Intimate Intersections: Exploring the Perspectives of Interracial Partners
in Heterosexual Romantic Relationships

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
under the Executive Committee
of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2017
ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the present study was to explore the endorsement of racial colorblind attitudes among partners in heterosexual interracial romantic relationships, as well as identify the potential effects of a colorblind ideology upon mental health and wellbeing. For interracial partners, race is simultaneously a fundamental part of their relationship with far-reaching implications, and also, simply put, one of many parts. Research attests that while some interracial partners proactively acknowledge race and initiate racial dialogue, others avoid or choose not to “see” race with their significant others (Killian, 2012; Steinbugler, 2012). From a counseling psychology framework, racial colorblindness, or the denial of the importance of race, minimizes the centrality of race and racism – when in fact race continues to hold the power to define social reality (Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Blumel, 2013). This study investigated the degree to which different interracial partners in heterosexual relationships report racial colorblindness or strategic colorblindness, and if such views impacted self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. Significant differences between partners of color and White partners in strategic colorblindness were indicated from independent-samples t-tests, and a series of one-way between-group analyses of variance found significant differences specifically between Asian and White partners. Multiple regression analyses found no significant associations between any type of
colorblindness and relationship satisfaction and no significant associations between self-esteem or relationship esteem and strategic colorblindness. Additional post-hoc analyses that examined demographic characteristics of the sample found specific intersections of gender and race to be associated with strategic colorblindness. History of being in an interracial relationship and relationship length of time were also significantly associated with relationship satisfaction and colorblind racial attitudes, respectively. Limitations of the present study and directions for future research are discussed. Results from this study can be used to identify multiculturally considerate strategies for clinicians working with interracial partners, and bridge growing interracial scholarship with emerging research on racial colorblindness.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A sincere thank you to the participants whose perspectives and relationships are reflected in this study. Special thanks to those who reached out during the recruitment phase to share their curiosities, reactions, ideas, and support for this research idea. I count it a privilege and joy to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Loving v. Virginia this year with you.

I want to express gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Laura Smith – thank you for your feedback and shaping of this project, from the first encouragement to brainstorm research ideas with the team until now. We have come a long way, and I truly would not have gotten to this point without your help, patience, and remarkable editing skills. I would also like to thank the rest of my dissertation committee: Drs. Brandon Velez, Elizabeth Tipton, Cindy Huang, and Brenda Mejia-Smith, for the constructive and creative ways you urged me to think about my research questions and data. I am grateful to have had a sponsor and committee of exceptional scholars propel my growth as a researcher and a critically thinking counseling psychologist.

Thank you to my incredible cohort: Aasha Foster, Amelia Walker, Joanna Rooney, and Rebecca Reed – there are bits and pieces of your ideas and suggestions in this project, as you were the first readers of my budding literature review back when it was assigned in our Review of Research class. That only seems appropriate, as I have gained so much from your brains, input, and friendship, which I am sure to pack with me for the journey ahead. Thank you for being a supportive and safe space to learn, grow, fall, and rest these last five years. An extra thank you to Aasha for your contagious work ethic, your tireless allyship, and freely sharing your knowledge of SPSS – especially while you were rowing your own boat to shore.

I am thankful for the incredible friends and community of faith who have supported me throughout the years it took me to get here – you know who you are. Whether it was allowing me
space to work without guilt, spending unearthly amounts of time with me in coffee shops all over
the city, expressing interest in my ideas, continuing to invite me to social events even when you
knew I could not go, providing spicy snacks in times of stress, or enthusiastically celebrating
every milestone along the way, even if you did not fully understand what it entailed – thank you
for your unconditional friendship.

To my parents and my one and only older brother: thank you for believing in me and
doing everything it took so that I could have the opportunity to pursue a program and career that
I love. I did not know that I could be a researcher before I started this project, but I realized along
the way that a key part is simply having a self-initiated interest in understanding the world
around you and a knack for perceptive and persevering questions – traits that each of you has
modeled in some way, shape, or form for as long as I can remember. Thank you for pushing me
along and also reminding me not to work too hard and to get enough sleep.

And lastly, to my husband, best friend, and fellow cross-cultural traveler, Matt – I am
certain that I could not have completed this without you. Thank you. Not only for your
unflagging care of my heart and mind throughout this process, but also for persevering with me
in what it means to do race work as we travel across barriers. I could not imagine a better
traveling companion, as you are invigorated by challenge, notice what I fail to, let in what is
good and beautiful, and supply the much needed humor and snacks. You remind me that race
matters because it is the key to real relating.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Interracial romantic partners are key protagonists in the nation’s unfolding racial narrative, as their stories chronicle the ever-evolving significance of what it means to “see race” within our most intimate relationships. While racial scholarship has grown tremendously in the last few decades, far less is known about the lived experiences of interracial romantic partners – who arguably “develop skills to resolve problems that threaten the very foundation of our society” (Foeman & Nance, 1999, p. 553) while redrawing the racial lines most commonly known to divide.

The year 2017 will mark the semi centennial, or 50th anniversary, of Loving v. Virginia – the celebrated 1967 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that eradicated anti-miscegenation law, or the legal prohibition of heterosexual interracial marriage. This decision overthrew one of the longest-standing forms of statutory racial discrimination in America (Karthikeyen & Chin, 2002), and with it, the necessity of racial categorization was called into question, as recognizing racial differences became synonymous with the perpetuation of racism (Pascoe, 2009). In response, colorblind racial ideology – or the belief that race should be disregarded – was systemically adopted as a sign of national progress in the fight against racism (Moran, 2007). Today, colorblind racial ideology persists, often accompanied with the mindset that racism belongs entirely to a dark chapter of the past (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). Indeed, since Loving, some have interpreted the rise of interracial couples as the ushering in of a “post-racial” era, or a progressive era that has evolved beyond racial barriers (Hattery & Smith, 2013).

Proponents of colorblindness also reason that downplaying the relevance of racial categories
reduces the likelihood of racism or prejudice in favor of tolerance (Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers, & Ambady, 2010).

However, psychologists challenge the notion that racial colorblindness is truly beneficial or signals broader social advancement, as racial colorblindness has been associated with greater racial stereotyping (Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007) and relationship conflict in group settings (Meeussen, Otten, & Phalet, 2014). Colorblindness has also been linked to organizational-level maintenance of racial disparities (Block, 2016), internalized oppression (Neville, Coleman, Falconer, & Holmes, 2005), decreased identification and reporting of racism (Apfelbaum et al., 2010) and diminished empathy (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Tettegah, 2016).

Jeanine Schroer (2015), who wrote about the phenomenology of race, observed,

In *trying* not to know something, it seems you are hopelessly connected to and aware of the very knowing that you are trying to avoid. An epistemology of ignorance resolves this incoherence. The problem is not with some particular bit of knowledge, but rather with one’s *way of knowing*” (p.101).

Subsequently, overlooking race is a superficial eradication of its existence. In reality, the effort required to disregard race demands a high degree of attention and maintenance, perhaps contrary to common belief.

As scholars increasingly conceptualize race as an active social construction (Rothenberg, 2010), understanding the ways interracial partners approach the topic of race can provide insight into the assigned meaning of race, particularly in a personal and emotionally consequential context. Ioanide (2015) writes,

*Emotions shape the ways that people experience their worlds and interactions. They give people’s psychic realities and ideological convictions (however fictional or unfounded)*
their sense of realness. Emotions cinch or unravel people’s sense of individual and group identity. They help motivate actions and inactions, often in unconscious or preconsciously reflexive ways. Although they may seem fleeting and incalculable, emotions attached to race and sexuality have their own unique logics of gain and loss.

(p.2).

In other words, emotions are fundamental and often drive lived experience, identity, and motivation for behavior – including whether or not one acknowledges or minimizes race when relating to a romantic partner. Relatedly, the likelihood that the exploration of race remains cursory, intellectual, or abstract in a romantic relationship is remote, since interracial partners already engage in a uniquely intimate context and are subsequently more likely to feel the emotional impact of racial dialogue or avoidance.

The literature indicates that individuals who endorse racial colorblindness often do so to reduce stereotype threat, or the likelihood of appearing racist, and promote the idea of equality by preventing judgment according to race (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Goff, Jackson, Nichols, & Di Leone, 2013). However, scholars assert that colorblindness itself is an ultramodern form of racism (Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013). By refusing to acknowledge race, present day racial inequalities are discounted and the responsibility for challenging an oppressive racial hierarchy is disowned (Jones, 2016).

Notably, a range of mindsets exists when it comes to addressing the topic of race among interracial partners in heterosexual relationships. Some romantic partners actively discuss their racial differences (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Foeman & Nance, 2002) while others espouse colorblindness and maintain that their relationship is no different from those of intraracial pairs (Datzman & Gardner, 2000). To what extent interracial partners adopt colorblindness remains
undetermined, despite the fact that these partners constantly operate in an interracial context with one another. Little research exists on how racial colorblindness may impact romantic relationships or the mental health outcomes of these interracial partners, despite research with broader populations identifying negative psychological outcomes for those that endorse colorblind attitudes (Neville et al., 2005; Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Sasaki & Vorauer, 2013; Trawalter et al., 2009). While promising interracial research has been conducted, it has often been conducted in experimental settings with participants engaging with research confederates (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Goff et al., 2013) rather than in naturalistic or more relationally meaningful contexts, such as romantic relationships.

The present study adds to the literature by exploring racial colorblindness among interracial partners in heterosexual relationships, as well as the impact of these views upon self-reported levels of self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. The study addresses the aforementioned gaps in the literature and represents a unique contribution in that it links the scholarship regarding interracial romance with developing research on racially colorblind attitudes. Moreover, the study is distinctive in focusing upon heterosexual relationships between a partner of color and a White partner; a juxtaposition that allows for racially differentiated perspectives to emerge. By recognizing key differences across interracial partner types and understanding the relationships between racial colorblindness, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction, results from this study are intended to help clinicians better understand what issues may become a focus of therapy.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Chapter Two provides a summary of the literature on heterosexual interracial romantic relationships, beginning with a history and survey of the unique aspects of these relationships and subsequently highlighting how interracial partners occupy important space within contemporary racial discourse. Next, a brief introduction to racial ideology leads into a conceptualization and critique of colorblind racial ideology. Research outcomes regarding the individual, relational, and psychological effects of adopting a colorblind point of view are presented. Afterwards, a look into how some interracial partners – perhaps counter intuitively – adopt colorblindness within heterosexual romantic relationships is provided. The chapter concludes with limitations in the literature and a rationale for the present study.

Research that advances the psychological understanding of interracial dynamics finds a natural place within a counseling psychology framework. Distinctively characterized by a dedication to multiculturalism and social justice, or the celebration of individual diversity and social equality, the field of counseling psychology views attention to these areas as irrefutable professional responsibilities (Vera & Speight, 2003; Packard, 2009). As counseling psychologists trace the basis of human suffering beyond individual experiences and also consider social conditions that exacerbate psychological distress, such as structural forms of oppression (Goodman et al., 2004), it is particularly well suited for the exploration of interracial relationships, where the experience of choosing a racially different partner is continually shaped by greater social realities.

This exploration has the potential to be as wide-ranging as the diversity of interracial couples themselves. For example, research suggests that same-sex interracial couples share a
number of challenges with heterosexual interracial pairs and may in fact be more likely to be inter racially partnered than heterosexual couples (Lundquist & Lin, 2015). At the same time, same-sex couples encounter homophobia and heterosexism in ways that heterosexual couples do not (Jeong & Horne, 2009). The intersectionality of identities for same-sex partners of color may affect the relationship experience in multiple ways; for example, some same-sex couples have reported that minority stress outweighs the stigma of being interracial (Rostosky, Riggle, Savage, Roberts, & Singletary, 2008). The operation of dynamics such as these suggests that different identity-related pairings within interracial couples merit investigation in their own right. Accordingly, the scope of the present study and literature review will comprise partners who report being in heterosexual interracial relationships, with other partnership configurations suggested as the focus of future research.

**Interracial Relationships: A Consequential Choice**

Interracial romantic partners choose to cross “the color line”, or challenge what has been considered the most socially policed boundary line in history (Du Bois, 1897). In the process, two individuals who embody different racial realities co-define the meaning of race within an intimate context. An extraordinary endeavor, the process may profoundly alter their sense of self, their significant other, and their racial reality, as attending to race can be an emotionally complex and transformative endeavor (Sue, 2015). As Nemoto (2009) stated,

> Intimacy is a cultural and social device of self-making. One’s view of oneself transforms through the exchange and confirmation of one’s recognition. Intimacy allows us to fashion ourselves and determine our futures through identification with others, and these others’ powers and identity are constituted by race…(p.1).
Hence, interracial romantic relationships are in themselves a consequential space for identity formation and change, as partners reflect on what race means with a racially different other, and in doing so, transcend historical rejection and social norms.

A Brief History

The historic prohibition and stigma associated with interracial romance differentiates these relationships from intraracial ones, as the choice to be interracially partnered conveys political and social meaning. Moran (2004) observed that the evolution of miscegenation law, or the laws banning interracial marriage, parallels the evolution of American racial ideologies, which drew the boundaries of acceptable sexuality and marital propriety along racial lines.

Since the establishment of colonial America, miscegenation – scientifically named from the words *miscere* meaning “to mix” and *genus* meaning “race” in 1864 – was considered a crime punishable by imprisonment, financial remuneration, and a voided marriage contract (Pascoe, 2009). Described as one of the longest-standing forms of statutory racial discrimination and one of the last racial regulations to be eliminated by the U.S. Supreme Court, anti-miscegenation law was distinctively discriminatory because it prohibited a voluntary and consensual relationship (Karthikeyen & Chin, 2002; Pascoe, 1996). The enforcement of anti-miscegenation law has been documented as early as 1630 as evidenced by the following sanction,

September 17th, 1630. Hugh Davis to be soundly whipped, before an assembly of negroes and others for abusing himself to the dishonor of God and shame of Christians, by defiling his body in lying with a negro; which fault he is to acknowledge next Sabbath day (Phillips, 1966, p.133).
In the course of American history, only eight states held no record of anti-miscegenation law (Fryer, 2007). The state of Alabama was the last state to formally repeal its anti-miscegenation law in the year 2000 (Green, 2013).

Historically, interracial marriage between White and Black partners was universally outlawed, however later anti-miscegenation law specified and extended the prohibitive ruling to Whites and “American Indians, native Hawaiians, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Hindus” (Pascoe, 2009, p. 2) as waves of immigration brought laborers from other nations into the country. This new immigrant presence was policed into ethnically segregated spaces to prevent the pollution of racial purity thought to occur through citizenship opportunities or marriage (Pascoe, 2009); in essence, immigrants were told to remain isolated and re-emigrate, or die out (Osumi, 1982). While a few sanctioned exceptions stemmed from American military presence in other countries during times of war, such as the War Bride Act of 1945 (Nemoto, 2009), it was regular practice for commanding officers to deny interracial romance cultivated abroad that would violate anti-miscegenation laws domestically (Moran, 2007).

Oh (2007) asserts that miscegenation law worked in the service of preserving White supremacy by mandating the practice of endogamy, or only marrying within one’s racial group. At its core, endogamy met the tri-fold objective of maintaining White racial purity, retaining White privilege and power, and denying social equality to other racial groups. Ultimately, these dictates legalized White supremacy under the guise of serving the public good and Christian ethics (Phillips, 1966). In clear contrast, interracial marriages between people of color were not illegal or regulated to the extent of White interracial marriage (Harris, 1993; Oh, 2007).

It was not until the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the Loving v. Virginia (1967) case that anti-miscegenation state laws were deemed unconstitutional, finally overturning a law “so
directly subversive of the principle of equality at the heart of the Fourteenth Amendment” in sixteen states (Fryer, 2007; Loving v. Virginia, 1967). Yet significant legislative and institutionally based decisions did not equate immediate ideological change or acceptance. In fact, Pascoe (2009) contests that the Loving verdict catalyzed the onset of a colorblind racial ideology under the premise of social progress, an ideology that continues to impact the nation’s racial consciousness in present day.

**Current Trends: The Increasing Visibility of Heterosexual Interracial Relationships**

National census data revealed an overall increase of heterosexual interracial marriage, illustrating the growing visibility and presence of these couples within the U.S racial landscape. In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau recorded 5.4 million interracial or interethnic, heterosexual married couple households in the U.S, which made up 9.5% of all married couple households nationally. According to Johnson and Kreider (2013) who mapped the most common types of interracial marriages from 2010 census data, the majority, or about 37.6% of interracial heterosexual marriages were between non-Hispanic White and Hispanic partners, 15.6% of these marriages included one partner who is multiracial, 13.7% were between non-Hispanic White and Asian partners, 7.9% were between non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black partners, 6.4% were between partners who both identify as multiracial, and 5.2% were between non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic American Indian partners. The remaining combinations of interracial couples totaled less than five percent of interracially married households. When looking at the composition of interracial households as a whole regardless of heterosexuality or married status, 6.9% of households included a married heterosexual couple, 14.2% included an unmarried heterosexual couple, and 14.5% included an unmarried same-sex couple (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The 2010 U.S. Census Bureau estimated that the number of heterosexual interracial
marriages increased 28 percent over the last ten years, which is particularly notable when the number of new marriages had declined and only about half, or 51%, of American adults were married (Wang, 2012).

Within the general increase of heterosexual interracial unions, specific patterns emerged among newlywed couples, which was defined as being married within 12 months of the survey (Wang, 2012). Results from the American Community Survey revealed that marriages between White partners and partners of color were the most common, accounting for 70% of new interracial marriages in 2010. When examining who tends to marry interracially, data indicated that 27.7% of Asians married outside of their race or ethnicity, in comparison to 25.7% of Hispanics, 17.1% of Blacks, and 9.4% of Whites. Hispanic-White couples made up the most common type of newlywed interracial couple, constituting 43.3% of new interracial marriages, whereas Asian-White couples made up 14.4%, Black-White couples made up 11.9%, and the remaining 30.4% represented couples comprised of two partners of color (Wang, 2012). While research attempts to differentiate factors that promote significant changes within one racial group and less in another group, as well as the prevalence of particular interracial compositions over others (Cholakov, 2014; Fryer, 2007; Lichter, Carmalt, & Qian, 2011; Qian & Lichter, 2011; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009), this remains an ongoing endeavor.

Patterns also arose when examining gender, place of birth, and educational achievement among newly married interracial couples. Whereas 23.6% of Black male partners interracially married in 2010, only 9.3% of their Black female counterparts did so. Gender differences were found among Asian partners; while 36.1% of Asian female partners married non-Asian partners, only 16.6% of Asian male partners married partners from another racial group. There were no gender differences among White and Hispanic partners in regards to prevalence of interracial
marriage in 2010; about nine percent of female and male White partners and about 25% of Hispanic partners interrracially married (Wang, 2012). Marrying interrracially was also more common for partners born in the U.S. than for those born outside of the U.S. For example, 37.5% of Asians born in the U.S. interrracially married in comparison to 24.4% of Asians not born in the U.S. For Hispanic partners, 36.2% born in the U.S. married a spouse from a different racial group in comparison to 14.2% of Hispanic partners born outside of the U.S. Differences in college level educational achievement were also found. Both Hispanic and Black individuals who married White partners were more likely to be college educated than their counterparts who married intraracially, whereas minimal difference existed for Asian individuals regardless of their partner of choice. For White partners, more than half who married Asian spouses completed college. In contrast, about one-third of White partners were college educated who married Hispanic and Black spouses, and approximately one-quarter of White women who married Black men (Wang, 2012).

