"WE" NEED TO TALK ABOUT RACE:

CONCEPTIONS OF WE-NESS IN BLACK COUPLES' RACE-THEMED INTERACTIONS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

OF

RUTGERS,

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

BY

ELIZABETH MOSES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY   OCTOBER 2016

APPROVED: _____
                 Shalonda Kelly, Ph.D.

                 _____
                 Karen Riggs-Skean, Psy.D.

DEAN: _____
                 Stanley B. Messer, Ph.D.

Abstract

Statement of Problem: Little is known about the processes that promote satisfaction and intimacy for Black couples, and even less research has been devoted to how these couples interact around race. This study explores whether the way in which Black couples discuss race might account for the mechanisms behind racial differences in marital quality. This study hypothesizes that use of we pronouns (we, our, us) will be positively correlated with relationship satisfaction in the sample of couples, compared to I, me and you. In addition, this study qualitatively examines how couples navigate we-ness to varying degrees across themes that represent threats to intimacy in Black couple relationships. Methods: A community sample of 26 Black adult couples in committed relationships received an eight-minute problem-solving task (Floyd, 2004) aimed to assess how Black couples address race-related disagreements between partners. Recordings and transcripts were acquired from a prior study conducted at Rutgers. Each couple was instructed to discuss a chosen issue, and fill out several self-report measures. Gottman & Gottman's (2008) "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling represented examples of separateness in the transcripts, in contrast to couples displaying antidotes to the "horsemen," and examples of kindness and generosity, as per coding analysis. Results: Use of "we" was not significantly related to reported relationship satisfaction; some positive correlations were found between partners' use of "I" and females' satisfaction. In addition, several clear patterns of potential positive and negative ways of discussing race emerged, and these patterns presented specifically across themes of stereotypes, child-rearing, and religion. Conclusions: This study examined Black couples' race-related discussions using quantitative and qualitative methods, to provide a preliminary idea of whether use of certain

pronouns may relate to relationship satisfaction, and to show how common patterns from

couples' research manifest uniquely in race-themed conversations. The results seem to show how

couples' ability to discuss these topics in a unified way manifests through complex qualitative

discussion patterns rather than only through the use of pronouns. Implications of these findings

are discussed.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank Dr. Shalonda Kelly, my chairperson and advisor, for her support, hard work, and guidance over the past five years. From my Cooper Fellowship with Dr. Kelly during my first year, she has fostered my passion in our shared area of interest, and I have enjoyed working with her on numerous projects, culminating so far in this dissertation. The work that Dr. Kelly and I completed during my first year served as the inspiration for my dissertation, and she has shaped my vision throughout the process. I have always enjoyed meeting with her, and receiving her comments on my work, as she has been able to provide critical feedback that has improved my work and helped me to grow as both a writer and a clinician.

I would also like to thank Dr. Karen Riggs-Skean, the other member of my committee, for serving as a supportive and calming presence throughout the process. I value her expertise and knowledge with couples, and the different perspective that she has provided. She has helped the process to proceed smoothly and I appreciate her guidance. I would also like to thank the rest of the GSAPP faculty for their support, valuable knowledge, and openness over the years. I am so proud to have been a GSAPP student, and you have shaped my development into a clinician.

I would also like to take this time to thank my family, and particularly my parents as they encouraged me to pursue graduate studies in psychology, and have supported me throughout my education. They have also provided constant love and support, particularly when things got stressful. I would like to thank my sister and brother for their love, kindness, and generosity, and enjoyable company over the years. Finally, I would like to thank Jeff, my future husband, who has taken this journey with me, and been so supportive and loving along the way. I could not have completed this process without him!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures

Chapter I: Introduction

A. Background of Problem:

When working with diverse couples, it is necessary to consider the influence of the

sociocultural context of the dyad and of each partner on relationship dynamics. African

Americans have greater relationship instability, poorer marital quality, and greater rates of

marital disruption compared with White or Hispanic couples (Bulanda & Brown, 2007). African

American couples also have lower marriage rates compared to other ethnic groups (U.S. Census

Bureau, 2003). Because of the sociocultural values and historical context that have shaped Black

individuals' experiences, conclusions drawn from research on European American marital

processes may not generalize to African American samples (e.g. Kelly, 2006). Unique racial and

gender-related social factors undoubtedly influence African American couples based on the

perspectives held by the spouses, and distinguish these couples from European American

samples (e.g. Kelly & Floyd, 2006; Orbuch & Eyster, 1997; Stanik, McHale & Crouter, 2013).

Prior research has examined the dynamics within African American marriages that may support

their stability as well as the structural, cultural, and individual factors that contribute to the low

marriage rates of this group (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Chambers & Kravitz, 2011). For example,

Chambers & Kravitz (2011) discuss how a matrix of factors likely contributes to the

disproportionately low marriage rates of this group. This matrix includes sociological factors

such as the role of cohabitation, children born outside of marriage, and the disparity in the ratio

of males to females, possibly due to high rates of incarceration or mortality. Psychological

factors, including a history of mistrust, and difficulties with forgiveness, may also contribute to

lower marriage rates (Chambers & Kravitz, 2011).

Bulanda and Brown (2007) used data from the National Survey of Families and

Households (NSFH) to reveal how when African American couples do marry, they display, on

average, lower marital happiness and more negative interactions, as well as higher rates of

disagreements and perceived instability. This poorer marital quality accounts for the higher odds

of separation or divorce. Structural and cultural factors associated with race-ethnicity, such as

income, unemployment, social relationships and religious participation, cannot fully account for

the poorer marital quality of African American couples relative to White couples (Bulanda &

Brown, 2007). Therefore, it is important to delve deeper into the unique predictors of African

American couples' marital quality and the ways in which race and gender factors serve as both

barriers to and enhancers of intimacy.

Little is known about the processes that promote marital satisfaction and intimacy within

this group, and even less research has been devoted to how these couples interact around race,

gender, and the stereotypes derived from a shared context of historical stigma. Attitudes about

gender and race between partners are related to dyadic functioning (e.g. Kelly & Floyd, 2006;

Stanik et al., 2013). The purpose of this dissertation is to explore whether the way in which

Black couples discuss race might account for the mechanisms behind these racial differences in

marital quality. The introductory section will outline the threats to intimacy faced by many

African American couples starting with an examination of the historical context of slavery and

the subsequent structural barriers faced by Black Americans. These barriers served as a catalyst

for gender role norms that diverged from mainstream gender roles (e.g. Hunter & Davis, 1992;

Stanik & Bryant, 2012), and the stereotypes of African Americans that developed to legitimize

slavery (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). More recent media portrayals further reinforce these

stereotypes (Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005). Internalization of these negative gender

stereotypes often acts a threat to intimacy and "we-ness" for African American couples through patterns of socialization (Bethea & Allen, 2013). In contrast to these threats, Black couples also embody numerous cultural strengths that support enduring relationships (e.g. Marks et al., 2008).

The forgoing unique contextual factors influencing relationship intimacy are extremely important distal factors, but few have examined how these elements are manifest at a micro level within couple interactions. Thus it is important to consider the way in which couples speak to each other. Research on pronouns has found an association between pronoun use, including we-ness (*we/us*) versus separateness (*I/you*) and relationship outcomes (e.g. Buehlman, Gottman, & Katz, 1992; Simmons, Gordon, & Chambless, 2005). For instance, research has shown that use of first-person plural pronouns (e.g. *we, us*) have been associated with more positive and less negative emotional behaviors (Buehlman at al., 1992), and more positive problem solutions (Simmons et al., 2005), separateness (*I, you, and me*) pronouns have shown diverse relationships with satisfaction across studies (Simmons et al., 2005; Williams-Baucom, Atkins, Sevier, Eldridge & Christensen, 2010), thus these relationships are largely inconclusive and require further research. Furthermore, this research has not focused on African American samples, and has not examined specific discussions about racial topics. Therefore, this dissertation will specifically examine discussions about race between African American partners to qualitatively and quantitatively assess the use of specific words and themes in these discussions that correspond to intimacy.

