SOCIETAL INFLUENCES ON RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION IN BLACK-WHITE INTERRACIAL COUPLES

by

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This thesis is dedicated to Perry L. Berry, III. My therapeutic muse.

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ABSTRACT

Interracial couples have different experiences compared to their intraracial counterparts. Interracial couples and their relationships (particularly their marriages) have been studied to see whether there are any effects on the relationship due to the couple's inherent differences. However, the literature heavily focuses on interracial marriages while only touching on interracial relationships in general, with a primary focus on interracial couples of all kinds. With the tension between White and Black Americans over the years, one can wonder if there would be any noticeable differences within Black/White interracial couples with regard to racial identification and experienced discrimination due to the Black-White racial disparity. This study tested whether these factors contribute to the overall relationship satisfaction in Black/White interracial couples. Data were collected via MTurk and participants completed three assessments to capture how racial identity and experienced discrimination impact their relationship. Racial identity was assessed using Worrell, Mendoza, and Wang's (2019) Cross Ethnic-racial Identity Scale- Adult (CERIS-A); perceived racial discrimination was assessed Conger's (2006) revised version of Landrine et al.'s (2006) General Ethnic Discrimination Scale; and relationship satisfaction was assessed using Funk and Rogge's (2007) Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16). It was predicted that experienced discrimination and racial identity would impact the relationship satisfaction of Black-White interracial couples. The results showed that experienced discrimination did significantly impact relationship satisfaction and racial identity, however, racial identity did not significantly impact relationship satisfaction in Black-White interracial couples. The lack of research on the CERIS-A's validity when interacting with other constructs, a missing question on the CSI-16, and not accounting for biracial participants and their experiences with racial identity development are all limitations that should be considered when reviewing the results. Clinicians can use the information from this study to assist clients in having more conversations about their experiences of discrimination with one another and having them create their own meanings around interracial dating and racial identity.

Keywords: racial identity, interracial relationship, Black, White, couples, experienced discrimination, relationship satisfaction

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Interracial relationships have become increasingly common and accepted in the United States, especially in recent decades. Interracial marriages increased from 7.4% of the United States population in 2000 to 10.2% in 2012-2016. Black-White interracial relationships, specifically, increased from 7.1% of couples in interracial relationships in 2000, to 8.1% in 2012-2016 (Kreider & Anderson, 2018). The Pew Foundation found that only 48% of Americans in 1987 deemed it acceptable for White individuals and Black individuals to date, but this percentage increased to 83% by 2009 (Taylor, Passel, Wang, Kiley, Velasco, & Dockterman, 2010). In 2013, 87% of the United States (U.S.) population approved of Black and White interracial dating (Newport, 2013).

In the history of the United States, there has been much discourse surrounding the idea of dating outside of one's race. With laws preventing interracial marriage in the United States until the *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) case—which nullified the prohibition of interracial marriage—the idea of unifying two races into one relationship was taboo and often illegal in some states. This was especially so for Black-White couples. There is a long-standing history of segregation and separation in the U.S. of the two groups (Moore, 1998). This contributed to these two groups experiencing life differently (i.e., Black individuals experience the effects of systemic racism that contribute to overall lack of access and disproportionate wealth distributions between the Black and White communities). How Blacks and Whites see race and internalizes messages about their race leads to differences in the way they seem themselves and how they identify socially. Today, people of color have more access to education, work, and living opportunities which has changed the social landscape, allowing for more social interaction between Black and White individuals (McIntyre, 2018). The growth of interracial marriage is often seen as an indicator of improved race relations within the United States (Ono & Berg, 2010; Qian & Litcher, 2007). This increase in racial and ethnic tolerance over the years supports the idea that there is a decrease in social distancing between groups (McIntyre, 2018). However, rates of interracial dating remain low.

Historically, interracial couples have been studied as anomalies of the community, seen as inherently flawed and less meaningful compared to intraracial relationships (Smith, 1966). In the United States, theories surrounding why one would choose to date interracially continued to shape the societal outlook on these couples within their respective communities. Researchers hypothesized that White individuals who chose to be in interracial relationships were either acting out in rebellion against their parents by choosing a mate of color, or they were lacking in self-esteem (Brayboy, 1966; Brown, 1987; Smith, 1966). People of color who created unions with White partners were hypothesized to be doing so for increases in social status, or caste exchanging (Van den Berghe, 1960). More current research on interracial relationships has reframed the lens we see interracial relationships through; there is more of a focus on comparing interracial and intraracial relationships, which in turn has normalized interracial relationships to some extent (Brooks, 2017). Interracial couples do face similar relationship conflicts that intraracial couples do (Biever, Bobele & North, 1998; Ho, Mathews, Rasheed, & Rasheed, 2004); however, through their comparisons, studies have overlooked important differences between interracial and intraracial couples (Brooks, 2017). Interracial couples experience challenges unique to their relationships that require additional reflection and negotiation as a couple, such as their dealings with experiences of discrimination (Killian, 2001, 2002, 2013).

Experienced Discrimination and Relationship Satisfaction

Although the social gap between racial groups may be growing smaller, research suggests that Black-White interracial relationships are still seen as somewhat controversial within American society (Knox, Zusman, Buffington, & Hemphill, 2000; Rosenthal & Starks, 2015). Previous research shows that these couples experience discrimination that other types of interracial couples (and all intraracial couples) do not experience. For example, White Americans who marry Black Americans tend to experience more first-hand racism and discrimination in comparison to White Americans who marry either within their racial demographic or other non-Black minorities (Zhang & Hook, 2009). Black Americans who marry White Americans are seen as weakening Black solidarity by some in the Black community and may be questioned about their choices (Harold, 1994). This questioning can cause stress and impact Black-White interracial couples' interactions, which can directly or indirectly affect their relationship satisfaction. Further, although Black-White interracial couples and their relationship satisfaction

have been studied for decades, the outcomes from these studies are mixed stating that these couples are more, less, or equally as satisfied as intraracial couples (La Taillade, 2000; Loo, 2017; Troy, Lewis-Smith, & Laurenceau, 2006).

Racial Identity and Relationship Satisfaction

Researchers of racial identity have multiple schools of thought on its development, but most of them stating that the developmental process of White and Black individuals occurs differently (Cross, 1971; Hardman, 1982; Helms, 1991; Helms & Carter 1991). However, more recent research on racial identity is proposing that perhaps the developmental processes are more similar than they are different (Worrell, Mendoza-Denton, & Wang, 2019). Research has found racial identity to play a more prominent role in day-to-day life for Black individuals than it does for White individuals in the U.S. (Childs, 2005; Dalmage, 2002). However, the literature on the relationship between racial or ethnic identity and relationship satisfaction is sparse and mixed in results (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004; McIntyre, 2018; McLean, Marini, & Pope, 2003), with some literature reporting that there is no connection between racial identity and relationship satisfaction (McLean, Marini, & Pope, 2003), whereas some studies find a correlation (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004); with the potential role that racial identity plays in a person's life, it could have a significant impact on relationship satisfaction.

Racial Identity, Experienced Discrimination, and Relationship Satisfaction

Racial identity, experienced discrimination, and relationship satisfaction all have their own isolated research catalogs but there has not been much focus on the intersectionality of these constructs on Black-White interracial relationships (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004). The purpose of this study is to gain further insight on how both of these constructs of racial identity and experienced discrimination may interact to impact the relationship satisfaction for those in Black-White interracial relationships. Although similar to Leslie and Letiecq's (2004) study, this study was not looking at the effects of social support on interracial relationships and took a different theoretical approach to identifying and explaining racial identity. This was done to understand if approaching racial identity from a different theoretical lens would change the relationship between any of the constructs.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Significance of the Problem

Relationship Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is a long-standing construct in the history of research on romantic relationships; it has become the keystone for understanding how marriage and relationships work (Funk & Rogge, 2007). Relationship or marital satisfaction can be affected by many factors, which include but are not limited to life stressors and transitions, the presence of violence, social support, communication patterns (particularly pursuer/withdrawer patterns), children, and the partners' backgrounds (e.g., culture, traditions, family dynamics, life experiences) (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). The terms marital satisfaction and relationship satisfaction have been used interchangeably with other terms, such as relationship/marital quality, relationship adjustment and happiness (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Heyman, Sayers, & Bellack, 1994). This study defines relationship satisfaction as a partner's subjective, overall assessment of the relationship.

Comparing Interracial and Intraracial Couples Relationship Satisfaction

Interracial relationships and relationship satisfaction have been studied extensively, resulting in mixed findings. The majority of the literature points to intraracial couples being more satisfied than interracial couples (Fu, Tora, & Kendall, 2001; Hohmann-Marriot & Amato, 2008). Cultural differences are frequently cited as contributing factors to these findings (Bishchoff, 2005). Cultural differences (e.g., language, customs, values, and norms) are often identified as an issue that interracial couples have to migrate through, as the differences may clash and bring about conflict, which can decrease relationship satisfaction (Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2011). Because cultural differences (e.g., differences in ideologies) are often seen as fixed, or unchangeable, it was assumed that the issues interracial couples faced that encircled cultural differences, too, were unchangeable. These misconceptions lead to interracial couples feeling misunderstood and isolated by society, or as if they have to have restricted

contact with other people in their lives (Daneshpour, 2003); thus, leading them to be less satisfied about their relationship.

Other studies have found that there are no differences between interracial and intraracial relationship satisfaction (Jeong & Horne, 2009; Johns et al., 2007; Troy et al., 2007). Troy, Lewis-Smith, and Laurenceau (2006) hypothesized that there would be noticeable differences in attachment style, conflict style, and relationship satisfaction between intraracial and interracial couples. They found no notable differences reported in any of these areas. La Taillade (2000) also found that Black-White interracial relationships were just as stable and satisfied with their relationships as intraracial couples.

Although there are mixed findings for overall satisfaction, interracial partners are still shown to experience greater distress compared to intraracial couples, which contributes to self-reported relationship satisfaction (Loo, 2017). For example, the addition of discrimination or stigma experienced due to being in an interracial relationship is a unique factor that interracial couples experience that their intraracial peers do not. Researchers have suggested that social ostracism can negatively influence relationship quality satisfaction in interracial relationship (Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee, 2004; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Rosenthal & Starks, 2015). Individuals who are in societally devalued relationships (e.g., interracial or same sex) experience stigma due specifically to societal devaluation of that particular type of relationship, and this stigma is correlated with lower commitment within the relationship (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006). Otis, Rostosky, Riggle, and Hamrin (2006) looked at the impacts of discrimination on same sex couples' relationship quality. They found that individuals' experiences with sexual orientation-based discrimination were indirectly associated with lower overall relationship quality through the partner's stress levels. Trail, Goff, Bradbury, and Karney (2012) found that in Hispanic newlywed couples, husbands who have to combat day-to-day racial discrimination reported having lower martial satisfaction with their wives. Leslie and Letiecq (2004) report that racial discrimination was also not as impactful on marital satisfaction as they had originally thought. They did, however, emphasize that because they had a sample in which the majority of the participants lived in more diverse regions and intermarriage was more prevalent, this could have decreased the likelihood of discrimination specifically directed at the interracial relationship. Leslie and Letiecq (2004) acknowledged the need for further research on the impacts of experienced discrimination on marital and relationship satisfaction.

The role of racial identity in relationship satisfaction is less well understood, but what is known is that it can shift if the relationship is interracial versus intraracial; race and racial identity tend to be spotlighted within interracial relationships. Leslie and Letiecq (2004) examined how racial identity development, social support, and experienced discrimination affected marital satisfaction in Black-White interracial couples. They found that racial identity (in Black partners and, to a lesser extent, in White partners) was the strongest predictor for marital satisfaction (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004). Partners who took pride in their racial background were more likely to be accepting of others and their racial identities and cultural values, which led to greater satisfaction within their marriage. These studies show that racial identity and being in an interracial relationship (or marriage) are each linked and are predictive of overall satisfaction for Black-White interracial couples.