Where pervasive anti-miscegenation legislation “formed a virtual road map to American legal conceptions of race” (Pascoe, 1996, p. 49), current geographic trends in interracial marriage also chart where interracial relationships most commonly occur. According to a 2012 report developed by the Pew Research Center, states west of the Mississippi River have a higher prevalence of heterosexual interracial marriage, where one in five marriages are interracial or interethnic. The Midwest reported the lowest rates of interracial or interethnic marriages at 11 percent. Attitudes towards interracial marriage also vary demographically - people of color, younger adults, residents in the Northeast or the West, and college-educated individuals self-identified as liberally minded were more likely than others to view interracial marriage positively. Approximately 35 percent of Americans report that a member of their immediate
family or close family member is interracially married, (Wang, 2012), representing an increasing transformation of traditional family structures and systems, and 37 percent of American stated that interracial marriage is beneficial for society (Wang, 2015). While limited, census data provides a broad survey and illuminates the significant changes in relationship trends within the American population.

**Comparing Heterosexual Interracial and Intraracial Couples**

Numerous scholars attest that heterosexual interracial romantic relationships are unlike intraracial romantic relationships, although research findings are mixed. For example, researchers who compared the conflict style, attachment style, and relationship satisfaction level of interracial and intraracial couples did not discover any remarkable differences (Troy, Lewis-Smith, & Laurenceau, 2006). Yet a greater body of scholarship indicates that interracial partners encounter considerable challenges and experience greater levels of distress than partners of intraracial couples. For example, higher scores on depression symptomology measures (Bratter & Eschbach, 2006) and lower levels of relationship quality, as defined by self reported satisfaction, level of conflict, and likelihood of relationship dissolution were found in interracial relationships compared to those in intraracial relationships (Hohmann-Marriot & Amato, 2008). One study demonstrated that interracial relationships are less likely to last more than three months or to progress to cohabitation or marriage (D’Souza, 2010). Using predictive modeling, Bratter and King (2008) showed that interracial couples were more at risk for divorce than intraracial couples ten years into marriage. More specifically, couples comprised of White women and men of color were most vulnerable to divorce. Another study indicated that while 72 percent of Latino marriages remained intact after 15 years, only 58 percent of Latino husband-White wife marriages and only 64 percent of Latina wife-White husband marriages did as well
(Fu & Wolfinger, 2011). A higher rate of intimate partner violence among interracial couples has been found in comparison to couples of color (Fusco, 2010) and White couples (Martin, Cui, Ueno, & Fincham, 2013).

**A Model of Interracial Relationship Development**

Inspired by biracial identity development research that normalized and illustrated the achievable integration of two seemingly disparate racial realities, Foeman and Nance (1999) proposed a model of relationship development that captures racialized moments unique to interracial couples. Although the model was initially developed for Black-White heterosexual couples, Foeman and Nance (1999) postulated that the successful strategies that Black-White couples employ may serve as an archetype for other interracial couples, as overcoming the historical polarity and enduring sense of racial transgression (Childs, 2005b) associated with Black-White relationships is a formidable task. Their model also challenges the myths that forecast psychological dysfunction in interracial intimacy, instead outlining a couple’s stages of growth and maturity as they strive towards relationship satisfaction and health. The four stages of relationship development that they proposed include: a) racial awareness; b) coping; c) identity emergence; and d) maintenance.

**Racial awareness.** In explaining the first stage, *racial awareness*, Foeman and Nance (1999) contended that, while any new relationship typically takes shape around new and shared experiences, the presence of racial differences for an interracial couple appends extra considerations. Even if race remains verbally unacknowledged, it is likely to manifest itself in other countless and unspoken ways. For example, being physically attracted to a hair type, eye shape, skin tone, or other racialized phenotypic characteristic can imply greater social meaning and highlight racial differences. Moreover, interracial partners do not share a common racial
group, so they must learn to balance four sets of perspectives: their own perspective, their partner’s perspective, their own racial group’s perspective, and their partner’s racial group’s perspective. By increasing sensitivity to a significant other’s social location, a new racial consciousness may be introduced and adopted that extends beyond one's personal racial identity. “Both partners must explain their thinking and perspective to a sometimes unfamiliar but intimate other. Both must develop sensitivity to a sometimes uncomfortable alternate perspective” (Foeman & Nance, 1999, p. 550). In this stage, an interracial couple also adapts a new set of responses to the public as the relationship strengthens and is acknowledged by others. Successful communication in this first stage results in increased trust and a foundation for future dialogue within the relationship.

**Coping.** In the second stage, *coping*, couples form strategic responses to handle unaccepting or hostile social contexts. Unexpected circumstances challenge the couple to take action together, which often solidifies a sense of togetherness in the relationship. Foeman and Nance (1999) labeled these responses as reactive and proactive, as they protect the integrity of the dyadic unit and help the couple navigate affirmative contexts (e.g., finding social support) and critical ones (e.g., avoiding certain unwelcome family contexts). In the coping stage, communication is a key component that aids the couple’s growing competency in strategy selection and execution (e.g., what to do when asked “what about the children”), and the couple eventually builds a tailored repertoire of responses. Part of interacting with one another in this stage may involve refraining from sharing, suppressing emotions, or diffusing potentially difficult dialogue with humor in order to protect the relationship (Foeman & Nance, 2002). Although this stage represents a defensive stance, as a couple focuses on successfully managing or coping with unreceptive reactions to their relationship, the couple also builds their own
“common culture” as a result of engaging multiple social contexts together (Foeman & Nance, 1999).

**Identity emergence.** The third stage of identity emergence includes reframing the interracial couple’s identity and experience, which is concretized through joint action. Racial differences are often conceptualized as an asset, and the interracial relationship becomes self-determining and autonomous. Communication between partners in this stage helps the couple redefine and assert their roles as constructors of their own relational reality as well as deciding how they engage with and represent themselves to the world. Instead of continuing to adopt a self-protecting stance or directing energy towards self-justification, interracial partners become creators of their own culture.

**Maintenance.** In the last stage, or the maintenance stage, couples recycle through previous stages as new circumstances necessitate, and may feel inspired to share their experiences with others. Foeman and Nance (1999) acknowledged that each partner might initially enter the relationship with varying degrees of awareness and as a result, progress through each stage differently as a result of individual or contextual factors. However, this last stage highlights the couple’s growing flexibility and maintenance as a single unit as they respond to new situations that may involve reevaluation of their strategies, communication styles, and identity as a long-term interracial couple.

**Unique Stressors for Heterosexual Interracial Couples**

As aforementioned, interracial partners historically endured enormous systemic barriers and social oppression, and still encounter significant racialized challenges in the present as they defy relationship norms drawn along racial lines. Race-related stress has been defined as “race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environments that emerge from the
dynamics of racism, that tax or exceed existing individual or collective resources or tax well-being” (Harrell, 2000, p.45). While interracial partners may progress through relational milestones identical to those encountered by intraracial couples – such as dating, marriage, integration into different families, and the parenting of children – each formative step signifies a destabilization of sorts as interracial couples renegotiate norms associated with the joining of two racial realities at each phase (Poulson, 2003; Root, 2001), which can be uniquely stressful. Interracial partners may experience difficulty “reconciling inconsistent worldviews, cultures, and goals in maintaining their relationship” (Foeman & Nance, 2002, p.243), which may result in an experience of internal conflict or relationship strain. Killian (2003) adapted Du Bois' (1897) concept of dual consciousness, or “the sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on” (p.194) for interracial partners. According to Killian (2003), interracial partners become aware of multiple perspectives, or develop a dyadic dual consciousness. In other words, couples become mindful of their own relationship experience and simultaneously, become mindful of external perceptions of their relationship. This added cognizance often introduces new stressors couples have to consider and address.

**External race-related stress.** Given the historical rejection of interracial romance, many interracial partners encounter significant stress as they continue to challenge the vestiges of social exclusion or oppression within their environments. Multiple studies indicated that heterosexual interracial partners perceived greater marginalization or social disapproval from others than their intraracial counterparts (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006, 2007). The experience of relationship stigma has been associated with poor relationship outcomes, such as lower commitment, trust, and sexual communication (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006, 2007; Rosenthal &
Starks, 2015). Across interviews, interracial couples reported public disapproval as a common source of stress, including being watched in restaurants, receiving prolonged stares, scowls, and under the breath comments communicating contempt (Killian, 2001a, 2003, 2012). Multiple studies documented reports of public disparagement, where interracial partners described receiving unsolicited comments problematizing their relationship (e.g., it must be jungle fever) or projecting status-gaining motivation (e.g., being a trophy wife, securing White privilege) as an underlying incentive (Foeman & Nance, 2002; Hill & Thomas, 2002; Killian, 2012). In anticipation of these stressors, research showed that interracial partners were significantly less likely than intraracial partners to publicly display affection, such as hold hands, or even inform others that they were a couple (Vaquera & Kao, 2005). Lee and Edmonston (2005) asserted, “Social acceptance of ... marriages across racial boundaries has varied over the country’s history, but prejudice and discrimination have been constants” (p.3).

Losing social support and social capital, or the threat of its forfeiture, has also been reported as significant external stressors for heterosexual interracial couples. Relinquished job opportunities or lost respect from co-workers upon the disclosure of an interracial partner (Killian, 2001a), the removal of family social support, or estrangement as a direct consequence of marrying interracially have been some of the devastating outcomes partners have experienced (Hibbler & Shinew, 2002, Hohmann-Marriot & Amato, 2008; Inman, Altman, Kaduvettoor-Davidson, Carr, & Walker, 2011; Killian, 2001b; Lewis & Yancey, 1995). Indeed, the future threat of these consequences has been enough to deter individuals from pursuing interracial romance. In a study sampling college students, participants named the fear of upsetting parents or friends, loss of career advancements, and the negative reactions of strangers as disincentives to date interracially (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000), a finding that has been corroborated through
recent studies (Field, Kimuna, & Straus, 2013; McClintock, 2010; Perry, 2014). Each of these instances exemplifies the ongoing reality of societal racism and experience of external race-related stressors, as interracial partners can be marginalized and rejected from previously accepted social circles.

Interracial couples also report a general sense of fatigue related to being visible in public spaces. For example, being the only person from a racial group in a neighborhood, church, or social setting because of a significant other is a distinctive challenge for interracial partners as they navigate racially homogenous or traditionally segregated environments (Steinbugler, 2012). Simply being present and noticed can become a source of stress and unwanted exposure. Consequently, some couples disclosed that they have chosen to stay home or avoid certain social spaces (Datzman & Gardner, 2000; Killian, 2003). Henderson (2000) demonstrated that interracial couples might develop unique strategies to manage their sense of visibility. In this study, intraracial and interracial married partners were videotaped, asked to discuss an area of disagreement, and problem solve aloud. Henderson (2000) found that interracial couples were more likely to discuss their concerns while videotaped as if clarifying and explaining their argument for the sake of a third party (i.e., the observing researcher), a tactic that none of the intraracial couples adopted. These observations alluded to a higher degree of impression management that may indicate a socialized hyperawareness of their visibility. Steinbugler (2012) asserted that interracial couples constantly work to manage a public identity – such ongoing maintenance represents an additional burden for these partners.

**Interpersonal race-related stress.** While every interracial interaction may not be characterized as stressful, studies corroborate the potentially emotionally and cognitively depleting nature (Holoien & Shelton, 2011; Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Shelton & Richeson
2006; Trawalter, Richeson, & Shelton, 2009), the vulnerability to microaggressions (Sue et al.,
2007; Wang, Leu, & Shoda, 2011), and the difficulties of racial dialogue (Sue, 2013, 2015)
common to interracial communication. Indeed, the stress stemming from interracial interactions
between strangers, friends, and professional colleagues has been established (Apfelbaum et al.,
2008; Kao & Joyner, 2004; Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009), and microaggressions that occur in
the context of friendship and trusting relationships have been reported as more upsetting,
disappointing, and harmful (Constantine, 2007; Constantine & Sue, 2007; Galupo, Henise, &
Davis, 2014; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009) than those perpetrated by strangers. Yet
little research examines this dynamic or conflict as it may occur between interracial romantic
partners – where this type of interracial interaction is inevitable (Steinbugler, 2012). Steinbugler
(2012) conceptualized the interpersonal stress related to interracial communication as “emotional
labor”. Partners may create different strategies for dealing with race within a shared life, need to
address conflict about differing racial views, become frustrated or angry, suppress emotions, and
decide whether or not to engage in racial dialogue on an ongoing basis. Such work has been
reported as emotionally costly for some interracial partners, but has been accepted as an
unavoidable aspect of being interracially partnered (Steinbugler, 2012).

**Differences Within Heterosexual Interracial Relationships**

Individual differences in the perception, appraisal, and internalized impact of racialized
moments are well documented in the literature (Hill & Thomas, 2002; Karis, 2003; Neville et al.,
2013; Plaut et al., 2009; Trawalter et al., 2009; Yancey, 2007). Since one’s opportunities,
resources, and social power are shaped by race, creating disparity in privilege (Leslie & Letiecq,
2004), it is likely that two interracial partners recall and are affected by a single event in
categorically different respects according to racial identity. Research has suggested that one’s
racial identity status predicts sensitivity to racism and related stress, where embracing one’s racial group leads to heightened awareness of racialized encounters (Concepcion, Kohatsu, & Yeh, 2013). Whereas White racial identity development moves towards an increasingly integrated awareness of oneself as a racial being who is committed to anti-racism, racial identity development for partners of color is oriented around recognizing and overcoming internalized racism by fostering a self-affirming racial identity (Helms, 1995). These divergent goals in racial identity development parallel some of the racially differentiated challenges for interracial partners outlined later in this section. The dissimilar experience and interpretation of racialized moments also demonstrate how contrasting racial realities struggle to coexist.

While it is important to acknowledge the diversity of perspectives among White persons and between various groups of color, social privilege is fundamentally organized according to a paradigm of White privilege and the shared marginalization of being a person of color (Helms, 1995; McIntosh, 1992; Takaki, 1993). Subsequently, the following sections summarize the more prominent differences between White partners and partners of color in heterosexual interracial relationships.

White partners. White partners enter interracial relationships with a racial identity that is coupled with racial privilege and the power to define accepted reality (McIntosh, 1992; Sue, Capodilupo, Nadal, & Torino, 2008). While research has suggested that some White individuals experience positive changes in their racial identity as a result of an interracial relationship (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Childs, 2005b; Vasquez, 2014), White privilege permits this attention to race to be largely voluntary or contextually bound (Karis, 2003; McIntosh, 1992), a choice unavailable to partners of color. In other words, whereas people of color daily confront their racial minority status, White persons can choose to occupy racially homogenous spaces and
even remain unaware of racial realities (McIntosh, 1992). For example, in a study of Asian-Indian and White partners, Whites were less apt to categorize their relationships as interracial (Inman et al., 2011), instead sharing that they had not discussed or applied labels on the relationship. Karis (2003) found that White interracially partnered women described an attentional dichotomy: they attended to race in public settings but not within the home. In Wieling’s (2003) study of White and Latino/a couples, White individuals acknowledged that the degree of acculturation to their partner’s culture was more flexible, convenient, and self-determined than that of their partner.

White persons may newly be subjected to race-based stress, such as when they witness discrimination against their significant other or towards themselves in public (Csizmadia, Leslie, & Nazarian, 2015; Hill & Thomas, 2002; Vasquez, 2014). Across interviews of 21 White individuals married to Black spouses, White partners recounted experiencing poor treatment and racial profiling for the first time by other White persons, subsequently feeling mistrustful of others within their racial group and recasting previously held beliefs (Yancey, 2007). Hill and Thomas (2002) found that White women in interracial relationships were perceived as “rule-breakers,” felt the loss of their White identity or assignment to minority family status, and experienced rejection from their White communities. Some women became aware of their White privilege for the first time or unexpectedly feeling “masked” when out alone, where they were included in racist conversations and internally deliberated whether they should disclose that they were interracially partnered (Hill & Thomas, 2002).

**Partners of color.** In contrast to White partners in interracial relationships, partners of color do not face challenges to embedded racial privilege, and instead encounter additional forms of racism, including internalized racism, as a result of being interracially partnered. They may
also shoulder the additional burden of observing racism that is unnoticed by White significant others. Multiple studies support that partners of color more frequently discern negative public attention or perceive racism than their White significant other while out as couple (Killian, 2001a, 2002, 2012; Steinbugler, 2012). Some partners of color reported being labeled as hypersensitive or paranoid by their White significant others for perceiving racial meaning in social situations (Killian, 2013), invalidations that cast self-doubt on the legitimacy or trustworthiness of their internal experiences (Leslie & Young, 2015). In Wieling’s (2003) interviews with Latino/a and White couples, both race partners described a mutual idealization of their significant other based on racial differences. However, Latino/a partners attributed their idealization to internalized views that privileged Whiteness.

Research suggests that partners of color may also face rejection from their own racial groups, their partner’s social network, and heightened discrimination. For example, Black women have reported having their racial credibility challenged by other Black individuals, and were regarded as sell-outs and traitors - or accused of becoming White or “escaping into White society” (Childs, 2005a; Hill & Thomas, 2002). Wieling (2003) found that Latino/a partners met stronger reservation from families of White partners in response to their relationship, an experience not unfamiliar to other partners of color (Field et al., 2013; Miller, Olson, & Fazio, 2004). Black men have recounted a sense of discomfort when traveling with their White partners for fear of being criminalized or accused of wrongdoing by strangers because of flagrant racial profiling (Killian, 2012; Yancey, 2007).

The Meaning of an Interracial Relationship

The symbolic meaning associated with interracial relationships has mirrored historical events, racial climates, and the reconstruction of race. For example, centuries of anti-
miscegenation law propagated an institutional-level invalidation of interracial union (Omi & Winant, 2014). Attempts to prove the inferiority of peoples of color have historically construed interracial relationships as deviant and scientifically unnatural (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). After Loving v. Virginia, interracial relationships became a symbol of national progress and the American melting pot (Pascoe, 2009); the growing number of interracial couples has been interpreted as a cautiously optimistic benchmark of improved race relations and the blurring of racial boundaries (Fu & Heaton, 2008; Qian, 2005, Qian & Lichter, 2011; Usita & Poulsen, 2009; Wang, 2012). Interracial couples have also come to represent the ushering in of a “post-racial” era, or the idea that society has moved beyond racial barriers and the racialized past (Killian, 2013; Smith & Hattery, 2013). Yet Palumbo-Liu (1999) contests this view, stating, 

Interrace marriage can now be a spectator sport…Yet the very obviousness of this erasure of not only race, but the politics of race, belies an anxiety over the actualization of multiracialization and an ardent desire to leap beyond such concerns to a future time of reconciliation, wherein, somehow, these concerns have already been sorted out…while one can understand and sympathize with that utopianism, this positive view…masks deeper anxieties” (p.110).

Childs (2005b) adapts the metaphor of a miner’s canary (Cohen, 1953) to underline how useful understanding the experiences of the interracially partnered can be. Previously used as a warning system for coal miners underground, canaries could sense an increasingly poisonous atmosphere and their physical distress alerted miners of the invisible danger in time for evacuation. Hence, the canary possesses diagnostic value, as its state of health or distress is directly linked to its surrounding environment and provides valuable information (Guinier & Torres, 2003). Likewise, interracial couples are also impacted by the invisible racial ideologies.
present in their social environments. Their experiences act as a barometer of the racial climates of families and communities (Childs, 2005b), making interracial partners an important focus of study.

**Understanding Race as a Social Construction**

Most scholars in the social sciences would agree that race is a social construction (Rothenberg, 2010), that is, its meaning develops from collective invention and reinvention. Conceptualizing race as a social construct illustrates a critical shift in historical thought, renouncing a generational legacy of racialized science, or the mythical reduction of race into genetic, discrete, and fixed categories (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Adopting a social constructionist approach towards race moves beyond an empirical or mechanical epistemology to one where “the degree to which a given form of understanding prevails or is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on the empirical validity of the perspective in question, but on the vicissitudes of social processes” (Gergen, 1985, p.268). Here, definitions of race are located within a specific social-cultural moment and created by an “active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship” (Gergen, 1985, p.267). Further defined by Omi and Winant (2014),

Race is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. Although the concept of race invoke seemingly biologically based human characteristics (so-called phenotypes), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process…Race is strategic; race does ideological and political work (pp.110-111).

