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“WHO DO YOU LOVE, AND ARE YOU FOR SURE?”: BLACK RELATIONSHIP ATTITUDES AND PARTNER PREFERENCES

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“WHO DO YOU LOVE, AND ARE YOU FOR SURE?”: BLACK RELATIONSHIP ATTITUDES AND PARTNER PREFERENCES

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By
Chesmore Simon Montique

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Candice Hargons, Associate Professor of Counseling Psychology

and Dr. Danelle Stevens-Watkins, Professor of Counseling Psychology

Lexington, Kentucky

2023

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

"WHO DO YOU LOVE, AND ARE YOU FOR SURE?": BLACK RELATIONSHIP ATTITUDES AND PARTNER PREFERENCES

Historically, research has identified Black relationships as deviant, unstable, and pathological as compared to White relationships (Frazier, 1966; Moynihan, 1965). This outlook centers on White experiences as a baseline for comparison and dismisses the cultural nuance within Black relationships. Examining intraracial Black relationship formation dynamics – specifically romantic partner preferences – using an intersectional framework seems more relevant as Black people are least likely of all races to date White people (Batson et al., 2006; Yancey, 2009). As Black immigrants continue to increase their presence in the U.S. (Anderson & López, 2018), the current research examines how cultural factors influence relational attitudes and partner preferences for ethnically diverse Black people in the U.S.

The first manuscript investigates how Black people's gender, ethnicity, and regional backgrounds influence their partner's skin color preferences. Results suggested that gender served as a mediator for both regional background and ethnicity, where international and Northeastern men had significantly higher endorsement of lighter skin as compared to Southern women, and the overall sample (majority cis women) preferred darker skin mates. The second study examines how endorsement of ethnic identity, racial identity, and Afrocentric beliefs impacts one's desire to date within their racial or ethnic group. Results suggested that increased Afrocentric beliefs were associated with an increase in one's desire to date both interethnically as well as intraracially. Racial centrality was also determined to be a significant factor in an individual's desire to date intraracially, however ethnic commitment was not significant in one's desire to date interethnically. Identifying how these differences manifest in Black relationships urges clinicians to improve treatment for Black couples by addressing differences in cultural identities and values that often are overlooked.

KEYWORDS: Intraracial; Black relationships; Black ethnic minorities; Identity salience

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Date

“WHO DO YOU LOVE, AND ARE YOU FOR SURE?”: BLACK RELATIONSHIP ATTITUDES AND PARTNER PREFERENCES

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Date May 23rd, 2023

This work is dedicated to all the Black immigrants that have found a way or made one for an opportunity to grow.

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This journey is dedicated to my past, present, and future. To my past, my mother, Avis Montique, thank you for the life, love, and lessons you gave me. I will always live to make you proud and be the man you raised me to become. To my present, my greatest gift, my love, Jordyn. Thank you for holding me down and being my rock through this process. I pray I'm able to spend the rest of my life showing you my appreciation. And to my future, my son, Uri, you truly are my motivation and my ray of light. I hope you realize if I can get through this process, there's nothing you can't do. And I'll be right there to support you. Carry the baton further, Simba. In addition, I could not have made it without my friends and family. This degree is not mine; it is my tribe's. Too many to name but "allyuh' know."

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Chapter One: Introduction

Black people are disproportionately marrying less often than their racial counterparts (Raley et al., 2015). In 2020, the marriage rate for Black Americans 18 or older was lower than (34.2%) rates for White (53.3), Hispanic (44.5%), or Asian (58.6%) Americans (U.S. Census, 2021b). Divorce rates are also higher for Black Americans, specifically women, with 15.1 in 1,000 married Black women getting divorced – the highest amongst all the races (National Center for Health Statistics, 2019), and Black Americans are least likely to remarry after divorce or widowhood (Parker & Wang, 2014). The long-standing dominant narrative on Black relationships has been deficit centered (Banks, 2011).

Early researchers identified Black relationship dynamics as deviant, unstable, disintegrated, broken, and pathological (Frazier, 1966; Moynihan, 1965), but these researchers typically used White values and norms to assert why Black experiences were deviant (e.g., traditional family structure, patriarchal households; Frazier, 1966; Moynihan, 1965). Using White standards to judge Black relationships promotes an ill-informed assessment of Black culture that does not consider factors specific to Black experiences that impact relational decisions. To that end, a considerable fault in research is the lack of intentional investigation of culturally relevant features of Black experiences. Pathological assessments of Black relationships based on Western standards are maintained without an intentionally culturally relevant investigation.

Historically, researchers and clinicians have yet to be effectively trained to contemplate the needs of populations disadvantaged by social identities such as race, ethnicity, generational status, and regional background (Allison et al., 1994; Bernal & Castro, 1994; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). More specifically, the variety of social and cultural identities (e.g., ethnic diversity)

within Black communities is seldom acknowledged (Cokley, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2014). The lack of investigation on diversity within the Black diaspora maintains an ignorant understanding of what cultural features inform Black romantic partnership preferences. Additionally, researchers primarily focus on relational success (Kelly & Floyd, 2001; LaTaillade, 2006; Randall & Bodenmann, 2017), but investigating relationship formation may prove most useful to examine how social factors impact decisions on who one even chooses to enter into a potential partnership with.

Black immigrants have quintupled in migration to the U.S. since the 1980s (Anderson & López, 2018). However, research does not examine this growing diversity within Black communities and its impact on relationship formation, even though cultural differences within-group likely influence how individuals select partners. Studies that have critically examined Black relationships from an Afrocentric lens tend to focus on African American identities exclusively (King & Allen, 2009; Parmer, 1998; Ross, 1997) or conflate constructs of race, ethnicity, and Afrocentrism (Cokley, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2014). This perpetuates an ill-informed, myopic understanding of Black experiences. Ethnic identities likely influence Black people's attitudes towards relationships and their partner preferences. Ethnic and national cultures influence individuals' value systems and worldviews (Cokley, 2005; LaTaillade, 2006), so they are also expected to impact relational attitudes in the current research. To investigate Black relationships more accurately, first, researchers need to make distinctions between race, ethnicity, and Afrocentric values, as well as the commitment to and personal salience of those identities to an individual. These identities may impact individuals' attitudes toward relationships in a unique manner. Adopting an intersectional viewpoint facilitates consideration of the impact

social locations have on lived experiences and the multiplicative nature of identities (Bowleg, 2008, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991).

The current investigation sought to examine how unique cultural factors – including ethnic group, racial identity, ethnic identity, Afrocentricity, U.S. regional background, and gender – influence Black people's preferred romantic partner traits (i.e., interethnic dating, intraracial dating, skin color preference). Ethnicity refers to a grouping of individuals based on their nation of origin, and the respective regional and cultural heritage (Morin, 2020; Robinson, 2020), whereas ethnic identity considers the individual's attachment and identification with their ethnic origin (Phinney, 2003; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Similarly, racial identity refers to the meaning one makes of their race and the cultural concerns of the group (Sellers et al., 1998). Afrocentricity explores the relation of one's beliefs to central themes that are believed to relate to universal African values (Sutherland, 2011). U.S. regional background considers how cultural influence from growing up in particular areas of the U.S. impacts preferences and relational values. Relationship attitudes are investigated based on participants' desire to date interracially and interethnically, as well as preferred partner skin color.

The research question asks, "How do cultural factors influence relationship attitudes and partner preferences for people of the African diaspora living in the U.S.?" The study will advance how we conceptualize Black relationships and romantic partnering, incorporating how cultural differences stemming from various social identities play a role in partner preferences. The two studies examine these research questions:

- How do gender, U.S. regional background, and ethnicity affect Black people's preferences for a romantic partner's skin color?

- Does racial identity, ethnic identity, and Afrocentric beliefs impact Black people's preferences for racially and ethnically similar romantic partners?

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is submitted in a multiple manuscript format. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research problem and the overarching research questions that guide the two quantitative studies conducted. Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature and the theoretical framework that provided the context for the studies. Chapters 3 and 4 are both full, stand-alone manuscripts describing the two separate studies. Chapter 5 is a summary and discussion of the overall findings of the entire body of research.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Black Relationships in the U.S.

Early History of Black Relationships in the U.S

Black and White marriage rates have a striking history of disparity in the U.S. Black relational hindrances can be traced back to Africans arriving on American soil. Black American history is typically discussed in three eras: slavery, emancipation, and urbanization (Dixon, 2017; Frazier, 1966). During slavery, Africans were forcefully transported to the U.S. for free labor on the plantations. While I will not detail the experience of slavery and oppression, it is vital to recognize the psychological aspects related to relationships Africans suffered in the stripping of their culture and religion (Blassingame, 1979; Frazier, 1966; Goring, 2006). Examples of relational obstacles include how Black families were separated to break away their psychological bonds to their family – lessening their chance to rebel against slave owners (Blassingame, 1979; Dixon, 2017; Frazier, 1966). Enslaved Africans were often married to multiple people due to being married, sold off to another plantation or freed, and married again

(Goring, 2006). This caused disruption during the emancipation era when newly freed African Americans were unsure whom they were married to. Enslaved Africans often had no control over their sexual relations, being instructed on whom to mate (or breed, as they were viewed as chattel) with by slaveowners (Frazier, 1966). Christianity was forced onto enslaved Africans to dismantle African cultures that promoted polygyny (Dixon, 2017; Mbiti, 1990). Enslaved people were able to rAfrocentricAfrocentric values and beliefs – such as collectivism, humanism, and extended family systems – and integrated them into the dominant beliefs they needed to confide to for survival (Dixon, 2017; Sutherland, 2011; Sudarkasa, 1975, 1997; Woodson, 1968).

More than four million African American people were liberated during emancipation (Dixon, 2017; Ruef & Fletcher, 2003). This served as a double-edged sword for the Black community; although Black people were liberated everywhere, people just began moving, leaving the plantation behind with no destination but away from that land (Dixon, 2017; Franklin & James, 1997; Frazier 1966). This exacerbated the displacement and disorganization of many Black families. Additionally, the experiences of multiple marriages across plantations left many uncertain on who their “true” spouse was (Dixon, 2017).

During the Urbanization era, with the rising tensions and segregation in the South, Black people began to move where they felt safest (Frazier, 1966). Many moved to southern communities und’r the Freedman Bureau's protection (an agency established to protect and help African Americans in the South) or to the North (Dixon, 2017). Dixon (2017) names four effective strategies African Americans employed to support their families: (1) getting legally married outside of marriage through slavery, (2) changing their last names to’take on their partner's, (3) finding family members who were sold off, and (4) adopting children of former neighbors and friends to keep th’m out of the Freedman's adoption system. These responses

named by Dixon served to recreate the Black family systems in the U.S. and inform a culture that emphasizes extended kinships and bonds across communities as a result of broken and complex consanguineal ties during slavery (Dixon, 2017; Nobles, 1974; Sudarkasa, 1975). These reformed Black family formations also promote an interdependence of family members and communities that supports equitable relationships dynamics (Dixon, 2017).

Historical Research on Black Relationships

The study of Black relationships in America has a long history dating back to the early 1900s, when Black family studies emerged as a distinct area of inquiry (Dixon, 2009, 2017; Frazier, 1932). American social scientists have extensively examined the effects of structural factors on Black families and relationships (Dixon, 2009). In this regard, two frameworks, namely the deficit or pathological approach and the cultural retention or adaptive method, have been primarily employed. E. Franklin Frazier, a Black American sociologist, developed a pathological approach to researching and intervening in Black families, informed by his work on the New World Negro Family (1932; Kempadoo, 2003). Frazier conceptualized the Black family structure as dependent on European rule and suggested that the high number of families headed by women pushed men out of their natural leadership roles. The Moynihan Re’ort furthered Frazier's concepts and posited that matriarchal family systems cause Black men to leave their families and perpetuate a cycle of broken homes with added challenges systemic oppression (Moynihan, 1965).

Many social scientists ’isagreed with Frazier's pathological approach, believing that Black familiesAfrocentricd adaptive Afrocentric family values (Kempadoo, 2004, 2009; Smith, 2011). They argued from a cultural retention perspective, contending that African Americans retained the essence of their cultural practices and family patterns. African-centered scholars

argued that to comprehend African American relationships, we must first understand African values of marriages and family (Sudarkasa, 1975). For instance, the practice of polygyny, which was common in some African cultures, was carried to the Caribbean and the Americas during slavery, and evidence was found of multigenerational extended families of enslaved people centered around particular areas or cities (Sudarkasa, 1997). The formation of polygynous relationships among enslaved and trans-residential communities on plantations was a solution to the sex ratio imbalance, providing all women with the ability to marry and depended on each other for economic support. African culture highlights a distinction between marital stability and familial stability that is not as pronounced in American norms, suggesting a need for an Afrocentric view of Black relationships.

Contemporary Context of Black Relationships: The Dating Dilemma

Black people continue to marry at increasingly lower rates than other racial groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020; USA Facts, 2020); this is especially true for Black women (Hall et al., 2014; Raley et al., 2015). By 1980, Black women married 17% less than their White counterparts in the U.S. (Caucutt et al., 2019). In 2006, 67% of White women ages 25 to 54 were married compared to almost half the amount (34%) of Black women, (Caucutt et al., 2019). Only 37% of Black men and 32% of Black women were married as of 2020 compared to 56% and 53% of their respective White counterparts. Black women are the least likely to be married of all racial groups and genders as of 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Black women are disproportionately disadvantaged regarding romantic relationships with Black men. The gender ratio favors Black men, such that there are fewer men available for potential heterosexual relationships (Hall et al., 2014).

This dating dilemma affords men the privilege to leverage relationships to their benefit since Black women are more likely to have difficulty finding another Black man. Hall et al.'s (2014) study found that Black female college students at an HBCU reported a perception of competing amongst women to secure a partner. This led women to use traits they deemed desirable by mates to their advantage, such as changing their wardrobe and engaging in relationships desired by men (i.e., casual dating, hookups, etc.). From the male perspective, this competition seems advantageous, reducing their "cost" and increasing the "rewards" within relational contexts (Pouget et al., 2010). This power dynamic provides context for how Black men and women navigate relational experiences with an imbalance in power dynamics. Black women are often left to negotiate their standards to partner with the contextual realities of available options, which may make interracial dating more attractive (Hall et al., 2014). Black men have been more willing to date outside of their race than Black women, possibly in effort to gain social status through their partner (Livingstone & Brown, 2017; Robnett & Feliciano, 2011). This context is largely explored amongst African Americans, but also exists in other ethnicities such as Caribbean and African communities.

Love in the Caribbean

Known for its portrayals of beautiful beaches, tropical weather, and fruity cocktails, the Caribbean (commonly called the West Indies) has a history far more complex than first appearances may suggest to tourists. The territory was established through a violent history of colonial conquest involving genocide of the indigenous people and forced importation of millions of Africans as slaves as well as thousands of Asians, and even some Europeans, as indentured workers (Kempadoo, 2004; Meniketti, 2009; Seegobin & Tarquin, 2003). Despite, and due to, the violence and terror of colonialization that characterizes its history, the Caribbean

is home to a diverse population of ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages. In some instances, the Caribbean refers to only the islands – the Antilles. Other times the definition includes territories on the coastland of Central and South America. In some studies, the distinction is made by language, referring to the Anglophone Caribbean – or English-speaking Caribbean (Kempadoo, 2003), the Spanish Caribbean (RoseGreen-Williams, 1993), or the French Caribbean (Smith, 2011).

Sexing the Caribbean

Across the variety of cultures represented throughout the region, the Caribbean is historically sexualized. The sexualization manifests externally in the history of sex tourism (Kempadoo, 2004; Sharpe & Pinto, 2006) and internally through limits of acceptable gender expression, sexual expression, and romantic relationship formations (Kempadoo, 2003; Wekker, 1999). Kempadoo (2004) dates notions of sexualization to European explorers from the 1800s characterizing Caribbean Amazonians as wild sexual beings because of the few women-only communities that performed heterosexual raids for procreation. These behaviors were contrary to the European norms of "proper" monogamous families and heterosexual relations, set within a patriarchal society. The perception of Caribbean people continued to develop in tandem with notions of West Africans who were enslaved as physical, sexual creatures.

The sexualization can be traced back to 1899 with the expansion of the United Fruit Company (Smith, 2011). The company developed a marketing plan for the Caribbean, a central port in exporting fruit. The plan was to increase their fruit sales to U.S. consumers and sell the visual image of the Caribbean as a relaxing, exclusive, and comfortable place of natural beauty (Saunders, 2011). This small development contributed to how the Caribbean was then seen and consumed. Combined with the presumed notion of the Caribbean people as sexual beings, it was

not a stretch for Europeans to travel to the ultimate vacation spot for forbidden sexual pleasures. Today, few vacation destinations are as popular as the Caribbean (Saunders, 2011). In 2018, tourism made up 15.5% of the entire Caribbean economy GDP, more than any other region of the world (Turner, 2019). However, undocumented sex tourism and prostitution is often the only way the people of the small nations can keep up with the high-speed economies of the larger nations controlling or influencing them (Sharpe & Pinto, 2006; Saunders, 2011).

Paradoxes in Paradise: Gender Stigmas and Sexuality

Researchers found several household kinships and sexual arrangements across the communities of Trinidad and Tobago (Herskovits & Herskovits, 1947). In some households, women had more power and equity than traditional European relationships. These relationship dynamics, along with other cultural behaviors, or "Africanisms," were found to relate to a central African culture (Herskovits & Herskovits, 1947). Studies also exhibited working-class women that would exchange sex labor or participate in nonmonogamy found these relationships more sexually satisfying or economically advantageous than heterosexual monogamous relationships (Barrow, 2019; Kempadoo, 2003; Tinsley, 2011; Wekker, 1999). By the 1970s, practices of outside relationships, common-law marriages, and visiting unions were seen as standard and acceptable relational practices in the Caribbean based on their historical, cultural, social and economic conditions (Kempadoo, 2003). This custom was dominated by masculine heterosexual norms that made these unions more acceptable for men (Kempadoo, 2003). Women's sexuality was still attached to social and biological notions of procreation and motherhood (Kempadoo, 2003).

The intersection of hypersexuality and heteropatriarchy is evident in labels surrounding sex tourism (Kempadoo, 2004). Sex tourism most commonly refers to female prostitution;

however, romance tourism refers to male sex workers whose sexual identity is seen as a sign of virility (Kempadoo, 2004; Pruitt & LaFont, 1995; Sharpe & Pinto, 2006). Women who interacted with male sex workers were more likely to have a romantic interest in the man compared to female sex workers, who were characterized by the "whore stigma," receiving only physical interest from male clients (Kempadoo, 2004). This dominance over women's sexuality continues in various economic classes of Caribbean romantic relationships. Barrow (2019) highlights this enigma in Caribbean relationships in her study on nineteen Bajan women's experiences with heterosexual relationships. Women are expected to be "proper housewives" who are faithful and domestic, and men can have second families or multiple sexual partners (Barrow, 2019; Kempadoo, 2003, 2004). Paradoxically, Caribbean culture presents as matrifocal, heterosexual, and monogamous, yet it provokes hyper-heterosexuality and male marginality (Barrow, 2019).

