A comparative study on attitudes toward interracial dating

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON ATTITUDES TOWARD INTERRACIAL DATING

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
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This study examined the relationships between race and attitudes toward interracial dating, gender and attitudes toward interracial dating, and race and gender and their relationship to attitudes toward interracial dating.

The study was based on the premise that both race and gender are important when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating. Two independent variables and one dependent variable were studied when researching this topic.

A comparative study analysis approach was used to analyze data gathered from two institutions, Clark Atlanta University and Kennesaw State College. An exploratory design with a survey questionnaire was used to collect data.

The researcher was prompted to complete this study by personal as well as a professional interest. The participants in this study consisted of forty college students. The make-up of the participants were: African-Americans (10 males and 10 females) and Caucasians (10 males and 10 females). Results from this study indicated that Caucasians and females demonstrated more acceptable attitudes toward interracial dating.

Understanding attitudes toward interracial dating will assist social workers, counselors, teachers, parents and peers in decreasing ignorance, stereotypes and violence against interracial couples in communities, schools, homes, and between family members and peers.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

"Everyday public contact with blacks has become acceptable in the minds of more and more white Americans. But when it comes to personal intimacy, resistance declines sluggishly and remains massive."¹ According to the Harris study, in 1963 and 1965, 90% and 92% respectively, of whites objected to their daughter dating an African-American. In 1966, 1967, and 1969, 88%, 90%, and 83% respectively, of whites would be personally concerned if their teenage child dated an African-American.² In the Gallup study in 1968 and 1972, whites disapproved of white and black marriages 72% and 60% respectively.³ In 1970, 74% of African-Americans felt that Caucasian men secretly wanted African-American women. In 1972 African-Americans approved of interracial marriages by 58%.⁴ In 1984 Moore, Hauck and Denne conducted a study examining racial prejudice of school age children in relation to interracial dating, marriage, school and social relationships.⁵ The results of this study indicated that Caucasians appeared to be more prejudiced than African-Americans in situations requiring prolonged interracial contact. A 1985 study showed African-Americans and

²Ibid., 289.
³Ibid., 292.
⁴Ibid., 292.
African-American women in particular were more apt to prefer interracial dating than Caucasian subjects. Among the Caucasians, men preferred interracial dating more than women. However, these findings do not confirm the finding by Petroni in 1973. In a 1992 study, subjects under age 40 were more positive than those over age 40. Caucasians were more positive than African-Americans in their attitudes, and younger African-American women were least willing to date outside of their ethnic group. Although the objections to interracial dating seem to be declining, racism and the taboo of interracial dating is still very prevalent in today's society.

Although previous research has been completed on attitudes toward interracial dating with emphasis on race, rarely has gender been considered. Few studies have sought to determine if race or gender is more important in explaining the attitudes toward interracial dating. Gender is important because an individual's views based on one's gender may outweigh their views based on race. For example, an individual who has very little or no knowledge or acceptance of his culture and/or race may not consider race when determining his attitude, but instead his attitude will be based on his knowledge and experience of his sexuality. A male and female may think, rationalize, and react differently solely because of a difference in gender, body make-up, and sexuality. Gender may also be more important when understanding one's sexual preference as it relates to explaining one's attitudes toward interracial dating.

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7Ibid., 1293.


Gender also needs to be researched in order to shape views and receive an accurate picture on attitudes toward interracial dating.

**Significance of Study**

In 1990 there were 211,000 black-white marriages in the United States.¹⁰ Therefore, it is logical to assume that interracial dating has previously occurred and will continue to occur. A study designed to examine if gender is more important than race when studying attitudes towards interracial dating can be significant to persons who are interested in better understanding attitudes of gender, male-female relationships, interracial dating, and developing ways for prejudice-free racial attitudes among college students. If gender is not included in the analysts, one is unclear about its significance when explaining the attitudes toward interracial dating. The findings of this study can be utilized by parents, students, educators and social workers. These people can plan, facilitate, and provide education and interaction between African-Americans and Caucasians in order to provide better understanding of gender, culture, customs and differences in both races. The study can also provide factual, accurate information on young adult views and perceptions of interracial dating based on gender. This would provide for revisions, alterations, updates on theory, and ways to address interracial dating as a complete issue not just a racial issue.