The historical context of oppression that began with slavery has uniquely shaped the experience of African American couples and has contributed to persisting conceptions of race and gender. The first African Americans were brought to the United States against their choice during the Transatlantic Slave Trade, within a system of racial, sexual, and economic domination

and dehumanization. During slavery, African Americans were unable to establish the conventional gender roles of the time because both men and women were required to work together in unpaid labor, rather than in separate spheres. In addition, African American men were unable to provide economic security to their families, which economically limited their patriarchal authority. African Americans' gender structures were also severely disrupted by the sexual exploitation of slaves in which enslaved African American men were forcibly paired to breed, and females were made to bear children through involuntary sexual pairings. Furthermore, African American women were subjected to widespread sexual abuse, and this also benefitted the slave masters because the resulting children were taken as additional property to contribute labor (Stephens & Philips, 2003). The dehumanization of slaves was legitimized through the development of overwhelmingly negative stereotypes about them (Kelly & Shelton, 2013). African American couples likely internalized mainstream conventions of separate spheres for men and women, but because of their place in slavery, racially discriminatory barriers prevented replicating mainstream White American relationship patterns, and pervasive negative stereotypes developed to perpetuate the status quo, resulting in a long history of Black relationships being viewed as deviant (Bethea & Allen, 2013).

The end of legalized slavery began a long history of institutionalized racism that perpetuated numerous structural barriers for African Americans, including racial segregation as well as employment and sex ratio constraints. The period of emancipation during the 19th century following the Civil War marked the beginning of the Black Codes and Jim Crow segregation practices, which served to continue relegating African Americans to the lowest tier of American social and economic structures (e.g. Wacquant, 2001; Woodward, 1974). African Americans were given constitutional rights following emancipation, which was out of alignment with the

goals of many White Americans, thus the segregation laws and practices originated to

disenfranchise African Americans (Kelly, Maynigo, Wesley, & Durham, 2013). Taken together

these historical institutions account for nearly 90% of the 450-year history of Africans in

America under the oppression of Europeans (Mutegi, 2013). It was also during this time period

that lynching peaked, using mob violence based on the ideology of White Supremacy to enforce

the status quo (Pfeifer, 2004). Thus during the time until the civil rights act, legal oppression

combined with physical means to emphasize the disenfranchisement of African Americans.

The present day result of these institutions is a disparate social arrangement in which

structural racism permeates present day systems including education, socioeconomic disparities,

and healthcare systems (Kelly et al., 2013). For instance, within the educational system,

structural racism has been evident since slavery, when it was illegal for African Americans to

learn to read, and thereafter, when African Americans were consistently excluded from

educational structures. The effects of this long-standing racism persist within racial disparities in

education (Kelly et al., 2013). African Americans have an overall lower level of educational

attainment compared to Whites, and there has also been a growing gender gap in the level of

education received among African Americans. Black women have significantly higher college

completion rates than Black men, and the gap has been widening over the past 25 years (US

Census Bureau, 2012).

Furthermore, African Americans face pronounced socioeconomic disadvantages

compared to Whites (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; House & Williams, 2000; US Census Bureau,

2012). Since slavery, African American men have had higher unemployment rates than other

groups, and are also often the first to be fired during economic downturns (Bureau of Labor

Statistics, 2014; Couch & Fairlie, 2010). In fact, as per statistics from the Bureau of Labor

(2014), from 2004 to 2014, the unemployment rate for African Americans has consistently been approximately twice that of Whites. As such, there is a dearth of financially stable African American male partners. Because of these structural barriers that hinder African American men's employment rates, African American women continue to participate in the workforce at a higher rate than European American women, and African American men are more involved in household labor (Orbuch & Eyster, 1997).

African Americans also face numerous barriers to quality housing and neighborhoods (Ross & Turner, 2005). The highly segregated housing patterns in the United States arose as a result of legal oppression since the beginning of the 19th century; the Jim Crow and Black Codes limited residential choices for Black individuals, and later many cities adopted ordinances that established separate neighborhoods for Black and White families (Massey & Denton, 1993). In addition to these legal measures, the use of violence towards Black neighbors further resulted in ghetto formation. Despite the legal overturning of segregation laws, increasing social differentiation has interacted with the spatial concentration of African Americans to reinforce the effects of social and economic deprivation, and results in a geographic intensification of poverty for African Americans (Massey & Denton, 1993). Housing market discrimination against African Americans has persisted (Ross & Turner, 2005). For example, the 2000 Housing Discrimination Survey indicates that African Americans experiences significant levels of adverse treatment when seeking rental housing, in both the areas of housing availability and inspection (Ross & Turner, 2005). In addition, Sampson (2009) provides data showing how and why economic disadvantage and its sequelae persist in neighborhood concentration for African Americans.

Finally, the sociohistorical context of oppression and discrimination within healthcare systems has resulted in mistrust among African Americans. Medical experimentation during slavery, and the "scholarly opinions" that African Americans were lower human specimens served as just two factors that created a culture of mistrust in healthcare institutions (Suite, LaBril, Primm & Harrison-Ross, 2007). Current significant healthcare disparities still exist. In fact, the 2013 CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report discusses numerous health disparities including higher rates of mortality due to strokes and coronary heart disease, of infant mortality, and of preventable hospitalization for African Americans (Center for Disease Control, 2013).

An additional factor that threatens African American relationships is the noted imbalance in the number of African American men to women, due to structural influences in the criminal justice system, and the structural barriers in the economy, healthcare and educational systems described above. African Americans have the lowest ratio of men to women compared to other groups (US Census Bureau, 2000), owing to higher mortality rates among Black males due to disease and violence as well as disproportionate rates of incarceration among Black males (Mauer, 2011). These disparate rates of incarceration are in part due to discriminatory practices by law enforcement officers, through racial profiling (Goff & Kahn, 2012), engendering a cycle of mistrust between law enforcement and African American males (Holmes & Smith, 2008). Therefore, pervasive adversity in concert with this low sex ratio together act as destabilizing factors in African American long-term relationships (Adimora & Schoenbach, 2005).

The historical precedents that arose from slavery have shaped Black male and female relationships in the United States in terms of the gender roles that ensued from slavery and how they relate to intimate relationships (Bethea & Allen, 2013). The issue of gender roles applies to

the division of responsibilities between the male and female relationship partners for providing

for the family, taking care of children, or maintaining the household. Historically, African

American women divided their time between family and paid work, a trend that has persisted

(Bethea & Allen, 2013). However, despite many African Americans' tendency to enact more

egalitarian gender roles, including African American women's higher paid employment rate, and

men's greater involvement in household labor as compared to White couples, evidence suggests

that they have preferences for more traditional roles (Hunter & Davis, 1992; Stanik & Bryant,

2012). For example, some African American men report that their partner should pursue work

outside the home, but also believe that the man should be head of the household, consistent both

with gender egalitarianism and a preference for traditional roles (Hunter & Davis, 1992). These

mismatches between what exists and what they desire can lead to relational tension, which

inhibits intimacy. Therefore, it is important to examine how both attitudes toward gender as well

as gender realities affect couple relationships.

