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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

AN ASSESSMENT OF COVERT RACISM IN THE
ATTRIBUTIONAL PROCESS TOWARD INTERRACIAL COUPLES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

BY
HOLLY J. HUCK

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
JANUARY 1993

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VITA

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Holly J. Huck
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An Assessment of Covert Racism in the
Attributional Process Toward Interracial Couples

The purpose of this study was to measure the amount of covert racism present in a college population. Racism appears to still be apparent in modern-day American society, although it seems to be evidenced in a different manner than was utilized in previous times. Formerly, it was socially acceptable to exhibit openly racist behaviors. Presently, society seems to have become less tolerant of open, or overt, racism. Instead of eradicating racism, this has resulted in displays of covert, rather than overt, racism. This study attempted to measure levels of covert racism in a college population by administering vignettes describing a marital conflict, and then asking individuals about their perceptions of the male, the female, and the couple described in the vignette. The vignettes differed only in the race of the participants in the couple described. The four couples were: African-American male and African-American female, African-American male and Caucasian female, Caucasian male and African-American female, and Caucasian male and Caucasian female. Subjects also filled in questionnaires regarding their personal background, including the amount of interracial contacts which they have had. It was hypothesized in this study that interracial couples, and their participants, would be evaluated more harshly than same race couples. It was further hypothesized that higher amounts of interracial contacts of the subjects would be correlated with more positive

ratings of the couples and participants as opposed to subjects with fewer interracial experiences. These hypotheses were generally not supported by this study; however, subjects with limited interracial contact rated the male described in the vignette, regardless of race, more negatively than those subjects with a history of more interracial contact. Possible explanations for these findings are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance that I received from my thesis committee: my Committe Director, Isiaah Crawford, Ph.d., and my Committee Reader, Scott Tindale, Ph.d. In addition, I would like to express my gratitude toward many other people who helped with this project: Anne Wells, Tilaya Bradford, Bobbie Khouvongsvanh, Peggy Kotis, Jill Narcisi, Meredith Monroe, Sue Principelli, Tarsa Washington, and Margaret Zukowski.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	2
Covert Racism	2
Measurement of Racism	5
Attitudes Toward Interracial Relationships	10
Attributional Theory	12
Rationale	16
Hypotheses	17
III. METHOD	19
Participants	19
Materials	21
Procedure	22
IV. RESULTS	24
V. DISCUSSION	29
APPENDIX	
A. INSTRUCTIONS TO SUBJECTS	33
B. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	35
C. CASE VIGNETTE	40
D. CONSENT FORM	49
E. DEBRIEFING STATEMENT	50
REFERENCES	52

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Demographics of Subjects	19
2. Descriptive Statistics for all conditions	25

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the 1950s and 1960s racial prejudice was an accepted fact, and it was something that African-Americans had to deal with on a daily basis. During this period, many Caucasians would have reacted with extreme surprise if they discovered another Caucasian who regarded African-Americans as equal and who expressed non-discriminatory views toward those people of the "inferior race." Stereotypes of African-Americans were more rigid and many Caucasian Americans were intolerant of the integration of African-Americans into mainstream society. Public attitudes have undergone change in the past three decades. Many of the rigid stereotypes have loosened and racial intolerance has become less prominent (Byrnes & Kiger, 1988; Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Greeley & Sheatsley, 1971; Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969; Scott, 1987; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). It is no longer publicly, or legally, acceptable to openly discriminate against people of another race. It is now commonplace for Caucasians to ride in the same elevators, go to the same schools, and drink out of the same fountains as African-Americans; consequently, overt racism, or open discrimination, is no longer in vogue. The question now remains as to whether or not covert racism (i.e., prejudicial attitudes and more subtle expressions of these biases) is still in existence in modern-day American society.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Covert Racism

"Old-fashioned racism (e.g., openly attributing inferior qualities to blacks, promoting segregation, advocating discrimination) is generally rejected (but not unheard of) in contemporary society" (Byrnes & Kiger, 1988, pp. 107-108); however, research suggests that discrimination and prejudice are still active factors in daily interactions, but are manifested in more subtle and indirect ways (Byrnes & Kiger, 1988; Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Greeley & Sheatsley, 1971; Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969; Katz, Cohen, & Glass, 1975; Scott, 1987; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). For example, according to Frey and Gaertner (1986, p. 1083), ". . . racial prejudice among white Americans today is often expressed in subtle, indirect, and rationalizable ways. Whites may thereby regard themselves as unprejudiced and non discriminatory as they continue to disadvantage minorities." This means that a Caucasian may avoid acting inappropriately in a situation in which social norms are clearly indicated, regardless of the race of the recipient. In other situations, where the norms are less clearly defined, or even conflicting, that same Caucasian may treat African-Americans less favorably than he or she would treat someone who was Caucasian. For example, in a situation where an individual is the victim of fate and is not responsible for his or her position of dependency, it is

unlikely that another person would demonstrate racial discrimination toward the person in need. On the other hand, if the individual was responsible for his or her dependent position, it is much more likely that racial discrimination may play a role in a person's decision to provide help (Frey & Gaertner, 1986).

Because of the present awareness and sensitivity in today's society, most people generally try to guard against committing actions that could possibly be construed by others, or even by themselves, as racist or discriminatory. Many theorists (Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Katz et al., 1975) see current racial attitudes of Caucasians toward African-Americans as no longer entirely negative, but neither are they entirely positive; instead, the attitude is one of ambivalence. Ambivalence generally involves the individual's awareness of both the positive and negative feelings and attitudes that are present. But, a special case is proposed in the area of racial attitudes of at least some of the Caucasian society. Some people, although they are ambivalent, actually regard themselves as nonprejudiced and are unaware of their ambivalence. These people are referred to by Frey and Gaertner (1986) as "aversive." Even when these individuals are aware of their ambivalent feelings, they attribute these feelings to something other than a racist, prejudiced attitude. Instead, these feelings are tied to racially symbolic issues (Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981). Examples of racially symbolic issues might include: reverse discrimination, homelessness, or drug use. It is primarily those people that have ambivalent racial feelings and who are unaware of these conflictual feelings who exhibit what is now known as "covert racism."

