

FACTORS THAT AFFECT COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD
INTERRACIAL DATING

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Thesis Prepared for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2001

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Gafford, Farrah D., Factors That Affect College Students' Attitudes Toward Interracial Dating. M.S. (Sociology), August 2001, 33 pp., 6 tables, 26 references.

This study was designed to examine the attitudes of undergraduate students toward interracial dating. The study examined the influence of race, gender, and previous interracial dating experience on interracial dating attitudes. The independent variable of racial identity salience was also examined. A final sample consisted of 389 students, recruited from first year political science classes at the University of North Texas. An 11-item self administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. The results indicated that race and previous interracial dating experience was associated with college students' attitudes. A weak association was also found between greater racial identity salience and less positive interracial dating attitudes. Future research should further examine racial identity salience and its role in partner selection.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express her deepest gratitude to professors and mentors, Dr. Russell Willis and Dr. Frances Staten, at Grambling State University for providing their assistance and encouragement throughout this project. I would like to also thank Dr. Rudy Seward, Dr. Lisa Garza, Dr. Arminta Jacobson and Dr. Daniel Jones for helping me to develop a quality thesis project for the completion of my Master's degree. Finally, I would like to thank the members of the political science department at the University of North Texas for their cooperation and allowing me to survey their students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The population growth of minority groups in the United States, along with previous integration of races in schools, places of employment, and other social institutions has resulted in greater interaction among racial groups. Not only has interaction occurred in different social settings; this interaction may be witnessed on more levels that are of an intimate nature (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). One of the noticeable results of this interaction is likely to be an increasing number of interracial couples in society. Qian (1999) revealed “Interracial marriages among all marriages increased from .7% in 1970 to 1.3% in 1980 and to 2.2% in 1992.” (p. 263).

The prevalence of interracial relationships is one indication of the deterioration of racial barriers. These unions represent a decline in “racial distance” and are a step in the direction of more positive race relations in this country (Lee & Fernandez, 1998; Qian, 1999). According to Milton Gordon, interracial marriages are part of the “acculturation and assimilation process (Gordon, 1964). Marital assimilation was the third stage in the seven-stage assimilation process outlined by Gordon. During the marital assimilation stage, members of society would accept interracial marriages just as marriages of people of the same racial group were accepted.

Historically, interracial unions were met with opposition. The issue of interracial unions carries extra importance in this country because “no nation other than the United States has ever prohibited interracial marriage” (A. I. Gordon, 1964, p. 222). Prior to the Loving v. Commonwealth of Virginia case in 1967, Black and White interracial marriages were unlawful in

many states (Spikard, 1989). Violation of this law could have lead to possible imprisonment or to the marriages being declared invalid.

Although law no longer prohibits interracial relationships, these relationships are still not fully accepted in society. The controversy over interracial relationships has not diminished over time. Even today, bi-racial couples may face discrimination, ostracism or harassment from friends, family members or society in general (Brown, 1980-1990; Lewis & Yancey, 1995). Studies reveal that some individuals still harbor less favorable attitudes about interracial relationships (Mills, Daly, Longmore & Kilbride, 1995; Paset& Taylor, 1991; Sones & Holston, 1988).

Although research has been gathered and data on interracial attitudes exist, there are gaps within the literature. The influences of race, gender and socio-economic status have all been previously examined within the research literature; however, research has neglected to investigate the influence of racial identity salience on interracial dating attitudes.

In the symbolic interactionist framework, the concept of salience “refers to the importance of
-Thompson, 1999, p.748). The overall commitment toward an identity influences the saliency of one’s identity. In turn, the salience of one’s identity impacts some of the choices an individual makes. It follows that a person with strong racial identity salience would perceive their membership in their racial group as relatively important to their lives and influence their attitudes to some degree. Therefore, it is expected that racial identity salience may influence a person’s attitudes toward interracial dating.

