy Psychology Clinic, Detroit, MI  
September 2005 – August 2006

### Professional Experience

---

Psychology Internship • Third Judicial Circuit Court -The Center for Child Study, Detroit, MI  
January 2014 – January 2015

Forensic Evaluator • Juvenile Assessment Center, Detroit, MI  
August 2008 – December 2013

Psychotherapist • Lewis & Mikkola Comprehensive Psychological Services, Bingham Farms, MI  
April 2009 – August 2012

Therapist • Boys Hope Girls Hope, Detroit, MI  
August 2008 – February 2009

### Research Experience

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Doctoral Dissertation • Racial identity salience and its effect on college students' attitudes toward interracial dating: Implications toward choosing a potential mate.  
Dissertation Defense: October 2012

### Honors Received

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Deans Award (Excellence in Academic Achievement) University of Detroit Mercy,  
March 2004