Caribbean Romantic Relationships

The region's unique amalgamation of cultures facilitates and hinders romantic relationships in various ways. Heteropatriarchy and hypersexuality inform Caribbean taboos that limit the sexual expression of particular groups while empowering others. Hypersexuality relates to a pervasive, longstanding belief that Caribbean people have hyperactive libidos and overly depend upon sexuality as a marker of identity (Kempadoo, 2004). Caribbean sexuality is then perceived as excessive, at times, pathological. The second concept, heteropatriarchy, consists of the distinctions and interplay of heterosexism and patriarchy (Kempadoo, 2004). The arrangement of heteropatriarchy in the Caribbean criminalizes and oppresses sexual and gender minorities by privileging heterosexual, promiscuous masculinity and subordinate, feminine sexuality. Both systems relate to a masculine dominance, however, combined, they relate to the way sexuality and gender are legally, socially, and politically imposed (Hargons, 2019). For

women, these constructs commonly attach sexuality to childbirth or male pleasure (Kempadoo, 2003, 2004). These social circumstances have implications for relationship dynamics such that Afro-Caribbeans may be perceived as sexually promiscuous by prospective partners or their values around sex may be more liberal than their African and American counterparts (Clarke, 1957; Kempadoo, 2003; Hamon, 2003; Seegobin & Tarquin, 2003). Moreover, the silencing of these ethnic differences in Black literature perpetuates the lack of understanding differences in Black relationships.

Barriers to Dating Outside of the Caribbean

The Caribbean is unlike many other regions with a number of diverse languages, cultures, religions, and ethnicities represented (Kempadoo, 2004). This may lead to challenges when dating individuals from outside of that culture. For one, Afro-Caribbeans are hypersexualized from early on. For Caribbean adolescents, sexual activity is seen as the rule rather than the exception (Hamon, 2003; Kempadoo, 2009). Moreover, the sexual perception of Caribbean people may cause issues in a relationship as well. For example, the hypersexualized characterization may lead a non-Caribbean individual to misinterpret a Caribbean persons' actions as provocative. This could lead the person, mainly Black Caribbean women, to receive unwarranted sexual attention, cat-calling, and sexual harassment or abuse. The casualty of sexual relations for many Caribbeans may lead to challenges for interethnic couples should they not effectively communicate. Some researchers believe individuals tend to date people of similar backgrounds (Luo, 2017), but how this may manifest in Black interethnic couples may differ due to the complicated relationship of contrasts and similarities.

Notions of race are interpreted differently in the Caribbean than in other countries. Before their race, Caribbeans tend to identify with their national identity due to the diversity within

many nations (Kempadoo, 2004). This can create issues for an Afro-Caribbean dating a Black American discussing systemic racism in the United States. The Afro-Caribbean may not identify with or understand the oppressive experiences of Black Americans. Likewise, the Black American may not relate to the Afro-Caribbean's sense of national pride. These misunderstandings can cause one partner to feel unheard or misunderstood by the other as well as create conflict around values, parenting, extended family structure, resolving conflict, and emotional expression (DeLoach et al., 2013). Black couples need to discuss their sub-cultural experiences and how they manifest in their current relationship.

Relationship Preferences

Few studies specifically examine partner preferences of Black Caribbeans (Barrow, 2019; Hamon, 2003; Seegobin, 2003). Barrow (2019) identified intimacy with communication and romance, equality in the relationship and lack of violence, and fidelity as critical components to love. Related to mate preferences, Hamon (2003) found that Bahamian women desired men who are responsible, honest, trustworthy, faithful, Christian, loving, industrious, hardworking, and family-oriented. Mainly, women wanted a man who had a plan for his life, “not just living day-to-day” (p. 25). They were also vocal about wanting a man who is not "a dog," or an adulterer, given the perception of Caribbean men's non-monogamous behaviors. Hamon also discovered that Bahamian men desire a woman who is not concerned about the material resources they have to offer, does not have children, physically attractive, has a good personality, from a respectable family, not promiscuous, communicates effectively, industrious, independent, well kept, dependable, honest, and supportive (2003).

Colorism also proves to be a prevalent issue in the Caribbean (Reddock, 2007; Darity, 2015). European standards of beauty influence who is recognized as beautiful, with those of

fairer complexion regularly considered most beautiful (closer to white; Darity, 2015). This preference for lighter skinned individuals can manifest as a phenotypical preference for some Afro- or Indo-Caribbeans and can also lead to issues of self-esteem for dark-skinned Caribbeans who may not be seen as equally attractive. This could create challenges in their relationship formation, maintenance, and overall satisfaction. Given notions of colorism (Darity, 2015; Reddock, 2007) and hypersexuality (Kempadoo, 2004) throughout the region's history, phenotypical preferences in partners should also be considered for Black Caribbeans.

African Love

Due to colonialization and slavery, the history of Africa and its culture has largely been erased, omitted, or gone unrecorded from world history so that it is almost universally assumed that history can be written without reference to African people (Dubois, 1947; Fage & Tordoff, 2013). This false reality has been proven inaccurate, as the earliest known evidence of the existence of man emerges from East and North-East Africa (Fage & Tordoff, 2013). The continent is home to 54 countries with a diverse people, cultures, and languages, each with their own distinct history (Fage & Tordoff, 2013).

Marriage and Polygamy

Mbiti (1990) emphasizes the importance of marriage in African cultures, which serves as a meeting point for all members of a community, including the departed, the living, and those yet to be born. Procreation is viewed as essential for marriage, as personality traits or characteristics are believed to be passed down from ancestors to the living. Four types of marriages are recognized in Africa, including Christian, civil, customary, and Islamic marriages, with the latter two allowing for polygamous relationships, mainly polygyny (Sodi et al., 2010). Polygamy is often practiced to maintain familial lineage and honor the ancestral past, which allows for larger

families and increases opportunities for procreation. Despite the benefits of polygamy, challenges such as unequal treatment or neglect of wives and the burden of educating, clothing, and feeding all of the children equally can arise (Sodi et al., 2010). Nonetheless, the benefits of polygamy and large families can be realized, regardless of one's personal outlook on the practice. Individuals from African cultures may have different values on romantic partnering and subsequent desires for partner preferences as compared to their American or Caribbean counterparts.

Romantic Attitudes

Cross cultural studies on romantic beliefs, including African beliefs, did not begin until the 1980s (Karandashev, 2019). By the 1970s, Munro and Adams conducted a series of studies to develop a scale that asses love attitudes in samples of American college and high school students (1978a, 1978b). The Munro-Adams Love Attitude Scale was later used in cross-cultural studies to examine African cultures and romantic beliefs (Philbrick & Opolot, 1980; Philbrick, 1988; Vandewiele & Philbrick, 1983). The items measured three subscales of love: (1) romantic idealism – belief that love is the highest goal of a relationship, (2) conjugal love – belief that love is a calm and stabilizing emotion that requires careful thought and consideration, and (3) romantic power – belief that love surmounts all obstacles and substantially influences one’s life (Karandashev, 2019). Researchers conducted several studies to explore attitudes toward love in Eastern and Western African regions.

Philbrick and Opolot (1980) found Ugandan students to affirm beliefs of romantic love. American beliefs of romantic idealism and conjugal love were higher than African samples from West (Senegal) and East Africa (Uganda; Philbrick & Opolot, 1980; Vandewiele & Philbrick, 1983). Authors noted that in many African cultures, conjugal love was not viewed as important

for marriage. Factors such as genetic considerations, tribal identity, and clan or family interests were more imperative (Vandewiele & Philbrick, 1983). Romantic love was seen as an appealing benefit, induced by romantic Hindu and Western films, but not a necessity (Vandewiele & Philbrick, 1983). The results generally held true for cultures in both East and West Africa, however some nuances arose (Philbrick, 1988; Vandewiele & Philbrick, 1983). Participants from Senegal differed such that romantic love did not hold as much importance as conjugal love in comparison to the Ugandan sample. Vandewiele and Philbrick (1983) suggest this difference may exist due to the French colonial influence in Senegal and the varied ethnic groups guiding the nation to be more open and tolerant in comparison to other societies in the area. Senegalese youth felt more agency to choose their partners, therefore having less need for romantic compensation in comparison to their Ugandan counterparts. Findings suggests that the Senegalese understanding of love is balanced by the amalgamation of indigenous conceptions of love and Western ideals of love, in comparison to Ugandans (Vandewiele & Philbrick, 1983).

Stones (1986) found that Black and White university students in South Africa had similar scores for romantic power as Americans and Ugandan samples, but lower scores for romantic idealism. Stones suggested this was due to the sociopolitical unrest and cultural upheaval (i.e. segregationist policies) in the nation at the time, minimizing any ideas of idealism, including in romance (1986). Lower scores for conjugal love were argued to be shaped by the Calvinist socio-religious philosophy of the nation. Results from the various studies display the influence of the cultural (Philbrick, 1988; Vandewiele & Philbrick, 1983), colonial (Vandewiele & Philbrick, 1983), political (Stones, 1986), and indigenous (Vandewiele & Philbrick, 1983) histories of African nations that guide how individuals navigate relational attitudes and preferences. One significant limitation of the Munro-Adams Love Attitude Scale is its use

amongst mainly college-aged samples. Research should continue investigating African adults and their romantic relationship preferences as this may be more relevant to the immigrant populations that migrate to the U.S. The current study seeks to further research on African immigrants related to their partner preferences, specifically around dating interethnically, interracially, and partner skin color preference.

Fu-Kiau's Cycle of African relations

Dixon (2017) applies the African concept of time, as described by Fu-Kiau (1994), to theorize heterosexual Black relationships and dating. Relational time is a cyclical process consisting of conception (Musoni), birth (Kala), maturity (Tukula), and transformation/death (Luvemba). The getting-to-know stage is the conception phase, while exploring each other at a deeper level is the birth phase. Commitment to how they will interact with each other is a significant task during this stage. The maturity phase is where the couple advances the relationship to the next level, such as marriage, through discussions and counseling. The transformation phase is where the relationship moves to a higher level, or it ends if the couple does not seek permanency. The cycle continues as couples assess their compatibility in different stages of the relationship.

Partner Compatibility

Dixon posits that partner compatibility can be categorized into five distinct domains: physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual (2017). Physical compatibility pertains to the sexual attraction and compatibility of partners, as well as the compatibility of familial health histories. Emotional compatibility considers the partners' temperaments, attachment styles, and the ability to meet each other's emotional needs. Mental compatibility encompasses the worldviews, personalities, and values of the couple. Social compatibility concerns the partners'

external networks, including friends, family, and children. Finally, spiritual compatibility involves the partners' spiritual values, their ability to help each other grow spiritually, and their religious identities and practices. These factors together contribute to the overall compatibility of a couple.

However, Dixon notes that African immigrants who subscribe to this cyclical approach to relationship formation may encounter difficulties when dating individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In the dominant U.S. culture, it is considered normal to engage in physical and emotional intimacy early in a relationship (Dixon, 2017; Hall et al., 2014), which can be at odds with the more gradual approach to African relationships. This dissonance may lead to a preference for dating individuals of a similar ethnic background in order to align values. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the literature on African relationships by exploring African individuals' relationship attitudes (e.g., dating interethnically and interracially) and partner preferences (e.g., skin color preference).

Theorizing Mating Strategies

Researchers utilize various approaches to understand partner, or mate, preferences. Evolutionary theorists focus on the need for procreation and sex roles to understand partner preferences (Buss, 2013). Assortative mating, or social homogamy, extends that people are attracted to individuals of similar backgrounds (i.e., race, class, proximity, political views, etc.; Buss, 1986). The social exchange theory posits that individuals perform a cost-benefit analysis in selecting a partner based on what they must give to the relationship and what they receive from it based on their preferences and desires (Sprecher, 1998; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). The varied theories undoubtedly provide a foundation for research on partner selection while exhibiting areas of necessary expansion. A major flaw of these traditional theories is that they are all

representative of a dominant Western perspective. This permits researchers to view Black relationships as pathological, detrimental, and deviant from the Eurocentric norm.

Most mate selection theorists are White men (Buss, 1986, 2013; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), enabling an external, objectifying cultural view of Black relationships' frameworks. For example, many human mating theories have evolved to incorporate important variables for choosing a partner while acknowledging contextual social dimensions that inform these perspectives (i.e., gender differences; Buss, 2013; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). However, none critically account for how various social constructs of minoritized identities such as race and ethnicity impact relational decisions. Black experiences must be examined through a lens, or theoretical orientation, that considers the political systems that impact Black experiences on every level, including relationally (Collins, 2002; Kempadoo, 2004). Black Women's rights activists called for theoretical methodology that pays critical attention to "exclusion, exploitable hierarchies, coercion and the differences within and across culture" (Ackerly, 2004, p. 298).

Intersectional theorists advance the call-to-action by considering the multiplicative nature of identities to think about how social locations, particularly minoritized identities (i.e., race, class, and gender) integrate into one identity and unique experience for an individual (Bowleg, 2008, 2012; Collins, 2002; Kempadoo, 2003, 2004, 2009). Intersectionality, born from Black feminist thought, represents a critical social theory that considers how political and social agencies inform a set of institutional practices Black women actively and chronically deal with (Bowleg, 2008, 2012; Collins, 2002; Crenshaw, 1991). This approach intentionally works against Eurocentric theories that facilitate pathological views on Black experiences by providing validity to investigating a minority-centered experience. More broadly, it considers how academic institutions act as a political system to interpret in an unequal and hierarchal fashion - in an effort

to facilitate just research (Joseph, 1995). Black feminist theory provides an alternative intersectional paradigm – or interpretive framework – to explain the social phenomena of Black relationships (Collins, 2002).

Utilizing a Black feminist lens enriches the intersectional analyses related to the various social locations that impact the individual's lived experiences (Few, 2007). It demands that co-created research is participant-centered, empowering, and critical to their identities (Few, 2007). I honor the roots of Black feminism centering Black women's experiences and acknowledge that it has often been co-opted and misused, decentering the social location and the systemic institutions at play and emphasizing the individual and their social identities (Cole, 2020). Contemporary researchers have commonly made invisible Black women's contributions to the knowledge and research on intersectionality (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Cole, 2020). Although the current study does not focus solely on the experiences of Black women, the aim of incorporating this epistemology is to (1) account for sociohistorical factors that impact individual's lived experiences and (2) recognize the multiple facets of identity (especially marginalized identities) that facilitate a distinctive experience from a "both/and" standpoint rather than an "either/or" recognition of identities (Brewer, 1999; Few, 2007). This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of individual's experiences and perceptions that inform their desires for a romantic partner.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory guides the current study on Black relational attitudes and partner preferences. Social identity theory posits that the groups people belong to are key sources of pride and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Trepte, 2006). Groups give folks a sense of belonging to the social world (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Social identity theory was initially

employed to explain the psychological and social basis for intergroup discrimination that provides a level of pride for an individual (i.e., “Americans are the best people in the world!”; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). However, it can also be used in the context of multicultural counseling, research, and practice, to illustrate the process by which individuals develop and maintain social identities to groups, regardless of their status of oppression (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). The current study uses the theory to explain how one’s affiliation with cultural groups informs their relational attitudes and desired partner preferences.

There are three main tenets to the theory: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. Social categorization refers to the process of determining the in-groups and out-groups of which the individual is a member. Categorization helps simplify the social environment based on how similar or different other individuals are. Related to the current study, individuals have identified themselves as members of particular social groups (ethnicity, gender, education status, etc.) and consider how the groups have benefits and restrictions that contribute to their holistic experience. Social identity represents the multiple levels of identity that define one’s personality. Individuals define themselves according to individual personality traits and their relationship to social groups to establish their identity labels (i.e., Black, Female, Master’s level education, Jamaican). Once folks have categorized themselves and determined their social identity, social comparison occurs to examine differences across other groups. To the original nature of the theory, this comparison usually leads to discrimination; in an effort to improve one’s self esteem individuals may put down the differences of out-group members. In the current context, social identity theory explains how individuals begin to filter out potential qualities that they desire in a partner who may be members of varying or similar social groups. People will

then negotiate what they are willing to compromise on and what they are stern on regarding preferred partner traits.

Social identity theory suggests individuals search for features in a partner that affirm their in-group, or relevant social identities (Trepte, 2006). Related to this study, social identity theory explains how unique social identities may lead individuals to favor partners with similar cultural backgrounds or characteristics that are congruent to the values they hold. The current study aims to examine Black people's preferences for partner traits, as well as relational attitudes, as influenced by social identities related to racial and ethnic identity, regional background, gender, and Afrocentric values. Racial identity, ethnic identity, Afrocentrism, and generation status speak to the salience – or importance of membership – of social identities and values that likely influence the person's relationship attitudes and desired partner traits (Cokley, 2005).

Social Identity and the Influence on Relationships

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably, although they have varied meaning. Race describes an arbitrary classification of humans based on a combination of physical characteristics such as skin color, eye shape, hair texture, facial form, or physical build (Morin, 2020; Robinson, 2020). Ethnicity is a broader term, represents a taxonomy system based on a person's regional and cultural heritage and expression (Morin, 2020; Robinson, 2020). This includes commonalities across religion, national origin, culture, and language, to name a few (Morin, 2020). For example, an individual can identify as Black (race) but be born of Guyanese parents (ethnicity).

Additionally, race and ethnicity operate within the context of a specific national environment (Robinson, 2020). How people identify race and ethnicity may differ based on the

national context. A person from the United Kingdom with a Moroccan ethnic background, may carry particular associations coming from northern Africa. However, that same person may move to the U.S., a different context, and be categorized as French, Muslim, Middle Eastern, or something else. Moving to another country can alter one's ethnic identity, meaning with the change in national context may come a change in identity saliency (Robinson, 2020). Various countries, and even subcommunities within a nation, place varied emphasis on race and ethnicity. Ethnicity can be conceptualized broadly (i.e., North African, Latinx, West Indian) or nuanced to specific nations (i.e., Egyptian, Moroccan, Aruban, etc.; Robinson, 2020).

Various social variables influence Black relationships in a unique manner. Previous research often looks at Black identities as monolithic, disregarding impactful cultural and social differences that arise from ethnic distinctions (Anderson & López, 2018; Cokley, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2014). For one, ethnicity is seldom addressed in the literature on Black relationships (Cokley, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2014). With a fivefold increase in Black immigrants since the 1980s (Anderson & López, 2018), ethnic differences amongst the Black community have become increasingly relevant. Individuals with backgrounds from ethnic-majority nations have vastly different cultures than that of African Americans, an ethnic minority group of the U.S. These cultural values undoubtedly influence how individuals choose a partner, what forms of relationships they pursue, and what they value in their relationship.

Ethnic and Racial Identity

Race and ethnicity only capture external labels put onto an individual. Ethnic and racial *identity* are internally constructed rather than externally, like race and ethnicity (Phinney, 2003; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Sellers et al., 1998). Ethnic identity refers to a multidimensional concept of self-categorization and attachment or commitment to a certain group and the values, beliefs,

languages, and culture of that group (Phinney, 2003; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Ethnic identity is also dynamic in that individuals continue to explore their ethnic backgrounds and culture over time and different contexts (Phinney, 2003, Phinney & Ong, 200; Robinson, 2020). Thus, measures of ethnic identity only capture an individual's affinity for their ethnic group at the time of measurement.