For example, in a sample of newlywed couples, husbands and wives reported lower

marital quality when husbands expressed more traditional gender role attitudes. Neither wives'

gender role attitudes, nor the interaction between husbands' and wives' attitudes were significant

predictors of marital quality. Further, husbands who participated in an egalitarian division of

housework reported higher marital quality, but wives' reports of marital quality were unaffected

by labor division. Therefore, husbands' gender role attitudes may have a greater impact on

marital quality than wives' gender role attitudes (Stanik & Bryant, 2012). Finally, the cumulative

effect of attitudes and labor division influenced husbands' marital quality such that holding

traditional attitudes while engaging in a traditional labor division was related to lower marital

quality. This finding suggests that the negative effect of traditional attitudes may be buffered if partners behave in a more equal manner at home (Stanik & Bryant, 2012).

Stanik et al. (2013) examined longitudinally the implications of gender attitudes and division of housework and parenting behavior for the trajectories of marital love within a sample of 146 African American couples. Overall, there was a decline in love as a function of marital duration, but gender roles moderated this decline. Couples who reported a more traditional division of labor and parental knowledge, such as knowledge of the child's homework, experienced a decline in marital love, but couples with more a more equal division of household labor and parental knowledge between the male and female remained stable. In addition, husbands' traditional attitudes were negatively related only to their own reports of marital love, but not to the reports of their wives (Stanik et al., 2013). The combined findings indicate the important implications of gender dynamics, including both expectations and reality, for marital satisfaction, and how these gender dynamics are embedded in the unique sociocultural context of many Black couples.

As a result of the abuses that were imposed upon African Americans during slavery, pervasive negative stereotypes about Black men and women developed that continue to influence African American couples today (Kelly & Shelton, 2013). Negative sexual stereotypes of both males and females were developed to legitimize the abuse of slaves. For example, Kelly & Shelton (2013) discuss how slave women were forced to satisfy their masters' sexual appetites, but slave masters used myths of African American women's hypersexuality to justify these abuses. Thus the stereotypes of African American females derive from historical notions of exaggerated and exoticized African American female sexuality. African American males were also portrayed as hypersexual and violent, in addition to immoral and lazy, which legitimized the

violence committed by White men for alleged sexual interactions with White women (Donovan, 2007). With respect to the specific stereotypes that have persisted historically, some African American men may view African American women as emasculating, aggressive, controlling, unfeminine, and women may perceive African American men as passive, unreliable, unfaithful, and uncommitted to long-term relationships (Lawrence-Webb, Littlefield, & Okundaye, 2004).

The gender roles that were imposed upon African Americans during slavery perpetuated gender role stereotypes of males and females. Because most African American males were unable to provide economic security for their families during slavery, many Black women had to seek employment in the paid labor force, while many Black men contributed to work in the home. As such, not only were men restricted from accessing traditional masculinity through economic provision, they were also feminized by doing traditionally female tasks (Bethea & Allen, 2013). These necessities were taken as signs of Black males' inferior masculinity and devalued Black femininity, which set the groundwork for tensions between men and women.

Because structural factors have blocked access to traditional modes of success, including employment, some Black males seek out alternative domains to achieve, as illustrated by the theoretical examination of class-based masculinities discussed by Pyke (1996). These alternative domains have frequently included hypermasculine behaviors such as aggressiveness and hypersexuality; thus masculinity for African Americans has long been linked to the stereotypes of hypersexuality (Hooks, 2004). The link between African American masculinity and hypersexuality relates back to the aforementioned historical antecedents, when slaves were bred for the slave masters within the sexual economy of slavery (Bridgewater, 2005). As such, sexuality is often a site for black males to display their manhood, but this image of hypersexuality suggests a lack of caring, commitment and intimacy (Bethea & Allen, 2013).

These stereotypes are directly linked to the aforementioned gender roles; structural barriers have determined gender roles that are frequently disparate from those of White couples, and thus viewed as pathological. These pathological roles have given rise to often-negative stereotypes of both males and females.

Warnings about stereotypical notions of Black males who are untrustworthy or undependable, through financial instability or hypersexual behaviors, can potentially socialize some African American women to be strong and independent, and reluctant to demonstrate vulnerability (Grange, Brubaker, & Corneille, 2011; Thomas & King, 2007). This strong and independent attitude may exist in concert with Black women's material self-reliance through labor force participation, illustrating the connection between the former stereotype and the latter gender role issue. This phenomenon is known in popular culture as the *Strong Black Woman Syndrome;* Harris-Lacewell (2000) uses data from the 1999 Chicago African American Attitudes study in a controlled study to explicate the ongoing consequences of the Strong Black Woman myth, which include a focus on Black women's individual faults, shortcomings, and accountabilities.

Furthermore, media consumption, including music video exposure, has been found to play a role in shaping and reinforcing these stereotypical gender notions, particularly among African American adolescents (Ward et al., 2005). For example, females in hip hop music videos are often shown as having great sexual desires while fulfilling these needs by being degraded for male pleasure, and as a "mass of body parts for males' consumption." An analysis of hip hop culture identified eight contemporary sexual scripts of African American females: The Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke, Gangsta Bitch, Sister Savior, Earth Mother and Baby Mama (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). These common stereotypes in the media build upon those that began

in slavery (Kelly & Shelton, 2013). The "freak" is a sexually aggressive exotic female who

wants sex without attachments. The "matriarch" is defined as a female who emasculates men –

overly aggressive, and unfeminine, in line with description of "ghetto" African American

females. In addition to aggressiveness, this "ghetto" stereotype can also include the female

standing out through being loud or flamboyant. The "gold digger" uses hypersexuality for

material gains (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). These stereotypes from hip hop culture also derived

from more foundational stereotypes such as the "jezebel," a sexually promiscuous and seductive

female who uses sexuality to gain attention, love and material gains (Stephens & Phillips, 2005).

These negative stereotypes reflect the myths of hypersexuality that started during slavery, and

serve to foster antagonistic relationships between African American females and males, because

they also imply that the males are only necessary for sexual needs. As such, they also perpetuate

negative stereotypes of males as unreliable (Kelly & Shelton, 2013). These scripts, which are

understood among African American youth, shape beliefs about interpersonal relationships.

Adolescents often evaluate how they measure up to these images in the media, and this process

shapes their gender identity and view of relationships with the opposite sex. African Americans

frequently internalize the scripts that emerge from the media, which are understood among

African American youth (Stephens & Phillips, 2005).

     The stereotypes that have developed from historical notions and from current media

portrayals shape the way in which African Americans see their partner and themselves. Further,

stereotypes have numerous implications for intimacy within couples because these portrayals

may result in viewing one's partner as inferior, unworthy and undesirable (Bethea & Allen,

2013). In fact, Gillum (2007) provided data that men who most subscribe to negative stereotypes

about African American women were least likely to have maintained a successful long-term

relationship. However, these stereotypes appear to be very widely held; in a sample of 221 African American adult males, nearly half of males endorsed the "jezebel" stereotype, while close to three quarters endorsed the "matriarch" stereotype (Gillum, 2007). However, despite males' endorsement of these stereotypes, the vast majority of the sample also endorsed positive characteristics of African American women; thus, although stereotypes are quite pervasive, many African American men respect African American women and see them in a positive light, which illustrates hope for negotiating intimacy within Black couples (Gillum, 2007).

As an example of how these stereotypes are currently enacted, during a racial integration program within suburban schools, African American female adolescents' qualitative responses suggested that they perceived how White suburban students stereotyped them as "ghetto" and "loud," and that they were excluded from primarily White social groups (Ispa-Landa, 2013). Within these stereotypes, "ghetto" implies both the supposed issue of black girls' loudness and failure to meet standards of femininity, but also seems to signify failure to enact characteristics that support subordination to masculinity and whiteness (Ipsa-Landa, 2013). African American boys, however, reported that they were included in social groups, which seemed to relate to their enactment of exaggerated standards of black masculinity, such as acting "street smart" and tough. The African American males discussed the reputations that they developed which made them popular among the suburban White students, and how they sometimes consciously exaggerated the perceived differences between themselves and the White boys to maintain this image of black masculinity. However, the African American males also perceived that their suburban classmates viewed them as underachievers and troublemakers (Ispa-Landa, 2013), consistent with the passive and unreliable stereotypes that have existed since slavery (Lawrence-Webb et al., 2004). This relational perspective exhibits the ways in which African American

individuals internalize these racialized gender scripts from an early age; socialization into these attitudes and behaviors starts well before adulthood.