The purpose of this study will be to investigate college students’ attitudes toward interracial dating. This research seeks to add to the current literature on interracial dating attitudes, and illuminate some neglected areas in the current research. Examining dating attitudes is important

because, dating is seen as a precursor to marriage, and it creates an opportunity for mate selection.

Research Questions

The following questions directed the research.

- A. What are the attitudes of undergraduate students concerning interracial dating?
- B. Are there differences by gender for certain attitudes held by undergraduate students?
- C. Are there differences in the types of attitudes held by students with prior interracial dating experience versus those without prior interracial dating experience?
- D. Are there differences in the types of attitudes held by racial groups concerning interracial dating?
- E. What is the relationship between the level of one's racial identity salience and their attitudes toward interracial dating?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes Regarding Interracial Relationships

Much of the literature on interracial relationships focuses on the attitudes people hold. It is difficult to measure such attitudes because the issue of interracial relationships is multi-dimensional. For example, attitudes may vary according to the type of relationship is being discussed within the study or the actual racial composition of the relationship. The literature discusses attitudes concerning friendships, dating and marriages and the differences in the attitudes according to race and gender (Knox, Zusman, Buffington & Hemphill, 2000; Mills, Daly, Longmore, & Kilbride, 1995; Todd, Mckinney, Harris, Chadderton, & Small, 1992).

Previously empirical studies have shown Blacks to be more accepting of interracial relationships when compared to Whites. Mills, Daly, Longmore, and Kilbride (1995) examined attitudes toward interracial friendships and relationships. The researchers used an Assessment Scale of Interracial Relationships (ASIR) to survey 142 undergraduate students at a university in the mid-west region of the United States. The study concluded Black students were more likely to engage in friendships with people of other races than were White students.

Black's favorable attitudes toward interracial relationships have been attributed to their minority status. As a minority group, Blacks have to interact more with the dominant, White culture than vice versa. This creates more opportunities for Blacks to form friendships or relationships with those outside of their race (Mills et al., 1995).

The attitudes of Blacks also suggest that they are more open to becoming involved in interracial dating. Knox, Zusman, Buffington, and Hemphill (2000) used a questionnaire to collect data on the attitudes of undergraduate students. This particular research assessed the attitudes of 620 university students on interracial dating by asking the students to respond using a likert scale to the item, “ I am open to dating someone outside of my race.” The survey revealed Black students were more open to dating someone outside of their race than were White students.

The study discussed the possibility of mothers in Black families setting the tone for approval or disapproval of interracial relationships. Therefore, if women displayed more accepting attitudes toward interracial relationships these attitudes would probably be transmitted to the children in Black families where mothers tend to be strong figures (Knox et al., 2000).

Most of the findings within the literature have tended to focus on Blacks and Whites’ attitudes while providing little information on the attitudes of other racial groups. There is a substantial gap within the literature on attitudes when it comes to other minority groups.

Some studies in the reviewed literature chose to focus on comparing Black and Whites attitudes (Paset & Taylor, 1991; Todd et al, 1992). Perhaps research has focused on these two groups more because no other combination of interracial relationships causes such disapproval as Black-White couples (Porterfield, 1982). The focus on Black and White attitudes may be a result of a history of discord and dissension between these two groups.

Differences in the attitudes between men and women have also been discussed within the literature. Mills et al. (1995) study on interracial friendships and romantic relationships found men and women alike possessed negative attitudes when it came to interracial relationships.

However, the women in the study “reported more negative prejudicial attitudes toward interracial relationships than did men” (p. 350). The research suggested that social conditioning could possibly be an explanation for the difference between men and women’s attitudes. These findings are consistent with those of Todd et al. (1992) where attitudes were observed by surveying 400 participants. The participants were asked to answer yes or no to being willing to date someone outside of their race. Men’s attitudes toward dating someone outside of their race were more positive than women.