Similarly, racial identity is internally constructed, pushing individuals to question how they identify themselves and what meaning the ascribe to membership with their racial group (Sellers et al., 1998). Because Black people are often perceived as monolithic in an American context, there is much confusion amongst the use of the terms race, ethnicity, racial identity and ethnic identity (Cokley, 2005). Researchers may interchangeably use the term "Black" and "African American", but they do not mean the same thing. Studying these varied experiences with race and ethnic culture for members of the diaspora will provide a more thorough understanding of how these identities influence Black people's lived experiences.

Studies have shown that ethnic identity is less salient to majority groups (Johnson et al., 2012), like White people in the U.S. (Yancey et al., 2001) or the Shona majority in Zimbabwe, who make up 82% of the population (Worrell et al., 2006). Individuals likely default to a national or racial pride consistent with their majority experience. Thus, in the context of the U.S., Black Americans are the majority group within the Black community; ethnic identity may not have as much salience to African Americans. Racial identity may be more prominent to African Americans as a majority group in the U.S.A. It is recognized that African Americans are considered a minority group within an American context, however, amongst members of the Black diaspora, African Americans are considered the majority ethnic group in the U.S.

Researchers must consider how various Black people make meaning of their racial and ethnic identities to determine how salient these identities are and their impact on relational choices.

Contemporary race and ethnicity academics do not consider the experiences of identities such as Afro-Cuban, African Jamaican, Indian Guyanese, or Spanish Trinidadian when considering ethnicity. The relevance and meaning of ethnic and racial identity will vary based on individual, contextual, and cultural differences, including political histories, personal values, and historical experiences of oppression each nation encountered by varied colonizers (Johnson et al., 2012; Kempadoo, 2004). Ethnic identity can be salient to ethnic minorities living in the U.S., where race is an overshadowing construct that does not recognize their uniqueness but that they must abide by for survival and social mobility (LaTaillade, 2006). For example, a Nigerian immigrant may be shocked by the racist treatment they receive because race is not salient to their experience in their nation of origin. However, they also may feel othered by African Americans since their culture and values differ. Psychological aspects of racial and ethnic identities impact relationship satisfaction and stability (LaTaillade, 2006), but little is known about how that influence affects relational attitudes and partner preferences amongst Black ethnic minorities.

Researchers fail to accurately examine Black relationships due to race and ethnicity's conflation. Black people are treated as a monolith where race and ethnicity conflate into one construct, overlooking ethnic differences and the subjective importance of those identities (Cokley, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2014). Ethnic differences are relevant to Black relationships as they may lead to different perspectives and attitudes about relationships (Kempadoo, 2003; Herskovits & Herskovits, 1947), including desirable partner characteristics. Due to the conflation of race and, ultimately, the silencing of ethnic diversity, these differences have not been examined for Black couples. The prospective study aims to explore the differences in

relationship attitudes across ethnic groups within the Black diaspora based on the salience of race and ethnicity.

Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity is another concept, often used interchangeably with concepts of ethnic and racial identity (Cokley, 2005). Researchers suggest that commonalities exist across Black cultures, connecting Black people to an Afrocentric origin (Sutherland, 2011). An African self-consciousness, or Afrocentricity, refers to (1) an awareness of one's Black identity and cultural heritage, (2) recognition of Black survival priorities, (3) participation in developing other Black people, and (4) a recognition of oppression (Bell et al., 1990; Kelly & Floyd, 2001). Affirmation of African-centric values as the basis for Black identity challenge the dominant Eurocentric framework, emphasizing community, a sense of spirituality, kinship or strong familial values, family structure, lack of materialism, a collective orientation, and shared psycho-historical and contemporary psychosocial realities (Cokley, 2005; Kwate, 2003; Ross, 1997; Sutherland, 2011).

In their attempt to assess Afrocentricity through a measure, Gills and Longshore (1996) operationalize Afrocentrism as the degree to which a person adheres to the *Nguzo Saba*, the seven principles of Kwanzaa. The principles are Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (Self-determination), Ujima (Collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Juumba (creativity), and Imani (faith). How people cherish various aspects of an Afrocentric perspective will impact how they navigate the world and, subsequently, view romantic relationships and desired partner characteristics.

Conceptually, ethnic and racial identity certainly overlap with Afrocentric values, however, there are also differences amongst the concepts (Cokley, 2005). Ethnic identity refers to an individual’s affiliation with their ethnic culture. This may be more specific to a nation of

origin, as compared to racial identity referring to a connection to Black people, or all people of African descent. Afrocentricity, however, specifically refers to the African centered cultural values that transcends ethnic differences amongst the diaspora to highlight common values within the race. It also suggests a level of African self-consciousness that allows Black people to reach optimal functioning (Kwate, 2003).

Kwate (2003) suggests individuals of African descent reach optimal functioning when their behaviors maintain and affirm a consciousness framed by Afrocentric characteristics. An Afrocentric worldview promotes the preservation, growth, and liberation of people of African descent (Kwate, 2003). Bell et al. (1990) details how a Euro-American worldview influences Black male-female relationships by emphasizing financial status, physical gratification, individualism, education status, and gender role differences (Bell et al., 1990). These values go against Afrocentric norms, creating a dissonance amongst Black men and women navigating a Western context (Bell et al., 1990). Conceptualizing Black relationships with a culturally relevant framework provides insight into what features promote relationship stability, specific to their norms.

Theorists have suggested Black people are also impacted relationally by negative messages received from structural and internalized racism (Kelly & Floyd, 2001; Kelly et al., 2020). Racism has played such an impactful role in the Black experience that one's Afrocentric values likely moderate how they make meaning out of their lived experiences (Bell et al., 1990; Kelly & Floyd, 2001). Black couples are faced with balancing Eurocentric norms, as displayed in the society around them, with their Afrocentric values to navigate the majority society governed by White standards (Bell et al. 1990). Afrocentric values are typically seen as a barrier for Black relationships to resist White norms. Bell et al. (1990) found Black subjects who endorsed higher

Afrocentric consciousness levels were more likely to prioritize Afrocentric traits such as emotional and intellectual stimulation, unconditional love, commitment to the Black community, cultural awareness, and being family oriented. These values are expected to lead to communal and egalitarian style relationships common to Afrocentric relationships as compared to their White counterparts' individualistic viewpoints.

Afrocentricity does not always work against Eurocentric values, but sometimes in tandem. Kelly and Floyd (2001) examined how internalized racism and Afrocentricity impacted 73 Black couples' relational quality. They found that a combination of internalized negative stereotypes and high Afrocentricity was associated with a decrease in Black men's trust and relational satisfaction (Kelly & Floyd, 2001). The relationship with internalized stereotypes and decreased relational quality and trust was expected; however, its relation to high Afrocentricity for men was unusual to prior research. Kelly and Floyd reasoned that the communal focus of Afrocentric thought might cause Black men to prioritize "the fight" for the greater community over household hardships (2001). Considering the intersection of the U.S.'s patriarchal, Eurocentric culture (Dixon, 2017), with an Afrocentric focus on community, Black men may prioritize the Black movement over the Black woman in their household. This notion continues to ignore Black women's plight in both relational and societal contexts.

With the continued growth of ethnic diversity within Black communities in the U.S. comes varied values and stances on Afrocentricity. Due to the variety of the Black experience, varied levels of Afrocentrism will likely impact how people prioritize particular traits in a partner and their desire for interracial or intraracial relationships. The current study aims to examine how varied levels of Afrocentric values impact Black people’s relational attitudes and desired partner characteristics.

Attitudes Towards Relationships

Interracial Relationships

Black men marry outside of the race at a higher rate than Black women. Since the 1980s, Black people marrying outside of their race has more than tripled by 2015 (Livingston & Brown, 2017). In 1980, 8% of Black men married interracially as compared to 3% of women. By 2015, the percentage increased to 24% and 12%, respectively, with Black men marrying outside of their ethnic group twice the number of Black women (Livingston & Brown, 2017). Yet, the ratio of Black men to women has not changed much over this time. With so many potential partners in Black women, it begs to question what qualities Black men desire in a partner that may move them to break societal norms of associative mating – or mating with individuals of similar identities (Robinson et al., 2017) – and seek a partner of another race. Some Black men may date interracially in effort to improve their social status (Livingstone & Brown, 2017; Robnett & Feliciano, 2011). Others may identify other relatable qualities that supersede the importance of racial identity in these interracial partnerships. Black men have a unique position being in great demand but in small supply, and these experiences likely impact how they navigate partner selection for relationships differently. This also brings into question how notions of colorism influence the desire to date interracially as well as what motivates individuals to maintain intraracial relationships.

Interethnic Relationships

Many studies use the term interethnic dating to describe individuals who date outside of their race (Clark-Ibáñez & Felmlee, 2004; Gaines et al., 1999; Gurung & Duong, 1999; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). In the current study, interethnic dating refers to a person dating within their racial group but outside of their ethnicity (i.e., an African American dating a

Nigerian American). Few studies examine differences within ethnic group dating, also known as ethnic endogamy (Bleakley & Chin, 2010; Furtado, 2012; Hannemann et al., 2018).

Bleakley and Chin (2010) found that immigrants with foreign-born parents who migrated earlier in age were more likely to engage in ethnic endogamy. Their findings suggest immigrant children were more inundated in their native culture and values due to migrating young compared to those who migrate later in life and assimilate to the host countries norms and culture. Bleakley and Chin (2010) shed light on the importance of generation status amongst ethnic minorities that migrate and how their socialization influences their preferences for a partner. Hannemann et al. (2018) studied this phenomenon of co-ethnic marriage over marrying native-born individuals from the host country in European nations. They found that migrants from non-European nations were more likely to marry interethnically, whereas those from neighboring nations were more likely to marry native-born individuals. Hannemann et al. (2018) suggest that individuals in a foreign country would be more likely to marry or date interethnically for similarities across their minority cultures. These findings also suggest that individuals may be interested in prospective partners migrating from neighboring nations. Hannemann et al. (2018) suggest that ethnic minorities in the U.S. may prefer to date other ethnic minorities from similar nations or cultures (i.e., A Jamaican preferring a Trinidadian over a Black American). The current study hopes to examine how Black ethnic minorities navigate dating in their host country by finding prospective partners from neighboring nations.

Furtado (2012) details how education and human capital influence ethnic immigrants to date and marry within their nationality. Education may improve one's ability to adapt to the host country's culture, facilitating more opportunities to date outside of their nationality – Furtado labeled this a cultural adaptability effect (2012). Education may also decrease the likelihood of

ethnic endogamy because the individual likely has to leave their ethnic cultural bubble to attend university – the enclave effect (Furtado, 2012). Lastly, she argues that the assortative mating effect, where individuals may prioritize similar education levels over ethnic similarities. Education level certainly influences the prospect of ethnic endogamous relationships (Furtado, 2012), but it has yet to be studied amongst the Black diaspora. The current study hopes to examine how a desire for interethnic relationships is influenced by one's ethnic identity, or the personal importance of, or connection to, their ethnicity.

Skin Color and Partner Preferences

Skin color has been deeply engrained into Black politics of attractiveness, acceptance, and access (Dixon, 2017; Hunter, 2007; Matthews & Johnson, 2015). Colorism has been present since slavery, where enslaved Africans who were fairer-skinned were given more desirable responsibilities such as the housework indoors, away from the sun. Light-skinned enslaved Africans were closest to a white complexion and were seen as more presentable for guests, thus delegated work as servants and housekeepers. Dark-skinned enslaved Africans were cast to the fields in the hot sun for work and were often treated poorly in comparison to their fairer-skinned counterparts (Hunter, 2007).

Western beauty standards characterize fairer skin as more attractive and attributed to positive characteristics, while darker skin is associated with negative traits and decreased attraction (Hunter, 2007; Matthews & Johnson, 2015). However, those who hold more positive views about Black people may flip their understanding of the complexions. In some Black communities, being darker is seen as being more authentically Black (DeLoach et al., 2013). For Black men in modern culture, being light-skinned is associated with being soft, sensitive, and emotional, while being dark-skinned is related to being masculine, tough, and authentically

Black (Hunter, 2007). As cultural values impact one's attitudes towards different skin tones, this is expected to show up in partner preferences in a parallel fashion. Research overwhelmingly supports the importance of physical appearance to both genders, but especially men (Dixon, 2017; Hitsch et al., 2010; King & Allen, 2009; South, 1991), so it stands that features such as skin color and hair have even more importance, given the sociohistorical circumstances. Those with more Afrocentric viewpoints will likely be more open to a partner of darker skin or all skin colors, whereas those with less Afrocentric values may prefer lighter-skinned partners.

The Current Research

The present research examines how nuanced factors that inform Black experiences (i.e., ethnic identity, racial identity, Afrocentricism, regional background, gender) influences their relationship values (i.e., dating interethnically and intraracially) and preferences (i.e., skin color). Nuanced features investigated include regional background, gender, and ethnic background as well as endorsement of their ethnic group – ethnic identity, racial identity, and Afrocentric beliefs. To clarify, the term Black is used to describe people of the African diaspora unified under the social construct of race. Black American is used to identify Black people born in the U.S. with an ethnic history of chattel slavery in America. A survey was electronically distributed to diverse Black folks and data collected was utilized in two different studies. Study 1 examines how regional background, gender, and ethnic background impact Black people's preferences for their partner's skin color. The working hypothesis is that these features will influence individuals' skin preferences as these sub-groups interact with colonialism and other racial groups in their environment to create their own sub-group value systems.

Study 2 goes deeper into the values Black participants hold by examining how ethnic identity, racial identity, and Afrocentric beliefs influence individuals' desire to date within their

racial and ethnic groups. One's affiliation with the respective groups may impact their values and desires to date within that same community. Relatedly, the concept of Afrocentrism conveys a universal value system that may also speak to individual's desire to date within or outside their racial and ethnic communities. In-depth examinations of within-group Black romantic relationships can inform treatment for Black couples and families with diverse backgrounds to improve relational success.

Chapter Three: Study 1

The Culture of Color:

Regionalism, Ethnicity, and Gender's Influence on Black Romantic Partner Skin Color Preference

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Abstract

Colorism globally impacts cultures, creating social advantages for individuals with lighter skin tones (Mason, 2004). The conflation of race and ethnicity limits researchers' understanding of the diversity of Blackness. This study examines how Black people's romantic preferences regarding skin color are influenced by their ethnicity, regional background, and gender. Study findings partially support the hypotheses that skin preferences vary among Black ethnic groups or U.S. regions, with gender's interaction effect. Enhanced comprehension of the burgeoning heterogeneity of Black individuals in the U.S. may facilitate clinicians in accommodating cultural disparities whilst recognizing commonalities to foster comprehension and communication among diverse Black couples.

Keywords–Skin color preference; intraracial relationships; Black diaspora; Black regional culture; Black partner preferences.

Skin color and colorism have played a significant role in cultures globally, providing individuals with lighter skin access to resources and opportunities that were not available to people with dark skin (Hunter, 2007; Mason, 2004). The impact of this phenomenon on Black American history is evident, particularly during chattel slavery when skin tone determined an enslaved person's indoor or outdoor work (Hunter, 2007). Skin privilege continues to be relevant today and impacts social, economic, political, and romantic opportunities (Edwards, 1973; Hunter, 2007; Neal & Wilson., 1989; Seltzer & Smith, 1991). Lighter-skinned Black individuals are often viewed as more attractive, hold more prestigious positions, attain higher education, and experience less racism (Edwards, 1973; Hunter, 2007; Seltzer & Smith, 1991). This dynamic is linked to colorism's function in reinforcing anti-Blackness and supporting a hierarchy that privileges light-skinned individuals who align with White beauty standards (Craig, 2002).

Studies have identified the intersectionality of gender and colorism, primarily within the experiences of Black women (Awad et al., 2015; Hamilton et al., 2009; Hunter, 2005, 2007). Further exploration of how skin color preference manifests for Black men and women from different ethnic and regional backgrounds could provide valuable insights for clinicians addressing internalized racism. However, little is currently known about how subcultures within the Black community influence romantic partner skin color preference, highlighting the need for further research.

It is important to note that racial similarities do not necessarily equate to cultural similarities (DeLoach et al., 2013), as individuals are socialized by the cultures in which they were raised (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2013). While research on the impact of gender, regional background, and ethnicity on Black communities and interactions is scarce (with some exceptions; Boyd, 2012; Tolnay, 2003), investigating these factors could shed light on mate

preferences regarding skin color. By exploring within-group differences in romantic partner preferences, clinicians can help individuals gain insight into their internalized racism and develop interventions that address intra-racial couple differences.

Skin Color

Skin color has a pervasive role in global societies (Hunter, 2007; Mason, 2004) and in the United States; it has been used by people of all races to discriminate and make distinctions (Neal & Wilson, 1989; Hunter, 2007). Colorism can be traced back to European colonialism and slavery in the Americas (Fanon, 1970; Hill, 2002; Hunter, 2007), creating a social hierarchy where dark skin represents savagery, irrationality, ugliness, and inferiority while white skin represents civility, purity, rationality, beauty, and superiority (Hill, 2002; Hunter, 2007).

During slavery, a class of elite Black freedmen emerged, consisting predominantly of lighter-skinned, interracial Black people, who gained social advancement ahead of other Blacks (Frazier, 1997; Gatewood, 1988). They became leaders within African American communities, and some were labeled as "Black Anglo Saxons" – a Black extreme of White cultural traditions (Hall, 2020). Pseudoscientific theories such as the "Mulatto theory" posed that light-skinned Blacks were superior to dark-skinned Blacks because they were closer to White (Azibo, 2014).

Discrimination associated with colorism may come from economic and political privileges (Keith & Herring, 1991; Hunter, 2007), affecting outcomes such as occupation, income, and educational attainment (Keith & Herring, 1991). Dark-skinned Black people earn less money than light-skinned Blacks, although both earn less than White people (Hunter, 2007). Dark-skinned Black people also experience persisting discrimination that inhibits vocational and social mobility (Keith & Herring, 1991). This discrimination is also seen in romantic dynamics and desirability for dark-skinned Blacks (Awad et al., 2015; Hamilton et al., 2009).

Research suggests that individuals prefer light-skinned partners in Black romantic contexts where light-skinned people are perceived as more attractive or desirable (Awad et al., 2015; Hamilton et al., 2009). Colorism also affects people's romantic decision-making for future endeavors, such as having children. Both light and dark-skinned people may intentionally partner with someone lighter to ensure their children will be lighter and assumingly face less colorism (Russell et al., 1993). Hunter (2007) describes how skin tone and colorism affect the experiences of Black, Latinx, and Asian Americans differently, reinforcing notions of light-skinned privilege. However, darker skin may be perceived as more ethnically legitimate or authentic than lighter skin in some minority spaces, which can be associated with having more race-conscious views (Hunter, 2005). Black people with great ethnic or racial pride may prefer dark-skinned partners. Ethnic identity among the Black diaspora may be associated with individuals' preference for their partner's skin color, and this study aims to explore this topic.