Internalized patterns of socialization about gender realities have created learned barriers to intimacy for many African American couples. Some Black men have been socialized to adopt a stance of detachment and projection of fearlessness as a self-protective mechanism, but this stance results in a sense of distrust, anger, and isolation in relationships and thus threatens intimacy (Bethea & Allen, 2013). In addition, some African American women may display learned barriers to intimacy, often as a result of disappointments experienced in previous relationships or conveyed by African American peers or family members (Grange et al., 2011). Past relationship frustrations can result in self-defensiveness, emotional guardedness, and the need to seek and exercise control within relationships (Bethea & Allen, 2013).

Furthermore, the internalization of racialized sexual scripts and stereotypes is implicated in patterns of infidelity in some African American couples, which serves as an additional threat to intimacy and trust. Stereotypes of African American men as hypersexual may stimulate females' anxiety that their male partner would seek another partner. African American men who internalize the sexual script of sexually assertive, promiscuous women may also experience anxiety regarding how she may act with other men. These anxieties are based on both lived experiences and historical stereotypes (Carey et al., 2010). African Americans have higher rates of infidelity than other racial/ethnic groups, and African American men are more likely to cheat than women (Adimora & Schoenbach, 2005; Carey et al., 2010). Data has revealed how these patterns of infidelity are related to negative stereotypes. For example, African American men who endorse stereotypes of sexually aggressive African American women show increased apprehension about their partner's infidelity potential (Gillum, 2007). Further, in a qualitative

sample of 38 low-income monogamous and nonmonogamous men, Fosse (2010) found that

one's own infidelity can stem from doubt and mistrust about one's partner's behaviors and

motives. Thus if the stereotypes heighten fears of infidelity, and these fears stimulate further

infidelity, the stereotypes are correlated with patterns of infidelity. Finally, infidelity behaviors

by African American men can be explained in part by the sex-ratio imbalance, which contributes

to beliefs developed by Black males that they can go elsewhere if unsatisfied in the relationship,

and also contributes to women's socialization toward self-reliance (Bontempi, Eng, & Quinn,

2008; Carey et al., 2010).

In addition to the racialized gender stereotypes that threaten intimacy in African

American couples, factors deriving from racism and racial identity can also influence intimacy.

African Americans continuously experience, perceive, and respond to racism, and may act out

the negative effects of racism on their partners, as a safer target (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Racism

may also cause deeply felt mistrust that limits the potential for intimacy (Willis, 1990),

especially when couples turn on rather than to each other. In addition to this mistrust,

internalized racism has a negative effect on couples' ability to form a loving bond. Specifically,

negative race-related experiences can lead African Americans to internalize the negative images

of themselves and of their partners, which can lead partners to negatively evaluate each other as

mates (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). This internalization can influence dyadic relations; in a study of 98

Black inner-city couples, Taylor & Zhang (1990) provided data that showed that distressed

African American married couples were more likely to endorse negative racial stereotypes of

African Americans than were non-distressed couples. In addition, Kelly & Floyd (2006)

conducted a quantitative study of 93 married African American couples and found that the

endorsement of negative African American stereotypes was inversely associated with marital

trust and marital adjustment for husbands. "Immersion" racial identity attitudes, which represent conflicting positive and negative views of African Americans, were also associated with lower marital trust for husbands' relationship adjustment.

This relationship between internalized images and dyadic relations highlights the importance of trust within African American couples, and the distinctive issues that trust may bring up for men, because trust and adjustment were only moderately related to each other for men, but strongly correlated for women (Kelly & Floyd, 2006). Trust is particularly hampered within African American dyadic relationships because of the multiple external strains that they face (Kelly & Floyd, 2001). Without trust there cannot be true emotional intimacy, thus mistrust is arguably the most significant threat to intimacy. To examine the origins of this mistrust in African American couples, Simons, Simons, Lei, & Landor (2012) used longitudinal data from a sample of 400 African American young adults and found a relationship between persistent childhood exposure to race-related stressful events, including discrimination and community crime, and distrusting relational schemas. These distrustful views about relationships were found to increase the probability of conflict-ridden romantic relationships into emerging adulthood, which promote more negative views of marriage. This data thus illustrates how the mistrust that may develop within African American relationships can be fostered from an early age (Simons et al., 2012). With respect to how stereotypes may be internalized and expressed, stereotypes can be conveyed in either an explicit or an implicit manner. Explicit or overt stereotypes are directly stated or overtly expressed beliefs that members of a particular group share some characteristic, such as stating, "African American males are players (gigolos or playboys)." However, much research has explored implicit stereotypes, or the unconscious internalization of attitudes about a group and how they might have the potential to drive behavior. For example, individuals who

implicitly endorse stereotypes about African Americans may be quicker to react to stereotype words when primed with the word BLACK (Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997)

Research that focuses on the "deficit" model of African American couples perpetuates the vilification of African American relationships (Marks et al., 2008). It is therefore necessary to promote a strengths-based approach emphasizing the cultural strengths and resiliency that African American couples display despite the manifold threats to intimacy that they face. Several strengths unique to African American culture include family and community support, religious and spiritual belief systems, and positive ethnic identity (LaTaillade, 2006). Positive racial identity can act as a protective factor for African Americans, for instance, adolescent racial identity has been found to protect against negative outcomes with respect to substance use and sexual behaviors (Wills et al., 2007). These unique strengths that African Americans bring to dyadic relationships may help couples maintain a sense of intimacy and promote we-ness rather than divisiveness, despite the structural and cultural barriers that African Americans face (e.g. Bell, Bouie & Baldwin, 1990; Phillips, Wilmoth, & Marks, 2012).

As an example of the strengths that promote positive African American relationships, Marks et al. (2008) interviewed thirty couples with "happy, enduring" marriages (average length 26 years), and noted several themes that arose in these couples' discussions of their marriage. First, many couples noted the theme of challenges that arose within African American marriages, such as work-family balance, violence related to "the street life," and giving out support to families. These challenges are all related to the aforementioned structural issues Black couples face, such as the need for dual incomes, and often living in low-income communities due to housing disparities. As such, their families face these issues too which necessitates monetary and emotional support. The second theme, arising from these noted challenges, was the ability to

overcome external challenges by relying on each other, using their spouse as a source of strength. The couples also discussed the ability to resolve intramarital conflict; they cited the importance of communicating and often turned to faith as a marital resource. Finally, the partners discussed the importance of unity for marriage, in which the partners complement each other. This theme related to the religious notion of being "equally yoked," with a unified family vision. It is noteworthy that enduring African American marriages seem to have endured many stressors, but their dyadic reaction to these stressors provided strength to the relationship (Marks et al., 2008).

Although prior research elucidates several factors that affect African American intimacy and marital outcomes, we know little about how African American couples interact with each other around race, and how they speak with each other about these elements that threaten intimacy. Prior research has shown that the words couples use may provide information about intimacy and the quality of their relationships. In particular, as individuals become intimate, they begin to adopt a "relational focus," and include one another in their cognitive representation of the self (Aron et al., 2004). We-ness refers to the interpersonal entity in a couple that is greater than the sum of its parts; the identity that each partner establishes in relationship to the other. This experience of we-ness is a psychological construct that conveys itself in the language that forms the bond between partners (Reid, Dalton, Laderoute, Doell, & Nguyen, 2006).

