


8-1-2010

# Dating Preferences among African-American Female College Students: Attitudes about Appearance, Trust, and Interracial Relationships

Christopher McConnell Green  
Western Kentucky University, greencm@wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses>

 Part of the [Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), [Social Psychology and Interaction Commons](#), and the [Sociology of Culture Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Green, Christopher McConnell, "Dating Preferences among African-American Female College Students: Attitudes about Appearance, Trust, and Interracial Relationships" (2010). *Masters Theses & Specialist Projects*. Paper 198.  
<http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/198>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact [connie.foster@wku.edu](mailto:connie.foster@wku.edu).

DATING PREFERENCES AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE COLLEGE  
STUDENTS:  
ATTITUDES ABOUT APPEARANCE, TRUST, AND INTERRACIAL  
RELATIONSHIPS

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of Sociology  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Christopher McConnell Green

August, 2010

DATING PREFERENCES AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE COLLEGE  
STUDENTS:  
ATTITUDES ABOUT APPEARANCE, TRUST, AND INTERRACIAL  
RELATIONSHIPS

Date Recommended August 11, 2010

Joan Krenzin  
Director of Thesis

Amy C. Kull

Stephen B. Snow

Richard M. Bowen August 17, 2010  
Dean, Office of Graduate Studies and Research      Date

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Krenzin for being a wonderful and inspiring mentor to me, not just during my graduate training but also in the development of my ability to become a successful student and a successful person in life. I thank her for being so patient with me during the process of completing this project. I also would like to thank Dr. Steve Groce for his belief in my talents and ability to be successful in graduate level work. Dr. Groce has been one of the main sources of my desire to pursue graduate studies in the field of sociology. I also would like to pay a special acknowledgement to Dr. James Kanan, who gave me the confidence and determination to continue my pursuit towards completing my project when I had doubts about my motivation to complete this project. A special acknowledgement goes to my favorite graduate school classmate, Mary Moneta. Mary was persistent in reminding me that I needed to keep working on this project and that I could complete it. I also would like to thank my mother for her support. She was very motivational in my continued pursuit to complete this important project. I would also like to thank Dr. Krull for being willing to be my third committee member towards the end of completion for this project. She has always been so kind to me and always told me everything I needed to know about the field of sociology.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	vi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	6
Socialization.....	10
Double Consciousness.....	12
Looking Glass Self .....	12
Dramaturgy.....	14
Synthesis.....	18
CHAPTER III LITERATURE REVIEW.....	20
Physical Appearance.....	20
Attitudes towards Relationships.....	22
Interracial Relationships .....	25
CHAPTER IV RESEARCH METHODS.....	28
Informed Consent.....	28
Sample and Data Collection.....	29
Questions about Attitudes.....	30
Character Preferences and Interracial Dating.....	31
CHAPTER V ANALYSES.....	33

<b>Similarities and Differences on Preferences.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Patterns of Distrust.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Attitudes towards Interracial Relationships.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>CHAPTER VI CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>APPENDIX A GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>APPENDIX B INTERVIEW GUIDE.....</b>	<b>.69</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>74</b>

DATING PREFERENCES AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE COLLEGE  
STUDENTS:  
ATTITUDES ABOUT APPEARANCE, TRUST, AND INTERRACIAL  
RELATIONSHIPS

Christopher McConnell Green      August 2010      Pages 78

Directed By: Dr. Joan Krenzin, Dr. Steven Groce, Dr. Amy Krull

Department of Sociology      Western Kentucky University

In-depth interviews were conducted with African-American female college students ranging from freshmen to graduate level. Students were asked about their dating preferences for African-American men. The study investigated how physical appearance, trust, and attitudes about interracial relationships affected their dating selection. Symbolic interactionism and dramaturgy were the theories used within this study. This study found evidence that supports existing literature on attitudes of distrust among African-American females toward African-American males, with lying, physical aggression, and cheating as top reasons. Distrust based on the females' viewpoints began with listening to warnings from their mothers about men's behavior. This study, however, found that dating preferences among females interviewed did not recognize physical appearance, such as light or dark skin preference and body-frame preference, as a significant factor for date selection. This finding is in contrast to existing literature. Attitude differences between young African-American female college students and the older African-American female college students were found. Freshmen and sophomores

related more of listening to social-group attitudes on dating preferences whereas junior, senior, and graduate- level females relied on individual decision making on dating selection. Supporting the current existing literature on attitudes about interracial relationships, the majority of the women interviewed had negative attitudes toward interracial relationships.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Love relationships between African-American males and African-American females have been a major concern in American society for years. Research conducted by sociologists and social psychologists has given a variety of explanations and theories pertaining to problems in African-American love relationships in hopes of informing the African-American community of how to solve these problems. The problems scholars have identified are communication issues, economic competition, movies and TV overrepresenting problems of cheating and lying among African-Americans and consequences associated with the double consciousness (Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin 1990; Cazenave 1983; Du Bois; 1903; Franklin II 1984).

Social norms that hurt the self-esteem of African-American men are generally based on re-curring patterns. One pattern shows that a lot of African-American men are trying and failing, according to Western standards, at proving their manhood. The failure to follow these norms prevents some African-American men from fitting into the mainstream because they do not present themselves nor are viewed as the accepted type of men in Western culture (Dade and Sloan 2000; Demo and Hughes 1990; Dixon 1998). Some other African-American males live with the daily hassles of racism such as lack of job opportunities, life chances, and educational options. Most African-American males believe that being able to provide for their families and being strong and competitive achieves their manhood (Aboramph 1989). A disproportionate number of African-

American males feel that they have failed to achieve these goals; thus, they have low self-esteem and feel unable to fulfill the needs of African-American women (Chapman 1997).

Another important aspect of racism on African-American males is the disproportionate number of African-American males going to prison. Social commentators have believed that large numbers of African-American males go to prison or jail every year, due sometimes to the negative image of them portrayed by the media and other agents of socialization (Collins 2004; hooks 2004). Collins commented in 2004 that a lot of African-American men copy the behaviors and attitudes that they see in the media. This, as a result, causes a lot of African-American men to make life choices that lead them to prison and or killed (2004:55). Another social commentator, bell hooks believes that this media overrepresentation causes damage and mortification among large numbers of African-American males' self-esteem (2004). African-American male incarceration and perceived low self-esteem have been viewed as main causes for the reduction in eligible African-American males to date African-American women.

African-American women also face daily struggles of racism and sexism. African-American women go through the "double prejudice." Double prejudice consists of having to deal with being a nonwhite human being and being a woman at the same time (Dove 1998). Some African-American women have also internalized Eurocentric views of society. Some African-American women, according to research scholars, go through the same gender crisis as the African-American males. A lot of African-American females are told by friends, family, and the media that independence, competitiveness, and nonempathic attitudes towards others are the most important values in their lives (Chapman 1997; Hill 2001). Some social scientists have theorized that African-

American females realize that in order to fall in love, get married, and live happily ever after, they must contradict what their friends, family, and the media project to them by adopting female gender roles such as becoming submissive and overly nurturing and understanding that males have more control and authority over them (Franklin II 1984). This contradiction hurts African-American women's self esteem because some do not know what direction in life regarding dating relationships they want to follow. This confusion results in some African-American females like some women of other races to believing the idea that dating males with achievements in materialism will help enhance their self esteem and social status.

As mentioned before, however, this self esteem results in tough competition among African-American women with few African-American men around to date, due to imprisonment and some African-American men choosing to date outside the race (Aboramph 1989; Burgest and Goosby 1985; Hutchinson 1999). Damage to African-American women's self-esteem also comes from some African-American women who decide to stay single and never marry. This pattern stems from college-educated, African-American women setting very high mating standards for African-American men. This belief has proven to be dysfunctional for African-American women because, with black men in racial and gender crisis, some of them are simply unable to live up to the high mating standards because of external restraints that are out of their control (Chapman 1997).

Crises of African-American males and African-American females from racism and sexism have resulted in high rates of failure in relationships. The increase in the failures of African-American love relationships has resulted in African-American men and

women distrusting each other, competing against each other in the job market, and disliking each other as a whole (Burgess 1994; Burgest 1990; Cazenave 1983; Dade and Sloan 2000).

I believe at this point that three main research questions warrant farther investigating.

1. Do differences and similarities exist in dating preferences between freshman and sophomore African-American females and junior, senior and graduate - level African-American females?
2. Does perceived distrust among African-American females continue to exist?
3. What are the attitudes towards interracial dating among African-American females?

Attempts at answering these research questions will come from investigating responses from African-American female college students through in-depth interviews. The theoretical section will discuss the theories of symbolic interactionism. Theories from Charles Cooley (1902) and Erving Goffman (1957) provided my basis for discussion. I integrated symbolic interactionism theory with the socialization process, especially gender socialization. Social constructions theory was fused with socialization theory and symbolic interaction theory to explain how meanings of reality of African-American females may or may not have changed their attitudes toward dating preferences, perceived distrust for African-American males, and attitudes towards interracial relationships.

The literature review discusses what previous research on African-American male and female relationships has concluded. The literature review was divided into five sections. The first section expands the discussion on the different views of dating

preferences from the late 1980s to the late 1990s and dating preferences regarding interracial dating. The second section reviews the literature that discusses how physical appearance has caused dysfunction in African-American male and female relationships. The third section discusses the importance of African-American attitudes such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and early viewpoints of relationship preferences of African-American women and men. The fourth section addresses literature about “game playing” in African-American relationships and how it has impacted African-American male and female relationships. The last section discusses current relevant literature on interracial relationships. Understanding of interracial relationships allows the researcher to gain insight into what questions to ask in hopes of gaining insightful information regarding attitudes toward interracial relationships and how they play an effect on African-American relationships.

The methods section addresses the type of research approach I conducted and explain why I felt it was the best approach for this research. The results section informs the reader of my findings and whether or not there were significant answers to my research questions. The conclusion section discusses the implications of the research and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Some African-Americans tend to view themselves based on how others view them. This social appraisal, in turn, gives African-Americans either a positive or negative sense of self (hooks 2004). These reasons lead me to believe that symbolic interaction theory in sociology would be the theory of choice in this research. My emphasis within symbolic interaction theory will be dramaturgy; however, other concepts from symbolic interaction will also be discussed.

John P. Hewitt (1997) explains the basic concepts of symbolic interactionism starting with explaining the consequences of symbols. According to Hewitt (1997) symbols impact humans on three main ways. First symbols strongly affect the environment in which humans reside. Humans use symbols as a way to think about what is real and what is not real. Even if significant symbols are not present, humans can still process a reality based on thinking that the symbols will show and give meaning to their thoughts at a later time (1997:34). Hewitt quotes a childhood memory that gives this research study purpose.

I can likewise remember scenes from my childhood and anticipate events that have not yet occurred but which will. In other words, human beings can respond to things that are spatially and temporally distant because they can invoke the symbols for these things. In doing so, they quite literally expand their world so that it encompasses whatever they can imagine.

Literature on African-American relationships argued that a lot of parents, especially African-American mothers who have endured painful memories in past relationships give

their daughters warnings not to trust men and to take care of themselves (Bugress 1994; Chapman 1997; Constantine and Blackmon 2002).

The second key factor in the influence of symbols, according to Hewitt, is that symbols cause behavioral dispositions and attitudes of one person to be re-created in another person. Relationship preferences have been created in part by the use of the second key fact. When people are socializing and looking for a potential dating partner, often one of the people will notice a male or female with a physical appearance that is deemed very attractive. The person will say a phrase that the group recognizes, and the phrase symbolizes something that has a common understanding for the group. On a larger scale, groups will develop attitudes relating to dating preferences for the opposite sex. One of the most frequently used attitudes made from dating symbols relates to physical appearance (Bolton 1958; Cash and Duncan 1984).

The third key influence of symbols on humans, according to Hewitt (1997), is that symbols allow people to be part of the environment to which they respond (1997: 34). Humans are able to use symbols that assist them in becoming accepted in their surroundings. People use traffic signals and signs to help them co-exist successfully with other people driving from place A to place B. When people are looking for a relationship; symbols such as appearance, presentation of self, and gestures of communication are used in hopes of being attractive to the opposite sex (Hill 2002). Dating norms are highly influenced by symbols learned from a person's social group. Members of a person's social group inform the person about what is deemed attractive to the opposite sex and what is deemed unattractive (Hare and Hare 1992; Porter and Bronzaft 1995; Sprecher 1998).

Another important basic concept in symbolic interactionism is the understanding of objects. Hewitt (1997) argued that objects serve as both created human activity and as goals that have two important consequences. The first suggests that people live in a world of objects, not of things or stimuli (1997: 40). The second suggests that conduct is orientated toward goals and purposes (1997:40). This means that people construct a social reality not merely based on physical things but on a combination of objects with defining meanings. People associate their actions towards specific goals based on social realities made and believed from combinations of objects. Literature on African-American relationships has argued that distrust stemming from miscommunication, possessiveness, and negative perceptions have led to increased failure in African-American relationships (Burgest 1990). Dating relationships, marriages, and love affairs are examples of objects; thus, when African-American men and women have negative experiences from the mentioned objects on a consist basis, it is possible to suggest that some African-American women would begin to believe that a lot of good African-American men are difficult to find (Dade and Sloan 2000; Franklin II 1984; Hill 2001).