Hence, race is more than phenotypic categories; it is a work of “social fiction” and a basis for social order (Smedley & Smedley, 2005), ultimately allocating how a particular body is given
space, power, and identity. Interracial relationships represent a uniquely intimate microcosm for the exploration of race’s social construction and reconstruction. As Foeman and Nance (1999) stated, “Successful interracial couples develop skills to resolve problems that threaten the very foundation of our society. They have perspective that escapes others and the wherewithal to define themselves where no set guidelines exist” (p. 553). Interracial partners are social pioneers, contributing important voices within contemporary racial discourse.

**Racial ideology as a worldview.** Dawson (2001) defines racial ideology as a worldview readily found in the population, including sets of ideas and values [about race] that cohere, that are used to publicly justify political stances [especially as they relate to racialized matters], and that shape and are shaped by society. . . . Cognitively, ideology serves as a filter of what one “sees” and responds to [interpersonally and] in the social world (pp. 4-5).

Understood as a global term that encompasses racial attitudes, identity, and beliefs – racial ideologies combine individualized views with dominant societal understandings, which become a schematic framework used to translate and interpret racial information (Neville et al., 2005). Bonilla-Silva (2011) described racial ideologies as “cognitive culs-de-sac because, after people invoke them, they explain racial phenomena in a predictable manner – as if they were getting on a one-way street with no exits” (p.192). Embedded in the social order of American culture (Omi & Winant, 2010), racial ideologies are often reflected in public domains, such as legislation (Pascoe, 2009) and the media (Paek & Shah, 2003). One’s racial ideology fundamentally governs how racialized moments are imbued with meaning, making the study of racial ideology a valuable area of study.
Choosing to be in an interracial relationship exemplifies one of the countless ways in which racial ideologies can be shaped, questioned, or transformed through a relationship experience (Hill & Thomas, 2000). Racial attitudes often inform decision-making and behavior. For example, individuals base their decisions about a marriage partner or openness to having children in ways consistent with their endorsed racial ideology (Herman & Campbell, 2012). Additional research corroborates the significant connection between one’s racial beliefs and emotional health (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004; Holoien & Shelton, 2012; Neville et al., 2005; Todd, Spanierman, & Aber, 2010), highlighting the behavioral and affective effects of racial ideology.

**The Loving decision: Instituting colorblindness.** As a result of the *Loving v. Virginia* case, the 1967 Supreme Court encouraged the abandonment of all racial categorization, as the recognition of race became associated with the perpetuation of racism (Pascoe, 2009). By minimizing racial differences, in essence, a colorblind racial ideology was disseminated from the highest court of law under the premise of eradicating racism and signifying progress (Moran, 2007; Pascoe, 1996). Prior to *Loving*, political liberals touted colorblindness as the preferred state practice because it seemed to address racial segregation and attack White supremacy by being in favor of equal treatment for all (Pascoe, 2009). After the hard-earned victory of *Loving*, leaders of the racial integration movement retreated from public visibility and much of America, including political conservatives, began to espouse the reframed “colorblind” language of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who dreamed of a future nation that esteemed his children’s character over the color of their skin. Liberals then questioned the nation’s swift forgetfulness and premature celebration that racism was a problem of the past – and the dawn of affirmative action, or color-conscious policy, emerged to counteract the nation’s amnesia (Pascoe, 2009).
Nonetheless, colorblindness had already been repurposed “from an oppositional weapon in the fight for racial justice to a conservative statement for American values” (Pascoe, 2009, p. 306), again demonstrating how the meaning of race is constantly reconstructed in accordance to broader sociopolitical contexts.

**A Look into Colorblindness**

A racial colorblind ideology de-emphasizes the importance of race and diversity, and presumes that racism belongs entirely to a chapter of the past (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Neville et al., 2013; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Brown, 2000; Wise, 2010). Frankenberg (1993) characterized colorblindness as “a mode of thinking about race organized around an effort to not ‘see’, or at any rate not to acknowledge race differences, the ‘polite’ language of race” (p.142). She further differentiated two forms of colorblindness: color evasion and power evasion. Whereas color evasion stresses the idea of sameness (e.g., we are all part of the human race), power evasion is the belief that all individuals possess the same opportunities to succeed (e.g., if everyone works hard, they can succeed) (Frankenberg, 1993). Other terms, such as racelessness, reflects similar attempts to extract race from the equation altogether and remain neutral (Jones, 2016). Whatever the terminology, the active adoption of colorblindness in many educational institutions, workplaces, and political reforms speaks to the attraction or “sweet enchantment” (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011) of an ideology that seemingly champions equality and inclusion (Apfelbaum et al., 2010) by overlooking differences. Embracing colorblindness also signifies continuing efforts to become a post-racial nation, or one that has transcended its appalling racial history by disavowing the significance of race and proposing that race should not matter (Neville et al., 2000). As reasoned by proponents of colorblindness, if individuals and institutions do not attend to race, subsequent actions are less likely to be prejudicial (Apfelbaum, Norton, &
Sommers, 2012), and a racialized hierarchy is subverted (Jones, 2016) – thereby improving race relations (Ryan et al., 2007).

**Contesting colorblindness.** Yet numerous scholars dispute that being racially colorblind is not possible nor truly humanizing. Obasogie’s (2013) compelling research on individuals born blind demonstrated that even those without visual sight “see” and understand racial categories, at times, to a greater extent than sighted individuals. Obasogie (2013) aptly observed,

> Since blind people cannot be seduced by the immediacy of visual perception, their visual understanding of race is inculcated in a more deliberate fashion that is part of the very same social forces that produce the visual salience of race for those who are sighted. Thus, blind people are uniquely capable of discussing the social practices that at once produce the visually self-evident character of race and hide themselves so that race is experienced at an individual level as mere observation of a fact-in-the-world…sighted people are in a sense blinded by their sight…” (pp.36-37).

Perhaps counter intuitively, being sighted provides an individual the constant option of simplifying race into observable, phenotypic, and arguably inconsequential categories. In doing so, this simplification undermines one’s ability to perceive the invisible social construction of race and its deeply rooted authority to differentially allocate power and privilege. Obasogie’s (2013) observations confirm that race cannot be primarily defined as a visual reality; rather, race is embedded and performed within social reality. Additional research also shows that recognizing racial categories is socially and neurologically imprinted as an automatic response (Phelps et al., 2000; Wilson, 1992). Therefore, racial colorblind ideology cannot refute the experiential and inevitable knowledge of race, and ultimately, that race matters.
Scholars also increasingly agree that colorblindness is an ultramodern form of racism (Neville et al., 2013) that only accentuates how racial discrimination has retreated underground but still maintains a social order privileging White individuals (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). Neville and Awad (2014) stated, “saying that someone does not notice race does not mean that that person is free from racial prejudice” and furthermore, “beliefs, desire, and intent are separate from reality” (p. 313). For example, when faced with the unique opportunity to adopt cross-racially and reaffirm a colorblind stance, White adoptive parents who initially espoused openness to adopting any child of color later clarified unwillingness to adopt Black children (Sweeney, 2013). As Bonilla-Silva (2002) asserted, the refusal to see color does not eradicate the operations of racism from the cultural landscape.

The current conceptualization of colorblind ideology focuses upon an ideological and institutional-level denial of race (Neville et al., 2000, 2013). This generalized refusal to see race deflects responsibility for social inequality away from institutionalized racism, invariably “victim blaming” those who face racism by viewing success as the product of individual determination (Gallagher, 2003; Neville et al., 2013). In other words, success is individually achieved or forfeited, with no consideration of larger systemic factors that privilege some and oppress others. Jones (2016) outlines four components that comprise colorblind logic: a) skin color is not tied to the quality of a person’s character, ability, or worth; b) skin color is irrelevant to making judgments or evaluating fairness; c) judging or evaluating fairness is flawed if race is included in that assessment; d) ignoring skin color is the best approach to avoiding racial discrimination. He stated, “colorblind beliefs about race offer their holder neutrality, a putative objectivity, an immunization against the charges that they, products of a racist America, are de facto racists themselves” (Jones, 2016, pp.40-41). Instead of promoting equality and shared
social accountability, colorblindness absolves responsibility and perpetuates complicit acceptance of a racist system. The injurious effects of colorblindness will be outlined in a later section.

**What motivates colorblindness.** Social psychology research suggests that defensive posturing may largely motivate taking a colorblind approach. Discussing race in a post-civil rights era has shifted from more explicit and public articulations to ambiguous and disguised expressions of racial attitudes (Sue et al., 2007), making the disclosure of racial ideology more potentially exposing. Colorblindness has been employed as a social regulatory tactic, namely, to diminish the possibility of appearing prejudiced or racist to others (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006; Norton, Sommer, Apfelbaum, Pura, & Ariely, 2006) or even shielding others from experiencing potential discrimination (Goff et al., 2013; Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, 2009). For some, racial colorblindness may be a passive default to the status quo, a socialized point of view that has never faced critical examination (Apfelbaum et al., 2010), or an active camouflaging of privilege to preserve benefits (Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008). Avoiding racial dialogue serves a self-protective and superficially harmonious function (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Goff et al., 2013; Murphy, Richeson, & Molten, 2011; Plant & Butz, 2006; Speight, 2007; Sue, 2013) since tackling race can introduce interpersonal risk, conflict, and emotional consequences – especially if individuals become angry or frustrated (Pasque, Chesler, Charbeneau, & Carlson, 2013; Wang et al., 2011). Described by Ioanide (2015), “remaining attentive to the function of emotion and affect allows us to better understand how and why, when it comes to race and sexuality, people unconsciously engage in patterns of denial and disavowal” (p.17). Subsequently, implicit patrolling of conversation, electing silence or avoidance about racial topics, or feigning non-
reaction to racially microaggressive moments dissipates the threat of relational consequences (Condor et al., 2006; Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004; Schoulte, 2011; Sue et al., 2009).

**Colorblindness Research**

Colorblindness research has grown in recent years to reflect the zeitgeist of the times and the growing interest in measuring racial attitudes (Awad & Jackson, 2016). Research regarding the effects of not seeing race demonstrate that denial itself is impactful. While some short-term positive effects have been argued, such as a sense of connectedness, lessened anxiety when emphasizing similarity, and less self-criticism (Coleman et al., 2012; West, Magee, Gordon, & Gullett, 2014; Vasquez, 2014), research also suggests that endorsing colorblindness comes with significant psychological consequences. From the individual to relational effects of colorblindness, studies show the wide-ranging influence of colorblindness on daily functioning and mental health, in addition to observing that color lines exist, even when it comes to who adopts colorblindness.

**Individual outcomes of colorblindness.** Upholding colorblind beliefs appears to impact individuals across the lifespan in a variety of ways. Researchers observed that young children who were primed with a colorblind mindset were more likely to then minimize their observations and reports of racism in contrast to those who were primed to value diversity (Apfelbaum et al., 2010). Adults who take a colorblind approach adopted a self-focused and defensive orientation towards others, which ultimately and paradoxically led them to appear anxious, self-critical, more racially biased towards others (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Ryan et al., 2007; Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009). The impact of colorblindness extends beyond behavioral observations; the effort required to ignore racial differences leads to cognitive fatigue (Sasaki & Vorauer,
2013), decreased executive functioning (Richeson & Shelton, 2007), and a range of stress responses (Trawalter et al., 2009). Ioanide (2015) stated,

[Emotions] are an important site of inquiry because they have the unique ability to foreclose people's cognitive receptivity…Any time our emotional structures experience danger, fear, or anxiety – affects that are all too common in discussions of systemic oppression – our capacity to integrate knowledge and participate in communicative acts also tends to diminish (pp. 2-3).

These results point to the undeniable impact of colorblindness upon individual psychological functioning.

Relational outcomes of colorblindness. Possessing colorblind views can also shape relational dynamics on an interpersonal and societal scale. Experiencing empathy for others is a central skill in human social behavior (Rameson, Morelli, & Liebermann, 2011) and it has been linked to an interest in social justice and advocacy. In contrast, low empathy is associated with poor relationships, violence, and abuse (Forgiarini, Galluci, & Maravita, 2011). While it may appear that one who espouses colorblindness should automatically has a high level of empathy for all, regardless of race, Tettegah (2016) warns that colorblindness may in fact encourage a type of “empathy erosion” (Baron-Cohen, 2011), where empathy is switched on and off according to personal self-interest. Tettegah (2016) states, "Individuals who adopt CBRI [colorblind racial ideology] pretend that empathy is an equal-opportunity behavior; there is no need for moral emotional engagement because CBRI denies the existence of race, at least superficially" (p. 182). In other words, the deeper level of engagement and consideration of the other that is inherent to experiencing empathy are bypassed for a generic and polite application of empathy that requires little personal effort. Even in the mental health field, where
professionals are trained to maintain empathy for their clients as a key tenet of the therapeutic relationship, colorblindness carries disruptive consequences. Studies show that clinicians who endorsed higher levels of colorblindness were less empathic, attributed greater symptomology when provided a fictional narrative about a client of color, and had less multicultural case conceptualization ability (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Gushue, 2004; Neville, Spanierman, & Doan, 2006). Colorblindness has also been associated with strained supervisory relationships (Burkard, Edwards, & Adams, 2016) and has predicted relationship conflict in work settings (Meeussen et al., 2014).

**Who tends to endorse colorblindness.** Research shows that White individuals tend to endorse higher rates of colorblind ideology in comparison to people of color (Oh, Choi, Neville, Anderson, & Landrum-Brown, 2010; Ryan, Casas, & Thompson, 2010; Ryan et al., 2007). Scholars have attributed this greater likelihood among White individuals to the socialization of colorblind messages across the lifespan (Pahlke, Bigler, Suizo, 2012; Rattan & Ambady, 2013; Sullivan, 2014). In McIntosh’s (1992) well-known essay on White privilege, she stated,

[T]here was more likely a phenomenon of White privilege that was…denied and protected, but alive in its real effects…My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will (p.31).

In contrast, individuals of color are more likely to be racially socialized in a manner that promotes racial pride, preparation for discrimination, and awareness of injustice (Barr & Neville, 2008; Evans et al., 2012; Hughes et al., 2006; Stevenson, 1994).
Although more research is required to explore colorblind racial attitudes amongst people of color, scholars attest that colorblindness is not a race-specific perspective (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Neville et al., 2013). Research revealed that both people of color and White persons endorse colorblind ideology (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Barr & Neville, 2008; Coleman et al., 2012; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004). After surveying over 1000 White, Black, and Latino individuals, Kalscheur (2009) found that the majority of Latinos believed that Blacks had equal opportunity in the United States and Latinos were just as likely to endorse colorblindness as non-Hispanic Whites irrespective of class or gender. This outcome has been discovered across other large samples. In a nationally representative survey of 2,521 White and Black adults, Black respondents were much less likely overall to embrace systemic colorblind statements than White respondents. However, for statements that focused upon individuality, meritocracy, and equal opportunity – areas that highlight personal responsibility as key to success – previous differences in response patterns subsided. Hence, both Black and White participants endorsed systemic colorblindness, or interpreted social inequalities as a result of individual shortcomings instead of recognizing preexisting institutional forms of racial inequality (Manning, Hartmann, & Gerteis, 2015).

The racially differentiated significance of colorblindness. While people of all races may espouse colorblind social constructions, the rationale and implications of doing so diverge significantly (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). As discussed previously, colorblind attitudes among White individuals have been related to White privilege and racial intolerance (Oh et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2010); White individuals are less likely to recognize systemic inequality (Manning et al., 2015) as they benefit from the present racial status quo (Neville et al., 2013). Racially colorblind attitudes among White college students have also been associated with
changes to White empathy, guilt, and fear over the course of four years (Todd, Spanierman, & Poteat, 2011).

In contrast, colorblind attitudes among individuals of color have been interpreted differently: they are associated with internalized racism (Neville et al., 2013; Speight, 2007). When people of color embrace a colorblind ideology, Neville et al. (2005) contested that the harm is two-fold; people of color suffer the psychological injury of self-oppression and are also more likely to perpetuate this inwardly directed prejudice within communities of color. Speight and her colleagues (2016) also suggest that the adoption of colorblindness by people of color may be explained by system justification theory, or the tendency to protect and uphold oppressive systems because its maintenance is less distressing than challenging the status quo (Speight, Hewitt, & Cook, 2016). For example, Coleman et al (2012) found that Black college students who endorsed higher levels of colorblind ideology experienced lower levels of race-related stress, which contradicts previous findings of adverse effects associated with colorblindness among students of color (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000). However, researchers speculated that assuming a colorblind view acted as a buffer against race-related stress, as “not seeing” race would allow these Black students to disavow the effects of racism (Coleman et al., 2012). Indeed, the same students who reported higher levels of colorblindness also had lower positive regard for being Black, again demonstrating the damaging consequences of internalized racism.

**Interracial Partners Who Endorse Colorblind Ideology**

Since racial ideologies guide one’s perception and response to race (Neville et al., 2005), this means interracial partners consciously and unconsciously convey their racial ideologies as they relate to one another and to others as a couple. Some interracial partners deliberately affirm
or proactively communicate about their differences, an approach which have been associated with greater open-mindedness, racial identity awareness, acknowledgement of White racial privilege, and relationship satisfaction (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Reiter & Gee, 2008). From a study with 76 Black and White heterosexual interracial marriages, Leslie and Letiecq (2004) found that spouses with an established sense of racial identity were more likely to describe a greater attachment and experience less ambivalence about the relationship as a whole, highlighting that the affirmation of one's racial identity in the context of a racially different significant other can positively shape relational connectedness.

In direct contrast, some interracial partners assume a colorblind racial ideology by selectively choosing not to attend to race, limiting a racial focus to particular settings, or preferring to promote points of similarity. For example, some partners chose to emphasize religion over racial differences (Killian, 2012), and others believed that race was only made salient when entering public spaces - a difference overlooked when alone (Karis, 2003; Vasquez, 2014). Asian partners born outside of the U.S. who adopted the cultural values of their White partners described higher levels of relationship satisfaction. In other words, endorsing similar worldviews and accentuating commonality resulted in a positive, fulfilling relationship experience (Kim, Edwards, Sweeney, & Wetchler, 2012). Overall, these perspectives seem to suggest that partners viewed racial consciousness as something externally activated; racial differences remained unfelt or undetected without reminder. In deprioritizing racial differences, interracial partners may be trying to reject the politicization or problematization of interracial romance as a form of resistance (Datzman & Gardner, 2000; Killian, 2003) – however this negation of race also denies the reality of institutional racism. Killian (2012) stated,
“Some interracial couples appear to navigate around differences in their relationship, marginalizing structural and material implications of being black or white, male or female, and of different socioeconomic statuses. Partners make a choice, explicitly or implicitly, to not invest time or energy into phenomena that are potentially divisive; they do not want to centralize color the way society centralizes it” (p. 132).

Of note, the interracial partners in these studies reportedly endorsed colorblindness with well-meaning intent, paralleling a broader societal trait to deemphasize the discordant potential of race and become a post-racial nation. Partners claimed that their goal was to shield themselves or their significant others from discrimination by ignoring race – they viewed their disregard for race as a humanizing endeavor (Karis, 2003; Wieling, 2003). In one study, one partner asserted, “In my mind, we’re all humans – and if you don’t think so, then you are the one with the problem” (Datzman & Gardner, 2000, p.6). Rosenblatt and his colleagues (1995) observed that while diminishing the importance of race may offset explicit stigma or racism, this strategy forgoes an opportunity for couples to gain insight and communicate meaningfully about race.