For example, Buehlman et al. (1992) examined the constructs of we-ness and separateness in the way couples described their relationship during an oral history interview. The authors found that schemas of we-ness were associated with more positive and less negative behaviors and lower levels of autonomic nervous system activity during recorded couple interactions. The findings from this study have particularly important implications because

Buehlman et al. (1992) attempted to predict divorce using observed constructs in the oral history interview, and found that both husbands' and wives' lack of we-ness during the oral history interview can indicate whether a couple will divorce. In fact, couples that eventually divorced were low in we-ness, in addition to displaying high negativity, chaos, and disappointment of the marriage, and low levels of glorifying the struggles that they had encountered together. Partners low on we-ness may not feel intimate with their spouse, and may be unable to communicate because of extremely divergent viewpoints or perceptions about relationship problems. Furthermore, using systemic constructivist couple therapy (SCCT), Reid et al. (2006) found that therapy-induced increases in we-ness corresponded to increases in relationship satisfaction. The authors defined thinking in terms of we-ness as including two components: a diminished tendency to think of one's partner as completely different from one's self, and an increased tendency to think of the couple as a single unit. Couples who talk using we-ness show integration of their partner's viewpoints and a lessening of primacy to their own experience. However, the research conducted by Buehlman et al. (1992) and Reid et al. (2006) was conducted with predominantly White couples.

Additional research has connected linguistic patterns during relationship interactions to relationship quality, satisfaction, commitment and intimacy. In examining frequency of first-person plural pronouns (e.g. we, us) during a conflict-resolution discussion in married couples, Simmons et al. (2005) found that spouses who used more first-person plural pronouns produced more positive problem solutions. Seider, Hirschberger, Nelson, and Levenson (2009) found that greater we-ness during a 15-minute conflict conversation was associated with interactions characterized by high levels of positive emotional behavior, low levels of negative emotional behavior, and low levels of cardiovascular activity. Williams-Baucom et al. (2010) discuss

linguistic patterns in marital interactions, and links between pronoun use and relationship

satisfaction. With respect to we-ness, the authors found that distressed couples used fewer we-

focus pronouns, and that we-focus pronouns were associated with greater positivity and lower

negativity observed within the interactions. Finally, in a study of word use in instant messages,

use of *we* was unrelated to relationship satisfaction or stability (Slatcher, Vazire & Pennebaker,

2008). The authors discuss how context may play a role; use of *we* during daily interactions

compared to within descriptions of the relationship may not tap into cognitive interdependence.

In addition, links have been found between the use of separateness-related pronouns

(I/me/you). Simmons et al. (2005) found that the use of *I* words but not *we* words was related to

greater relationship satisfaction, and the use of *you* was related to negativity. This study posits

support for the use of *I* statements during problem-solving discussions. In the study conducted by

Seider et al. (2009), separateness words (*me/you*) were associated with more dissatisfied

marriages. Williams-Baucom et al. (2010) found that distressed couples used more you and me-

focused pronouns than non-distressed couples. Additionally, there were differences in the

associations between *I*-focus pronouns and relationship satisfaction such that in distressed

couples, *I* pronouns were positively associated with relationship satisfaction, whereas in non-

distressed couples, *I* pronouns were negatively associated with satisfaction. The authors suggest

that *I*-focus pronouns may have different functions in the context of problem solving for couples

with differing levels of distress. This information could provide preliminary support for

communication interventions that teach distressed couples to use *I* statements, rather than *you*

statements when interacting with each other (Williams-Baucom et al., 2010).

Although there is evidence that pronoun use is related to relationship outcomes, all of the

foregoing research on linguistic patterns in couples has been conducted with predominantly

White samples, so it is necessary to examine whether the findings are consistent with samples of African American couples. In addition, pronoun use takes on additional meanings when considering couples' discussions of racial topics. For instance, *we* and *they* may connote racial in-groups and out-groups. *I* and *you* may involve a comparison and reconciliation of experiences and opinions or it may signify a critical view of the partner in the context of opposite-sex stereotypes. The latter *I* versus *you* context represents an enactment of the aforementioned barriers to intimacy. Therefore, an understanding of the words that couples use during race-themed discussions can provide insight into the unique marital dynamics of Black couples. That is, how do African American couples discuss disagreements that involve these factors, and in what ways do these interactions reflect unique themes?

The current study contributes to the existing literature by combining an exploration of language use with an exploration of race in African American couples to examine the way in which African American couples discuss race, using a mixed methods approach. The quantitative aspect of the study looks to examine whether the amount of we-ness within a couple interaction is related to relationship satisfaction across the sample. The qualitative section of the study seeks to examine in-depth the racial themes relevant to intimacy as well as the extent to which each couple navigates a sense of we-ness through their discussion of these themes. Specifically, the present study will examine what *we* can mean in a racialized context, such as the various ingroup/outgroup meanings that *we* vs. *they* can imply. In addition, throughout these discussions, I expect couples to address the aforementioned threats to intimacy and a sense of we-ness to varying degrees, which will be conveyed in their discussions both by actual use of the word *we* and by efforts to understand the other's perspective.

B. Specific Hypotheses and Predictions

First examining the quantitative element of the study, I hypothesize that use of *we* pronouns (*we, our, us*) will be positively correlated with relationship satisfaction in the sample of couples, compared to "separateness" pronouns including *I*, *me* and *you,* which I hypothesize will be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Despite the fact that Williams-Baucom et al., (2010) found that *I* operated in a complex fashion across distressed and non-distressed couples, I still hypothesize that the pronoun *I*, combined with the other "separateness" pronouns will be associated with lower satisfaction, because the sample falls largely in the non-distressed range, and Williams-Baucom et al., (2010) found that in non-distressed couples, I pronouns were negatively associated with satisfaction. With respect to the qualitative examination, I will examine how couples navigate we-ness to varying degrees across the themes that represent threats to intimacy in African American couple relationships, and explore the aforementioned themes detailing what *we* can mean in a racialized context.

Chapter II: Method

A. Participants

Participants were a community sample of 26 African American couples. The participants represented a convenience sample recruited from organizations with Black members in New Jersey and Georgia, and recordings and transcripts from the couples were acquired and used for a prior study currently being conducted at the Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. Eligible couples are adults in committed relationships lasting six months or longer. The mean age of participants was 37.4 years ($SD = 13.3$) for males and 34.9 years ($SD = 12.5$) for females.

B. Procedures

Each couple received an adapted eight-minute problem-solving task (Floyd, 2004) aimed to assess how African American couples address racial differences. The couple was instructed to choose their own issue or pick from a list of race-related issues including: different ideas as Black mothers and fathers about child rearing in a White society, differences in racial views such as how Black people should behave, disagreements about how to deal with racism or whether racism happened to one member, or expressing negative stereotypes or complaints about each other. The couple was asked to discuss their chosen issue and resolve their disagreement during the eight-minute timespan.

C. Plan of Analyses/Measures

Marital adjustment. Each spouse completed the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). This 32-item measure of marital quality is widely used and has well-established norms,

and validity, and reliability in distinguishing distressed from non-distressed spouses (Carey,

Spector, Lantinga, & Krauss, 1993; South, Krueger, & Iacono, 2009).

      Coding and text analysis. Following verbatim transcription of the problem-solving task

from the recordings, for the prior study, interviews were analyzed using open coding, and for the

current dissertation they will be analyzed further using axial coding (Fassinger, 2005). Open

coding consists of analyzing the transcribed interviews line by line, identifying concepts in the

data. Open coding was performed independently during the prior study. Axial coding consists of

looking for interconnections between recurring themes along the specific dimensions of we-ness

and separateness within the interviews. Specifically, for the current study, this entails first

highlighting common themes in the race-based discussions. Next, the axial coding includes

further analysis of the open coding within these overarching themes to determine common

manifestations of we-ness and separateness, discussed further below.