Covert racism is expressed more subtly and indirectly than traditional racism. It is possibly a more insidious type of racism than the "old-fashioned" form. Covert racism is generally rationalizable and can be used to protect an individual's image as a nonprejudiced person. As aforementioned, covert racism can be used to protect not only an individual's external image as nonprejudiced, but also that person's internal self-image. The use of the concepts of covert racism or symbolic racism is challenged by some researchers, such as Sniderman and Tetlock (1986), because of a lack of clarity across researchers as to the exact meaning of the terms and the correct means of measuring different types of racism. In addition, Sniderman and Tetlock (1986) assert that they are not convinced that there is actually a difference between symbolic racism and traditional racism.

In defense of the separation of racism into two types, Frey and Gaertner (1986) found that, while direct and obvious prejudicial actions are avoided, in unclear ambiguous situations, Caucasians were treated more favorably than African-Americans in altruistic situations. In this case, Frey and Gaertner (1986, p. 1087) report that "... subjects were less helpful to blacks than to whites only when recipients, requesting assistance themselves, were responsible for their dependency owing to their lack of effort." In cases which involve some question regarding the "deservingness" of the recipient, it is easier to rationalize away the decision to withhold aid. It was in these instances that Caucasians were given aid more often than African-Americans.

Other researchers, too, have found support for the existence of covert racism and its separation from overt racism. Batson, Flink, Schoenrade, Fultz, and Pych (1986), for example, found that, depending upon a person's

religious orientation, he or she may exhibit different types of prejudicial actions. They divided religious orientation into two categories: religion as end, and religion as quest. Religion as an end refers to an intrinsic orientation to religion "in which religion is an end in itself, the 'master motive' in life" (Batson et al, 1986, p. 175). Religion as a quest "concerned the degree to which the individual sought to face religious issues in all their complexity, while resisting clear-cut, pat answers" (Batson et al, 1986, p. 175). Those subjects who viewed religion as an end in itself, although showing little overt racial prejudice, exhibited covert racial prejudice. On the other hand, those who view their religiosity as more of an open-ended quest were more likely to show fewer signs of prejudice, even covert prejudice. Those who view religion as an end in itself seem to want to "*appear*" nonprejudiced, whereas those viewing religion as an open-ended quest seem to actually hold fewer prejudicial attitudes.

Measurement of Racism

The F Scale (F stands for Fascist) was developed to tap into the authoritarian personality, and it was found that this scale had a positive correlation with measures of racism (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). Some of the characteristics of the authoritarian personality were as follows: tendency to view situations in terms of individual's power, frequently viewing people as members of a category (whether an ingroup or outgroup) rather than as distinct human beings, and a tendency to regard other's motives in a cynical manner. In addition to studying the characteristics of racially prejudiced people, a number of studies have been conducted to try to develop scales which measure a subtle

form of prejudice known as covert racism (Byrnes & Kiger, 1988; Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Scott, 1987). Also, because racial prejudice is counterproductive to the goals that should be present in the school environment and can be detrimental to the development of children, some measures have been developed solely to measure the racial climate present in schools as reported by school-children (Green, Adams, & Turner, 1988; Moore, Hauck, & Denne, 1984). Other measures have been developed to determine the level of tolerance subjects have for various forms of integration, such as interracial friendship and marriage (Moore, Hauck, & Denne, 1984; Sones & Holston, 1988). Various racial stereotypes have also been the focus of several studies (Bryant, Coleman, & Ganong, 1988). Bryant, Coleman and Ganong (1988) studied the perceptions of families based on the family race and structure (i.e., genetic family structure vs. step family structure). They found a significant main effect for the structure of the family, but not for the race of the family. Bryant, Coleman and Ganong (1988) employed stereotyping theory to understand this finding. Since there is social pressure against racial stereotyping, subjects may not openly express opinions which could be interpreted as racially discriminative. Subjects might be reticent to share negative opinions on questions that relate to African American people, even if that is the opinion they hold, because others might interpret this response as racially discriminating. On the other hand, stereotyping based on family structure has not reached this level of sophistication. At this point, people do not seem to be sensitized to not wanting to appear discriminatory toward stepfamilies. It was hypothesized by Bryant, Coleman and Ganong (1988) that stepfamily stereotyping might achieve the same social status that racial stereotyping now holds, and at that

point, it will be less likely that researchers will find results which indicate biases against stepfamilies.

As racist attitudes become more complex, so, too, must the means of measuring these attitudes. Previously used instruments for measuring racial climate are now obsolete, and newer and more subtle measures are being developed and tested (Batson et al., 1986; Byrnes & Kiger, 1988; Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Gaertner & McLaughlin, 1983; Scott, 1987). Many researchers use helping behavior as an unobtrusive measure of covert racism or prejudice (Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Scott, 1987). In such instances, subjects are presented with a situation in which they can decide whether or not to give aid to another person, and the race of the person requesting aid is varied. It is then determined whether subjects were more likely to help people of a particular race, and in what situations this phenomenon occurred. Batson et al. (1986) used an attributional ambiguity technique to measure the amount of covert, as well as overt, racism present in their sample. This technique involves ostensibly studying one variable while the experimenter is actually studying a different variable. In their study, the experimenters gave the subjects a choice of a movie theater in which they could view a film. They systematically varied whether the theaters were showing different movies. Each theater already had one occupant (one theater had an African-American occupant, the other had a Caucasian occupant) and the subject then chose which theater to enter. Their findings displayed a significantly negative correlation between those who view religion as an end in itself and choosing to sit with the white person in the overt condition. Also, those who saw religion as an end in itself showed no clear preference in the covert condition. These two findings taken together were interpreted

to mean that those subjects who viewed religion as an end in itself chose to sit by an African-American in situations when choosing not to do so could be interpreted as a racist action. On the other hand, those who saw religion as an open-ended quest showed no preference in either the overt or covert conditions. All of this taken together gives support to the hypothesis that those who view religion as an open-ended quest are less prejudiced than those who view religion as an end in itself.