Black women’s attitudes have been documented as being negative. Paset and Taylor (1991) conducted a survey study among Black and White female college students. The survey asked the participants to rate their attitudes towards interracial marriages between Blacks and Whites. Using a likert scale the respondents rated their response for the questions “what is your attitude toward a man of your race marrying a woman of a different race” and “what is your attitude toward a woman of your race marrying a man of a different race” (p. 753). The scores of the Black women tended to cluster around the unfavorable end of the spectrum, while the opposite was true for the White women. The authors suggested, “black women perceive interracial marriages of black men and women as substantively more threatening to their personal and racial welfare than do white women” (Paset & Taylor, 1991 p.745). These attitudes may also reflect what some Black women see as the decreasing number of available Black men or the idea that races should not mix as far as marriages and relationships are concerned (Brown, 1987).

Racial Identity

Racial identity centers on “ an individual psychological attachment to a social category based on race, skin color or a common history of oppression and discrimination attributable to skin color” (Sanders-Thompson, 1999, p. 748). It is not unusual for group members to perceive their racial identity in different ways, nor does it hold true that racial identity will be an integral part of every group member’s self concept. The differences can be attributed to the salience of one’s racial identity.

The reviewed literature on racial identity reveals that the importance of racial identity varies according to each racial group (Jaret & Reitzes, 1999; White & Burke, 1987). Research has indicated that when compared to Whites and other racial groups, racial identity is more important to Blacks. Jaret and Reitzes (1999) conducted telephone interviews to examine the importance of racial-ethnic identity among 533 respondents. The researchers found Black’s racial-ethnic identity was more important to their self-concept than it was for multi-racials and Whites in the survey. It has been suggested that Blacks view racial identity as more important because the topic of racial identity for Blacks has been at the forefront of many debates throughout time. Hence, it has been argued that inevitably racial identity has become more salient to Blacks. Studies on Whites and racial identity have suggested just the opposite. Because of their dominant status, Whites are less likely to place as much emphasis on their race. Therefore, racial-ethnic identity of Whites has been described as “hidden” and not as important to their overall self concept (Jaret & Reitzes, 1999, p. 713).

The identity theory developed by Stryker proposes that the self is composed of “a hierarchical ordering of identities” (Gecas & Burke, 1995 , p. 45). For example, an African

American woman may identify more strongly with being a woman than being African American; therefore, her gender identity would rank higher on her hierarchy of identities. She may then be inclined to activate that identity in a given situation or just be more committed to that particular identity. Stryker and Serpe (1994) noted that identities are arranged “by the probability of their being involved in a given situation or in a series of situations” (p. 17). Furthermore, the overall commitment toward an identity influences the saliency of one’s identity.

The Relationship Between Racial Identity and Attitudes Regarding Interracial Relationships

Racial identity issues have been a focus when examining interracial relationships. In some instances, one’s racial identity may be attacked because of their involvement in an interracial relationship. Participating in a relationship with someone of another race may cause an individual to raise questions about their own identity or for others to challenge their identity. Strong questions may arise about how “true” or “real” a person is to his or her race/ethnicity if they engage in interracial dating or marriages.

Rosenblatt, Karris, and Powell (1995) addressed the issue of challenges to one’s identity with interracial couples. The authors interviewed twenty-one interracial couples in a qualitative study. The purpose of this study was to gather information about experiences as being part of an interracial couple. The couples were comprised of one Black partner and one White partner. Participants were asked to discuss identity issues as part of their interview. Some of the participants revealed that they felt that their views on racism were “discredited” because they were involved with a person of another race. Black participants of the study mentioned how in

some instances the Black community was suspicious of their credibility. One of the participants described one of his experiences as he taught Black history to one of his classes:

I was teachin' a history class . . . and . . . one of my students [said], “. . . How can you say that? Your wife is white.” That threw the whole class into chaos. . . It was like, “ How can you teach this class if you're married to a white

Although authors Rosenblatt, Karris, and Powell (1995) noted that engaging in an interracial partnership did not contribute to the dissolution of one's racial identity, they did note that one's identity may be questioned by others which in turn may cause those who participate to question their own identity.