      Language data reduction. Undergraduate research assistants separately counted the total

number of we-words, me-words (I/me), and you-words spoken by the male and female partner in

each transcript. Their final counts were compared to determine accuracy, and differences were

reconciled with author counts. Two language variables were created for each spouse. The total

number of we-words divided by the total number of words spoken was treated as a we-ness

variable. The total number of me-words plus the total number of you-words divided by the total

number of words spoken was treated as a separateness variable.

      Plan of analyses. Pearson correlations between individuals' pronoun use and marital

satisfaction (DAS) will be conducted to determine whether a significant relationship exists

between we-ness or separateness and relationship satisfaction within the sample. With respect to

the qualitative element of analysis, I will use grounded theory (Fassinger, 2005) to examine

specific codes associated with we-ness and codes associated with separateness across the transcript to denote how different dyads navigate discussions about race in ways conveying togetherness versus separateness.

Specifically, Gottman (1999) describes how the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling, are the strongest predictors of relationship instability and dissolution. He also proposes several antidotes for working to eliminate the Four Horsemen in a relationship. Criticism is defined as stating a problem as a deficit in a partner's character or personality. The antidote to criticism includes complaining without blame by using I statements paired with a positive need. Defensiveness is defined as self-protection in the form of righteous indignation or innocent victimhood in efforts to ward off perceived attack. The antidote involves accepting responsibility for one's part in the conflict. Contempt is defined as utilizing statements that come from a relative position of superiority, and can include sarcasm, name-calling, or direct insults, and the antidote is to build a culture of appreciation and respect. Finally, stonewalling is defined as emotional disengagement from the interaction and the antidote is to practice self-soothing, often in the form of a planned break from discussion. I will examine the codes used throughout the transcripts for those that fall into any of these four markers of relationship distress (e.g. partner criticism, partner unfair, cross-complaint, siding with others against partner). These four characteristics of negative couple conversation will be a proxy for "separateness" in the context of the racial discussions. The codes that fall into the antidotes will serve as a proxy for we-ness within racial conversations (e.g. partner perspective integration, self-sooth, comparing partner favorably with self, compliment partner, empathy). This will also include codes that convey the Reid et al. (2006) conception of we-ness as integration of their partner's viewpoints and a lessening of primacy to their own experience, as this represents an

operational definition of we-ness. Coding definitions based on the horsemen, the antidotes, and Reid et al. (2006)'s conception are outlined in Table 4. The examination of these expressions of separateness and togetherness across the transcripts will provide an illustration of preliminary "masters" and "disasters" (Gottman & Gottman, 2008) of racial discussions, and will provide insight into clear discussion patterns that likely represent positive and negative interactions. This examination will also illustrate which racial themes and structural barriers (e.g. stereotypes, gender roles, structural barriers) promote the highest level of separateness and we-ness.

I will also examine how the horsemen look across the aforementioned racial topics. Therefore, the overall goal of this qualitative examination is to illustrate how common patterns from couples research are manifest in unique ways within African American couples' cultural context.

Chapter III: Results

A. Quantitative Analyses

　　Relationship satisfaction. Mean relationship satisfaction was 109.1 (SD = 15.76) for

males and 108.2 (SD = 15.22) for females on a scale of 0 to 151, which indicates that they are

non-distressed, on average (Table 1).

　　Pronouns. See Table 2 for the means and standard deviations from linguistic analyses of

transcripts. There were no significant differences between male and female partners for the use

of *we* or *I/you* pronouns, and couples used *I/you* far more frequently than we. As shown in Table

3, neither males' nor females' use of *we* was significantly related to either partner's reported

relationship satisfaction. Women and men's combined use of *I/you* was significantly and

positively related to females' relationship satisfaction, but not males' relationship satisfaction.

Males' use of *I/you* was also significantly and positively related to their female partners'

satisfaction, but not to their own. Finally, there was a trend that females' use of *I/you* also

positively was related to their own satisfaction, and this relationship was significant only at the

0.1 level.

B. Qualitative Analyses

　　A wide variety of race-related topics were discussed across the sample. The themes that

appeared to be most prominent, which will be analyzed in further detail below, included

discussions of in-group criticisms and stereotypes (*n* = 12), discussions of children/child rearing

and racial socialization (*n* = 9), and disagreements regarding cultural values and norms,

particularly relating to religion (*n* = 6). There was some overlap between these themes, such as

within a discussion about teaching children about stereotypes, and thus n represents the number

of times the theme appeared at least once. Thus the tally is greater than the 26 couples in the

study. Because the couples were explicitly asked to speak about race, issues of racism and racial

stressors arise both within and in addition to the aforementioned themes, and will be addressed

throughout the analyses. Moreover, specific quotes will be used to illustrate the findings, the

open coding used in the prior study will be presented in bold next to the statement within the

quote that represents the code, and the horseman, antidote, or the Reid et al. (2006) definition

will be presented in brackets. The couples (n=14) who provided the excerpts below are listed in

order of the themes presented below and by separateness or we-ness in Table 6. This table lists

couples in the order that they occur below. Table 7 shows all couples in the sample (n=26) in

numerical order, the theme it falls into, and whether it has been included as an excerpt.

In addition, several clear patterns of potential positive and negative ways of discussing

race emerged (Table 5), which will be explained in detail with examples from transcripts, and

italicized below when they are discussed. Positive patterns across themes included: discussing a

stereotype and differentiating one's partner (e.g. providing evidence that the partner is unlike the

stereotype), including context to soften negatives (e.g. expressing how shared sociocultural

factors explain stereotypes), positively reframing stereotypes (e.g. demonstrating how a

seemingly negative race-related trait may have been adaptive), race-based compliments (e.g.

highlighting a positive partner quality related to race), complaining about realities without blame,

compliments about positive child rearing, compromise over child rearing, and a respectful

exchange of perspectives toward agreement. Negative patterns within stereotype discussions

included specifically incorporating the partner into a stereotype (racialized criticism), race-

gender criticisms (e.g. explaining an opposite-gender partner's negative qualities using stereotype about individuals of partner's gender and race), criticism of partner's actions (e.g. actions confirm stereotype). Negative patterns within child rearing/racial socialization discussions included criticism of partner's racial socialization (e.g. suggestion that partner is wrong within a disagreement over how to socialize children), and criticism of partner's child rearing decisions based on racial factors. Negative patterns within discussions of religion included disrespect over religious mismatch (e.g. criticism about partner's choices/actions related to religion). Given that there was some overlap of the major themes, some of these patterns occurred across themes, and some patterns were unrelated to specific themes, such as refusal to consider partner's perspective over a race-based issue (Table 5).

  Stereotypes. It is important to examine the ways in which stereotypes arise in African American couples conversations, as this appeared to be one of the most prominent themes within the discussions. In addition, this theme is particularly important in the context of whether it unifies or divides couples during their discussions because the idea of "stereotypes" has a particularly negative connotation. This is consistent with the predominant stereotypes relevant to African American couples, defined above and in Figure 2. As discussed above, research has shown a distinction between explicit and implicit stereotypes. However, several partners in this sample do not directly state the stereotype, but instead appear to knowingly and overtly use adjectives that imply a stereotype. In the example of males as players, the speaker might instead state, "African American males are sneaky in relationships." This is in contrast to implicit stereotypes, which have been widely studied (e.g. Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009). Implicit stereotypes act outside of conscious awareness. For example, even if one might say that men and women are equally good at math, this person may be more likely to hire a male

for a math-related position without being fully aware of this reasoning. The scope of this study

does not cover implicit attitudes.