In examining the racial climates in schools and its perceived effect on the quality of academic life of school-children, Green et al. (1988) began to address the question of the effect of desegregation on the schools and on the students in them. Green et al. (1988) constructed a measure which gave them an indication of the student's perception of the racial climate of the school he or she was attending. Students were asked to respond to a series of Likert-format questions which related to the racial climate in their school. A typical question would be "Students at this school think it's good to get to know other students of different races." (Green et al., 1988, p. 250.) The student responses were also used to predict the students' attitudes toward school, and toward students of a differing racial/ ethnic backgrounds. They found that students who felt that their school's interracial climate was positive, that is, that it has been successfully integrated, had more positive attitudes toward school, as well as toward students of another race. This finding held for both African-Americans as well as Caucasian students.

Moore et al. (1984) also conducted a study using students as the focus. Instead of examining the effects of the school interracial climate, Moore et al. (1984) looked at the variables which could possibly influence a child's racial attitude. The variables which they studied included: the race

of the child, interracial contact, grade, gender, intelligence, locus of control, anxiety, and self-concept. Each of the students were given questionnaires in which they were asked about their opinions about certain actions (e.g., whether African American girls should be allowed to have Caucasian boyfriends, or whether desegregation of schools is the right thing to do). Students were obtained from segregated and desegregated schools. According to their results, Caucasian students appeared to be more prejudiced than African-American students in cases which involved prolonged periods of contact (such as a dating relationship, or attending the same school). They also found that females tended to be less prejudiced than males. None of their other findings reached statistical significance.

In an experiment designed to measure prejudice through an unobtrusive means, Scott (1987) found that, although interracial couples did not seem to be a novel stimulus, there was a significant reaction to the couple which consisted of a African-American male and a Caucasian female. His experiment included four confederate couples: Caucasian male and Caucasian female; Caucasian male and African-American female; African-American male and Caucasian female; and African-American male and African-American female. Scott (1987) had each of the confederate couples approach a Caucasian male who was alone in a shopping mall. The confederate couple would then ask him for directions. Both the response latency and the response duration were measured. Response latency was assumed to measure covert prejudice, and response duration was used to measure overt prejudice. The relationship between these two was used as a measure of surprise. It was hypothesized that if this was a significantly inverse relationship, then the interracial couple was seen as a novel stimuli.

The response latency to the African-American male and Caucasian female was significantly longer than it was to the other three couples. It seems that, to Scott (1987), a reaction of surprise is equivalent with a prejudicial reaction, because this was interpreted by Scott as a prejudicial reaction. None of the response durations were significant. This experiment has a limitation in that it was only conducted on Caucasian males and, therefore, cannot be easily generalized. It does lay ground work for further investigation. It demonstrated that there is a more negative, "startle," reaction to a couple involving an African-American male and a Caucasian female, but it does not further analyze this reaction. It does not break it down into its parts: What is it about the coupling of the African-American male and the Caucasian female that causes this negative reaction by Caucasian males? And, further, this study does not examine the on-looker's perception of the individual participants involved in an interracial relationship. Why does he think that these two people are involved in a relationship? And, what does he think of each of them as opposed to what he would think of them if they were involved in a same-race relationship?

Attitudes Toward Interracial Relationships

What is the distribution of current attitudes in the United States toward romantic interracial relationships and interracial marriage? At one time, there was a very strong resistance against the idea of interracial relationships, particularly ones that ended up in marriage. In fact, there were states that had laws against interracial marriage. It was not until June, 1967, that these laws were declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme

Court. Since that time, the rate of interracial marriages has increased, yet social opposition to these relationships remains (Porterfield, 1982).

Perceptions of the individual participants in an interracial relationship seems to be an area that is relatively untouched by research. Yet, there are some theoretical suggestions regarding what would happen to a person's social status when he or she becomes a participant in an interracial relationship. Cretser and Leon (1982) state that the most common form of interracial relationship between African-Americans and Caucasian Americans is one involving an African-American male and a Caucasian female. They explain this relationship from a class hypergamy standpoint. This means that when an African-American male belongs to a higher socioeconomic status than a particular Caucasian female, he can increase his class status by marrying that female who, by virtue of her race, holds a higher class position. Inversely, Caucasian females who belong to a low socioeconomic bracket can increase their socioeconomic status by marrying a African-American male of higher socioeconomic status. Still unresolved, though, is the question of the general public perception of the participants in the interracial relationship. Addressing that question is the purpose of this study.

Scott (1987) examined two possible hypotheses for Caucasian prejudice against interracial relationships. These two hypotheses were an incentive-conflict model, and a sexual-threat model. The incentive-conflict model proposes that Caucasians receive certain rewards from the subordination and separation of African-Americans, and these rewards perpetuate the attitudes against equality of the races and against interracial relationships. The sexual-threat model, on the other hand, suggests that

negative attitudes are supported by the "cultural projection onto blacks of sexual anxieties and conflicts." (Scott, 1987, p. 125). A third perspective from which to view prejudicial attitudes toward interracial couples involves the attributional process undertaken by the viewer. There is a paucity of research in this area, so it is difficult, to further elaborate upon these theories and any empirical support for them. This is further evidence demonstrating the need for research in this area.

Attributional Theory

Fiske and Taylor (1984) discuss attributional theory from a variety of standpoints, all revolving around the basic idea that people have ideas about why things occur. Individuals conceptually organize their world and then continue to protect this organization through their attributions. Attribution theory involves, at its basic level, three things. The first assumption is that people use information in their social environment to obtain causal explanations for events. Second, causal analysis can be the result of motivational factors. "People's needs to predict the future and to control events or other people are thought to be important in initiating causal analysis." (Fiske & Taylor, 1984, p. 21). The third factor involved in attributional theorizing is that the human person as a social perceiver is seen as a naive scientist, using a logical, rational method in reaching his or her conclusions. Any departures from a logical line of reasoning are seen as the result of motivational factors. Attribution theories assume that the conclusions of a causal analysis then become the ground upon which an individual bases his or her other cognitions, behaviors, and feelings.

Correspondent inference theory, a subset of attributional theory, involves the question of how individuals make causal attributions about other people's behavior (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). According to this model, people perceive individuals as having intentions and behaving on the basis of these intentions. In addition, people perceive intentions and behaviors as corresponding with that individual's underlying dispositions, or stable qualities within that person. By knowing an individual's disposition, an on-looker is able to make predictions about that person's behaviors and hypothesizes about the originating intentions. This can also be inversely conceptualized. If an individual observes certain behaviors in someone else, he or she can then try to reason to the person's intentions and disposition. This analysis can involve examining noncommon effects, choice, social desirability, social role, and prior expectations (Fiske & Taylor, 1984).