Hewitt (1997) also argues that the meaning of social acts has importance regarding symbolic interactionism. When a person interacts with someone else either with language or a gesture, the person makes a name for it and, thus, a goal to achieve in response to the communication (1997:45). When people are looking for dating relationships, men and women engage in constant responses to communication through social acts. These social acts occur based on the impulse or the perceptions by each person (1997:45). Attitudes in dating are highly influenced by exchanges of social acts. Both men and women have expectations of select social acts to be done in order to



strengthen dating relationships. When certain social acts are viewed as unfavorable, this increases the likelihood that dating relationships could come to an end. Interpreting other people's acts is the key to social interaction and especially in dating relationships (Hughes and Demo 1989; Jacobs 1999; Ross 1997).

Hewitt (1997) notes that another important basic concept of symbolic interactionism is the understanding of various roles. Hewitt says that roles help define three important things for people in everyday life. This first explains that roles help establish a form of structure (1997:59). People know from definitions of the situation who is around and what may happen and organize their situations for performing various roles. When it comes to dating relationships, men and women on a date or spending time with significant others organize their situations and their attitudes in order to help them perform the specific roles of both the preferred attitude and the behavior for their mates (Wilson and Constantine 1999).

The second reason for the importance of roles is the assistance of organizing a combination of ideas and principles people use to engage in correct behaviors to match a situation (Hewitt 1997). Men and women in dating relationships organize behaviors that they feel are most preferred by their potential partners, which will, in turn, will make them attractive to the opposite sex. A lot of men believe that displaying a tough-guy role with a muscular build will make them more attractive in the presence of a female (Cash and Duncan 1984) whereas some women take on various roles based on dressing in certain outfits.

The third factor in the understanding of roles suggests that roles are resources that people in situations use to conduct their activities (Hewitt 1997). People use what they

know about current roles or roles of other situations to help increase their ability to achieve specific goals. Literature on African-American relationships has argued that mothers of African-American women have stressed the need to take on additional roles when they are approached by African-American men. These additional roles include a mindset of distrust and warnings to keep in mind in hopes of avoiding being emotionally hurt in future relationships (Chapman 1997).

### **Socialization**

Brim and Wheeler (1966) wrote a two essay book that gives a good explanation about the process of socialization. In the first essay Brim defined socialization as the process through which people acquire knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less members of society (1966:3). Brim argues that two dimensions are used when a person acquires the culture of groups through socialization. The first suggests that people learn and understand specific statuses within their society. This understanding helps people learn the roles of these statuses and behaviors and values to help identify who they are among society. This understanding also helps people meet other people with similar statuses and roles to participate in select groups so they can further their chances of being productive members of their society.

Brim (Brim and Wheeler 1966) further argues that what is learned during the process of socialization throughout the life cycle is engagement through interpersonal relationships. Each person has a number of individuals in his or her life that have a big influence in his or her life (1966:8). Men and Women have interpersonal relations with important people who will have an impact on their decisions about dating in some form (Hunter and Davis 1994). As men and women grow into new social environments, they

may engage in interpersonal interaction with their preferred social groups and learn about different dating preferences from their groups (Sprecher 1998). This research asked questions about how much influence parents and friends had on African-American females' preferences in dating.

Stanton Wheeler (Brim and Wheeler 1966) argued in part two of the book on socialization after childhood that socialization is not just occurring within the family and personal context but also within the large social organizations. Wheeler notes that when people move to a new interpersonal setting, a conflict occurs in whether the person can meet the demands and follow the norms of the setting (1966:60). This normally occurs when a person desires to become acceptable to a new social organization. This, in turn, causes the person to learn new norms, values, and beliefs within the social group of which he or she desires to be a part. The learning of the specific new norms, values, and beliefs is a form of training and education, which can assist the person in being accepted into the desired social organization. This process Wheeler referred to as developmental socialization (Brim and Wheeler 1966: 68). The African-American females were asked whether or not dating preference was higher for men who belong to a fraternity or engaged in behaviors that followed specific social group codes of conduct (fancy cars, proper English, etc). Four of the subjects interviewed belong to sororities. This offered the chance to discover insight into how attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors on dating preferences could have been influenced by the process of socialization stemming from formal organizations.

### **Double Consciousness**

In *The Souls of Black Folk* Du Bois (1903) argued that African-Americans constantly feel that they are under endless self-evaluation based on how others see and think about them. This according to Du Bois creates a constant self-esteem battle of desiring to be accepted as an American while at the same time dealing with the horrible realities of prejudice and racism from being black(1903: 2-5). This theory suggests that African-Americans are more likely to feel a sense of mortification and low self-esteem, which in turn has caused serious challenges to successful black relationships (Blake and Darling 2000; Broman, Neighbors, and Jackson 1988; hooks 2004; Hughes and Demo 1989; Hunter and Davis 1994; Mizell 1999). Based on this theory along with Brim and Wheeler's (1966), questions were asked by the interviewer to the African-American female respondents concerning attitudes about problems with African-American men, African-American relationships, and how relationships could improve. African-American men and women struggle to understand which norms, values, and beliefs to follow based on this double consciousness. Some African-American men and women feel that living the norms of black pride would solve the issue of double consciousness whereas some African-Americans feel that living the norms and beliefs of being an American give the best chance at a successful life in society and relationships (Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin 1990; Constantine and Blackmon 2002).

### **Looking Glass Self**

Charles Horton Cooley (1902) devised a concept explaining how actors are constantly thinking about how the audience thinks of their performances. There are three components to the looking glass concept. Cooley (1902) argues that actors first think

about how others think of them. Second, actors perceive judgments of their performances and appearances. The third part is the self-feeling of the actor based on how the actor thinks the audience rated the performance. If the actor believes the audience enjoyed the performance, the actor will continue the same performance with a positive view of himself or herself. If the actor perceives the review as negative, impression management is used to improve the performance until the audience accepts it. Cooley addresses this notion as follows: "A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearances to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification". (Cooley 1902)

Most African-Americans imagine their appearances as a daily struggle in the face of whites because of the constant threat of racism and prejudice. Some African-Americans make assumptions of how whites treat them based on the color of their skin by thinking that all whites can not be trusted (Demo and Hughes 1990). Some African-American males go through a mortification-based self-feeling due to failed efforts in achieving manhood and being able to acquire good employment (Franklin II 1984). Some African-American females feel that they must succeed at the highest levels possible in life to achieve the positive self-feeling. These levels include education as in earning not just a bachelor's degree but earning master's and doctor's degrees (King 1999). Attitude is another level. Some African-American women feel pride is achieved only when they engage in extreme assertive attitudes while engaging in social interaction (Smith, Burlew, and Lundgren 1991). Employment is another level. Some African-American women feel

that, with their advanced degrees, avoiding mortification feelings is achieved by earning high-paying positions in the employment field (Porter and Bronzaft (1995).

Many college-educated African-American women go through either mortification or a positive self-feeling. The positive self-feelings stem from being independent and doing everything on their own, without the services of the African-American male (Collins 2004). On the other hand, some African-American women go through mortification because they feel that finding a good African-American male is close to impossible due to high rates of African-American men going to jail, fewer African-American men going to college, and fewer African-American men finding and securing good jobs (Asante 1998). Many African-American college-educated women are left with a choice, either stay single or have relationships with African-American men who do not have the same educational and economic prestige as they.

### **Dramaturgy**

Dramaturgy argues that the self is not just an actor in the social theatre but a product of dramatic interaction between actor and audience (Goffman 1967; Manning 1992). Everyday life is a series of performances. People put on different performances depending on the type of person with whom they are interacting. The most important sociological theorist in the dramaturgical perspective is Erving Goffman.

Goffman (1957) argued that people as actors put on various presentations of self in order to receive acceptance from the audiences. Actors also desire to control the audience in hopes of having everything going in their favor. When performances are successful, actors will engage in the same performance over and over until there is an audience that dislikes the performance. Goffman (1967) talked about how people go through rituals as

they engage in face-to-face behavior. Actors are continuously trying to maintain a positive projection of self in front of the people to whom they are speaking.

Goffman (1957) argues that actors have two types of stage performances in which the self engages. The front stage represents people's ideal self. These kinds of performances are projections of people in the way they want the audience to see them. People construct masks to use in order to manipulate other people's perceptions of themselves. The back stage is the true representation of self. The audience never knows the back stage because individuals hold secret behaviors and attitudes which, if the audience were to discover this kind of interaction, could cause the audience to view the actor differently. This new and different reaction could give the actor a sense of mortification in her or his social interactions.

African-American relationships, like most relationships in general, require the use of front-stage and back-stage performance. People in general when going on a date will project a front-stage performance in hopes of gaining the other person's approval for a relationship. These performances will include the props of dress, language, posture, paralanguage, eye contact, and adjustment of presentation depending on how the audience views them. The important point is that most people in most situations of front-stage interaction will not reveal their true selves. After the relationship is successful to a certain extent, the actor may feel comfortable enough to allow the back stage to come into the picture.

When actors are able to succeed in their performances, the goal of personal gain is accomplished. The new goal of the actors at this point is to protect their social situations (Manning 1992). Sometimes actors lose control of their social situations when the

audience disapproves of the actors' actions, whether they are verbal or physical. The actor engages in what is called impression management to win back the audience. People will change their image by either changing their appearance, values, norms, belief systems, or lifestyles in hopes of winning back the audience.

Some African-American males learned through Eurocentric norms that a muscular appearance, a dominating attitude, an overconfident sense of self, and possession of money and property as front stage performances will win over the audience and the desire of some African-American females (Wade 2003). Front stage performances for some African-American females stem from peer-group norms of being independent, being assertive, and possessing overconfident attitudes (Wilson and Constantine 1999). The back stage for some African-American males stems from constant anxiety coming from both the white and black communities. Anxiety related to the white community has some African-American males thinking about a back stage of fear of being a threat if the African-American male is too strong and dominant. Thus, some African-American males project doubt in their ability to be the strong African-American male an African-American woman desires in a relationship (Cazenave 1983).

Back-stage performances for some African-American females stem from a very difficult decision. Some African-American females project back stage of either staying single because of the limited number of eligible African-American males or by selecting an African-American male that more than likely will have a lower social status and educational prestige (Franklin II 1984; Porter and Bronzaft 1995).

Some actors in society have an ascribed or achieved status that gives the audience a negative view of them (Goffman 1963). The negative qualities of the actor can be



physical or mental. When the audience knows about these negative characteristics, the actors have what is called a stigma attached to them. Stigmas are characteristics of a person that are viewed negatively by the audience. There are two kinds of stigmas. The discredited stigmas are those characteristics of people that are known by the audience. Examples of discredited stigmas are people with a lost limb, people of color, and people with deformed facial features. The other type of stigma is a discreditable stigma.

Discreditable stigmas are those characteristics not known by the audience or perceived by them (Manning 1992). An example of a discreditable stigma is homosexual individuals who understand that, if their sexuality is discovered by the people in the workplace, the actor could lose his or her job or suffer avoidance. Race can be viewed as a discredited stigma. Dealing with racism associated with the discredited stigma attached is not the only problem with which some people deal. Some females who have dark brown skin find it difficult to get along with African-American females with lighter skin because many African-American males find lighter-skinned African-American females more desirable (Hughes and Hertel 1990; Ross 1997). Questions were asked of the subjects to see if the literature is supported. Questions were also asked of the female subjects to see if they also have a skin tone preference in dating characteristics.

Many African-American men decide to put on a performance resembling the hip-hop culture in hopes of gaining a love relationship (Collins 2004; hooks 2004). Some African-Americans who do not use ebonics could be given a discredited stigma by the black communities. Broman, Neighbors, and Jackson (1988) found that racial-group identification for blacks required recognition of using ebonics for communication. Blacks who were found not to use ebonics were found to be negatively labeled or not part

of the black community. The African-American community might disassociate themselves from the African-Americans who do not engage in the favorable performances. This internalization may cause great difficulty in finding a meaningful African-American relationship.

### **Synthesis**

African-Americans like other people in society internalize the norms, values, and belief systems of society by engaging in the socialization process, which determines the degree to which social interaction and interpersonal relationships occurs. Some African-Americans in some definitions of the situation internalize the meanings and symbols to engage in social interaction in hopes of gaining pleasure-based results and avoiding painful results (Burgest 1990). Like most people in general African-Americans who receive acceptable responses from their chosen presentation of self will more than likely continue with the performance as long as it continues to increase or maintain their pride. When the audience negatively views their performance, African-Americans like most people in general will make adjustments, modifications, or changes in their front stage interaction to avoid a self-feeling of mortification (Cooley 1902).

African-American men and women also feel that they have to manage two parts of selves. The first is learning norms, values, and beliefs from significant others and formal social organizations. This gives them the chance to be successful members of society (Brim and Wheeler 1966; Du Bois 1903). The other part is having to endure prejudice and racism for being African-American. This conflict makes some African-Americans feel a serious sense of mortification with the desire to end it through various social acts to gain approval (Hewitt 1997; Hutchinson 1999). This, in turn, suggests that African-

American men and women have attitudes of distrust and negative attitudes toward successful black relationships. Questions asked to the subjects were based on the theories discussed from this chapter.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The selection criteria for African-Americans in pursuing a love relationship vary to a certain degree. Just as most relationships in general, African-Americans desire mates that have good self-esteem, a good job, a good personality, and a good presentation of self (Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, and Larsen 2001). Racism, materialism, and presentation of self have played huge influences on the attitudes among African-Americans in relationships.