Hill and Thomas (2000) focused on racial identity development of women whose partners were of a different race. Narratives of the participants revealed how they rejected damaging experiences that would adversely affect their identity. Instead, participants described various strategies that they used in order to change damaging experiences into experiences that would ultimately empower their racial identity. These strategies included “screening” which participants described as surrounding themselves with people who supported their decisions to be a part of an interracial couple. Another strategy discussed was direct confrontation. Through direct confrontation, the women responded to negative comments or stares. For some participants, this was one way to let people know that they were not ashamed of their relationships. The researchers concluded that with the use of these strategies the women were actively taking part in their racial identity development.

While the research reveals that engaging in interracial unions have strong implications for racial identity, research has not discussed the influence of racial identity salience on interracial dating attitudes. If people question the racial identity of those who participate in interracial dating, it would be likely that they had strong racial identity salience. It follows that a person with a strong racial identity salience would perceive their membership in their racial group as relatively important to their lives and thus, influence their attitudes toward interracial dating.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study's population consisted of undergraduate students who attended the University of North Texas. For the year 2000, the university's undergraduate enrollment was 21,059 (45.1 % male, 54.9 % female). The distribution of the university's undergraduate population by racial group is as follows 71 % White, 10.3 % African American, 8.6 % Hispanic, 4.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, .8% American Indian and 2.1 % Unknown (University of North Texas Fact book, 2000).

In an attempt to represent the diversity of the university's student body, participants were recruited from five, first year, political science. These political science classes were selected because they are a required part of the core curriculum for graduation from the university. The use of these classes was an attempt by the researcher to obtain the most representative sample for the study in both a timely and cost efficient manner.

Data Collection Procedure

Three teaching fellows from the political science department were contacted about the research project. The researcher discussed the study with the instructors and asked their permission to survey each of their first year level, political science classes. Five sections were surveyed for the purpose of the study. Before distributing the survey, the investigator informed the students that the survey was completely anonymous and that each participant had to be at

least 18 years old and never married in order to participate. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data during the beginning of each class. Upon completing the survey, the investigator collected each survey. Participation was voluntary, and each participant was informed of his/her rights by participating in the study through an Institutional Review Board approved consent letter (see appendix A).

Instrument

The survey instrument was comprised of 11 items (see appendix B). The demographic characteristics studied were age, gender and race. Participants were asked for their age in years. The variable of gender was coded as 1= female and 2= male. Racial groups were coded as 1 = African American/Black, 2= Hispanic/Latino, 3= White, 4=Asian, 5=Other. One item asked about previous interracial dating experience. Each participant was asked to respond yes or no to the item “Have you ever dated someone outside of your race?” The response of “yes” was coded as 1 and “no” was coded as 2.

In order to measure the salience of racial identity, a racial salience index was adapted from existing instruments (Sander-Thompson, 1999; White & Burke, 1987). To tap this dimension, three items were indexed. The first item asked respondents “How important is it that your friends view and accept you according to your race?” Next, the respondents were asked “How important is it that people in general view and accept you in terms of your race?” Finally, the last item asked students “How important are race and racial identity to you?” For each question, the participants were asked to indicate how important by selecting from not very important, somewhat important, important or very important. The possible answers were coded

as follows: not very important =0, somewhat important=1, important=2 and very important=3.

The scores from each response were added together with 0 being the lowest possible score and 9 being the highest score. A high score indicated a strong racial identity salience, whereas a low score indicated a weak racial identity salience.

The investigator developed the remaining items on the questionnaire. The questionnaire assessed interracial dating attitudes by asking the participants to respond on a continuum including-strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, and strongly disagree to three statements. The items were coded as strongly agree =1, agree=2, unsure=3, disagree=4 and strongly disagree =5. The scores from each question were added with 3 being the lowest possible score and 15 being the highest possible score. A low score indicated disapproval toward interracial dating and a high score indicated approval of interracial dating. The participants were asked to respond to the following three statements: (1) I would prefer to only date someone of my race, (2) I would object if a family member started to date someone of another race, and (3) I would object if a close friend started to date someone outside of his/her race.