Experienced Discrimination

Views on Interracial Dating and Stereotyping

Discrimination can take many forms, from engaging in more covert discriminatory practices (e.g., stares), to more overt practices (e.g., violence derogatory jokes, comments, subpar services, restriction to different activities or opportunities, and preferential treatment; Killian, 2002; Leslie & Letiecq, 2004). Generally, research indicates that the Black community, in the U.S., is more accepting of interracial dating compared to the White community. For Black-White interracial couples, the Black partner's families have been shown to be more supportive and accepting of the relationship compared to the White partner's family (Hibbler & Shinew, 2002). Fears and Deane (2001) found that 86% of Black participants said that their families would be accepting of a White partner, while only 55% of White participants said their family would be accepting of a Black partner. Killian (2001) conducted a study, by interviewing Black-White interracial couples on their relationship, in which it was found that White partners reported that their families were initially apprehensive or disapproving of their relationship/marriage, whereas the Black partners reported their families being much more open the couple's union at the onset.

White Views on Race

The emphasis on race has a long history in the United States, and as a result, racist ideologies have been ingrained into the dominant (White) society. In order to maintain the racial hierarchy (with the White community at the top and other racial minority communities at the bottom), racially-based frameworks were created to justify and explain hierarchical differences and why they should be perpetuated (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). The White community directly benefits from this racial status quo through material benefits, which has made working towards eradicating racial disparities difficult (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). The beliefs of White superiority produced prejudices associated with Blackness (Romero, 2014). The effects are still present today and can influence how White people view being Black. For example, White individuals are more likely to believe in and to support meritocracy, which is the idea that individuals are to blame for their circumstances rather than sociopolitical factors that could be influencing them (Gillies, 2005). A common stereotype for minority groups, specifically Black people, is that they are lazy, or do not work hard enough (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), which can serve as evidence as to why there is a large socio-economic difference seen between White and Black communities, and shields one from having to delve deeper into issues that have actually been proven to be contributing to this economic difference, such as institutionalized racism. The acceptance of one stereotype can bolster the acceptance and perpetuation of other stereotypes, which can impact views of others and increase discriminatory practices (Gillies, 2005).

Black Views on Race

Childs (2008) found through interviews that Black individuals tend to base their stereotypes about the White community on their experiences with racism and discrimination. If they are disapproving of interracial dating, they are often more vocal about their concerns than White individuals. Dating interracially can be seen as an effect of White domination and the internalization of self-hatred brought on by this (Collins, 2004). White culture has been set as the idealized standard in the U.S. and having a White partner may be seen as abandoning one's own culture because one has been "brainwashed" into thinking that White is better. Thus, there is an assumption that dating a White partner will help them to assimilate and give them advantages towards making it in the U.S. (Porter, 1995).

Because of race relations between White and Black people in U.S. history, the Black community can attribute the stereotype of untrustworthiness to White individuals. Consequently, the intentions of the White community are often in question, and this lack of trust carries over into views on interracial dating. The sincerity of a White person wanting to date a Black person can be a point of contention. This distrust had been rooted in many historical events such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, in which Black men were recruited and told by White researchers that they would be treated for their syphilis symptoms but never received, and were never intended to receive, any treatment. This resulted in the death of more than one-hundred participants (Brandt, 1978). The events that took the life of Emmitt Till, who was beaten to death for allegedly whistling at a White woman in the 1950s (Crowe, 2018), also serve as an example. The historical mistreatment of the Black community in general is often brought up and connected to the probability of the White partner disrespecting the Black partner in some way (Childs, 2008).

With stereotypes and mistrust contributing to the lack of interaction between White and Black individuals, and the decreased contact between the two races due to segregationist policies, there is an absence of understanding between the two. This lack of understanding may be related to prejudice and discrimination between groups.

Gender Pairing of Black-White Interracial Couples and Experienced Discrimination

There is research that suggests that Black-White interracial couple experiences the most discrimination, specifically Black men-White women pairings and the discrimination comes in particularly strong levels from White men (Scott, 1987; Wade, 1991). For example, Scott's (1987) study compared response times from White men to different interracial and intraracial couple pairings when consulting about directions to a local motel. It was found that Black male-White female pairings received the slowest response times when asking for directions compared to other racial and gendered pairings. Wade (1991) found that White men were more accepting of Black male-White female pairings when the woman was deemed to be unattractive by societal standards.

Differences in Experiences of Discrimination Between Black and White Individuals

Discrimination varies drastically between the White and Black racial groups. White individuals are not subjected to the same discriminatory practices that their minority counterparts

are. When they get into interracial relationships, there is often a shocking realization about the pervasiveness of racism throughout society (Dalmage, 2002). Growing up in a White, single-race family within a relatively segregated neighborhood comes with certain privileges, which include not having to fully confront race and racism. Without having much exposure to other ethnicities, experiences with direct prejudice and discrimination occurs rarely, if ever at all. Once White individuals are with their minority partner, in this case their Black partner, they begin to gain new experiences with race and racism, which could make their privileges as a White individual seem more obvious than they did previously (Dalmage, 2000). For example, White women in these relationships reported facing more racial incidents while with their partners, such as poorer service while out, racial profiling, and discrimination and racism directed towards their children (Yancy, 2007).

Black individuals within the United States usually have more direct experiences with racism and discrimination (e.g., derogatory jokes, comments, subpar services, and restriction to different activities or opportunities, as mentioned above). They must consider their race on some level (whether it be actively acknowledging or making efforts to actively downplay race's social impacts) in their daily interactions; their physical features and skin color shape the way that others see them. This makes them more likely to be aware of the part that race plays within their life and within their relationships (Foeman & Nance, 2002).

Discrimination, Racial Identity and Relationship Satisfaction in Interracial Relationships

Being in an interracial relationship poses a whole new host of considerations when looking at experiences of discrimination. Although Black-White interracial relationships are often seen as a sign of improving times or better race relations, these unions are often met with confrontation and resistance from both Black and White communities (Childs, 2005; Harold, 1994; Porter, 1995). These couples live on a color line—the "borderlands" between Black and White (Childs, 2005, p. 6)—and are forced to question what it means to be Black or White, from a societal point of view (Childs, 2005; Dalmage, 2002; Rosenblatt, Karris, & Powell, 1995). Both partners are consistently confronted with race because of the nature of their relationship. People in Black-White interracial partnerships may find that they are treated differently by both Black and White racial groups, than they had been in previous same-race relationships (Childs, 2005). Those who are in single-race relationships may not be as aware of the impacts of racial

categorization (Dalmage, 2002). For example, White partners in interracial relationships are often taken aback by their direct experiences with discrimination when they are in a societally devalued relationship. Black partners may get comments from people within their racial community that confront their racial identity, and their ability to identify as Black (e.g., can one be pro-Black while dating outside of their race?). Rosenblatt et al. (1995) found that both partners in Black-White interracial relationships, but especially Black partners, were likely to be questioned about their marriage and how it impacts their racial identity from their community as well as their friends and a family. These encounters can be shocking and can ignite ambiguity around racial identity due to the questioning. Relationship satisfaction can decrease if the aspects of racial identity that comprise how one sees other races is negatively impacted.

Although the majority of the literature suggests that discrimination negatively impacts relationship satisfaction for interracial couples, there is section of literature that also supports the idea that experiences of discrimination may strengthen the bond and commitment between interracial couples (Dalmage, 2000; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002). Experiences of discrimination can, in a way, positively impact the relationship by increasing the sense of commitment and unity between the couples (Hibber & Shinew, 2002). There is an increased awareness of and empathy for issues dealing with race because of the discrimination endured due to their relationship (Dalmage, 2000).

Racial Identity Theory

Racial Identity in Black-White Relationships

Racial identity is how individuals recognize, understand, and value their racial background and culture (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004). It is a developmental process that involves continual assessment of those who make up one's ascribed racial group, and of those in other racial groups (Thompson & Carter, 1997). Social constructionist theory suggests that racial identity develops between individuals and their social context (Thomas & Hill, 2000). Gergen (1991) proposed that identity is not something that originates internally but is determined through the individual's relationships and the interactions that take place within these relationships.

Childs' (2005) study on Black-White interracial couples found that racial identity was either emphasized or deemphasized within the relationship, which was expressed through how they would discuss their relationship, as well as societal responses to it. For some of the Black partners, their racial identity was an integral part of what made them who they were. For others, there was an ambivalence around their racial identity; they acknowledged their Blackness but claimed to not want to think in terms of race (e.g., by acknowledging that they are Black but identifying more with being a part of the human race or their nationality). Through this, they adopted a colorblind ideology, which is the view that all people should be valued, assessed, and judged as individual human beings, without the consideration of their race or ethnicity (Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007). This ideology on the surface may seem harmless, or maybe even a step in the right direction, but it is still rooted in racism. In this ideology there is a denial of racial differences that is perpetuated through the emphasis of sameness, and the denial of racism through the emphasis of equal opportunity (Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013), which promotes more covert practices of discrimination. Instead of overtly racist epithets, colorblind ideology otherizes softly through statements such as "these people are human, too" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). While the endorsement of this ideology from a person from an oppressed group may seem contradictory, the adoption of this philosophy could serve as a protective factor (Childs, 2005) (e.g., individuals growing up in a predominantly White area and adopting the colorblind theory to deemphasize their differences as a method to blend in).

All of the White participants in Childs' (2005) study reported either having very little to no connection to their racial identity. Participants could acknowledge their Whiteness but chose to identify with other aspects of their global identity (e.g., their ethnic identities) or downplayed their racial identity all together. White individuals tend to see themselves as a neutral norm, rather than as a particular identity (Pearce, 2004). Race is often seen as something for people of color (Pearce, 2004). When prompted to identify the meaning of Whiteness, the often-common answer is one of uncertainty, followed by an articulation of never having thought about it before (Feagin & Hernan, 2000). With minimal thought of racial identity beforehand, navigating understanding of one's White identity becomes even more complicated once in an interracial relationship. Dalmage (2002) found that the way the Black partner identified racially heavily influenced the way the White partner conceptualized race and interracial relations. For example, if Black partners adopt a more colorblind approach to how they see race, their partner will do the

same. If the Black partner has a stronger attachment to their racial identity, the partner will in turn support their partner and whatever it means to be Black. There is thus shared meaning making of how race plays a role in their relationship and in their lives.

Hill and Thomas (2000) found that both Black and White women in Black-White interracial relationships were active in their racial identity development by rejecting constraining narratives (i.e., narratives that were deemed to be oppressive and incongruent with their experiences) and embracing of more empowering narratives (i.e., narratives around their interracial relationships that participants found to be constructive and affirming of their experiences). They use strategies to protect their racial identity such as blocking negative racial narratives or identities, transforming offensive identities into more empowering ones, and generating nurturing communities to buffer racism and give the ability to shape their own racial identity (Thomas & Hill, 2000).

Racial Identity in Other Racial Combinations of Interracial Relationships

AhnAllen and Suyemoto (2011) examined interracial relationships among Asian American women and White American men, and how their relationship influenced their racial identity. They found that, similar to Foeman and Nance (1999)'s conclusions, there is an increased awareness of racial-ethnic identities within interracial couples. Interracial dating for both Asian American women and White American men had influence on racial/ethnic identities for both groups (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011). Asian American women reported an increased appreciation for their culture, whereas White American men reported an increased understanding of the power and privilege associated with being a White man and becoming more aware of their partners' experiences as a minority; these men also expressed that these understandings challenged their views in a humbling way (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011).

From these studies, we can see that interracial relationships have an impact on the concept of racial identity. Comparing these findings to those of Childs (2005) and Dalmage (2002), we can postulate that race and racial identity in these couples' relationships played a salient role in how they conceptualized their interracial relationship.

Differences in Black and White Racial Identity

As highlighted above, racial identity is a complex, individualized process. As a result, there are different schools of thought on the topic, each providing models to assist in the explanation of the developmental process and what occurs during the development. Earlier models of racial identity separated White and Black identity development into separate processes (Cross, 1971; Hardman, 1982; Helms 1984, 1990, 1995; Helms & Carter, 1990, 1991; Rowe, Bennet & Atkinson, 1994).

Black Identity Development

Cross (1971) introduced Nigrescence theory, which focused on racial identity and the course of its development for Black individuals. Within this theory, he included a model to detail the process. This model consisted of five stages: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment.

Pre-encounter. In the first stage, pre-encounter, Black Americans were described as being pro-White and anti-Black in their orientation. There is little thought or emphasis given to one's race and how that has impacted their lives within this stage. Other identifying factors, such as religion or occupation, were thought to be more salient contributing aspects of the individual's identity (Cross, 1971). Individuals who espouse anti-Black ideology and rhetoric are housed within this stage. Typically, they have not realized the extent to which White, westernized ideologies have shaped their views (Cross, 1971).