Ethnicity

In everyday discourse, the terms "race" and "ethnicity" are frequently conflated, despite important distinctions between them (Cokely, 2005; Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006). For Black people, these terms are often used interchangeably, but they in fact refer to distinct concepts. While race is a socially constructed category that identifies people of African descent as Black, ethnicity pertains to the regional and cultural heritage of one's ancestry (Yancey et al., 2001). The Black population in the US is becoming increasingly diverse, with one in five Black individuals being immigrants or the offspring of immigrants, primarily from African or Caribbean countries (Tamir, 2021; 2022). However, these countries have also experienced colonialism, which has perpetuated Eurocentric beauty standards through practices such as skin lightening and relaxed hair (Barnett, 2016; Charles, 2003). Nevertheless, growing up in

predominantly Black countries may provide a different perspective on skin color and beauty ideals than in the US.

As Black ethnic minorities assimilate into American culture, they may experience changes in their identity and values. While some may fully assimilate, others may undergo a process of acculturation, balancing the preservation of their cultural practices with adaptation to the US context (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Trepte, 2013). Exposure to American culture can also evoke pride in one's ethnic identity, leading to the retention of certain values or beliefs associated with one's ethnic group, such as a preference for darker skin (Hunter, 2007). Interestingly, individuals from predominantly Black nations or ethnic cultures may have a stronger preference for darker skin than Black Americans, as they have been insulated from European beauty standards (Hunter, 2005). The present study aims to investigate how Black ethnic groups vary in their preferences for a partner's skin color. We hypothesize that participants' skin color preferences will differ based on ethnicity, with Black Americans preferring lighter-skinned partners and individuals from ethnic-majority nations favoring darker-skinned partners (Hunter, 2005). In addition to ethnicity, Black regional culture in the U.S. may impact individuals' values (Steinmetz & Henderson, 2012) – potentially their partner preferences.

Black Regional Culture

In the early 1900s, the Great Migration resulted in a large movement of Black people from the South to the North, where industrial job vacancies were available (Tolnay, 2003). During World War I, non-agricultural labor opportunities emerged, and Black people continued to move to major cities in the Northeast and Midwest, and later to the West Coast in the 1940s (Tolnay, 2003). By 1980, over four million Black people migrated out of the South (Tolnay,

2003), and this migration contributed to the development of regionalism within Black U.S. communities.

Regionalism is a concept in which a particular area of states share common political views, behaviors, and economic interdependence (Mansfield & Solingen, 2010). In the context of Black regionalism, loyalty to one's region of origin is significant (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Trepte, 2013), and hip-hop culture serves as an analogy for the transformation of Black culture in various U.S. regions. Although similarities exist across hip-hop, regional distinctions exist in the sounds, dance moves, fashion, and more. As hip-hop culture influences how people generally carry themselves (Steinmetz & Henderson, 2012), it may also impact beauty standards within Black communities.

This study aims to examine how Black people of various regional backgrounds rate their partner's skin-tone preferences. It is hypothesized that Southern Black individuals may prefer dark-skinned partners more strongly than other regions. The South can be considered the true Black community where many migrated from, and they may reclaim agency around beauty standards (Hunter, 2007; Tolnay, 2003).

Gender

Gender intersects with colorism in creating a hierarchy of attractiveness and subsequent romantic interest among Black people (Collins, 2002; Hill, 2002; Hunter, 2005, 2007). Women's bodies are often seen as indicators of their worth in a sexist society (Glapka, 2018; Hunter, 2005), which, combined with White racism, acutely affects Black women. Historical beauty standards, which have directed the male gaze towards women and favored White beauty, have placed light-skinned women at the top of the beauty hierarchy. In Craig’s (2002) study, one

Black woman described her experience of the dating hierarchy as a dark-skinned woman at her Black college in Huntsville, Alabama:

> We always laughed in my dorm that the first month of school really light-skinned girls got dates. Then the brown-skinned girls started getting dates. And finally by Christmas when all these relationships were breaking up maybe the darker-skinned girls would get a date (pp. 29-30).

In the context of colorism and romantic relationships for Black individuals, gender plays a significant role in creating a hierarchy of attractiveness and subsequent romantic interest (Collins, 2002; Hill, 2002; Hunter, 2005, 2007). This hierarchy, known as the "beauty queue," ranks women from lightest to darkest, with lighter-skinned women receiving more perks such as dates, male attention, and job opportunities (Bond & Cash, 1992; Hunter, 2005). Studies have shown that skin color has a greater impact on Black women than Black men (Collins, 2002; Hill, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Russell et al., 1993), with Black women being more "… affected by the prejudicial fallout surrounding issues of skin color, facial features, and hair" (Neal & Wilson, 1989, p. 389). However, empirical studies on the matter lack discussions on Black men's experience with colorism (Bond & Cash, 1992; Hill, 2002). In Western culture, lighter features are associated with feminine qualities, as shown in historical art (Russell et al., 1993). For example, when Black women are displayed as less feminine or attractive, such as the trope of the mammy – it is typically a dark-skinned, overweight woman with her hair covered or short. Conversely, images of the jezebel trope usually depict light-skinned, slim or curvy, curly or straight-haired, seductive women (West, 1995). With so much focus on women and attraction, the attention is only amplified for Black women in both in-group and out-group contexts. Previous research suggests that heterosexual Black men are more likely to endorse a preference

for a light-skinned partner than Black women (Collins, 2002; Craig, 2002; Hill, 2002). Women may prefer a dark-skinned partner due to stereotypes of lighter skinned associated with femininity (Russell et al., 1993).

Methods

This study examines skin color preferences for Black individuals of diverse identities and cultures, exploring differences based on ethnicity, region raised in the US, and gender. Hypotheses include ethnic differences in preferences with Africans and Caribbeans having stronger preference for dark-skinned partners, regional differences with Southern Black individuals preferring darker skin, and gender differences with Black men more likely to prefer light-skinned partner and Black women preferring dark-skinned partners. Participants completed a fifteen-minute online survey via Qualtrics. Continuing with the survey after the informed consent section served as consent to participate, and the study was approved by the institutional review boards of the university. Participation was voluntary and uncompensated.

Participants

Participants (N = 269) were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling between June and December 2021. Eligibility criteria included identifying as Black, including those who identified as multi-racial if one identity was Black, and being 18 years or older. Recruitment flyers were disseminated online through social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, and promoted by the research team within relevant groups after receiving permission from page coordinators (i.e., HBCU alum groups, Caribbean or African dating groups). Snowball sampling was used due to its cost-effectiveness and ability to recruit participants from a unique group, such as Black ethnic minorities (Sadler et al., 2010). Data from 332 initial responses were cleaned by removing responses from participants who did not meet the

eligibility criteria or who completed less than 76% of the survey items. Only cisgender identities were included in the analysis, resulting in a remaining population of N = 269.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic information collected included age, gender, sexuality, relationship status, ethnic identity, country and region of origin in the U.S., SES, education status, and parental background. Variables of interest for analysis were gender identity, U.S. region of birth, and ethnic identity.

Skin Color Preference Ranks

Participants rated their ideal partner's skin color on a scale of 1 to 9, with 1 being the most preferred and 9 being the least desired. The skin colors were based on the Bond and Cash (1992) color system, which was derived from the Pantone Matching System (PMS), a standardized color system used in the printing and color industry. The reliability and ordinality of the PMS skin tones have been established in previous studies (Bond & Cash, 1992; Coard et al., 2001; Gitter et al., 1972). The skin tones used in this study were labeled 1 through 9, with PMS #4685 (1) being the lightest and PMS #462 (9) being the darkest. Figure 1 provides a reference for the skin colors [Insert Figure 1 here].

Analysis Procedures

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the original nine skin tones and their rankings prior to inverting scores. The Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests were utilized as they are suitable for rank-based data (Harpe, 2015; Sullivan & Artino, 2013). The Mann Whitney U test (two groups only) was used for gender analysis, while the Kruskal-Wallis test (two or more groups) was employed for regional background and ethnicity analysis.

Next, skin color rankings were inverted to easily interpret higher endorsement with higher factor scores. A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to reduce the nine skin tone variables into three factors: light-skinned, brown-skinned, and dark-skinned. Factor analysis has been used in previous research to reduce ranked data dimensions (Kolenikov & Angeles, 2009). Multiple regression was performed to determine how the independent variables predicted the skin color factors with missing data was excluded pairwise. Results and descriptive findings are discussed below.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The sample (N = 269) consisted primarily of cisgender women (78.1%) [Insert Table 1 here]. Most participants identified as Black American (71.8%), with 23% identifying as Afro-Caribbean or Afro-Latine, and only 5.2% as African. Nearly 70% of the sample were non-immigrants, and education levels varied, with 39% holding Master-level degrees, 33.8% Bachelor's degrees, 17.8% Doctoral/Professional degrees, and 9.2% Associate degrees or less. A variety of relationship statuses were represented, with 35.3% of the sample identifying as single, 30.9% in a committed or domestic partnership, and 22.7% married. Most participants grew up in the South (40.1%) or Northeast (28.6%) regions of the U.S., with smaller percentages from other regions or internationally.

The survey yielded 269 participant-ranked results [Insert Table 2 here]. Of the respondents, 110 ranked all nine skin tones, while 159 responses were partially ranked. Skin tone 7 was the most frequently ranked (n = 190), while skin tone 1 was the least frequently ranked (n = 112). Smaller scores closer to one indicate higher rankings, while larger scores, closer to nine, suggest lower average rankings. Skin tone 8 had the highest mean rank score (M = 2.52),

followed by skin tones 7 (M = 2.89) and 9 (M = 2.90). Conversely, skin tone 1 had the lowest mean rank score (M = 8.32), followed by skin tones 2 (M = 7.07) and 3 (M = 6.36). For the remaining analysis, prior to conducting the PCA analysis, rank scores were inverted to indicate higher endorsement or preference from one to nine, with nine representing the highest rank endorsement and one the lowest.

The high amount of missing data (ranging from 30% to 59% for each skin color rank) may render results as hypothesis-generating rather than generalizable, especially as Little's MCAR (1988) test results suggested data is missing not at random, $\chi^2 = 240.545$, DF = 95, p = .000 (Clark & Altman, 2003; Jakobsen et al., 2017).

Non-parametric tests

Independent-samples Kruskal-Wallis H tests were conducted to examine differences in skin tone rankings among three ethnic groups (African, Black American, and Caribbean) and six regional backgrounds (Northeast, South, Midwest, West, International, and two or more regions). The distributions of skin tone rankings were visually inspected and found to be similar. However, none of the nine Kruskal-Wallis H tests for ethnic and regional differences in skin tone rankings were statistically significant. These findings support the null hypothesis that region and ethnicity do not significantly impact skin tone rankings.

Additionally, independent-samples Mann-Whitney tests were performed to assess potential differences in skin tone ranks between cisgender men and women. The distributions of skin tone rankings were similar and visually inspected. Median scores for skin tone 1 and 8 were found to be statistically significant. Specifically, men endorsed a higher preference for skin tone 1 (the lightest skin tone; than women U = 802.5, z = -3.558, p < .001, while women endorsed a

higher preference for skin tone 8 (the second darkest skin tone) than men $U = 3377$, $z = 2.084$, $p = .037$, using an exact sampling distribution for U (Dineen & Blakesley, 1973).

PCA Results

A PCA was conducted on a nine-item scale representing a gradient of skin tones, where participants assigned a value from 1 to 9 to indicate their preference for their partner's skin color. Before conducting the PCA, the nine skin color variables were inverted. The suitability of the PCA was assessed and indicated a mediocre to middling classification based on the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (.677) and individual KMO measures greater than 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < .001$), suggesting the data was factorizable. The PCA yielded three components with eigenvalues greater than one, explaining 31.14%, 19.77%, and 13.19% of the variance, respectively. Visual inspection of the scree plot also suggested that three components be retained (Cattell, 1966). A Varimax orthogonal rotation was employed, and the rotated solution exhibited a simple structure. The three-component solution explained 64.10% of the total variance and was interpreted as factor 1 - light-skinned, factor 2 - brown-skinned, and factor 3 - dark-skinned. [Insert Table 3 here].

Multiple Regression

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict skin color factor scores using gender, U.S. regions, and ethnicity. Results revealed significant effects for only the light skin factor. Linearity and homoscedasticity were confirmed through partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against predicted values. Residuals were independent, as indicated by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.279. Multicollinearity was not present, as indicated by tolerance values exceeding 0.1. Although two studentized deleted residuals were greater than ±3 standard deviations, they were retained in the model. Leverage values above .5 were observed for four

cases, but no values for Cook's distance exceeded 1. The assumption of normality was met, as indicated by a Q-Q plot. The multiple regression model significantly predicted the light-skinned factor, $F(13, 96) = 2.391$, $p = .008$, adj. $R2 = .142$ [Insert Table 4 here]. Specifically, international men, compared to Southern women, had a statistically significant effect, $p = .026$, with a 95% CI [.185, 2.801], indicating that Black men with international origins have a stronger preference for light-skinned partners than women from the U.S. South. Northeastern men, compared to Southern women, also had a statistically significant effect, $p = .021$, with a 95% CI [.165, 1.937], suggesting that Black men who grew up in the Northeast have a stronger preference for lighter-skinned partners than Southern women.

Discussion

This study investigated skin color preferences among Black individuals, considering ethnic, regional, and gender differences. The study addressed three research questions and hypotheses. The first hypothesis, which proposed that ethnic group identity would affect skin color preferences, was not supported by the non-parametric analysis. This may be due to the significance of Black cultural values, such as Afrocentrism, which transcends ethnic differences (Cokely, 2005).

The results partially supported the hypothesis that ethnicity impacts skin color preferences, but in the opposite direction than predicted. Specifically, Black men who grew up outside the U.S. had a statistically significant preference for lighter skin partners than Black women raised in the U.S. South. Future studies could explore the role of Afrocentricism in skin tone preferences among Black individuals. Black men, due to their gender identity, have a certain degree of privilege that positions them closer to White patriarchal norms (Marsh, 2011), which may subconsciously lead to a preference for lighter skin. This preference is prevalent

among men of different ethnic backgrounds, indicating the global impact of colonialism on beauty standards (Dirlik, 2002). According to social exchange theory, some Black men perceive dating White women as a means of gaining access to higher social status (Robnett & Feliciano, 2011) and may view euro-centric beauty features, such as light skin, as more attractive. As the sample did not include African men, future research should investigate their skin color preferences concerning Black Americans and Afro-Caribbeans.

The second research question aimed to explore skin color preferences in relation to U.S. regional background. The non-parametric analysis did not support the hypothesis that regional differences were significant, indicating that White patriarchal norms influence Black skin preferences in the U.S. regardless of region (Dirlik, 2002; Hunter, 2007). However, the multiple regression analysis showed statistically significant differences for international and Northeastern men compared to Southern women in their skin preferences when examining the interaction of regional background and gender. The South is known as the center of Black culture in the U.S., where darker skin is often more accepted and celebrated (Hunter, 2007; Hunter & Robinson, 2018), while the Northeast has a diverse population of Black people that may promote Eurocentric beauty standards (Freeman, 2002; Tamir, 2022). Future research should investigate regional differences in skin preferences among Black men to understand how different cultures shape their choices.

The third hypothesis suggested gender differences in skin color preferences among participants, with men preferring lighter skin partners and women preferring darker skin partners. The majority of the sample (75%, n = 210) identified as women, and descriptive statistics indicated a trend towards darker skin preference. Regression analysis showed significant interaction effects of gender and regional background, with international and northeastern men

displaying different skin preferences than Southern women. Mann-Whitney U tests also showed that Black men preferred lighter skin tones compared to Black women. This aligns with previous research indicating that Black men are more likely to prefer light-skinned partners due to their alignment with White heteropatriarchal norms produced by colonialism (Dirlik, 2002; Hill, 2002; Hunter, 2007). This may influence Black men's skin color preferences differently than Black women, who may be considered the antithesis of White patriarchal norms (Collins, 2002; Hill, 2002).

In the sample, consisting of nearly 75% (n = 210) cis Black women, darker skin tones were generally preferred, with skin tone 8 ranking highest according to Mann-Whitney U tests. Black women are particularly affected by colorism due to cultural values of beauty, and Afrocentric values may contribute to a preference for darker skin as a representation of Blackness. Hunter (2005) suggests that dark skin may provide an in-group benefit of perceived racial authenticity or consciousness. He also posits lighter skin is associated with femininity, making light skin men less desirable (Hunter, 2005). Black women's unique positionality opposite White patriarchal norms of colonialism likely shapes their experiences of race and gender (Collins, 2002; Hill, 2002). A darker-skinned man who experiences oppression due to colorism and holds Afrocentric values may be more desirable as a partner, as Black women may seek someone who is conscious of their status and experiences, or darker skin may represent a perceived masculine man (Hunter, 2005). Future research should explore Black women's skin color preferences in a way that avoids domination by the Black male gaze and elucidates the origins of these preferences.

Limitations

The study has several limitations that should be noted. The sample was recruited through snowball and purposive sampling, limiting generalizability. Additionally, the sample was primarily Black American (71%), predominantly heterosexual (81%), and identified cisgender – mostly as women (70%), further limiting generalizability. Future studies should consider intentionally recruiting African and Afro-Caribbean Blacks for more evenly distributed sample groups and exploring the unique experiences of individuals of all sexual orientations and genders. The large demographic of HBCU graduates in the sample (63%, n = 177) also limits generalizability.

Additionally, a significant amount of participant responses was missing from the skin ranking data. It is noteworthy to consider why individuals may have chosen not to rank certain skin tones. While there were no discernible patterns in the cross-tabulations of skin rankings and independent variables such as regional background, gender, and ethnicity, it is possible that individuals purposely abstained from ranking certain skin colors. Missing data crosstabs did indicate a pattern where missing data decreased with higher skin colors. This suggests that individuals may have naturally preferred darker skin tones, omitting some of the lighter skin tones they did not find attractive. Additionally, the PCA results altered the natural order of skin tones from lightest to darkest, grouping brown skin and dark skin together. Further research accurately capturing skin tone distinctions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of preferences around dark and brown skin. Exploring individuals' skin rankings and their reasons for these preferences would also be beneficial for future research.

Implications and Application

Despite limitations, this study contributes to the understanding of Black skin color preferences and intraracial relationships, without comparing them to White counterparts. Black

sub-communities, such as ethnic group, regional communities, and gender, hold various values and share different experiences, which require further investigation (Joyner, 2003). The diversity of Blackness in the US is increasing (Tamir, 2021), and Black people have one of the most diverse immigrant populations in the world (Read et al., 2005), yet little is known about differences and similarities across Afrocentric values and how Black ethnic groups interact. In addition, research has yet to explore how colorism shows up in Black queer communities. This study opens the door to discussing within-group interactions of the growing diverse Black community in America (Tamir, 2021).