An analysis of noncommon effects involves looking at the unique effects that are a result of the choice made by the individual. Choice involves looking at the degree of freedom which the individual had in making his or her decision. Socially undesirable acts can help an observer make more confident inferences about the underlying disposition. When individuals perform functions that are indicated by their social role, then these actions are not very informative about their disposition, as opposed to actions that are contrary to their defined social role. As experience with a particular person's actions increases, so do the expectations about that person's actions. When that individual acts in a way which seems to contradict the observer's understanding of his or her underlying disposition, then some readjustment of dispositional attributions by the observer will likely take place (Fiske & Taylor, 1984).

Unexpected events, in particular, arouse an individual's attributional processing (Clary & Tesser, 1983; Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Hastie, 1984; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1981). If an individual sees something which challenges his or her view about the way things are and the way things should be, then that person's attributional process comes into play. There are occasions when the attributional process will not follow entirely logical lines. For example, when this unexpected event either obstructs or promotes the observer's goals, it is likely that the attributional process will be biased. This is known as hedonic relevance (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). In addition, when individuals experience emotional reactions as a result of a threatening experience, they may reattribute these emotions to a neutral or less threatening source. This may aid in the understanding of aversive types of people who were studied by Frey and Gaertner (1986). As aforementioned, aversives are those individuals who have ambivalent feelings about other races, yet are unable to admit this to themselves. Instead of admitting these ambivalent feelings are tied to persons of another race (i.e., a threatening source), they would prefer to think that this ambivalence is tied to racially symbolic issues (i.e., a less threatening source such as homelessness or drug use). An additional area where the causal analysis is not necessarily logical is in the ascription of characteristics to members of an out-group (Bochner & Harris, 1984; Fichten & Amsel, 1986; Whitehead, Smith, & Eichhorn, 1982). Out-group members are people who do not belong to the same group as the perceiver. It is generally found that more negative characteristics and causes are ascribed to out-group members than to in-group members. In testing this effect for gender of the perceiver,

Bochner and Harris (1984) found that this effect did not hold for female perceivers.

When a perceiver is only allowed a limited amount of information about an event, the causal attribution process is somewhat different than when the perceiver has access to multiple events upon which to base a causal inference (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). According to Fiske and Taylor (1984, p. 33), when there are multiple events, the factors considered seem to be "... occurrences across entities (distinctiveness), across time and modality (consistency), and across persons (consensus)." It would seem that, according to this model, most individuals in the United States would come to have the expectation that romantic relationships not only generally *do* occur, but also *should* occur, only between individuals that share the same race. Although the number of interracial marriages are on the rise, they still only account for a small percentage of the marriages that occur in the United States. According to the United States Bureau of Census (1990), in 1970, out of 44,597,000 total marriages, 310,000 (.007%) were interracial marriages. By 1988, there were a total of 52,613,000 marriages and 956,000 (.018%) of them were interracial. Interracial relationships go against the norm and, therefore, would be difficult to integrate into a perceiver's world view. When only one event is available the individual relies more heavily upon causal schemata. Causal schemata involve the person's ideas about how certain causes produce certain effects (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). This causal schema could be either a "multiple necessary causes schema" (if the effect is an extreme one, generally many causes must be present in order to produce the effect), or a "multiple sufficient causes schema" (a less extreme

effect could be produced by a single cause out of a variety of possible causes).

It seems to be the consensus that when an unexpected event occurs which challenges an individual's expectations, all attempts are made to interpret the event in terms of the original expectation and to preserve the individual's prior ideas (Clary & Tesser, 1983; Fiske & Taylor, 1984). It is as if the individual, and not just the individual's ideas and schemas, were being challenged; therefore, if an individual has a prejudicial attitude toward romantic interracial relationships and is then faced with a romantic interracial relationship, the individual would attempt to continue to maintain his or her prejudicial stance. Instead of modifying his or her view of the world, the perceiver would try to interpret the data in reference to his or her original expectations. This may involve making negative attributions toward the relationship or towards the individuals involved in the relationship. On the other hand, if interracial relationships are something with which the individual is familiar, these negative attributions would be much less likely to occur.

Rationale

Reduction and the removal of racism are important goals for American society. The removal of racism can benefit society in a variety of ways: possible reduction of crime, growth originating in a greater understanding of other cultures, and a more productive climate in workplaces, to name just a few. In order to reduce the amount of racism that is still present in the United States, it is first important to gauge the manners in which racism is still exercised. Once these can be found, it is important to

increase the public's awareness of this process. This is particularly important if those people that are racist are not consciously aware of this fact, as Frey and Gaertner (1986) suggest. In this study, the existence of covert prejudice was tested. It was assumed that there is social pressure against overt manifestation of prejudice. Further, it was assumed that there is a generally negative social perception of interracial relationships and participants in these relationships; therefore, when questioned anonymously about their beliefs toward interracial relationships and participants in interracial relationships, subjects would respond more negatively than when questioned about their beliefs toward participants in same-race relationships. In addition, it was likely, based on both research (Frey & Gaertner, 1986) and theoretical support (Fiske & Taylor, 1984), that these negative attributions would be tied to something less threatening than a prejudicial attitude on the part of the observer.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were evaluated:

Hypothesis I: Interracial marriages will be seen more negatively than same-race marriages.

Hypothesis II: Individuals in interracial relationships will be perceived more negatively than participants in same-race relationships.

Hypothesis III: Subjects with more interracial experiences (e.g., contact with persons of another race, contact with people in interracial relationships)

will make more positive attributions toward interracial marriages than subjects with fewer interracial experiences.

Hypothesis IV: Subjects with more interracial experiences (e.g., contact with persons of another race, contact with people in interracial relationships) will make more positive attributions toward participants in interracial marriages than subjects with fewer interracial experiences.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

The sample included 142 undergraduate volunteers from Loyola University of Chicago. Subjects were recruited through the university's human subject pool and received course credit for their participation. There were 53 males (37%) and 89 females (63%) who participated, and subjects ranged in age from 17 to 33 years, although most subjects (N=66) were 18 years of age. Most subjects were Freshman (65%) and were unmarried (99%). Table 1 presents the demographics of the participants.