Prior to administering the questionnaire, the instrument was examined for face validity by several lay reviewers and then piloted among ten adults. Pilot test reviewers were asked not only to answer the questionnaire, but also to give the investigator feedback on each of the sections of the questionnaire. Based on the pilot testing and reviewer feedback, items were added, deleted or revised. The items pertaining to interracial dating attitudes were re-worded to simplify their readability. The alpha reliability coefficient for the interracial attitude index measures was .78.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science was used to analyze the data collected. After the data were coded, they were entered into a SPSS data file. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), independent t-test, ANOVA, and correlation tests were performed by the investigator for each research question.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter examines the distribution of the research variables and the influence of selected variables on undergraduate students' attitudes on interracial dating. First, the characteristics of the sample will be presented. Then the findings will be presented as they pertain to each research question.

The sample consisted of 389 undergraduate students. Among the respondents 224 were females, 164 were males and 1 person failed to indicate their gender. The racial breakdown of the sample was very similar to that of the university's undergraduate population. The racial breakdown of the sample was comprised of, Whites (70.6%), African Americans (10.3%), Hispanics (8.2%), Asians (4.4%), and others (6.4%). The mean age of the participant was about 20 years old (19.76). Of the sample, 46.9% reported having prior interracial dating experience and 53.1% reported having no prior interracial dating experience.

A summation of scores from the three items concerning interracial dating was calculated. The mean sum score of attitudes for the sample was 11.97 and the standard deviation was 2.53. The minimum and maximum scores were 4 and 15 respectively.

Table 1 displays the percentages of the responses for each question about interracial dating. Only 10.8% of the respondents "strongly agreed" with the statements "I would prefer to only date someone of my race" and less than 1 percent of the percent of the pa agreed" with the statement "I would object if a close friend started to date someone of another race." For the statement "I would object if a family member started to date someone outside

of his/her race” 1.3% “strongly agreed.” More than fifty percent of the participants “strongly disagreed” with the attitude questions that referred to a family member or a close friend dating outside of his/her race.

Table 1 also includes the means and standard deviations for each of the attitude items. The results show that the largest standard deviation was for the question “ I would prefer to date someone of my own race.” This indicates that there was more variation for this particular question when compared to the other two attitude items.

Table 1. Interracial Dating Attitude Responses

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	<u>M/</u> <u>SD</u>
I would prefer to only date someone of my race.	10.8	23.1	15.9	31.6	18.5	3.23 1.29 (389)
I would object if a family member started to date someone of another race.	1.3	4.6	10.3	32.9	50.9	4.27 .91 (389)
I would object if a close friend started to date someone outside of his/her race.	.3	2.8	5.9	33.2	57.8	4.45 .75 (389)

Parentheses indicate N values

Gender and Attitudes

Independent t-test results to determine difference by gender are summarized in Table 2. A summation of scores was obtained by using the scores from the three attitude items. The minimum score for attitudes was three, and the maximum score was fifteen. A low score over the interracial dating attitude questions indicated that the participant was opposed to interracial dating. As revealed in this table the independent t- test analysis yielded an observed value of .985, $df=386$, $p=.325$. Although women obtained a higher mean score indicating they held more accepting attitudes toward interracial dating, the difference was not statistically significant between the attitude scores of college men and women.

Table 2. Independent t-test for the Independent Variable of Gender

Dependent Variable		Male	Female	t	df	p
Attitudes Regarding Interracial Dating	Mean	11.82	12.08	.985	386	.325
	SD	2.63	2.4			
	N	164	224			

Previous Interracial Dating Experience and Attitudes

An independent t-test result to indicate the impact of previous interracial dating experience is presented in Table 3. A statistically significant difference was found between the mean sum attitude scores by dating experience. The mean score for those with dating experience was 13.00 while the mean score for those without interracial dating experience was 11.03. The

higher mean score for those with dating experience indicates a greater acceptance toward interracial dating.

