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The Changing Landscape of Race, Culture, and Family Life: Interracial Couples' Contribution to the Conversation

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Abstract

The published social science research on interracial marriages has burgeoned considerably over the past few decades as experts address not only traditional, but also emerging questions about the quality of life in mixed-race families. The "emic" experience of being in a mixed race family remains, though, a relatively under-explored topic. To help fill the gap, we conducted a nationally distributed, snowball sample, anonymous, online survey of 241 married or cohabiting individuals; 83.6% self-identified as a member of a bi-racial couple. The 131 items surveyed couples' experiences of their partnership, family life, support, and discrimination—both in time and in place. The study presented multiple findings including a persistence of race discrimination in neighborhoods and at work; surprisingly, the couples also reported that their children were allowed to play with the children of White neighbors, regardless of the racial makeup of the family. There was a significant relationship between "importance of falling in love" and the racial makeup of the couple ($\chi 2$ (15, N=205) =30.42, p=.01); Black/White and Hispanic/White couples choose their partner for love. Moreover, same race couples expressed the most unhappiness and the most regret of all of the couple-groups surveyed. Most concerning, though, was that interracial couples perceive raising multiracial children as more difficult; these results were significant ($\chi 2$ (30, N=206) =62.68, p=.00) with Black/White couples, at 45.7%. The study presents multiple correlation tables. Additionally, limitations of the study are discussed and suggestions for further studies are presented.

Keywords

marriage, interracial, couples, mixed race, cohabiting, intermarried, interethnic

1. Introduction

The issue of interracial marriages and long-term relationships in the United States has captured the interest of both popular and scholarly writers for the past century (Day, 1912). The published social science research on interracial marriages has burgeoned considerably over the last few decades as experts address not only traditional, but also emerging questions about the quality of life in mixed-race

romantic unions. In Monahan's (1970) seminal article published more than four decades ago, the author discussed the contradictory findings reported on the rates and stability of cross-racial or cross-ethnic marriages, particularly Black/White couples, in the United States.

Although recent evidence clearly demonstrates that interracial marriages are more prevalent today, the statistics on the stability of these unions are equivocal and depend partly on the racial combination of the couple (Bratter & King, 2008; Monahan, 1970). A growing number of studies have yielded quantitative and qualitative evidence on interracial relationships, but the data gleaned from most of these investigations reflects the perspective, and thus the bias, of academic researchers. The "emic", or insider's, experience of being in a mixed race romantic partnership remains a relatively under-explored topic in both the social science and behavioral science literature. Yet first-hand accounts of interracial marriages from the actors themselves i.e., the individuals in a mixed-race relationship—may provide valuable sociological insights into shifting perceptions of interracial relationships, families, and the multiracial children of cross-racial partners.

To help fill the gap in emic-oriented research on this topic, we conducted an online survey of opinions of individuals in interracial relationships regarding various aspects of their partnership and family life. Our study used a snowball research strategy to collect quantitative information on how interracial couples view themselves and view reactions to them from other people—their family members, co-workers, and neighbors. The reader should note that authors in previous studies have used the terms, "intermarried, interracial and interethnic" to connote the essence of what the authors in this paper describe as "interracial" a term which we use to depict "individuals in a mixed-race relationship, whereby one or both partners may be of a single race, or mixed race". We have, however, used these terms (i.e., interracial, intermarried and interethnic) interchangeably to honor the intentions of the work of authors who have previously written on this subject matter.

2. Literature Review

Interracial relationships and the children produced from them historically have been meet with punitive legal measures, social sanctions and severe stigmatization. After years of legalized racial inequality, the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's brought about sweeping social changes and with those changes, the end of anti-miscegenation laws. But even though the laws had changed, a social environment that accommodated the prospect of interracial marriages would require additional time. In recent years, the rise in interracial marriage and multiracial children have sparked some questions about how these families are faring in the wake of a world that only recently has legally acknowledged their rights as a family. This review highlights some of the most salient trends surrounding interracial partnerships in the United States that have been reported in the literature.

3. Historical Issues of Racial Classifications and Identifications of Multi-Racial Families

For years prior to 1970, information on the nature and makeup of intermarriage (marriage between partners of different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds) in the United States was largely incomplete and inconsistent, with the little data that were collected tending to be descriptive rather than representative and anchored in quantifiable research (Monahan, 1970). Part of the difficulty in understanding intermarriage throughout time stems from poor record-keeping on race and family identity (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Monahan, 1970; Mourning, 2003). Records of marriage and divorce in the United States have often been incomplete, frequently omitting the racial identity of the partners (Monahan, 1970).

Codification of racial identity in the U.S. Census reflects the socially constructed nature of race and, therefore, has changed greatly throughout time, due largely to "the social, political and economic outlooks of the nation's White citizenry at the time" (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Mourning, 2003). Thus, in certain years of the U.S. Census, racial classification systems will not align properly or categories used in the past (for example, versions of the U.S. Census in the late 1700's only had three options: free White, slaves or other) (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Monahan, 1970; Mourning, 2003; Sandefur, Martin, Eggerling-Boeck, Mannon, & Meier, 2001). Multiracial identity was first recorded by the U.S. Census in 1850 and remained an option throughout most years in some form until 1920 when it was removed (Mourning, 2003). The multiracial category in the U.S. Census did not return until 2000 (DaCosta, 2007; Mourning, 2003). Prior to 1850, the only racial terms used on the U.S. Census were "White, Indians (not taxed- and thus excluded from enumeration), and colored" (Mourning, 2003). However it is not simply the changing U.S. Census definition of what constitutes mixed racial identification during this time that make enumerating interracial marriage difficult, but it is also the way in which the U.S. Census collected its data. Until 1960, the U.S. Census used enumerators to collect their data (Mourning, 2003; Sandefur et al., 2001). However, the directions given to the enumerators changed from year to year, sometimes with specific instructions for the enumerators to place mixed race respondents into single race categories—specifically in the years with no mixed race option—or very specific instructions on how to classify people based on each individual's percentage of types of "mixed blood" for example, classifications such as mulatto, quadroon and octoroon (Mourning, 2003). These issues make collecting data on interracial families and multiracial children in the years prior to 1970 difficult and raise questions about the validity of the data collected.

3.1 Interracial Marriage and the Law: Loving vs. the State of Virginia

Anti-miscegenation laws had been in place in the United States as early as the colonial period and persisted until 1967 (DaCosta, 2007; Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Mourning, 2003). The first anti-miscegenation law was passed in Maryland in 1661 and, like most laws to restrict interracial interaction, was specifically written to ban Black/White unions (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). Most states in the union adopted similar laws by the end of the 19th century, a trend that would not start to be reversed until after World War II (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). Few states repealed their

anti-miscegenation laws before this; Pennsylvania in 1780 and Ohio in 1887 (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). In 1946, the War Brides Act of 1946 permitted U.S. Servicemen to bring their foreign born Japanese wives to the United States, but not without extensive background checks on both the wife and husband (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). With the launch of the civil rights movement in the 1960's came the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and finally, the overturn of the landmark case, Loving vs. the State of Virginia in 1967, which declared anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional (DaCosta, 2007; Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Mourning, 2003).