Moreover, regional experiences in Black culture are seldom discussed outside of popular culture and HBCU communities. The history of Black migration and the culture established over time in various regions, as well as relations with other racial groups, have created regional differences amongst Blacks in the U.S. Attending an HBCU seems to also create a unique Black culture of Afrocentric values that should further be investigated for its influence on Black partner preferences. Clinicians should be mindful of the diversity amongst Black clients and how internalized racism may manifest as colorism as well as protective factors against internalized racism. Additionally, clinicians should be aware of their own biases of a myopic understanding of Blackness and work to address them.

Finally, the diversity of color representation in media and music must continue to expand to modify beauty standards amongst Black communities and shift away from colonialist norms. Messages of Black skin color pride continue to advance with the inclusion of ethnic diversity in popular media, such as Beyoncé's hit song "Brown Skin Girl" featuring a Nigerian male singer Wizkid and Guyanese American male rapper Saint Jhn. Mainstream hip-hop music can continue to grow inclusive of darker skin tones to help modify beauty standards amongst Black

communities. As messages in mass media change, the culture of skin tone preferences may shift away from colonialist norms.

Conclusion

This study examines how Black people's partner skin tone preferences are influenced by their ethnic, regional, and gender identities. While colorism may not be the only factor impacting skin color preferences, Black culture is often viewed as a monolithic experience, which hinders nuanced discussions on intragroup partner preferences. To address this, the study explores how intersecting identities, such as ethnicity, U.S. region of origin, and gender, affect Black partner preferences related to skin color. Results partially supported hypotheses that differences in partner skin preferences would exist based on Black ethnic groups or U.S. regions, with gender interactions playing a role. The study also found support for the hypothesis that gender differences exist amongst cis Black men and women, in line with previous research (Collins, 2002; Hill, 2002; Neal & Wilson, 1989; Russell et al., 1993). Mental health providers should be mindful of intercultural differences and the impact of colonialism on partner preferences to better support Black clients in healing from internalized racism. Improved insight on the growing diversity of Blackness in America will allow clinicians to address cultural differences while acknowledging similarities to find compromise and improve communication and understanding amongst diverse Black couples (DeLoach et al., 2013).

Table 1

Demographics of Study Sample for Study (N = 269)

	n	*%*	*M*	*SD*
Age	267	—	34.07	9.86
Gender				
Cis Male	59	20.9	—	—
Cis Female	210	74.5	—	—
Ethnicity				
Black American	193	71.7	—	—
Afro-Caribbean/Afro-Latine	62	23	—	—
African	14	5.2	—	—
Immigrant Status				
First-generation	27	10	—	—
Second-generation	55	20.4	—	—
Neither	187	69.5	—	—
U.S. Region Raised				
Northeast	77	28.6	—	—
South	108	40.1	—	—
Midwest	27	10	—	—
West	30	11.2	—	—
International	23	8.6	—	—
Two or more regions	4	1.5	—	—
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual	220	81.8	—	—
Homosexual (Lesbian/Gay)	15	5.6	—	—
Bisexual	17	6.3	—	—
Other	15	6.3	—	—
Education Status				
Associates degree and below	25	9.3	—	—
Bachelor's Degree	91	33.8	—	—
Master's Degree	105	39.0	—	—
Doctoral/Professional Degree	48	17.4	—	—
HBCU Grad				
Yes	103	38.3	—	—
No	166	61.7	—	—
Relationship Status				
Single	95	35.3	—	—
Married	61	22.7	—	—
Committed Relationship or domestic partnership	83	30.9	—	—
Open relationship	2	.7	—	—
Casually dating	15	5.6	—	—
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	13	4.8	—	—

Table 2

Mean rank scores for skin colors by regional background, ethnicity, and gender

		Skin 1	Skin 2	Skin 3	Skin 4	Skin 5	Skin 6	Skin 7	Skin 8	Skin 9
N	Valid	112	116	116	130	144	181	190	180	173
	Missing	157	153	153	139	125	88	79	89	96
Mean		8.32	7.07	6.36	5.02	4.00	3.47	2.89	2.52	2.90
Median		9.00	8.00	7.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	2.00	3.00
Std. Dev.		1.797	1.892	1.628	2.035	1.943	1.393	1.399	1.577	2.000

Note. Std. Dev. = standard deviation

Table 3

PCA Rotated Component Matrix Results

	Component		
	1	2	3
Skin2	**.793**	.112	.110
Skin1	**.752**	.025	-.162
Skin3	**.518**	-.004	.123
Skin4	-.056	**.821**	.120
Skin7	-.359	**-.771**	.113
Skin5	-.111	**.650**	.452
Skin9	-.459	-.085	**-.739**
Skin6	-.391	-.002	**.730**
Skin8	-.409	-.353	**-.657**

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Table 4

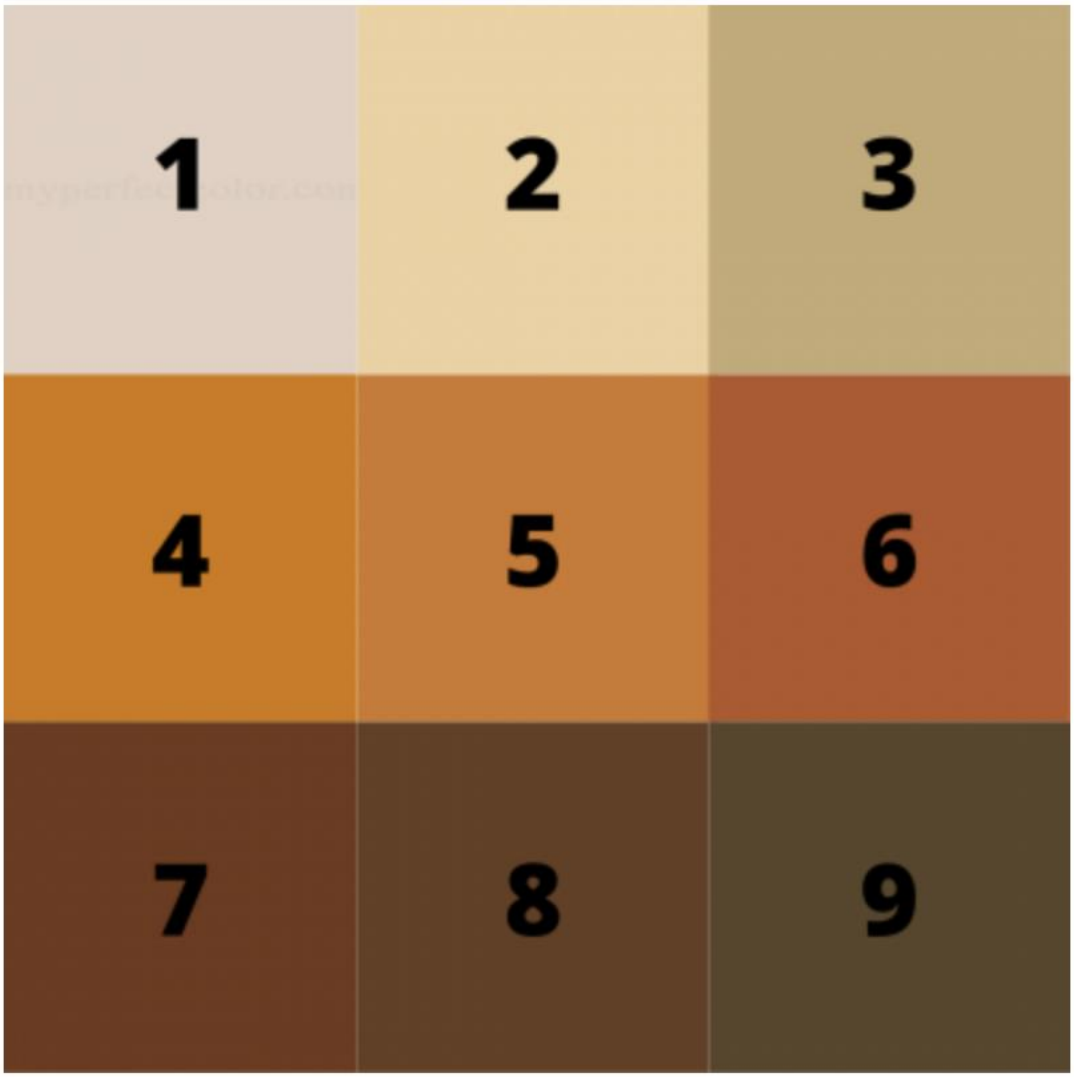
Multiple Regression Results For Region, Ethnicity, and Gender and Interactions On Light Skin Factor

	B	Lower Bound CI	Upper Bound CI	Std. Error	Std Coeff.	R^2	ΔR^2
Model						.245	.142
(Constant)	-.049	-.374	.276	.164			
Caribbean X Black American	-.196	-.706	.313	.257	-.087		
African women X Black American women	-.330	-1.212	.552	.444	-.072		

Caribbean Men X Black American women	.431	-.816	1.679	.628	.094
Intl men X South women	*1.493	.185	2.801	.659	.256
Intl women X South women	-.131	-.926	.663	.400	-.034
Midwest men X South women	.154	-.696	1.005	.428	.034
Midwest women X South women	-.459	-1.129	.210	.337	-.132
Both women X South women	-.305	-2.142	1.533	.926	-.030
Northeast men X South women	*1.051	.165	1.937	.446	.270
Northeast women X South women	-.185	-.690	.320	.254	-.080
South men X South women	.175	-.469	.818	.324	.053
West women X South women	.088	-.529	.706	.311	.028
West men X South women	-.577	-1.861	.707	.647	-.081

Note. Model = "Enter" method in SPSS Statistics; B = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; Std Error = standard error of the coefficient; Std Coeff. = standardized coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination; ΔR^2 = adjusted R2. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Figure 1
Skin colors from Pantone Matching System



Note. **The PMS skin colors from lightest to darkest are as follows: PMS #4685 (1), PMS #155 (2), PMS #466 (3), PMS #1385 (4), PMS #145 (5), PMS #471 (6), PMS #168 (7), PMS #469 (8), and PMS #462 (9).**

Chapter Four: Study 2

Deeper than Black:

Racial Centrality, Ethnic Commitment, and Afrocentrism's Influence on Intraracial and Interethnic Partner Preferences

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of racial centrality, ethnic commitment, and Afrocentric beliefs on Black people's racial and ethnic romantic partner preferences. Existing research on Black people's romantic relationships tends to overlook within group differences, leading to a limited understanding of Black relationship formation processes (Cokley, 2005; DeLoach et al., 2013). The findings show while racial centrality significantly impacts the desire to partner within one's race, ethnic commitment does not respective to ethnic partnering. However, Black people's endorsement of Afrocentric beliefs significantly reduces their willingness to partner both interracially and interethnically. The study highlights the importance of considering nuanced cultural differences within the Black diaspora when working with Black couples and relationship formation. Clinicians should focus on understanding the diverse cultural backgrounds of Black people and how they influence partner preferences and relationship function, rather than just assuming similarities based on racial background.

Partner preferences are shaped by personal and cultural values, individual developmental experiences, and situational factors within society (Eagly et al., 2009). Yancey (2009) suggests Black people are perceived as less desirable in dating – the least preferred partners -, causing Black people to romantically alienate themselves from non-Black potential partners and express less interest in interracial dating (Yancey, 2009). However, this narrative neglects the possibility Black people may prefer dating within their race not solely due to exclusion, but because of racial pride or a prioritization of Afrocentric values (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Social identity theory helps explain how group membership can be a primary component of identity (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), motivating Blacks to partner within their race.

Diversity is increasing for Black people in the U.S., with roughly one in five Blacks in the U.S. being immigrants or children of immigrants (Tamir, 2022). Black immigrants come from diverse backgrounds (Read, Emerson, & Tarlov, 2005), however ethnic diversity across the diaspora is overlooked and conflated with race (i.e., Black/African American; Cokley, 2005). Differences in cultural values (e.g., Afrocentric beliefs) can impact how individuals navigate Black romantic contexts, yet research seldom explores how ethnic affiliations and/or cultural values influence partner preferences (Batson, Qian, & Lichter., 2006; DeLoach, Petersen-Coleman, & Young, 2013). Studying ethnicity and Afrocentricism related to partner preferences can reveal nuanced differences within the Black community affecting relationship formation.

The current study moves away from comparisons across racial groups as they disregard Black people's within-group experiences of dating (DeLoach et al., 2013). This study examines the relationship between ethnic commitment, racial centrality, and endorsement of Afrocentric values with Black people's preference for intraracial or interethnic romantic partners. The first hypothesis posits individuals who strongly identify with their racial identity will prefer a partner

of the same race, while the second hypothesis suggests participants who endorse their ethnicity as salient to them will prefer to partner within their ethnic group. Examining cultural differences amongst people of the African diaspora can improve clinical conceptualizations of Black clients and advance culturally relevant interventions that improve relationship quality.

Black Partner Preferences

Partner preferences among Black Americans are influenced by various personal and socio-political factors. Both Black men and women desire partners who are financially stable, educated, monogamous, spiritual, and reliable; however, this constraint compels Black women to choose Black men with fewer financial resources or educational backgrounds (Raley, Sweeney, & Wondra, 2015). For example, studies have focused on the scarcity of "marriageable Black men" due to limited resources and opportunities, such as unemployment and incarceration rates (King & Allen, 2009). The scarcity may motivate Black women to consider interracial relationships, but their racial and ethnic identities and endorsement of Afrocentricism may facilitate a commitment to their race, reasoning why they are still less likely to date interracially, irrespective of the dating pool (Raley et al., 2015; Yancey, 2009).

Montique and Hargons (2020) found qualities like faithfulness, a desire to marry, intelligence, ambition, and fun were highly valued among Black professionals. Participants also valued social consciousness and financial literacy, related to their personal education and social consciousness goals. This study revealed how personal experiences and values impact partner preferences for Black professionals. The current study advances Montique and Hargons (2020) by exploring how the centrality of racial and ethnic identities, and importance of Afrocentric values relates to Black partner preferences.

Yancey (2009) explored the racial dating preferences of different ethnic groups, including African Americans. The study found Black people were less willing to date interracially than other racial groups, with Black alienation being a significant factor. They posit Black people avoid dating Whites due to the history of colonialism facilitating a lack of trust. Contrastingly, some lower status groups (i.e., Blacks) may view interracial dating as an opportunity to improve their societal status (Robnett & Feliciano, 2011). The present study advances Yancey's work, considering how Black people's endorsement of racial and ethnic identity impacts their desire to date interracially or inter-ethnically based on group pride and shared values.

Batson et al. (2006) examined intraracial group preferences among the Black diaspora. The study found highly educated individuals and men were more likely to intermarry or cohabitate with White people, which is consistent with findings for other racial groups (Qian & Lichter, 2011). Black immigrants were more likely to intermarry than Black Americans because of higher education levels, but they were less likely to intermarry than other highly educated racial minorities. Cultural values were found to trump social resources for Blacks interested in intraracial relationships. Notably, Batson et al. cautioned against exaggerating intraracial unions between Black immigrants and Black Americans, as they are still low overall. The current study continues Batson et al.'s work on Black intraracial preferences by examining how endorsement of ethnic identity, racial identity, and Afrocentric beliefs influence partner preferences.

Social Identity Theory and the Black Experience

Social identity theory suggests individuals' identity shapes their social decisions; group memberships can serve as sources of pride and self-esteem (Trepte, 2013). Social identity relates to an individual’s self-concept informed by their knowledge of membership to a social group, (e.g., race, ethnicity) with some level of emotional significance attached to that group

membership (Tajfel, 1974). After categorizing oneself into a group, they begin to adopt the group culture and place personal significance on group membership. While the theory initially focused on group affiliation promoting exclusion and discrimination, it can also explain the relative importance of group membership, or salience, motivating individuals to date intraracially and maintain group cohesion. For instance, celebrations of Black love reflect the pride of maintaining successful romantic relationships despite historical obstacles such as forced marriage during chattel slavery and the lack of recognition of Black marriages post-slavery (Goring, 2006; Wanzo, 2011). The current study focuses on the social identification construct of the theory, examining the importance of race, ethnicity, and Afrocentric beliefs on partner preferences.

Identity is contextual, suggesting, experiences of assimilation for Black Americans and immigrants can impact their sense of self (Herskovits & Herskovits, 1947; Thornton, Taylor, Chatters, & Forsythe-Brown, 2017). For Black immigrants, balancing their ethnic and racial identities can influence their American-lived experience (Keane, Tappen, Williams, & Rosselli, 2009). Differences in Black American, African, and Afrocentric cultures can be identified through these diverse contexts. Black immigrants may arrive with more social capital than Black Americans, including education, financial resources, physical health, and occupational prestige, due to selective migration (i.e., individuals who migrate are chosen due to their potential for success or access to necessary financial resources; Keane et al., 2009; Manuel, Taylor, & Jackson, 2012). This could make Black immigrants appear more preferrable to prospective partners. They also benefit from the healthy immigrant effect, which suggests those who migrate are physically healthier and possess characteristics that propel them to success compared to their native counterparts (Keane et al., 2009; Read et al., 2005). Those who desire a driven Black

partner without importance of ethnic background may seek out Black immigrants who possess desirable characteristics.

Race, Ethnicity, and Afrocentricity

Race and ethnicity are frequently conflated in contemporary American culture (Cokely, 2005; Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006). For Blacks, race and ethnicity are commonly used interchangeably, as indicated by the demographic option "Black/African American." Race is a social construct classifying individuals of African descent as Black, while ethnicity refers to regional and cultural ancestry (Yancey, Aneshensel, & Driscoll, 2001). Ethnic and racial identities involve a connection and identification with the respective culture (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Research has demonstrated the salience of racial and ethnic identity differs both between and within groups (Batson et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2012; Worrell, 2006; Yancey et al., 2001). Batson et al. (2006) note how Whites in the United States were originally segregated by ethnicity (e.g., Irish, Italian). As they assimilated into majority culture, ethnic differences diminished in favor of a centralized racial identity (Robnett & Feliciano, 2011). This shift in ethnic identity salience resulted from changes in social interactions and opportunities.

Similarly, the process of assimilation as a Black ethnic minority in the United States may cause a transfer of identity salience. Most Black immigrants originate from majority Black African or Caribbean countries, holding distinct perceptions of race and racism compared to the United States (Tamir, 2021). As they integrate into American society, Black minorities may re-evaluate their racial and ethnic identity's significance within the American context (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Trepte, 2013). Some may prioritize race over ethnicity, others may retain their ethnic or national identity due to cultural pride. This self-assessment may influence preference

for a partner of a similar race or ethnicity. Given the impact of identity salience, this study examines the influence of ethnic and racial identities on partner preferences.

Ethnic Identity and Partner Preferences

Ethnic identity refers to an individual's sense of self in relation to their ethnicity – which encompasses shared ancestry, culture, language, and place of origin (Phinney, 2003). The degree to which ethnic identity is central to one's sense of self can influence the importance placed on ethnic values, which in turn can affect partner preferences. Ethnic identity is a multidimensional construct, and various instruments were developed to measure its features. The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) is one of the most widely used measures, which assesses the exploration of identity issues and commitment in relevant domains (Brown et al., 2014; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Ethnic commitment is the focus of this study as it most relates to one's identity related to their ethnic background salience.