The knowledge gained from this study can assist parents, students, social workers, caseworkers, counselors and educators in understanding and solving social conflict in schools, homes, neighborhoods, between peers, family members and adults. Understanding and acknowledging the impact of race and gender on views toward interracial dating can eliminate some of the social conflicts that exist today. When a social worker has or can retrieve the knowledge which can be gained from this

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study, one may be able to assess, objectively, the social, sexual and racial factors that may be operating, and hence, be better able to plan and implement gender groups in schools, agencies, prisons and hospitals. The knowledge gained from this study may also assist the social worker in enabling to assist others in resolving conflicts such as tension that may be produced when the mixing of different racial groups occur.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine the relative effects of race and gender on the attitudes toward interracial dating of African-Americans and Caucasians. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to examine 1) the individual effects of race and gender on attitudes toward interracial dating and 2) whether gender is more important than race in explaining attitudes toward interracial dating.

**Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are used:

- **African-American** - a male or female of the African race.
- **Caucasian** - a male or female of the Caucasoid ethnic division.
- **Favorable** - supportive and positive indication.
- **Unfavorable** - unsupportive and negative indication.
- **Attitude** - a manner of acting, feeling or thinking that shows disposition and opinion.
- **Interracial dating** - conventional dating between an African-American and a Caucasian.
- **Extent of past social contact** - the extent of interpersonal involvement psychologically and socially with members of a different racial group, in the areas of education, residency, and heterosexual relationships. The quality of past social contact occurs by choice as well as by circumstance.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literature Review

In this chapter, the researcher will focus on past and present studies, findings, and views in regard to attitudes toward interracial dating. Although some studies focus on attitudes toward interracial marriage, few studies focus on attitudes toward interracial dating with emphasis on race, and even fewer studies focus on attitudes toward interracial dating with emphasis on gender.

Interracial marriages have increased from 51,409 in 1960 to 211,000 in 1990. Erskine notes, "a rise in the number of interracial marriages counted by the Census might perhaps be attributable to a slight lessening of taboos and an increasing insistence on frankness among the young." But, for many years, it was a taboo to portray interracial lovers, in movies, television, and in everyday life. Many changes have occurred throughout history towards racial equality and racial acceptance, but society as a whole does not accept or encourage interracial dating. Although studies have been conducted, very few studies address the issue of interracial marriage between African-Americans and Caucasians, and even fewer address the issue of

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Over the years, few topics have preoccupied whites, blacks, and others as much as interracial dating and ultimately, intermarriage. At the same time, in spite of the pressure both at the psychological and at the sociological level on those who date interracially, there is evidence that more couples are involved, or at least their involvement is more visible now. A Harris Poll shows that one out of every five Americans has had a date with someone outside of his or her own race. While the Harris Poll suggests that interracial dating is not infrequent, it also reveals that at least 42% of those interviewed knew that interracial couples have difficulties when they appear in public. And of that number, only 57% were sympathetic.

John Harre, in his study of mixed marriages in New Zealand, wrote the following on the subject of dating:

There is no doubt that in a vague sort of way the community in general does not fully accept mixed dating...They tend to express themselves with statements such as: "It's better to stick to your own race" and "It's just asking for trouble."

With this in mind, one has to wonder what affects the views of a person's attitude toward interracial dating.

Race

Race or one's ethnicity often affects the views, opinions and attitudes of an individual. In most studies on interracial dating, race is considered the only or primary factor in explaining one's attitude toward interracial dating. For example, in a 1963, 1966, 1967 and 1969 study, Caucasians stated they would be concerned if their teenage child

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6Ibid., 128.

7Ibid., 129.
dated an African-American by 90%, 88%, 90% and 83% respectively. The Harris Poll also noted that in 1970, 74% of African-Americans agreed with the statement that Caucasian men secretly wanted African-American women. The Gaffin study also showed that only 58% of African-Americans were opposed to interracial dating whereas 72% of Caucasians were opposed to it. The issue of which race is more accepting of interracial dating varies from study to study whereas the Harris Poll showed African-Americans as being more accepting, a study by Todd, Mckinney, Harris, Chadderton and Small showed that Caucasians were more positive in their attitudes toward interracial dating. In the Gallup study in 1968 and 1972 Caucasians disapproved of Caucasian and African-American marriages 72% and 60% respectively. In a 1984 study by Moore, Hauck and Denne, Caucasians appeared to be more prejudiced than African-Americans in situations requiring prolonged interracial contact. But in 1992 study, Caucasians seemed to have more positive attitudes toward interracial dating. As of now we are unsure of which race is more accepting of interracial dating. Many factors may be looked at when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating based on race. For example, physical attractiveness, social status and stereotypes may play a role in one’s attitude toward interracial dating. In a study by Murstein, Merighi and Malloy, physical attractiveness and