   Separateness. Several of the couples in the sample exhibited a broad pattern of *racialized*

criticism in which partners integrated negative stereotypes into partner criticism, one of the four

horsemen. Further, it is particularly important to examine the instances of *race-gender*

stereotypes, a subtype of *racialized criticism,* in these conversations. The use of gender-based

stereotypes as a criticism contains an implicit *I/you* emphasis, as if stating that all African

Americans of *your* gender are negative in this way, and *I* (the partner speaking) include *you* in

that stereotype. This implication directly contradicts a sense of we-ness between partners.

Emphasizing this gendered point of difference between partners rather than emphasizing race as

a shared factor would seem to signify an attitude of separateness. For example, in the excerpt

below (couple #4), the male partner summarizes the general concept of race-gender criticism,

through the application of the gender stereotype "ghetto" to his partner:

> M: you know what, there are things about you that I don't like (**confrontation, anger or frustration**)…the way you talk I told you that already. (**partner criticism**) [**horseman: criticism**]
> F: how do I talk? (**elicit partner criticism**)
> M: like how you say things. The way you come across with your ideas.
> F: like sounding disrespectful?
> M: Yes. Acting ghetto. (**partner criticism, stereotype acceptance/application**) [**criticism**]
> F: No, it is not… (**statement of disagreement**) [**defensiveness**]

This couple also uses another subtype of *racialized criticism,* in which the male partner *labels*

specific actions done by his partner (e.g. "how you say things. The way you come across with

your ideas") as evidence for confirming a stereotype. Another male partner below (couple #7)

also exhibits partner criticism based on stereotypes:

> M: you know as well as I know that you do have an attitude problem (**partner criticism**)…I disagree with like some of the ways you go about…how you express your attitude (**partner criticism**)…[**horseman: criticism**]
> W: So what do you disagree with…I have an attitude with certain people because they have an attitude with me (**perspective justification**) [**defensiveness**]
> M: I think you just skip right over that and you go straight to…Is it something that's uncontrollable for you? (**partner criticism**) [**criticism**]

> W: No I think that it something that everyone, everyone disagrees with certain things…I'm allowed to be annoyed (**feeling misunderstood, perspective justification**) **[defensiveness]**
> M: You shouldn't get annoyed as easily. (**partner criticism**) **[criticism, contempt]**
> W: Well what if I can't? (**perspective justification**) **[defensiveness]**

Though this male partner does not overtly mention the race-based stereotype in the way that the previous couple utilized "ghetto" as a criticism, he uses an *implied stereotype* within a partner criticism. Specifically, the aforementioned "ghetto" stereotype of African American females being aggressive, mean or angry is implied in his use of the phrase "attitude problem." This example includes all *racialized criticism* subtypes of *implied stereotype, race-gender stereotype,* and *labeling partner's actions as confirming stereotype.* Thus this excerpt again implies separateness rather than we-ness. At the end of the excerpt, the female partner also displays defensiveness, including *righteous indignation* and innocent victimhood, with her final statement above. Thus this couple displays two of Gottman's (1999) four horsemen (criticism and defensiveness) within a few minutes of discussion. Finally, the couple below (couple #18) provides an example of a the male partner discussing the stereotype of African American women as controlling, stating that "black women like to be controlling and domineering in all aspects of the relationship…[they] tend to be much more domineering, much more opinionated and outspoken" (**gender criticism, criticism of in-group, stereotype acceptance/application**). He then applies this *racialized criticism* to his partner below (*race-gender stereotype)*:

> M: Yes. Sure you're opinionated and outspoken about things. Yes. Absolutely. (**partner criticism**) **[horseman: criticism]**
> W: Like what? (**request elaboration**)
> M: On certain topics. (**recall struggle**)
> W: Well you have to give me a –
> M: I can't think of any. It's just…
> W: You probably can't because there aren't any. (**partner criticism**) **[defensiveness]**

Like the previous couple, the female partner exhibits race-based defensiveness through the pattern of *righteous indignation* and *refusal to incorporate partner's view* in her final statement.

It may seem a natural response to be defensive when one's partner applies a negative race-gender stereotype to him or her, but given that defensiveness is one possible indicator of relationship instability (Gottman, 1999), the pattern displayed in these two excerpts indicate couple separateness. Therefore, this pattern of criticism and defensiveness in a race-based context may be a dangerous cycle for African American couple stability.

     We-ness. If couples are able to acknowledge negative stereotypes and differentiate their partner from the negative traits contained in race-gender stereotypes by showing appreciation and respect (antidote to contempt), this may be one way that a couple can utilize stereotypes towards couple unity. This pattern is exhibited below when one couple (couple #13) is exploring the stereotype of African American men as "players:"

> M: My child left since I met you. I don't feel like messing with these other girls. I don't. (they laugh) Why you giving me that look like you been messing with everyone… Oh you think I do**? (humor, compliment partner, clarification) [antidote: complain without blame; Reid: primacy of relationship over self]**
> F: But nah, I don't think that about you. I don't. I really have faith in you. I do. **(compliment partner) [culture of appreciation and respect]**
> M: That's good. **(partner perspective validation)**

Within this excerpt, the female partner not only *differentiates her partner from a negative stereotype*, she also utilizes a positive affirmation to communicate faith in her partner and his commitment to the relationship, which conveys we-ness. The male partner above also displays the antidote to criticism, which is to *complain without blame*. He notes that his child left since the current relationship began, but does not appear to demonstrate animosity toward his partner.

     In an example of another couple (couple #3) discussing the stereotype of African American women as controlling, male partner attempts to *include context into the discussion to justify the gender stereotype* by stating:

> M: I think women have a harder time being out here in society on their own because they're female and people try to run over them and take advantage of them. And for my role…I always try to help them to what's happening or either try to back them up in a lot of cases. (**empathy, life hardship, perspective justification, protection impulse) [antidote: culture of appreciation and respect, Reid: empathic anticipation of partner's experience]**

F: That's you. You're unique honey. **(compliment partner, warmth to partner) [culture of appreciation and respect]**

The female then exhibits a similar pattern to the couple above, where she *shows warmth* to her

partner by pointing out how he is different from other males (*differentiate partner)* in a positive

way. In this case, the male partner is expressing understanding rather than criticism and

implicitly demonstrating support for his female partner. The female partner positively reinforces

her partner's perspective by showing warmth and complimenting him for his unique attitude

towards her and towards African American females. This pattern (soften stereotype resulting in

showing warmth) seems to contrast with the pattern of criticism and defensiveness and thus

conveys reciprocity of we-ness.

Another male partner (couple #14) invokes context when discussing the stereotype of

Black women as controlling. He states how:

M: A strong Black woman has the enthusiasm and decency to go out there and be independent **(stereotype acceptance/application)…** think I don't have a problem with that stereotype right there that um black woman is too controlling, it's for a reason because black woman do go through a lot with um abuse **[antidote: culture of appreciation and respect]**
F: Yea, they be stuck with babies, men walking out **(gender criticism, stereotype acceptance, life hardship)**
M: Men cheating you know, baby fathers walking out. They go through a lot, a lot…I don't have a problem with a black woman being controlling and don't need a man, you know if its for the better, hey, I'm with you a hundred percent. **(Black pride, stereotype acceptance, necessity based nontraditional role)**
F: Do all black men have foreheads? **(laughter, friendly banter, humor)**

This couple discusses stereotypes in a less critical way by *positively reframing stereotypes* as

strengths in the face of hardships, rather than accepting the negative aspects of the stereotype at

face value. Specifically, the male partner *positively reframes* the stereotype of black women as

controlling by *including the context* of the adversity that some African American women have

faced. At the conclusion of the discussion, the female partner illustrates humor, illustrating a

pattern of how positive interactions can evoke further positive statements in couple

communication. Both partners do apply stereotypes to males throughout the contextual

discussion, but neither applies stereotypes to their partner in a critical way.