Encounter. In the second stage, encounter, Black Americans were described as being forced to face and come to terms with the fact that they encounter and experience racism and discrimination. This stage encompasses two steps: encounter and personalize. During the encounter step, a specific event takes place and shapes their overarching views on race. During the personalize step, individuals take action as a reaction to the personal impact the event had on their world view (Cross, 1971; Ritchey, 2014). Cross and Vandiver (2001) highlight that these encounters do not have to be negative; they just need to be impactful enough to influence the individual.

Immersion/emersion. This stage is highlighted by the idealization of Black culture, and the construction of a new world view with the information they have, and will, gather about race.

There are levels of rage (at White culture and individuals of that culture) that fuels this stage of development. Due to the rage experienced, there is a development of views that are anti-White culture, and a lack of desire to interact with White individuals. During immersion, Black individuals decompress all negative and racist stereotypes attributed to being Black by immersing themselves into Black culture. Emersion describes the emergence from racist ideologies that once shaped their views (Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

   Internalization. In the fourth stage, internalization, Black individuals embrace what it means to be Black and to have Black self-love (Cross, 1971; Ritchey, 2014). There is also an openness to understanding White culture, as well as its strengths and weakness. Individuals in this stage are able to have and maintain relationships with White people whom they feel also find value in culturally blended relationships (Cross, 1971; Ritchey, 2014).

   Internalization-commitment. In the final stage, internalization-commitment, Black Americans actively work to support Black self-empowerment (Worrell & McFarlane, 2017). This stage is where the achievement of healthy racial identity development takes place. This happens when Black individuals go through the process of racial identity by beginning with the acceptance of degrading thoughts and feelings about themselves and their culture, and ending with internalized positive thoughts about themselves, Black culture, and other racial groups (Cross, 1971; Ritchey, 2014).

   Up until the development of this theory, the discourse around Black identity was based on ideas of self-hatred (Cross, 1995). Yet there is so much more that goes into racial identity and how one accepts it. Each stage contains different beliefs and internalized messages that shape the narrative of the individual.

White Identity Development

   Janet Helms' model is the most cited, researched, and applied out of all the models. Her book, *Black and White Racial Identity; Theory, Research, and Practice* (1990), highlighted the differences of racial identity development for Black and for White individuals, separating them into two mutually exclusive processes. Much like Worrell et al. (2019), the process she identified for Black identity development was based on Cross' (1971) Nigrescence model. Helms' theory on White identity suggested that the racial identity development and racial self-actualization are broken down into six stages: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independence,

immersion/emersion, and autonomy. With this model, she also provided scales to measure identities for both racial groups (Helms, 1990; Helms & Carter, 1991).

Contact. In this stage, there is contact with a Black individual, whether it be directly or indirectly (e.g., via television, a movie, a story from a friend). The Black person's differences are noted and then they are categorized as an other or an outsider. These recognized differences are met with fear, uncertainty, and incredulity (Helms, 1990).

Disintegration. In this stage, White individuals have a conscious understanding of their Whiteness and what this means. This recognition may cause some discomfort or confliction for the person. This stems from the acknowledgement that other White individuals, and White institutions, uphold racial inequality by ignoring inequality or downplaying its existence as a way to sustain their societal position of superiority (Helms, 1990).

Reintegration. During the reintegration stage the realization of the benefits that come from being White, and associating with other White individuals, will eventually lead to the acceptance of White superiority and minority inferiority. According to Helms (1990), there is a conscious acknowledgment of their Whiteness and the person sees institutionalized and cultural racism as dues from the earned privileges of White individuals.

Pseudo-independence. In this stage, White individuals have abandoned their racist identity and have begun the process of constructing a more positive associations with being White, thus creating a more positive White identity. People in this stage undertake a journey of discovering a better definition of their Whiteness which can allow for them to interact with Black individuals, and other minorities, while also still feeling comfortable in their White identity.

Immersion/emersion. Similar to the immersion/emersion stage of Black identity, Helms (1990) describes that during this stage White individuals immerse themselves into White culture in order to gain a better understanding of what it truly means to be a White person They have a true understanding of racial inequality and they have now moved to challenging the views and status quo of their White culture.

Autonomy. In the final stage of White racial identity development, Helms (1990) states that this person begins to regain their comfortability in their Whiteness. These White individuals are able to acknowledge and internalize a positive definition of Whiteness while also being able to acknowledge areas where racial inequality is still being upheld through actions in the White community, or through things they are doing themselves.

The Revision and Expansion of Racial Identity

Originally, this study was going to follow Helms' (1990) model, separating the development of racial identity between Black and White individuals; however, due to the low reliability and validity scores of the scales, a different route was taken—focusing more on the Cross (1991) expanded theory of Nigrescence and the assessments associated with it.

In 1991, Cross revised his 1971 model to focus on attitudes instead of developmental stages, which suggested that there is more than one way of being in each of the remaining four stages (Worrell & McFarlane, 2017). Self-esteem's impact was also limited to one stage in the original model (Nigrescence stage); this was changed in this expanded version, as Cross suggested that self-esteem in Black Americans can be high throughout all stages (Worrell & McFarlane, 2017). In the revision (Cross, 1991), Cross proposed three stages to racial identity development: pre-encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization. The encounter stage of the original model (Cross, 1971) keeps its existing name and place; however, it is no longer a full stage. It depicts a series of events that influence individuals to reassess their social group membership (Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen, 2002).

Cross and Vandiver (2001) expanded the theory by dropping the fifth stage, internalization-commitment, and moved towards continually establishing identities within the remaining four stages. In the revised version (Cross, 1991), the pre-encounter stage had two identities: assimilation and anti-Black, whereas in the expanded version (Cross & Vandiver, 2001) there are three identities: assimilation, miseducation, and self-hatred. All other identities (anti-Black, anti-White, intense Black involvement, multicultural inclusive, and Black nationalist) remained the same, although only seven are thought to be measurable (Vandiver et al., 2002). The names of these stages do not describe one particular identity, as they are overarching themes of the particular stage (Vandiver et al., 2002; Worrell et al., 2019).

Pre-encounter. Within this stage, there are three identities: assimilation, self-hatred, and miseducation. In the assimilation attitude, there is not much emphasis given to race or racial identity as a defining part of people. Other aspects of them (such as religion, gender, or class) and their lives take precedence when they are identifying themselves (Cross, 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Within the self-hatred attitude, there is a hatred and loathing of being Black and for Black people and culture; because they are a part of this identity, they tend not to accept themselves. White ideology is deeply imbedded into this their culture, and they often do not

realize they are upholding these White, westernized philosophies. These individuals are noted to have been socialized throughout their lives to idealize and favor a more Eurocentric perspective and view on life (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). The miseducation attitude refers to a person within this stage having negative stereotypes about Black people and the Black community in general. Although miseducation and self-hatred are similar, there is a distinction. Self-hatred tends to impact self-esteem whereas miseducation does not necessarily effect on self-esteem.

Encounter. This concept is not linked with any particular identity cluster or stage, as it is more focused on individuals' reexamining their racial group orientation. There are two processes for this reexamination: encounter and personalize. Once Black individuals realize they cannot attain the same advantage or privilege that is often associated with White culture, they move into encounter (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). This realization is usually prompted by a particular experience that ignites the reexamination. The experience does not need to be a negative one (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). There could have been a positive experience with another member of the Black community that has changed their views of themselves as a Black person and the stereotypes they had for the Black community as a whole. In the next process, personalize, this person will internalize this experience by acting upon it in a way they feel is correct, as it has impacted them personally (Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

Immersion/Emersion. Within this stage, there are two identities: intense Black involvement and anti-White culture and beliefs. Within these identities, Black people are immersing themselves into Black culture in order to find an understanding and to develop a definition for what it means to be Black. There is an idealization of Black culture and Black individuals, and a rejection or de-idealization of White individuals and White culture. With immersion, Black individuals may start to develop resentment and anger towards White individuals and to begin to remove themselves from contact with them and with pre-encounter Black individuals. Aspects they begin to identify with (e.g., preferences for music, clothing choices, hairstyles, religion) and to attribute to themselves may be more rigid in nature, and they often are eager to differentiate what they deem to be Black and non-Black. They are still working on developing their racial identity, so what they have attributed as part of their racial identity is not yet incorporated into their overall identity. In the emersion portion, the Black person becomes very interested in learning about Black culture and understanding the strengths and

weakness of it. There is a more informed and realistic understanding about what societal implications come with being Black (Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

　　Internalization. In the final stage of Black racial identity development, Black individuals are now able to fully merge their racial identity with their overall identity. The person begins to reject racist ideology while also being open to understanding White culture, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. Individuals in the stage are able to have and to maintain relationships with White people who they feel also find value in culturally blended relationships. Within this stage there is also the process of internalization-commitment, in which the Black individual tries to eliminate racism and other forms of oppression through forms of activism in social, political, or everyday experiences (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Within this stage, there are the biculturalist, multiculturist inclusive, and Black nationalist identities. *Biculturalist* individuals are able to accept and to identify two cultural identities (e.g., Black and American). *Multiculturalist inclusive* individuals embrace multiple cultural identities, beyond Blackness (e.g., being Christian—or any other religion, LGBTQ, American), while holding Black self-acceptance at the heart of their multicultural identity. Most people identify with this stage (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross & Worrell, 2001). *Black nationalists* would be considered to have achieved internalization. They are able to hold well-articulated ideologies that are used to achieve the empowerment of Black people and Black culture, as well as economic equity (Cross, 1995; Vandiver et al., 2001). Although it was not mentioned as its own identity it is important to mention that Afrocentricity—a form of Black nationalism and comparable to the Black nationalist identity (Cross & Vandiver, 2001)—is a Black person's perception of what it means to have an African perspective (Cross, 1991; Vandiver et al., 2001). For example, what does it mean to see things through the lens of a Black person? And what effects does that have on one's life existing in a predominantly White ideological society?

　　The expanded Nigrescense theory and the different identities within each stage set the foundation for further research to be done on racial identity, and to look at the different attitudes that make up racial identity. Worrell et al. (2019) modeled the Cross Ethnic-Racial Identity Scale-Adult (CERIS-A) after the expanded version of Cross' (1991) Nigrescense theory. The identities from the revised theory (assimilation, miseducation, self-hatred, anti-Black, anti-White, intense Black involvement, multicultural inclusive, and Black nationalist) were reworded to capture the ethnic-racial attitude for multiple minority groups. The attitudes they proposed were

assimilation, miseducation, self-hatred, anti-dominant, ethnocentricity, multiculturalist inclusive, and ethnic/racial salience.

Although these attitudes were constructed with a Black identity development theory in mind, they are not exclusively applicable to Black people; they can apply to different racial and ethnic backgrounds, including White individuals. Recently, Worrell stated that "five constructs—that is, culture, ethnicity, ethnic identity, race, and racial identity—are defined in terms of membership in a particular group and a sense of psychological commonality, whether referred to as values, beliefs, status in society, or the meaning of group membership" (Worrell, 2015, p. 254). From this viewpoint, he argued that all of these factors are intertwined (culture = ethnicity = ethnic identity = race = racial identity) (Worrell, 2015). Because of this, one should be able to measure these constructs across all ethnic and racial groupings.

Although these attitudes have broadened to encompass all racial groups, Worrell et al. (2019) found differences in attitude scoring between races for some of the attitudes. White Americans had the highest scores on assimilation compared to all other minority groups, and Black Americans had the lowest assimilation scores. Black Americans reported the highest scores on ethnocentricity whereas White Americans had the lowest scores on ethnocentricity; with regard to ethnic-racial salience, Black Americans reported significantly higher scores than White Americans (Worrell et al., 2019). Worrell et al. (2019) also predicted differences in anti-dominant scoring between Black and White Americans; however, they found that both groups scored relatively low in this category.