The boundaries for interracial relationships were still amorphous in 1967, a year when the Stanley Kramer film, starring African American actor Sidney Poitier, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*—a comedy built around parents' acceptance of an interracial couple—was considered groundbreaking (Crary, 2007). In fact, at the time that the law was overturned, 15 states still had anti-miscegenation laws in effect and, though legally unenforceable, some states have retained these laws in their constitutions until as late as 2000 (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). After the labors of the Civil Rights Movement and the abolition of anti-miscegenation laws, public concern about interracial marriage ran high, sparking an increased interest in research on the topic (Monahan, 1970).

Early research on interracial marriage was largely descriptive, and usually focused on Black/White marriage as opposed to other couplings (DaCosta, 2007; Day, 1912; Yancey, 2007). Caroline Bond Day (1912) described one of the first anthropological and sociological investigations of Black/White interracial marriage in her book titled: *A Study of Some Negro White Families in the United States*. In her study, Day (1912) sampled Black/White and mixed race families in Washington D. C. and Georgia. The sociological issues affecting Black/White families in Day's writings are similar to those confronting Black/White families for several decades thereafter (DaCosta, 2007; Day, 1912). Day notes that for these families, their own family history is often "shrouded in mystery" due to the stigma associated with Black/White couples and families, either in whole or in part, engaging in racial "passing" as White families; roughly 35 of the 346 families Day sampled for her study were passing in whole or in part (Day, 1912). Day's sample consisted largely of families that had lived during the time of slavery when most interracial marriages (or "initial cross" as Day terms it) documented occurred between a White man and a Black woman.

In another study of Black/White unions in Chicago conducted in 1945, researchers note that engaging in intermarriage is "sociological suicide" for White partners as they often had to move to the Black part of town where they would be merely tolerated by other Black residents, and furthermore, where children from these unions were subject to segregation (DaCosta, 2007). However, Day (1912) concluded that several qualities of life (e.g., divorce rates, household upkeep, furnishing, accommodations, etc.,) in Black/White interracial marriages were generally consistent with those of the general population.

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3.2 Interracial Marriage after Loving vs. the State of Virginia

In the years after the overturn of anti-miscegenation laws, change was slow to come to the American population. In 1987, 48% of the public said it was "ok for Whites and Blacks to date each other" (Passel et al., 2010). By 2003, 77% of the public agreed with the same statement and by 2009, that percentage rose again to 83% (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Passel et al., 2010). In 2003, 86% of Black, 79% of Hispanic and 66% of Whites would accept their child marrying someone of a different race (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). The number of U.S. married couples in interracial marriages more than quadrupled from 1970 to 1998, resulting in 1.4 million couples (5% of all married couples) (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Mourning, 2003). In 2000, over 6 million Americans identified themselves as having two or more racial ancestries, roughly 42% of them under the age of 18, which may be an indicator that children from interracial marriages are reporting multiracial identity compared with individuals of multigenerational mixed racial ancestry, who self-identify with only one race (DaCosta, 2007; Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Mourning, 2003). What was once seemed so radical to many Americans became commonplace in 2007, with many prominent Blacks—including Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, civil rights leader Julian Bond and former U.S. Senator Carol Moseley Braun—having married Whites. Well known Whites who have married Blacks include former Defense Secretary William Cohen and actor Robert DeNiro (Crary, 2007). By 2008, it was estimated that about 14.6% of all new marriages were interracial/ethnic, a figure that is six times the number of interracial marriages in 1960, and double that of 1980 (Passel et al., 2010). In 2008, about one third of all adults reported having a close family member marry outside his own race (Passel et al., 2010). Coupled with a steady flow of immigrants from all parts of the world, some believe the surge of interracial marriages and multiracial children is producing a 21st century America more diverse than ever, with the potential to become less stratified by race (Crary, 2007). This is not to say that acceptance has been universal. Interviews with interracial couples from around the country reveal varied challenges, and opposition has lingered in some quarters. Most notably in South Carolina, where Bob Jones University only dropped its ban on interracial dating in 2000; a year later 40 percent of the voters objected when Alabama became the last state to remove a no-longer enforceable ban on interracial marriages from its constitution (Crary, 2007).

4. Interracial Families Today

In general, intermarriage is inversely related to the size of a racial/ethnic population; the higher the percentage of a racial group in the population, the less likely they are to marry someone of a different racial or ethnic background (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). Rates of intermarriage have varied greatly by time, race/ethnicity and gender. In 1960, the rates of intermarriage for Black men and women were approximately equal (Sandefur et al., 2001). However, since 1970 there has been a significant difference in the number of Black men who intermarry as opposed to Black women, whose rates are much lower (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Passel et al., 2010; Sandefur et al., 2001). A reversed trend is

reported for Asians, as Asian women have much higher rates of intermarriage than Asian men (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Passel et al., 2010). Since the 1970's Hispanics have had higher rates of intermarriage than Black and Whites with no significant difference observed between the intermarriage rates of Hispanic women vs. Hispanic men (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Passel et al., 2010; Sandefur et al., 2001). For the past 50 years, the minority population with the highest rates of intermarriage has been American Indians, with over 60% of the American Indian population in an intermarriage in 1990 (Sandefur et al., 2001). In 2000, this rate dipped slightly to 56% (Lewis & Ford-Robertson, 2010).

According to the Pew Research Center, of the marriages that occurred in 2008, Hispanic (26%) and Asians (31%) made up that majority of interracial couplings. Though numbers for White (9%) and Black (16%) persons were much lower than those of Hispanics and Asians, the number of White interracial marriages doubled, and that of Black interracial marriages tripled between 1980 and 2008 (Passel et al., 2010). However, these rates varied greatly by gender. In 2008, Black men (22%) married partners of another race at much higher rates than Black women (9%), whereas Asian women (40%) married partners of another race at much higher rates than Asian men (20%) (Passel et al., 2010). Interracial marriages in 2008 were slightly more common among those who attended college than those who did not, and were more common among native born persons than among immigrants (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Passel et al., 2010). The relationship between education and interracial marriage was noted as early as 1912, when Caroline Bond Day found in her sample of younger interracial couples that over 50% had a degree higher than a high school diploma. Though age has been strongly correlated with interracial marriages in the past, for new intermarriages in 2008, age was not as strong of a factor (Bratter & King, 2008; Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Passel et al., 2010).