Summary: Heterosexual Interracial Romance and Colorblindness

The number of heterosexual interracial marriages in the U.S. has undergone tremendous growth within the last few decades, from representing less than one percent of marriages in 1970 to five percent of marriages in 2000 (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). By 2013, heterosexual interracial marriages represented 12 percent of newlyweds according to the Pew Research Center (Wang, 2015). Interracial couples regularly navigate the racial realities that structure American life, in ways that are universal for romantic partners and in other ways unique and uncharted. The historical adversity that interracial couples have endured, from the illegalization of interracial
marriage to the residual public scrutiny experienced by romantic partners that cross the color line today illustrates that race matters. Cabrera (2000) observed,

> Who you date and who you marry are among the most personal decisions a person can make, yet strangely enough, nothing elicits such an outcry as when we date outside our cultural, ethnic or racial groups. Suddenly the private boundaries disappear and our personal lives are fair game for strangers and family alike (p. 1281).

Unlike intraracial couples, interracial partners are more likely to confront race-based stressors, such as experiencing public discrimination or familial disapproval, and the emotionally vulnerable task of addressing racial differences (Foeman & Nance, 1999; Hohmann-Marriot & Amato, 2008; Killian, 2012). Research shows that this process itself is a racialized one, as White partners and partners of color make interpretations of their experiences in ways unique to their racial identity (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Karis, 2003).

Since racial ideology determines how one perceives, interprets, and responds to racial stimuli, one's ideological stance plays a key role in the response to race and interracial interactions. Colorblind racial ideology, or colorblindness, has emerged as a way to diminish the importance of race in a country marked by racialized trauma by proposing that race is irrelevant (Jones, 2016; Neville et al., 2013). Yet scholars are critical of this perspective, as research demonstrates that taking a colorblind position is largely motivated by the fear of appearing racist or avoidance (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Murphy et al., 2011) and only perpetuates racism by denying the existence of racial inequalities and disowning responsibility for social change (Neville et al., 2014). Decreased cognitive capacity (Holoien & Shelton, 2012), empathy (Tettegah, 2016), and self-esteem (Coleman et al., 2012) have all been associated with endorsing colorblindness, particularly in persons of color.
Perhaps surprisingly, research shows that interracial heterosexual couples also subscribe to colorblind views, both as a way to emphasize similarities and their shared life (Karis, 2003; Killian, 2012) or to reject the politicizing or problematizing of their relationship (Datzman & Gardner, 2000). Little is known about why these partners choose to adopt colorblindness, especially when some interracial partners actively choose to discuss their racial differences (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Foeman & Nance, 2002). Yet Steinbugler (2012) asserts, When partners intentionally dodge the emotional minefields of social differences, they practice a form of emotional labor—strategic avoidance. Although these practices are characterized by evasion and omission, and not by the explanations and contestations that mark most racework, partners who use this strategy do acknowledge that when they are “letting some of this lie,” they are making conscious decisions to do so” (p.99).

Such intentional choices may then impact mental health, including self-esteem and relationship satisfaction.

**Limitations in Current Research**

While the breadth of scholarship has grown in commensurate ways with the increasing prevalence of interracial relationships and interest in racial attitudes, research remains exploratory, and much is unknown. As previously mentioned, no known research examines the mental health or relational effects of colorblindness in the context of a heterosexual interracial romantic relationship. Some of the limitations in current research are briefly outlined below.

**Comparison couples research.** The majority of scholarship on this topic considers interracial couples as a unit, and more specifically, focuses on relationship development, relational characteristics, or contrasting the experiences of interracial couples to those of intraracial couples (Bratter & Eschbach, 2006; Childs, 2005b; Negy & Snyder, 2000; Troy et al.,
The plethora of attitudinally-based studies confirm that interracial relationships still represent a departure from social norms and intraracial couples are often used as a point of comparison. A much smaller body of literature exists that independently gives voice to the lived experiences of the interracially partnered (Childs, 2005b; Johnson & Warren, 1994; Steinbugler, 2012) or explores the individualized perspectives of partners apart from their identity as part of a romantic dyad.

**Methods of research.** Studies that have investigated the shared experiences of interracial couples have often done so through qualitative interviews of both partners. Although interviewing or observing a couple together is a common research methodology (Bustamante, Nelson, Henriksen, & Monakes, 2011; Henderson, 2000; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Killian, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2012; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013), samples sizes are typically small due to the time-intensive demands of this approach. Opportunities to uncover racially differentiated experiences or more candid opinions can be lost (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Inman et al., 2011; Karis, 2003; Killian, 2012; Vasquez, 2014) when partners are not given the chance to share their perspectives individually.

**Exploring racially differentiated perspectives.** The reality remains that power, privilege, and opportunity are allocated along racial lines, which determine one’s experience of self, others, and the world. A few studies exist that investigate the interracial romantic experience from partners of a specific racial group (Hill & Thomas, 2002; Inman et al., 2011; Karis, 2003; Nemoto, 2006), but much more research must be conducted to understand if patterns exist across racial groups. Furthermore, a preponderance of research has been based on Black-White interracial couples (Foeman & Nance, 1999, 2002; Forry et al., 2007; Karis, 2003;

**Impersonal contexts of colorblindness research.** The majority of colorblindness research examines patterns of ideology endorsement in experimental settings with samples of strangers (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Goff et al., 2013; Holoien & Shelton, 2012), which fails to investigate contexts that are representative of personally significant relationships. Despite research indicating that colorblind ideology is associated with lower self esteem, cognitive exhaustion, and internalized racism (Coleman et al., 2012; Murphy et al., 2011; Neville et al., 2013), which has also been tied to poor relationship satisfaction (Taylor, 1990), no known research explores the impact of colorblindness in interracial relationship contexts upon self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. Despite affirming the importance for interracial couples to develop strategies to address race and racism as a key task for relationship health (Foeman & Nance, 1999), there is little elaboration of the implications associated with ignoring race, or choosing to be colorblind with a significant other in present literature.

**The Present Study**

The following study addresses the aforementioned gaps in literature by addressing the individual perspectives of interracial partners on their own merit through a quantitative research design. While there is no singular definition of an interracial relationship, the term *interracial relationship* in this study was defined as a heterosexual romantic relationship between a White partner and a partner of color in order to test hypotheses against the current literature which largely explores heterosexual relationships. The pairing of a partner of color and a White partner was chosen because it describes 70 percent of interracial marriages according to recent survey data (Wang, 2012). While it is important to recognize the diversity of experiences amongst
interracial romantic partners and the important differences amongst particular interracial configurations, current social order is based on a racial hierarchy that privileges White individuals as a group and disadvantages groups of color (Helms, 1995; McIntosh, 1992; Takaki, 1993). Therefore, the definition of an interracial relationship was established to capture the perspectives of partners of color and White partners in heterosexual relationships.

It is expected that overall, participants of color are more likely to endorse lower levels of colorblind ideology in comparison to White participants, as evidence exists that supports this general difference between White persons and people of color (Killian, 2012; Ryan et al., 2007). However, it is unknown if this pattern is seen among partners in interracial relationships, as research suggests that racial attitudes and awareness can change when relating to a racially different significant other (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011). Furthermore, as research has demonstrated that people of color are more likely to be socialized in a way that recognize racial differences (Helms, 1995) and are negatively impacted by the self-endorsement of colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Coleman et al., 2012), it is expected that participants of color are less likely to adopt colorblind strategies within their romantic relationship. As research has shown that individuals are often motivated to enact colorblindness in defensive ways that reduce the threat of conflict, the salience of difference, or the appearance of being racist in interracial interactions (Murphy et al., 2011) in favor of relational harmony, it is expected that there will be a significant effect of colorblindness on relationship satisfaction. Relatedly, it is anticipated that individuals who have poor self-esteem and poor relationship esteem, or perceived difficulty relating intimately to others, are more likely to value enacting colorblindness in their relationship in order to avoid race-related stress. Therefore, it is expected that there will be a significant effect of self-esteem or relationship esteem on strategic colorblindness. As studies have recognized that
interracial couples vary widely in their approach to racial differences (AhnAllen & Suyemto, 2011; Datzman & Gardner, 2000), which may diverge according to racial identity, it is expected that interracial partners will exhibit differences in colorblindness and perceptions of their relationship. For example, as partners of color are more likely to have experienced race-related stress by nature of being members of racially marginalized groups, participants of color may experience greater relationship satisfaction in comparison to White participants who may find interracial dialogue and/or the challenges of being interracially partnered disruptive to their experience of racial privilege (Yancey, 2007). Lastly, as scholars have attested, the meaning and impact of upholding colorblind beliefs upon the sense of self is differentiated along racial lines (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011); therefore, it is expected that while White participants who endorse colorblind beliefs will experience little disruption to their sense of self, there will be a significant effect on self-esteem among participants of color who possess colorblind beliefs.

**Hypotheses.** Eight hypotheses will be tested, and are listed below:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Participants of color as a group will report lower levels of racial colorblindness in comparison to White participants.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Participants of color as a group will report lower levels of strategic colorblindness (i.e., perceive less negative consequences associated with acknowledging race) in comparison to White participants.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Racial colorblindness is expected to be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction.
- **Hypothesis 4:** Strategic colorblindness is expected to be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction.
• Hypothesis 5: Self-esteem is expected to be negatively associated with strategic colorblindness.

• Hypothesis 6: Relationship esteem is expected to be negatively associated with strategic colorblindness

• Hypothesis 7: It is expected that there will be a significant difference between reported racial colorblindness, strategic colorblindness, and relationship satisfaction across racial groups.

• Hypothesis 8: Participant race and level of racial colorblindness will have a significant impact on reported self-esteem for participants across racial groups.
CHAPTER THREE

Method

Study Design

An online survey was developed that included five instruments assessing partner perspectives in heterosexual interracial romantic relationships. More specifically, the instruments utilized in the online survey measured colorblind racial attitudes, strategic colorblindness, self-esteem, relationship esteem, and relationship satisfaction. The remainder of this chapter details recruitment strategies and an introduction to the instruments.

Procedure

Participants were recruited online via convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and social media websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit). The study was advertised as an exploration of perspectives of interracial partners currently in an interracial relationship. Again, for the specific purposes of this study, an interracial relationship was defined as a heterosexual romantic relationship between a partner of color and a White partner.

After clicking on a website link that was provided, participants were directed to an online survey that described the purpose of the study in detail and explained informed consent (See Appendix H). At the end of the survey, participants were offered the option to enter a raffle to win a $25 Amazon gift card. Participants were required to give informed consent, indicate understanding of participant rights (See Appendix I), and confirm that they (a) are at least 18 years of age, (b) reside in the U.S., and (c) are currently involved in an interracial romantic relationship as defined within this study. Participants who did not meet these criteria were taken to the survey’s exit page. Participants who met these eligibility requirements were then asked to provide additional demographic information, which included age range, birthplace and current...
place of residence, and self-identified racial identity, in addition to those of their partner. Participants were also asked to indicate how long they have been in their present interracial relationship, if this relationship was their first interracial relationship, educational achievement level, and social class. Participants then read and completed a number of items that reflected their attitudes about race, perceptions regarding the value of enacting colorblindness in a relationship, self esteem, relationship esteem, and relationship satisfaction. Participants responded to a total of 65 items.

Participants were not included in the final data set if they (a) failed to provide informed consent, (b) did not meet all eligibility requirements (e.g., were less than 18 years of age, identified as multiracial, were not in a heterosexual interracial relationship), (c) did not complete all of the survey items, and/or (d) failed both of the two manipulation check items embedded into the survey. These procedures resulted in a final participant sample of 311 individuals that met all eligibility criteria.

**Instruments**

**Racial Perceptions**

Individual colorblind racial attitudes were measured using two self-report scales, the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000) and a modified version of the Strategic Colorblindness Scale (SCS; Goff, Jackson, Nichols, Di Leone, 2013). Two scales measuring colorblindness were used, as each scale provided information about a different aspect of colorblindness. Whereas the CoBRAS evaluates one’s global beliefs about attending or not attending to race on an institutional level (e.g., social policy), the SCS assesses perceptions about the potential consequences associated with acknowledging race.
**Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale.** The CoBRAS is a 20-item scale that assesses three cognitive aspects of colorblind racial attitudes: *Unawareness of Racial Privilege, Institutional Discrimination*, and *Blatant Racial Issues*. Items are presented on a six-point Likert scale ranging from one (*Strongly Disagree*) to six (*Strongly Agree*), and higher total scores are associated with higher levels of colorblindness (see Appendix A). A sample item is represented by the statement *Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich*, which corresponds to the *Unawareness of Racial Privilege* category. The CoBRAS has demonstrated good concurrent validity with two other scales measuring racial prejudice, the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986) and the Quick Discrimination Index (Ponterotto & Burkhard, 1995). It has also been used to explore the association between colorblind racial attitudes and specific outcomes, such as exposure to multicultural interventions (Neville et al., 2000) and collective self esteem (Tawa, Suyemoto, & Roemer, 2012). The CoBRAS has been administered to racially diverse samples (Coleman et al., 2012; Manning et al., 2015; Tawa et al., 2012) and the initial validation of the CoBRAS revealed an overall Cronbach’s alpha of .91 (Neville et al., 2000), demonstrating good reliability. In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .92.

**Strategic Colorblindness Scale.** The SCS is an 11-item scale that measures individuals’ beliefs about the potential consequences associated with acknowledging race (see Appendix B). Items are presented on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from one (*Strongly Disagree*) to seven (*Strongly Agree*). Higher total scores indicate that an individuals associates greater negative consequences with acknowledging race is more likely to value the use of strategic colorblindness. The original SCS items were modified for use in the current study to encourage participants to consider their responses specifically within the context of their romantic
relationship. For example, an item from the original measure reads *Categorizing people by race is in and of itself racist.* Instead, this item was revised to read *Categorizing my partner by race is in and of itself racist.* Researchers found an initial Cronbach’s alpha of .91 (Goff et al., 2013). In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .86.

**Personal Perceptions**

Personal appraisal of self-esteem, relationship esteem, and relationship satisfaction were measured using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), the Relationship Assessment Questionnaire (RAQ; Snell & Finney, 1993), and the Couple Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge, 2007).

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.** The RSES is a widely used 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by looking at positive and negative feelings about the self (see Appendix C). Items are presented on a four-point Likert scale ranging from one *(Strongly Disagree)* to four *(Strongly Agree)*, where higher total scores signify better self-esteem. A sample item reads *I feel that I have a number of good qualities.* Researchers have used the RSES in romantic relationship contexts and found that self-esteem is associated with future relationship satisfaction (Erol & Orth, 2014; Neff & Beretvas, 2013). Previous studies have yielded acceptable psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.81 to 0.87 (Erol & Orth, 2014; Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012). In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .89.

**Relationship Assessment Questionnaire.** The RAQ is a 30-item scale that measures three relational aspects of the self: relational esteem, or one's ability to relate intimately to another person; relational depression, or the tendency to feel depressed about the state of one's relationships; and relational preoccupation, or being highly absorbed by thoughts about intimate relationships (see Appendix D). Items are presented on a five-point Likert scale ranging from
one (Not at All Characteristic of Me) to five (Very Characteristic of Me). A sample item from the relational esteem subscale reads *I am a good partner for an intimate relationship.* Higher scores on the relational esteem subscale indicate a higher sense of perceived confidence in the abilities to relate with others and a generalized tendency to positively evaluate their capacity to relate intimately to another individual. A sample item from the relational depression subscale reads *I sometimes have doubts about my relationship competence.* Higher scores on the relational depression subscale represent a lack in confidence in relationships. For the purposes of this study, only the items from the relational esteem subscale and the relational depression subscale were utilized. A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.86 was found in the original study (Snell & Finney, 1993), and acceptable ranges have been yielded in later studies among men and women, ranging from 0.78 to 0.92 (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for relational esteem was .78 and the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for relational depression was .88.

**Couples Satisfaction Index.** The CSI is a 32-item scale that presents items on a six-point Likert scale (see Appendix E). The CSI was developed as a result of analyzing eight prevalent self-report measures of relationship satisfaction using item response theory and a principle-components analysis. The 32 items that were developed demonstrate high precision and greater power to distinguish differences in relationship satisfaction, and the CSI as a whole demonstrates construct validity with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976) and the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959), two of the most widely cited measures of relationship adjustment. The CSI can also be reduced to a 16-item (CSI-16) and 4-item (CSI-4) measure to accommodate application constraints while maintaining psychometrically valid results. For the purposes of this study, the CSI-4 will be utilized. An example of an item on the
CSI-4 is the statement *I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner* to which a participant would respond on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*Not at all true*) to 5 (*Completely true*). Higher scores indicate greater relationship satisfaction. The 32-item CSI also demonstrated initial reliability, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .98 (Funk & Rogge, 2007) and the 4-item CSI has also demonstrated adequate reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .89 (Cacioppo, Cacioppo, Gonzaga, Ogburn, & VanderWeele, 2013). In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the 4-item CSI was .94.

**Demographics**

Demographics were assessed by the use of a questionnaire (see Appendix F). Participants were asked to identify their age, place of birth and current country of residence, race, gender, length of current relationship, history of interracial relationships, level of education, and social class. Participants were also asked to identify their partner’s age, partner’s place of birth and current country of residence, partner’s race, and partner’s gender.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of the sample, followed by preliminary analyses of the data and descriptive statistics. Following the reporting of descriptive statistics, the statistical results corresponding to each hypothesis will be presented.

Participants

The final sample consisted of 311 adult participants living in the U.S. For the purposes of this study, participants who met eligibility criteria were categorized as White participants or participants of color. Individuals were categorized as White participants if they self-identified as White and non-Hispanic, whereas individuals were categorized as participants of color if they identified as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; Black or African American; Latina/o; or Native American/First Nations.

Participants who responded “Other” for self-identified race or partner’s race in the demographic section were asked to provide a more detailed response. There were a total of 30 responses of “Other” for either self-reported race or partner race that were later categorized after considering the information provided. Participants completing the survey who self-identified as “Other” were not included in the final data set if no clarifying details were offered, regardless if it was clear what racial group they ascribed to their partner. Responses were categorized as people of color (n = 6) if answers indicated a greater level of specificity not offered in the original survey but could be sorted into an existing racial category in the survey (e.g., Indian, West Indian, South Asian). Ultimately, participants who completed the survey were categorized as White if their response indicated White racial identity (e.g., Jewish and White) and they reported that their partner was a person of color (n = 3). While individuals of Middle Eastern
descent are categorized as White on the U.S. Census, research indicates that this classification may be incongruent with personal experiences of not identifying as White (Ajrouch, 2004; Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007); hence, participants who self-reported Middle Eastern descent (e.g., Arab, Arab American) and also having White partners (i.e., perceived themselves as being interracially partnered) were categorized as participants of color \((n = 2)\). After sorting through participant responses, the total sample included 175 White participants and 136 participants of color. Figure 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the final sample.

Participants of color. As displayed in Figure 1, participants of color ranged in age from 18 to 54 years of age; the majority, or 53.7%, was between 25 and 34 years of age. There were 116 participants of color who self-identified as female and 20 participants of color who identified as male. Of participants of color, 60.3% identified as Asian or Asian American, 23.5% identified as Black or African American, 14.7% identified as Latina/o, and 1.5% identified as Other, and were later categorized as a partner of color based on additional details provided in the survey. 61.8% of participants of color were born in the U.S; 38.2% stated that they were born outside of the U.S. but currently live in the U.S. This sample was highly educated; 56.6% of participants of color attained a postgraduate degree. In terms of social class, the majority of participants of color, or 70.6%, self-described as middle class.