The Present Study

Black-White interracial relationships and the relationship satisfaction within them have been studied for several decades finding mixed results in their overall satisfaction (La Taillade, 2000; Loo, 2017; Troy et al., 2006). Racial identity and experienced discrimination have their own extensive research catalogs, yet the inclusion of racial identity and experienced discrimination as joint factors that influence relationship satisfaction is something that has received less attention. This study adds to the research gap by contributing data to this intersection and its impacts on Black-White interracial couples. This study explored the following: do perceived experienced discrimination and racial identity have an effect on the overall relationship satisfaction of Black-White interracial couples (i.e., those who are married or

in a relationship)? The Worrell et al. (2019) Cross Ethnic-Racial Identity Scale-Adult is used for the first time since its publication, thereby adding more research to the literature on racial identity and relationship satisfaction. Racial identity is measured via seven racial identity attitudes.

Hypotheses

Based on the studies referenced above that discuss experienced discrimination's influence on all aspects of racial identity (Childs, 2005; Rosenblatt et al., 1995), several hypotheses were tested (see Figure 1 for the model to be tested):

(H1) experienced discrimination will be negatively related to assimilation attitudes;

(H2) experienced discrimination will be positively related to miseducation attitudes;

(H3) experienced discrimination will be positively related to self-hatred attitudes;

(H4) experienced discrimination will not affect anti-dominant attitudes;

(H5) experienced discrimination will be positively related to ethnocentric attitudes;

(H6) experienced discrimination will be negatively related to multiculturalist inclusive attitudes;

(H7) experienced discrimination will be positively related to ethnic-racial salience attitudes.

Based on the studies referenced above that discuss racial identity's potential influence on relationship satisfaction (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004) the following hypotheses were also tested:

(H8) more salient assimilation attitudes will be negatively related to relationship satisfaction;

(H9) more salient miseducation attitudes will be negatively related to relationship satisfaction;

(H10) more salient self-hatred attitudes will be negatively related to relationship satisfaction;

(H11) more salient anti-dominant attitudes will not affect relationship satisfaction;

(H12) more salient ethnocentric attitudes will be negatively related to relationship satisfaction;

(H13) multiculturalist inclusive attitudes will be positively related to relationship satisfaction;

(H14) more salient ethnic-racial salience attitudes will be positively related to relationship satisfaction;

(H15) experienced discrimination will be negatively related to relationship satisfaction.

Finally, based on the Worrell et al. (2019) findings that there are no significant difference found between Black and White participants in anti-dominant scores, White individuals scored higher in assimilation than Black individuals, Black individuals scored higher than White individuals in ethnocentricity and ethnic-racial salience, and that there are notable differences in scoring for miseducation, self-hatred, and multiculturalist inclusive, these final hypotheses were tested.

(H16) Black participants will have higher scores in Ethnocentricity than White participants;

(H17) White participants will have higher scores in Assimilation than Black participants;

(H18) Black participants will have higher scores of ethnic-racial salience than White participants;

(H19) there will be no notable differences in scores of miseducation between Black and White participants;

(H20) there will be no notable differences in scores of self-hatred between Black and White participants;

(H21) there will be no notable differences in scores of anti-dominance between Black and White participants;

(H22) there will be no notable differences in scores of multiculturalist inclusive between Black and White participants.
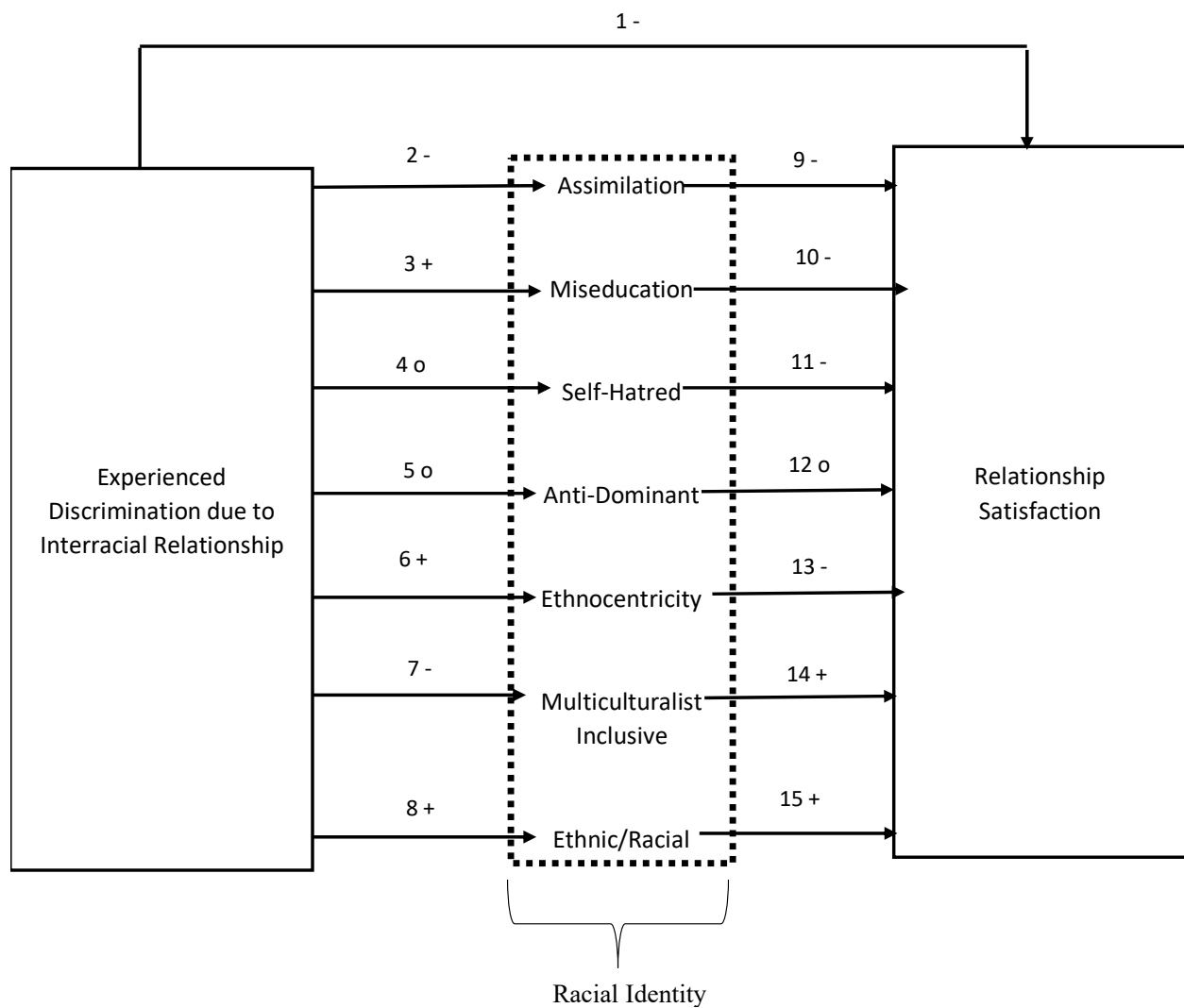
Figure 1. Theoretical Model of Relationships among Variables

Note: 0 = no relationship predicted, + = positive relationship predicted, - = negative relationship predicted

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited via Amazon's online crowdsourcing website Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A $0.50 incentive was provided after completion for participants who met the following inclusion criteria: participants must (a) be in a relationship for at least six months, (b) be in a Black-White interracial relationship, (c) identify as Black or White, (d) be a United States citizen, and (e) be 18 years or older. After accessing the MTurk website, participants were given two different links to access the anonymous survey: a mobile version and a desktop version. The purpose of the study (to gain further insight on how experienced discrimination and racial identity impact relationship satisfaction for those in Black-White interracial relationships) and the researcher's information was provided, and participants were instructed to read though the informed consent (see Appendix A for informed consent) before completing the questionnaire (see Appendix B). None of the participants were asked any personally identifying questions to insure participant confidentiality.

A portion of the questionnaire focused on the demographics of the participants. Including questions regarding the participants age, race (Black or White), ascribed gender, annual income, perceived racial makeup of the area in which they live (shared racial and ethnic identity), education level (high school, some college, bachelors, masters, PhD), length of current relationship (in years), previous relationships, and whether those previous relationships were interracial.

Materials

Experienced Discrimination

Conger's (2014) revised version of Landrine et al.'s (2006) General Ethnic Discrimination Scale was used to assess experienced discrimination in terms of the participants' interracial relationship. Respondents were asked to disclose if they have experienced discrimination in various areas of life directly because of their interracial relationship (e.g., work, school, interactions with strangers, helping professionals). The assessment had 19 items and

responses as to how often they have experienced discrimination in different areas were given via a 6-point Likert scale (*never, once in a while, sometimes, a lot, most times, almost all*) (α = .98). An example question is "How often have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students, and colleagues because of your interracial relationship?" The respondent also rated how stressful this experience of discrimination was on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from *not stressful at all to extremely stressful*. The scale assessed if the discriminators were aware of the interracial relationship via yes or no questions (e.g., were your teachers or professors aware of your interracial relationship?). However, for the purposes of this study, these awareness-based questions were removed, as the respondent was prompted in the directions to answer these questions directly in terms of their interracial relationship. Results were computed via total score. Higher scores indicate more frequent experiences with discrimination.

Racial Identity

The Cross Ethnic-Racial Identity Scale-Adult (CERIS-A) (Worrell et al., 2019) was used to assess racial identity (α = .94). This scale was a 29-item Likert response (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) questionnaire that contains seven subscales: assimilation (α = .77), miseducation (α = .80), self-hatred (α = .86), antidominant (α = .90), ethnocentricity (α = .74), multiculturalist inclusive (α = .71), and ethnic/racial salience (α = .83).

Assimilation

This subscale assessed the conceptualization of individual identification in terms of nationalism as opposed to ethnonationalism. This means that someone with this attitude would identify with their nation—for example, American—before they would identify as whatever race or ethnicity they are (e.g., Black American, Mexican American, Asian American; Worrell et al., 2019). A sample item is "I think of myself primarily as an American, and seldom as a member of an ethnic or racial group." Higher scores on this subscale indicate a more salient identification with nationalism rather than ethnonationalism.

Miseducation

Similar to the definition in Cross's (2001) expanded Nigrescense theory, miseducation attitudes are the extent to which an individual internalizes and endorses stereotypes about other races. A sample item is "People should relax about being too politically correct because sometimes stereotypes about our group are true." Higher scores on this subscale indicate more salient views of stereotypes of other races.

Self-hatred

The self-hatred subscale assessed the extent to which an individual dislikes, or rejects, the racial or ethnic group they are part of. A sample item is "I sometimes have negative feelings about being a member of my ethnics/racial group." Higher scores within this area indicate higher levels of rejection or dislike of one's own ethnic/racial grouping.

Anti-dominant

This subscale is based on Cross's (1971) anti-White stage. With the racial and ethnic generalization of this scale, anti-White was broadened to anti-dominant. This assessed the extent to which individuals of both the minority and majority dislike the dominant group within their society. A sample item is "My negative feelings towards the majority culture are very intense" (Worrell et al., 2019). Higher scores within this subscale indicate greater levels of dislike for the dominant group.

Ethnocentricity

This subscale is the reconceptualization of Afrocentricity based on Cross' first assessment, the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS). As previously stated, Afrocentricity is comparable to the Black Nationalist identity (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). Expanding this to ethnocentricity allowed for this scale to assess this attitude within other racial or ethnic backgrounds, as this attitude is applicable to many races/ethnicities. An example item is "We cannot truly be free as people until our daily lives are guided by the values and principles grounded in our ethnic/cultural heritage." Higher scores within this subscale indicate more

salient views on the empowerment of their ethnic/racial background, while still seeking general equality for all.

Multiculturalist inclusive

This subscale assessed the duality of having a strong connection to one's own racial group, while also being able to be open and willing to engage with other cultural groups; and not only do those things, but also to value the information and different perspectives brought by these different groups (Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006; Worrell et al., 2019). An example item is "I believe it is important to have a multiculturalist perspective which is inclusive of everyone" (Worrell et al., 2019). Higher scores within this subscale indicate greater appreciation of one's culture and the integration of cultures.

Ethnic/racial salience

This subscale looked at ethnic/racial salience, which assesses the degree to which individuals consider race in their day-to-day lives (Worrell et al., 2019). An example item is "When I have a chance to decorate a room, I tend to select pictures, posters, or works of art that express strong ethnic-cultural themes." Higher scores within this area indicate more frequent consideration of one's race during day-to-day activities.