The review of the past literature on African-American relationships argues that mate selection is based on the socialization effects on physical appearance, attitudes toward themselves and others, and the amount of materialistic possessions one owns. The review also addresses the preferences regarding selection of African-American men and women who choose to pursue interracial relationships and marriages.

#### **Physical Appearance**

Most human beings in general feel that body image is very important in not only self-esteem but in determining whether finding mates will be easy or difficult (Thompson and Keith 2001). African-American mate selection is based on social constraints such as racism due to the internalization of the socialization process through the years. African-American mate selection has a strong historical reference behind it. Ross (1997) argued that the social institution of slavery played a huge part in the division of social statuses among the African-American slaves. Lighter-skinned African slaves were given better

social status and privileges than the darker- skinned slaves. The belief system of lighter is better was internalized by both whites and blacks as the years went on.

As more research on African-American mate selection was conducted, other scholars discovered the same patterns of the internalization of the preference of lighter-skinned African-Americans in relationships. Lighter-skinned African-Americans enjoy better socioeconomic status and have social advantages over dark-skinned African-Americans. African-American men in general, based on the literature, have been socially conditioned to believe that light-skinned people represent high achieved social mobility (Cash and Duncun 1984; Hill 2002; Hughes and Hurtel 1990; Wade 2003). The presumed high achieved status makes the lighter-skinned African-American female more desirable to the African-American men that were used in the interviews and surveys of the past research. Some African-American males, like most males in Western society, have internalized the media's definition of the desirable female. These characteristics include light-skinned females with skinny bodies who enjoy working out and are willing to submit to their gender roles of having the male be in charge and being dependent on the male (Collins 2004; hooks 2000).

Some African-American males--who in constant pursuit of achieving their manhood, good self-esteem, and a woman's desire--internalize the generalized-other phase and copy the clothing styles, appearance, and language of African-American males seen in the media, especially music videos (hooks 2004). Some African-American males believe that having big muscles and a big body are important, not just for winning the affection of African-American females but also to achieve good social statuses among competitive males (Broman, Neighbors, and Jackson 1988). African-American women have both

similar and different dimensions of perceived desirable physical appearance. What is similar in both African-American males and females is the pattern of self-esteem. Like most women physical appearance is important for dating potential, and they must also develop self-esteem (Smith, Burlew, and Lundgren 1991). Another pattern of similarity in the literature is that some African-American females express strong concern with body image and presentation of self of African-American males. Some African-American females view African-American males with big muscles and an athletic physique as more desirable than African-American males who are less active (Wade 2003).

Another similar pattern of self-esteem-based traits in both African-American males and females is the presentation of self. Hutchinson (1999) showed in her interviews with African-American women who were engaged in the night club setting that a lot of African-American women are attracted to African-American males who wear expensive clothing such as Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger. However, the author discovered that the women interviewed admitted to having low self-esteem and pursued the materialistic men in hopes of enhancing their own social status and self-esteem among the other African-American women. There are differences in the preferences in mate selection among African-American women from African-American men. The differences stem from the socially conditioned attitudes among African-American females regarding relationships (Cazenave 1983; Dixon 1998).

### **Attitudes toward Relationships**

The literature on African-American relationships shows an important pattern regarding attitudes of African-American women. Gender and media have socialized many African-American women to be socially androgynous (Collins 2004; Franklin II

1984; hooks 2000). Many African-American women learn through primary socialization to be both nurturing and dominant. Some African-American women go through a socialization process of believing in the use of aggression to get their way and to have authority over both women and men. One of the key patterns in the conflict between African-American men and women is that many women are socially conditioned to a belief that African-American men will not be around to care for them; thus, they can not be trusted (Howard and Evans 2000).

Research on African-American men shows that African-American men are killed or sent to jail for long periods of time at higher rates than are white males (Chapman 1997). Another negative assumption given to many African-American women is the media's image of the African-American male. Many African-American men shown on the news and on TV are displayed as being dirty, being locked up, using bad language, and displaying negative attitudes (hooks 2004). Although the media presents a truth about some African-American males, this causes some African-American women to either have negative attitudes toward African-American men or to feel that they are entitled to relationships with men who have a lot of money and wealth (Collins 2004). Primary socialization has told many African-American women that they must take care of themselves because they are unlikely to find an African-American male who will take care of them (Franklin II 1984).

The African-American females who live with this belief system are faced with a very difficult decision later in life. Too many African-American female professionals discover that the number of eligible African-American men is very small. Porter and Bronzaft (1995: 164) sampled 70 unmarried African-American female students between

the ages of 17 and 25. The subjects were asked to complete the perceptions of a dating questionnaire. Porter and Bronzaft learn how the women felt about whom they were dating and their attitudes toward black men. The researchers discovered that the women felt they either have to choose to marry an African-American male who has a lower socioeconomic status (only a high school education or less) or just stay single. This was due to the belief that black men were not acquiring the same educational achievement as they. The past literature shows that two attitude patterns cause this. The first attitude pattern stems from gender socialization. African-American males and females start to dislike each other because of having to compete in the job market. Dixon (1998) and Mizell (1999) found that African-American men in their attempt to achieve manhood feel that they have to be both aggressive toward and the breadwinner for the African-American women. What has been happening is that discrimination has constrained a lot of African-American men from having high-paying jobs to support the African-American women and their families. The effects of the discrimination in return cause some African-American men not only to have low self-esteem severe enough to resort to deviance but also to label themselves as unattractive to the African-American female. This attitude causes many African-American females to remain single (Dade and Sloan 2000).

The second attitude pattern comes from the submission trait of female socialization. Dade and Sloan 2000; Dixon (1998); King (1999) found that though more African-American females get college degrees and become professional than do African-American men, some realize the desire to fall in love and have a relationship and potential marriage with an African-American male. However, based from findings in Dixon's research on large percentages of African-American men not getting college



degrees; many African-American females feel that lower-status African-American men are the only choices for a relationship.

Some African-American female professionals have problems with relationships due to having set very high standards. Some of the standards include having the same socioeconomic status, same educational success, and the same presentation of self (Ross 1997; Chapman 1997).

### **Interracial Relationships**

A final difference in my research was an attempt to show how much influence interracial dating has on the selection process of African-American-female college students. Most of the literature on African-American relationships was conducted from 10 to over 20 years ago. Because of a strong influence of interracial dating in American society, a research update is needed to see if there have been changes in the preferences among African-American women within African-American relationships. The majority of the literature discussing interracial dating stems from interracial marriages. This paper provides possible reasons why African-American men and women choose to engage in interracial dating.

Lewis, Yancy, and Bletzer (1997) conducted research on interracial relationships and found that the majority of interracial marriages and interracial relationships come about through what is called homogeny. Homogeny is defined as people basing their dating preferences on people who have the same characteristics as they. Lewis, Yancy and Bletzer (1997) also found in their research that 70 percent of the subjects believed that common interests and mutual physical attraction were more important than simply looking at the race of the person when it came to deciding to begin an interracial

relationship. People with extended interracial dating history tend to identify sexual attractiveness and good character and goals to people of other races as most important (Kalmijn 1993). These findings are important to explore as questions. During the interview I asked the participants, if they were to begin interracial dating, what qualities they would consider to be important

Research literature on interracial relationships and marriages has also explored the attitudes and perceptions of the people in the relationship for reasons for starting the relationships and ways of handling feedback from society. Research findings have suggested that many interracial relationships begin with the purpose of increasing social status and social recognition (Foeman and Nance 1999; Yancy and Yancy 1997; Zebroski 1999). These research findings have led to the development of a concept called status hypergamy. This means that people will cross racial boundaries with the purpose of achieving racial social prestige. Many people, not all, will choose to start an interracial relationship if the person that is of a different race has a high social-class status compared to their own.

Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1990) conducted research on trends on African-American interracial marriage from a social structural context and found that African-American men marry outside their race more frequently than do African-American women. This also points out how and why distrust between African-American men and African-American women plays a role in their decision to date interracially.

The other focus in research on interracial dating has been on how couples react to social feedback about their public and open relationship. One factor explaining how interracial couples deal with outside feedback is attitudes from within the family.

St. Jean (1998) conducted research on viewpoints on interracial dating couples and found that both partners experience a lot of pressure from their families in two forms. This stems from the physical appearance and skin-color appearance and presentation. Due to differences in color, families are concerned about increased negative attention the couple will face as they go out in public. Another concern is, if the couples have children, the struggle the children will go through.

The second part stems from private context. This means that a lot of interracial couples decide to keep their relationship hidden from the social audience and from their families. St. Jean (1998) also argued that African-Americans are more supportive of interracial relations than are whites. However, Yancey published research on how alienation of African-Americans relates to social-dominance orientation (2009). Yancey found that African-American females have the most dislike for interracial unions. Yancey also found that African-Americans are least desired for an interracial relationship and were not desiring interracial relationships with white Europeans. This research finding challenges previous research that suggested that overall African-Americans desired and accepted interracial unions (Jean 1998; Mosley, Diawara, Taylor, and Austin 1998). Questions on interracial relationships for this research focused on family attitudes of African-American female college students to see whether they support the literature on relations among African-American families and African-American college women and what attitudes they hold about interracial relationships.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

In the search to discover what characteristics African-American females desire in a love relationship, methodological approaches become one of the most important factors. My primary research approach in the beginning was quantitative survey research. I discovered, however, that using surveys might not allow me to gather valuable in-depth information from African-American females. I am interested in gathering information that would obtain emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Gathering a record of these would allow me to match desired qualities with my theoretical approach. This matching created meanings, which, in turn, helped me gain a better understanding of what attributes African-American females desire in love relationships, why they desire them, and their viewpoints on African-American relationships and interracial relationships. The decision was made to conduct in-depth interviews of African-American women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four enrolled in a four-year university.

#### **Informed Consent**

Participation was conditional on the basis of each participant signing a consent form that shows that she were asked questions regarding her personal love relationships. The consent form also told each participant that she could refuse to answer any question and terminate the interview at any time. Every participant was assured confidentiality by not having her name included in any of the information asked or written. Pseudonyms were

used to help identify each participant. Age, social class, and other demographic characteristics can be found in Appendix A.

### **Sample and Data Collection**

The sample of eighteen participants was drawn from a college campus in Kentucky. The college campus in Kentucky has a majority of white students, consisting of 83.3 percent of the total student enrollment, and a small percentage of African-American students, which consists of 8.3 percent of total student enrollment. One group of participants was gathered randomly by asking professors permission to talk about the need for participations in the study in their African-American-experience courses. Website flyers were also created on facebook asking for interested participants to be interviewed. The majority of participants who expressed interest in being interviewed came from responses emailed to my facebook account.

The sample of willing participants turned out to be mostly older students but had a few participants with levels of freshman and sophomores (See Appendix A for details). This procedure helped discover possible differences in view between students who are starting the college experience and students who have knowledge and experience of dating in the college setting.

The interview guide is divided into four sections. The first section asks the participants about themselves in general. These general questions relate to preference of clothing, favorite type of music, socioeconomic status, the type of socialization of both her and her parents, and the type of religion she practices. Other general questions center on her peer socialization. Questions on her peer socialization focus on the type of friends with whom she enjoys associating. She was asked questions regarding how much

influence her friends and peers have on her in deciding whom she should be dating. Self-esteem questions were also asked of the participants to get a feeling for how they view themselves in society and their views of men in society.

The second section of the interview consists of questions regarding how important physical appearance is in mate selection. Hutchinson (1999) argued that many African-American females are attracted to African-American men when they show the appearance of having money and wearing expensive clothing, wearing gold or silver, having a muscular build, and being tall in height. Questions on this section asks the participants what they deem as attractive regarding presentation of self in African-American males. Ross (1997), found that some African-American females view skin tone as an important factor in mate selection. Questions regarding skin tone were asked of the participants. The questions asked in this section allowed the researcher to make pattern connections between media and peer socialization regarding their roles in the mate selection by African-American females.

### **Questions Regarding Attitudes**

The third section of the interview asks participants about their attitudes regarding mate selection and the characteristics favorable in a love relationship. This section talks basically about whether the participant structures her selection around whether the attitudes and behaviors used by a mate could strengthen the relationship or damage it. Participants were asked the kinds of attitudes of the mate they prefer to date. Do they prefer to date men who display an attitude of aggression, control, and dominance as argued by Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin (1990)?

### **Character Preferences and Interracial Dating**

Franklin II (1984) argued that some African-American women are conditioned to believe that most African-American males will not be there for them so they will have to take care of themselves, and they therefore, distrust men. Questions were asked of the subjects about their relationship history in order to determine patterns of how African-American women in college construct their relationship-selection scale. Questions were also asked to see whether African-American females prefer African-American men that believe in family values, strong religious affiliation, cooperation, and support for their race. These questions originate from research that studied black pride of African-American males and how important it is to African-American females in mate selection (Broman, Neighbors, and Jackson 1988; Constantine and Blackmon 2002; Demo and Hughes 1990).