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9Ibid.
13Petroni. Interracial Marriage, 168.
the exchange theory in interracial dating were examined. In this study, twenty interracial couples were observed and rated by judges for physical attractiveness. The couples consisted of thirteen pairs of an African-American man and a Caucasian woman and seven pairs of an African-American woman and a Caucasian man. Because physical attractiveness is an important variable in interpersonal attraction, it was argued, in accordance with the exchange theory, that in a racially prejudiced society African-Americans would have to offer more to Caucasians than visa versa to participate in an interracial romantic relationship. Acknowledging that endogamy was firmly established in American society, Merton nevertheless noted that when exceptions did occur, the lower caste person gave something extra to the relationship to compensate for the higher status of the upper caste person. For example, African-Americans would have to be of higher socioeconomic status to attract Caucasians into dating or marriage. Caucasians might require that African-Americans be more attractive than they themselves as a means of compensating for African-Americans lesser-valued skin color. Physical attractiveness was used in this study because it was readily observable, had reasonably high agreement on standards, and was a prime factor in early courtship. The majority of the participants in this study were students, with very little age difference. They were generally not religious, and all were dating consistently or living

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 326.

18 Ibid.
together. The African-American woman-Caucasian man couples were dating approximately 13 months and the African-American man-Caucasian woman couples were dating approximately 17 months. The judges were four college students ranging from age twenty to twenty-three, two African-Americans and two Caucasians, one of each sex from each race. The study confirmed that African-Americans exceeded their Caucasian partners in physical attractiveness according to the judges' perceptions, but according to the partners' perceptions each found their partner equally attractive. Physical attractiveness and social class are prime examples of factors within race that need consideration and clarification in order to accurately explain race and its relationship to attitudes toward interracial dating. Although this study took a detailed look at physical attractiveness and its role in racial attitudes, it did not consider other factors such as power, education, socioeconomic status and freedom from neurosis that may also impact on one's attractiveness to their mate of choice.

In another study by Spaights and Dixon, they noted that many of the problems associated with African-American and Caucasian romantic alliances are rooted in stereotypes that grew out of a long period of slavery and African-American oppression. They state that the specific pathological dynamics in each alliance depend on various combinations of race and sex as well as each partners socio-psychological make-up.

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22Ibid.

23Ibid., 326.

24Ibid.


26Ibid.
psychological dynamics of African-American and Caucasian romantic alliances are extremely complex and often contain a potential for pathology. The foundation of this pathology is embedded in the history of racism that has shaped the physical dimensions of African-American children and has produced a normative prejudice in Caucasian children. The source of pathology for both African-Americans and Caucasians who become involved in interracial romances lies in the potential for racial stereotyping. According to Spaights and Dixon, for African-Americans, one’s partner may be an object upon which to vent rage, to gain revenge, or to punish white society. For Caucasians, one’s partner may be an object through which they can atone for white society’s sins against the African-American race or release their own pent up sexuality often constrained by Puritan mores. From either view, the partner is not perceived as a full human being with a full range of individuality, but rather as an unconscious racial symbol. Many stereotypes which are held by both African-Americans and Caucasians, persist as a result of the historical relations between African-Americans and Caucasians. The African-American woman may be perceived as an "earth mother" - sensual, uninhibited, spontaneous, free and loving, promiscuous by choice, and animalistic in her sexual responses. The Caucasian woman may be perceived as frail and chaste, too sensitive and pure to become fully involved in sexual relations. The African-American male is assumed to be shiftless, happy-go-lucky, ignorant, irresponsible, childlike, and an


28Ibid.

29Ibid.

30Ibid.

31Ibid., 133-134.

32Ibid., 134.
object to be feared. The Caucasian man is assumed to be controlling, suspicious, protective, powerful, vengeful, and responsible for the past actions of the white race. These are just a few of the common stereotypes that exist among people of both races. African-American women may consider dating a Caucasian man because she may become disenchanted by African-American men, feel that only Caucasian men can provide her with romance, affection, and lovemaking as a prelude to the sex act, have experienced physical abuse by an African-American man, or economic factors may underlie her decision. A Caucasian man may consider dating an African-American female because of a spontaneous sexual play that he has not found among Caucasian women, a liberal upbringing may lead him to identify with the underdog, or he may use the relationship as a rebellion against his parents to antagonize them. A Caucasian woman may seek relationships with African-American men because of their stereotypes as lovers, physically well-endowed, and exotic. She may use her African-American lover to overcome insecurity about her sexuality, especially if he treats her like a "white queen". The motivation of the African-American male who becomes involved with interracial romances has the potential for the greatest pathology because he is the member of this quartet who in many ways has been most severely restricted by the historical relations between African-Americans and Caucasians. Many African-American men have blatantly exploited Caucasian women as revenge for the treatment they and their

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34Ibid.