Research has confirmed ethnic identity can influence relationship attitudes and racial stress management (Maiya, Killoren, Monk, Kline, & Chavez, 2021). Ethnic identity can be protective for Latine young adults suffering from acculturation stress, inhibiting deleterious effects on romantic relationship commitment (Maiya et al., 2021). Studies have shown individuals tend to group or pair themselves with people of similar ethnic identities in a platonic context (Syed & Juan, 2012). Ethnic minority pairs of friends have been found to have more similarities in ethnic identity exploration and commitment than White or mixed pairs of friends. Black ethnic minorities may prefer to partner with someone of their ethnic group due to shared culture and identity exploration or commitment. Research has yet to investigate how identity endorsement varies among ethnic minorities and influences dating decisions. The current study

examines how Black people's ethnic commitment affects their willingness to romantically partner with someone of their ethnic group.

Racial Identity

Racial identity refers to the personal significance and meaning race holds for an individual (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Race is a social construct used to group individuals by shared physical traits and ascribe meaning to the groups (Banks, 1995). Racial identity is dynamic, multidimensional, and adaptive over time and context, and can be investigated through the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers et al., 1998). The MMRI emphasizes four primary dimensions related to racial identity: salience, centrality, regard, and ideology. Centrality is the focus of the present study as it represents a longstanding commitment to racial identity.

Previous research has explored the impact of racial identity salience on individuals' attitudes towards interracial dating. For instance, Lemay and Teneva (2020) investigated meta-perceptions of Black and White interracial couples regarding their partner's valuation of their race and its impact on the relationship. Findings suggest people with positive regard for their racial group may be significantly impacted in relationships if they perceive their partner does not share the same level of care. Before investigating attitudes towards racial experiences, researchers must understand the centrality of race to their sample, as this differs among individuals. The present study examines how racial centrality impacts Black individuals' desire to partner within or outside their racial group. The concept of Afrocentricism may also impact partner preferences, as this considers universal African values that transcend ethnicity (Cokley, 2005).

Afrocentrism

Afrocentrism refers to shared cultural themes and values considered to be elements of African culture people of the diaspora relate to regardless of ethnic origin (Grills & Longshore, 1996). Scholars debate the extent to which Africans shipped to the Americas were stripped of their culture (Frazier, 1966), or whether they maintained Afrocentric beliefs, which were crucial to their survival (Herskovits, 1941; Woodson, 1968). These beliefs manifest as community-oriented values, lifestyles, religious rituals, language, and the arts, rooted in African cultures (Mbiti, 1970; Herskovits, 1941; Nobles, 2000). The current study explores how endorsement of these values affects one's preference for intraracial or interethnic relationships.

Afrocentrism encompasses the creolization of African and European cultures (Joyner, 2003), creating a unique African-based experience, such as African American culture. Similarly, this blending of cultures impacts enslaved people from Caribbean countries with various cultural influences from British, French, Spanish, and Dutch colonizers and others who migrated as immigrant laborers (Nakhid, 2005). The various experiences Black ethnic groups face and their interactions, regarding romantic relationships, are of interest in the current study.

Cokley (2005) highlights the lack of studies directly comparing ethnic identity, racial identity, and Afrocentric values as concepts. Examining distinctions between these concepts, Cokley found Afrocentrism is related to ethnic identity, but also examines a unique aspect of identity, specifically cultural components such as attitudes, values, and beliefs. Conversely, ethnic identity primarily focuses on a sense of belonging. Additionally, racial and ethnic identities were found to be weakly related, indicating they are primarily independent of each other. Cokley suggests for Black Americans, the two identities may feel closely related due to the prevalence of racism towards Black people in the United States, but this may not be the case for Africans and Afro-Caribbeans. Given the inconsistent conceptualization of Afrocentricity in

the literature, it is important to make clear distinctions amongst the topics of current interest (Cokley, 2005).

African-centered psychologists have challenged Eurocentric theories, advocating for an African-centered worldview that reflects Black psychological experiences (Cokley & Williams, 2005). Afrocentrism posits Black people's main problem is often an unconscious adaptation of Eurocentric beliefs (Asante, 1980; Mazama, 2001). Afrocentric values seek to cultivate a consciousness of victory, rather than oppression, rooted in the interest of African people (Karenga, 1988; Mazama, 2001). Several "shared orientations" are considered core to Afrocentricity, including community centrality, respect for tradition, deep reverence for spiritual and ethical concerns, harmony with nature, sociality of self-hood, veneration of ancestors, and continuity of being (Karenga, 2003). Grills and Longshore (1996) operationalized Afrocentrism based on the principles of Kwanza and developed a measure for Afrocentric values. The Kwanza principles emphasize unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith when translated to English (Grills & Longshore, 1996).

Examining how Afrocentric values influence decision-making regarding relationships can shed light on central themes of African culture that transcend race and ethnicity. Kelly and Floyd (2006a) compared married and unmarried Black couples and found married couples were typically older and tended to have fewer mixed-race attitudes. Additionally, women who were married were more likely to have fewer Anti-Black attitudes, whereas anti-Black attitudes had no significant influence on men's marital status (Kelly & Floyd, 2006b). The impact of gender on racial perspectives suggests intersectional differences may exist concerning the importance of Afrocentric beliefs and relationship preferences. Furthermore, racial attitudes may determine choices to be in a relationship with a prospective partner proactively. The current study explores

how the personal significance of cultural values, such as Afrocentricism, racial identity, and ethnic identity informs intraracial interethnic partner preferences.

Methods

This study investigates the impact of cultural identity on Black people's preference for partnering within their racial and ethnic group. The study explores the effect of ethnic identity commitment, racial identity centrality, and Afrocentric values on one's inclination to partner with individuals of the same race and ethnic group.

Procedure

Participants (N = 282) were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling between June and December 2021. Eligibility criteria included self-identification as Black, including those who identified as multiracial if one identity was Black, and being 18 years or older. Recruitment was conducted online through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as targeted groups, such as HBCU alumni groups, with permission from the page coordinators. Snowball sampling was utilized to facilitate recruitment and reduce time and cost, which is particularly helpful for recruiting underrepresented populations such as Black ethnic minorities (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic limited advertising opportunities in local venues, making snowball sampling an ideal option. The initial pool of 332 responses was reduced by removing responses that did not meet the eligibility criteria (11 removals) and did not complete at least 76% of the survey items (39 removals). The final dataset for analysis consisted of 282 completed responses.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic information included participants' age, gender, sexuality, relationship status, ethnic identity, country of origin, immigrant status, region of origin in the U.S., SES, and education status.

Ethnic Identity

The study used the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure – Revised (MEIM-R; Phinney & Ong, 2007) to assess ethnic identity. This is a widely used six-item measure, assessing two domains: exploration and commitment. Exploration refers to seeking information and experiences related to one's ethnic identity, while commitment refers to a strong sense of belonging to one's ethnic group. The study focused on the MEIM-R subscale, Commitment, which has a high internal consistency ($\alpha = .851$).

Racial Identity

The Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity – Short (MIBI-S; Martin, Wout, Nguyen, Sellers, & Gonzalez, 2008) was used to measure racial identity, which is based on the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Coleman, Chapman, & Wang, 2013). The MIBI-S is a seven-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, and comprises three dimensions: centrality, regard, and ideology. The Centrality sub-scale, which consists of four items measuring the extent to which being Black is central to the person's definition of themselves, was used for analysis. Higher scores indicate a belief that race is an essential aspect of the individual's identity. The reliability analysis revealed acceptable internal consistency for this sample ($\alpha = .707$).

Afrocentric Values

The study utilized the Africentrism scale (AFRI; Grills & Longshore, 1996) to measure Afrocentricity. AFRI is a 15-item measure, rated on a four-point Likert scale, which

operationalizes Afrocentrism based on Kwanza principles. The principles include Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Juumba (creativity), and Imani (faith). The AFRI mean scores were used to measure participants' endorsement of Afrocentric values, with higher scores indicating a higher endorsement. However, there was a human error in displaying one of the fifteen items to participants. Only fourteen items were displayed and used for analysis. The Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .529.

Dating Within Race

Participants' preference for intra-racial dating was measured using a single Likert-type item on a five-point scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The item stated, "I prefer my partner to be of the same race as me." Higher scores indicate a stronger preference for intra-racial dating.

Dating Within Ethnicity

Participants' preference for dating within their ethnic group was assessed using a single item, "I prefer my partner to be of the same nationality as me (i.e., Black American and Black American, Ghanaian and Ghanaian)." Responses were rated on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher scores indicate a stronger desire to partner within one's ethnic group.

Analytic Approach

After conducting descriptive and bivariate statistics, multivariate tests were performed to explore the relationship between endorsement of racial and ethnic identities, Afrocentric beliefs, and preference for inter-racial/ethnic relationships. Multiple linear regression was employed to investigate how ethnic identity, racial identity, and Afrocentricity affect the desire to partner

within one's racial or ethnic group using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28) software. A Pearson correlation test indicated a moderate relationship between the desire to partner within one's race and ethnicity ($r = .373$, $p < .001$) which was not enough to consider an analysis of multiple dependent variables (Tabachnick, Fidell, & Ullman, 2007). Two separate regressions were then performed to investigate each dependent variable separately. A follow-up ANOVA was conducted to compare differences in the impact of independent variables (ethnic identity, racial identity, and Afrocentrism) within ethnic groups.

Results

Descriptive Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the participants, which comprised 282 individuals who identified as Black, with 73% (n = 206) being Black Americans, 22% (n =62) identifying as Caribbean or Afro-Latine, and 5% (n = 14) identifying as African. The sample had a median age of 33.99 (SD = 9.86), with 80% (n = 225) identifying as heterosexual, 75% (n = 210) identifying as cisgender women, and 21% (n = 59) identifying as cisgender men. In terms of education, 38% (n = 106) held Master's-level degrees, 36% (n = 100) held Bachelor's-level degrees, and 17% held Professional degrees. Thirty-six percent (n = 100) of the sample was single, 22% (n = 63) married, and 31% (n = 87) in a relationship or domestic partnership. Additionally, 37% (n = 105) of the sample attended an HBCU.

Table 2 displays the mean scores for the sample on various measures. The MEIM Commitment subscale had an average score of 3.51 (SD = .59) out of 7 (n = 282), while the MIBI-S Centrality subscale had an average score of 6.07 (SD = .91) out of 7 (n = 282). The AFRI overall mean score was 3.27 (SD = .24) out of 4 (n = 279). On the preference for a partner

of the same race (n = 279), the average score was 4.02 (SD = 1.02) out of 5, and for the desire to partner with someone of the same ethnicity (n = 281), the average score was 3.16 (SD = 1.05).

An ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in scores on measures and variables by ethnicity (Table 3), which revealed significant differences in the MIBI-S Centrality subscale ($F(2, 279) = 5.162$, $p = .006$), AFRI ($F(2, 276) = 3.774$, $p = .024$), and preference for a partner of the same ethnic group ($F(2, 278) = 5.243$, $p = .008$). The LSD Post Hoc test (Table 4) identified Black Americans had .42 significantly higher mean score on the MIBI-S Centrality subscale ($p = .004$), .09 higher on the AFRI ($p = .027$), and .47 higher preference for a partner of the same ethnic group ($p = .006$) than their Caribbean/Latine counterparts. However, no significant differences were observed for Africans compared to Caribbeans or Black Americans on any of the measures.

Notably, the first and second-generation immigrants of the sample was around 30%, with an ANOVA indicating statistically significant differences in Afrocentric values across immigrant generation groups ($F(2, 276) = 4.039$, $p = .019$), but not in ethnic identity commitment ($F(2, 279) = .789$, $p = .455$) (See Table 5). First-generation immigrants demonstrated higher average scores on the Afrocentric value scale than second-generation immigrants ($p = .046$) and non-immigrants ($p = .005$; Table 6). Still, second-generation immigrant scores were not significantly different from non-immigrants ($p = .454$).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Racial Preference

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between Afrocentric values, ethnic identity, and racial identity, and partner race preference. The assumptions of linearity, independence, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, and normality were

met. There was only one studentized deleted residual greater than ±3 standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2, and no values for Cook's distance above 1. The regression model was statistically significant ($F(3, 272) = 11.276$, $p < .001$, adj. $R^2 = .111$) and had a small to medium effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = .125$). Racial centrality ($p = .025$) and Afrocentric beliefs ($p = .005$) were found to significantly predict partner race preference. Results indicate an increase in racial centrality associated with a .181 unit increase in endorsing the desire to partner within race, holding all variables constant, and an increase in AFRI mean score is associated with a .804 increase in desire to partner within race, holding all variables constant (Table 7). These findings support the hypothesis that racial centrality positively influences the desire to partner with someone of the same race, and that AFRI scores impact the desire to partner within one's race.

Ethnic Preference

For the second research question, a multiple regression was conducted to investigate how Afrocentric values, ethnic identity, and racial identity influence the desire to partner within one's ethnic group. Assumptions of linearity, independence, homoscedasticity, and normality were all met. There were no studentized deleted residuals greater than ±3 standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2, and values for Cook's distance above 1. The multiple regression model significantly predicted ethnic preferences for a romantic partner ($F(3, 274) = 3.264$, $p < .001$, adj. $R^2 = .035$), with a small effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = .036$). However, only AFRI mean score ($p = .009$) was found to have a significant impact on the prediction, while ethnic identity did not ($p = .451$). Each unit increase in AFRI score was associated with a .795 unit increase in the desire to partner within one's ethnic group (Table 8).

Discussion

This study examines the relationship between race centrality, commitment to ethnicity, endorsement of Afrocentric beliefs, and preferences for intragroup romantic relationships among Black individuals. Results indicate Black Americans have a higher level of racial centrality than Afro-Caribbeans/Latines, which may be attributed to the prominence of racial dynamics in American culture (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Trepte, 2013). Additionally, Black Americans endorse Afrocentric values more strongly than their Caribbean counterparts, possibly due to a rejection of Eurocentric norms and a desire to assert their own cultural identity. Finally, Black Americans demonstrate a stronger preference for intraethnic relationships compared to Afro-Caribbeans/Latinos, which may reflect the mainstreaming of Black American cultural norms and a degree of exclusivity towards Black migrants. However, a larger sample size of African participants would have allowed for more robust comparisons within this subgroup.

The study partially supported the hypotheses, indicating racial centrality significantly predicts the desire to partner within one's race. The history of oppression of African Americans in the US has led to discussions on race relating to social mobility. There has been a sociohistorical distancing of Blacks and Whites due to chattel slavery, segregation laws, and interracial marriage bans (Batson et al., 2006). Cohesion within the group has been crucial for Black American survival, providing refuge amidst “lynching, migration, segregation, integration, and struggle” (Clark, 2008, P .170). Thus, Blacks who consider the centrality of race may prefer to partner within their racial group to safeguard themselves from racial oppression (Yancey, 2009).

Some scholars argue Black individuals may conform to White norms, either by moving towards Whiteness or Black exceptionalism (Robnett & Feliciano, 2011). This study diverges from a Eurocentric perspective equating social advancement with proximity to Whiteness,

instead examining how race centrality and Afrocentric beliefs influence individuals to seek partners within their own race for cultural pride. For Black individuals, dating within their race may feel secure, culturally fulfilling, and aligned with their value system. Social identity theory explains this motivation as a source of pride, especially for those who have experienced oppression and do not feel welcomed by other racial groups. Thus, dating within the Black race may represent a sense of resistance, pride, and safety (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Eccleston & Major, 2006; Trepte, 2013).

The second hypothesis, which proposed a positive association between ethnic identity commitment and the desire to partner within one's ethnic group, was not supported. This may be due to the low representation of ethnic minorities in the sample, particularly Africans. It is possible a more diverse sample, with a balanced representation of Black Americans, Caribbeans, and Africans, would demonstrate a significant association. Individuals who originate from predominantly Black countries may develop their identities surrounding race and ethnicity differently from Black Americans. The impact of immigrant status on Afrocentric values could be due to assimilation into American culture, causing individuals to shift away from their Afrocentric values.

The ANOVA also indicated a significant difference in ethnic partner preference for Black Americans versus Caribbeans/Latinos with Americans more strongly endorsing dating within their ethnic group. As race and ethnicity are more central to Black Americans, they may view partnering with another Black American as more critical. The monolithic identity of "Black" people typically centers on the Black American experience, which may encourage Black Americans to stay within their group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Trepte, 2013). African and Afro-Caribbean cultures may not resist White standards of beauty and partner preferences to the same

extent as Black Americans. Some norms, such as colorism and beauty stigmas, may be more prevalent and less discussed in Caribbean and African nations (Barnett, 2016; Charles, 2003), facilitating less promotion of intraracial relationships amongst the diaspora. Some Black immigrants may see dating outside of their ethnic group as a sign of status (Robnett & Feliciano, 2011). Future studies should specifically target Black ethnic minorities to explore their experiences within the Black community and how their culture shapes attitudes toward dating and relationships.

Afrocentrism was found to be significantly associated with the preference for partnering within one's racial and ethnic groups. Specifically, the AFRI scores had the largest coefficient in both regression models, indicating it was the most influential variable in shaping partner preferences around race and ethnicity for the sample. These findings highlight the importance of cultural values within groups, as previous research has suggested (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Trepte, 2013). For instance, despite the differences between various Asian cultures, they are commonly considered part of a broader "Asian culture" (Karenga, 2003). Similarly, while African diaspora people have diverse ethnic identities, they also share central values (Cokely, 2005; Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2006).

The study also found Black Americans had higher scores on measures of Afrocentricity, racial centrality, and preference for a partner of the same ethnic group compared to other ethnic groups. This could be due to the ongoing systemic oppression faced by Black Americans, which makes their racial identity more salient. In contrast, Black ethnic minorities may be more flexible in partnering with Black Americans as the dominant group, while Black Americans become more ethnically exclusive as the Black majority (Robnett & Feliciano, 2011). The role of nationality in shaping individuals' sense of ethnic, racial, and Afrocentric heritage was also

noted. Nationality refers to where a person is born, regardless of their personal characteristics, and may influence their identity to varying degrees. Future studies should explore the relationships between race, ethnicity, nationality, immigrant generation status, and Afrocentric values in navigating Black identity, as well as how these identities impact romantic decision-making within diverse Black communities. Differences across subgroups within the Black community should also be considered for intercultural relationships (DeLoach et al., 2013).

Limitations

This study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. Firstly, convenience and snowball sampling were used, which limits the generalizability of the study's findings without a randomized sample. Additionally, online surveys cannot verify the identities and responses of participants. The highly educated nature of the sample, with over 90% having at least a bachelor’s degree and a significant portion being graduates of HBCUs, may have skewed the sample towards individuals who value Afrocentric beliefs (Van Camp, Barden, & Sloan, 2010). Thus, future research should examine relationship preferences for non-college-educated populations, which make up the majority of Black individuals over the age of 25 in the US (U.S Census, 2021a).