Table 1.

Demographics of Subjects (N = 142).

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Gender</u>		
Males	53	37.3
Females	89	62.7
<u>Year in College</u>		
First	92	64.8
Second	33	23.2
Third	15	10.6
Fourth	2	1.4

Marital Status

Single	141	99.3
Divorced	1	0.7

Race

African-American	7	4.9
Asian-American	17	12.0
Caucasian	97	68.3
East-Indian	5	3.5
Hispanic	12	8.5
Other	4	2.8

Highest education level of main provider of
family of origin

Graduate School	37	26.1
Bachelor's Degree	40	28.2
Associate's Degree	11	7.7
1 year or more of college without degree	18	12.7
High School Diploma	21	14.8
Some High School	9	6.3
Eighth Grade Diploma	4	2.8
Less than Eighth Grade Diploma	2	1.4

Amount of Interracial Contact

Low	34	23.9
Meduim	60	42.2
High	48	33.8

Age

M = 19.04

SD = 2.03

Range = 17 to 33

Materials

A demographic data questionnaire was given to each of the subjects in the experiment. This was used to obtain statistical information with which to describe various characteristics of the sample that was used in the experiment. The questions inquired into the subject's race, gender, age, as well as his or her interracial experiences and the racial makeup of his or her high school and neighborhood. This questionnaire took each subject about 15 minutes to complete. The Demographic Questionnaire is presented in Appendix B.

Each subject received one of four possible vignettes which was followed by a series of questions. Each vignette described a married couple. The couples consisted of one of the following: an African-American male and a Caucasian female; a Caucasian male and an African-American female; a Caucasian male and a Caucasian female; or, an African-American male and an African-American female. It gave a brief history of the relationship of the couple, and described the present marital conflict between the couple. In addition, various personality characteristics of the persons involved in this conflict were detailed. Each vignette was identical except for the race of the two people described in the relationship. All vignettes were followed by a series of four-point Likert-type questions which were used to evaluate the subject's perception and attributions about the couple and each of the individuals involved in the relationship. These questions, when scored, were broken down into three subscales: male score (indicating the subject's

attributions toward the man in the vignette), female score (indicating the subject's attributions toward the woman in the vignette), and couple score (indicating the subject's attributions toward the couple in the vignette). These Likert-type questions had anchor points of one (1) to four (4), and were scored so that low scores were indicative of a negative perception, and high scores were indicative of a positive perception. The vignette and questions took about 30 minutes to complete. A copy of the vignette and questions are presented in Appendix C.

Procedure

The subjects were tested by a female experimenter in a classroom setting in groups of one to eight. There were nine experimenters in total. Five of these experimenters were white, the remaining four were non-white (either African-American, East Indian, or of foreign descent with a marked accent). The experimenter read the instructions aloud and then answered any questions that the subjects offered. Each subject was then presented with a consent form. The subjects were asked to read and sign the consent form. Once they had signed the consent form, they turned it in to the experimenter. This consent form was kept separate from their questionnaires in order to assure them of their confidentiality and anonymity. Upon handing in his or her consent form, each subject was given a vignette, followed by a series of four-point Likert-type scale questions. The subjects were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. The vignettes were in random order, and each subject was given the vignette at the top of the pile. They were requested to read the vignette and to carefully consider and answer all of the questions following their vignette. Once having finished

the questions following the vignette, each subject turned it in to the experimenter. After completing the questionnaires, participants were asked to complete the demographic data sheet. After completing the demographic data sheet and handing it in, each subject was handed a Debriefing Form. The aforementioned Informed Consent Form is presented in Appendix D, and the Debriefing Form is presented in Appendix E.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

A reliability analysis was conducted on the three subscales: male score, female score, and couple score. An initial analysis of reliability led to the removal of 1 item from each of the scales. These items, instead of being Likert-type, were in short answer format, and severely decreased the reliability of the subscales. It was discovered in scoring these items that the answers were not easily discernible as projecting a "good" or "bad" attribute. After removing these items, the subscales had Cronbach's reliability alphas as follows: male subscale alpha =.64, female subscale alpha =.49, couple subscale alpha =.76. Although the female subscale reliability is low, both the male subscale and the couple subscale have acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

A score for interracial contact was compiled for each subject. This score was determined by respondent's answers to five questions, each of which probed their amount of interracial contact. The content of the five questions were: the racial integration of their neighborhood, the racial integration of their high school, the number of interracial relationships which they have had, the number of interracial relationships which family members or friends have had, and the percent of their friends which are of other races. The total range of responses to each question were broken into thirds. Subjects were then given zero points if an answer indicating zero amount of contact was given, one point if they had scored in the lowest third of the range of responses for that question, two points if they had scored in the

second third, and three points if they had indicated an answer which placed them in the highest third. Total points for interracial contact were then summed. Subjects's scores for reported interracial contact were then divided into low, medium, and high amounts, again by thirds.

To test all of the hypotheses a 4x3 Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted, with amount of interracial contact and type of marriage described as the independent variables. The dependent variables were the value of attributions toward the male, the female, and the couple. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for each of these conditions.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics for all Conditions.