All participants of color reported that their partner was White, non-Hispanic and of the opposite biological sex and gender. Most participants of color, or 69.9%, stated they had been in an interracial relationship before. In respect to the length of time of the relationship, 36.0% of participants of color indicated that they have been in their relationship for over five years.
Figure 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participant Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Participants of Color (n = 136)</th>
<th>% White Participants (n = 175)</th>
<th>% Sample (N = 311)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 24 years</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34 years</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 44 years</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 54 years</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 – 64 years</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non Hispanic</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of Birth</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in the U.S.</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not born in the U.S.</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 year degree</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 year degree</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post graduate</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer no response</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Class</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer no response</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior IR Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3 years</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 5 years</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
White participants. As seen above in Figure 1, White participants ranged in age from 18 to 64 years of age; more specifically, 61.7% were between 25 and 34 years of age. There were 136 White participants who identified as female and 39 who identified as male. The large majority, or 89.7% of White participants was born in the U.S; 10.3% stated that they were born outside of the U.S. but currently live in the U.S. This group was also highly educated; 56% of White participants attained a postgraduate degree. In terms of social class, most White participants, or 73.1%, self-reported as middle class.

With regard to demographic information provided about their significant other, all White participants reported that their partners were persons of color and the opposite biological sex and gender. In contrast to participants of color, 58.9%, of White partners stated they had been in an interracial relationship prior to the present relationship and 41.1% stated that this was their first interracial relationship. When asked to report the length of their present interracial relationship, 38.3% of White participants indicated that they have been in their relationship for over five years.

Figure 2
Interracial Relationship Type from Participant Sample with National Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interracial Relationship Type</th>
<th>% Sample (N = 311)</th>
<th>% National*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White – Hispanic/Latino/a</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White – Asian</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White – Black</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White – Middle Eastern</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>--**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White – American Indian</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single multiracial partner</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both partners multiracial</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *National data is based on interracial marriages from the U.S. Census Bureau (2010). **This data is unknown.

Sample characteristics. As shown in Figure 2 above, half of the participants in the sample reported being in a White – Asian interracial relationship, followed by fewer participants
being in White – Black relationships and White – Hispanic/Latino/a relationships. Figures 3 – 7 below further illustrate characteristics of the participant sample by gender, race, partner’s gender, and partner’s race. The majority, or 43.7%, of participants in this study were White females with male partners of color, followed by female participants of color with White male partners, White male participants with female partners of color, and lastly, male participants of color with White female partners. When looking at specific racial group and gender representation, Asian female participants with White male partners comprised of 23.2% of the sample, which was the most common type of participant. White female participants with Asian male partners made up 17% of the sample, and White female participants with Black male partners made up the 16.7% of the sample, representing the next largest portions of the sample.

Figure 3  
**Participant Relationship Type by Race and Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Type</th>
<th>% Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White female – POC* male</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POC female – White male</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male – POC female</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POC male – White male</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. (N = 311) *POC is an abbreviation for “Person of Color”*

Figure 4  
**White Female Participants with Male Partner of Color**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Partner*</th>
<th>% White Female Participants (n = 136)</th>
<th>% Sample (N = 311)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *Of the male partners of color reflected in this figure, Asian: (n = 53), Black: (n = 52), Latino: (n = 25), Middle Eastern descent: (n = 6).
Figure 5
Female Participants of Color with White Male Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Participant*</th>
<th>% Female Participants of Color (n = 116)</th>
<th>% Sample (N = 311)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Of the female participants reflected in this figure, Asian: (n = 72), Black: (n = 26), Latina: (n = 16), Middle Eastern descent: (n = 2).

Figure 6
Male Participants of Color with White Female Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Participant*</th>
<th>% Male Participants of Color (n = 20)</th>
<th>% Sample (N = 311)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Of the male participants reflected in this figure, Asian: (n = 10), Black: (n = 6), Latina: (n = 4).

Figure 7
White Male Participants with Female Partners of Color

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Partner*</th>
<th>% White Male Participants (n = 39)</th>
<th>% Sample (N = 311)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *Of the female partners reflected in this figure, Asian: (n = 21), Black: (n = 11), Latina: (n = 5), Middle Eastern descent: (n = 2).

Preliminary Analyses

Normality and outliers. Data were screened for normality and outliers prior to analysis.

Degree of skew ranged from -0.47 to 2.28 and kurtosis ranged from -0.18 to 7.06. These levels fall within the recommended ranges to meet satisfactory univariate normality across variables.
(i.e., skewness < 3, kurtosis < 10; Weston & Gore, 2006). The Shapiro-Wilk statistic was significant, indicating a violation of normal distribution (i.e., p< .05). However, this concern can be resolved by the sample size of this study, as the central limit theorem states that the mean of a large enough sample will be approximately normally distributed (Field, 2013). Further examination of histograms and normal Q-Q plots showed reasonable bell curves and straight lines, respectively, across the data for all variables with exception to the relationship depression variable. When boxplots were inspected for outliers in the data, the presence of extreme outliers, or cases that extended more than three box-lengths from the box edge, were found only for relationship depression scores. However, an inspection of all 5% trimmed means revealed that these particular cases did not greatly affect the overall distribution, as they did not differ from the mean values by more than 1 point across all variables. Therefore, none of these cases were eliminated from the final data set.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Means and standard deviations for all scales scores are shown in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Variables</th>
<th>Overall Sample</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorblind Racial Attitudes</td>
<td>46.90</td>
<td>16.06</td>
<td>46.21</td>
<td>14.26</td>
<td>47.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Colorblindness</td>
<td>30.28</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>31.85</td>
<td>10.81</td>
<td>29.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>31.61</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>31.73</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>31.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Esteem</td>
<td>26.18</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>26.27</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>26.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Depression</td>
<td>16.08</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>15.68</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>16.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>20.48</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>20.91</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>20.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Total Sample (N = 311).
Exploratory bivariate correlations were conducted to investigate relationships between study variables. A correlation matrix is displayed in Table 2 below. Cohen’s (1992) recommendations were used to interpret small ($r = .10$), medium ($r = .30$), and large ($r = .50$) effect sizes.

Table 2
_Bivariate Correlations of Study Variables_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Colorblind Racial Attitudes</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Strategic Colorblindness</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Self Esteem</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Relationship Esteem</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Relationship Depression</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>-.52**</td>
<td>-.50**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>-.67**</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Note._ **p < .01, N = 311_

Medium to large correlations were found between self-esteem and all relationship variables. Self-esteem had a medium positive correlation with relationship esteem and relationship satisfaction, and self-esteem had a strong negative correlation with relationship depression. Relationship esteem had a strong negative correlation with relationship depression and a strong positive correlation with relationship satisfaction. The strongest correlation was found between relationship satisfaction and relationship depression, which was negative. The two colorblind measures had a small positive correlation with each other, and strategic colorblindness also had a small positive correlation with relationship depression. There were no significant correlations between colorblind measures and self-esteem and no significant correlations between colorblind measures and relationship esteem or relationship satisfaction.

**Hypothesis Testing**

**Hypothesis 1.** *Participants of color as a group will report lower levels of racial colorblindness in comparison to White participants.* Levels of racial colorblindness between racial groups were investigated using an independent-samples t-test, comparing total scores on the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) between participants of color and White
participants. A Levene’s test for equality of variances was non-significant (p = .069), meaning that there was no violation to homogeneity of variance. Hypothesis 1 was not supported. There was no significant difference in scores for participants of color (M = 46.21, SD = 14.26) and White participants (M = 47.44, SD = 17.36); t (309) = -0.67, p = .51).

**Hypothesis 2.** Participants of color as a group will report lower levels of strategic colorblindness (i.e., perceive less negative consequences associated with acknowledging race) in comparison to White participants. Levels of strategic colorblindness between racial groups were investigated using an independent-samples t-test, comparing total scores on the Strategic Colorblindness Scale (SCS) between participants of color and White participants. A Levene’s test for equality of variances was non-significant (p = .78), meaning that there was no violation to homogeneity of variance. Hypothesis 2 was partially supported, as there was a significant difference in strategic colorblindness between participants of color and White participants. However, it was White participants who reported lower levels of strategic colorblindness (M = 29.06, SD = 11.73) in comparison to participants of color (M = 31.85, SD = 10.81); t (309) = 2.15, p = .03). Using Cohen’s guidelines (1988) for interpreting small (d = .2), moderate (d = .5) and large (d = .8) effect sizes, the magnitude of the difference was small (d = .24).

**Hypothesis 3.** Racial colorblindness is expected to be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. To examine the relationship between racial colorblindness and relationship satisfaction, a multiple linear regression was performed with racial colorblindness and strategic colorblindness as independent variables and relationship satisfaction as the dependent variable. Racial colorblindness was measured with the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), strategic colorblindness was measured with the Strategic Colorblindness Scale (SCS), and relationship satisfaction was measured with the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI).
Initial inspection did not reveal multicollinearity between racial colorblindness and strategic colorblindness \((r = 0.2)\). Additionally, the tolerance and VIF values for the COBRAS were within acceptable limits, whereas a tolerance value below 0.1 or a VIF value above 10 would indicate a problematic correlation between independent variables (Pallant, 2013). Here, the tolerance value was .96 and the VIF was 1.04. While some outliers were found when looking at Mahalanobis Distance values, further inspection of the Cook’s distance values revealed that these outliers did not greatly influence the model. The Durbin-Watson value indicated no violations to assumptions of independent errors \((D = 1.85)\). Subsequently, both variables were entered simultaneously into the regression model.

Results are shown in Table 3 and Table 4 below and indicated that the overall regression model was not significant \((R^2 = .012, F (2, 308) = 1.91, p = .15)\), with both independent variables explaining only 1.2% of the variance.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>MS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>29.915</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>4833.823</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>15.694</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4893.653</td>
<td>310</td>
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</table>

Note. \(p < .05\), \(N = 311\).

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>CoBRAS</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.473</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>-1.92</td>
<td>.055</td>
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</table>

Note. \(p < .05\), \(N = 311\). CoBRAS = Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale, SCS = Strategic Colorblindness Scale

The beta value for racial colorblindness was .04 \((p = .47)\). Hypothesis 3 was not supported - these results showed that racial colorblindness was not significantly associated with relationship
satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 4.** *Strategic colorblindness is expected to be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction.* To analyze the relationship between strategic colorblindness and relationship satisfaction, a multiple linear regression was conducted. The regression model generated from Hypothesis 3 was examined with attention to the strategic colorblindness variable. Again, there was no indication of multicollinearity, as seen by acceptable tolerance and VIF values at .96 and 1.04, respectively, and preliminary analyses did not find undue impact of outliers or violations to the assumptions of independent errors.

Results are shown in Table 3 and Table 4 above. The beta value for strategic colorblindness was -.111 (*p* = .055). While strategic colorblindness approached significance in its contribution within the model (*p* = .055), the overall model was not found to be statistically significant. In summary, strategic colorblindness was not found to be significantly associated with relationship satisfaction and hypothesis 4 was not supported,

**Hypothesis 5.** *Self-esteem is expected to be negatively associated with strategic colorblindness.* The relationship between self-esteem and strategic colorblindness was explored by conducting a multiple linear regression with self-esteem and relationship esteem as independent variables and strategic colorblindness as the dependent variable. Self-esteem was measured with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), relationship esteem was measured with the relationship esteem subscale of the Relationship Assessment Questionnaire, and strategic colorblindness was measured with the SCS. Checks for multicollinearity showed that the correlation between the independent variables was .44 and did not exceed the recommended cut-off (Pallant, 2013; *r* = .7). The tolerance value was .81 and the VIF value was 1.24, further corroborating no violation of the multicollinearity assumption or need to remove either of the
variables from the model. Examination of Mahalanobis Distance values revealed the presence of outliers; however, Cook’s distance values indicated that these outliers did not exert undue influence on the whole model. The Durbin-Watson value indicated no violations to assumptions of independent errors \((D = 1.82)\). Hence, both self-esteem and relationship esteem were simultaneously entered into the regression model.

Results are shown in Table 5 and Table 6 below and indicated that the overall regression model was not significant \((R^2 = .002, F(2, 308) = .305, p = .737)\), with both independent variables explaining only .2% of the variance.

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<th>Source</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>310</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Note. \(p < .05, N = 311\).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSES</td>
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<td>.579</td>
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<tr>
<td>RelEst</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-.247</td>
<td>.805</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. \(p < .05, N = 311\). RSES = Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, RelEst = Relationship Esteem subscale of the Relationship Assessment Questionnaire*

The beta value for self-esteem was -.04 \((p = .58)\), meaning that it did not significantly contribute to the model. Overall, one’s self-esteem was not significantly associated with strategic colorblindness, and hypothesis 5 was not supported.

**Hypothesis 6.** Relationship esteem is expected to be negatively associated with strategic colorblindness. The relationship between relationship esteem and strategic colorblindness was explored by conducting a multiple linear regression with self-esteem and relationship esteem as
independent variables and strategic colorblindness as the dependent variable. The regression model generated from Hypothesis 5 was examined with attention to relationship esteem. Preliminary analyses found no violations to assumptions of multicollinearity, as seen by acceptable tolerance and VIF values, no violations to assumptions of independent errors, and no disproportionate effect of outliers on the model. Results are shown in Table 5 and Table 6 above. The beta value for relationship esteem was -.016 ($p = .81$), meaning that it did not significantly contribute to the model. Relationship esteem was not found to be significantly associated with strategic colorblindness; therefore Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

**Hypothesis 7.** *It is expected that there will be a significant difference between reported racial colorblindness, strategic colorblindness, and relationship satisfaction across racial groups.* To test this hypothesis, a series of one-way between-group analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted with participant race as the independent variable and racial colorblindness, strategic colorblindness, and relationship satisfaction as dependent variables. Participants were divided into three groups according to self-reported racial group (Group 1: White; Group 2: Asian; Group 3: Black, Latino, and Other persons of color). There were 175 participants in Group 1, 82 participants in Group 2, and 54 participants in Group 3. Results for the Levene’s test across all three ANOVAs found no violations to homogeneity of variance ($p > .05$). Analyses were conducted using a Holms-adjusted alpha level of .017 for the three planned comparisons to control familywise Type I error rate (.05/3).

Hypothesis 7 was partially supported. Results showed that there were no statistically significant group differences between the three racial groups in reported levels of racial colorblindness ($F(2, 308) = .305, p = .74$) and relationship satisfaction ($F(2, 308) = 1.491, p = .23$) as shown in Tables 7 and 9. However, results showed statistically significant differences
between racial groups for strategic colorblindness, $F(2, 308) = 4.62, p = .011$ at the adjusted .017 alpha level as shown in Table 9. Effect size, as calculated by eta squared, was .03, which is considered a small effect size according to Cohen’s (1988) guidelines to interpret small ($\eta^2 = .01$), medium ($\eta^2 = .06$), and large ($\eta^2 = .14$) effect sizes. In other words, group differences between White participants (Group 1), Asian participants (Group 2), and Black, Latino, and Other participants of color (Group 3) in the perceived consequences of acknowledging race reached significance; however, the actual difference between average group scores was small.

Table 7
Effect of Race on Racial Colorblindness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>158.327</td>
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<td>79.164</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td>.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>79832.779</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>259.197</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>79991.106</td>
<td>310</td>
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Note. Holms adjusted $p < .017, N = 311$.

Table 8
Effect of Race on Strategic Colorblindness

<table>
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<th>p</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1174.643</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>587.322</td>
<td>4.624</td>
<td>.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>39124.019</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>127.026</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>310</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. Holms adjusted $p < .017, N = 311$.

Table 9
Effect of Race on Relationship Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>p</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>46.934</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23.467</td>
<td>1.491</td>
<td>.227</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>4846.719</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>15.736</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4893.653</td>
<td>310</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Holms adjusted $p < .017, N = 311$.

Post–hoc comparisons of racial groups using the Tukey HSD test are summarized in
Table 10 below. Multiple comparisons indicated statistically significant differences of strategic colorblindness between White participants ($M = 29.06, SD = 11.73$) and Asian participants ($M = 33.52, SD = 11.22$). No significant differences were observed between White participants and Black, Latino, or Other participants ($p = .99$) or between Asian participants and Black, Latino, or Other participants ($p = .08$).

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-4.462</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black, Latino, Other</td>
<td>-.233</td>
<td>.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>4.462</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black, Latino, Other</td>
<td>4.228</td>
<td>.083</td>
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<tr>
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<td>White</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.990</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-4.228</td>
<td>.083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. p < .05, N = 311.*

**Hypothesis 8.** Participant race and level of racial colorblindness will have a significant impact on reported self-esteem for partners across racial groups. To test this hypothesis, a 2x3 two-way factorial analysis of variance was conducted to compare the main effects of participant race and level of colorblindness as well as the interaction effect of race and level of colorblindness on self-esteem. A Levene’s test for equality of variances was non-significant ($p = .33$), establishing homogeneity of variance. As the CoBRAS does not provide standardized cut-off scores to classify level of colorblindness (Coleman et al., 2012), other researchers have designated low, moderate, and high ranges of colorblindness by using percentiles to differentiate levels (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Gushue, 2004). This approach was adopted and three groups were formed using the 33.3 and 66.6 percentiles; participants were categorized as endorsing a low ($M = 30.55, SD = 5.31$), moderate ($M = 46.44, SD = 4.55$), or high ($M = 66.12, SD = 10.44$)
level of colorblindness according to their total CoBRAS score. The two levels of participant race (White participants and participants of color) and three levels of colorblindness (low, moderate, and high) were entered into the model as main effects with self-esteem as the dependent variable. It was hypothesized that there would be significant differences in self esteem among White participants across varying levels of colorblindness in comparison to participants of color.

Results demonstrated that Hypothesis 8 was not supported. The interaction effect between participants race and level of colorblindness was not statistically significant, $F(2, 305) = 1.42, p = .24$, and no main effects reached significance as shown in Table 11 below. The main effect for participants race yielded an F ratio of $F(1, 305) = .12, p = .73$, the main effect for levels of colorblindness yielded an F ratio of $F(2, 305) = .23, p = .79$.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3.187</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.730</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Colorblindness</td>
<td>12.496</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.248</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race*Level of Colorblindness</td>
<td>76.246</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38.123</td>
<td>1.425</td>
<td>.242</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>8158.876</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>26.750</td>
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</table>

Note: $p < .05, R^2 = .012, \text{Adjusted} \ R^2 = -.005$

Post-Hoc Analyses

Following the testing of hypotheses as originally proposed, a number of exploratory analyses were conducted. These analyses included alternative testing of hypotheses to address potential statistical limitations, additional unplanned examinations of the data based on the demographic characteristics of the final sample, and descriptive statistics of specific dyadic pairs.

Alternative Analyses for Hypothesis 8. Hypothesis 8 posited that participant race and level of racial colorblindness would have a significant impact on reported self-esteem for
partners across racial groups. In the previous analysis of hypothesis 8, subgroups were created using percentile cut-offs based on total scores from the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS). As this approach can introduce problems with reduced variance, an alternative analysis using a hierarchical multiple linear regression was conducted to address this possibility. Participant race and racial colorblindness were entered as independent variables, and self-esteem was the dependent variable. Variables were entered in two blocks; participant race was entered into the first block and racial colorblindness as measured by total scores on the CoBRAS was entered into the second block. Initial checks with tolerance and VIF values did not reveal problems with multicollinearity. Again, outliers were found when looking at Mahalanobis Distance values; however, further inspection of the Cook’s distance values revealed that these outliers did not greatly influence the model. The Durbin-Watson value indicated no violations to assumptions of independent errors ($D = 1.93$).

As has been the case with the planned test of the hypothesis, results demonstrated that Hypothesis 8 was not supported. Participant race was entered into the first block, and explained .04% of the variance in self-esteem as seen in Table 12 below. After total CoBRAS scores were entered in the second block, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was .2%, $F(2, 308) = .32, p = .73$. Colorblindness attitudes explained an additional .2% of the variance in self-esteem, after controlling for participant race ($R$ squared change = .002, $F$ change (1, 308) = .51, $p = .47$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R Squared</th>
<th>Adjusted R Squared</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>R Squared Change</th>
<th>F Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>.0004</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>.0004</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $p < .05. N = 311.$*
**Exploratory Analyses.** Additional post-hoc exploratory analyses were conducted to assess for significant differences between groups based on the demographic characteristics of the final sample. These groups were formed to examine information completed by participants that had not been considered via previous hypotheses (e.g., participant’s reported relationship length of time), as well as particular demographic characteristics within couple pairings. Participants were grouped according to the following factors: gender, prior interracial relationship experience, relationship length of time, and types of partner or interracial relationship, as a sufficient number of participants or responses were obtained to conduct adequately powered analyses.