Moreover, the sample had an uneven distribution across gender, with almost 75% identifying as cisgender women. A more evenly distributed gender sample could highlight differences across cisgender men, transgender, and genderqueer Black people. Additionally, ethnicities were unevenly distributed, with bi-ethnic participants being categorized into the respective non-Black ethnic minority group, which may limit the generalizability of the results to mixed ethnic minorities. A larger sample of ethnic minorities could provide valuable insight into culture, identity, and romantic relationships from a qualitative standpoint.

Another limitation is the study's lack of focus on nationality, immigration status, and ethnic identity development. The current study did not explore how individuals conceptualize their racial and ethnic experiences related to their immigrant or national identities, which may impact their partner preferences. Future research could benefit from a qualitative approach exploring the phenomenon of Black immigrant assimilation and their ethnic identity development on partner preference. Additionally, the reliability of the AFRI measure was compromised due to the use of only 14 of the 15 recommended items for analysis, and its validity has been critiqued for being solely valid for unidimensional use (Cokely & Williams, 2005). The continued development of the AFRI could improve its reliability and validity, aiding Black couples in identifying Afrocentric values and how they align with their relationships.

Implications and Applications

This study offers a unique contribution to the limited literature on Black ethnic minority partner preferences. It highlights the importance of considering various facets of Black identity in understanding clients' experiences. Specifically, exploring the meaning individuals make from their identities can be more relevant to clinical conceptualization than identifying labels such as race, ethnicity, nationality, and Afrocentrism (Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 1994). To decenter White relationships as a comparison to Black experiences and focus on experiences within the Black diaspora, this study shifts away from a Eurocentric worldview.

The findings of this study suggest racial centrality and Afrocentricity influence one's desire to partner within their race or ethnicity, while ethnic identity may not have appeared as significant due to the race-centralized context of the U.S. These findings have implications for researchers and clinicians working with Black populations. It is important to recognize Black people have intentional thought in their decision making around partnerships outside of just

group association. Cultural values one endorses or practices from a particular group (i.e., Afrocentrisms) appear to differ in meaning compared to one's membership in the group (ethnicity or race). Therefore, considering one's relationship to their identity and culture can help improve client conceptualization and treatment planning for individuals, couples, and families.

As mental health services continue to become aware of barriers to services for minority populations (Williams, 2018), it is essential to acknowledge the idiosyncrasies clients bring to the therapeutic context. Facilitating awareness of the impact one's culture has on their partner preferences can be valuable in couples work where partners struggle due to conflicting values. Clinicians aware of these cultural nuances can guide clients to insight into their differences, which may be overshadowed by presenting similarities such as race. Therapeutic space can be held for differences as well as similarities amongst partners. In summary, researchers should continue investigating ethnic minorities and their nuanced experiences within racial groups to improve mental health services for minority populations.

Conclusion

In summary, current research on romantic partner preferences among Black individuals has overlooked intercultural differences and minimized cultural nuance by conflating ethnic and racial identity (Cokley, 2005; DeLoach et al., 2013). This study challenges this narrative by examining the impact of racial centrality, ethnic commitment, and Afrocentric beliefs on interethnic and intraracial relationships. Results showed racial centrality was a significant predictor of the desire to partner within one's race, whereas ethnic commitment was not. Additionally, endorsement of Afrocentric beliefs was found to significantly reduce willingness to partner interracially and interethnically. These findings highlight the importance of considering

nuanced cultural within the diaspora when working with Black individuals and couples in forming and maintaining relationships.

Table 5

Demographics of Study Sample for Study (N = 272)

	n	*%*	*M*	*SD*
Age	—	—	33.99	9.86
Gender				
Cis Male	59	20.9	—	—
Cis Female	210	74.5	—	—
Trans Man	1	.4	—	—
Trans Woman	1	.4	—	—
Gender queer/fluid/non-conforming or non-binary	9	3.2	—	—
Prefer to self-identify	2	.7	—	—
Ethnicity				
Black American	206	73	—	—
Afro-Caribbean/Afro-Latine	62	22	—	—
African	14	5	—	—
Immigrant Status				
First-generation	27	9.6	—	—
Second-generation	58	20.6	—	—
Neither	197	69.9	—	—
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual	225	79.8	—	—
Homosexual (Lesbian/Gay)	16	5.7	—	—
Bisexual	17	6.0	—	—
Asexual	1	.4	—	—
Demisexual	2	.7	—	—
Queer	15	5.3	—	—
Prefer to self-identify	6	2.1	—	—
Education Status				
Associates degree and below	27	9.6	—	—
Bachelor's Degree	100	35.5	—	—
Master's Degree	106	37.6	—	—
Doctoral/Professional Degree	49	17.4	—	—
Relationship Status				
Single	100	35.5	—	—
Married	63	22.3	—	—
Committed Relationship or domestic partnership	87	30.9	—	—
Open relationship	2	.7	—	—
Casually dating	16	5.7	—	—
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	14	4.9	—	—
Annual Income				
< $34,000	62	21.98	—	—
$35,000 – $74,999	100	35.5	—	—
> $75,000	120	42.6	—	—

Table 6

Mean Scores for Variables

	MIBI-S Centrality	AFRI Total	MEIM Commitment	Same Race Pref.	Same Ethnic Pref.
N	282	279	282	279	281
Mean	6.0718	3.2663	3.5106	4.02	3.16
Std. Deviation	.91276	.24345	.59196	1.021	1.045

Table 7

ANOVA for Ethnic Groups and AFRI, MEIM, MIBI-S, and Preferences

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
AFRI Total	Between Groups	.439	2	.219	3.774	*.024
	Within Groups	16.037	276	.058		
	Total	16.476	278			
MEIM Commitment	Between Groups	.183	2	.091	.259	.772
	Within Groups	98.285	279	.352		
	Total	98.468	281			
MIBI-S Centrality	Between Groups	8.354	2	4.177	5.162	**.006
	Within Groups	225.754	279	.809		
	Total	234.108	281			
PREFSAMEETHNIC	Between Groups	10.485	2	5.243	4.935	**.008
	Within Groups	295.308	278	1.062		
	Total	305.794	280			
PREFSAMERACE	Between Groups	3.359	2	1.680	1.618	.200
	Within Groups	286.512	276	1.038		
	Total	289.871	278			

Note. *indicates p <.05, ** indicates p < .01.

Table 8

LSD Post Hoc ANOVA for Ethnic Groups and AFRI, MEIM, MIBI-S, and Preferences

Dependent Variable	(I) Ethnicity	(J) Ethnicity	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
AFRI Total		African	.08108	.06660	.224	-.0500	.2122

	Black American	Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	.09120*	.03518	*.010	.0220	.1605
	African	Black American	-.08108	.06660	.224	-.2122	.0500
		Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	.01012	.07144	.887	-.1305	.1507
		African	-.01012	.07144	.887	-.1507	.1305
MEIM Commitment	Black American	African	.07351	.16393	.654	-.2492	.3962
		Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	.05277	.08598	.540	-.1165	.2220
	African	Black American	-.07351	.16393	.654	-.3962	.2492
		Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	-.02074	.17563	.906	-.3665	.3250
MIBI-S Centrality	Black American	African	.09726	.24844	.696	-.3918	.5863
		Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	.41869*	.13030	**.001	.1622	.6752
	African	Black American	-.09726	.24844	.696	-.5863	.3918
		Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	.32143	.26617	.228	-.2025	.8454
Ethnic Preference	Black American	African	.202	.285	.479	-.36	.76
		Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	.467*	.149	**.002	.17	.76
	African	Black American	-.202	.285	.479	-.76	.36
		Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	.265	.305	.386	-.34	.87
Racial Preference	Black American	African	-.227	.281	.421	-.78	.33
		Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	.223	.149	.135	-.07	.52

African	Black American	.227	.281	.421	-.33	.78
	Caribbean/ Afro-Latine	.450	.302	.138	-.14	1.04

Note. *indicates p <.05; ** indicates p < .01.

Table 9

ANOVA for Immigrant status and AFRI Total score and MEIM Commitment

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
AFRI Total	Between Groups	.469	2	.234	4.039	*.019
	Within Groups	16.007	276	.058		
	Total	16.476	278			
MEIM Commitment	Between Groups	.554	2	.277	.789	.455
	Within Groups	97.914	279	.351		
	Total	98.468	281			

Note. *indicates p <.05

Table 10

LSD Post Hoc for Immigrant status and AFRI Total score and MEIM Commitment

Dependent Variable	(I) IMMIGRANT	(J) IMMIGRANT	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
AFRI Total	First-generation	Second-generation	-.11264*	.05626	*.046	-.2234	-.0019
		Neither	-.13985*	.04945	**.005	-.2372	-.0425
	Second-generation	First-generation	.11264*	.05626	*.046	.0019	.2234
		Neither	-.02720	.03626	.454	-.0986	.0442
MEIM Commitment	First-generation	Second-generation	-.05811	.13802	.674	-.3298	.2136
		Neither	-.13066	.12157	.283	-.3700	.1086
		First-generation	.05811	.13802	.674	-.2136	.3298

	Second-generation	Neither	-.07255	.08850	.413	-.2468	.1017

Note. *indicates p <.05; ** indicates p < .01.

Table 11

Regression Coefficients for Predicting Partner Racial Preference

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound (95%CI)	Upper Bound (95%CI)
(Intercept)	.014	.791		.018	.986	-1.544	1.572
MIBI - Centrality	.181	.080	.162	2.256	*.025	.023	.339
AFRI Total	.804	.286	.190	2.815	**.005	.242	1.366
MEIM - Commitment	.080	.122	.046	.655	.513	-.160	.319

Note. *indicates p <.05; ** indicates p < .01.

Table 12

Regression Coefficients for Predicting Partner Ethnicity Preference

Predictors	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound (95%CI)	Upper Bound (95%CI)
(Intercept)	.716	.836		.857	.392	-.929	2.362
MIBI - Centrality	-.082	.086	-.072	-.962	.337	-.251	.086
AFRI Total	.795	.303	.185	2.622	**.009	.198	1.391
MEIM - Commitment	.098	.130	.056	.754	.451	-.158	.353

Note. *indicates p <.05; ** indicates p < .01.

Chapter Five: General Discussion

Black relationships warrant thorough examination from a lens that respects their unique social locations. The historical tendency to study Black relationships through a Euro-centric lens has led to a narrow-minded and pathological view that fails to acknowledge the diversity of Black ethnicities in an increasingly diverse America (Kempadoo, 2003). Given the rapid influx of Black immigrants into the U.S. (Anderson & López, 2018), the Black diasporic experience is becoming increasingly relevant to discuss. Therefore, intraracial studies that explore the cultural values that shape relationship formation and satisfaction among Black communities can significantly enhance our understanding of Black relationships (DeLoach et al., 2013). Moreover, an intersectional lens that considers the nuances of minority romantic relationships can provide a rich and informative perspective (Dixon, 2017).

Studies focusing on intraracial relationships amongst Black individuals can provide a better understanding of the cultural values that influence relationship formation and satisfaction within Black communities (DeLoach et al., 2013). An intersectional lens can offer a nuanced perspective that considers the complexities of minority romantic relationships (Dixon, 2017). This paper presents two studies that expand scientific understanding of Blackness regarding race and ethnicity and examines Black romantic relationships from an intersectional, intragroup perspective. These studies quantitatively analyze how various social identities impact one's relational attitudes and partner preferences.

The first study investigates how ethnic group, U.S. regional background, and gender influence preferences for partner skin color. Results indicate that gender creates an interaction with both region and ethnicity, with Northeastern and international Black men more strongly endorsing a preference for lighter skin partners than Southern women. However, the sample,

primarily composed of women, overall endorsed a preference for darker skin tones. This aligns with previous research suggesting that men tend to prefer lighter skin due to their proximity to Eurocentric norms identifying as male (Collins, 2002; Craig, 2002; Hill, 2002; Hunter, 2005). On the other hand, Black women, who are further away from both Whiteness and male-ness, may choose to date darker skin men who can relate to their experiences as minorities or who exhibit more racial authenticity (Hunter, 2007; Russell et al., 1993). Findings from the first study prompt the question of the importance, or salience, of various group identities to the participants and how that may influence partner preferences. This leads to the second study, which examines ethnic commitment, racial centrality, and Afrocentric beliefs and their influence on one's desire to date within their ethnic and/or racial groups.

The second study indicates that racial centrality significantly impacts the desire to partner interracially, particularly for Black Americans. As race is an important context for being Black in America, it is reasonable to assume that race is more salient to them (Cokley, 2005). Immigrants may begin to assimilate to the importance of their racial experience as they spend more time in America. Future research should explore generational differences amongst immigrants. Ethnic commitment, however, did not have a significant impact on preference to partner interethnically. Black Americans tend to endorse dating within their ethnic group more favorably than other Black ethnic minorities (Africans and Caribbeans). This could be due to the conflation of ethnicity and race for Black Americans, but also, they may view dating within their ethnicity as an important source of pride (Cokley, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). As Black Americans are the majority minority, they may feel a need to exclude other Black ethnicities to maintain their ideal of Blackness. Finally, it is noteworthy to observe that Afrocentricism significantly impacted individuals' desire to date both intraracially and interethnically. This finding implies that the

endorsement of Afrocentric values may potentially represent a distinct form of identity, one that can more effectively address partner preferences than ethnic or racial group identity. It is imperative that subsequent research endeavors delve into the distinctions between Afrocentric values and ethnic or racial identities and their implications for how ethnically diverse Black people navigate romantic relationships and other related encounters. In conclusion, these studies bring attention to intercultural differences amongst Black communities that are often overlooked (DeLoach et al., 2013). The aim is to improve therapeutic conceptualizations of and interventions for Black individuals, couples, and families.

Implications

The current studies explore the impact of race, ethnicity, regional background, and gender on Black relationship attitudes (i.e., desire to date intraracially and interethnically) and desired partner characteristics, with the aim of demonstrating the importance of these various identities in informing Black partner selection. Historically, Western approaches to understanding Black relationships have often ended with deficit-based perspectives, which can result in a limited and myopic understanding of Black experiences that merge ethnicity and race, ignoring the cultural distinctions that inform individuals' attitudes and lived experiences (Cokley, 2005; DeLoach et al., 2013; Kempadoo, 2003).

Counseling psychology values the importance of moving individuals toward their full self-actualized potential and honoring the holistic and contextual realities that inform their lives (Scheel et al., 2018). However, the lack of acknowledgement of ethnic differences across the diaspora can leave Black clients underserved by counseling psychologists. Unfortunately, as of 2019, only 3% of psychologists identify as Black, and there is no distinction among Black ethnic groups within the APA workforce statistics, as well as other minority groups (APA, 2020). This

limited representation of ethnic minorities, combined with the lack of acknowledgement of their distinctions, has hindered progress in honoring the diversity of the Black experience, which may extend to the therapeutic space. An understanding of intercultural differences can facilitate dialogue for diverse Black couples around family values and roles, extended kinships, co-parenting, expressing and managing emotion, and more (DeLoach et al., 2013)

The present research endeavors to provide a basis for researchers and clinicians to recognize the important nuances among subgroups of ethnic minorities. Specifically, the findings highlight how internalized colorism may differentially affect Black men from the Northeast and raised abroad, as compared to Black women from the South. Such regional disparities can inform clinicians' understanding of conflicts within Black couples' relationships. It is necessary to undertake further investigations to explore additional regional differences that may manifest in diverse Black relationships across the United States and abroad. Notably, Black Americans tend to prioritize ethnic congruence over other Black minorities. This in-group bias can create conflicts for clients who engage with a diverse Black community or for immigrants seeking to assimilate into Black American dating culture. Mental health providers can better engage clients to have discussion around dynamics amongst Black ethnic minorities and Black Americans. By taking into account the significance of Afrocentricisms, counselors can probe couples about the alignment and misalignment of their values to explore how their socialization experiences may impact their present conflicts.

Moreover, the current study benefits the relationships of Black families, couples, and singles. By considering ethnic subgroups' different needs, service and mental health providers can better advise and support these communities. Couples and family therapists can utilize these findings to inform how they conceptualize their clients' interacting social locations. Clinicians

may begin to consider other social identities that influence the client's attitudes and behaviors, leading to improved interventions that increase family and relational happiness and success.

Future studies can further develop approaches, such as longitudinal or qualitative methods, to examine the causal nature of relationships and gain an in-depth understanding of those relational experiences. Findings from this study have implications for clinical use, as acknowledging Black clients' unique experiences may lead to better-informed therapeutic approaches to counseling Black populations. Moreover, raising awareness of ethnic or cultural differences often ignored within Black relationships may provide clients with insight into their minority experiences, challenges, and interpersonal relationships.

Appendix A: Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
CONSENT FORM
Black Relationship Attitudes and Partner Preference

Researcher's Statement
You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Chesmore Montique, M.A. under the instruction of Candice Hargons, Ph.D., from the University of Kentucky (UK). The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship attitudes and partner preferences of people of the Black diaspora. This study will contribute to the student's completion of his dissertation. You will participate in one survey that may take 15 to 30 minutes.

Before you decide to participate in this study, it is essential that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. The information below can be used to inform your participation. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear to you, or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent."

Principal Investigator: Chesmore Montique, M.A.
Department of Education, Counseling and School Psychology
Email: csmontique@uky.edu

Co-Investigator: Candice Hargons, Ph.D.
Department of Education, Counseling and School Psychology
Email: cncr229@uky.edu

Purpose of the Study
The current study aims to help us better understand the relationship attitufes and desired partner preferences among diverse Black people. You are eligible to participate in this study if you meet the following criteria: **a) 18 years or older and b) Self-identify as Black**

Study Procedures
Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will continue onto the survey, indicating your agreement to this consent form. **If you do not consent, then do not continue this survey**. This study consists of this one survey that will follow the informed consent should you agree. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to your ethnic and racial identity, educational experience, relationship perspectives, and preferred partner preferences. **Any person over the age of 18 who identifies as Black can participate in this study.**

Time Required
Participants will complete the one-time survey that follows the informed consent. **The survey is estimated to take 15 to 30 minutes.**

Risks and Discomforts
The investigator does not perceive more than **minimal risks** from your involvement in this non-invasive study. At most, risks include the distress and anxiety that may occur from the content of the survey. Some participants may experience discomfort or emotional distress in reflecting on their experiences of romantic relationships. For participants still feeling distressed or anxious after the survey, please contact your local healthcare provider.

Benefits
There are **no direct benefits, incentives, or compensations** from this study, but you are more than welcome to follow up with the researcher to find the results of the study, which may provide insight into your social interactions. Participants may also gain insight on their values in a mate and how their identities and experiences inform their romantic relationships, which can lead to improved romantic experiences. If you take part in the study, information learned may help inform other's romantic experiences and what qualities they value. Participation in this study can be beneficial through providing an outlet for individuals who identify with a marginalized group of people to share their experiences and various perspectives, all while contributing to our expanding knowledge base on Black mate selection.

Privacy/Confidentiality
With participants revealing their thoughts regarding their dating preferences and romantic perspectives, it is essential to keep the participant's information confidential. Data will be analyzed and assessed as a collective interpretation, not individually. When reporting findings, the researcher will take care not to include details that may identify the participant. No personal affiliations or identifying information will be used in the findings. The researcher will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project, without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking Part is Voluntary
Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time should you become uncomfortable with any of the questions asked during the survey.