The fourth section of the interview asked participants about whether they think there are problems with African-American relationships. These questions stem from the articles of Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin (1999) and Chapman (1997) who found that both African-American males and females have distrust for each other due to intense competition for jobs, an education, income, and high expectations for relationships. The researcher asked participants their attitudes and beliefs centering on how and why some African-Americans decide to date interracially.

Responses from the African-American female participants can be highly affected by the fact that the interviewer was an African-American male. Although this reasoning was not probed by the interviewer, some of the answers given for the interview were probed by the interviewer in effort to gather more information for the reasons for their

viewpoints and decisions. There is always a possibility that desirability and level of openness could be different if the interviewer were also an African-American female or a person of a different race. However, before interviews began, the participants were told that doing this interview would be their chance to have their voice heard about an issue that affects a lot of African-Americans every day and this research could lead to answers that could raise awareness on the need to end a difficult situation in relationships.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **ANALYSES**

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using a transcription machine. Participants consisted of two freshmen, one sophomore, three juniors, three seniors, and four graduate students. This chapter is divided into three sections. This first section will discuss the first research question for this study which looks at differences and similarities between class levels among the college African-American females. The second section will discuss the findings regarding the second research question which focused on whether or not perceived distrust among African-American females towards African-American men continues to exist. The final section of analyses will focus on the attitudes the African-American female students had toward interracial relationships.

#### **Similarities and Differences on Preferences**

Similarities on general demographics included the fact that the majority of the mothers of the students have educational achievement levels beyond high school. Six out of the thirteen moms had college degrees. Eight out of the thirteen subjects used for the analyses has had three or more dating relationships thus far in their life at the time of being interviewed. Another similarity was that ten out of the thirteen interviewees used for analyses responded that they were practicing Baptist Christians. Looking at both Cooley's (1902) theory and Brim's (Brim and Wheeler 1966) theory on socialization, it was important to ask questions regarding self-appraisals and how much group attitudes affected how they looked at relationships. All of the respondents commented that

personality is what they liked about themselves; and, if they could change anything about themselves, it would be their tendency to overreact on some things or level of confidence.

Sherry, a senior explained it this way:

People say I am not grateful and have a bad attitude. But, I feel no one is perfect, but I guess that's what I would change about myself, but in truth it's a question I really don't like to answer. (Sherry)

Sherry's viewpoints showed evidence that supports Brim's (Brim and Wheeler 1966) view on socialization in which individuals who are very close to a person or persons have the most impact on a person's socialization to become productive members of society.

One of the influences passed on from parents to the females was the importance of religion. Sherry mentioned religion stressed to her from her family plays a vital role in her attitudes towards dating. Although all of the females interviewed gave self-appraisals of having a positive personality they also mentioned that their attitudes would be something they would change about themselves. Sherry mentioned that people have told her about her attitude. This in a way supports Cooley's (1902) looking-glass-self theory on desiring to adjust who they present in society based on a mortification. All of the females in the study mentioned that the male must have strong family ties and must have a goal in life. This supports Hewitt's viewpoints on symbolic interaction, which suggested symbols instigate behavior that can be reproduced in another person (1997).

When physical appearance was discussed, the answers support the literature regarding the importance of height. Nine out of the thirteen interviewees mentioned that the male has to be taller than they in order to feel a sense of security. Ten out of the thirteen interviewees mentioned that teeth and shoes were the two things that are first noticed when a male approaches them:

His shoes [laughing], cause you can tell a lot about the person by their shoes. Their smile if they have clean teeth. (Tonya)

Shoes, Shoes tell a lot about the person. It shows that he takes care of himself. Dirty shoes say he doesn't take care of himself. I just love shoes. (Johanna)

Teeth and shoes. If you can't take care of your teeth, then there are other things he can't take care of. If the shoes aren't nice, they mess up their whole outfit. (Kim)

Shoes and teeth according to the African-American females are symbolic of the overall way a man chooses to take care of himself. Shoes and teeth tend to be important props of the presentation of self for the women. Men who approach the women with dirty shoes symbolize lack of care of themselves and are not favored for a dating relationship. When asked about muscular appearance being an attractive feature, all of the females interviewed felt that it was very attractive; however, six out of the thirteen interviewees responded that muscular bodies are attractive because they symbolize that the men take care of themselves:

Yes I do. It shows that they take care of themselves and makes them more good looking, but mainly just shows they take care of their bodies. (Sarah)

Yeah 'cause it shows that they can and are willing to take care of their bodies and remain in good health. Who would be attracted to a guy who is lazy and doesn't want to take care of their bodies? (Kim)

Another important criterion that all of the ladies mentioned which gives support for Brim's (Brim and Wheeler 1966) socialization theory was whether a man who speaks proper English is favorable or not favorable. The respondents mentioned that they have to be able to understand what the men are talking about. Use of ebonics is acceptable at times, but it depends on the social situation. This relates to socialization and basic symbolic interactionism, which suggests that social acts are deemed favorable depending on the definition of the situation (Brim and Wheeler 1966; Hewitt 1997).

Yes it does. I could bring home a man who is proper, and my mom is wondering if he is straight. If I am having an intelligent conversation with them; I want them to be able to give it back to me. (Carrie)

Yes it does matter. I don't want anybody using it [ebonics] too much. I want to be able to understand him. (Becky)

It depends where you are. If we are in certain places, he should know how to talk. It would be ok if he spoke proper. (Tonya)

Yes. It matters because, oh my god, my first relationship was bad on communication. You have to know how to talk to people. You don't want someone who can't speak right. (Johanna)

Skin color as in light or dark preference was not a factor at all according to the women. All of the women commented that whether a man is light skinned or dark skinned does not matter to them at all as long as they are treated right. This goes against the literature that mentioned that most people prefer light-skinned over dark-skinned men (Hill 2002; Thompson and Keith 2001; Wade 2003; Wilson and Constantine 1999). Another very important similarity that was found regarding presentation of self was whether driving fancy cars was deemed attractive. All of the ladies interviewed mentioned that driving fancy cars does not make them more attractive to them. In truth, according to the ladies, it weakens a man's chances of earning a dating relationship with them.

Ummm, no. I think the reason why is that my parents have always said that it doesn't mean anything. I also found that if they have nice cars, they are nothing on the inside. (Lisa)

No, not important 'cause most of the time he is selling drugs, and it's nothing I would want to be around. They could have a nice car and still be an ass hole. (Tonya)

No I don't. I think that guys who drive the fancy cars are more into themselves instead of the emotional feelings of his girl. (Carrie)

I don't. I don't find them more attractive. When I was younger I thought it was cool

but then saw that some of them get their money illegally. If he is a hard worker, he will use his money to get a house or something besides a car. It's nice, but I have met guys like that, and I don't like that at all. (Johanna)

According to the three ladies quoted above, not only is driving fancy cars seen as unattractive, but a stigma seems to be placed on men who drive fancy cars suggesting that they are more concerned with themselves and are not viewing feelings of another person as equally important. Another stigma that Tonya and Johanna placed on men with fancy cars is having a bad attitude and being a drug dealer. These findings dispute Hutchinson's (1999) findings from her interviews in which the women interviewed favored men who drove fancy cars because they felt the men had money and could increase their social status. Brim (Brim and Wheeler 1966) argued that socialization is a life long process. This process includes a person having significant people in their lives that tell them the norms, values, and beliefs to function as a meaningful person in society. Questions about family influence, religious affiliation, job placement, and personal goals were all seen as requirements by the women for a dating relationship. Cindy and Kim makes this clear from their interviews as both inform how important these four symbolic objects are for a dating relationship.

Yes, we have to have the same religious base. I can't see myself with a guy with a different religion or no religion at all. I am very close to my family. Most men who have a close relationship with their mother will more likely treat their women right. I have a job, and I work very hard and earn everything I get so he must be as well. Yes, it's very important to have a goal 'cause I have goals and I can date someone who is going to a technical college or a doctor. And it's all about what you want in life. If you are getting yourself back on track then that's cool as well. (Cindy)

Yes, 'cause like my parents, we believe in being with someone who has the same religion as you, but I haven't always found people with the same religion as me. So it does have an influence on me a little bit. Yeah it is important for him to be close to his family because I am very close to my family, and I want someone who is just as close to their family as me. Having a goal in life is very important because it shows that he's not out there just to be that. He is a person with a goal and wants to

achieve that goal that he sets for himself. (Kim)

Brim's (Brim and Wheeler 1966) view on socialization is supported with the viewpoints of the women. Specific norms, values, and roles they desire in a man stem from norms, values, and roles similar to those of as the people with whom they grew up. Men with a status of having a job and working towards a goal according to the women interviewed are viewed very desirable for a relationship. Wheeler (Brim and Wheeler 1966) stressed that socialization processes also occur within specific organizations in which people wish to be accepted in. Questions were asked of the females to see whether or not men who are deemed popular or are in organizations such as fraternities are viewed as more attractive. Out of the six females in the sorority, five of them felt that a man being in a fraternity and/or being popular was not only unattractive and also attached a stigma to them. All five women described why they would not be attracted to a man who has engaged in the socialization of a structured social organization and having the status and socialization of being popular.

It doesn't matter to me whether he is in a fraternity or not. I would be more attracted to a man if he was not in a fraternity 'cause a lot of them only care about themselves and play games on women. Being popular is not important to me because if he is popular I more likely don't want him at all. (Elizabeth)

No, I would not be more attracted to a man in a fraternity because a lot of times it doesn't seem that men in a frat are not faithful to their girlfriends. Popularity doesn't mean anything to me. Because, people are more likely to be in your business when you are with someone popular. If he is popular, then more females will want him. (Tammy)

No, I would never be more attracted to a man in a fraternity because they have reputations which can be nasty or ho's. I would not be more attracted to him if he was popular. I used to feel that way in high school, but now it doesn't matter at all. (Becky)

No, I don't know. It doesn't make a difference if they are or not. I know that being in a fraternity takes a lot of time, and there's a lot of groupies in a fraternity, and

sometimes it's the trust factor with me. Kind of I don't know. Popularity is not important at all. It is better that people don't know who he is because then you have people trying to take him away from you or become jealous and be disrespectful towards you. When people do know, it is like everybody knows who he is and wants to know what is going on between you and him in hopes of hearing that we broke up so they can attempt to have him. (Kendra)

No, I would be less attracted to him. I don't really agree with their personal attitude. It is not really the fraternity; it is really their attitudes they display from being in a fraternity. Some of them think that being in a fraternity makes them special or more important than anyone else. Well, in college popularity is not a factor at all. In high school it was not really either. I guess if he was really popular, I would feel intimidated but now not at all. (Pam)

Johanna however, who finds them more attractive, justifies why she is more attracted to men who are in a fraternity.

Yeah, I would be more attracted to a man who is in a fraternity. The last two men I dated were in one. It makes a man and it helps makes you know what you want [goals]. But it depends on the fraternity. It teaches you to be responsible. I am attracted to them. I don't like dating men who are popular because I don't like other people being in my business nor his. (Johanna)

Although Johanna mentioned that she would be more attracted to a fraternity guy due to helping a man learn the norms, values, and beliefs seen as acceptable to society, she mentioned that it is based on the kind of social organization and whether that social organization teaches the man the right norms, values, and beliefs that establish him as a good productive member of society. It was surprising to discover that the women who are in a social organization had a lot of negative views toward men in a social organization and attached stigmas to them. The seven females who were not involved in social organizations also felt that men in social organizations such as fraternities were viewed as unattractive due to the attached stigmas, and they described them as untrustworthy. It is also important to mention that all six of the women in social

organizations were juniors, seniors, and graduate students. Kendra was very vocal in her desire for a man with a positive attitude and not a fraternity member:

No, no. I do not want a man who is in a fraternity. I am glad that you said that because you would be surprised as to how many African-American females are so hyped on seeing letters on a guy. I mean the guy could be just really be ugly and just plain scum. Those types of men do not turn me on at all. What really turns me on about a guy is his attitude. I like the guys who really see what they have and see that they have their stuff together. I don't like the guys' attitude that's funky like the ones in fraternities. I prefer a man who is understandable and respectful. (Kendra)

Few differences between the younger African-American females and the older African-American females were discovered. Among the most important differences was attraction towards a man who displayed toughness and dressed well.

I like the men who wear the hip hop style pants and jeans but not the ones with jeans on the sides. Sagging is retarded. Sometimes I am more attracted to the men who do act tough in public. Unless he is acting like he is a gangster or a thug, then I do not think he is attractive. (Tonya freshman)

Umm, yes. But don't overdo it. I do not need you to fight all the time. I want someone masculine, but I do not want someone who will be picking fights and stuff all the time. As far as dress, I like the casual jeans buttoned down. Hip-hop dress is nice. Dress up is ok, but I am not ready for those types of men right now. (Sarah freshman)

I like someone who is colorful and up to date with their fashion. And I want them to look as good as I do at the moment. Umm. I think that you can act tough but can be too much sometimes. But some of the guys look funny sometimes, but overall acting tough is ok. (Carrie sophomore)

The freshmen and sophomore females feel that it is ok for a guy to put on performances and presentations of self as being tough in public as long as it does not go too far. The current literature and viewpoints from social commentators suggested that a lot of African-American men feel that acting tough in public is required or they would not get the respect and attention they would like to receive from the public audience (Aborampah 1989; Collins 2004; Dade and Sloan 2000; Hughes and Demo 1989; Hunter



and Davis 1994). On the other hand juniors, seniors, and graduate-level students feel that acting tough in public would not make them attractive to them at all and would not be welcomed. In addition, the older African-American females reported being more attracted to men who dress casually and more professionally rather than wearing jeans and hip-hop urban clothing.