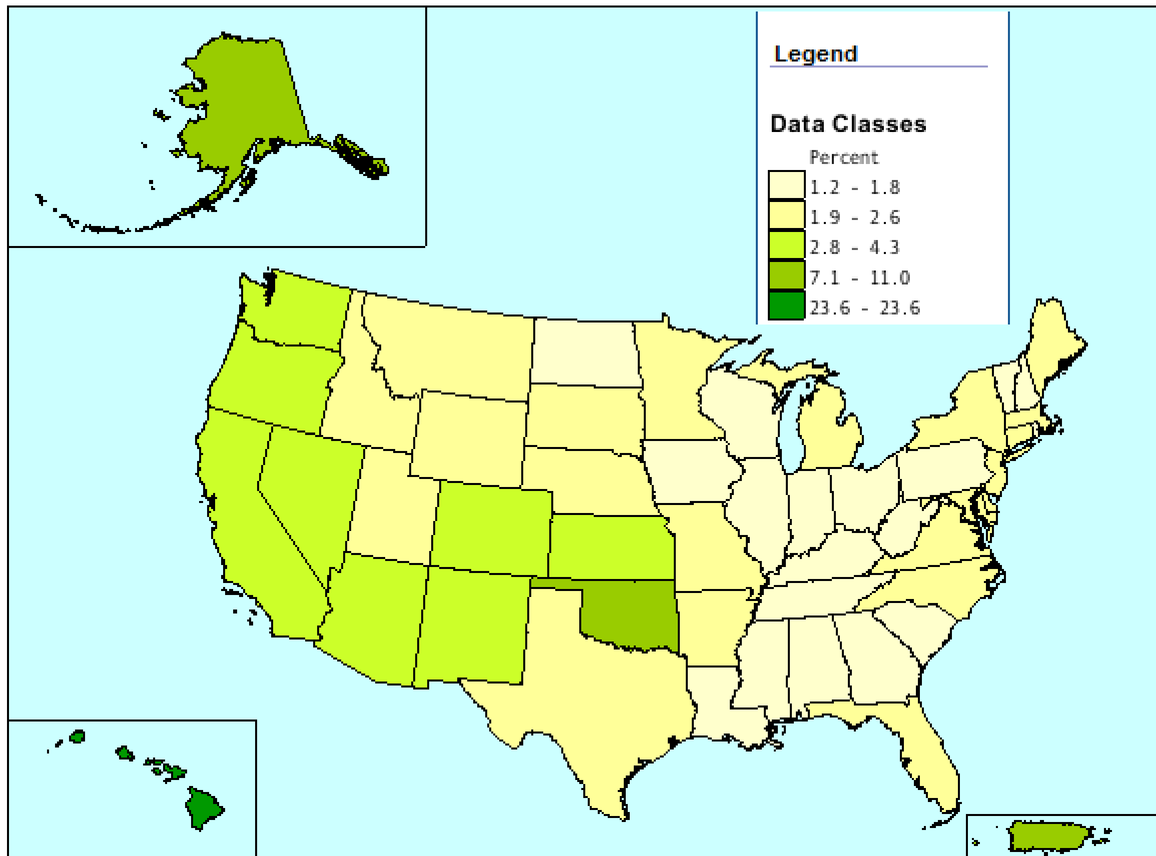

Figure 1. Percent of the Total Population Who Are Two or More Races

*** 2009 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.**

4.1 Where Are Interracial Marriages Happening?

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, multiple race reporting was highest in the West, usually in areas with relatively large Hispanic populations (Mourning, 2003). This trend was also apparent in the 2009 American Community Survey (see Figure 1) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). This may be due to the relatively higher rates of interracial marriages in the West; in 2000, about 4 in every ten couples in the West were interracial/ethnic, and in 2008 about one in five of all marriages in the West (Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Passel et al., 2010). However, rates of interracial marriages in 2008 varied by region of the United States; White and Black persons married a partner of a different race more frequently in the Western region of the United States whereas rates of interracial marriages were highest for Hispanics in Midwest and highest for Asians in the South (Passel et al., 2010). Over 40% of adults living in the West have reported a family member who was in an interracial marriage, compared to 38% in the South, 31% in the Northeast and 25% in the Midwest (Passel et al., 2010). Marriages between Whites and Blacks have been historically rare in the South, due primarily to a long history of racial tensions and the large size of each racial group in the region (Lee & Edmonston, 2005).

4.2 How Stable Are Interracial Marriages?

After the overturn of 1967 Loving vs. the State of Virginia, early criticisms of intermarriage were that marriages across racial and ethnic boundaries experienced less stability and ended in divorce more than in marriage (marriages between persons of the same racial and ethnic background) (Monahan, 1970). Due to the nature of the data available on intermarriage until approximately 1970, research on the issue was largely inconclusive and in many cases even conclusive results limited by poor sampling—a lack of representative data (Bratter & King, 2008; Monahan, 1970). More recent research on the topic has found that intermarriages are slightly more likely than in same race marriages to end in divorce, but research on this issue continues to produce conflicting results (Bratter & King, 2008). Past research has shown age to be a significant predictor of divorce and it is possible, therefore, that since intermarriage is more common among younger populations, the instability attributed to intermarriage may be more of product of age than intermarriage (Bratter & King, 2008).

5. Interracial Experiences

Qualitative research studies indicate that rates of interracial marriage increase as social distance decreases (DaCosta, 2007; Kouri, 2003). As American life became increasingly desegregated starting in the late 60s, and as measures such as affirmative action have diversified the workplace, interracial marriage has grown more common as exposure to diverse populations becomes more widespread (DaCosta, 2007; Kouri, 2003). Studies with couples in interracial or interethnic marriages indicate that these intermarried couples feel a high level of social visibility (DaCosta, 2007). Respondents from interracial marriages have reported that they encounter frequent stares in public places, attribution of non-familial ties to family members by strangers in public, or seemingly benign comments attesting to the "exceptional" beauty of their families, which make these individuals increasingly aware that they violate the norm of what families are "supposed" to look like (Bratter & King, 2008; DaCosta, 2007).

Some studies suggest that couples in interracial marriages receive less support from family members and from friends as well (Bratter & King, 2008). Other research indicates that those who marry a different race have reported having parents who generally supported racial equality in theory, but were less accepting of the prospect of an interracial/ethnic relationship when it was first addressed (DaCosta, 2007; Kouri, 2003). One study reports that respondents in interracial/ethnic relationships experienced great fear and anxiety at the thought of telling their families about their partner (DaCosta, 2007). According to some research, after an initial time period, most families of interracial partners come to accept the spouse, although sometimes this does not occur until after the marriage, or after children are born of the union (DaCosta, 2007; Kouri, 2003). In a published survey, respondents reported that parental fears about their interracial/ethnic relationships more often associated with social status of their own child or that of their potential grandchildren; and, fear for their safety in public. (DaCosta, 2007) Respondents in these studies tended to "downplay" the negativity expressed by their parents initially after they had accepted their child's spouse. Instead, most framed it in a "letting bygones be

bygones" perspective (DaCosta, 2007; Kouri, 2003). In a comparative study of White spouses with Black partners versus White spouses with other minority non-Black partners, White spouses with Black partners were more likely to report first hand experiences of racism than were White partners with non-Black minority partners (Yancey, 2007).