There were four items per subscale on each of the seven racial identity subscales; the scores for each were computed by summing the four items that make up each of the seven subscales, then calculating the mean scores for that subscale. Mean scores thus ranged from 1 to 7. These scores were assessed to see their effects on relationship satisfaction.

Relationship Satisfaction

Using Funk and Rogge's (2007) Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16), relationship satisfaction was assessed via a 6-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (*extremely unhappy*) to 6 (*perfect*), 5 (*all the time*) to 0 (*never*), 0 (n*ot at all true*) to 5 (*completely true*), or 5 (*interesting*) to 0 (*boring*). There was a total of 16 items with a total score ranging from 0 to 81, with higher scores indicating greater relationship satisfaction ($\alpha = .91$). Scores that fall below 51.5 suggest notable dissatisfaction within the relationship. To compute scoring for the scale, the

responses across all 16 items were summed together. Example items include "How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?" and "My relationship with my partner makes me happy."

Demographics

Participants were also measured on the following demographic variables: A age, race, ascribed gender, annual income, perceived racial makeup of the area in which they live, education level, length of current relationship, previous relationships, and whether those previous relationships were interracial.

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

Data Screening

A total of $N = 275$ participants completed the survey. In SPSS, relationship satisfaction questions: "*In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?*", "*My relationship with my partner makes me happy*", "*I really feel like part of a team with my partner*", and "*How well does your partner meet your needs?*" were originally identified and coded as string variables from Qualtrics. After download they were changed to numerical. Experienced discrimination, racial identity (assimilation, miseducation, self-hatred, anti-dominant, ethnocentricity, multiculturalist inclusivity, ethnic-racial salience) and relationship satisfaction scales were computed and tested for skewness and kurtosis, in order to check for normal distribution. Analyses revealed notable skewness for the subscales for racial identity (skew / skew standard deviation = diagnostic; assimilation diagnostic: -.80/.16 = -5.11; miseducation diagnostic: -.70/.16 = -4.46; self-hate diagnostic: -.56/.16 = -3.57; anti-dominant diagnostic: -.51/.16 = -3.27; ethnocentricity diagnostic: -.42/.16 = -2.57; multiethnic inclusive diagnostic: -.45/.16 = 2.85; ethnic-racial salience diagnostic: -.53/.16 = - 3.40). In order to correct this, a reflection and square root was transformed on each of the subscales. It should be noted that only five of the seven subscales (assimilation, miseducation, self-hatred, anti-dominant, ethnic-racial salience) were actually skewed but in order to maintain consistency, a reflection and square root was done on all seven. The transformation produced normal, or non-skewed, distribution (assimilation diagnostic: .28/.16 = 1.79; miseducation diagnostic: .27/.16 = 1.71; self-hate diagnostic: .16/.16 = 0.99; anti-dominant diagnostic: .18/.16 = 1.16; ethnocentricity diagnostic: .04/.16 = .27; multiethnic inclusive diagnostic: .00/.16 = .01; ethnic-racial salience diagnostic: .11/.16 = .72). Next, the data were examined for non-random (systematic) missing data. Two participants had missing data, and 34 participants did not provide their age. After listwise deletion, this left a total sample size of $n = 239$ viable participants.

The data were then tested for linearity and homoscedasticity through a visual analysis of a scatterplot which indicated that all pairs of variables were in linear relationships, and the homoscedasticity assumption was met. Next, an analysis of multivariate normality was completed using Mahalanobis distance. There were eight detected multivariate outliers ($p <$

.001), having values greater than the critical value (26.13). All participants above the critical value were excluded from further analysis (8 participants total), resulting in a final analysis sample size of $n = 231$ participants. Lastly, the absence of multicollinearity was tested for by running correlations among variables. There was concern for multicollinearity as there were strong correlations ($r =.70$) between self-hatred and miseducation ($r = .73$), anti-dominant attitudes and self-hatred ($r =. 81$), ethnic-racial salience and self-hated ($r = .76$), ethnic-racial salience and anti-dominant attitudes ($r = .79$), and ethnic-racial salience and ethnocentricity ($r = .78$). Due to the study variables and structure, all of the subscales were kept for further analysis, as each measured a uniquely different, yet overlapping, construct. To confirm this, a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was calculated for all variables that were above a correlation of .70 when considering relationship satisfaction as the dependent outcome. Each variable had a VIF lower than 10 (selfhate VIF = 3.77; misedu VIF = 2.54; antidom VIF = 3.68; ethnicrac VIF =4.07; ethno VIF = 2.81) which indicates that each was measuring a unique construct (Miles, 2014).

Description of Sample Participants

The final sample included 231participants. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 60, with the mean age being 31.14, median being 30.0, and the standard deviation being 6.92. In terms of racial identity, 35.7% of the sample identified as Black/African American and 64.3% identified as White/Caucasian American. Gender was broken down with 64.4% identified as male, 35.1% identified as female, and 0.4% identified as nonbinary/third gender. Most (80.8%) of participants had been in previous relationships of substantial length; of those, 76.8% have been interracial relationships prior to their current relationship. A vast majority (99.1%) of participants had been in their current relationship for at least 6 months, and 42.9% were in their current relationship between 1 and 6 years. In terms of relationship status, 34.7% of the population were dating their partner, 38.53% were married or in a civil union, and 26.8% were cohabitating/in a domestic partnership. In terms of sexual orientation, 35.9% of participants were in a same-sex/same-gender relationships, 64.1% were not. 63.4% of participants had a bachelor's degree. In terms of income, 33.1% of the participant's household income ranged from $50,000-$74,999, while 29.3% of participant's income ranged from $25,000-$49,000. The median income range was $50,000-$74,999. In terms of neighborhood demographics, 51.7% of

participants thought that most of the people in their neighborhood shared their racial identity, while 38.5% thought that most of the people in my neighborhood shared their racial identity.

Test of Hypotheses

IBM SPSS and EQS software (Bentler, 2006) were used to test the 22 hypotheses found in Figure 1. A structural equation model was used to examine data. The results are displayed in Figure 2, and a table of correlations among variables is provided in Table 1. In order to determine goodness of fit within the analysis, a model chi-square (χ^2) statistic at p-value above 0.05 indicated that the data and the model are not significantly different. The independence model does not fit well, $\chi^2 = 1465.92$ (37, $N = 239$), $p < .05$. The Satorra-Bentler Scaled (robust) chi-square for the final model indicated a good fit between the model and the data, $\chi^2 = 45.3624$ (1, $N = 239$), $p < .001$, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .44.

Table 1. Pearson Correlations Among Variables

Observed Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Experienced Discrimination	1								
2. Assimilation	-.35**	1							
3. Miseducation	-.60**	.43**	1						
4. Self-hatred	-.74**	.42**	.73**	1					
5. Anti-Dominant	-.80**	.39**	.68**	.81**	1				
6. Ethnocentricity	-.60**	.38**	.68**	.68**	.64**	1			
7. Multicultural Inclusive	-.21**	.44**	.34**	.24**	.15*	.36**	1		
8. Ethnic-Racial Salience	-.74**	.40**	.70**	.76**	.79**	.78**	.36**	1	
9. Relationship Satisfaction	-.46**	-.05	.22**	.35**	.47**	.24**	-.22**	.34**	1

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). These numbers are based on of the transformed variables

The following question was unintentionally omitted from the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16) in the survey: "*please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship*." Due to this error, reliability was run on the scale to determine if it was valid for use. Cronbach's alpha for the CSI was shown to be acceptable for this sample, $\alpha = .91$. The other scales used in the study were also examined with a reliability analysis, providing evidence of a reliability. Due to the omission of the items of the Couple Satisfaction Index, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine if the scale retained validity structurally. KMO and Bartlett's test of Sphericity indicated that the factor analysis was appropriate based on sample and data characteristics (KMO $= .94$; $\chi^2(91, 239) = 1929.23$, $p < .001$). Overall, this variable retained a single factor structure, similar to initial development of the scale. Examination of the scree plot showed a clear elbow at one factor, as well as the single factor having an eigenvalue of 6.99 (33.78% of the variance) – a second factor eigenvalue decreased to less than 1.0, indicating single factor structure. Additionally, factor loadings for the items all correctly and positively loaded onto a single factor, with loadings ranging from .33 to .83. There was only one second factor loading, a negative loading, below significance ($p > .25$).

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one stated that experienced discrimination is negatively related to relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported within the data sample, $B = -.29$, $p < .05$. There is a negative relationship between experienced discrimination and relationship satisfaction, indicating that the more experiences of discrimination individuals have, the less satisfied they are with their relationship.

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two stated that experienced discrimination will be negatively related to assimilation attitudes. The hypothesis was supported when looking at the sample as a whole, $B = -.34$, $p < .05$. There was a negative relationship between experienced discrimination and assimilation attitudes. Indicating when there is more experienced discrimination, the less the individuals identify with their nation (or nationality) and the more they identify with their ethnicity.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three stated that experienced discrimination will be positively related to miseducation attitudes. This hypothesis was not supported when looking at the sample, $B = -.62$, $p < .05$, as there was a negative relationship between experienced discrimination and miseducation. This indicates the more experiences of discrimination the less likely individuals are to endorse stereotypes about others' race or ethnicity.

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four stated that experienced discrimination will not be related to self-hatred attitudes. This hypothesis was not supported when looking at the sample, $B = -.79$, $p < .05$. There was a negative relationship between experienced discrimination and self-hatred, which indicates that the more experiences of discrimination, the less likely individuals are to dislike, or reject, their racial or ethnic group.

Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five stated that experienced discrimination will not be related to anti-dominant attitudes. This hypothesis was not supported when looking at the sample, $B = -.84$, $p < .05$. There was a negative relationship between experienced discrimination and anti-dominant attitudes, which indicates that the more experiences of discrimination, the less likely individuals are to dislike the dominant group.

Hypothesis Six

Hypothesis six stated that experienced discrimination will be positively related to ethnocentric attitudes. This hypothesis was not supported when looking at the sample, $B = -.65$, $p < .05$. There was a negative relationship between experienced discrimination and ethnocentric attitudes, indicating that the more experiences of discrimination, the less likely individuals are to have a salient understanding of what it means to be a part of their racial group.

Hypothesis Seven

Hypothesis seven stated that experienced discrimination will be negatively related to multiculturalist inclusive attitudes. This hypothesis was supported when looking at the sample, $B = -.62$, $p < .05$. There was a negative relationship between experienced discrimination and multiculturalist inclusivity, indicating that the more experiences of discrimination, the less open individuals are to the idea of engaging with other cultural groups.

Hypothesis Eight

Hypothesis eight stated that experienced discrimination will be positively related to ethnic-racial salience attitudes. This hypothesis was not supported when looking at the sample, $B = -.79$, $p < .05$. There was a negative relationship between experienced discrimination and ethnic/racial salience, indicating that the more experiences of discrimination, the less likely individuals consider race in their day to day life.

Hypothesis Nine

Hypothesis nine stated that more salient assimilation attitudes will be negatively related relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported within the data sample, $B = -.10$, $p < .05$. There is a negative relationship between assimilation and relationship satisfaction, indicating that the more individuals identify with their nationality and not their ethnicity, the less satisfied in their relationship they were.

Hypothesis Ten

Hypothesis ten stated that miseducation attitudes will be negatively related to relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported within the data sample, $B = .01$, $p > .05$. There is a positive relationship between miseducation and relationship satisfaction, indicating that the more individuals endorse stereotypes about their racial group, the more satisfied they are in their relationship.

Hypothesis Eleven

Hypothesis eleven stated that more salient self-hatred attitudes will be negatively related to relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported within the data sample, $B = .05$, $p > .05$. There is a positive relationship between self-hatred and relationship satisfaction, indicating the more individuals dislike or reject, the racial group they belong to, the more satisfied they are within their relationship.

Hypothesis Twelve

Hypothesis twelve stated that more salient anti-dominant attitudes will not affect relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported within the data sample, $B = .28$, $p < .05$. There is a positive relationship between anti-dominant attitudes and relationship satisfaction, indicating that the more individuals dislike the dominant group, the more satisfied they are within their relationship.

Hypothesis Thirteen

Hypothesis thirteen stated that more salient ethnocentric attitudes will be negatively related relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported within the data sample, $B = -.12$, $p < .05$. There is a negative relationship between ethnocentricity and relationship satisfaction, indicating the more individuals have a salient understanding of what it means to apart of their racial group, the less satisfied they are in their relationship.