Differences in racial colorblindness, strategic colorblindness, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction based on gender and prior interracial relationship experiences were investigated by conducting independent-samples t-tests. Cohen’s guidelines (1988) were referenced for interpreting small \(d = .2\), moderate \(d = .5\) and large \(d = .8\) effect sizes for t-tests. Potential differences in racial colorblindness, strategic colorblindness, and/or relationship satisfaction based on length of time in the relationship and types of partner or interracial relationships were explored using one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA). Effect sizes for ANOVAS were generated by calculating eta squared, and again, Cohen’s (1988) guidelines were used to understand small \(\eta^2 = .01\), medium \(\eta^2 = .06\), and large \(\eta^2 = .14\) effect sizes. Results for these exploratory analyses are outlined below.

**Analyses by gender.** As prior analyses did not consider the potential impact of gender, participants were separated into two groups according to self-identified gender. Since female participants were overrepresented in the present study, comparing female participants to male participants would have resulted in largely unequal groups and skewed interpretation of the data.
Subsequently, subgroups were created based on specific intersections of gender and race. Total scores on the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), Strategic Colorblindness Scale (SCS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) were compared among particular groups of female and male participants by conducting independent-samples t-tests.

*White female participants and female participants of color.* Differences between white female participants and female participants of color were examined. Levene’s tests for equality of variances were non-significant across all measures ($p > .05$) with exception to relationship satisfaction, where homogeneity of variance was violated ($p = .03$). Results indicated a significant difference between White female participants and female participants of color in strategic colorblindness, which corresponded with results found between White participants and participants of color overall in Hypothesis 2. White female participants reported lower levels of strategic colorblindness ($M = 28.19, SD = 10.57$) in comparison to female participants of color ($M = 32.46, SD = 11.12$); $t(250) = 3.12, p = .002$). This effect size was small ($d = .39$). Relationship satisfaction approached significance between female participants, where female participants of color reported slightly higher levels of relationship satisfaction ($M = 20.91, SD = 3.58$) in comparison to White females ($M = 19.95, SD = 4.47$); $t(249.09) = 1.9, p = .058$). Again, equal variances cannot be assumed in this case due to the violation of Levene’s test. No significant differences were found for racial colorblindness ($t(250) = .47, p = .64$) and self-esteem ($t(250) = .85, p = .39$).

*White male participants and male participants of color.* Potential differences between White male participants and male participants of color were also explored. Levene’s tests for equality of variances were non-significant across all measures with exception to strategic
colorblindness, where homogeneity of variance was violated ($p = .04$). Results from the independent-samples t-test revealed no significant differences between White males participants and male participants of color across racial colorblindness ($t (57) = -1.58, p = .12$), strategic colorblindness ($t (56.7) = -1.27, p = .21$), self-esteem ($t (57) = -.86, p = .39$), and relationship satisfaction ($t (57) = .06 p = .95$).

**Analyses by relationship history.** An additional variable of interest that remained unexplored was a participant’s previous relationship history. The majority of participants in the sample reported being in an interracial relationship before, in comparison to 36.3% of participants who stated that the present relationship represented their first interracial relationship experience. Two groups were created; one group represented participants new to interracial relationships, and the other group represented those who had past interracial relationships. Again, total scores on the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), Strategic Colorblindness Scale (SCS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) were compared for statistically significant differences using independent-samples t-tests. No violations to homogeneity of variance were found ($p > .05$). Differences in reported relationship satisfaction approached statistical significance ($t (309) = -1.95, p = .052$), with participants in interracial relationships for the first time reporting greater relationship satisfaction ($M = 21.06, SD = 3.73$) in comparison to those who had been in interracial relationships in the past ($M = 20.15, SD = 4.08$). No significant differences were found in terms of racial colorblindness ($t (309) = -1.12, p = .26$), strategic colorblindness ($t (309) = -.83, p = .41$), or self-esteem ($t (309) = 1.25, p = .21$).

**Analyses by relationship length of time.** Participants were asked to report the length of their present interracial relationship in the survey, and responses ranged from the “six months to
one year” to “over five years”, which signifies a substantial difference in the length of commitment to a racially different significant other. Differences in racial colorblindness and strategic colorblindness across varying relationship lengths of time were investigated by conducting a series of one-way between group analysis of variance (ANOVA). Participants were separated into four groups according to the length of their present interracial relationship (Group 1: six months to one year, Group 2: one to three years, Group 3: three to five years, and Group 4: over five years). Group 1 included 43 participants, Group 2 included 87 participants, Group 3 included 65 participants, Group 4 included 116 participants. Results for the Levene’s test across both ANOVAs found no violations to homogeneity of variance (p > .05). As two planned comparisons were being conducted, a Holms-adjusted alpha level of .025 was utilized to control familywise Type I error (.05/2).

Significant group differences were found for racial colorblindness, $F(3, 307) = 5.02, p = .002$ at the adjusted .025 alpha level as shown in Table 13. The effect size was .05, which is considered a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Results revealed no statistically significant group differences between the four relationship lengths of time for strategic colorblindness ($F(3, 307) = .84, p = .47$), which is illustrated in Table 14 below.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
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<td>5.020</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
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<td>Within Groups</td>
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<tr>
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<td>310</td>
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</table>

Note. Holms adjusted $p < .025, N = 311.$
Table 14

*Effect of Relationship Length of Time on Strategic Colorblindness*

<table>
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<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>328.150</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>109.383</td>
<td>.840</td>
<td>.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>40298.662</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>130.197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40298.662</td>
<td>310</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Holms adjusted *p* < .025, *N* = 311.

Post – hoc comparisons of relationship lengths of time using Tukey’s HSD are shown below in Table 15. Multiple comparisons indicated statistically significant differences in reported racial colorblindness between participants who were in their relationship between one to three years (*M* = 43.05, *SD* = 15.18) and those in their relationship for over five years (*M* = 51.23, *SD* = 16.27). Differences approached significance for participants who reported being in their relationship for three to five years (*M* = 45.06, *SD* = 13.61) and those in their relationship for over five years (*p* = .058). No significant differences in racial colorblindness existed between participants with the shortest length of relationship, or six months to one year, and those who had been with their partners for over five years (*p* = .22).

Table 15

*Post-Hoc Comparisons of Racial Colorblindness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Time</th>
<th>Length of Time</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>1 – 3 years</td>
<td>2.768</td>
<td>.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 – 5 years</td>
<td>.752</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>-5.419</td>
<td>.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3 years</td>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>-2.768</td>
<td>.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 – 5 years</td>
<td>-2.016</td>
<td>.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>-8.187</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 5 years</td>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>-.752</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 – 3 years</td>
<td>2.016</td>
<td>.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>-6.171</td>
<td>.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>6 months to 1 year</td>
<td>5.419</td>
<td>.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 – 3 years</td>
<td>8.817</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 – 5 years</td>
<td>6.171</td>
<td>.058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Holms adjusted *p* < .025, *N* = 311.
Analyses by partner and relationship type. White female participants and female participants of color made up the largest portion of the sample, and differences in racial colorblindness, strategic colorblindness, and relationship satisfaction were explored within these two groups. Two one-way between-group analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted, and differences by partner type were explored. Again, to control Type I error, a Holms-adjusted alpha level of .017 was used (.05/3).

White female participants with male partners of color. Three subgroups were formed according to the partner’s racial group (Group 1: Asian partners, Group 2: Black partners, Group 3: Latino partners). Group 1 included 53 participants, Group 2 included 52 participants, and Group 3 included 25 participants. Results for the Levene’s test across all ANOVAs found no violations to homogeneity of variance (p > .05). Results demonstrated no significant group differences for racial colorblindness ($F(2, 127) = .302, p = .74$), strategic colorblindness ($F(2, 127) = .88, p = .42$), or relationship satisfaction ($F(2, 127) = .14, p = .88$), as shown below in Tables 16 – 18.

Table 16
Partner Type on Racial Colorblindness for White Female Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>162.002</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>81.001</td>
<td>.302</td>
<td>.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>34070.891</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>268.275</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34232.892</td>
<td>129</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Holms adjusted $p < .017, n = 130$.

Table 17
Partner Type on Strategic Colorblindness for White Female Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>201.182</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.591</td>
<td>.875</td>
<td>.419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>14605.595</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>130.197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14806.777</td>
<td>129</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Holms adjusted $p < .017, n = 130$. 
Female participants of color with White male partners. Three subgroups were created according to the female participant’s self-identified racial group (Group 1: Asian partners, Group 2: Black partners, Group 3: Latina partners). Group 1 included 72 participants, Group 2 included 26 participants, and Group 3 included 16 participants. Despite unequal group size, results for the Levene’s test found no violations to homogeneity of variance ($p > .05$). No significant group differences resulted for racial colorblindness ($F(2, 113) = .41, p = .67$) or relationship satisfaction ($F(2, 113) = .65, p = .52$), as shown below in Tables 19 and 20 below.

### Table 18
**Partner Type on Relationship Satisfaction for White Female Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>5.742</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.871</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>2542.750</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>130.197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2548.492</td>
<td>129</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Holms adjusted $p < .017$, $n = 130.*

### Table 19
**Relationship Type on Racial Colorblindness for Female Participants of Color**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>160.497</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80.249</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td>.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>21749.784</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>195.944</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21910.281</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Holms adjusted $p < .017$, $n = 114.***

### Table 20
**Relationship Type on Relationship Satisfaction for Female Participants of Color**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>16.906</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.453</td>
<td>.650</td>
<td>.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1443.375</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>130.197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1460.81</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Holms adjusted $p < .017$, $n = 114.***

However, statistically significant group differences were found between female participants of color from differing racial groups ($F(2, 113) = 6.89, p = .002$) in strategic colorblindness with an effect size of 0.11, which is a moderately large effect size according to Cohen (1988). Results are
shown below in Table 21.

Table 21
Relationship Type on Strategic Colorblindness for Female Participants of Color

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1515.695</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>757.847</td>
<td>6.888</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>12212.726</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>110.025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13728.421</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Holms adjusted *p* < .017, *n* = 114.

Table 22 shows the post–hoc comparisons that were conducted using Tukey’s HSD among female participants of color. Multiple comparisons indicated statistically significant differences in strategic colorblindness between Asian (*M* = 34.39, *SD* = 11.34) and Black female participants (*M* = 25.77, *SD* = 8.64) who are with White male partners (*p* = .001). Asian female participants reported higher levels of strategic colorblindness, or perceived greater negative consequences associated with acknowledging race, in comparison to their Black counterparts. Differences approached significance between Black (*M* = 25.77, *SD* = 8.64) and Latina (*M* = 34.75, *SD* = 8.99) partners with White men at the adjusted alpha level of .017 (*p* = .02). In this comparison, Latina female participants reported higher levels of strategic colorblindness in comparison to Black female participants. There were no significant differences between Asian and Latina participants (*p* = .99).

Table 22
Post-Hoc Comparisons of Female Participants of Color with White Male Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>8.620</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>-.361</td>
<td>.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-8.620</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>-8.981</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>.361</td>
<td>2.899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>8.981</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Holms adjusted *p* < .017, *n* = 114.
Descriptive Statistics for Specific Dyadic Pairs. The focus of this study was the perspectives of individual partners, and the study’s original hypotheses did not address the different responses that might characterize different racial pairings. At the same time, there is reason to suspect that not all interracial couples share precisely the same experiences. For example, White women married to Black spouses (Yancey, 2007) experience racism differently than Asian women with White partners (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011), because their relationship challenged a particularly stigmatized union between a Black man and a White woman. This is only one example of many where the combination of historical context and degree of privilege or disadvantage associated with a racial identity can greatly alter the meaning of being interracially partnered. Therefore, a comparison of the responses of specific couple configurations could offer directions for future research, as particular interracial pairings carry distinctive meanings that should be acknowledged. As will be described below, the current sample afforded the opportunity to examine two such pairings in increased details. Significance testing was not utilized, as the unequal group sizes would have generated underpowered analyses.

Partners in Asian-White relationships were the most predominant types of interracial couples sampled in this study; therefore exploratory descriptive statistics were calculated for these couples. Means and standard deviations for their respective scales scores are shown in Table 23 below. As the table indicates, White male partners with Asian women endorsed greater global colorblind attitudes than Asian female partners with White men, and Asian male partners with White women endorsed greater global colorblind attitudes than White female partners with Asian men. Both Asian female and Asian male partners reported higher strategic colorblindness scores in comparison to their White partners. White males and White females reported higher
self esteem than their Asian partners. Male partners reported greater relationship esteem and relationship satisfaction than their female partners in Asian-White relationships. Asian partners reported greater relationship depression than their White partners.

Table 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Variables</th>
<th>Asian Female</th>
<th>White Male</th>
<th>Asian Male</th>
<th>White Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorblind Racial Attitudes</td>
<td>45.75</td>
<td>13.45</td>
<td>54.62</td>
<td>15.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Colorblindness</td>
<td>34.39</td>
<td>11.34</td>
<td>31.05</td>
<td>14.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>31.29</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>32.81</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Esteem</td>
<td>25.40</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>27.29</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Depression</td>
<td>15.92</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>20.79</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>21.10</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Total Sample (N = 311), Asian Female Partners (n = 72), White Male Partners (n = 21), Asian Male Partner (n = 10), White Female Partners (n = 53)

As partners in Black-White relationships were the second most prevalent types of interracial couples sampled in this study, means and standard deviations for their respective scales scores were calculated and are shown in Table 24 below. Male partners in Black-White relationships endorsed greater global colorblind attitudes in comparison to their female partners, whereas White partners in Black-White relationships endorsed greater strategic colorblindness than their Black partners. Black partners reported higher self-esteem and higher relationship esteem scores, as well as lower relationship depression scores in comparison to their White partners. Black partners in Black-White relationships also reported greater relationship satisfaction in comparison to their White partners.
Table 24
*Descriptive Statistics for Individuals in Black-White Relationships*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Variables</th>
<th>Black Female</th>
<th>White Male</th>
<th>Black Male</th>
<th>White Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorblind Racial Attitudes</td>
<td>44.58</td>
<td>13.44</td>
<td>54.00</td>
<td>23.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Colorblindness</td>
<td>25.77</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td>31.18</td>
<td>12.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>33.62</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>32.91</td>
<td>6.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Esteem</td>
<td>28.08</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>25.91</td>
<td>5.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Depression</td>
<td>14.23</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>19.64</td>
<td>11.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td>21.50</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>20.73</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Total Sample (N = 311), Black Female Partners (n = 26), White Male Partners (n = 11), Black Male Partner (n = 6), White Female Partners (n = 52)*
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The present study explored the individual perspectives of interracial partners in heterosexual romantic relationships, with specific attention to racial colorblind attitudes, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction among White partners and partners of color. As heterosexual interracial couples become increasingly prevalent and visible within today’s social fabric, their perspectives are all the more important to integrate into modern racial discourse. Steinbugler (2012) stated,

Debates about the possibility of a postracial society threaten to devolve into a standoff between those who focus on decades of racial progress and those who stress the persistence of inequality. This polarized discussion obscures a more complex reality…To understand this contemporary reality, we must…move on to more sophisticated questions…How do individuals engage one another along racial lines? Can intimate relationships bridge racial boundaries, or do they inevitably reproduce the tensions that characterize broader hierarchical realities?” (p. xiii).

Indeed, such questions are complex, with answers and implications that are as multifaceted and wide-ranging as the diversity of interracial relationships that exist. This study represents an exploratory investigation of the possible relationship between racial colorblindness and one’s sense of the self and the significant other, in addition to what differences may exist among different types of interracial partners. This chapter summarizes the results of each hypothesis and exploratory post-hoc analyses, followed by a discussion of how these findings relate to current literature about interracial romantic relationships and colorblind racial attitudes. Limitations of
the present study are considered in addition to future directions for research. Finally, clinical implications are reviewed in context of a counseling psychology framework.

**Summary of the Findings**

**Hypothesis 1.** Results from the present study did not support the hypothesis that participants of color would report lower levels of racial colorblindness as measured by the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale in comparison to their White counterparts. Outcomes revealed no statistically significant difference between partners of color and White partners in their report of racially colorblind attitudes. Both groups endorsed racial colorblindness at moderate levels in comparison to other studies with racially diverse samples (Coleman et al., 2012; Neville et al., 2000; Neville et al., 2005). These results may indicate that White individuals and persons of color can endorse colorblindness at similar rates, which has been shown to be true in the general population (Manning et al., 2015). This particular hypothesis may also have been susceptible to a self-selection bias, wherein individuals who choose to be in interracial relationships may be less likely to hold widely divergent global beliefs about race.

**Hypothesis 2.** Results revealed a significant difference between participants of color and White participants in terms of reported levels of strategic colorblindness as measured by the Strategic Colorblindness Scale. This finding partially supported Hypothesis 2, which posited that participants of color would endorse lower levels of strategic colorblindness in comparison to White participants. However, it was White participants in the present sample that described lower levels of strategic colorblindness. In other words, White participants associated fewer consequences with acknowledging race with their significant other than participants of color. This was unexpected; research has suggested that persons of color are negatively impacted by the denial of race (e.g., Coleman et al., 2012; Neville et al., 2013; Speight et al., 2016). However,
this finding may reflect that participants of color may uphold a more defensive or self-protecting stance and may be more likely to attend to potential risks when engaging in racial dialogue. As persons of color are more frequently in positions of potential invalidation, rejection, and disempowerment in an American social hierarchy, especially when it comes to discussing race, perceiving greater consequences when acknowledging race may reflect an accurate appraisal of that greater reality.

**Hypothesis 3.** It was hypothesized that there would be a negative association between racial colorblindness and relationship satisfaction. This hypothesis was not supported and there was no significant relationship found. This finding may be partially explained by a number of factors. First, the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale largely measures racial attitudes on a global level in that individuals are asked to reflect on their beliefs on subjects such as the education system, health care, and the official language of the U.S. These topics are often broad in scope, and may be engaged on an intellectual level that is far removed from one’s personal life. It may be that racial attitudes on a systemic level have little to do with one’s sense of relational fulfillment in a romantic context. Secondly, even if individuals endorse racially colorblind beliefs, these beliefs may not negatively impact relationship satisfaction. For example, individuals may uphold racially colorblind beliefs about American social policies, which may create conflict with a racially different partner. A partner may then choose to prioritize other points of similarity in the relationship, such as religion, hobbies, and personal values that supersede points of disagreement, or simply “agree to disagree” – highlighting that interracial partners are in some ways, like all other romantic partners who must navigate their differences. As suggested by Hypothesis 1, where there were no significant differences in racial colorblindness between White participants and participants of color, it is also possible that
participants may be in relationships where both partners endorse similar levels of colorblindness, and this factor becomes neither a point of interest nor contention when assessing the quality of the relationship.

**Hypothesis 4.** It was hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between strategic colorblindness and relationship satisfaction, which was not supported by results in the present study. Again, due to the multifactorial nature of relationship satisfaction, it may be that participants chose to evaluate their relationship based on a number of other criteria unrelated to the acknowledgement or avoidance of race with their significant other. Alternatively, there may be other factors that mediate the relationship between strategic relationship and relationship satisfaction that were not tested.