35Ibid.

36Ibid., 135.

37Ibid.
parents have received. African-American men may also seek Caucasian women because they have experienced rejection by African-American women in the past. African-American men may tend to flee to the stereotypically passive, submissive, Caucasian woman who, they believe, will stand behind them and build their egos. Regardless of the stereotype or reasons for interracial dating, it is clear that interracial couples may likely find some form of harassment or resistance in both African-American and Caucasian communities. The kind of harassment ranges from staring to violence. Interracial couples also struggle with many aspects of living that African-Americans have historically faced. For example, they may be refused or given poor service, ignored by taxi drivers, and told the hotel is full. But regardless to how society treats interracial couples, interracial romance appears to be on the rise. This study examined the historical underpinnings related to the sexual motivations of African-American and Caucasian persons and the dynamics between African-American and Caucasian males and females involved in pathological romances. The previously mentioned polls and studies all describe, evaluate and explain their findings in relation to race and its effect on the attitudes toward interracial dating. Although these polls did provide statistics and research on attitudes toward interracial dating based on race, they did not consider or explain any other factor that may possibly effect one’s attitude toward interracial dating. For example, the studies could have considered gender, educational level, or economic status in order to provide more accurate findings. Although race is

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39 Ibid., 136.

40 Ibid., 137.
important when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating, gender may be equally or more important in explaining one's attitude.

**Gender**

Gender can also affect one's attitude, views, and opinions when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating. Although most literature focuses on race when measuring attitudes, a few studies have used gender as a primary factor when measuring attitudes toward interracial dating. These studies have just been conducted within the past ten years with the exception of one. Therefore, gender seems to be a relatively new concept when measuring attitudes toward interracial dating. In the United States today, 71% of mixed couples and marriages consist of African-American men and Caucasian women. While only 29% pair Caucasian men with African-American women. In a 1984 study by Moore, Hauck, and Denne, females were generally less prejudiced than males and African-American males of low prejudice were more intelligent, more external, and less anxious than African-American males of higher prejudice. In a 1985 study, Korolewicz showed that African-Americans and African-American women in particular were more apt to prefer interracial dating than white subjects. Among the white subjects, men tended to prefer interracial dating more than women. These findings do not confirm the findings of Petroni (1973) or Todd, McKinney, Harris, Chadderton, and Small (1992) who reported that African-American women

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were least likely to date interracially. In a 1988 study, Johnson and Ogasawara reported that more positive and more frequent attitudes toward interracial dating were found among men than women and among lower income groups than higher income groups. In a 1992 study, more positive attitudes toward interracial dating were found among men and Caucasians. Sixty-One percent of the subjects were willing to date outside of their race. African-American women were the most negative, with 35% of them willing to date outside of their race and 44% of them clearly stating they were not willing to do so. The only other group with less than half willing to date outside of their race was the older Caucasian female. Overall, more men expressed a positive attitude toward interracial dating than did women. Those who did state that they were willing to date people from a different ethnic group rated themselves as more independent and persuasive. African-Americans tended to rate themselves more positively than Caucasians did. The previously mentioned studies explained attitudes toward interracial dating based on gender. These studies tend to agree that males have a more positive attitude toward interracial dating and are most likely to date outside of their race with the exception of the 1984 and 1985 studies. In order to enhance this research and make it more understandable, social factors which may have influenced one's attitude can be incorporated into the study along with race and gender.


"Ibid., 205.

"Ibid., 205.

"Ibid., 207."
In conclusion, the issue of interracial relationships has historically been a difficult one for America. After decades of laws prohibiting such relationships, American attitudes toward them continued to be extremely negative until the present day, when they can be said to be ambivalent at best. These attitudes are reflected in problems surrounding interracial dating and marriage. Nevertheless, such relationships appear to be increasing in number.\textsuperscript{49} When interracial dating and marriages occur, by and large, the people are of the same level of economic and educational equality.\textsuperscript{50} When measuring attitudes toward interracial dating, one must keep in mind that although there may be a consensus on which race or which gender is more positive, the reasons and influences may be very different in each person's case. For example, Mr. Humphries, the principal of Randolf County High School in Wodowee, Alabama, disagreed with interracial dating, canceled the prom due to interracial couples planning to attend, and insulted a biracial student by referring to her as a mistake. Although Mr. Humphries felt his views were correct, the students, Board of Education, and the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice disagreed with him. His reasons for disagreeing with interracial dating may have been influenced by his race, gender, or other influential factors that surround him. The Black Collegian asked the question to ten college students, "Should interracial dating be allowed?" Nine out of ten students said it should be allowed. Although most agreed with interracial dating, their views varied from: "Rejection on the basis of race is an unfair practice that deprives us of the opportunity to explore the personalities of people of other races" to "It is ordained by God that we are all one race of human beings, with no differences\textsuperscript{50}