	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
<u>Score for Male</u>		
<u>Low Interracial Contact</u>		
Condition: White Male-White Female	9.63	2.38
White Male-Black Female	9.33	2.08
Black Male-White Female	9.91	1.58
Black Male-Black Female	11.22	2.77
<u>Medium Interracial Contact</u>		
Condition: White Male-White Female	11.56	1.42
White Male-Black Female	11.4	1.68
Black Male-White Female	11.62	1.76
Black Male-Black Female	11.21	2.22

High Interracial Contact

Condition: White Male-White Female	10.86	1.34
White Male-Black Female	10.53	2.39
Black Male-White Female	11.6	2.55
Black Male-Black Female	11.0	1.54

Score for FemaleLow Interracial Contact

Condition: White Male-White Female	9.36	1.5
White Male-Black Female	10.0	1.0
Black Male-White Female	10.64	1.29
Black Male-Black Female	10.67	2.06

Medium Interracial Contact

Condition: White Male-White Female	10.06	1.59
White Male-Black Female	10.53	1.68
Black Male-White Female	10.54	1.51
Black Male-Black Female	10.43	2.62

High Interracial Contact

Condition: White Male-White Female	10.57	1.51
White Male-Black Female	11.05	1.81
Black Male-White Female	10.8	1.87
Black Male-Black Female	10.75	1.48

Score for CoupleLow Interracial Contact

Condition: White Male-White Female	14.27	3.61
White Male-Black Female	12.67	6.81
Black Male-White Female	15.73	4.38

	Black Male-Black Female	16.44	2.88
<u>Medium Interracial Contact</u>			
Condition:	White Male-White Female	15.0	1.64
	White Male-Black Female	16.93	2.82
	Black Male-White Female	14.85	2.7
	Black Male-Black Female	15.38	4.12
<u>High Interracial Contact</u>			
Condition:	White Male-White Female	17.14	2.27
	White Male-Black Female	16.05	2.78
	Black Male-White Female	16.3	3.8
	Black Male-Black Female	16.67	2.46

In order to thoroughly test the first hypothesis, the attributions toward the four different marriages (African-American male and African-American female, African-American male and Caucasian female, Caucasian male and African-American female, and Caucasian male and Caucasian female) were compared with each other. No significant differences were found, $F(3, -1/2, 63) = .59$, $p = .80$. The second hypothesis regarded attributions toward the participants in these relationships. As there was no main effect for type of marriage, there was also no significant finding for differences in attributions toward individuals in the relationships described.

It had been hypothesized that amount of contact would have an effect on attributions toward interracial marriages and toward the participants in those marriages, but, as aforementioned, there was no main effect for type of marriage described. It was found that amount of contact did have an effect on the responses to the questions following the vignette. Amount of contact

was significant, $F(2,0,63)= 2.55, p=.02$. The univariate effects of contact were then probed, and it was found that amount of contact had a significant effect on how males in the vignettes were perceived, $F(2, 130)=4.46, p=.013$, produced only a trend in how the couples were perceived, $F(2, 130)=2.63, p = .076$, and did not have a significant effect on how the females were perceived, $F(2, 130)= 1.15, p = .32$. A oneway analysis of variance was then conducted which probed the effect of level of contact on the male score which determined that responses from subjects with limited interracial contact ($M=10.12, SD=2.25$) were significantly more negative than subjects with medium amounts of interracial contact ($M=11.45, SD=1.73$), but that subjects with more numerous interracial interactions ($M=10.92, SD=2.04$) were not significantly different from either of the other two groups.

In order to further illuminate these findings, a supplementary analysis of the data was conducted to examine the effects of race of experimenter on perceptions of the couples and participants in the relationships. To examine this, three t-tests were performed which compared subjects tested by a Caucasian experimenter to subjects tested by a non-Caucasian experimenter. No significant differences were noted in attributions toward the couple ($t(140) = -.36, p = .72$) nor toward the female depicted in the vignettes ($t(140) = -.88, p = .38$); however, a trend was noted in attributions toward males ($t(139.39) = -1.78, p = .078$). Subjects with a Caucasian experimenter tended to rate males more positively ($M = 11.22, SD = 2.25$), as contrasted with subjects tested by non-Caucasian experimenters ($M = 10.62, SD = 1.72$).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Research suggests that discrimination and prejudice are still active factors in daily interactions, but are manifested in more subtle and indirect ways (Byrnes & Kiger, 1988; Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Greeley & Sheatsley, 1971; Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969; Katz, Cohen, & Glass, 1975; Scott, 1987; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). It was hoped that this study would allow for an opportunity to assess the degree of covert racism of college undergraduates. Since it is likely that racism will not be openly expressed, then this measure had to be sensitive enough to be able to measure whatever covert racism might exist in the tested college sample.

Upon analysis, this study revealed nonsignificant results for the hypotheses that were examined. This result indicates no differences in perception of the interracial couple as opposed to the same race couple. This also means that there were no differences in perception of the participants in the interracial couple as opposed to the same race couple. This seems to indicate either: a lack of racism in the tested sample, or that the measure used was not sensitive enough to assess racism that was present.

The additional finding was that, although the effects of the race of experimenter on ratings did not reach significance, it did seem that there was a trend for subjects with a Caucasian experimenter to rate the male depicted in the vignette, regardless of race, more positively. Although it is unclear to

this experimenter how to explain this phenomena, this may have been a result of a greater degree of sensitivity toward race and gender in subjects when they were presented with a non-Caucasian experimenter. In contrast, when subjects had a Caucasian experimenter, they may have been less drawn to these variables because they may have expected to have a Caucasian experimenter.

It is likely that the methodology and questionnaires used in this study were not subtle enough to effectively assess covert racism. Upon further investigation of the measure, it is likely that it could have been improved. The male and female subscales had only four questions each and, in comparison, the couple subscale had six questions. Sensitivity could be improved by adding more items to each subscale and asking more in-depth questions. The effectiveness of this measure could also have been limited by the population which was used. College students at a Jesuit institution may have had more exposure to more diversified points of view on racism and interracial relationships compared to the general American public. It is also possible that these subjects were more sensitized to the possibility of being construed as racist and, therefore, took greater pains to present themselves in a non-prejudiced manner. Additionally, these students were all enrolled in a psychology class at the time they participated in this study. As a result, they may have been more aware of the psychological phenomenon which was being tested. It is possible that testing a larger and more diverse population might show greater levels of racism and more correlation between level of racism and level of interracial contact.