5.1 Children of Interracial Marriages

Between 1970 and 1990, the number of children living in intermarried households quadrupled, rising from 900,000 to over 3 million (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). The most common intermarriage combination with children in 2000 was a White individual and multiracial spouse (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). About two thirds of interracial households with children live in the West and South (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). Issues of identity are particularly salient for children of interracial households; in qualitative research on the subject, respondents indicated that choosing one racial identity over another felt like betraying a parent (DaCosta, 2007). However, qualitative research on parents of interracial children found that some parents favor choosing one racial or ethnic background when reporting the race of their child rather than categorizing their children as multiracial (Brunsma, 2005). In one study of biracial children of Asian ancestry, more than 40% of children of White/Asian marriages were defined by their parents as Asian as opposed to less than 33% of Black/Asian children who were labeled by their parents as Asian (Mourning, 2003).

5.2 Religion and Culture

The impact of religion and culture on American families has been well documented in various studies of family life, and this is no different for interracial/ethnic families. In her seminal study, Day (1912) stated, "Although the Methodist and Baptist faiths were principally those of the older generation, the younger group have to a large extent turned away to other denominations where they have found a more intelligent clergy than that in some of the older and less progressive of the Methodist and Baptist churches" (p. 115). Day reported that there were no indications that the cultural interests of these families were different from those of the general population, "on account of the fact that the majority of these people live or have lived in the South, many of their cultural tendencies which might be considered Negroid are really only Southern" (p. 119). However, she noted that in larger cities there was increased participation in social uplift and self-improvement, especially among southern homemakers in her sample (Day, 1912). Some research has indicated that religious affirmations of love for all of mankind permeate individual choices and rationales regarding interracial marriages (Kouri, 2003).

Conversely, though prior studies (Kouri, 2003) reflect a higher rate of acceptance of marriage to those of a different racial or ethnic group, newer studies reveal that the majority of Americans affiliated with a religion would have a difficult time with a family member's decision to marry someone who does not believe in God (Passel et al., 2010). Moreover, almost seven-in-ten of those associated with a religion say they would either not accept such a marriage (27%) or would be bothered by it before coming to

accept it (43%), while 27% say they would be fine with a relative's decision to marry someone who did not believe in God (Passel et al., 2010).

Among people who are affiliated with a religion, Blacks, who are the most likely to be accepting of interracial marriage, are more likely than Whites or Hispanics to express discomfort with marriage to an atheist. Passel et al., (2010) also found that those who regularly attend religious services are less likely to approve of marriage to someone who does not believe in God. Among high-attending believers, Whites are somewhat less likely than Blacks, and much less likely than Hispanics, to approve of marriage to an atheist (11% of White high-attenders, 16% of Black high-attenders and 35% of Hispanic high-attenders say it would be fine if a relative married someone who does not believe in God). Among believers who attend less frequently, Whites (36%) and Hispanics (41%) are more likely than Blacks (26%) to approve of such a marriage (Passel et al., 2010).

6. Methods

6.1 Research Design and Questions

This study is a cross-sectional correlational survey design describing individuals' experiences and perceptions of being an interracial family in changing American society. Specifically, we asked couples sets of questions addressing five themes: (1) the beginning of the relationship—how and why they met; (2) perceived support for the relationship—parents, siblings and friends; (3) experiences of discrimination by neighbors, co-workers, employers and strangers in public places; (4) changes in cultural and religious activities as part of creating an interracial family; and (5) the impact of being an interracial couple on the quality of the marriage, family, and children. Furthermore, we explored these factors in time (when they married), and place (geography).

6.2 Participants

A nationally distributed, anonymous, online survey was completed by individuals (n=241) in the Northwest 13.7%; South 24.1; Mid-West 11.6%; and West 41.5 regions of the U.S. (9.1% gave incomplete responses or no response to the region question). Eighty percent (80) of the respondents were married; 19.9% were cohabitating; 44.4% had children. Of the respondents who completed the survey, 74.2, were women, the majority of whom were educated (80.7% college graduates married to 57.8% college graduates). Respondents who self identified as a member of a bi-racial couple constituted 83.6% of the survey sample.

6.3 Sampling Procedure

This study was conducted using an online snowball sampling strategy. An anonymous link to the survey was sent in a cover letter to multiple national online support groups for biracial and multiracial couples' support groups. The original 12 organizations targeted for participant recruitment were discovered through a Google search. An identified list serve provider/manager was emailed a message asking that they electronically forward to their members an email text that contained a link to the anonymous survey. The text included the statement: "We are asking for volunteers to complete a survey

as part of our research project to better understand the experiences of interracial couples in American society". We also encouraged any participants to pass on the text with the embedded survey-link to any individuals potentially interested in the survey or to organizations whose websites are frequently visited by interracial couples. Once a respondent submitted the survey, the data were sent to a data bank disconnected from the sender's name or email. Only couples married or cohabitating were invited to participate. The survey was active from mid-summer 2008 through the end of 2009.

6.4 Survey Instrument

The survey was developed by the authors, based on previous published studies and the expertise of the research team [identifying information has been deleted to protect the blind-reading of the manuscript]. As noted previously, the survey inquired about the interracial couples' initial attraction to each other, how and where they met; interracial dating patterns; perceived reactions, discriminations and/or support from neighbors, relatives and co-workers; and, the perceived impact of interracial status on the quality of their marriage, family and children. Queries were also made regarding participation in, and affiliation with, cultural and religious activities. Furthermore, the survey collected information on the decade that the relationship began and the geographical location of the family both at the beginning of the courtship and currently.

6.5 Data Analysis

The survey consisted on 112 items—primarily Likert scales. Construct scales were created on perceived level of discriminations: by White neighbors; by minority neighbors; by co-workers; by strangers in public places; and by family members. Additionally, construct scales were developed on the intensity of perceived support by family and friends, at both the beginning and currently in the lives, of these interracial families. Given that the primary variable, the racial makeup of the couple was categorical, cross tabulations were used to evaluate and describe the data while Chi-Square Test for Independence was utilized to test the null hypothesis. The final analysis explored the factors of (1) time (decade married), (2) racial makeup of the couple, and (3) place (region in the U.S. that the client resides), on the dependent variable (perceived difficulty of raising children in an interracial family) in a one-way ANOVA. The results were demonstrated in a plot graph.

7. **Results**

The racial makeup of the respondents consisted of 75 (31.1%) Black/White couples; 37 (15.4%) Asian/White couples; 36 (14.9%) Multiracial/White couples; 16 (6.6%) Hispanic/White; 1 (.4%) Native/White couple; and 41 (17%) same race couples. Of the total sample of respondents, 35 (14.5%) provided incomplete responses or no response to the race questions.

7.1 Description of the Respondents

Of the 241 respondents, 193 (80.1%) were married whereas the remaining were cohabitating; 199 (83.6%) self identified as an interracial couple. One (0.4%) respondent was married in the 1940's; three (1.3%) in the 1960's; 14 (5.9%) in the 1970s; 19 (8%) in the 1980s; 46 (19.4%) in the 1990s; and 154

(65%) in the 2000s. In total: 35% of the couples cohabitated or married before the turn of the 21st Century; and, 65% of the sample afterwards. Of the 219 individuals who responded to "where did your relationship start": 15.1% lived in the Northeast; 26.5% lived in the South; 12.8% lived in the Midwest; and 45.7% lived in the West. Of the 226 individuals who responded to the items about place (currently reside): 12.8% live in the Northeast; 31% live in the South; 14.6% live in the Midwest; and 41.6% live in the West.