**Hypothesis 5.** Results showed no significant relationship between self-esteem and strategic colorblindness. As utilizing colorblind strategies has been associated with anxiety about appearing racist (e.g., Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Goff et al., 2013), it was hypothesized that self-esteem as measured by scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale would be related to the perceived consequences in recognizing or attending to race, which can be a sensitive and tricky endeavor. However, this was not found to be the case. This finding may suggest that other individual factors are more directly related to seeing race with a significant other than self-esteem, such as one’s racial identity development, historical successes or failures in addressing race in relationships, or anxiety, to name a few. Alternatively, factors related to a participant’s specific partner might be stronger predictors or moderate the perceived consequences of mentioning race, such as their partner’s race or racial identity development.

**Hypothesis 6.** Contrary to the prediction posited in Hypothesis 6, there was no significant relationship between relationship esteem and strategic colorblindness. Since one’s
approach to race may be motivated by a prioritization of relational harmony or conflict avoidance, the degree of confidence in one’s relational ability was expected to impact strategic colorblindness. Results demonstrated that this hypothesis was not supported. Again, this result may suggest that other relational factors are more likely to predict strategic colorblindness, such as communication style or conflict resolution skills. Moreover, concurrent external or internal relational stressors not captured by the present study may also have a stronger relationship with strategic colorblindness, as romantic partners are known to face innumerable pressures related to their interracial status as well as those idiosyncratic to their relationship (e.g., Inman et al., 2011; Steinbugler, 2012).

**Hypothesis 7.** It was hypothesized that differences in racial colorblindness, strategic colorblindness, and relationship satisfaction would exist among racial groups, which was partially supported. Results indicated that while there were no statistically significant differences in racial colorblindness and relationship satisfaction; however, there were significant differences in reported strategic colorblindness between White partners and Asian partners. More specifically, White partners reported lower levels of strategic colorblindness than Asian partners. This means that Asian partners in interracial relationships perceived greater negative consequences associated with acknowledging race within their relationships – and were subsequently more likely to endorse a strategically colorblind approach. These findings may be explained in part by similar results supporting Hypothesis 2, wherein participants of color perceived greater negative consequences in comparison to their White counterparts. These findings suggest that there may be different implications of acknowledging race when that involves seeing a partner’s “Whiteness” in comparison to seeing a partner’s “Otherness”. Whereas one is linked to racial privilege, and highlighting privilege may be new or experienced
as relationally confrontational, the other is more likely associated with recognizing a new worldview or culture that is unlikely to be threatening. It is also possible that Asian participants were more likely to perceive consequences in seeing race because doing so may be viewed as divisive and incongruent with traditional cultural values.

**Hypothesis 8.** Hypothesis 8 predicted that participants of color would be more impacted by endorsed racial colorblindness than White participants; however, this hypothesis was not supported by the results. Results from a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) that assessed for the main effects of participant race and level of colorblindness on self-esteem and the interaction of race and level of colorblindness on self-esteem indicated no significant main effects or interaction effect. As previously mentioned, one’s broader beliefs about race as it relates to society and broader functioning may not have any direct impact on a sense of personal value or worth, as racial attitudes measured by items on the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale may prime one to reflect on external directed beliefs that are less tied to the self. Likewise, other factors may be more likely to influence self-esteem that may also differ according to race, such an individual’s sense of racial pride or belongingness to a racial group.

**Summary of exploratory post-hoc analyses.** Following the testing of the study’s initial hypotheses, alternative tests of the proposed hypotheses were conducted and a number of additional exploratory post-hoc analyses were also performed. Hypothesis 8 was once again unsupported, as no significant relationship between participant race or racial colorblindness and self-esteem was found. This result may indicate that other factors may be stronger predictors of self-esteem for interracial partners, such one’s racial identity. Additional analyses examined differences in racial attitudes, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction based on the demographic characteristics of the sample not otherwise investigated. Differences based on
gender, prior history of interracial relationships, relationship length of time, and partner type were considered.

**Gender.** This analysis tested any differences between white female participants and female participants of color on measures of racial colorblindness, strategic colorblindness, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction. White female participants reported less strategic colorblindness than did female participants of color, which again supported this general pattern between White participants and participants of color in strategic colorblindness. No such difference was found between White male participants and male participants of color. These results may indicate that particular intersections of gender and race may heighten sensitivity to the consequences of “seeing race” for those occupying social locations that represent multiple disadvantaged social identities, such as for women of color partnered with White men. Being more aware of potentially negative consequences in the relationship may reflect both an adaptive function for romantic partners and replicate a general tendency to be watchful and defend oneself as a marginalized “Other” from potential experiences of oppression.

**Prior relationship history.** This analysis explored whether significant differences existed between participants who had been in an interracial relationship before and those whose present relationship represented their first interracial romantic experience. Participants who reported that their present interracial relationship was their first interracial experience described higher levels of relationship satisfaction in comparison to those who stated that they had been in prior interracial relationships. This finding is difficult to explain, and may reflect a number of factors. It is important to remember that correlation does not equate causation. In other words, being in an interracial relationship experience for the first time does not necessarily produce greater relationship satisfaction. Here, obtaining additional information from participants may help
illuminates these results. For example, participants in prior interracial romantic relationships may have found public disapproval of the relationship to be a major source of stress, which contributed to the end of the relationship. Such participants may subsequently be wary of anticipated conflict with a new interracial partner, which then impacts relationship satisfaction. Without further context, it is difficult to know what variables may be contributing to reported levels of relationship satisfaction.

**Relationship length of time.** This analysis investigated whether significant differences existed between participants who had been in their relationship for six months to one year, one year to three years, three years to five years, and over five years. Significant differences were found in general colorblind racial attitudes between participants who had been in their relationship for one to three years and those who had been in their relationship for over five years. Surprisingly, participants who had been in their relationship for a longer period of time reported higher levels of colorblind attitudes. As the present research is correlational, again, such outcomes cannot be straightforwardly interpreted as indicating a causal relationship between the amount of time in a relationship and an increase in colorblind attitudes. They may mirror a growing cognizance of racialized issues in recent years given their greater attention in the media, which has covered increased concern regarding racially motivated policing, the presidential election, and immigration reform. These topics inherently bring into light how race permeates and impacts our most important social structures (e.g., the democratic process, justice system, foreign and domestic policy). Individuals who have chosen to be in an interracial relationship in the last year to one to three years may have had to engage more frequently in conversations about race with co-workers, friends, and family members during that period of time – which may have decreased the likelihood of endorsing colorblind racial attitudes. Individuals in relationships
that have lasted five years or more have, quite literally, entered their relationship in a different racial climate. The possibility of such interpretations highlights the social construction of race and how the meaning of race always emerges from a specific sociocultural and political context.

**Partner type.** In this series of analyses, differences between White female participants with Asian, Black, and Latino male partners of color were examined, and differences between Asian, Black, and Latina female participants of color with White male partners were explored. There were no significant differences between White female participants who were with Asian, Black, or Latino male partners in respect to racial colorblindness, strategic colorblindness, or relationship satisfaction. However, significant differences were found when comparing Asian, Black, and Latina female participants partnered with White males. Asian female participants were more likely to perceive negative consequences associated with seeing race than their Black counterparts. Not only does this point to the heterogeneity of experiences for partners of color in interracial relationships with White men, but also may be explained by some of the cultural and gendered norms for Asian women that discourage eliciting attention to existing differences. The need for further research in this area is discussed in a later section.

**Descriptive Statistics for Specific Dyadic Pairs.** A final set of exploratory analyses addressed differences between interracial couple configurations, as the specific type of interracial relationship can greatly influence the relational experience. Research supports that the relational challenges and public response faced by partners vary according to the interracial configuration of the relationship (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Karis, 2003; Killian, 2012; Yancey, 2007). Along these lines, means and standard deviations for scale scores were generated for individual partners in Asian-White relationships and Black-White relationships in order to make comparisons across particular couple configurations. As mentioned, these comparisons are
descriptive in nature, and no significance testing was utilized, as the unequal group sizes would have yielded underpowered results. Yet they indicate that important differences may exist across interracial pairs. In this sample, male partners reported greater colorblindness than their female counterparts in both Asian-White and Black-White interracial relationships. Whereas Asian partners in Asian-White relationships reported higher strategic colorblindness in comparison to their White counterparts, White partners in Black-White relationships reported higher strategic colorblindness scores in comparison to their Black counterparts.

There was variability across self-esteem, relationship esteem, relationship depression, and relationship satisfaction scores that were unique to the type of interracial relationship individuals were in. First, White partners across genders in Asian-White relationships reported higher self esteem than Asian partners regardless of gender in the same type of interracial pair, and Black partners across genders reported higher self-esteem than White partners regardless of gender in Black-White relationships. Next, male partners in Asian-White relationships endorsed greater relationship esteem in their relationships in comparison to their female counterparts, and Black partners regardless of gender reported greater relationship esteem than White partners regardless of gender in Black-White relationships. Additionally, Asian partners across genders described greater relationship depression than White partners across gender in Asian-White relationships, whereas White partners irrespective of gender in Black-White relationships reported greater relationship depression. Finally, male partners in Asian-White relationships endorsed higher relationship satisfaction in comparison to female partners in Asian-White relationships, and Black partners across gender in Black-White relationships reported higher relationship satisfaction in comparison to White partners across gender in the same relationship type. Overall, trends within this sample suggested that, within the context of individuals in Asian-White dyads,
White partners regardless of gender in these relationships endorsed higher self-esteem in comparison to their Asian counterparts and male partners in these Asian-White dyads generally had scale scores corresponding to higher levels of relationship wellbeing. In Black-White dyads, Black partners irrespective of gender reported higher self-esteem as well as higher levels of relationship wellbeing across the board.

These exploratory findings underscore the heterogeneity of experiences among interracial pairs. Moreover, the results suggest that not only are an individual’s gender and race key factors to consider in the experience of an interracial relationship, but also the specific interracial context and dyadic makeup.

**Relevance of Present Results to Current Literature**

Steinbugler (2012) asserted,

In the popular imagination, love has the potential to bring about radical social transformation, because it is believed to supersede group differences and render them trivial…It is a curious idea that in a world where racial conflicts are widespread, romantic love can be assumed to create an intimate sphere where in which racial differences do not matter (p. xi).

The present study both supports and refutes this statement, and in similar fashion, the results of this study both reinforce and challenge previous research, ultimately illuminating areas that merit further empirical attention.

**Support for existing literature.** While some research suggests that interracial partners become more racially aware as a consequence of being with a racially different significant other (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Steinbugler, 2012), other research indicates that a colorblind perspective is not race-specific. Both people of color and White persons adopt colorblind
ideology, albeit for different reasons (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Coleman et al., 2012; Manning et al., 2015; Vasquez, 2014). The results of the present study supported this contention; both participants of color and White participants endorsed racially colorblind attitudes at moderate levels comparable to other studies of colorblindness (Coleman et al., 2012; Neville et al., 2000; Neville et al., 2005). It appears that being in an interracial relationship in of itself does not eliminate racial colorblindness, and this study indicated that White partners and partners of color are equally as likely to “not see” race with regard to their general attitudes about society. These findings may also reflect a contemporary tendency to view the nation as being a post-racial melting pot (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011) where a focus upon race is viewed as a thing of the past.

The emergence of differences between participants of color and White participants in regards to strategic colorblindness supports previously-established findings that how one experiences interracial romance can be dramatically different according to race (Inman et al., 2011; Karis, 2003; Killian, 2012). The findings that participants of color perceived greater consequences associated with acknowledging race confirm Killian’s (2013) observations that partners of color may be more sensitive or attentive to racial meaning in social situations than their White partners overall. Also, these results may support prior studies where addressing race can be experienced as more relationally risky for persons of color (Sue et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2011). Furthermore, the significant differences in strategic colorblindness provide some initial support to work conducted by Goff et al (2013) and Steinbugler (2012) emphasizing that the choice to recognize or not recognize race is relationally motivated. Choosing to not “see race” may be an interpersonal tactic to reduce possible conflict and a form of emotional labor.
The significant differences found specifically among female participants of color in strategic colorblindness correspond with a major tenet of intersectionality literature (Crenshaw, 1991) according to which multiple social identities can exacerbate vulnerability to oppression. Results from the present study appear to support this principle, since women of color, who simultaneously inhabit multiple minority statuses, perceived greater consequences to making racial differences explicit. These differences also reaffirm the heterogeneity of experiences for women of color as a group (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Hill & Thomas, 2002), which must be taken into consideration when conducting interracial research. Research also indicates that the meanings attributed to race are often governed by changes that occur on a macro-level. Therefore, the ways individuals experience and are impacted by their interracial relationships depend on the time period that individuals enter the relationship (Afful, Wohlford, & Stoelting, 2015). Differences found between participants in relationships lasting one to three years and those lasting over five years may offer preliminary support that systemic and sociocultural factors exert an important influence on the lived experiences of interracial partners.

**Challenges to existing literature.** Although the present study did not compare interracial partnerships to intraracial ones, it was noted that participants regardless of racial group reported similar positive rates of relationship satisfaction and self-esteem. This finding partially challenges prior studies citing lower rates of relationship satisfaction among interracial couples (Bratter & Eschbach, 2006; Fusco, 2010; Hohmann-Marriot & Amato, 2008; Martin, Cui, Ueno, & Fincham, 2013). The fact that over 80% of participants cited being in their relationship for at least one year or more may also partly contest statistics reporting that interracial relationships are less likely to last more than three months (D’Souza, 2010). Foeman and Nance’s (1999, 2002) introduction of an interracial relationship development model was predicated on a Black-White
relationship, with the belief that some generalizable trends may exist for other types of couples. While this may be the case, findings from this study indicate that significant differences exist between various relationship types that should not be overlooked.

In addition, previous studies had indicated that endorsing racial colorblindness could be psychologically detrimental, as it has been negatively correlated with an affirming racial identity (Coleman et al., 2012) and been associated with a reduction in empathy for others (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Tettegah, 2016). Results in the present study did not seem to coincide with these studies, as there was no significant relationship between colorblind racial attitudes or strategic colorblindness and self-esteem or overall relationship satisfaction. It may be that for interracial partners, one’s approach to race may be only one of many components that influence one’s sense of worth and fulfillment, and may play a smaller role than anticipated.

**Gaps in the literature addressed by the present study.** In essence, the present study represented efforts to address gaps in interracial and colorblindness research and create new bridges between these areas of scholarship. As aforementioned, the majority of interracial research relies on qualitative research designs and methodology with small samples (Bustamante, Nelson, Henriksen, & Monakes, 2011; Henderson, 2000; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Killian, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2012; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013); this study offered a quantitative survey of 311 adults using a number of established attitudinal measures. Colorblindness research in social and counseling psychology has been conducted with adults across numerous settings, including research labs (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Goff et al., 2013; Holoien & Shelton, 2012), college campuses (Neville et al., 2000; Todd et al., 2011), work environments (Meeussen et al., 2014), and clinical settings (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Gushue, 2004; Neville, Spanierman, & Doan, 2006) – however, this study signifies a look into the more
intimate and relationally consequential backdrop of romantic relationships and contributes an original focus of research. Moreover, previous studies have rarely considered group differences between White partners and partners of color within the same study, which was the primary focus of the present study. The present study also provided supplementary explorations of the demographic variables and individual characteristics not otherwise focused upon in interracial research, and significant results suggest a relationship between the intersection of social identities and strategic colorblindness.

Limitations of the Present Study

A number of limitations exist in the present study and should be taken into consideration when interpreting the data.

Demographic characteristics. A key limitation in the present study is the demographic profile of the final sample and subsequent problems with external validity. The sample was not comparable to national averages of interracial relationship types, and there was an overrepresentation of individuals in heterosexual Asian-White relationships. The majority of the sample was in their mid-twenties and thirties, female, highly educated, middle class, and all participants reported being in heterosexual relationships. Therefore, any significant results are not generalizable to many other important segments of the general population, such as older adults, men, LGBTQ individuals, and those without access to computers, as their perspectives are mostly or completely excluded from this study. Also, almost one-quarter of the sample was not born in the U.S., which may greatly impact the endorsement and expression of racial attitudes in an American context.

Social desirability. Although the present study utilized an anonymous survey method, the impact of social desirability, or “making oneself look good in terms of prevailing cultural
norms when answering to specific survey questions” (Krumpal, 2013, p. 2028) is a prevalent concern in survey research. Though this may be the case for much of psychology-based attitudinal research, this may be even more the case when asking about one’s racial attitudes, evaluation of personal value, and relational fulfillment. Krumpal (2013) discussed two components of social desirability that may be uniquely important to take into account in regards to the present study: personality characteristics and item characteristics. Misreporting can reflect a personality trait that demands approval or secondly, the beliefs that certain survey items are less socially undesirable than others; both forms result in impression management behaviors. Lalwani, Shavitt, and Johnson (2006) also showed that social desirability was culturally influenced and subject to nuanced forms of collectivism, which may impact the way data collected from Asian participants should be interpreted. As no social desirability measure was included in the present study, it is not possible to know the degree to which participant responses may have been determined by social desirability and if this tendency significantly impacted the data.

**Psychometric considerations.** Analyses conducted with the Strategic Colorblindness Scale yielded significant results; however, this scale was modified for the purposes of this study, which should be considered with regard to construct validity. The four-item Couples Satisfaction Index was also included in the online survey instead of a longer version to decrease participant fatigue, but a larger number of items may have more adequately captured the concept. Furthermore, only the relational esteem subscale of the Relationship Assessment Questionnaire was used in data analyses, as the items from this subscale appeared to be a clearer measure of relationship competency, which was a variable of interest in this study. While the RAQ has been
used to measure other maintenance strategies in relationships (Snell et al., 1992; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004), its psychometric properties have not been extensively validated.

**Sampling and selection bias.** Participants were recruited into the sample through convenience and snowball sampling, which began with the social network of the primary investigator. Recruiting also included posting a brief advertisement for the study on social media sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) and websites specifically created for individuals in interracial relationships (e.g., Reddit). This strategy may account for the large percentage of participants who were in their twenties and thirties, highly educated, middle class, in longer-term relationships, and in Asian-White relationships, as these demographics reflect the primary investigator’s immediate social networks, as well as a sample who has access to a computer and use social media sites. Consequently, despite the fact that Hispanic-White relationships make up the largest proportion of interracial relationships, this was not reflected in the sample. Another limitation to the study is a self-selection bias, which may not only skew the sample, but also the interpretation of data. For example, it may be that participants who would agree to complete a survey about racial attitudes from an interracial relationship website and those who choose to be in an interracial relationship may share common traits, such as a general level of satisfaction with their relationship, or an openness to addressing race, which decreases the likelihood of finding significant differences across participants in the sample.

**Future Directions**

The present study explored the colorblind racial attitudes and subsequent mental health outcomes for partners in heterosexual interracial relationships. Examining colorblind attitudes in its relation to social policy and larger systems, as well as its possible impact within a romantic relationship, represents a novel approach in colorblindness research. Additionally, the study
represents an early foray in the investigation of the impact of such racial attitudes upon mental health outcomes for interracial partners through survey research – and therefore replication studies are recommended to test if current findings are valid and can be duplicated. Results from this study also bring to attention some possible directions for future research, which will be discussed below.

First, future studies may benefit from including additional variables that can enhance the understanding of factors that contribute to racial colorblind attitudes. Instead of simply measuring the presence or absence of colorblind racial attitudes, incorporating demographic variables such as geographic area of residence and acculturation status can provide greater insight into potential influences on colorblindness that correspond to one’s degree of contact with racial diversity or its particular meaning in an American context. Furthermore, factors that may mediate or moderate racial colorblind attitudes, such as racial identity development may be helpful to expand upon in future research. As the present study indicated that there might be relationally motivated aspects to endorsing a colorblind perspective, other relationship-specific variables that may predict strategic colorblindness should be explored. Factors such as coexisting relationship stressors or negative experiences, communication style, conflict resolution skills, stage of interracial relationship development, and whether or not a participant co-parents with their significant other may also bring to light how racial attitudes may greatly depend on the nature and status of one’s relationship rather than being the reflection of one’s static ideology.