Umm, not much into the hip-hop style. I am more attracted to the ones whom dress classy and dress up. No I do not find men who act tough in public attractive because I think that is ignorant. They always try to pick a fight and be the bigger man. So often they act crazy in front of people, and it is embarrassing. (Kim junior)

Style of dress depends on the environment. In church he should be dressing nice. I do not like men who dress in too low sagging pants and oversize clothing. In some situations hip-hop dress is ok, like if we are at a party, but overall classy and dressy is more attractive. No I do not like the acting tough stuff. I call my boyfriend out when he acts different with his friends and different with me. It is not attractive to me at all. (Becky senior)

I like the clean-cut guys. The Kanye West type. They can express hip-hop wear if they want, but I prefer them to be clean-cut dress type. No, I do not like those types that try to be big and bad. I do not like that at all. They are being fake when they do that and it does not impress me at all. (Elizabeth graduate student)

The other main difference between the younger and older African-American females' viewpoints and desired characteristics is their opinions regarding attitudes for the inadequate selection of good black men. Another difference in viewpoints regards attitudes about competition for accomplishing a dating relationship with a good black male. I asked about competing with white women.

Yes, I think there are no eligible African-American men sometimes. My mom always says that they are either dead or in jail or going to the white women. Yes, it is like everybody else wants a man, and it is only cheaters. It is harder to find the right one, and everybody wants it. (Tonya, freshman)

I do not want to think or feel like there are no eligible black men out there because I do not want to feel bitter. Yes, I feel like I do have to compete for the right black male. It seems there are more females than males, and they are a wide variety and all

trying to talk to the same guys. (Sarah, freshman)

To a certain degree I think there are not many eligible black men to date. Because the majority of black guys are in jail or dead, or the good ones are taken by white women. I definitely feel like I have to compete to have the right black man. A lot of black women are looking for a nice strong black man, and most are dead, or into violence. Makes me sad. There are a lot of good guys out there, but they are taken by the white women and it hurts that I have to compete for it. (Carrie, sophomore)

The younger African-American women expressed frustration in their answers about finding the right man to date and competing with others. Most interesting was the fact that all of the freshmen and sophomore ladies placed a lot of blame on white women for taking away the good black men to date. Among the older African-American females, nine out of the ten voiced the view that they do not feel that they are competing. Eight out of the ten older African-Americans felt that there are plenty of good, eligible black men around.

I used to think that there were no eligible black guys because I come from a town that had a lot of black guys and a lot of white girls. Now that I came to college, there are a lot more black guys, and I do not feel like that anymore. (Kim junior)

I feel that way here [the campus]. But that is only because I do not think about it. It is more like with myself. I go to the club once every two months. If I see myself like some of these females are, they are looking for a guy. They are trying to be or do too much, talking to multiple people and try to keep it down. I do not feel I am having to compete. I do not conclude that. I have a friend but every time we are in the area or same room with guys, guys would speak to me and she would feel that not enough attention was focused on her. (Sherry senior)

Sometimes I feel that way for the simple fact 'cause maybe my standards are too high and sometimes I talk to people, but sometimes it feels that way, but I tend to feel it is on me from putting it back on them. I never really felt I was in any competition with other black women. Going to a mostly white school, I wasn't really having to compete since there weren't really any black males to talk to. But when I came to college, I realized that a lot of females are really prepared. But I never really had to feel that way. I kind of do my own thing. (Tammy graduate student)

The older group of women voiced the opinion that the social environment is the main cause for possibly thinking that there are not enough good black men to date. They

stressed that being in a college town with a low black student enrollment is a reason for this instead of thinking that overall good black men are hard to find in general. Tammy made it clear that she has never felt that she had to compete. She is content with being herself and doing things her own way.

Some of the literature addressed in chapter three discussed research arguing how a lot of African-American men and women were more attracted to men and women who took pride in their African-American heritage because it showed that they know where they came from and lived that culture within their own lives (Bell, Bouie, and Baldwin 1990; Broman, Neighbors and Jackson 1988; Demo and Hughes 1990; Oliver 1989). Out of the younger group of African-American females interviewed, only one out of the three said that knowing African-American heritage was important to her. Out of those three younger African-American females, none of them voiced the idea that a man who knows his African-American heritage was important to them. Also, according to the younger group, family members either rarely or never spoke to them about African-American heritage.

In regard to the older group of African-American females interviewed, all 10 voiced the belief that knowing their African-American heritage was very important to them. Eight out of the 10 said that their families spoke to them about African-American heritage.

I think it is very important. Any type of heritage is important. I got it mostly from church or my family 'cause I went to a private school and was the only black student in the class. My father is from Ghana, Africa, and he can tell us about how it is like to live there. And give me a bigger picture of African heritage not just African-American heritage. No, I think it does not play a factor 'cause I really have not thought about it. (Tammy)

I think it is pretty important to know where you are coming from. They do not learn it

in school and forget the important stuff. Yes, my grandmother on my dad's side a lot. And he was in the military, and he knows about his family history so he does a lot. No, I mean it is good to know some things, but I do not think it is important to know everything about African-American history 'cause I do not know everything. (Kim)

Yeah, I support people like Martin Luther King. I really support the true heritage, not what people show today. Us as a people. It was like, you know, people would come up to the stores and support each other. My mother does, but my father does not. But my mom does, she talks about when she was younger, especially when we go home, to her family side, in Georgia. They sit around and talk about, you know, back then you know things were coming up. Before the civil rights, she tells a lot of good stories, but those are things that I ask her. My father does not talk about it 'cause my great grandmother was Indian; and my father, I do not really know if he was really black. Everything in his family is really mixed. No, it does not play a factor in dating selection. Umm, it would be nice to know if an African-American did know, but like I said, education is very different areas in America. (Sherry)

It is very important. Knowing where you came from and who you are and know your culture and that you need to find yourself as a person. My grandma talks to me about it all the time. She wants us to be thankful for what we have. I think it is important. I will not turn a person down if he does not. So, no, it does not play a factor. (Cindy)

However, only two out of the ten older respondents felt that knowing African-American heritage is very important to her for dating selection.

Knowing African-American heritage is very important to me. You have to know where you come from. I had family tell me about my heritage, mainly my mother. When talking to a guy for dating, I think it is important for him to know African-American heritage because you have to know where you came from; and, if you just don't understand about your heritage and stuff like that and don't care about it, then you don't know much at all about who you are as a African-American. I don't want anybody who doesn't know their past history. (Kendra)

Well, most people that I hang out with are African-American so it's real important to me because it is about where you come from. My family did speak to me about my African-American heritage. Well mostly of times they tried to tell me about why I should know everything about my culture. No a man's knowledge of his culture don't matter to me. Because it doesn't matter where you come from. It is about how he treats me, but he should know a little bit about his history. I think it is important if he doesn't know his history because it may tell me that a relationship may not work long. (Pam)

Although Pam feels that a guy is not disqualified completely if he does not know much about his African-American history, she stressed that a man should know a little bit

or the relationship may not last long. These findings regarding culture have been the opposite of findings found in previous research that looked at how black pride is an important factor in black dating relationships.

### **Patterns of Distrust**

The second research question focused on investigating whether distrust for African-American men still exists among African-American women. Much of the literature on African-American relationships argued that many of the women have developed a distrust for African-American men stemming from group influence and family influence. These two influences surfaced in warnings to the woman regarding the African-American men (Burgest 1990; Chapman 1997; Dade and Sloan 2000). Questions were asked about how their parents explained how men behaved toward their daughters. They were also asked what behaviors practiced by the men would automatically cause a termination to the relationship. Literature on black relationships has argued that certain reasons for the ending of relationships have been remembered by the women and used as a means of keeping them watchful for certain behaviors that could occur with future men (King 1999; Rose 1994; Ross 1997). Questions were also asked regarding whether the women felt their friends were dating a man whom they felt they should stop dating. This question was important to help understand further investigation of levels of distrust in relationship selection.

When the women were asked what their parents said to them about what men were like, nine out of the thirteen interviewees voiced the opinion that their mothers were negative towards men and warned them not to trust men. Only four fathers out of thirteen mentioned advice to their daughters. The advice from fathers was on the same

level as the mothers', which was negative and warning-based. The remaining nine fathers did not speak to them about men at all.

Guys take a while to commit; and even if the guy is great, his maturity level may not be the same as yours. A lot of men are not on the same level as you. My father would tell me that men are men. Men can use you, some men just want sex and watch out. Be on top of your game, and don't give in to a person, and be aware. Do your research and don't put yourself in a situation you can't get out of. (Cindy)

My mom thinks that anybody that's athletic is sad. [Laughing] Like sports. And, she told me to stay away from football players, and she instilled in me that certain guys are smooth talkers, and they only want one thing. So she is very instilled that guys are not really secure. I feel awful when my daddy talks to me. He always says, I used to be a boy growing up. He talks and talks, but I don't really like talking to my dad about it. I like talking to my mom about it better about stuff like that. He is like football players are this and that. He says stay away from the players. (Sherry)

My mom told me don't trust everything that they say. Have a mind of your own and that black guys are dumb. My father told me that they are dogs [men]. Don't trust what they say and not to date 'til I am 30 [laughing]. (Carrie)

My mom told me that men are only out there to get one thing and need to be on guard and protect myself in any situation. But my father never talked to me about it. I wish he would talk to me more about it. (Kim)

The moms of the women warn their daughters about how men can be. This advanced preparation of warnings occurred as the women were headed to college and leaving the home. The fathers were viewed as being indirectly absent in their lives. Kim wishes that her father would offer information to her on knowing what kind of men she should be trying to date. One way of investigating another possible pattern of distrust was asking how most of their relationships end and what behaviors displayed by the men would automatically end the relationship. It was important to ask these questions because one of the most important premises to socialization and symbolic interactionism was the importance of influence stemming from various interpersonal relationships. All thirteen women mentioned that cheating and physical aggression were the two types of behaviors

that would result in immediate termination of a relationship. Ten out of the thirteen women stated that their relationships ended because the boyfriends became physically aggressive with them and/or cheated on them.

Cheating on me or physical abuse. It's not easy to leave someone you fall in love with, but I don't see myself staying with a guy who will hit me all the time. Umm most of my relationships ended because I felt used. They seem like they told me everything I wanted to hear. I was hurt at first, but I took it as a learning experience, and I moved on. They would mainly cheat on me for the most part. (Kim)

Cheating on me. I won't stand for cheaters or liars. All of my relationships ended because they cheated on me, all of them. I think it's because they failed to get me to have sex with them, and I am determined with what I want in relationships. (Carrie)

Cheating, dishonesty, stealing, no questions asked. No goals, not being supportive, not having faith in me and my abilities. Well, first when I ended, I felt that I was settling and I asked myself that I could see myself with him later on in life. Things were changing--lack of communication, not being genuine. Second one ended due to distance. He showed me that I can't trust him. He was a cheater. I found video footage on him doing cheating. I prayed to god when I would go visit him at TSU, and I was hoping that GOD will let me know, and he sure did show me. I was able to get into his email account and I was able to see his emails too. I just realized that he had a low manhood level. (Johanna)

Patterns of distrust also were investigated when the women were asked if they had friends who dated men that should be discarded. It was important to look at this because of the literature on socialization and symbolic interactionism arguing that human behavior is based on the influences of one's social group, and people attempt to have others copy their behaviors (Hewitt 1997).

Yes. I have friends that date bad men. The men just chill and do nothing. Some are losers like they are ghetto fabulous and says he's a rapper, and he really doesn't and tries to live the lifestyle and changes jobs like he changes underwear, and that's ridiculous. (Lisa)

Yes I do. A lot of the boyfriends my friends date are abusive, and a friend's boyfriend was on their way home, and he punched her in the face, and that's not cool. (Tonya)

Definitely. I have friend in my sorority, and she is dating a man in a clique, and he is very disrespectful to her and other people. And he has done things to her and their

whole relationship. In the beginning it was based on getting even with each other. Most of the people have tried to talk to her and she stays with him and feel that she is brainwashed and can't let go. (Tammy)

Umm yeah. Well they have guys that are thugs, and I knew he was sneaky by cheating, and she got his facebook account and found out all of his lies. And, she always dates guys who cheat on her, and I look at them, and I tell myself that it will not work. (Johanna)

Yes. My friend is in an abusive relationship right now. Lack of self-esteem on her part, and I told her, but it's up to her. (Becky)

Yeah. Because I know things, and I try to tell them. They [boyfriends] are doing this behind their back, and they don't listen so yeah. (Sarah)

Yes, because some of them are dating, and they are actually not in a relationship, and some guys they talk to do what they want to do. In situations in which I try to tell them [her friends] that he is no good, they don't listen and doesn't want to know. And, as long as she thinks she is happy, she is not going to listen until she finds out for herself. (Kendra)

According to the responses, the women have a distrust of their friends' boyfriends because of the way they behave and how they are perceived by the women interviewed. Sarah, Becky, and Kendra expressed the belief that people should warn their friends about bad relationships. Their friends, however, do not listen to them because of lack of self-esteem, or they think they are in love and do not want to lose that feeling. All thirteen interviewees said that they have more than one friend they feel is in a bad relationship, and they wish for them to end that relationship.