Table 3. Independent t-test results for the Independent Variable of Previous Dating Experience

Dependent Variable	Experience		t	df	p	
	Experience	No Experience				
Attitudes	Mean	13.00	11.03	8.26	386	.000
Regarding	SD	1.97	2.62			
Interracial Dating	N	182	206			

Race and Interracial Dating Attitudes

Table 4 displays the mean and standard deviations of attitude scores for each racial/ethnic group examined within the study. As witnessed in the table the lowest mean score of 11.65 belonged to the Asians. The Other racial group obtained the highest mean score, 13.64, of all of the racial/ethnic groups. The statistical technique of ANOVA (analysis of variance) was performed in order to determine if there was a statistical difference among the means of the racial/ethnic groups. The test found a significant difference between the mean scores of the racial groups. In order to pinpoint exactly where the differences were, a multiple comparison test was used. The Bonferroni test of comparison found a significant difference in the mean scores of the White and Other racial category. The mean sum score for Whites was 11.76 (2.57) and the score for “Others” was 13.64 (2.01). The higher mean score of “Others” indicates favorable attitudes toward interracial dating.

Table 4. Means and Standard deviations for Interracial Attitude Scores for Racial/Ethnic Groups.

Race/Ethnic Group	N	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>
African- American/Black	40	1.96	12.10
White	274	2.57	11.76
Hispanic/Latino	32	2.44	12.47
Asian	17	3.28	11.65
Other	25	2.02	13.64
Total	388	2.54	11.97

Table 5. ANOVA for Racial Groups

Source of Variation	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	4	92.316	23.079	3.675*
Within Groups	383	2405.313	6.280	
Total	387	2497.629		

* $p < .05$

Racial Identity Salience and Interracial Dating Attitudes

In order to examine the research question “What is the relationship between racial identity salience and interracial dating attitudes?” a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient

between the categories scores of racial identity salience and interracial dating attitudes was calculated. The result of the test found a negative, weak correlation (-.138) between racial identity salience scores and interracial dating attitudes scores. A negative correlation indicates that as racial identity salience scores increase, acceptance of interracial dating decreased. The relationship was statistically significant at the .01 level.

Table 5 shows the responses for each of the racial salience questions, along with the mean and standard deviation for each question. The table also includes the percentages of the responses for each question about racial identity salience. As witnessed by the data, the highest mean score for a racial salience identity item was 1.00 and the lowest mean score for an item was .94.

Table 5. Racial Identity Salience Responses

	Not Very Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	M/ SD
How important is it that your friends view and accept you according to your race?	51.3	18.3	15.2	15.2	.94 1.13 (389)
How important is it that people in general view and accept you in terms of your race?	47.2	22.2	19.1	11.6	.95 1.06 (389)
How important are race and racial identity to you?	40.6	28.9	20.7	9.8	1.00 1.00 (388)

Parentheses indicates N value

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Review of the Study

This study examined the attitudes of undergraduate students concerning interracial dating. The variables studied were the students' race, gender, previous dating experience and racial identity salience. The results of this study will be discussed in two sections. The first section will discuss the findings as they pertain to each research question. In the second section, the implications for future research will be discussed.

College Students' Attitudes Toward Interracial Dating

Findings from the study suggest that the students may be open to dating someone outside of their race. This finding is very similar to Knox et al. (2000) who found that 49.6 % of the students surveyed expressed an openness to participate in interracial dating. Knox and colleagues cited the increase of minority enrollment in universities as a possible reason for college students' attitudes to be more approving of interracial dating. In addition, it has been suggested that college students challenge traditional values that may lead them to reject taboos and therefore be open to interracial dating (Aldridge, 1978). This appears to be the case at the university studied as just over half of the students surveyed disagreed with preferring to only date within their own race.