It does seem that, although this scale was not sensitive enough to measure covert racism in the tested sample, it was able to measure another

type of bias, which seems to have some link to amount of interracial contacts. Students with few interracial contacts tended to rate the male depicted in the vignettes more negatively, across race, than students with more interracial contacts. It is possible that this is due to the fact that the majority of the subjects were females, and that there seems to be a current trend in society to speak out more negatively against males than there has been in the past. This may have caused this sample to view the male in this vignette more negatively. Studies have shown that women generally tend to be less racially biased than men (Herek, 1988). This, possibly, is a result of empathy for people who are discriminated against, stemming from their own personal experiences. As women may feel discriminated against by men, they may not feel the empathy towards them that they seem to feel for people of diverse races. Racism has become a sensitive subject in today's society. People are careful to protect themselves from being viewed as racist. On the other hand, there are other types of stereotypes which have not become so sensitive. As an example, stereotyping based on family structure has not reached this level of sophistication. Presently, people do not seem to be sensitized to not wanting to appear to discriminate against stepfamilies. As stated earlier, it was hypothesized by Bryant, Coleman and Ganong (1988) that stepfamily stereotyping might achieve the same social status that racial stereotyping now holds, and at that point, it will be less likely that researchers will find results which indicate biases against stepfamilies. It is possible that this is also true for stereotypes of males and any kinds of prejudices against males. It is further possible that this trend was so pronounced in those subjects with fewer interracial experiences because of the likelihood that people with fewer interracial experiences have

fewer diversified experiences and, therefore, a more simplified view of problems.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are very limited because of the aforementioned weaknesses of this study. First, the measure that was constructed has limitations in how well it is able to assess the variables which were being studied. Second, any assessment of racism involves the confounding effect of social desirability. Subjects want to portray socially desirable traits and, therefore, attempt not to portray a racist image of themselves. Third, it is possible that demand characteristics could have confounded the results. The subjects were asked to try to solve a marital conflict, so perhaps this encouraged them to take a hopeful perspective on each conflict in order to find ways to resolve it, or they recognized the true intent of the study.

Although the findings of this study were primarily nonsignificant, future research in this area is encouraged. Development of methodologies and instruments that can assess covert racism in a subtle manner is needed. Examining covert racism with a broad and representative sample of Americans is also encouraged.

APPENDIX A

Instructions to Subjects

Hello. My name is _____ and I would like to thank you for participating in this study.

I'm going to hand you a consent form. I would like you to read and sign the consent form, and then hand it to me. Because all of your responses are to be completely anonymous, I would like to keep your consent forms separate from your answer sheets.

After you have handed your consent form to me, I will give you a case vignette followed by a series of questions. I would like you to read the vignette that you have been given, and then carefully read and answer all of the following questions. This is a study on the resolution of marital conflict, so the vignettes that you will receive will describe a married couple and the conflict in which that couple is involved. You are asked to evaluate this conflict and the best method of resolving this conflict, if you believe that it can be resolved. Your answers will be completely anonymous, so please do not put your name on anything other than the consent form. After you have completed the questions following the vignette, please come turn in that form to me. At that point, I will hand you a final set of questions to answer. These are some questions about yourself. Please read and follow the instructions for those questions. Remember, your answers are completely

anonymous, so please try to be as honest as possible in all of your answers. Once you have completed the questionnaires, please bring it to me and you will be finished. If at any point during the project you wish to discontinue, please feel free to do so.

If during the testing you have any questions, please feel free to come up and ask me. Does anyone have any questions now?

You are free to go when you have finished answering all of the questions. Please begin.

APPENDIX B
Demographic Data

Please answer the following questions:

1. How old are you? _____ years of age.

2. Are you: Male _____ (Check one)
 or Female _____

3. What is your classification at the University? (Check one)
_____ Freshman
_____ Sophomore
_____ Junior
_____ Senior
_____ Other _____

4. What is your marital status? (Check one)
_____ Single (Never been married)
_____ Married
_____ Divorced
_____ Separated
_____ Widowed

5. What is your sexual orientation? (Check one)

- _____ Heterosexual
 _____ Homosexual
 _____ Bisexual

6. What is your racial background? (Check one)

- _____ African-American (Black)
 _____ Asian-American
 _____ Caucasian (White)
 _____ East-Indian
 _____ Hispanic
 _____ Native American Indian
 _____ Other (Please specify) _____

7. Are you a parent? Yes _____

No _____

If you answered yes to the above question, how many children do you have? _____

8. What is the occupation of the main provider in your family? (check one)

- _____ Executive, doctor, dentist, lawyer.
 _____ Manager/owner of a large business.
 _____ Administrator, small businessperson or semi-professional.
 _____ Clerical or salesworker or technical worker.
 _____ Semi-skilled laborer.
 _____ Unemployed for 1 year or more.

_____ Other (Please specify) _____.

9. What is the highest education level of the main provider in your family has completed?

_____ Graduate education (Ph.D., M.D., J. D., MBA).

_____ College degree (Bachelor's Degree).

_____ Associate's degree (Junior College Degree).

_____ One year or more of college without degree.

_____ High School diploma.

_____ Some high school.

_____ Grade School diploma.

_____ Less than eighth grade.

10. What religious denomination do you belong to?

_____ Roman Catholic.

_____ Muslim.

_____ Jewish.

_____ Greek Orthodox.

_____ Protestant.

_____ No religious affiliation.

_____ Other (Please specify) _____.

11. What percentage of your friends or relatives are:

_____ African-American (Black)

_____ Asian-American

_____ Caucasian (White)

- _____ East-Indian
 _____ Hispanic
 _____ Native American Indian
 _____ Other (Please specify) _____.

12. Have you ever been involved in an inter-racial relationship? (Check one)

_____ Yes

_____ No.

If you answered yes to the above question, how many inter-racial relationships have you been involved in? _____.

13. Have any of your friends or family members ever been involved in an inter-racial relationship? (Check one)

_____ Yes

_____ No.

If you answered yes to the above question, how many inter-racial relationships have your friends or family members been involved in? _____ . (If you are not sure, please guess.)

14. How would you describe the racial composition of the neighborhood in which you grew up? (Check one)

_____ extremely segregated

_____ somewhat segregated

_____ somewhat integrated

_____ extremely integrated

15. How would you describe the racial composition of the high school you attended? (Check one)

_____ extremely segregated

_____ somewhat segregated

_____ somewhat integrated

_____ extremely integrated

APPENDIX C

Case Vignette

Mary and Tom have been married for three years. Mary is a 25 year old _____ female who works in advertising. Her friends describe her as being a good friend -- nice, always there when needed, and always able to bring a smile to people's faces. She's cheerful, friendly, and hard-working. Tom is a 27 year old _____ male who is a computer programmer. His friends describe him as outgoing and fun to be around. He's trustworthy, intelligent, and considerate. Mary and Tom dated for two years and were engaged for one year before they got married. Both are from the Midwest and are currently living in Chicago.