### **Attitudes towards Interracial Relationships**

The last section of the interview focused on the African-American female's attitudes about interracial relationships. This helped gain even more understanding about possible distrust and understand whether anger and frustration were present among African-American females as indicated in the current literature (Foeman and Nance 1999;



Zebroski 1999). The literature on interracial relationships as mentioned in chapter three argued that the majority of African-American females have a negative attitude toward interracial relationships, mainly black male/white woman relationships (Childs 2005; St. Jean 1998; Yancey 2009).

The first set of questions asked focused on why they thought African-American men and women decide to engage in interracial relationships. Nine out of the thirteen women felt that African-American men date outside the race because they do not know how to handle a black woman's attitude. The same nine women felt that white women are more submissive to black men and allow the black men to say and do whatever they want.

It is hard to decide to say what I think and what others think and say. A lot of black people are strong-willed and speak their mind. A lot of black males date outside 'cause I think they are able to say more and speak their mind. It made me a little insecure when I felt that he wanted to be with white females. A lot of them [black males] don't know how to handle their [black women's] attitudes. I think black women date outside the race because I guess there are no eligible black men to date. A lot of white men tend to treat their women better than black guys. A lot of black men are in jail and not motivated to get high education. (Tammy)

Because white girls are more submissive and they will give almost anything they want, and a black girl won't stand for it. I think black women date outside of the race because they don't trust black guys. (Tonya)

I don't know. They say that black women are too picky, but I beg to differ. Black men think we are too picky and we are too needy. I just want someone that will help you with this and that, and some black people are like that. Some white women are passive and allowing black guys do everything. And, I see a white girl is driving, and the black guy is in the passage seat, and I can tell she is working and he is not. And, gets dropped off, and it gets on my nerves. A lot of black women date outside the race because they lack motivation or they are tired of people [black guys] without goals or wanting someone to take care of them. (Johanna)

Some of them [black males] say that because black women have an attitude and they don't like it. I don't know why they [black guys] do it personally. I don't really think black women do it intentionally, but I think black men do it intentionally 'cause I think it may make their status higher. I feel black women date white because it's a higher connection. (Sarah)

I think they [black males] want to try something different. They grew up with African-American women all of their life, and they want something they have never had before. I don't know. And maybe because my brother says black women nag too much and they complain about this and complain about that. But umm, I always heard from my mom that black men just want to manipulate. Black women date outside the race because they want to try something different and can't find any successful black males. (Kim)

I am not really sure why they [black males] date outside the race. I think they find it easier to talk to a white woman than a black woman. Some black men don't like the challenge. I don't know why black women do either. Maybe cause the white dude was cute. If you are white, then be all white. (Cindy)

I guess African-American women get a bad rep for being so strong and I guess they [black males] don't want to be with someone that is confrontational. I think black women date outside their race because of the whole excuse about black men not being good enough, being in jail, selling drugs, or being gay. (Elizabeth)

Because black girls have a lot of attitude and they (black males) can get away with a lot more with a white girl. Umm I think black females date outside their race because black guys are doing it, and then some are doing it because I don't think color should make a difference. It's about personality. (Carrie)

The women stressed that African-American males date outside the race because they believe that white women are more passive and will let the African-American male have more freedom. The respondents' views placed much of the blame on white women, their views of them being more passive. Johanna symbolized that black men who are riders in a car with white women driving and dropping off men meant to her that the black male does not do anything and does not have a job or has not established stability. This shows evidence of the continuing anger and frustration among African-American women towards African-American males regarding interracial relationships as argued in Childs' research on interracial couples (2005). Kim made reference in her viewpoint about what she has heard from other African-American men and women about interracial relationships that influenced her views. This was evidence that supports Brim and

Wheeler's (1966) socialization arguments stressing that socialization is a process that affects how a person behaves in society from interpersonal influences such as close friends and group organization influences. The women voiced responses about African-American women deciding to date outside of the race either because they were angry and frustrated with African-American men or because they wanted to try something new. Again, these responses support current literature on interracial relationships, which argued that a lot of African-American women are frustrated with African-American men's behavior and viewpoints about them (Aborampah 1989; Jean 1998; Kalmijn 1993). Viewpoints on African-American women's decisions to date outside the race were justified by the women. This supports arguments made by social commentators who have written books about interracial relationships (Collins 2004; hooks 2004).

The next section asked the women if they felt offended when they see African-American men with women from a different race, how they felt about interracial relationships, and whether they have ever dated a man outside of their race. Four out of the thirteen women said that they are not offended whatsoever by seeing African-American men dating women outside of their race.

No. It's based on how I was brought up. I was brought up that people are people and the majority of the relationships in my home town were interracial. I have dated outside my race before. Umm, I didn't think about it as a different race. Not really in that people are different due to race. It's based on attitude. And, people have a negative view about it. I think it's perfectly normal because, it's not what makes some people different. It's the culture and it shouldn't be a factor. (Pam)

No I am not offended. Because it is kind of what society says. And it doesn't have anything to do with that. I don't have that chip on my shoulder. Yes, I did date outside of my race. We actually dated all throughout high school. And, umm, I guess my brother was like the surprised one and was like, "wow you are dating a white guy." Umm, I think you have to do a lot more in the relationship, and I think it's good for two cultures to come together and do well. (Lisa)

I don't feel offended at all. And I have bi-racial folks in my family, and it is common where I am from. I went out on a date with a white guy, and I didn't think about it. I was attracted to him, and he was attracted to me. I don't think I disagree with it in general. But rumors that were told to me was that black guys think white girls are easier. Not that big thing to me. (Becky)

For a moment I did, but, I mean, you can't help what you like. No, I am not offended. I haven't ever dated outside of my race and as far as interracial relationships in general go, it's whatever floats your boat. (Elizabeth)

Pam, Lisa, and Becky stressed that interracial relationships are normal and part of today's society. These three women made reference that their viewpoints stemmed from their socialization processes. Pam mentioned that her family raised her to adopt a belief system that people are people and it is all about attitude. However, Lisa feels that being offended symbolizes having a chip on your shoulder. Becky feels that there is no need for her to be offended because she has interracial people in her family. This again gives support to Brim's (Brim and Wheeler 1966) socialization theory of interpersonal relationships. This also supports Hewitt's (1997) arguments on how symbols can make possible attitudes and behavioral dispositions. Three out of the thirteen women feel very offended when they see black men with women from a different race.

Yes, I am offended because I just find it disrespectful to your [African-American] culture. I mean, if a black guy was to date a white woman, it would be very disrespectful to me. Because, I mean, all things that black people went through, all the pain white people have caused black people, and you want to date one of those. I am not racist...I am not racist. You know what I am saying. I just don't agree with dating someone of a different race. I think its disrespectful. No I haven't NOT dated outside my race [answered emphatically]. Like I said, I feel it's very disrespectful to your culture and it's just like; I feel like it's not truly accepted and it will never will be. And people are just acting like they accept it, and they don't. And, I don't agree with it. (Kendra)

They [black men dating interracially] make me feel like that I am no good. Umm, I have dated interracially once, and it was good. And he was attractive, and it just didn't work out. I think you should go with whatever you like, but it shouldn't be based on race. (Tonya)

Yes I am offended because I feel like they [black males] think that white women are better and have a higher status. No, I have never dated outside my race. I don't, well, it doesn't really bother me. Well, I don't really like it. If it's their relationship or not, it don't bother me. I can't do anything about it. It does bother me because it kind of makes me think like she [white females] is better than me. (Sarah)

Kendra's anger is towards the perceived disrespect of African-American culture when she sees African-American men dating outside of the race. Whereas both Tonya and Sarah feel a sense of self-mortification when they witness African-American men dating outside the race. When the ladies explained which race they meant, all of them were referring to white women. Tonya and Sarah's view supports Cooley's (1902) looking-glass-self theory; however, instead of adjusting who they are in hopes of gaining the approval of the audience, the African-American females tend to place blame on white women to explain their disapproval of interracial relationships. These responses also support the current literature and social commentary on perceived competition among African-American females regarding dating and self-perceptions about interracial relationships (Aborampah 1989; Blake and Darling 2000; Burgess; 1994; Chapman 1997; Collins 2004; Dixon 1998; Franklin II 1984; Jacobs 1999; Lewis, Yancey, and Bletzer 1997; Yancey 2009). Four out of the thirteen women used to feel offended, but later on in life, they no longer felt offended.

I don't like any public affection; but seeing an African-American with a white woman, it don't bother me. My parents taught me differently. It don't bother me. It's about as long as he treats me right. But in high school I was bothered by that 'cause people were diverse. But when I got to another city for college, it is really negative here. But when I took a sociology class, I realized race don't matter. This is funny. There was this one white guy. He liked me and asked me out all the time. As I agreed to go out with him, people were like "Oh you are going out with him?" I broke up with him, and I was like man. As far as interracial relationships in general, I don't care. It don't bother me. I actually like seeing diversity, and people need to break out of their shell. (Sherry)

I think now I don't feel offended. When I was in high school, I was. And no one ever

talked to me. It made me feel I was not good enough. Now I have no reason to be upset 'cause I don't know him and I don't know her. I had to re-look at myself and my self-esteem. And it wasn't until college that I was able to tell myself that there was nothing wrong with me. No, I have never dated outside of my race. In general, I now feel that love sees no color. I don't think you should date someone just 'cause of their race. Sometimes it's the family. (Tammy)

No. Not anymore. At first I was like, white girls messing them up, but not anymore. I feel different cause I told myself that they have nothing to do with relationships and how you should date. The Bible doesn't say that you have to date your own race. I have never dated outside my race. I went to school with mostly, black and there were no white people to date. I think overall interracial relationships are fine. No problem at all. (Cindy)

The three females made reference to their family influences playing the biggest factor in how they feel about interracial relationships. Again, this supports Brim's (Brim and Wheeler 1966) view of the process of socialization throughout the life cycle. They voiced the opinion that at one time in their lives they felt offended, but as they progressed through their lives, they came to feel that interracial relationships are not a problem. Tammy said that sometimes it is about the family. She felt that what the family teaches them can have an effect on how African-American females feel about interracial dating. Sherry has experienced an interracial relationship, and according to her, she broke the relationship off based on social pressure and criticism. Two females felt that interracial relationships were acceptable as long as both the black man's and white woman's social status and presentation of self were deemed acceptable to these African-American females.

I am offended only when I see them [black males] being a bum or a lazy shit. I have bi-racial brothers and sisters so it don't bother me. If I see them and if the quality man [black male] is with a trashy lady, I am like, don't be used and confused. Don't use one another. No I haven't dated interracially. But I have thought about it, but I am like, I don't know where to start. In general, I have no problem with them [interracial relationships]. It doesn't bother me at all. (Johanna)

Oh, I really don't get offended unless I see a real well dressed African-American man with a sloppy white woman. I don't think you should be seen in public with someone outside your race. If I was a white girl I would want for him to be clean and pretty. I have dated outside the race because he was a nice guy and he made me laugh. After a while I was stubborn, but he was nice. I think that it's important to know that it comes down to how you are treated. It's a trust factor, that's the big thing. (Carrie)

Goffman's (1957) dramaturgy theory was supported by the two women's viewpoints.

Both Johanna and Carrie felt that presentation of self was important in how they felt about interracial relationships between black men and white women. Black males or white females who are dressed well engaging in relationships with mates outside the race who are dressed in a way that is deemed unacceptable makes them feel offended.

Dressing unacceptably and interacting with well dressed opposite sex people outside the race is viewed as a discredited stigma for Johanna and Carrie. The literature on presentation of self among interracial relationships was supported by Johanna's and Carrie's viewpoints (Thompson and Keith 2001; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1990).

Finally, it was important to look again at influences of family socialization by asking the African-American females how their parents feel about interracial relationships. Peer group socialization was re-visited as well by asking the African-American females how much influence their friends have on their attitudes about interracial dating. Questions were also asked about what characteristics they would want in the male if they decided to date outside the race. Thirteen mothers and thirteen fathers were mentioned when asked about parents' attitudes regarding interracial relationships. Out of the thirteen mothers, eleven have no problem with interracial relationships, in general. Ten fathers, ten of the children felt that their fathers have no problem with interracial relationships in general. The responses to the question of how their parents would react if they did date

interracially proved to be different. Six females out of thirteen felt that their parents would disapprove of them dating outside the race compared to the remaining seven who felt their parents would approve. Ten of the thirteen women felt that family does not influence their decisions about interracial dating while three felt that it does strongly.