Hypothesis Fourteen

Hypothesis fourteen stated that multiculturalist inclusive attitudes will be positively related to relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported within the data sample, $B = -.20$, $p > .05$. There is a negative relationship between multicultural inclusivity and relationship satisfaction, indicating that the more individuals are open to the idea of engaging with other cultural groups, the less satisfied they are within their relationship.

Hypothesis Fifteen

      Hypothesis fifteen stated that more salient ethnic-racial salience attitudes will be positively related to relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported within the data sample, $B = .04$, $p < .05$. There is a positive relationship between ethnic-racial salience and relationship satisfaction, indicating that the more individuals consider their race in their day to day lives, the more satisfied they are in their relationship.

Hypotheses Sixteen to Twenty-Two

      Hypotheses sixteen to twenty-two reported potential difference that could be seen in scoring between Black and White Participants, particularly, in three areas: ethnocentricity scores (hypothesis sixteen) assimilation scores (hypothesis seventeen) and ethnic-racial salience scores (hypothesis eighteen). An independent t-test was conducted to compare any differences seen between Black and White participant responses on the seven subscales for racial identity; see Table 2 for results. Hypothesis sixteen stated that Black participants would have high ethnocentricity scores; this hypothesis was not supported within the data sample. Hypothesis seventeen stated that White participants will have higher Assimilation scores than Black participants; this hypothesis was not supported within the data sample. Hypothesis eighteen stated that Black participants would have higher ethnic-racial salience scores than White participant; this hypothesis was not supported within the data sample. Hypotheses nineteen through twenty-two stated that there would be no notable differences in scoring between Black and White participants in miseducation, self-hatred, anti-dominance, and multiculturalist inclusivity scoring. There was a significant difference in scoring between Black and White participants in assimilation attitudes only $t(236) = 2.17$, $p = .03$, where Black participants scored higher than White participants. Hypotheses nineteen through twenty-two were supported in the data set.

Table 2. Black-White Participants and Outcomes

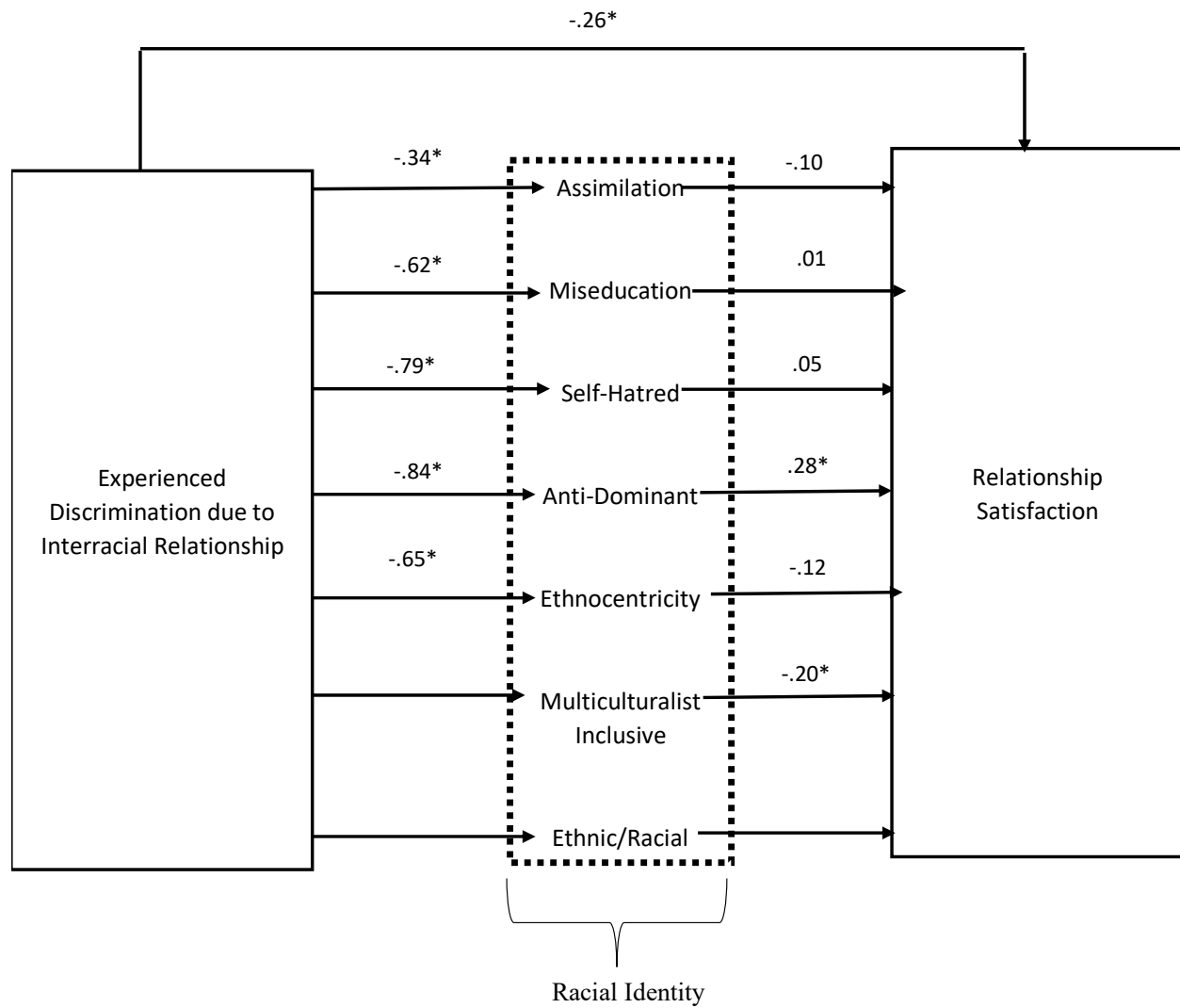| Scale	White		Black		T-Test	
	M	σ	M	σ	df	t
Assimilation	1.63	.30	1.73	.36	236	2.17*
Miseducation	1.76	.33	1.78	.39	236	.42
Self-Hatred	1.82	.40	1.85	.44	236	.62
Anti-Dominant	1.87	.45	1.89	.47	236	.38
Ethnocentricity	1.78	.34	1.73	.33	236	-1.28
Multiculturalist Inclusive	1.65	.31	1.63	.30	236	-.41
Ethnic/Racial	1.78	.39	1.78	.38	236	-.07

Note: * < .05

Figure 2. Structural Equation Model Visualization of Relationships Among Variables

Note: * *p* < .05

Post Hoc Analysis of Data

This study found that experienced discrimination has a negative relationship with relationship satisfaction. Because the gender pairing of Black-White couples can potentially cause for more frequent experiences of discrimination, a post hoc analysis was run to analyze if the race and gender of the participant impacted the relationship satisfaction of these couples as well. To analyze any honeymoon effects bias from participants whose relationships were not as long, a post hoc analysis was run on length of relationship and relationship satisfaction.

A simple linear regression, with all variables entered all at once, was run to predict any potential relationship among relationship satisfaction, race, gender, and length of relationship. For the relationship between race, gender, and relationship satisfaction there was no significant correlation found $F(2, 235) = 0.27$, $p = .76$, $R^2 = .00$. For the relationship between length of relationship and relationship satisfaction, the linear regression identified a significant regression $F(1, 236) = 10.74$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of 0.044. This suggests that length of relationship is positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, $r(1) = .21$, $p = .001$; the longer the participants reported being in their relationship the higher their relationship satisfaction scores were. Overall, the linear regression showed that length of relationship had more impact on relationship satisfaction than either gender or race did.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

Experienced Discrimination and Relationship Satisfaction

This study found that increased discrimination due to being in an interracial relationship decreased relationships satisfaction. This contributes to the mixed findings for interracial couples and their relationships satisfaction (La Taillade, 2000; Loo, 2017; Troy et al., 2006). Couples in Black-White interracial relationships experience discrimination in ways that other interracial couples (and intraracial couples) do not. The White partner may have not had very many direct experiences with racism, but when in a relationship with a Black partner their experiences of first-hand racism are more frequent compared to White individuals in an intraracial relationship (Zhang & Hook, 2009). Couples in intraracial relationships (two Black partners or two White partners) may have more commonalities in their experiences with discrimination which may contribute to discrimination not being as impactful on their relationship satisfaction. The discrimination experienced would not be related to the race of relationship, per se, but may be due other factors such as their socioeconomic status or sexuality.

Experienced Discrimination and Racial Identity

Experienced discrimination had a significant influence on all aspects of racial identity, creating negative relationships for each attitude. This contradicted the predicted relationships between experienced discrimination and miseducation, self-hatred, antidominant, ethnocentricity, and ethnic/racial salience. Experiences of discrimination can influence how we see others, but more importantly how we see ourselves. Experiences of discrimination because of being in an interracial relationship can present in unique ways that may not have been experienced prior to the development of the relationship (Childs, 2005). As a result, racial identity can often be questioned by others (Rosenblatt et al., 1995). This questioning could cause for some ambiguity about what it means to a member of the individual's racial group. This could contribute to an internalized struggle with what it means to be a Black or White person, and negative stereotypes about who one is for choosing to date outside of their relationship. These points were the background for this study when creating the hypotheses for experienced discrimination impact miseducation, ethnic-racial salience, ethnocentricity, and self-hate

attitudes. However, the opposite effect was found. Increased experienced discrimination due to being in an interracial relationship actually decreased miseducation, self-hatred, anti-dominant, ethnocentricity, and ethnic-racial salience.

The results for self-hatred and antidominant attitudes also do not match the predicted hypotheses. Experienced discrimination was predicted to be positively related to self-hatred because self-hatred is directly impactful to self-esteem and experienced discrimination can negatively impact self-esteem (Cross & Vandiver, 2001). The different relationship identified could be attributed to the fact that experienced discrimination is specifically focused on discrimination experienced because of one's interracial relationship and not discrimination experienced because of one's individual race. Self-hate is individualized. The dislike for the dominant group within society (antidominant) decreases as experiences of discrimination increase. While this result may seem contradictory, and goes against the predicted hypothesis, the context of the interracial relationship should be taken into consideration. For Black-White interracial couples, there is one person in the relationship who identifies as White; this may complicate feelings towards the dominant race for both partners. White partners do increase their exposure to discrimination and depending on how salient they are in understanding of what it means to be White in America prior to their interracial relationship, it can cause ambiguity in how they see their race as a whole after they are in their interracial relationship. Black partners' experiences with the dominant culture, perhaps, have not been positive, but their partner being White may decrease their level of dislike for the dominant culture; their partner stands as a counter example of the negativity they may experience from the majority (and White culture tends to be the least accepting of interracial dating). It is possible that this could help the Black partner to isolate the discrimination to an individually-based problem rather than a problem of the dominant culture as a whole. This individualization of the discrimination could also explain the negative relationship between experienced discrimination and miseducation: the more discrimination is experienced, the less the individual endorses stereotypes about other races. The partner may not endorse different stereotypes about other cultures because they or their partner represents a positive example of all groups not being the same.

Experienced discrimination and ethnic-racial salience also had a negative relationship. Frequent considerations of one's race in day-to-day life decreases if experiences of discrimination because of their interracial relationship increases. Because individuals in these

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relationships are questioning their racial identities more often, due to discrimination being received from others (Rosenblatt et al., 1995), this aspect of their racial identity may get less attention due to the uncertainty around what it means to be White or Black. There is possibly less salience in who they are as a member of their ethnicity due to the discrimination. Similarly, when looking at the impact of experienced discrimination on ethnocentricity (increased discrimination decreased the desire for empowerment of their racial background while simultaneously wanting equality for all) and multiculturalist inclusive (increased discrimination decreases the appreciation for one's culture and the integration of other cultures), the ambiguity or lack of understanding of what it means to be a member of one's racial group may decrease the ability to really immerse oneself in the culture associate with it enough to appreciate it.

Lastly, the more experienced discrimination, the less one would identify with their nationality (assimilation). More experiences of discrimination may retract individuals from wanting to assimilate into a culture that is not accepting of their relationship, and the White community tends to be less accepting of interracial relationships compared to the Black community (Fears & Deane, 2001; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Killian, 2001). Assimilation does not have to include dislike for the dominant culture or group, just the desire to be accepted as a part of it, but discrimination is not welcoming; interracial couples can feel misunderstood by those around them, which can be somewhat isolating (Daneshpour, 2003). So, it may be difficult to want to fully immerse in the culture that is causing one to feel the most misunderstood or unwelcomed.