Mary and Tom met at a party thrown by a mutual friend. It seemed to be love at first sight. During their two years of dating, Mary and Tom seemed to get along like most couples -- some fights and some periods of making up. They only had one serious break-up during that time. About one year into their relationship, Tom started to wonder if he was ready to settle into a serious relationship. After a month of fighting about this, Mary and Tom broke up. Neither of them was happy without the other one and two months later they got back together. Nine months later they were engaged and one year later they were married.

At this point their marriage is going through some difficulties. They have been fighting a lot more frequently, and these fights have become more serious than they have been in the past. Usually, their arguments are generally centered around little things. For example, Mary wants the toothpaste rolled up from the bottom and Tom only infrequently remembers to do this; and, it irritates Tom when Mary bites her fingernails (which happens to be an unconscious habit of hers).

These arguments have been more heated recently, and they center on a more important topic. Three years ago, when Mary and Tom initially discussed getting married, they both decided that they wanted a family, but that they would wait for a period of time after they got married before they would have any children. At this point in time, Mary is ready to have children and she has broached the subject with Tom. He, on the other hand, still wants to wait. He has told Mary that he thinks that he is not yet ready to become a father, not to mention the fact that, in his opinion, they are not financially stable enough to consider adding on to their family.

This has become a strong point of contention between Tom and Mary and, at this point, they don't seem to be able to resolve it on their own. Every conversation that they have, no matter how trivial it seems, eventually evolves into a discussion (and then argument) about whether or not to have children now. This conflict seems to be growing, too. It has now become a wider issue of Mary questioning Tom's commitment to her and to the marriage, and Tom feeling like Mary is being unfair and changing the rules in the middle of the game. In his mind, they had discussed this and

had decided that they would wait until they could make a mutual agreed upon decision.

At this point, both Tom and Mary have become concerned about their relationship. All conversation between them seems to end up in an argument about having a child and each argument seems to get worse. In fact, there have been a few nights when one of them has ended up sleeping in the guest bedroom. So, at this point, not knowing what else they can do to solve their problem, they have decided to go to a marriage counselor to ask for help.

If you were the marriage counselor that this couple came to for help, what would be your opinion about the following questions?

For each of the following questions, please circle the response that most appropriately describes your opinion. **Please pay special attention to the rating scales that apply to each question, because they are *different* for each question.**

1. How emotionally stable do you believe this couple is?

1	2	3	4
Very Emotionally Stable			Very Emotionally Unstable

2. How emotionally stable is Tom?

1	2	3	4
Very Emotionally Unstable			Very Emotionally Stable

3. How emotionally stable is Mary?

1	2	3	4
Very Emotionally Stable			Very Emotionally Unstable

4. What kind of self-opinion do you think Tom has?

1	2	3	4
Very Bad			Very Good
Opinion			Opinion

5. What kind of self-opinion do you think Mary has?

1	2	3	4
Very Good			Very Bad
Opinion			Opinion

6. What kind of husband is Tom ?

1	2	3	4
Very Bad			Very Good
Husband			Husband

7. What kind of wife is Mary?

1	2	3	4
Very Good			Very Bad
Wife			Wife

8. How loving and secure of a home do you feel Tom and Mary could create for any children that they would have now?

1	2	3	4
Very Unloving and Insecure			Very Loving and Secure

9. How loving and secure of a home do you feel Tom and Mary could create for any children that they would have in the future?

1	2	3	4
Very Loving and Secure			Very Unloving and Insecure

10. How much blame do you place on Tom for these present disagreements?

1	2	3	4
Very Much Blame			Very Little Blame

11. How much blame do you place on Mary for these present disagreements?

1	2	3	4
Very Little			Very Much
Blame			Blame

12. Do you, as their marriage counselor, believe that this is a healthy marriage?

1	2	3	4
Very Much			Very Much
Believe So			Believe Not

13. As Tom and Mary's marriage counselor, do you believe that this couple can solve this disagreement?

1	2	3	4
Very Much			Very Much
Belive So			Believe Not

14. Please explain your reasons for your answer to #13.

15. Why do you think that Mary wants to have a baby now?

16. Why do you think that Tom doesn't want to have a baby now?

17. How would you, as their marriage counselor, work with this couple to try to help them resolve their present conflict?

18. How long do you, as their marriage counselor, believe it will take Tom and Mary to resolve this conflict?

0	1	2	3	4
Can't be Resolved	Very Long Time			Very Short Time

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

I have been informed as to what I am expected to do as a participant in this experiment, and I agree to participate. I have also been informed that if at any time, I feel unable or unwilling to continue participating in this experiment, I may leave after informing the experimenter. I understand that I may leave without penalty of loss of credit for participating. If I leave before the Debriefing at the end of the experiment, I will inform the experimenter so I can be debriefed and receive credit for participation.

Signature _____

Date _____

Name _____

(Please Print)

Instructor's _____

Name (Please Print)

APPENDIX E
Debriefing Statement

Project Title: An Assessment of Covert Racism in the Attributional Process Toward Interracial Couples.

Principal Investigator: Holly Huck

Many rigid racial stereotypes have loosened and racial intolerance has become less prominent than in the 1940s and 1950s. Racism has now been divided into two categories: covert racism and overt racism. Covert racism is a more subtle form of prejudice than overt racism. Studies have been conducted to gauge the amount of covert racial prejudice that still exists. This project is designed to examine present-day perceptions of interracial relationships and the participants involved in interracial relationships. In addition, the relation between interracial experiences and interracial attributions will be studied.

Specific variables that were examined included the attributions that undergraduate students ascribed to the individuals in interracial marriages as opposed to same-race marriages, and their opinions regarding the marriages which described an interracial couple as opposed to those which described a same-race marriage.

If you have any further questions, please contact Holly Huck at 508-2490. If you would like more information about this area of research, the

references listed below would be good places to start. Thank you for participating in this study.

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9/2/92

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