They wouldn't mind it. Most of my aunts and uncles have people outside their races. I guess it's viewed positively if I did date outside the race. My family is vastly mixed and it don't bother them. (Pam)

They don't react differently, and the issue is that making sure he is nice to you and not abusive. I think they are like, no problem with that. I am not influenced by that 'cause they [family] are cool with it. (Lisa)

She [mother] does not like it at all. I think she doesn't approve of it at all. No, my family doesn't influence me on interracial relationships. I believe it's whatever I want to do. And, we had arguments with my mom about it. She is not racist, just she don't like the interracial dating. (Tonya)

I would never date interracially. Umm. Well I thought about it. My mom joked about it in my family. It's the guys who date outside of the race. But, umm, I would never feel uncomfortable bringing someone outside the race home. (Johanna)

They wouldn't react. I am guessing 'cause I have never brought anyone from a different race to home at all. But, umm, I would think that they wouldn't be mean to it. They would support me with any decision I make. No my family doesn't influence me on that. Because, like I said, we have a more of a support system. It's my decision. Their views are my views. I am past that point. I do set my limits and take control. (Sherry)

Regardless of age level, the females felt that family does not have much influence on interracial relationships because they feel they have the right to make their own decisions about their dating lives. However, Yancey's research in 2009, which argued that the majority of African-Americans in his survey would not be interested in dating outside the race, was supported by the answers from these interviews. As mentioned in the theory chapter and supported in literature of cultural group influence, peer group influence plays



a vital part in dating decisions and an individual's progression through the lifelong socialization process.

The last section of this interview asked the African-American females whether their friends played an influence in their decisions and attitudes about interracial dating. They were asked what characteristics they would want in a man if they decided to date outside of their race. Four out of the thirteen women said that their friends' views do affect their decisions on interracial dating.

When I date someone, even outside of the race, I like humor. I really like a listener. Someone who listens and who is trustworthy. Yes, my friends do affect me. I have a friend that I talked to yesterday that she is from Africa. It doesn't matter what race he is. I am around positive people anyway. They don't care about white and black.  
(Sherry)

I guess if I date interracially, it should be someone that's going to treat me right and share some of the same things that I do and share some of the beliefs that I do. Yeah, my friends, they are like, you know, there's no attractive white guys out there. So I am like I don't know. There ain't; then I will see somebody who is cute. And they say oh he's ugly 'cause he's white. So I think it does a lot. So I have a preference that I would rather date a black guy. (Kim)

I guess it's mostly personality 'cause I have dated different types of men in my life. I like guys who are willing to help and treat me right and be nice to me. I guess they would if I had friends that know more about it. I mean I would tell them a story that people might look at you at different faces. (Pam)

Sherry noted that her peer-group influence was from a positive group of people to whom race does not matter. Sherry said that such a group influence affects her in a positive way and gives her the feeling that interracial dating would not be a problem to her or her friends. Kim's friends make her feel that interracial dating is not preferred due to lack of attractive presentation of self from the men of the other race. This influence has been a major factor in her decision to prefer to date only within her own race. Pam's main concern when she decides to date outside the race is whether he has a good

personality or not. She said that she has dated many types of men. When Pam tells her friends about her interracial dating experiences, she at times faces possible mortification from getting certain looks of disapproval.

Nine out of the thirteen women said their friends do not have an influence on their decisions about dating interracially.

If I was ever to do interracial dating, it would have to be someone I don't know. I just thought I would be uncomfortable sometimes. It is weird to say. Someone I could relate to. I would be uncomfortable during the holidays thinking about how it would be for that person. No, my friends don't affect me in that way. I would talk about different people to date, and we all stay open-minded. (Johanna)

I want someone who would not make racial comments. If I was in the room with mainly white females, I would feel a more insecure. No, my friends don't affect me. Because I mean I don't know I think well. All of my friends have made comments about, oh I would date him and it would be a white guy. And I had a friend who actually dated one. I don't think it would matter. (Tammy)

I would never even consider it. I mean I just feel strongly about that. Because I just don't agree with it. I mean white people have done a lot to our people and to date one of those is disrespectful, especially in like when I have friends like my boyfriend. He has dated nothing but white women and I told him. I just like honestly do you expect that this is accepted? Do you think her parents really agree with it? Honestly not. Back in history, look at Emmitt Till. He was beat to death for whistling at a white woman. And, it is something I would not do. And, it's really disrespectful to me. I don't like it at all. No, not at all. My friends don't affect my decisions. They think they do, but I guess I would be one of those people that act like I accept it and I don't. If she is happy, I will be happy for her; but I really won't care for it too much. (Kendra)

Kendra's views strongly support the literature on racial group identity and how it has affected her approach to dating relationships (Demo and Hughes 1990; Hill 2002; Hughes and Hertel 1990). She makes historical references as to why she would never date interracially. Tammy also voiced racial group identity when she said that being in a room with mostly white women would make her feel insecure. However, she is not bothered by her friends' effect or influence because when she dates interracially, she keeps it a

secret. However, she did feel dating interracially could be a discreditable stigma because if her friends were to find out, they may have views about it that would make Tammy feel mortification (Cooley 1902; Goffman 1963). This supports Goffman's (1967) and Cooley's (1902) theories on looking-glass self and dramaturgy.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to find out not just basic preferences of African-American adult women for dating relationships but to also investigate the key influences behind their preferences on dating. Current literature on African-American relationships has dealt mostly with pathological aspects. As for this study, there were responses that can be easily be viewed as negative or pathological, which would continue the pattern of pathology in African-American research. However, this study did find attitudes of African-American women who voiced positive things about African-American relationships when it comes to their preferences.

The women had a lot to say about what they want and what they see with African-American relationships even though the average number of dating relationships they have had to date was three (see Appendix A for more details). A reason for their willingness to talk about African-American relationships might be due to media attention that pathology of African-American relationships gets (Burgest and Goosby 1985). Media socialization has encouraged many African-Americans to be outspoken about their dating relationships. More than half of the women said that their previous dating relationships have ended with them being the victims of cheating. Certain questions asking them to recall past relationships may have motivated them to be very vocal about some of their responses (King 1999; Porter and Bronzaft 1995).

Warnings from mothers about how men behave proved to be highly effective regarding the continued distrust between African-American men and women. The distrust was never more evident than when women were asked about their attitudes about interracial relationships. Yancey's research (1999) was supported by having more than half of the women resolve that they would not date interracially. However, there was a pattern that emerged that goes contrary to current literature on interracial relationships. Many the women were not negatively affected by interracial relationships because they associated themselves with social groups that were accepting of people of different cultures and races. This supports the theories of socialization and symbolic interactionism. These findings were not previously seen nor reported in past literature of African-American relationships.

Peer group socialization, as evidenced by the responses, plays a very important role in people's attitudes about dating. The women who have friends who do not support interracial dating, more likely would not date outside the race whereas women with friends who accept interracial dating are more likely to engage in interracial dating. Thus, it is possible to suggest that people's behaviors and attitudes stem from what their social group's norms, values, and beliefs system are. This was more evident when it came to differences between the younger African-American women and the older African-American women. The younger African-American women, who rely more on what their peer groups believe, felt that it was ok and acceptable for the men they desired to date to act tough in public and display a presentation of self that matches their urban culture. Older African-American women felt such behavior was putting on an act and unacceptable. Such group influence is strong among younger women who have not had

much experience in the college environment where social groups are more vast. The older women who have experience in the college world tend to have been introduced to individuals who are from different cultures and who have diverse ways of thinking about dating relationships and life in general.

One of the important findings was that all of the women felt that the men must have strong positive ties to both their family and the same religion as they. This is normally true for many people regardless of race (Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, and Larsen 2001). The findings on desired family ties support Kane's (2000) research about African-American family dynamics. The women do not view fancy cars as an attractive factor for relationships. The women place stigmas on those types of men because it gives them the message that those men do not handle their money wisely and would not take a relationship seriously (Goffman 1963). Another negative attribute was fraternity membership. Most of the older African-American women interviewed belong to a social organization. They felt that African-American men in fraternities were focused only on themselves or are looking only for sex. Although one of the women found fraternity men attractive due to the organization's socialization of working hard and having goals, the stigma attached to African-American fraternity men seems to be very strong due to the experiences the African-American women have endured with African-American fraternity men. This in turn continues and increases the perceived distrust.

Presentation of self is still a very important factor in relationships regardless of race. Props such as teeth and shoes proved to be the message women sought to tell them whether African-American men take care of themselves. This suggests that there is no difference with these views and views held about relationship preferences in general.

One factor of appearance that was found contrary to the literature was skin color preference. The women felt that skin shade was no factor in their decisions. The past literature argued that light skinned women and men were preferred (Cash and Duncan 1984; Hill 2002; Hughes and Hertel 1990; Thompson and Keith 2001).

The women felt that the ideal man with whom to have a relationship was a man who has strong ties with his religion, a good personality, goals, and close family ties and does not obsess over his appearance and ownership of materialistic possessions. One can argue that these preferences are the same for both men and women in general (Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, and Larsen 2001). The women also believed that men who are close to their mothers would more likely not engage in physical aggression in a relationship. Cheating and physical aggression were the two behaviors that they feel would immediately end the relationship if one were to occur. Again, cheating and physical aggression are viewed as huge negatives for relationships for all women in relationships regardless of race. Another interesting finding was that the women do not feel that an African-American male's knowledge of his African-American heritage was important in dating selection. This went against what past literature argued in research about racial pride and racial group identity (Demo and Hughes 1990; Jacobs 1999; Oliver 1989).

Conflicts among African-American men and African-American women have been given more media spotlight in recent years. Social commentaries on African-American relationships from various celebrities and authors have become best sellers, which increases the book writers' social status and income (Collins 2004). Movies on African-American male/female pathology have been on the rise, and both African-American men

and women have gone in front of the camera, on radio shows, and on talk shows voicing their frustrations (Collins 2004; hooks 2004; King 1999). This frustration stemming from both African-American men and women has been recognized and supported by both genders by taking sides against each other, which only increases the conflict. The pathology of African-American relationships has become entertainment for both African-American men and women.

Negative stereotypes being made about how African-American men and women are highly sexualized based on hip-hop music lyrics and the content presented in hip-hop videos not only make this conflict continue but make the conflict profitable and acceptable (Rose 1994). This study showed that a lot of the preferences and desires are not what the media has been reporting in recent years, but it supports the argument that African-American women have dating preferences that are no different from women in general according to the findings in the research of Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, and Larsen (2001). African-American relationships that get into the media would offer a more positive benefit if they would cite facts based on research that show more of the positive factors and findings and not just the negative ones. It is possible to suggest that pathology of distrust could end if African-American families would teach their offspring that there are a lot of good men and women out there to date and not to believe a lot of the negative stereotypes that are associated with African-American men and women in the media and among various peer groups. Men and women would also benefit, based on the findings of this study, in associating with peer groups who do not feel race is a factor in preferences about dating and feel that character and personality are most important and



most beneficial. Association with peer groups who do not allow media influences to play a dominant role in decisions about dating should be encouraged.

This research does have limitations. The African-American women interviewed for this study were all college students. Even though research has argued that more African-American women go to college and get degrees (Porter and Bronzaft 1995), it still does not represent the majority of African-American women in the United States. Another limitation is the region from which the women came. The region was in the South, where the African-American students attended a school with a majority of white students. Future research conducting interviews with African-American women who go to school in different regions to compare cultural differences would be beneficial. Future research would also benefit if interviews were conducted with African-American students who attend school with a majority African-American student enrollment.

Another possible limitation was the gender and race of the interviewer. The interviewer was an African-American male college graduate student. The African-American women who agreed to the interviews may have felt a sense of comfort and were able to be open and honest about their responses. One of the flaws of in-depth interviews is knowing whether or not the interviewees were completely honest in their responses. It is possible to suggest that the women gave answers that they felt would make them be viewed as likeable people or responses they felt the researcher would like to hear. However, many of the interviews produced much insightful information about attitudes in relationships and interracial relationships among African-American adult women. Many of the women had no problem voicing strong opinions about the subject matter.

Although distrust among African-American women is still evident, the study shows that such distrust possibly stems from agents of socialization such as family, peer groups, and media. Future research should also focus on more qualitative research that interview African-American men about their dating preferences. Such studies could help discover whether African-American men have dating preferences that are the same in general as men of all races. It may also show that African-American men desire the same factors in a woman as the women desire in their men (personality, strong family ties, and religious ties). Future research on African-American relationships would also benefit from interviews with men and women who did not to go college. This information could be compared to this study to see both similarities and differences between the two groups.

## Appendix A

### General Demographics of Participants

Name	Year in School	Major	Mom's Education	Dad's Education	*Dating Relationships
Sherry	Senior	Nursing	High School	High School	3
Kim	Junior	Nursing	High School	College (2 years)	3
Cindy	Senior	Social Work	Master's Degree	High School	3
Tammy	Grad Student	Public Health	High School	Associate's Degree	3
Becky	Senior	HR Science	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Associate's Degree	2
Lisa	Grad Student	Counseling	Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	2
Elizabeth	Grad Student	Public Admin	High School	High School	2
Kendra	Junior	Bachelor's Degree	High School	High School	3
Carrie	Sophomore	Sociology	Master's Degree	High School	3

Pam	Junior	Hospitality	Bachelor's Degree	High School	5
Johanna	Grad Student	Counseling	Associate's Degree	Middle School	3
Tonya	Freshman	Education	Bachelor's Degree	High School	2
Sarah	Freshman	Accounting	Bachelor's Degree	Ph. D	0

---

\*Serious Relationships up to present time.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview Guide**

#### Section 1: General Questions about the Person

1. What year of school are you in currently?
2. What are your favorite things to do in your free time?
3. What is your current major?
4. What are your future goals in life?
5. What is/are your favorite type(s) of music?
6. What is your mother's occupation?
7. What is your father's occupation?
8. With which kind(s) of friends do you prefer to associate?
9. Do you have a religious affiliation? If yes, which one?
10. Are you active in your church? How?
11. Do you belong to a sorority? If yes, which one?
12. How does your family influence your decisions about dating?
13. How do your friends influence your decisions about dating?
14. What is your mother's educational level?
15. What is your father's educational level?
16. What is your mother's mother's educational level?
17. What is your mother's father's educational level?