\textsuperscript{50}Ibid.
except between the righteous and the sinners."51 This again shows that the attitudes toward interracial dating vary from race to race and gender to gender for various reasons. Phillips writes,

"No fruit has ever been quite so forbidden. What person of spirit could fail to crave a taste? And how sweet it is, this poem of contrasts between gleaming black skin and creamy pink flesh. How tender the moment of refuge from the terror and rage of the world. How piercing the intrusions of apprehension and guilt. Existential, folks, and there's not a lot of that about. Try it next time you get the chance. You'll see what I mean."52

Interracial dating has and will continue to exist, but is race or gender more important and accurate when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating?

**Theoretical Framework**

This study conceptualizes that race and gender are pertinent in explaining attitudes toward interracial dating. The majority of literature suggests that African-Americans and Caucasians have different attitudes toward interracial dating primarily because of race. Although few, some literature suggests that gender is the primary factor that allows African-Americans and Caucasians to vary in their attitudes toward interracial dating.

In stating this, there may be more than one theory that would apply to this behavior. But for the purpose of this study, the cognitive theory will be used to explain race and gender and their relationship to attitudes toward interracial dating. Cognition is the act or process of knowing. It involves how one goes about representing, organizing, treating and transforming information as one devises their behavior.53

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It encompasses such phenomena as sensation, perception, imagery, retention, recall, problem solving, reasoning and thinking.54 Jean Piaget, a Swiss developmental psychologist, is known for being the initial person who studied cognition.55 Cognitive learning is the learning of new responses without first having had the opportunity to make the responses oneself. Cognitive learning is accomplished by watching other people.56 The cognitive learning theory would state that attitudes toward interracial dating are based on learned behavior. When examining how cognitive learning theory lends itself to attitudes toward interracial dating, one must understand that race and gender and the behaviors that exist in both are learned behaviors.

Race is one’s ethnicity. People of different races tend to act different, not primarily because of their race, but instead because of the learned behavior that is associated and expected of their race. For example, when a child is born it is not able to recognize its race. The child only recognizes its race when other identify a difference in race among people and when it is taught that people’s behavior is based on their race. Therefore, a person’s personal experience affects their attitude. Both African-Americans and Caucasians have different experiences and experience different learned behaviors based on their race. The beliefs, stereotypes and sociably acceptable views are also passed on to individuals in each race group. If interracial dating is not acceptable or if a negative connotation is placed on someone for dating someone of a different race, then that behavior is imposed on the child who does not recognize race differences, but is seeking approval by others of the same race.

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55Ibid.

56Ibid., 61.
The cognitive learning theory, states that children often imitate and model after someone of similar resemblance to themselves.57 Children imitate and form their views based on the person they are modeling. For example, a child models oneself after someone who may be of the same race by eating, talking and following the norms of society placed on that race. Therefore, attitudes toward interracial dating vary from race to race depending on what is acceptable among peers, adults and members of that race. If it is not acceptable and one decides to pursue interracial dating, one will be ridiculed by members of that race. Likewise, if it is acceptable and one pursues interracial dating one may be accepted by members of both races.

Gender is one's sexuality. Male and females are different and act different because of biological make-up and learned behavior. Males and females are actively rewarded and praised, both by adults and by their peers, for what society perceives to be sex-appropriate behavior. They also are ridiculed and punished for behavior inappropriate to their sex.58 With this in mind, one can see that an individual's views and attitudes are often based on learned behavior. The cognitive learning theory states that children often imitate and model after someone of similar resemblance to themselves.59 For example, a child models a person of the same sex by dressing, gesturing, and following the norms of society placed on one's gender. An individual will form his views of what is acceptable, according to society based on gender. This may have a profound effect on an individual's attitudes toward interracial dating. Attitudes toward interracial dating as well as attitudes toward different issues in life are formed early in a child's life based on

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58 Ibid., 257-258.
59 Ibid., 258.
gender expectations of society. These attitudes may be formed or shaped unconsciously because they are considered to be social norms. Therefore, one's attitudes toward interracial dating may be based on social norms that are acceptable to society based on gender.