Future research will be augmented via the development of more psychometrically valid measures of colorblindness to assess colorblind racial attitudes in the context of personal relationships, especially as interracial contact is becoming increasingly inescapable in a rapidly diversifying society. For example, additional tools that include a greater number of items as well
as items that identify underlying relational motivations for colorblindness (e.g., I want to avoid hurting my partner) or its perceived benefits (e.g., I prefer to focus on shared qualities in my relationship) may be particularly helpful for both researchers and clinicians. A scale that helps individuals identify what stage of interracial relationship development according to the model posited by Foeman and Nance (1999) may also provide normative expectations for interracial partners and help researchers identify what stressors may be impacting reported rates of relationship satisfaction. Lastly, integrating items or a scale that measures one’s social desirability and its impact on response style is an important recommendation for future research that explores colorblindness.

As the present study was conducted online, future studies should both consider how this approach may impact the types of participants that are recruited and how to utilize different offline methodologies to increase generalizability. Incorporating a question about how participants heard about the study may help researchers understand how social media or active Internet use may influence one’s worldview and/or create a self-selecting bias in the recruited sample. Future studies that use a combination of paper and pencil surveys as well as online surveys are more likely to obtain a diverse and nationally representative participant sample.

Finally, the present study sampled and categorized participants largely into two groups (i.e., White and participants of color) because it utilized a subjective definition of an interracial relationship. This study therefore did not address the full range of interracial subgroupings or intersections with gender and sexual identity. Post-hoc analyses represented an exploratory examination of such subgroups, and subsequent research could involve the intentional sampling of specific types of interracial partners, relationships, and intersections of social identities (e.g., Hispanic women with White men, gay White men with Asian partners). Along these lines, future
researchers are encouraged to address interracial dynamics within same-sex, non-binary, and/or other couples configurations, especially as same sex couples are more likely to be interracially partnered (Lundquist & Lin, 2015). As descriptive statistics of dyadic pairs revealed differences among various interracial pairs, using a mix of individual and couples data might better capture the complexity of one’s relationship experience and how an individual’s experience may be shaped by the specific coexisting racial realities within an interracial dyad.

**Clinical Implications of the Present Study**

The present study underscores the complex nature of interracial relationships and explored the decision individuals make to “see” or “not see” race, both in the world and in the context of their significant others. In a parallel fashion, clinicians must also make this choice with their clients as they engage in a therapeutic relationship. Counseling psychologists assert that multicultural competency and socially-just practice are not optional additions to the therapeutic relationship, but tenets of ethical practice. As a result, the role of a helping professional has broadened beyond addressing intrapsychic concerns to being an ally and activist who resists systems of oppression and inequality (Vera & Speight, 2003; Packard, 2009). Thus clinicians are uniquely positioned to model what it means to see race in their therapeutic relationships with the interracially partnered. Killian (2001b) stated,

> Responsible therapists who seek to do more than simply support the sociopolitical status quo may opt to be subversive, transgressive, even revolutionary in their interventions, as long as they are offered in a gentle, supportive, and empowering manner to their clients (p. 38).

However, not all mental health professionals are prepared to work competently with interracial partners and couples, as traditional training paradigms may fail to integrate macro-level
processes such as the impact of race relations into clinical work (Tubbs & Rosenblatt, 2003).

Hence the potential for relational rupture and resulting disappointment is of real concern between clinicians and their clients (Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005).

Indeed, current scholarship instructs clinicians to attend to, rather than minimize race throughout the therapeutic process, particularly during preliminary assessment. Examples include noting implicit racial themes in self disclosure (Tubbs & Rosenblatt, 2003; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005), assessing a partner's level of racial awareness (Killian, 2012) or acculturation (Wieling, 2003), observing the ways race impacts a partner's relational microsystem and family or community macrosystem (Seshadri & Knudson, 2013; Usita & Poulson, 2003), and identifying strategies that have been utilized to address racial differences or racism (Killian, 2012). Initiating dialogue about race (Killian, 2012; Tubbs & Rosenblatt, 2003) has been highlighted as an important task of the clinician to preserve space and opportunity for potentially painful discussion and to prevent complicity in the dominant discourse of silence around racial topics (Killian, 2012; Molina, Estrada, & Burnett, 2004). Bacigalupe (2003) cautioned,

> Therapeutic conversation, however, can also be a subtle, or gentle, form of colonialism that evolves from a reproduction of oppressive structural social patterns. The therapist herself can also be part of this reproductive stance; her expert position can simply disallow conversations that require critiquing the authority, including her own (p. 144).

Accordingly, clinicians’ willingness and ability in positioning race as a legitimate topic for therapy can be a powerful support for such exploration by interracial partners and couples.

Although interracial couples may seek therapy for reasons similar to intraracial couples (Henderson, 2000; Poulsen, 2003), clinicians also need to balance divergent therapeutic tasks in therapy that may be racially differentiated, as has been demonstrated through the results of the
present study. White partners may need to move beyond an individualistic worldview to incorporate the racially differentiated views of their significant other (Karis, 2003), whereas partners of color may need to be encouraged to honestly voice ambivalence about the relationship (Forry, Leslie, & Letiecq, 2007). Clinicians must also be cautious not to pathologize strategies used to manage race or a partner’s autonomy to self-define (Killian, 2002), particularly when the strategy may involve the exercise of selective silence or colorblindness. Instead, clinicians can help normalize the seemingly paradoxical choice of adopting colorblind strategies in an interracial relationship, help partners explore the implications, and clarify their desired vision for the relationship (Karis, 2003; Killian, 2003). Given the present study’s findings that partners of color are more likely to view bringing up race as negatively impactful to their relationship, clinicians should be aware of this possibility and explore potential concerns or resistance to racial dialogue in therapy. As this concern may be heightened for Asian women with White male partners as suggested from this study, possible gendered or culturally informed determinants that may be related should be explored collaboratively.

Psychotherapeutic literature recommends that counselors who want to work capably with interracial partners must engage in honest self-reflection, reflecting upon biases or reactions towards interracial romance, the impact of racism in their work, and their own racial identity and its ascribed meaning in the therapeutic space (Killian, 2002, 2003, 2012; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006; Tubbs & Rosenblatt, 2003). Hare-Mustin (1994) stated,

The therapy room is like a room lined with mirrors, reflecting back only what is voiced within it. If the therapist…[is] unaware of marginalized discourses, such as those associated with members of subordinate gender, race and class groups, those discourses remain outside the mirrored room. . . . Structural inequalities influence the therapeutic
conversation; what can be spoken about and who can speak it are issues of power (pp. 22-23).

If clinicians are asked to responsibly assess, create opportunity, and explore how race and racism influence the course of a partner or interracial couple’s relationship, they must first engage in the difficulties of race work in order to become authentic helpers, allies, and advocates.

Conclusion

Interracial partners are among the most experienced cross-cultural travelers – whether or not they intend to be – since they journey across racial borders that may often be left unchallenged. As discussed, race has the power to define reality, allocate opportunity or disadvantage, and is infused into our fundamental social structures. However, choosing to “see” or “not see” race continues to be a point of contention. Commitment to racial discourse in a nation that has been labeled as post-racial can be seen in of itself as a form of social activism, as the choice to make race explicit may be accompanied with consequences. However, “seeing” race is ultimately about identity, recognition, and understanding what it means to be truly known and truly empathic towards the full and complex experience of a different “Other”. As stated by an interracial partner who perseveres in racial dialogue, “I do the work because I refuse to be in pain… I refuse to be in love with someone who can’t see me or only sees parts of me or sees me as only this racial being” (Steinbugler, 2012, p. 94). The acknowledgement or disavowal of race bears great personal and relational significance, which is a choice that interracial partners constantly face. Therefore, the exploration of colorblind racial attitudes in romantic contexts, where intimacy is negotiated around knowledge of the other and countless points of connection and disconnection becomes paramount.
The challenges of scholarship in this area of study are clear for researchers, and the clinical implications are equally demanding for clinicians who work with interracial partners. However, for those who are dedicated to the task of multiculturally competent work, the difficulties parallel those faced by the interracially partnered. The commitment to racial dialogue, as provocative, polarizing, minimized, or complex as it may be, is necessary, in order for authenticity to exist between two individuals, whether in an interracial relationship or a therapeutic one.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

*Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale*
(Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000)

**Strongly Disagree = 1, Strongly Agree = 6**

1. Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.
2. Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S.
3. It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian American.
4. Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.
5. Racism is a major problem in the U.S.
6. Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.
7. Racism may have been a problem in the past, it is not an important problem today.
8. Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as white people in the U.S.
9. White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.
10. Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.
11. It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems.
12. White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
13. Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and values of the U.S.
14. English should be the only official language in the U.S.
15. White people are more to blame for racial discrimination than racial and ethnic minorities.
16. Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against white people.
17. It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.
18. Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
19. Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.
20. Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.
Appendix B

Strategic Colorblindness Scale (adapted)
(Goff, Jackson, Nichols, & Di Leone, 2013)

Strongly Disagree = 1, Strongly Agree = 7

1. Seeing my partner in terms of race contributes to racial tension for us both.
2. Seeing my partner in terms of race breeds interracial mistrust and prejudice in our relationship.
3. Seeing my partner in terms of race creates inequality within our relationship.
4. Categorizing my partner by race is in and of itself racist.
5. Seeing my partner in terms of race strips away her/his individuality.
6. Seeing my partner in terms of race is unfair.
7. Ending racial categorization would create a more equal dynamic in our relationship.
8. Seeing my partner in terms of race leads to stereotyping.
9. Racism and prejudice are products of racial categorization.
10. Recognizing racial affiliations prevents us from moving forward in our relationship.
11. Seeing my partner in terms of race is a significant hindrance to racial harmony.

Original Strategic Colorblindness Scale items:

1. Seeing people in terms of race contributes to racial tension for everyone.
2. Seeing people in terms of race breeds interracial mistrust and prejudice.
3. Seeing people in terms of race creates inequality among racial groups.
4. Categorizing people by race is in and of itself racist.
5. Seeing people in terms of race strips one of their individuality.
6. Seeing people in terms of race is an injustice.
7. Ending racial categorization would create a more just society.
8. Seeing people in terms of race leads to stereotyping.
9. Racism and prejudice are products of racial categorization.
10. Recognizing racial affiliations prevents the United States from moving towards a more socially just society.
11. Seeing people in terms of race is a significant hindrance to racial harmony.
Appendix C

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
(Rosenberg, 1965)

Strongly Disagree = 1, Strongly Agree = 4

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
Appendix D

Relationship Assessment Questionnaire
(Snell & Finney, 1993)

1 = Not at all characteristic of me
2 = Slightly characteristic of me
3 = Somewhat characteristic of me
4 = Moderately characteristic of me
5 = Very characteristic of me

1. I am a good partner for an intimate relationship.
2. I am depressed about the relationship aspects of my life.
3. I am better at intimate relationships than most other people.
4. I feel good about myself as an intimate partner.
5. I sometimes have doubts about my relationship competence.
6. I am disappointed about the quality of my close relationship.
7. I am not very sure of myself in close relationships.
8. I cannot seem to be happy in intimate relationships.
9. I think of myself as an excellent intimate partner.
10. I am less than happy with my ability to sustain an intimate relationship.
11. I would rate myself as a "poor" partner for a close relationship.
12. I feel down about myself as an intimate partner.
13. I am confident about myself as a relationship partner.
14. I feel unhappy about my interpersonal relationships.
15. I am not very confident about my potential as an intimate partner.
16. I feel pleased with my love relationships.
17. I sometimes doubt my ability to maintain a close relationship.
18. I feel sad when I think about my intimate experiences.
19. I have few doubts about my capacity to relate to an intimate partner.
20. I am not discouraged about myself as a loving partner.
Appendix E

_Couples Satisfaction Index_
(Funk & Rogge, 2007)

*Indicates used for the CSI-4

**Extremely Unhappy = 0, Perfect = 6**
1. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Most people have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

**Always Disagree = 0, Always Agree = 5**
2. Amount of time spent together
3. Making major decisions
4. Demonstrations of affection

**Never = 0, All the time = 5**
*5. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?*
6. How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten into this relationship?

**Not at all True = 0, Completely True = 5**
7. I still feel a strong connection with my partner
8. If I had my life to live over, I would marry (or live with/date) the same person
9. Our relationship is strong
10. I sometimes wonder if there is someone else out there for me
11. My relationship with my partner makes me happy
*12. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner*
13. I can’t imagine ending my relationship with my partner
14. I feel that I can confide in my partner about virtually anything
15. I have had second thoughts about this relationship recently
16. For me, my partner is the perfect romantic partner
17. I really feel like part of a team with my partner
18. I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does

**Not at All = 0, Completely = 5**
*19. How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?*
20. How well does your partner meet your needs?
21. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
*22. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

**Worse than All (extremely bad) = 0, Better than All (extremely good) = 5**
23. How good is your relationship compared to most?
**Never = 0, More Often = 5**

24. Do you enjoy your partner’s company?
25. How often do you and your partner have fun together?

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes how you feel about your relationship. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

26. Interesting 5 4 3 2 1 0 Boring
27. Bad 0 1 2 3 4 5 Good
28. Full 5 4 3 2 1 0 Empty
29. Lonely 0 1 2 3 4 5 Friendly
30. Sturdy 5 4 3 2 1 0 Fragile
31. Discouraging 0 1 2 3 4 5 Hopeful
32. Enjoyable 5 4 3 2 1 0 Miserable
Appendix F

Demographics Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your age below:
   a. 18-24 years of age
   b. 25-34 years of age
   c. 35-44 years of age
   d. 45-54 years of age
   e. 55-64 years of age
   f. 65+ years of age

2. Please indicate where you were born, and where you currently reside:
   a. Born in the United States, and currently live in the U.S.
   b. Not born in the United States, and currently live in the U.S.

3. Please indicate which race you most closely identify with below:
   a. Asian/Asian American
   b. Black
   c. Latina/o
   d. Native American
   e. White, non-Hispanic
   f. Multiracial
   g. None of the above – Please list your response here.

4. Please indicate which gender you most closely identify with below:
   a. Female/Woman
   b. Male/Man
   c. None of the above

5. Please indicate your romantic partner’s age below:
   a. 18-24 years of age
      b. 25-34 years of age
      c. 35-44 years of age
      d. 45-54 years of age
      e. 55-64 years of age
      f. 65+ years of age

6. Please indicate where your partner was born and where your partner currently lives below:
   a. Born in the United States, and currently live in the U.S.
   b. Not born in the United States, and currently live in the U.S.
7. Please indicate what race your partner most closely identifies with below:
   a. Asian/Asian-American
   b. Black
   c. Latina/o
   d. Native American
   e. White, non-Hispanic
   f. Multiracial
   g. None of the above – Please type in your partner’s race

8. Please indicate which gender your partner most closely identifies with below:
   a. Female/Woman
   b. Male/Man
   c. None of the above

9. Please indicate how long you and your partner been in a romantic relationship:
   a. less than 6 months
   b. 6 months to 1 year
   c. 1 to 3 years
   d. 3 to 5 years
   e. Over 5 years

10. Have you been in an interracial romantic relationship before the present relationship that you are in?
    a. Yes, I have been in an interracial romantic relationship before.
    b. No, this is my first interracial romantic relationship.

11. Please indicate your highest level of educational achievement
    a. Some high school or less
    b. High school diploma
    c. Some college
    d. 2 year college degree
    e. 4 year college degree
    f. Some postgraduate
    g. Postgraduate degree
    h. I prefer not to respond

12. Please indicate what social class you most closely identify with below:
    a. Upper
    b. Middle
c. Working
d. Poor
e. I prefer not to respond
Hello,

You are invited to participate in my dissertation project, which is a study exploring the perspectives of partners in interracial (partner of color/White partner) romantic relationships. The procedure of this study will include reading a list of statements, and then indicating your response to each statement. This survey should only take about 10-15 minutes.

If you are willing and eligible, please just click on the link below to continue. Thank you in advance for your time and please feel free to pass on to anyone who might be interested.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Must be at least 18 years old
- Must live in the U.S.
- Must identify as heterosexual and currently be in an interracial (partner of color/White partner) romantic relationship for at least six months

If you meet the above criteria and are interested in participating, please click on the link below to begin the short survey.

[Qualtrics Survey Link]

***This study has been approved by the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board: Protocol #XX-XXX. If you have any complaints, questions, concerns, or would like to know the results, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at pal2132@tc.columbia.edu.
Appendix H

Informed Consent

INTRODUCTION
You are being invited to participate in a research study exploring the attitudes and beliefs of partners in interracial romantic relationships. In this study, interracial romantic relationships are defined as a romantic relationship between a heterosexual couple with one partner of color and one White partner.

You may qualify to take part in this research study if: you are over 18 years old, reside in the U.S., identify as heterosexual and a man or woman, and currently a partner in an interracial romantic relationship lasting at least six consecutive months.

Participation in this study will take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time.

This study is being conducted by Peggy Loo, MA, who is a counseling psychology doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University and the Principal Investigator. This study is sponsored by Dr. Laura Smith, a counseling psychologist and associate professor at Teachers College, Columbia University.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?
As little research has been conducted on the lived experiences of interracial partners, this study is being done to explore the attitudes of heterosexual partners in interracial romantic relationships. More specifically, this study asks interracial partners about their personal perceptions on topics such as race, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
If you decide to participate, you will complete an anonymous online survey. You will be asked to read a number of statements and select the responses that most closely match your own experience or beliefs. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes. You will not be asked to provide your name at any point during the study.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORT CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
Potential risks associated with participation in this study include distress or discomfort elicited when thinking about race, engaging in self-reflection, or assessing your personal relationship satisfaction. Please be assured that you can stop participating in this study at any time without penalty. The Principal Investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential by keeping all information in a secure database on a password-protected computer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Results from this study may benefit mental health professionals interested in understanding the experiences of partners in interracial romantic relationships and developing more effective therapeutic interventions.
WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?
You will not be paid for your participation in this study; however, you may enter a random drawing for a $25 Amazon gift card. If you are interested in entering the drawing, you will be asked to provide an email address at the end of the survey. The email addresses will be removed before data analysis and stored in a password-protected file not affiliated with the study data.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?
The study is over when you have completed the online survey. However, you may stop participating in this study at any point without penalty by exiting the browser.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY
Your responses in this study will be anonymous. All data will be kept confidential and will only be reported in a conglomerate format (only reporting combined results and never reporting individual results). Participants will be identified through a code assigned by the Principal Investigator. Linking data will not be possible because names will not be requested at any point in the survey. Data collection will be stored on a secure database until deleted by the Principal Investigator. No one other than then Principal Investigator and her Faculty Sponsor will have access to the data. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?
The results from this dissertation project may be presented at conferences, meetings, articles, or used for educational purposes. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the Principal Investigator.

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?
If you have any questions about taking part in this research study or following your participation in the study, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Peggy Loo at pal2132@tc.columbia.edu or the Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Laura Smith at ls2396@tc.columbia.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.
Appendix I

Participants’ Rights

· I have read the informed consent provided by the researcher/Principal Investigator. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits regarding this research study by contacting the Principal Investigator at pal2132@tc.columbia.edu.

· I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.

· The Principal Investigator may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.

· If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the Principal Investigator will provide this information to me.

· Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

· If at any time I have additional questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the Principal Investigator, Peggy Loo (pal2132@tc.columbia.edu) or the Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Laura Smith (ls2396@tc.columbia.edu), who will answer my questions.

· I can print a copy of this Informed Consent document.

  • I understand that I can print a copy of the Informed Consent and this Participant's Rights document for my own personal records.

  • By checking the box below and clicking “Next”, I agree to participate in this study.

  • YES, I have read and understand the above, and I agree to participate in this study.