Racial Identity and Relationship Satisfaction

In terms of the impact of racial identity on relationship satisfaction, the relationship overall was not significant. This is contradictory to the findings of Leslie and Letiecq (2004), who found that racial identity played a large role in relationships satisfaction for Black-White interracial couples, with the relationship identified being more prominently with Black partners compared to White partners. However, these results align with McLean, Marini, and Pope's (2003) finding that relationship satisfaction is not related to racial identity. Overall, the literature looking into the relationship between and relationship satisfaction is scant. The commonality between these two studies mentioned lies within the scale used to measure racial identity. Both studies used Helms' (1990) Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RAIS). With the lack of literature

within this area, it is hard to narrow down the cause for these differences found in those studies and the current study. What is for certain is the sample populations were different; Leslie and Letiecq (2004) and the current study both looked at Black-White interracial couples, whereas McLean, Marini, and Pope (2003) looked at Black, gay men. These could contribute to the differences noted in the findings. Additionally, Helms' RIAS has been identified to have low reliability and consistency, which could be a contributing factor in the differences found between this study and the other studies who used that particular model. Low reliability can interfere with the likelihood of finding significant results. The literature on racial identity and relationship satisfaction needs more contributions as a whole. This relationship should be taken into consideration for future works looking at racial identity and its impacts.

There were, however, significant relationships between both anti-dominant attitudes and multiculturalist inclusive attitudes and relationships satisfaction. A positive relationship was identified between anti-dominant scores and relationship satisfaction. The more dislike one has for the dominant group, the higher their relationship satisfaction. It seems that perhaps couples may bond over their dislike for the dominant group. While Personal experiences of discrimination can impact a partner of a relationship, decreasing their overall relationship satisfaction (Otis et al., 2006; Trail et. al, 2012), this finding suggests that relating to one another on this specific topic seems to bring the individual closer to their partner.

There was a negative relationship between multiculturalist inclusive attitudes and relationship satisfaction. The more people are appreciative of their culture and the integration of other cultures, the less satisfied in their relationship they are. This result is particularly hard to explain, as it does not line up with the literature. However, the context of the relationships is unknown in terms of what the respondent's partner is like/what their views are and should be taken into consideration. Perhaps they are in a relationship with someone who is not as open to the idea of integrating different races and culture. Just because one is in an interracial relationship does not automatically define them as inherently non-racist. One can see an individual of a specific racial group as the exception to the rule (or token), while still holding biases and prejudices against the racial group as a whole (Bonilla-Silva, 2002). In the current study's survey, participants were asked if they had experiences of direct racism from their partners, via an open-ended question, and were asked to share examples of this. These

experiences could impact their overall satisfaction levels while not impacting how they generally view the integration of cultures and races.

Differences between Black and White Partners

Worrell et al. (2019) found that, generally speaking, Black participants had higher ethnocentricity and ethnic-racial salience scores, White participants had higher assimilation scores, and in all other attitudes there would be no notable differences. This study found that the only attitude that displayed any significant difference in scoring was assimilation, and Black participants scored higher than White participants. The sample population comprising specifically of partners in Black-White interracial relationships may contribute to this finding. The way Black partners approach race within the relationship can influence the way that White partners view race and interracial relations (Dalmage, 2002). However, perhaps participants in this study were more influenced by their White partners, who would be a part of the dominant culture. Additionally, there was no assessment of assimilation scores prior to being in an interracial relationship, but there is a potential that those who are more willing to date interracially have higher assimilation scores to begin with. Overall, Black individuals may identify more with their race than White individuals do, but when in an interracial relationship with a White partner their views on race and ethnicity may become more fluid. If Black participants had higher assimilation scores than the Black participants in the Worrell et al. (2019) study, it would make sense that, subsequently, their scores would not be as high in ethnic-racial salience and ethnocentricity comparatively, which is what was found.

Post Hoc Analysis

It was found that gender and race did not have a significant impact on relationship satisfaction. Although Black-White couples tend to be the least favorable combination of interracial relationships, this does not automatically mean they will have increased experiences of discrimination, especially because this study did not do any comparisons to other combinations of interracial relationships to confirm if this was the case. Perhaps for this particular group, the race-gender combination was not as prominent of a factor contributing to their relationship satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction was positively correlated with length of relationship. This could be due to the fact that those in longer relationships have more time to get to know their partner, which means they have a better understanding of how to interact with their partner. For example, when in a newer relationship people may not be as familiar with how to communicate with their partner, or what triggers their partner has due to their upbringing or previous relationships, which can lead to more frequent arguments. When a couple has spent more time together, they have better understanding of how to communicate with one another, resulting in fewer disagreements.

Clinical Implications

The overall take away from this study is that while there might not be a substantial relationship between racial identity and relationship satisfaction, experienced discrimination does have a significant negative impact on all aspects of racial identity, as well as relationship satisfaction. Findings suggest that experienced discrimination creates some level of ambiguity within Black-White interracial couples around their racial identity and how that impact their views of themselves and of others. The parts of racial identity that have to do with how one sees themselves in relation to others and how one sees others, generally, seems to lack salience, and this makes sense. There are a lot of different messages in society about dating outside of one's race; this can cause for some confusion when these messages and aspects one's life are not aligning. Relationship satisfaction may not be strongly impacted by racial identity, but having couples discuss these experiences together may strengthen their relationship.

Couples in interracial relationships may sometimes be too afraid to share their experiences of discrimination with one another due to fears of how it may impact their relationship (Rosenblatt et al., 1995). This study, as well as others, (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006; Otis et al., 2006; Trail, et al., 2012) show that individual experiences of discrimination decreases relationship satisfaction. Couples being too afraid to share their experiences with their partner hints at a bigger issue: communication being limited. Increasing communication habits can increase relationship satisfaction in couples (Eldridge & Christiansen, 2002). Clinicians providing these couples with the space to safely share these experiences can be beneficial. Having the couple facilitate conversation around racial identity, their experiences of discrimination because of their interracial relationship, and how these experiences have shaped their outlook on their own racial group can create a more secure understanding between the

couple. Considering that racial identity is broken down into different attitudes (in the CERIS-A), clinicians can discuss these different attitudes with clients. Specifically, the attitudes that have to do with how the individual sees others (miseducation, anti-dominant, multiculturalist inclusive), which can include their partner. If the clinician has a better understanding of experiences of discrimination each partner has had, and its effects of racial identity, they may have a better view on what to tackle with the couple. In order to help couples feel more secure in their ability to share their experiences with their partner, first the clinician would need to identify reasons why they have not shared with each other thus far. If they are fearful that it will negatively impact their relationship, have the clients express in what ways this would happen; are they not wanting to burden their partner? Are they afraid that their partner will not understand? Are they afraid that they will be dismissed or undermined by their partner? It is very important for the clinician, as well as the couple, to understand the root of the lack of communication in order to pinpoint what to change within the communication cycle. The clinician can have the couple participate in reflective listening exercises, where one partner shares their fears and the other partner has to reflect back what they heard their partner say. This can help the couple practice actively listening to one another, which can help them better understand one another and potentially ease some of the fears they have.

Once the couple has identified the main reason why they do not want to communicate about their experiences of discrimination, the clinician can have them begin to share their experiences with one another. The clinician can help facilitate the conversation by using empathetic interpretation (a method where the client expresses the root of their concerns, then the clinician interprets what the client said to their partner in a way that highlights the emotions). For example, if the client is sharing about a particular experience they have had, the clinician can say, "it sounds like that experience was very painful for you" or "it sounds like that experience made you feel isolated, or alone". These are just examples, and it will depend on what the client is sharing, but the purpose is to pull emotions from the client's story so their partner can attune to these emotions and understand the impact these experiences have had on them.

Next, the clinician can discuss with the clients the narratives, or discourses, that these experiences have created for them. How have these experiences of discrimination shaped the way the clients' view themselves, their relationship, and others? Additionally, what would need to happen for the clients to be able to deconstruct and rebuild these narratives? Once the clinician

has identified these topics, they can then have the clients identify what they think about their relationship or their race. Outside of the dominant discourses on race and their relationship that have been created for them, how do the clients feel about being in an interracial relationship? How do they feel it impacts their racial identity? The clinician can help the couple create their own narratives about their interracial relationship and their racial identity by building off of what the couple has shared.

Limitations

The scope of this study focused primarily on individuals who self-identified as Black or White as their racial background. This does not take into consideration those who are biracial and are both Black and White, but racially identify as either Black or White. Biracial individuals have their own experiences of discrimination that differ from those who are just Black or just White. Some biracial individuals have experiences that make it difficult for them to connect wholly with one particular identity (Rockquemore, 1999). And while on paper they may identify as Black or White, this does not mean that they have a full understanding of their racial identity. This could be a contributing factor in the lack of salience seen in the racial identity results in this study.

In terms of the sample population, the final count of participants was 231, slightly under the recommended 250 that would be needed to run a Structural Equation Model (Bentler, 2006). This could directly impact the power of the study. The most frequently used and cited scale to assess racial identity is Helms' (1990) Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RAIS). However, the scale's low reliability can potentially lead to a low likelihood of finding significant results. The addition of the CERIS-A is important in assessing racial identity, as there are not many reliable scales for use. The addition and testing of more reliable scales is a necessity in order to continue contributing to the literature in this area.

With this being said, the CERIS-A assesses salience in racial identity, specifically. Worrell et al. (2015) suggested that culture, ethnicity, ethnic identity, race, and racial identity are all constructs that are intertwined (culture = ethnicity = ethnic identity = race = racial identity) and were defined in terms of membership to a particular group. Because of this, they state that one should be able to measure these constructs among all ethnic and racial groups. While the CERIS-A is measuring racial identity, with this being the first time it has been used in a study

outside of the Worrell et al. (2019) study, it was unknown how this scale would interact with other constructs.

The effectiveness of this scale being able to be attributed to everyone seems to be less likely when taking into consideration other constructs, such as gender or orientation. In this study, 35.9% of participants reported being in a same-sex relationship, and while this study did not look at gender pairing, that also has an effect on experiences of discrimination (as discussed above—Black man-White woman gender pairings are the least favorable type of interracial relationship and could experience more discrimination compared to other pairings). What was found is less salience within racial identity, however, there could have been other factors beyond racial identity that were not assessed for in this study that could be contributing to these findings. The sample size of the current study is not sufficient enough to evaluate a sub-group analysis that would be able to see the effects of gender and orientation on the scores of racial identity and experienced discrimination. This could be done in future research, specifically in a longitudinal study, to see if these constructs look any different before, during, and after being in an interracial relationship.

There was also an error on the part of the researcher made before distribution of the scales. A question was left off of the CSI-16. Normally there would be a concern for validity however the Cronbach's alpha for the CSI-16 was shown to be acceptable for this sample, α = .91. However, this should still be taken into consideration when reviewing the data.

Lastly, it should be noted that the RMSEA score of .44 was very high, which does not indicate good model fit.

Conclusion

Racial identity, experienced discrimination, and relationship satisfaction have been individually studied over the years, whereas the relationship between these variables in Black-White interracial couples have received less attention. Whether interracial couples are more, less, or equally as satisfied within their relationship compared to intraracial couples is mixed within the literature. Experienced discrimination has been found to decrease relationship satisfaction, while racial identity's role is less known due to the lack of research on the relationship. This study's aim was to identify whether racial identity and experienced discrimination had any effect on relationship satisfaction in Black-White interracial couples. It was found that experienced

discrimination had a significant negative relationship with relationship satisfaction, which is supported in the literature. Although the predicted relationships were not supported, experiences of discrimination had a significant negative relationship with racial identity. Lastly, while primarily positive, the relationship between racial identity and relationship satisfaction was proven to be not as significant as predicted. The major findings suggest that relationship satisfaction decreases as experiences of discrimination increases, and that racial identity becomes less salient when experiences of discrimination increase. Biracial participants identifying as either Black or White could contribute to this lack of salience, due to their experiences around race, racial identity and acceptance into racial groups. It could also be due to the limited research known on how the Cross Ethnic-Racial Identity Scale-Adult (CERIS-A) interacts with other constructs.