18. What is your father's mother's educational level?
19. What is your father's father's educational level?
20. How much of an influence do your religious values have on your decisions about dating?
21. Are your parents still married? If so, what do you think keeps their marriage together? If not, what caused them to separate?
22. In how many dating relationships have you been involved to date?
23. What are some of the things you like about yourself and why?
24. What are some of the things you dislike about yourself and why?
25. If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be?
26. How important is African-American heritage to you and why?
27. Did or do your parents or other family members talk to you about your African-American heritage?
28. Has your mother talked to you about what men are like? What did she say? How did it make you feel? Why?
29. Has your father talked to you about what men are like? What did he say? How did it make you feel? Why?

#### Section 2: Physical Appearance

30. What are some qualities about an African-American male you find attractive?
31. What are some qualities about an African-American male you find unattractive?
32. When an African-American male approaches you, what are the first thing(s) you notice about him?
33. Is the height of a male important to you? Why?
34. What style of dress makes a man attractive to you? Why?
35. What is your current height?
36. Do you prefer darker- or lighter-skinned males? Why?

37. Do you find muscular/athletic African-American males attractive? Why?
38. Does it matter whether a male speaks proper English or not? Why?

### Section 3: General Characteristics

39. During a relationship what do expect your boyfriend to do in order to keep the relationship going? Why?
40. Does religious affiliation play a role in your mate selection? Why? If so, how?
41. Does his knowledge of African-American heritage play a role in your mate selection? Why?
42. Do strong family ties play a role in mate selection? Why?
43. Do you see African-American males who drive fancy cars as more attractive than African-American males who do not drive fancy cars? Why?
44. Does a man having a job factor into your mate selection? Why?
45. Do you find African-American males who are sensitive in their emotions attractive? Why?
46. Do you find African-American males who act tough and strong in public attractive? Why?
47. Is having a goal in life a factor in mate selection?
48. What expectations do you have of a mate in a relationship? Why?
49. What mistakes caused by a mate would result in immediate termination?
50. What behaviors of a mate would make you even more attracted to him?
51. What kind of attitudes displayed by an African-American male make him attractive to you?
52. How important is a mate's educational level to you in relationship selection?
53. Would you be more attracted to a man who is in a fraternity?
54. How important is popularity to you when you look for a mate?
55. Is it important that your mate shares your interests?

56. Is it important that your mate enjoys the same recreational activities that you do?

Section 4: Problems Today and Interracial Relationships

57. What do you like most about African-American males?
58. What do you like least about African-American males?
59. Do you sometimes feel that there are no eligible African-American males to date? Why?
60. What do you think are the main problems in African-American relationships?
61. How did most of your failed relationships end? How did it make you feel? Why?
62. Do you sometimes feel that you are competing with other African-American females in trying to find a mate?
63. How do you think African-American relationships can improve?
64. Do any of your friends date men whom you feel they should discard? Why?
65. Why do you think an increasing number of African-American males is deciding to date outside of their race?
66. Why do you think some African-American women decide to date outside their race?
67. Do you feel offended when you see African-American males with women of different races romantically? Why?
68. Have you dated outside your race? If so, what made you decide to date interracially? Why?
69. How do you feel about interracial relationships in general? Why?
70. How does your mother feel about interracial relationships? Why?
71. How does your father feel about interracial relationships? Why?
72. How do your parents react if/when you are dating interracially? Why?
73. Do your family's views about interracial dating affect whether or not you date interracially? Why?



74. If/when you decide to date outside the race, what characteristics do you look for in a mate? Why?
75. Do your friend's views on interracial relationships affect whether or not you decide to date interracially? Why?

## REFERENCES

- Aborampah, Osei-Mensah. 1989. "Black Male-Female Relationships." *Journal of Black Studies* 19(3):320-42.
- Asante, Molefi K. 1998. "The African American as African." *Diogenes* 46(184):39-50.
- Bell, Yvonne R., Cathy L. Bouie, and Joseph A. Baldwin. 1990. "Afrocentric Cultural Consciousness and African-American Male-Female Relationships." *Journal of Black Studies* 21(2):162-89.
- Blake, Wayne M. and Carol Anderson Darling. 2000 "Quality of Life: Perceptions of African-Americans." *Journal of Black Studies* 30(3):411-27.
- Bolton, Charles D. 1958. "Behavior, Experience, and Relationships: A Symbolic Interactionist Point of View." *American Journal of Sociology* 64(1): 45-58.
- Brim, Orville G. and Stanton Wheeler. 1966. *Socialization after Childhood: Two Essays*. New York: Wiley and Sons.
- Broman, Clifford L., Harold W. Neighbors, and James S. Jackson. 1988. "Racial Group Identification among Black Adults." *Social Forces* 67(1):146-58.
- Burgess, Norma J. 1994. "Gender Roles Revisited: The Development of the Woman's Place among African-American Women in the United States." *Journal of Black Studies* 24(4):391-401.
- Burgest, David R. 1990. "Sexual Games in Black Male/Female Relations." *Journal of Black Studies* 21(1):103-16.
- Burgest David R. and Mary Goosby. 1985. "Games in Black Male/Female Relationships." *Journal of Black Studies* 15(3):277-90.
- Buss, David M, Todd K. Shackelford, Lee A. Kirkpatrick, and Randy J Larsen. 2001. "A Half Century of Mate Preferences: The Cultural Evolution of Values." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63:491-503
- Cash, Thomas F. and Nancy C. Duncan. 1984. "Physical Attractiveness Stereotyping among Black American College Students." *The Journal of Social Psychology* 122:71-77.

- Cazenave, Noel A. 1983. "Black Male-Black Female Relationships: The Perceptions of 155 Middle Class Black Men." *Family Relations* 32:341-50.
- Chapman, Audrey B. 1997. *The Search for Love and Devotion: Facing the Future against All Odds*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Childs, Erica C. 2005. Navigating Interracial Borders: Black-White Couples and their Social Worlds. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Collins, Patricia H. 2004. *Black Sexual Politics: African-Americans, Gender, and The New Racism*. New York: Routledge.
- Cooley, Charles H. 1902. Human Nature and the Social Order. New York: Schoken.
- Constantine, Madonna G. and Sha'kema M. Blackmon. 2002. "Black Adolescents' Racial Socialization Experiences: Their Relations to Home, School, and Peer Self-esteem." *Journal of Black Studies* 32(3):322-35.
- Dade, Lennell R. and Lloyd R. Sloan. 2000. "An Investigation of Sex-Role Stereotypes in African-Americans." *Journal of Black Studies* 30(5):676-90.
- Demo, David H. and Michael Hughes. 1990. "Socialization and Racial Identity among Black Americans." *American Journal of Sociology* 53(4):364-74.
- Dixon, Patricia. 1998. "Employment Factors in Conflict in African-American Heterosexual Relationships: Some Perceptions of Women." *Journal of Black Studies* 28(4):491-505.
- Dove, Nah. 1998. "African Womanism: An Afrocentric Theory." *Journal of Black Studies* 28(5):515-39.
- DuBois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Fine Creative Media.
- Foeman, Anita K. and Teresa Nance. 1999. "From Miscegenation to Multiculturalism: Perceptions and Stages of Interracial Relationship Development". *Journal of Black Studies* 29 (4): 540-57.
- Franklin II, Clyde W. 1984. "Black Male-Black Female Conflict: Individually Caused and Culturally Nurtured." *Journal of Black Studies* 15(2):139-54.
- Goffman, Erving. 1957. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1967. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. New York: Patheon.
- Hare, Nathan and Janis Hare. 1992 "African-American Relationships: Sexual Conflict amid Emerging Family Development." *Black Collegian* 22(4).
- Hewitt, John P. 1997. *Self and Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Psychology*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Needham Heights, MS: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hill, Mark E. 2002. "Skin Color and the Perception of Attractiveness among African-Americans: Does Gender Make a Difference?" *Social Psychology Quarterly* 65(1):77-91.
- Hill, Shirley A. 2001. "Class, Race, and Gender Dimensions of Children in African-American Families." *Journal of Black Studies* 31(4):494-508.
- hooks, Bell. 2000. *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. New York: Routledge.
- Howard-Mosley, Susan G. and Cheryl Burgan Evens. 2000. "Relationships and Contemporary Experiences of the African-American Family." *Journal of Black Studies* 30(3):428-52.
- Hughes, Michael and David H. Demo. 1989. "Self-Perceptions of Black Americans: Self-esteem and Personal Efficacy." *American Journal of Sociology* 95(1):132-59.
- Hughes, Michael and Bradley R. Hertel. 1990. "The Significance of Color Remains: A Study of Life Chances, Mate Selection, and Ethnic Consciousness among Black Americans." *Social Forces* 68(4):1150-20.
- Hunter, Andrea G. and James Earl Davis. 1994. "Hidden Voices of Black Men: The Meaning, Structure, and Complexity of Manhood." *Journal of Black Studies*. 25(1):20-40.
- Hutchinson, Janis F. 1999. "The Hip-Hop Generation: African-American Male-female Relationships in a Nightclub Setting." *Journal of Black Studies* 30(1):62-84.
- Jacobs, Bruce A. 1999. *Race Manners: Navigating the Minefield between Black and White Americans*. New York: Arcade.
- Jean, Yanick St. 1998. "Let People Speak for Themselves: Interracial Unions and the General Social Survey". *Journal of Black Studies* 28(3):398-414.

- Kalmijn, Matihjis. 1993. "Trends in Black/White Intermarriage". *Social Forces* 72(1):119-46.
- Kane, Connie M. 2000. "African-American Family Dynamics as Percieved by Family Members." *Journal of Black Studies* 30(5):691-702.
- King, Anthony E.O. 1999. "African-American Females' Attitudes toward Marriage." *Journal of Black Studies*. 29(3):416-37.
- Lewis, Richard Jr., George Yancey, and Siri S. Bletzer. 1997. "Racial and Nonracial Factors That Influence Spouse Choice in Black/White Marriages". *Journal of Black Studies* 28(1):60-78.
- Manning, Phillip. 1992. *Erving Goffman and Modern Sociology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Mizell, Andre' C. 1999. "Life Course Influences on African-American Men's Depression: Adolescent Parental Composition, Self-Concept, and Adult Earnings." *Journal of Black Studies* 29(4):467-90.
- Mosley, Walter, Manthia Diawara, Clyde Taylor, and Regina Austin, eds. 1999. *Black Genius: African-American Solutions to African-American Problems*. New York: W.W Norton.
- Oliver, William. 1989. "Black Males and Social Problems: Prevention through Afrocentric Socialization." *Journal of Black Studies* 20(1):15-39.
- Porter, Margaret M. and Arline L. Bronzaft. 1995. "Do the Future Plans of Educated Black Women Include Black Mates?" *Journal of Negro Education* 64(2):162-70.
- Rose, Tricia. 1994. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University.
- Ross, Louie E. 1997. "Mate Selection Preferences among African-American College students." *Journal of Black Studies* 27(4):554-69.
- Smith, Lori R., Ann Kathleen Burlew, and David C. Lundgren. 1991. "Black Consciousness, Self-esteem, and Satisfaction with Physical Appearance among African-American Female College Students." *Journal of Black Studies* 22(2):269-83.
- Sprecher, Susan. 1998. "Insiders' Perspectives on Reasons for Attraction to a Close Other." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 61(4):287-300.

- St. Jean, Yanick. 1998. "Let People Speak For Themselves: Interracial Unions and the General Social Survey." *Journal of Black Studies* 28(3): 389-414.
- Thompson, Maxine S. and Verna M. Keith. 2001. "The Blacker the Berry: Gender, Skin Tone, Self-Esteem, and Self-Efficacy." *Gender and Society* 15(3):336-57.
- Tucker, Belinda M. and Claudia Mitchell-Kernan. 1990. "New Trends in Black American Interracial Marriage: The Social Structural Context". *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52:209-18.
- Wade, Joel T. 2003. "Evolutionary Theory and African-American Self-Perception: Sex Differences in Body-Esteem Predictors of Self-Perceived Physical and Sexual Attractiveness, and Self-esteem." *Journal of Black Psychology* 29(2):123-41.
- Wilson, John W. and Madonna G. Constantine. 1999. "Racial Identity Attitudes, Self-Concept, and Perceived Family Cohesion in Black College Students." *Journal of Black Studies* 29(3):354-66.
- Yancey, George. 2009. "Crossracial Differences in the Racial Preferences of Potential Dating Partners: A Test of the Alienation of African-Americans and Social Dominance Orientation." *The Social Quarterly* 50:121-143.
- Yancey, George A. and Sherelyn W. Yancey. 1997. "Black-White Differences in The Use of Personal Advertisements for Individuals Seeking Interracial Relationships." *Journal of Black Studies* 27(5):650-67.
- Zebroski, Sheryline A. 1999. "Black-White Intermarriages: The Racial and Gender Dynamics of Support and Oppression." *Journal of Black Studies* 30 (1):123-32.