The attitudes also reflect that the majority of the students are not opposed to friends or family members dating outside of his or her race. Even most of the students who would prefer to date someone of their own race expressed that they would not object to another person's choice to date outside of their race. The literature discusses familial and friendship support of

interracial relationships. Having support and a kinship network is an asset for interracial couples. According to Zebroski, (1999) “ a tolerant environment is helpful not only for the formation of these relationships, but also for the day -to-day survival ” (p. 124). The high percentages of ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ responses to the last two attitude items suggest that participants would offer this support to family members and close friends.

Gender and Interracial Dating Attitudes

The study did not find a significant difference in the interracial dating attitude scores between men and women. This finding is similar to that of Knox et al (2000), where no significant difference in the attitudes of men and women was found. Although no significance was found in this research, more men than women strongly agreed to the statement, “ I would prefer to only date someone of my own race.” These results are inconsistent with those of Mills and associates (1995) that found women more likely than men to exhibit greater prejudicial attitudes toward interracial relationships. The authors offered social conditioning as a possible explanation for the difference between men and women’s prejudicial attitudes. The findings on the relationship between gender and attitudes appear to be either weak or inconsistent within the literature.

Previous Interracial Dating Experience and Interracial Dating Attitudes

A significant difference was found between the average attitude scores of those with prior interracial dating experience versus those without prior interracial dating experience. This finding coincides with previous work that discusses the impact that exposure to other races has on interracial dating attitudes. Knox et al. (2000) found students who had dated interracially to be more open to participating in an interracial relationship again. The authors suggested that as a person’s exposure to other races increases, they become more open to interacting with

different races. Therefore, those students with prior experience with dating other races may be more comfortable with entering another interracial relationships due to their previous experience with a person of another race. It is not clear whether favorable attitudes expressed by the students in the study existed prior to the interracial dating or if it occurred as a result of dating interracially. Students could have possessed positive interracial dating attitudes prior to dating someone of another race.

Race and Interracial Dating Attitudes

A significant difference was found between the attitudes for certain racial groups. A multiple comparison test noted that the greatest difference was between the racial groups of Whites and Others. The Other category consisted mainly of students who were bi-racial (i.e. White and Hispanic, Black and White). The Other's higher mean score on interracial dating attitudes is not surprising because they are offspring of interracial unions. This is a new finding as bi-racial student have not been discussed in previous studies.

Although a significant difference was not found between Blacks and Whites, Blacks did posses a higher mean score. Past studies have shown Blacks to be more accepting based on the idea that their minority status requires them to become more involved with dominant, White group in society. Furthermore, it follows that Blacks have more experience with interacting with Whites than vise versa therefore, causing there attitudes to be more accepting than Whites.

The study was able to also provide information on the attitudes of the Hispanic/Latino group, which the current literature has neglected. The Hispanic group's mean score indicated relatively positive attitudes about interracial dating. Although significant difference was not discovered, the mean score of Hispanics was larger than the mean score of Blacks.

A study by Qian (1999) reveals that educational attainment has a greater impact on Hispanics' likelihood to marry outside of their race. The accepting attitudes toward interracial dating noted within the study and the fact that the Hispanic students surveyed are furthering their education, may be an indication on the future interracial marital trends on the part of this group.