7.2 Survey Themes and Questions

In keeping with the themes explored in this study, the survey addressed five questions: (1) how did interracial couples begin their relationship; (2) how did the couples perceive support of their relationship by their parents, siblings and friends; (3) what discriminations did interracial families experience by White neighbors, by non-White neighbors, at work, by White co-workers, by non-White co-workers, and in public places; (4) what, if any, cultural and religious activities did they change in response to having a interracial family; and (5) how did being an interracial family impact the quality of life of the marriage, of the family, and of the children. Furthermore, did time (when they married), or place (geography) impact these five areas of inquiry.

7.2.1 How Did Interracial Couples Begin Their Relationship; in Time, and in Place?

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of ten various options in choosing their partner: shared interest; working in the same occupation; personal attraction; shortage of persons in own racial group; different race physically more attractive; socially exciting to marry out of racial group; different racial group more sexually attractive; different racial group easier to talk with; share same entertainment interests; and fell in love. Only "fell in love" was significant. There was a significant relationship between "importance of falling in love" and the racial makeup of the couple (χ^2 (15, N=205) =30.42, p=.01); Black/White and Hispanic/White couples choose their partner *for love*. No relationship was found between the "importance of falling in love" and the decade in which the couple met—1940's, 1950's, 1960's, 1970's, 0980's 1990's or 2000's (χ^2 (20, N=236) =26.00, p=.17), or where they met—Northeast, South, Midwest, or West (χ^2 (12, N=218) =6.66, p=.88). See Table 1.

Table 1. The "Importance of Love" in Choosing a Partner by Racial Makeup of Couple

	Black/ White	Hispanic/ White	White/ White	Multiracial/ White	Same Race	Total
Most Importantwithin race	95.9%	100%	89.2%	83.3%	70.7%	87.8
Somewhat Important within race	4.1%	0%	8.1%	13.9%	17.1%	8.8%
Neutral within race	0%	0%	2.7%	0%	12.2%	2.9%
Least Important within race	0%	0%	0%	2.8%	0%	.5%
Total Count	74	16	37	36	41	205
% within race	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

7.2.2 How Did the Couples Perceive Support of Their Relationship by Their Parents, Siblings and Friends in Time and Place?

1) Support from family and friends

Respondents were asked about their perception of support from family and friends when the couple announced that they would marry. There were no significant differences by the couples' racial makeup and perceived support by the respondents' mother (χ^2 (20, N=192) =15.39, p=.75), father (χ^2 (20, N=164) =21.00, p=.397), siblings (χ^2 (20, N=187) =25.32, p=.19), or friends (χ^2 (20, N=201) =24.11, p=.24). The data were split by early (before 1990) and recent (1990 and after) to run cross tabulations, independently. The data showed a trend of less support by respondents' mother if the couple dated before, compared to after, 1990; mothers became more supportive over the decades of Black/White couples (41.7% Vs 54.4%) compared to less supportive of both Hispanic/White couples (50% Vs 46.2%) and same race couples (100% to 83.3%). Although the data revealed a trend, it was not significant in either group: couples married before 1990 (χ^2 (20, N=30) =28.13, p=.11) compared to couples married more recently (χ^2 (20, N=161) =13.11, p=.873). Similarly, the data were split in to run cross tabulations independently by the region of the country in which the respondent was married. The data on respondent's mother's support was not changed by Northeast, South, Midwest or West regions in which the couple resided at the time of their engagement. Mothers were supportive across place. See Table 2.

2) Support from partner's family and friends

Data on support from the respondents' partners' families, showed a different trend. The racial makeup of the engaged couple was related to a perceived lack of support by the partner's mother (χ^2 (25, N=186) =45.37, p=.01). Specifically, the partner's mother expressed the most opposition when the partnership was Multiracial/White (21.2%), Asian/White (20%), Black/White (14.1%), or Hispanic/White 6.3% couples compared to same race couples (5.4%). There was no significant relationship (although the lack of support was in the same direction as the trend for partners' mother) between the partner's father's support and the couples' racial makeup (χ^2 (25, N=164) =36.72, p=.06). There was a significant relationship between the partner's siblings' support and the couples' racial makeup (χ^2 (25, N=174) =59.49, p=.00). The partner's siblings were most discouraging of Hispanic/White (15.4%), Black/White (14.7%), Multiracial/White (12.6%), and Asian/White (2.8%) couples compared to same race couples (3.2%). Friends of the respondents' partner were more neutral. See Table 2.

The respondent's partner's mother's lack of support by racial makeup of the couple was consistent across the decades: 1940's—1980's, $\chi 2$ (20, N=157) =64.23, p=.00; 1990's-2000's χ^2 (25, N=157) =38.67, p=.04. Region was also a significant factor in the respondent's mother's support, except in the South. The respondent's partner's' mother's support in the Northeast, Midwest, and West was related to the racial makeup of the couple. Overall, the respondents' mothers were most supportive of same race couples and least supportive of Multiracial/White couples. By contrast, in the South, the couples' racial makeup was unrelated to the respondent's' partner's' mother's support, χ^2 (20, N=51) =13.21, p=.87.

See Table 2.

Table 2. Family Support, Own and Partners', as Perceived by Respondent by Race Group

	FAMILY SUPPORT (in percentages) as perceived by respondent by race group									
	Own	Partners'	Own	Partners'	Own	Partners'	Own	Partners'	Own	Partners'
	Blk/Wht		Hisp/Wht		Asian/Wht		Multi/Wht		Same race	couples
Father	63.1	69.2	73.3	78.6	71.4	72.7	78.1	59.4	82.7	87.5
Mother*	72.5	76.6	66.7	75.1	81.1	77.2	85.3	63.7	89.2	89.2
Siblings*	75.8	73.8	86.7	53.9	77.8	83.3	78.8	71.9	76	77.4
Friends*	87.5	77.4	75.1	73.3	94.6	97.1	94.3	85.7	87.5	86.5

* Significant at .05 level (Chi Square).

7.2.3 What Discriminations Did Bi-Racial Families Experience by White Neighbors, by Non-White Neighbors at Work, by White Co-Workers, by Non-White Co-Workers and in Public Places; and in Time and Place?

1) Discrimination by White neighbors

There was a significant relationship between the racial makeup of couples and their experience of having White neighbors not speak to them (χ^2 (20, N=205) =41.98, p=.00). See Table 4. The couples also reported being stared at by White neighbors; the relationship of the families racial makeup and staring was significant (χ^2 (20, N=204) =45.80, p=.00). According to the respondent data, Black/White couples noted that they were stared at more often/frequently at a rate of 34.6% compared to same race couples at 9.8%. Physical confrontations with White neighbors were also significantly (χ^2 (10, N=203) =19.91, p=.03) related to the racial makeup of the couple: Black/White 12.4%; Hispanic/White 6.2%; Asian/White 5.6%; Multiracial/White 8.6% compared to same race couples 5%. See Table 3.