Although race has been studied more than gender and used more frequently when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating, it may not be as important or accurate as gender. The cognitive learning theory is the learning of new responses without first having had the opportunity to make the responses oneself. It is accomplished by watching other people.60 This theory applies to both race and gender. Race expectations vary from person to person, social class to social class, and educational level to educational level. Gender expectations, on the other hand, tend to remain the same regardless of person, race, social class, or educational level. With this in mind, one might maintain that one's views may be more consistent when looking at gender rather than race. For example, if one asks an African-American or Caucasian male and female, both being of the same race, their views on interracial dating, they may vary greatly. Although they are both of the same race, society has reared each differently because of gender. Both African-Americans and Caucasians rear males to be the bread winners, the head of the household, the strong more domineering figure in the family. Females are reared to be the less aggressive and domineering, the one who keeps the house in order, and the secondary bread winner, not making as much as the male. This exists in both races. Both races may also allow males more freedom than females when choosing a mate. Race may play a key role in explaining attitudes toward interracial dating, but it may not be as important or accurate as gender when explaining one's attitudes toward interracial dating. This may be because race expectations vary from race to race, social class to

social class, and educational level and gender
expectations remain the same regardless of race, social class, and
educational level. Therefore, gender may be more important when
explaining attitudes toward interracial dating than race.

Statement of Hypotheses

A. There will be a significant relationship between race and
   attitudes toward interracial dating.
B. There will be significant relationship between gender and
   attitudes toward interracial dating.
C. There will be a significant difference between race and gender
   in explaining attitudes toward interracial dating.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Design and Sample

The research design for this study was an exploratory design with a survey questionnaire utilized to collect data. This design was selected to examine the relationship between the independent variables, race and gender, and the dependent variable, attitudes toward interracial dating. The mode of observation that was used to collect data was survey research. A standardized questionnaire was self-administered for the respondents. All data were collected on one day. The samples were selected through purposive sampling. The samples consisted of all college students. The setting for this study was Clark Atlanta University and Kennesaw State College.

The university’s student body make-up is majority African-American and the college’s student body make-up is majority Caucasian. The sampling consisted of the first twenty individuals (10 males and 10 females) who were interested and willing to participate in this research. As the students passed by the researcher, they were asked would they be interested in filling out a survey on interracial dating. The researcher stated that the survey would be used as part of completion for a Master’s thesis. As the students agreed to participate, the researcher introduced herself, read the cover page to the participants, and informed the students that the questionnaires would be used for the following thesis: A Comparative Study On Attitudes Toward Interracial Dating. The researcher informed all participants that the information provided was confidential and that all responses would be destroyed three to six months after the study was
completed. The researcher reminded the participants that participation was voluntary and all results were anonymous. The students read the directions, completed the questionnaire, and returned it to the researcher, omitting their names from the questionnaire.

**Measurements**

The questionnaire was the data gathering device used in this study. It was used to collect data on race, gender, and attitudes toward interracial dating. A nominal scale measurement was used to measure the variables of race, gender, and an interval scale measurement was used to measure attitudes toward interracial dating. Race was operationalized by the extent to which one is African-American or Caucasian American. Gender was operationalized by the extent to which one is male or female by biological make-up. Attitudes toward interracial dating were measured by the use of a modified version of the scale, *Attitudes Toward Interracial Dating*. This scale measures the extent to which one accepts or rejects interracial dating based on personal or emotional views. The scale contained twenty-one, close-ended statements. The scale was scored by assigning numbers one through five to the possible responses. The numbers were assigned as follows: One - strongly disagree, two - disagree, three - neutral, four - agree, and five - strongly agree. The scores range between 15 and 75, with the highest score suggesting a more acceptable view on attitudes toward interracial dating and the lowest score suggesting the least acceptable views on interracial dating. The reliability coefficient of this scale with the sample was .88, indicating that there was a considerable internal consistency in the way the participants responded to the items in the scale.

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CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS

Results

In this research study, descriptive statistics and T-Test of group analysis were used to analyze the study variables. It was used to determine whether to reject or accept the study hypotheses; an alpha level of .05 was used.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTITUDES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ATTITUDES: MEAN = 32.28 STANDARD DEVIATION = 7.22

23
Table 2. Results of T-Test Analysis of Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANCE</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45.80</td>
<td>10.76</td>
<td>T = -1.28</td>
<td>DF = 36.83</td>
<td>P = .207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50.26</td>
<td>10.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFRICAN-AMERICAN</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43.95</td>
<td>11.41</td>
<td>T = -2.98</td>
<td>DF = 36.62</td>
<td>P = .005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUCASIAN</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>53.17</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one shows descriptive statistics that were used to calculate frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of the study variables. For gender, out of the 40 college students, 20 were male and 20 were female. For race, out of 40 college students, 22 were African-American and 18 were Caucasian.