With that being said, this is the first time the CERIS-A is being used in a study, which adds additional research to literature on the assessment of racial identity. With other scales used to assess racial identity not being as widely available or lacking reliability, it is important to continue the search for more reliable scales, and the creation of the CERIS-A is a step in the right direction. While the CERIS-A is said to be able to be used on all racial demographics to assess racial identity, when adding other constructs, such as experiences of discrimination or relationship satisfaction, the scale may not measure racial identity as well as it does when used alone. More studies using this particular scale are needed.

To conclude, this study can be useful for clinicians, as it can provide an area to be focused on when working with Black-White interracial couples. Clinicians should help clients get to the root of their reluctance, if any, as to why they do not want to share their experiences with their partners. From here, they should guide couples in sharing these experiences with one another in order to increase communication between them. Increasing communication can lead to increased relationship satisfaction. Additionally, clinicians can have clients create meaning around what it means specifically for them to be in an interracial relationship, in hopes to replace these negative narratives created from experiences of discrimination with more positive ones.

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APPENDIX A. INFORMED CONSENT

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Study of Racial Identity and Experienced Discrimination on Relationship Satisfaction

Briana N. Walker, B.S., M.S. Candidate, Marriage and Family Therapy Program, Purdue University Northwest

David P. Nalbone, Ph.D., Department of Behavioral Sciences, Thesis Chair, Purdue University Northwest

Key Information

Please take the time to review this information carefully. This is a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary which means that you may choose not to participate at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may ask questions of the researchers about the study whenever you would like. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to agree to take the survey, so be sure to understand what you will do and any possible risks or benefits.

What is the purpose of this study?

You are being asked to participate in a study designed by Briana N. Walker, B.S., M.S Candidate of Purdue University Northwest. I want to understand more about you interracial relationship, particularly how your racial identity and any experience discrimination (because of your interracial relationship) impact your relationship satisfaction.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

If you choose to participate, you acknowledge that you are 18 years or older, in a relationship where one partner is White and one partner is Black, in the relationship for at least 6 consecutive months, and are a US citizen. You will be asked to complete 4 questionnaires asking about your racial identity, your relationship satisfaction, how much support you are receiving in terms of your relationship, and experiences of discrimination due to your interracial relationship. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

How long will I be in the study?

It should take approximately 15 minutes for you to complete the entire study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

Breach of confidentiality is a risk. To minimize this risk, only the researchers will access the data from this study, and no personally identifying information will be collected during the study. The questions involve no greater risk than that found in everyday life.

Are there any potential benefits?

You will not directly benefit from participating in this study. However, you will have a chance to take part in research, and your participation thus may contribute to the scientific understanding of how people view social issues.

Will I receive payment or other incentive?

You will receive compensation of less than $1 for successfully participating in this research project.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

There is no personally identifying information on this questionnaire; all responses will remain anonymous and will be used only in combination with the responses of other participants in this and related studies. In addition, you may choose not to answer particular questions, or to withdraw your participation at any time, without penalty. All data gathered in this study will be stored separately from the consent form, and will be accessed only by the researchers. The data file will be used for preparation of research reports related to this study, and kept for a period of three years after publication of any articles related to this study. The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

You do not have to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. Your participation will not affect your grade in class.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Briana N. Walker at 219- 237-4059, or David P. Nalbone at 219-989-2712. If you have concerns about the treatment of research participants, you can contact the Committee on the Use of Human Research Subjects at Purdue University, Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032, 155 S. Grant St., West Lafayette, IN, 47907-2114. The phone number for the Committee's secretary is (765) 494-5942. The email address is irb@purdue.edu.

<u>Documentation of Informed Consent</u>

        I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research project and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research project described above. I certify that I am between 18 and 64 years old, have been in a Black/White interracial relationship for at least 6 months, am a U.S. citizen, and agree to participate in this study.

APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE

Qualtrics Survey

Do you racially identify as either Black (i.e., Black American/African American) or White (i.e., Caucasian/European American)?

○ Yes

○ No

Are you in an interracial relationship where one partner is considered White and one partner is considered Black?

○ Yes

○ No

What is your age (in years)?

Have you been in your relationship for at least 6 months?

○ Yes

○ No

	strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neither agree not disagree	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree
Life in America is good for me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I think of myself as an American, and seldom as a member of an ethnic or racial group	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I think that many of the stereotypes about my ethnic/racial group are true	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I go through periods where I am down on myself because of my ethnic group membership	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important for multiculturalists to be connected to people of many different groups, such as Latino/as, Asian Americans, European Americans, Jews, gays and lesbians, Blacks, multiethnic, etc.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I have strong feelings of hatred and disdain for the majority culture	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe that only people who accept a perspective from their ethnic/racial group can truly solve the race problem in America	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe it is important to have a multicultural perspective which is inclusive of everyone	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I look in the mirror, sometimes I do not feel good about the ethnic/racial group I belong to	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

If I had to put a label on my identity, it would be "American", and not a specific ethnic/racial group	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I read the newspaper or magazine, I always look for articles and stories that deal with race and ethnic issues.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When people say things about my group that sound stereotypical, I find myself agreeing with them	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We cannot truly be free as a people until our daily lives are guided by values and principles grounded in our ethnic/racial heritage	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Members of the dominant group should be destroyed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being a member or my ethnic/racial group	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I had to put myself into categories, first I would say I am an American, and second I am a member of a racial or ethnic group	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People should relax about being too politically correct because some stereotypes about our group are true	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I have a chance to decorate a room, I tend to select pictures, posters, or works of art that express strong ethnic-cultural themes	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I hate people from the dominant racial/ethnic group	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I respect the ideas that other people hold, but I believe that the best way to solve our problems is to think from an ethnic/racial point of view	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I vote in an election, the first thing I think about is the candidate's record on racial and cultural issues	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe it is important to have both an ethnic identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Whites, Jews, gays and lesbians, American Indians, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
During a typical week in my life, I think about ethnic and cultural issues many, many times	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

We will never be whole until we embrace our ethnic/racial heritage	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My negative feelings towards the majority culture are very intense	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I sometimes have negative feelings about being a member of my group	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
As a multiculturalist, it is important for me to be connected with individuals from all cultural backgrounds (gays and lesbians, African Americans, Jews, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos/as, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My ethnic/racial group shares characteristics that are reflected in the stereotypes about us	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?

○ All of the time

○ Most of the time

○ More often than not

○ Occasionally

○ Rarely

○ Never

Our relationship is strong

○ Not true at all

○ A little true

○ Somewhat true

○ Mostly true

○ Almost completely true

○ Completely true

My relationship with my partner makes me happy

○ Not true at all

○ A little true

○ Somewhat true

○ Mostly true

○ Almost completely true

○ Completely true

I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner

○ Not true at all

○ A little true

○ Somewhat true

○ Mostly true

○ Almost completely true

○ Completely true

I really feel like **part of a team** with my partner.

○ Not true at all

○ A little true

○ Somewhat true

○ Mostly true

○ Almost completely true

○ Completely true

How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?

○ Not at all

○ A little

○ Somewhat

○ Mostly

○ Almost completely

○ Completely

How well does your partner meet your needs?

○ Not at all

○ A little

○ Somewhat

○ Mostly

○ Almost completely

○ Completely

To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

○ Not at all

○ A little

○ Somewhat

○ Mostly

○ Almost completely

○ Completely

In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

○ Not at all

○ A little

○ Somewhat

○ Mostly

○ Almost completely

○ Completely

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes *__how you feel about your__ __relationship.__* Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
	1	2	3	4	5		
Interesting	○	○	○	○	○		Boring
Bad	○	○	○	○	○		Good
Sturdy	○	○	○	○	○		Fragile
Discouraging	○	○	○	○	○		Hopeful
Enjoyable	○	○	○	○	○		Miserable
Full	○	○	○	○	○		Empty

Page Break

I am interested in your experiences with racial discrimination due to your interracial relationship(s). As you answer the questions below, **please think about the history of your entire interracial relationship** and answer the questions in terms of this relationship. Please answer all parts of each question.

	1: never	2: once in a while	3: sometimes	4: a lot	5: most times	6: almost all
How often have you been treated unfairly by teachers or professors because of your interracial relationship?	○	○	○	○	○	○
How often have you been treated unfairly by your employers, bosses and supervisors because of your interracial relationship?	○	○	○	○	○	○
How often have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers, fellow students and colleagues because of your interracial relationship?	○	○	○	○	○	○
How often have you been treated unfairly by people in service jobs (by store clerks, bartenders, bank tellers and other) because of your interracial relationship?	○	○	○	○	○	○

How often have you been treated unfairly by strangers because of your interracial relationship

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

How often have you been treated unfairly by people in helping jobs (by doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, case workers, dentists, school counselors, therapists, social workers, and other) because of your interracial relationship?

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

How often have you been treated unfairly by neighbors because of your interracial relationship?

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

How often have you been treated unfairly by institutions (schools, universities, law firms, the police, the courts, the Department of Social Services, the Unemployment Office and others) because of your interracial relationship?

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○

How often have you been treated unfairly by people that you thought were your friends because if your interracial relationship?

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○

How often have you been treated unfairly by family members because of your interracial relationship?

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○

How often have you been accused or suspected of doing something wrong (such as stealing, cheating, not doing your share of the work, or breaking the law) because of your interracial relationship?

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○

How often have people misunderstood your intentions and motives because of your interracial relationship?

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○

How often did you want to tell someone off for being racist towards you and your partner but didn't say anything?

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○

How often have you been really angry about something racist that was done to you and your partner?

○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○　　　　○

How often have you been forced to take drastic steps (such as filing a grievance, filing a lawsuit, quitting your job, moving away, and other actions) to deal with some racist thing that was done to you and your partner?

⭕   ⭕   ⭕   ⭕   ⭕   ⭕

How often have you been called a racist name because of your interracial relationship?

⭕   ⭕   ⭕   ⭕   ⭕   ⭕

How often have you gotten into an argument or a fight about something racist that was done to you our your partner because of your interracial relationship?

⭕   ⭕   ⭕   ⭕   ⭕   ⭕

How often have you been made fun of, picked on, punished, shoved, hit, or threatened with harm because of your interracial relationship?	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please describe any instances where you felt you were racially discriminated against by your partner. This includes microaggressions (e.g., downplaying how race impacts you socially by saying things like "I don't see color") and blatant displays of racism (e.g., calling you racist names)

_____

Please read the following question carefully.

	1: not at all	2	3	4	5	6: extremely different
How different would your life be now if you HAD NOT BEEN treated in a racist and unfair way because of your interracial relationship?	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Finally, we have a few questions about your background.

_____

Please identify your ascribed gender?

    ○ Man

    ○ Woman

    ○ Nonbinary/third gender

    ○ Prefer to self-describe _____

Please identify your ascribed racial identity.

    ○ Black/African American

    ○ White/Caucasian American

_____

Please identify your highest level of education.

○ Less than a high school diploma

○ High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)

○ Some college, no degree

○ Associates (e.g. AA, AS)

○ Bachelors degree (e.g. BA, BS)

○ Masters degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)

○ Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)

○ Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

Please identify the length of your current relationship.

○ 6 months-1 year

○ 1-6 years

○ 6- 12 years

○ 12-18 years

○ 18-24 years

○ 24-30 years

○ 30-36 years

○ 36-42 years

○ 42+ years

Are you in a same-sex/same-gender relationship?

○ Yes

○ No

Please identify the status of your current relationship.

○ Dating

○ Cohabitating/Domestic Partnership

○ Married/Civil Union

Have you been in previous relationships?

○ Yes

○ No

Were any of these relationships interracial?

○ Yes

○ No

Please identify the demographics of the neighborhood where you currently reside by indicating how strongly you agree with each of the following statements.

	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	neither agree not disagree	somewhat agree	strongly agree
Most of the people in my neighborhood share my racial identity	○	○	○	○	○
Most of the people in my neighborhood share my ethnic identity	○	○	○	○	○

What was your household income last year?

○ Less than $25,000

○ $25,000 - $49,999

○ $50,000 - $74,999

○ $75,000 - $99,999

○ $100,000 - $124,999

○ $125,000 or more

Thank you for taking part in this survey!

In order to get paid, enter the survey code 19.