Table 3. Discrimination by White Neighbors by Racial Makeup of Couple

	Black/ White	Hispanic/ White	Asian/ White	White/ White	Same Race	Total
Not spoken to at all% within Racialmakeup of couples	58.7%	58.7%	83.3%	66.7%	70.7%	67.8%
Rarely spoken to% within racial makeup of couples	16.0%	6.3%	0%	25.0%	12.2%	13.2%
Occasionally spoken to% within racial makeup of couples	18.7%	18.8%	11.1%	5.6%	12.2%	13.7%
Often spoken to within racial makeup of couples	4.0%	0%	5.6%	2.8%	4.9%	4.4%
Always spoken to% within racial makeup of couples	2.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.0%
% within racial makeup of couples	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

No relationship was found between the racial makeup of couples and their experience of White neighbors making racial slurs (χ^2 (15, N=204) =20.75, p=.15) or destroying property (χ^2 (15, N=204)

=6.37, p=.97). The couples also reported that their children were allowed to play with the children of White neighbors regardless of the racial makeup of the family (χ^2 (15, N=154) =14.83, p=.46). Discrimination by White neighbors was unrelated to the time period era in which the relationship started: pre 1990's (χ^2 (18, N=9) =22.5, p=.21), compared to post 1990's, (χ^2 (65, N=74) =61.41, p=.21). Furthermore, the only area of the country that was correlated to racial makeup of couple and discrimination by White neighbors was the West. See Table 4.

Table 4. Chi-Square Tests of Discrimination by White Neighbors by Place/Currently Residing

Region that couple now lives		Value	df	Significance (2-sided)
Northeast	Pearson Chi-Square	5.49	3	.139
	N of Valid Cases	27		
South	Pearson Chi-Square	9.016	8	.341
	N of Valid Cases	65		
Midwest	Pearson Chi-Square	3.65	8	.887
	N of Valid Cases	30		
West	Pearson Chi-Square	26.16	10	.004*
	N of Valid Cases	75		

2) Discrimination by Non-White neighbors

Similar to the trends seen for White neighbors' reactions to interracial partners, couples reported a significant relationship between the family's racial makeup and being stared at by Non-White neighbors (χ^2 (20, N=197) =37.45, p=.01). Black/White couples experienced the most staring, 71.6%, followed by Hispanic/White, 56.2%, Multiracial/White, 55.9, Asian/White, 37.5 in contrast to same race couples, 32.5%.

No significant relationships were found between the couples' racial makeup and not being spoken to by non-White neighbors (χ^2 (15, N=197) =22.32, p=.10); racial slurs (χ^2 (15, N=198) =14.47, p=.49); property destroyed (χ^2 (10, N=197) =7.83, p=.65); children allowed to play together (χ^2 (10, N=150) =16.52, p=.09); or physical confrontations (χ^2 (10, N=198) =8.17, p=.61). If bi-racial couples married before the 1990's they were more likely to experience discrimination by their non-White neighbors (χ^2 (9, N=9) =17.44, p=.04); this did not hold true for couples married after 1990 (χ^2 (55, N=70) =44.03, p=.86). The only region that was significantly correlated with discrimination by non-White neighbors was the South. See Table 5.

Table 5. Chi-Square Tests of Discrimination by Non-White Neighbors by Place/Currently Residing

Region that couple now lives		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Northeast	Pearson Chi-Square			
	N of Valid Cases	1		
South	Pearson Chi-Square	6.00	2	.050*
	N of Valid Cases	6		
Midwest	Pearson Chi-Square	6.61	6	.358
	N of Valid Cases	7		
West	Pearson Chi-Square	56.57	56.57	.416
	N of Valid Cases	58		

3) Discrimination at work

Couples' experiences of discrimination in work promotions was significantly (χ^2 (25, N=206) =44.89, p=.01) related to the racial makeup of the couple: Black/White 9.3%; Hispanic/White 13.3%; Asian/White 5.6%; Multiracial/White 2.8%; compared to same race couples 7.9%. These numbers remained consistent regardless of when the couple married: before 1990 (χ^2 (12, N=30) =27.98, p=.00) or post 1990 (χ^2 (20, N=168) =36.39, p=.01). No significant relationships were found, though, between regions in which the couple resided;—any discrimination was equally distributed across the country.

4) Discrimination at work by white and non-white co-workers

Interestingly, no significant relationship was found between racial makeup of the couple and White co-workers (χ^2 (20, N=203) =27.01, p=.14). Nor was any significant relationship found between region in which the family resided and discrimination by White co-workers when the data was examined by region independently.

Couples reported a significant relationship between racial makeup and discrimination by non-White co-workers (χ^2 (20, N=202) =69.34, p=.00). 24.4% of Black/White couples; 40% of Hispanic/White couples; and 13.9 of Asian/White couples; compared to 25% of same race couples. This pattern held true of couples recently married (χ^2 (20, N=169) =61.13, p=.00), but not for those married earlier (before 2000). Additionally, more discrimination was experienced in the Western region of the U.S., specifically for Hispanic/White couples.

5) Discrimination in public places

Couples reported no significant relationship between service in public places (restaurants, hotels and stores) and their racial makeup as a couple (χ^2 (55, N=206) =65.15, p=.16). This held true for couples married before 2000, (χ^2 (24, N=31) =30.11, p=.18) and for those married post 2000 (χ^2 (55, N=172) =56.67, p=.41). Additionally, no relationships were observed between region in which the couple resided and discrimination by racial makeup of the couple in public places. Discrimination was equally

distributed across time and place.

7.2.4 What Cultural and Religious Activities Did Couples Change in Response to Having a Bi-racial Family? Was Time or Place Related to Changes?

Multiple cultural factors were examined to identify any changes that a couple made in response to being bi-racial. None of the cultural factors examined were significant. Changes were evenly distributed between partners, regardless of the couples racial makeup, in music (χ^2 (25, N=193) =24.19, p=.51); leisure activities (χ^2 (25, N=191) =24.35, p=.50); entertainment (χ^2 (25, N=191) =23.99, p=.52); food preferences (χ^2 (25, N=193) =12.80, p=.98); home décor (χ^2 (25, N=193) =19.65, p=.77); preferences in parenting practices (χ^2 (25, N=166) =16.57, p=.90); and ties to extended family (χ^2 (25, N=193) =17.15, p=.88). Furthermore, the data on religious preferences revealed that an equal percentage (about a third) of partners either changed their religious preferences toward their partners' and or changed their views toward the respondents' religious preference. These findings were unrelated to the race of the respondent or the race of the respondents' partner. No relationships were found between racial makeup of the couple and changing religion (χ^2 (20, N=165) =7.72, p=.99). This pattern was closely matched when asked about celebrating holidays. These distributions held constant across time and geography.