Racial Identity Salience and Interracial Dating Attitudes

The correlation between racial identity salience scores and interracial dating attitudes was statistically significant. As expected, a negative, weak relationship between the two variables suggested that as racial identity salience scores increase there is a decrease in positive interracial dating attitudes. The more salient a student perceives his/her racial identity to be, their attitudes toward interracial dating become less favorable. This is another unique contribution of this study, as previous research has not examined the influence of racial identity salience on interracial dating attitudes. Stryker's identity theory may be useful to understanding the relationship between racial identity salience and interracial dating attitudes, but as mentioned here the association is rather modest. However, the concepts should be researched further. It is likely that participants with high racial identity scores placed racial identity high within their hierarchy of identities. Because racial identity and race would be important to these students, it may be equally as important in choosing people to date. More specifically, they may view dating someone of another race as a threat to their racial identity. Further investigation on racial identity salience would be needed in order to fully understand its influence on attitudes.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was the sampling technique used in the research. While the intended population for the survey was all undergraduate college students, a convenience sample of students attending the University of North Texas was used instead. Although the sample of convenience assisted the researcher in fiscal and time restraints but certain groups, such as community college transfers and students choosing to take this class elsewhere was excluded. Also, students at private schools and other regions of the country were not represented. This type of sample makes it inappropriate to generalize the findings to the general population.

In addition, the use of cross sectional data makes it impossible to determine cause and effect. For example, there was no way of determining if dating patterns change attitudes or if attitudes change dating patterns.

Implications and Conclusion

The findings from this study contribute to the current literature on interracial relationships. This study was able to supply information about the attitudes of other minority groups, which was missing from previous studies in this area. The findings on the attitudes of Hispanic/Latinos and multi-racial students opens should be investigated in future research. Additionally, this study went a step further and introduced a new variable into the literature. Racial identity salience, which has not been previous discussed within the literature on interracial dating attitudes, was examined in this study.

Implications for race relations stem from this study's findings that almost half of the students admitted to previous dating experience with someone outside of their race. Assuming

interracial dating is a true indication of better race relations, observing these attitudes among college students may assist college administrators to assess the racial climate on their college campuses.

In conclusion, the findings from this study did indicate that most undergraduate students possessed positive attitudes toward interracial dating. Although significant difference in the attitudes between men and women was not found, a significant difference was found in the attitudes of those with previous dating experience versus those without previous dating experience. Students with previous interracial dating experience were found to have more favorable attitudes toward interracial dating than those without. Future research should further examine racial identity's influence on interracial dating attitudes to gain a better understanding of the relationship between racial identity salience and interracial dating attitudes.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

To all participating students

I am a graduate student in the department of Sociology here at UNT. I am conducting a research project and I would like your help with it. The purpose of the study is to learn more about college student's attitudes on interracial dating.

If you participate in this research project, you will be asked to answer questions from a research questionnaire. The survey will take about ten minutes to complete. In order to participate in the study you must be at least 18 years old, and never have been married.

As a participant in this study, you will not be asked for your name or student identification number. Therefore, it should not be possible to link your responses to a questionnaire. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time, if you so desire. You may ask any questions during or immediately following the completion of the questionnaire. Thank you for your participation and help with my research.

Farrah Gafford

214-340-1659/ farrahdg@hotmail.com or Dr. Rudy Ray Seward 940-565-2295

Appendix B

Racial Identity and Interracial Dating Questionnaire

Below is a list of questions that measure how important your race is to you. Please circle the number that reflects how important the matter in each statement is to you. Each number indicates a level of importance; (0) not very important, (1) somewhat important, (2) important and (3) very important.

	Not very important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
1. How important is it that your friends view and accept you according to your race?	0	1	2	3
2. How important is it that people in general view and accept you in terms of your race?	0	1	2	3
3. How important are race and racial identity to you?	0	1	2	3

The following sets of questions are statements about interracial dating. Please circle whether you agree or disagree with each statement using the following choices: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) unsure, (4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. I would prefer to only date someone of my race.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I would object if a family member started to date someone of another race.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I would object if a close friend started to date someone outside of his/her race.	1	2	3	4	5

The following questions ask for information about you so that the researcher will be able to have a general picture of the people filling out this questionnaire. This information will not identify you in any way. Only grouped data will be reported

Please indicate your gender by circling one of the following. Female Male

What is your age? ____

Have you ever dated someone outside of your race: Yes No

Please indicate your race by circling one of the following:

African American/Black Hispanic/Latino White Asian Other, specify

Please indicate your major(s). _____

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