If You Have Questions
The primary researcher conducting this study is Chesmore Montique, M.A., a doctoral candidate at the University of Kentucky. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Chesmore Montique at Csmontique@uky.edu or Dr. Candice Hargons at Cncr229@uky.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the University of Kentucky (UK) Office of Research Integrity (ORI) between the business hours of 8 am and 5 pm EST, Monday-Friday at 859-257-9428 or toll-free at 1-866-400-9428.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:
I have read this consent form, and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. **I understand that continuing with this survey serves as my expedited consent.**

Appendix B: Recruitment Script

Hello, I hope this message finds you well! My name is Chesmore, a doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at the University of Kentucky. Currently I am working on my dissertation, studying ethnic and cultural differences amongst Black people and how it impacts our attitudes towards relationships and partner preferences. Since research often views Black people all the same, I want to be intentional and making sure different ethnic and cultural communities are represented in my study. I would love to post my recruitment flyer with your community. If you are willing, please let me know if I have your consent and I can go ahead and send that over to you. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know and I would be happy to address them.

Appendix C: Survey Items

Demographics

What is your racial identity? Select all that apply.

a. Black [Must identify as Black to continue survey]
b. White
c. Asian
d. Native American
e. Pacific Islander
f. Prefer to self-describe [Text Box]

What is your age?

a. Under 18 [Will not be able to continue survey]
b. 18 or older (Please specify your age) [Text Box]

What is your sex?

a. Male
b. Female
c. Other (Please Specify) [Text box]

What is your gender?

a. Man
b. Woman
c. Transgender
d. Gender non-conforming
e. Other

What is your sexual orientation?

a. Heterosexual
b. Homosexual
c. Bisexual
d. Pansexual
e. Other [Text Box]

How do you most identify within the Black diaspora? Select all that apply

a. Black American/African American
b. African
c. Afro-Caribbean/Black Caribbean/West Indian
d. Black European
e. Afro-Latinx
f. Other (Please specify)[Text Box]

What is your father's nationality?

[Text Box]

What is your mother's nationality?

[Text Box]

Use the graphic below to reference your state's region for the next question (Graphic taken from the United States Census Bureau).

What region of the U.S. are you from? If you grew up in multiple regions, please select all that apply. If you grew up internationally, please specify where.

a. Northeast
b. South

c. Midwest
d. West
e. International (Please specify) [Text Box]

What region of the U.S. do you currently reside in? If you live abroad, please specify.

a. Northeast
b. South
c. Midwest
d. West
e. International (Please specify) [Text Box]

What is your annual income?

a. Less than $20,000
b. $20,000 to $34,999
c. $35,000 to $49,999
d. $50,000 to $74,999
e. $75,000 to $99,999
f. Over $100,000

What is your religious identity?

a. Christian
b. Catholic
c. Muslim
d. Agnostic
e. Atheist
f. Mormon
g. Jewish
h. Seventh Day Adventist
i. Other

What is your current relationship status?

a. Married
b. Single
c. In a relationship or domestic partnership
d. In an open relationship
e. Casually dating
f. Widowed
g. Divorced
h. Separated

What is your parent's relationship status?

a. Married
b. Divorced
c. Widowed
d. Cohabitating
e. Married to a different spouse that is not my parent (at least one parent)
f. Never married
g. Other

Generation Status

Are you a child of an immigrant or an immigrant yourself?

a. Yes

b. No

(If they identify as first-generation immigrants) What age did you migrate?

[Text Box]

Education Status

What is the highest degree you have earned?

a. Some high school (did not complete)
b. High school diploma or GED equivalent
c. Some college (did not complete)
d. Associate's
e. Bachelor's
f. Master's
g. Professional Degree (Ph.D, J.D., M.D., etc.)

Institution Racial Culture

Did you attend a historically Black college or university (HBCU)?

a. Yes
b. No

(If yes is selected) For undergraduate, graduate school, or both?

a. Undergraduate
b. Graduate
c. Both

Black Greek Letter Organization

Are you a member of a Black Greek Organization? You will not be asked what organization you are a member of.

a. Yes
b. No

Racial Identity - Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity Short (MIBI-S):

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

[Responses are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)]

1. Overall, being Black has very little to do with how I feel about myself.
2. It is important for Black people to surround their children with Black art, music, and literature.
3. I feel good about Black people.
4. Overall, Blacks are considered good by others.
5. I am happy that I am Black.
6. Black people would be better off if they adopted Afrocentric values.
7. Black people must organize themselves into a separate Black political force.
8. In general, others respect Black people.
9. Whenever possible, Blacks should buy from other Black businesses.
10. have a strong sense of belonging to Black people.
11. Blacks should have the choice to marry interracially.
12. Blacks would be better off if they were more concerned with the problems facing all people than just focusing on Black issues.
13. Being an individual is more important than identifying oneself as Black.
14. Blacks should judge Whites as individuals and not as members of the White race.
15. I have a strong attachment to other Black people.

16. The struggle for Black liberation in American should be closely related to the struggle of other oppressed groups.
17. Blacks should strive to be full members of the American political system.
18. Blacks should try to work within the system to achieve their political and economic goals.
19. Blacks should strive to integrate all institutions which are segregated.
20. The racism Blacks have experienced is similar to that of other minority groups.
21. Blacks should feel free to interact socially with White people.
22. There are other people who experience racial injustice and indignities similar to Black Americans.
23. Being Black is an important reflection of who I am.
24. The same forces which have led to the oppression of Blacks have also led to the oppression of other groups.
25. In general, other groups view Blacks in a positive manner.
26. I am proud to be Black.
27. Society views Black people as an asset.

Ethnic Identity – The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM-R)

Please rate your level of agreeance with the following statements

[Responses are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)]

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
2. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
3. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
4. I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better.
5. I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group.
6. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.

Afrocentricity - Africentrism Scale (AFRI)

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements

[Responses are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).]

1. Black people should make their community better than it was when they found it.
2. The unity of the African race is very important to me.
3. I owe something to Black people who suffered before me.
4. Black people should build and maintain their own communities.
5. I must do all I can to restore Black people to their position of respect in the world.
6. I make it a point to shop at Black businesses and use Black-owned services.
7. It hurts me when I see another Black person discriminated against.
8. It is important that Black people decide for themselves what to be called and what their needs are.
9. The problems of other Black people are their problems, not mine.
10. I am more concerned with reaching my own goals than with working for the Black community.
11. I have very little faith in Black people.
12. Black people need to stop worrying so much about “the community” and take care of their own needs.
13. The success I have had is mainly because of me, not anyone else.

14. I have more confidence in White professionals, like doctors and teachers, than in Black professionals.

Type of Relationship Desired

What is your ideal long-term relationship?

a. Married and monogamous
b. Married in an open relationship
c. Married with other partners they don't know about (nonconsensual)
d. Not married, in committed relationship
e. Single, non-committed
f. Consensual nonmonogamy – one main partner with others they know about
g. Nonconsensual nonmonogamy – one main partner with others they don't know about
h. Open relationship
i. Polygamous – multiple partners
j. Other (Please Explain) [Text Box]

Perceived Mate Availability

[Responses are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)]

1. It is difficult for me to find a partner of my race.
2. It is difficult for me to find a partner of my ethnicity (i.e., finding a Black Caribbean partner if you identify as the same)

Interest in Interracial Relationships

[Responses are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)]

1. I prefer my partner to be the same race as me

Interest in Interethnic Relationships

[Responses are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree).]

1. I prefer my partner to be the same nationality as me (i.e., Black American and Black American or Ghanaian and Ghanaian)
2. My partner does not have to be of the same nationality, but I would prefer someone from a similar culture (i.e., both Caribbean, both African)

Preferred Partner Characteristics

Please rate the importance of each trait for your ideal partner.

[Responses are rated from 1 (Not very important) to 7(Very important).]

1. Ambitious
2. Attentive
3. Caring
4. Compassionate
5. Emotionally stable
6. Honest/integrity
7. Loving
8. Sexual compatibility
9. Desires children/Family-oriented
10. Socially conscious/culturally aware
11. Financially Literate
12. Fun
13. Supportive
14. Affectionate
15. Sense of Humor

16. Emotional intelligence/maturity
17. Intelligent
18. Faithful/committed
19. Dependable/Reliable
20. Similar education
21. Spiritual/religious
22. Physically attractive
23. Economically stable
24. Independent
25. Leader
26. Adventurous/spontaneous

Preferred Hair Type

[Responses are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree).]

I prefer my partner to have a natural hairstyle. (For women, this includes wearing their natural hair out or in natural hairstyles such as braids, twists, or locs. For men, this includes grown out hairstyles such as an afro, braids, twists, or locs).

Please select the hair type that best represents your hair type

[Picture of hair texture chart with respective numbers]

1	3b
2a	3c
2b	4a
2c	4b
3a	4c

Please select the hair textures that best represent your last or current romantic partners' hair.

[Picture of hair texture chart with respective numbers]

1	3b
2a	3c
2b	4a
2c	4b
3a	4c

Please select the hair type that you would like your ideal partner to have. Order your preferences from 1 (your most preferred) to 10 (your least preferred)

[Picture of hair texture chart with respective numbers]

1	3b
2a	3c
2b	4a
2c	4b
3a	4c

Preferred Skin Type

Select the color that most identifies with your skin color
[PMS colors will be shown for the respective number]

PMS #4685	PMS #471
PMS #155	PMS #168
PMS #466	PMS #469
PMS #1385	PMS #462
PMS #145	

Select the skin colors that best represents your last or current romantic partner.
[PMS colors will be shown for the respective number]

PMS #4685	PMS #471
PMS #155	PMS #168
PMS #466	PMS #469
PMS #1385	PMS #462
PMS #145	

Select your ideal skin tone for you partner. Order your preferences from 1 (your most preferred) to 9 (your least preferred)
[PMS colors will be shown for the respective number]

PMS #4685	PMS #471
PMS #155	PMS #168
PMS #466	PMS #469
PMS #1385	PMS #462
PMS #145	

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Looking for Black people of all backgrounds for a survey about relationship and partner preferences

MUST BE 18+ AND IDENTIFY AS BLACK

We need Black people of different:

Ethnic backgrounds
Immigrant/Generation status
Education level
Gender identity
Sexuality
Relationship status
You name it!
All Black people are welcome

Link here!

Any questions or concerns contact Chesmore Montique, M.A. at Csmontique@uky.edu

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Vita

CHESMORE SIMON MONTIQUE, M.A.

He/Him/His

EDUCATION

2015 – 2017	**Master of Arts in Psychology** American University, Washington, DC Faculty Advisor: Noemi Enchautegui-de-Jesus, PhD Master's Thesis: Relationship Dynamics of Educated Black Women
2011 – 2015	**Bachelor of Arts in Psychology** Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA Faculty Advisor: Yohance Murray, PhD Senior Research Project: Black Interpretations of the Media

CLINICAL INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE

August 2022-Present	**Georgia State University Counseling Center,** Atlanta, GA Supervisors: Mikyta Daugherty, PhD, LP; Jenny Qin, PhD, LP
Oct. 2021-June 2022	**Federal Medical Center,** Lexington, KY Supervisors: Adu Boateng, PhD, LP; Megan Schuster, PhD, LP Faculty Supervisor: Sharon Rostosky, PhD, LP Hours: Intervention: 82.5, Supervision: 35.5, 13.25 Assessment hours
July 2021-2022	**Laboratory for Human and Behavioral Psychology,** Lexington, KY Supervisor: Danelle Stevens-Watkins, PhD, LP Faculty Supervisor: Sharon Rostosky, PhD, LP Hours: Intervention: 45.0, Assessment: 27.25, Supervision: 2
Aug. 2020-2021	**University of Kentucky – Counseling Psychology Program,** Lexington, KY Faculty Supervisor: Sharon Rostosky, PhD, LP Hours: Intervention: 9, Supervision: 8
Aug. 2020-2021	**Center for Healing Racial Trauma,** Lexington, KY Individual Supervisor: Candice Hargons, PhD, LP Faculty Supervisor: Sharon Rostosky, PhD, LP Hours: Intervention: 149, Supervision: 91
Aug. 2019 – 2020	**University of Kentucky Counseling Center,** Lexington, KY Individual Supervisors: Adrianna Fisher-Willis, PsyD, LP and Walter Malone, PhD, LP Group Supervisors: Nathan Miles PhD, LP and Alex Forsyth, PsyD, LP Faculty Supervisor: Sharon Rostosky, PhD, LP Hours: Intervention: 91, Supervision: 98.5
Aug. 2018 – 2019	**Abundant Living Psychological and Coaching Svcs.,** Lexington, KY Individual Supervisor: Shambra Mulder PhD, LP Faculty Supervisor: Candice Hargons, PhD, LP Hours: Intervention: 43, Supervision: 45
Aug. 2018 – 2019	**Higher Horizons,** Lexington, KY Individual Supervisor: Clarissa Bell-Roan, PhD, LP Faculty Supervisor: Candice Hargons, PhD, LP Hours: Intervention: 44.5, Supervision: 47.25

PUBLICATIONS AND BOOK CHAPTERS (6)

Montique, C.M., Mizelle, D.L., Wright, C.J., & Hargons, C.N. (2023). The culture of color: Regionalism, ethnicity, and gender's influence on Black romantic partner skin color preference [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Department of Education, University of Kentucky.

Montique, C.M., Wright, C.J., Mizelle, D.L., & Hargons, C.N. (2023). Deeper than black: racial centrality, ethnic commitment, and afrocentrism's influence on racial and ethnic romantic partner preferences [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Department of Education, University of Kentucky.

Hargons, C., Malone, N., **Montique, C.,** Stuck, J., Dogan, J., Meiller, C., Sullivan, Q., Sanchez, A., Bohmer, C., Stevens-Watkins, D., Tyler, K., Woods, I., Goodwin, R. (2021). Race-based stress reactions and recovery: Pilot testing a racially specific meditation. *Journal of Black Psychology*.

Hargons, C., Mosley, D., Meiller, C., Dogan, J., Stuck, J., **Montique, C.,** Malone, N., Bohmer, C., Sullivan, Q., Sanchez, A., Oluokun, J., & Stevens-Watkins, D. (2021). "No One Can Make that Choice for You": Exploring Power in the Sexual Narratives of Black Collegians. *Journal of Counseling Sexology & Sexual Wellness: Research, Practice, and Education, 2* (2), 80-92. https://doi.org/10.34296/02021040

Hargons, C.N., Malone, N., **Montique, C.**, Dogan, J., Stuck, J., Meiller, C., Sanchez, A., Sullivan, Q., Bohmer, C., Curvey, R., Stevens-Watkins, D., Woods, I., Tyler, K., & Oluokun, J. (2021). "White people stress me out all the time": Black students define racial trauma. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*. doi:10.34296/02021040

Montique, C.S., & Hargons, C.N. (2020). "I Want to Feel Enlightened by You": Black professionals' preferences in an ideal partner. *Journal of Black Sexuality and Relationships 6*(4), 27-55. doi:10.1353/bsr.2019.0025.

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Hargons, C., Malone, N., & **Montique, C.** (in press). Intersectionality in therapy for Black women. In Shelton, S., Lyn, M., & Endale, M. (eds.) *Handbook on Counseling with African American Women: Psychological Symptoms, Treatments, and Case Studies.* Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing.

PRESENTATIONS (7)

Murphy, E. A., Curvey, R. M. G., Tiereny, T., & **Montique, C.S.** (2020, August). *Promoting Help-Seeking: A Professional Athlete Modeling Approach*. Poster presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association. Washington D.C.

Hargons, C., Malone, N., Dogan, J., **Montique, C.S.**, Stuck, J., Oluokon, J., & Meiller, C. (2019). *Can a meditation help heal racial trauma?* Poster presented at the 2019 American Psychological Association Convention, Chicago, IL.

Montique, C.S. (April 2018). *Black Women's Dating Experience: A Content Analysis.* Round table discussion at the Association of Black Sexologists and Clinicians Spring Rounds Table Series in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

Montique, C.S., Gomez, L. (February 2015). *Improving Science Scores by Increasing Reading Skills.* Round table discussion at the National Council of Teachers of English Assembly for Research (NCTEAR) at Xavier University.

Montique, C.S., Gomez, L. (August 2014). *Improving Science Scores through Reading Comprehension and the Gender Differences in Learning.* Poster Presentation at Summer Undergraduate Research Symposium at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Montique, C.S., Bell, K. (April 2014). *College Type and its Effect on Gender and Racial Identity*. Oral presentation at the Atlanta University Center Research Conference

Montique, C.S., Bell, K. (July 2013). *Black Women's Identity: Effects of Collegiate Environment.* Oral presentation at the SAEOPP McNair/SSS Scholars Research Conference.

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, HONORS, AND SCHOLARSHIPS

2020 – 2022	American Psychological Association Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (APA MHSAS) Minority Fellow
2019-2020	University of Kentucky Lyman T. Johnson Diversity Fellowship
2019	The Center for Graduate and Professional Diversity Initiatives Student Professional Development Grant
2018-2019	University of Kentucky Ronald E. McNair Fellow
2015-2017	American University Merit Graduate Assistantship
2014	Atlanta University Center Research Symposium – 3rd Place Oral Presentation
2013	Morehouse College Ronald E. McNair Scholar Fellow
2011-2015	Morehouse College Academic Scholarship

LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2020	**The Center for Graduate and Professional Diversity Initiatives** Graduate Diversity Honors Reception Planning Committee
2019-2021	**University of Kentucky Graduate Student Congress (UKGSC)** Department Representative
2019 – 2020	**Kentucky Career Development Association**: Graduate Student Representative
2019- 2020	**UKGSC Professional Development and Networking Committee** Committee Member
2019	**University of Kentucky Black Graduate and Professional Student Association (UKBGPSA)** Member
2018- 2022	**American Psychological Association (APA):** – Student Affiliate
2018- 2022	**APA:** American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS)
2018- 2022	**APA:** Division 5 – Quantitative and Qualitative Methods
2018- 2022	**APA:** Division 17 – Society of Counseling Psychology
2018- 2022	**APA:** Division 35 – Society for the Psychology of Women
2018- 2022	**APA:** Division 43 – Society for Couple and Family Psychology
2018- 2022	**APA:** Division 45 – Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race
2018- 2022	**APA:** Division 47 - Society for Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology

ADDITIONAL CLINICAL TRAININGS AND CERTIFICATIONS

2021	**Facing Addiction in America: Tutorial on the Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health (1 hour)** Substance Use and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA)
2021	**Substance Use Disorder in Minority Men Who Have Sex with Men (6 hours)** SAMHSA
2021	**Co-Occurring Mental and Substance Use Disorders (6 hours)** SAMHSA
2021	**#RelationshipGoals: Significant Others in Women's Recovery (1.5 hours)** SAMHSA
2021	**UCLA – Tour of Motivational Interviewing (1.5 hours)**

HealtheKnowledge: Online Learning & Continuing Education for Health and Behavioral Health Professionals

2018 **Ally Development Workshop (8 hours)**

University of Kentucky Dept. of Education, School, and Counseling Psychology