7.2.5 Did Being an Interracial Couple Impact the Quality of Life on Their Marriage, on Their Family and on Their Children; and in Time and Place?

1) How did the couples meet?

Couples were asked how they met at work, nightclub, introduced by friends, recreational activity, at school, at church, on the internet, or other. Where the couple met was unrelated to the racial makeup of the couple (χ^2 (35, N=205) =44.85, p=.12). This was consistent across time and place except for couples living in the West (χ^2 (35, N=79) =57.43, p=.01). Of couples in the West: Black/White most likely met at school (29.2%); Hispanic/White most likely met at work (50%); Asian/White most likely met on the internet (31.6%); Multiracial/White most likely met at school (25%) or were introduced by friends (25%); whereas, same race couples most likely met as "other" (38.5%).

2) What wedding ceremony did the couples have?

Couples were also asked about their wedding ceremony. The ceremony was related to the couples' racial makeup (χ^2 (20, N=202) =39.32, p=.01). A cross tabulation of time married and couples' racial makeup could not be performed because the number of couples married before 2000 was too small. See Table 6.

Table 6. Wedding Ceremony by Racial Makeup of the Couple

	Black/ White	Hispanic/ White	Asian/ White	Multiracial/ white	Same Race	Total
Church/ religious ceremony % within racial makeup of couples	53.4%	33.3%	21.6%	45.7%	43.9%	42.6%
Private ceremony at home % within racial makeup of couples	12.3%	6.7%	24.3%	2.9%	22.0%	22.0%
Civil ceremony % within racial makeup of couples	11.0%	26.7%	24.3%	5.7%	5.7%	13.4%
Other % within racial makeup of couples	9.6%	6.7%	21.6%	21.6%	21.6%	21.6%
Cohabitating % within racial makeup of couples	13.7%	26.7%	8.1%	8.1%	8.1%	8.1%
Total within racial makeup of couples	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3) How did the couples divide domestic labor?

Couples were asked about division of labor in their marriages: pay bills; house cleaning; cooking; car care; caring for the children; caring for seniors; making social engagements; shopping and yard care. Although many of the tasks fell within traditional roles (e.g., yard and car care identified as "men's work"), they were not distributed by the race of the respondent or the racial makeup of the couple. There was also general agreement between the respondents' expected roles and his/her partners' roles.

4) Who makes most of the decisions regarding money?

Given that in the U.S. society control of money may indicate power, the study asked explicitly about who controlled the family money. Our questions were framed to elicit answers by the race of the respondent and by the racial makeup of the couple. No significant relationship was found between the race of the respondent and money decisions (χ^2 (8, N=231) =14.07, p=.08); or between the racial makeup of the couple and who made money decisions (χ^2 (10, N=203) =15.11, p=.13). When examining money by the race of the respondent, the most common response (64.1%) was that they shared the decisions equally (Black, 60.8%; Hispanic, 51.1%; Asian, 72.2%; Multiracial, 66.7%; and White, 82.5%). When examining the data by the couples' racial makeup, the responses were very similar to those for the race of the respondent.

5) What was the families' response to the children?

No relationship was found between the racial makeup of the couple and the respondents' family response to the children (χ^2 (12, N=102) =10.31, p=.59). See Table 7. Similar patterns were found when asked about the partner's family. See Table 7.

Table 7. Respondents' Family Response to the Children by Racial Makeup of Couples

	Black/ White	Hispanic/ White	Asian/ White	Multiracial/ White	Same Race	Total
They accepted them as legitimate family members beginning % within racial makeup of couples	93.5%	100%	88.2%	85.7%	94.7%	92.2%
They accepted them as legitimate family members took time% within racial makeup of couples	4.3%	0%	11.8%	7.1%	0%	4.9%
They tolerate the children % within racial makeup of couples	2.2%	0%	0%	7.1%	0%	2.0%
They ostracized them % within racial makeup of couples	0%	0%	0%	0%	5.3%	1%
Total within racial makeup of couples	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

6) How difficult was it to raise children in an interracial family?

Interracial couples perceive their experience of raising multiracial children as more difficult; these results were significant (χ^2 (30, N=206) =62.68, p=.00). Responses of "somewhat" and "much more" difficult by percentage within racial makeup was for Black/White couples, 45.7%; for Hispanic/White couples, 28.6%; for Asian/White couples, 47.1%; and, for Multiracial/White couples, 49%. See Table 8.

Table 8. Difficulty of Raising Children in an Interracial Family by Racial Makeup of Couples

	Black/White	Hispanic/ White	Asian/ White	Multiracial/ White	Total
Much less difficult % within racial makeup of couples	2.2%	0%	0%	21.4%	4.5%
Somewhat less difficult % within racial makeup of couples	4.3%	0%	0%	0%	2.2%
About the same as other (non-interracial) couples% within racial makeup of couples	47.8%	71.4%	52.9%	28.6%	48.3%
Somewhat more difficult % within racial makeup of couples	43.5%	28.6%	47.1%	42.9%	42.7%
Much more difficult % within racial makeup of couples	2.2%	0%	0%	7.1%	2.2%
Total within racial makeup of couples	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Perceived difficulty of raising interracial children was explored in a one-way ANCOVA. Perceived difficulty varied, based on the region of the country in which the couple resided (South and West) and, it increased with time. See Figure 2.