Attitudes had a mean score of 32.28 and a standard deviation of 7.22. On average, respondents had moderately high acceptable attitudes toward interracial dating. Generally speaking, people's attitudes were favorable toward interracial dating. Attitude scores were categorized into low, moderate, and high, indicating the higher the scores the more acceptable one's views are toward interracial dating. Eight respondents (20.7%) had scores ranging between 18 and 25, which indicates low acceptable attitudes toward interracial dating. Eleven respondents (30.9%) had scores ranging between 26 and 32, which indicates moderate acceptable attitudes toward interracial dating. Ten respondents (15.1%) had scores ranging between 33 and 39, which indicates high acceptable attitudes toward interracial dating.

Table two shows results of a T-Test analysis of study variables. As it concerns the relationship between gender and attitudes toward interracial dating, females had a higher mean score (50.26) than men (45.80). Although the females had more favorable attitudes toward interracial dating than did the males, this difference was not
statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis that states that there would be a significant relationship between gender and attitudes toward interracial dating, is rejected. As it concerns the relationship between race and attitudes toward interracial dating, Caucasians had a higher mean score (53.17) than African-Americans (43.95). This difference was found to be statistically significant at the .005 level which indicates that Caucasians had significantly more favorable attitudes toward interracial dating than did African-Americans. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that race would be significantly related to attitudes is accepted. As it relates to the last hypothesis, which states that gender would be more important than race in determining attitudes, the data revealed that race was more important than gender. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that gender would be more important than race in explaining attitudes toward interracial dating is rejected.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

There were several major findings of this study. The first finding was that race was significantly related to attitudes toward interracial dating. The finding from this study may be explained in the following way. Race may have a significant relationship when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating because racism, racial stereotypes, and racial recognition has existed since the beginning of time. Society rears children and adults to recognize, capitalize, and differentiate between people of different races. Therefore, one's views and attitudes may be based on racial experiences.

The second finding was that gender was not significantly related to attitudes toward interracial dating. This study found that Caucasians had more acceptable attitudes toward interracial dating than African-Americans. This may be because Caucasians are openly and publicly less concerned about race than African-Americans. African-Americans, on the other hand, are more race conscious because of the experiences that they have had due to their race. Although Caucasians appear to be less conscious of race, public behavior does indicate that racial discrimination still exists toward African-Americans and other minorities. Gender, on the other hand, has no significant relationship when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating. This may be because the issue of attitudes toward interracial dating is a racial issue not a gender issue. Therefore, gender may not be important and may not effect one's views on racial issues. Although this study did not find a significant relationship between gender and attitudes toward interracial dating, it found that there was a slight difference in
males' and females' attitudes toward interracial dating. Females had slightly more acceptable attitudes toward interracial dating than males.

The third finding was that race is more important than gender when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating. This may be because society discriminates, promotes, and looks at racial issues based on one's ethnic background rather than one's sexuality. Therefore, race may be a stronger, more dominating factor than gender when explaining racial issues and attitudes.

As was suggested earlier, most studies on attitudes toward interracial dating suggest that race is the primary factor when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating. A major finding of this study was that gender does not have a significant relationship when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating. Furthermore, this study found that race is more important and accurate than gender when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating. The results of the study regarding demographic variables are in general agreement with the more recent studies. The study found that Caucasians and females had more acceptable views on attitudes toward interracial dating. In this regard, the findings were different from those of Korolewicz, in a 1985 study that showed that African-Americans had more acceptable views on attitudes toward interracial dating.1 It was also contrary to a study by Johnson and Ogasawar, in a 1988 study on gender, and partially different from a 1992 study by Harris, McKinney and Todd on race and gender which stated that Caucasians had more acceptable views on interracial dating.2 On the other hand, the findings from this study were in agreement with the findings of a 1984 study by Moore, Hauck and

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Denne which stated that females had more acceptable views on attitudes toward interracial dating.³

By relating the findings of demographic variables to attitudes toward interracial dating, one can present a profile on the college students in the study and their attitudes toward interracial dating. The data suggests that Caucasians, more than African-Americans, and females, more than males, have more acceptable attitudes toward interracial dating.