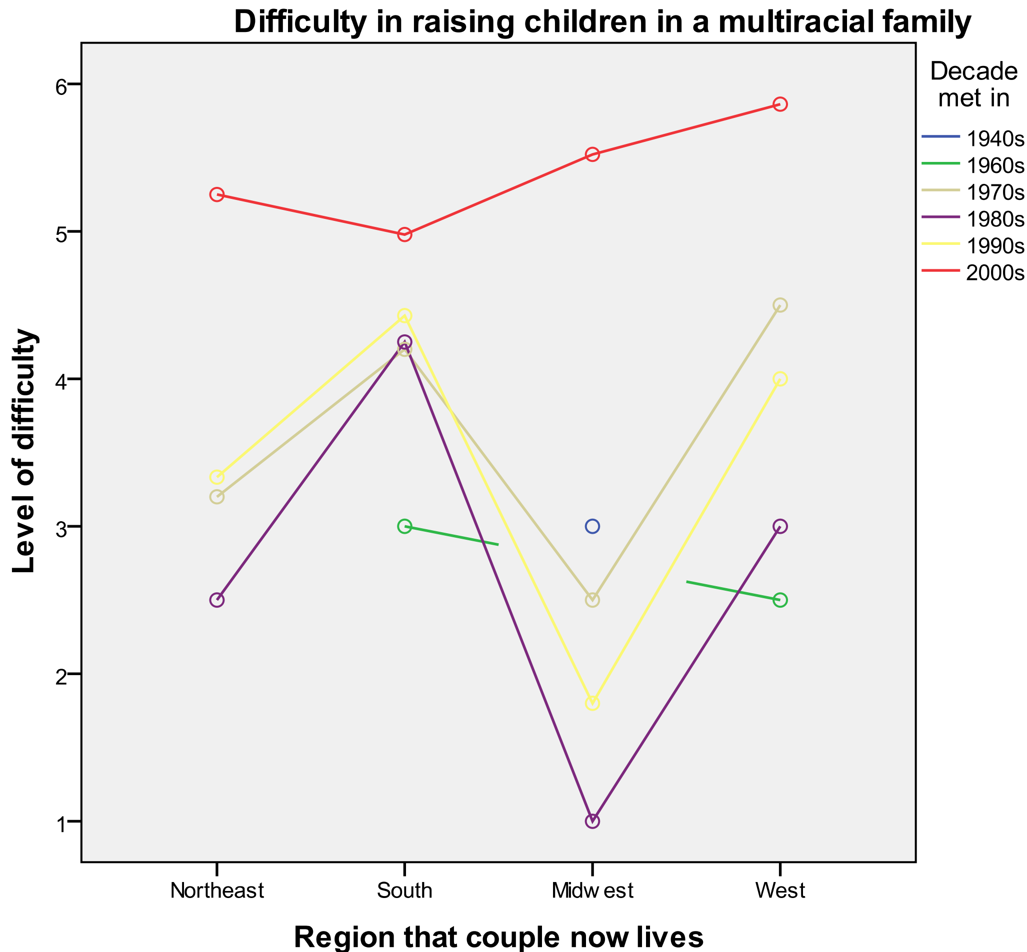

Figure 2. Multiracial Couples Perceived Difficulty in Raising Multiracial Children by Place and Time (One-Way Angove)

8. Experiences of Being Married

The survey also asked questions about the couples' experience of being married. Specifically, they were asked how happy their marriage/cohabitation is. Happiness was reported in Black/White couples at 88%; Hispanic/White couples at 100%; Asian/White couples at 89%; Multiracial/White couples at 91.7%; compared to same race couples at 70.7%. These figures were not significant (χ^2 (20, N=203) =26.03, p=.17). Couples were also asked "how difficult has it been to remain married". The responses were similar to the happiness question and were not significant (χ^2 (25, N=203) =30.64, p=.20). Finally, the respondents were asked: "If you had known all the difficulties facing you as a couple, would you have married/cohabitated?". The responses to this question were significantly related to the racial makeup of the couple (χ^2 (25, N=203) =41.99, p=.02). Regret was reported in Black/White couples at 9.3%; Hispanic/White couples at 0%; Asian/White couples at 5.6%; Multiracial/White couples at 5.6%; compared to same race couples at 15.4%. Same race couples expressed the most unhappiness and the most regret of all the couple-groups surveyed.

9. Discussion

The present study sheds light on the contemporary racial landscape, the complexity of race and the changing demographics that immigration brings. It is imminently clear that the new immigrants complicate, but do not replace the Black/White binary understanding of racial dynamics. Race is this country's most endearing wound, however there exists a presumption that a post-racial, beyond-race America will be one in which no one thinks about race any more, an America in which we all just see each other as individuals. While the present study illuminates the progress that has been made, it also highlights the fact that the Black/White binary is still the primary axis around how race relations function in this country.

This research study focused on five questions: (1) how did interracial couples begin their relationship; (2) how did the couples perceive support of their relationship by their parents, siblings and friends; (3) what discriminations did interracial families experience by White neighbors, by non-White neighbors, at work, by White co-workers, by non-White co-workers, and in public places; (4) what, if any, cultural and religious activities did they change in response to having a interracial family; and (5) how did being an interracial family impact the quality of life of the marriage, of the family, and of the children. Furthermore, did time (when they married), or place (geography) impact these five areas of inquiry.

There was a significant relationship between the racial makeup of couples and their experience of having White neighbors not speak to them and experiencing being stared at by White neighbors. Black/White couples noted that they were stared at more often compared to same race couples. Physical confrontations with White neighbors were also significantly related to the racial makeup of Black/White couples. These discriminations were unrelated to when the couple married, but more pronounced in the Western region of the U.S. Similar to the trends seen for White neighbors' reactions to interracial partners; couples reported a significant relationship between the family's racial makeup and being stared at by Non-White neighbors: Black/White couples experienced the most staring. This level of discrimination supports a similar study (Yankee, 2007) that reported White spouses with Black partners were more likely to report first hand experiences of racism than were White partners with non-Black minority partners.

Conversely, no relationship was found between the racial makeup of couples and their experience of White neighbors making racial slurs, or destroying property. Moreover, couples did not report discrimination in public places—either by recency of relationship or residence, and the division of domestic labor was consistent with traditional values and unrelated to racial makeup. Money (as an indicator of power) was equally controlled by husbands and wives unrelated to racial makeup.

Most concerning was that interracial couples perceive their experience of raising multiracial children as more difficult. Specifically, the couples reporting the most difficulty to the least were: Multiracial/White couples; Asian/White couples; and Black/White couples. Historically the most difficult region in the country, was the South the West; whereas couples married since 2000 are experiencing more difficulty in the West and least difficulty in the South. Interestingly enough however,

the couples also reported that their children were allowed to play with the children of White neighbors, regardless of the racial makeup of the family.

Black/White and Hispanic/White couples choose their partner for love. This relationship was independent of when the couple met or where. This is a particularly interesting finding, given that same race couples in this study expressed the most unhappiness and the most regret of all the couple-groups surveyed. Notably work discrimination by racial makeup of the couple was most reported by Hispanic/White couples—the discrimination was equally perceived by when the couple married and the region in which they reside. However, most discrimination was experienced in the Western region of the U.S., specifically for Hispanic/White couples that have recently married.

10. Limitations

The present findings need to be interpreted with caution, however. Snowball sampling poses serious limitations. The couples that responded to the survey are not representative of all interracial families in the United States. Responding couples could represent only those with a bias (share an attitude or belief that "threads" the sample together), are the most comfortable (experiencing the least racism-stress), or couples with the most resources (access to the internet, time to respond to a survey). Although an effort was made to move the survey across a diverse population (starting with 14 separate social network online communities) with an encouragement to "pass on" the survey link at will, we do not know if these methodological strategies were successful in gathering a diverse group of respondents. The results may only reflect the experiences of educated, social media savvy and socially-connected interracial couples. On the other hand, the sampling strategy allowed us to access a minority and historically oppressed population across the United States.

To further illuminate the experiences of multiracial families, future researchers might consider using a mixed-method approach that includes regional focus groups. Focus groups by facilitating a dialogue can get a more in-depth understanding of deeply personal experiences. The interactions between participants in a focus group can co-construct shared meaning on "issues which may not emerge from their interaction with the researchers alone" (Liamputtong, 2011, p. 4). Moreover, focus groups can provide insight into complicated topics when opinions are conditional, or when the area of concern relates to multifaceted behavior or motivation (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The present study offers a plethora of themes that could facilitate multiple rich focus group dialogues that would further elucidate the important findings from this study.

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