**Future Research**

The researcher suggests that for the future study of attitudes toward interracial dating, greater effort be exerted to study African-Americans and Caucasians from the same geographical area, social class and age group. Also, a larger sampling size can be used along with probability sampling when selecting subjects for participation. An expansion of this study could consist of: 1) exploring the environmental factors which influence attitudes toward interracial dating; and 2) conducting studies that focus and compare attitudes within each racial group. For example, comparing 8 African American females with African American males and Caucasian females with Caucasian males. This would enable the researcher to compare gender more specifically within each race.

**Implications for Social Work**

Social workers can use previous studies, future studies, and this study of attitudes toward interracial dating on both a micro and macro level. With research on attitudes toward interracial dating, one can work with a family to provide better understanding of racial influences and their effect on forming one's attitudes toward interracial dating.

For example, a social worker can work with a family by providing individual counseling with the parent and the child, when the parent does not approve of a child’s choice of partners based on race. On a larger level, one can help schools, communities, and different races plan, facilitate, and provide education and interaction between African-Americans and Caucasians. For example, a social worker can provide workshops in a variety of areas and communities for parents and children to gain a better understanding of the opposite race, as well as talk about one’s choices of a partner. This may enable the children to express themselves in an appropriate manner, as well as allow the parent an opportunity to get involved in their child’s life without threatening or feeling like she has no control over her child’s life and decisions.

This may be done in order to provide better understanding of one’s race, culture, customs and views on attitudes toward other races and interracial dating. Also, it may provide an opportunity to build relations between a child and her parent. Social workers can focus more on African Americans and males specifically because this study indicated that these two groups of people had the least acceptable attitudes toward interracial dating. With this in mind, social workers may need to focus more of their efforts on these two groups, if tolerance of interracial dating is a desired treatment outcome. With a better understanding of a person’s culture, customs and views, one can decrease ignorance, stereotypes and violence against interracial couples.
Hello, my name is Heidi Walker. I am a native of St. Louis, Missouri and a product of a biracial marriage. I received my Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I am currently a graduate student at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia. I have previously interned at Lorenzo Benn Youth Development Center and I am currently interning at Laurel Heights Mental Hospital. They are both located in Atlanta, Georgia.

This is a questionnaire designed to find out one’s views and attitudes toward interracial dating. This questionnaire is also designed to examine if race or gender is more important and accurate when explaining one’s attitudes toward interracial dating. The research is important because most studies have only looked at race when explaining attitudes toward interracial dating and have not considered gender as an important factor in explaining one’s attitude toward interracial dating.

I am requesting your participation in completing this questionnaire. Completion of this questionnaire will be done on a voluntary basis and all responses will contain anonymity and remain confidential. All results of this questionnaire will be destroyed three to six months after the completion of the thesis. Please do not sign your name to any part of the questionnaire. The information gathered will be employed in a Masters thesis at Clark Atlanta University, School of Social Work entitled: A comparative study on attitudes toward interracial dating.
Part I

1. Sex: (Check One)
   a. Male ____
   b. Female ____

2. Race: (Check One)
   a. African-American (Caribbean, Black, African) ____
   b. Caucasian American (Italian, Irish, European) ____
   c. Other (Please Specify) ____________________________
Part II

Read each statement and place the number which best expresses your feelings in the space provided in front of each statement. Please respond to all statements.

5=Strongly Agree
4=Agree
3=Neutral
2=Disagree
1=Strongly Disagree

1. ____ Interracial dating is the result of mutual attraction of the persons involved.

2. ____ Caucasian females do not date African-American males solely for sexual reasons.

3. ____ African-Americans do not date Caucasians to gain prestige among their friends.

4. ____ Caucasian males do not date African-American females solely for sexual reasons.

5. ____ Interracial marriages are one way to solve the race problem.

6. ____ A child who is the product of an interracial couple knows who or what he is.

7. ____ Observing an interracial couple does not strike me as distasteful.

8. ____ There should not be a separate way of life for African-Americans and a separate way of life for Caucasians.

9. ____ Interracial dating should be encouraged.

10. ____ African-American males do not date Caucasian females solely for sexual reasons.

11. ____ Parents and friends should not oppose a person who dates interracially.

12. ____ African-American females do not date Caucasian males solely for sexual reasons.

13. ____ The morals of Caucasians are not higher than those of African-Americans.

14. ____ People should date interracially in spite of the social consequences.

15. ____ Interracial dating and interracial marriage are all right.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