Children and child rearing. Race-related themes are very important in the context of child rearing, since the values that are transmitted to children are culture-bound. The constructive discussion of race in the context of raising children and racial socialization is necessarily connected to successful parenting, which is likely related to couple satisfaction.

Separateness. One couple (couple #16) demonstrates an intersection of the aforementioned stereotype-based criticism with parenting, in the context of how children will view their opposite-gender parent. The female partner sets the theme of the discussion by asserting her feelings about her partner's stereotype application with respect to her parenting style. The male partner then confirms this belief and criticizes his female partner for acting in line with certain stereotypes (*race-gender stereotype*) and thus setting a poor example of Black females for their sons though her behavior (*criticism of partner's racial socialization*):

> W: Oh. Make me inflammatory. Okay I believe that you are hard on Black women and I get very upset because you say there are things that I do that if I want my sons to marry black women that I shouldn't do. So you shouldn't act that way and you imply that only black women act that way and if you don't act that way which is attached to being a black woman then our sons won't see it as something negative. So if our sons select someone to marry outside of the race it'll be because I portrayed negative things as a black woman **(gender defending, partner criticism, anger or frustration, hurt, stereotype refute) [horsemen: criticism, defensiveness]**
> M: I knew what you were going to say …Step one is you are a black woman umm step two is our sons see a lot of negative stereotypes on television and so they see that you already highlight it and step three is that when we have a certain type of discourse that is negative and fits into a stereotype it will be a bell that rings in their head and says 'my mother is a black woman, this is a stereotype that she's fitting, hence all women feel this way.' …[and think] 'Ah it must be true.' **(lack of empathy, partner criticism, stereotype acceptance, marshaling evidence) [criticism]**
> F: I think that's unfair **(stereotyped, stereotype refute, protection impulse) [defensiveness]**

His tone is noticeably accusatory, while the female partner's opening and final statement display defensiveness *through righteous indignation* and *feeling misunderstood by stereotype application*. This discourse conveys separateness, rather than an effort to present a united and supportive front when parenting, and again demonstrates the pattern of criticism and defensiveness displayed by several couples above

One couple (couple #27) also clearly demonstrates separateness when discussing the topic of the female partner staying home to care for children. The male displays criticism, in his original statement, "you started out the conversation wrong," and he demonstrates *criticism of his partner's child rearing choices* throughout the discussion. The partners also show defensiveness in the pattern of "summarizing self syndrome" in which partners continue restating their own position in a standoff rather than attempt to validate their partner's point of view (Gottman, Notarius, Gonso, & Markman, 1976):

> M: I think it's a monetary issue, you started out the conversation wrong [**horseman: criticism**] because it's a monetary issue
> F: Well, if it, well I know it's a monetary issue, that's why I gotta go back to work (**partner criticism**)
> M: But spending, nah, everybody should be working (**perspective justification**)
> F: Why (**request elaboration**)
> M: Because
> F: I don't have a problem, I just feel if we were in a financial situation, I would like to stay home and take care of the baby for a minimum of one year, no more than two years, I mean a year or two. (**perspective justification**)
> M: If we were in a financial situation, I'd still say no. (**statement of difference or disagreement**) [**defensiveness, summarizing self syndrome**]
> F: And then if we wanna have another [child] in the next two years (**request elaboration**)
> M: Yea right (**sarcasm**) [**contempt**]

In addition, the male partner above utilizes unilateral I-based decision-making when he states, "If it were a financial situation, I'd still say no." However, this may also serve as an example of a couple with traditional gender ideals, where the male serves as decision-maker. Finally, the male partner's final statement of "Yeah right" displayed contempt through use of *sarcasm*.

Finally, one couple (couple #17) conveys separateness in a discussion of whether and how to teach children directly about race and racism or let them learn themselves. when the male partner (couple #17) *criticizes the female's parenting style* below:

> M: I always have issues with the way you're trying to raise (Daughter) because I think you're trying to raise her into that tough kid …I think you're trying to project your personality upon the kids. You want (Daughter) to be like you, a no nonsense, tough, karate type, you know stay away from people…which is not her personality. She's more friendly…That always irks you and to me…I think to me that's just accepting who she is and allowing her to be herself. (**partner oversight, partner criticism, discrimination identification**) [**horseman: criticism**]

This couple bases their points of view on their divergent past personal experiences, below, but

rather than expressing a stance of openness to one's partner's perspective, the male starts the

discussion off on a critical tone.

> F: Well with, (Daughter), my thing is…she goes the school she's in, she's the only Black child in the class…she's thinking she's everybody's friend and…if you listen to her when she tells her story…you can kind of take out the real story in it…they would say little comments that you and I would clearly know [as being race related]…she feels like she can trust but that's not the world we live in. (**parental vigilance, protection impulse, discrimination identification**)
> M: Why do we have to remind her of those things? I think there are some lessons best taught through experiences…My father never sat me down to teach me…you can teach her…but let her make those decisions not based on your own experiences (**personal historical context, perspective sharing, partner criticism**) [**criticism**]
> F:…I would have appreciated if somebody were there to make sure I had my guards up. (**personal historical context**)

> *We-ness.* In contrast to the couples above, one couple (couple #2) provides an example of

we-ness within a discussion of how to discipline children, based on differences in the partners'

upbringings. It is notable that this couple's discussion includes numerous "I" statements; rather

than using "I" in a divisive way, the partners come to an understanding using perspective sharing

and integration, and drawing from personal historical contexts:

> W: See…well with me and you as far as our kids are concerned, it's some things that I disagreed on with what you would not do, what I would have done but to keep peace I went along with it. But however our children turned out real good we didn't have no problems with them, but the thing is you were the talker you was the one that was soft spoken and you thought…well you did pretty good in that category. You knew how to talk to them where I was a yeller and a screamer (**accommodate to partner or compromise, compliment partner, compare partner favorably to self**) [**antidotes: complain without blame, accept responsibility, culture of appreciation and respect**]
> M: I didn't make idle threats I just explained to them how it should be and how it was going to be (**teach or help partner**)
> W: And they listened to you, but I can come back there and say…and scream at me... (**compare partner favorably with self**)
> M: Well I figure once you start screaming you've lost a person (**teach or help partner**)
> W: Well that's true…(**partner perspective integration, statement of agreement**) [**Reid: integration of viewpoints**]

This couple demonstrates disagreement but still exhibits we-ness above as the female partner

demonstrates the antidote to the horsemen of complaining without blame when she states that she

disagreed with some of her partner's choices, but follows that statement with a *compliment of his*

parenting abilities. Her statement acknowledges how the partners may have had different

parenting styles, but ultimately had success raising their children together (*compromise in child-rearing*). She also accepts responsibility for sometimes screaming at the children, another antidote. Throughout the excerpt both partner's also display the antidote of showing appreciation and respect as well as integration of one's partner's viewpoints which is part of the Reid et al. (2006) we-ness definition.

Several couples' conversations centered on the theme of childrearing and racial socialization and how it intersects with racism, racial stress, or racial identity. Another couple (couple #21) discusses interracial relationships in the context of their children. This couple demonstrates we-ness with the antidote of expressing a culture of appreciation and respect, as seen when male exhibits a *race based compliment* toward his partner below:

> M: I think you just shouldn't limit the caste of your happiness and you should look at that. I lucked out by meeting a beautiful Black woman, an African American woman. (**compliment partner**) [**antidote: culture of appreciation and respect**]
> W: It wasn't luck. (**statement of disagreement**)
> M: It wasn't luck. I was blessed to meet you. (laughs) And glad that I did. (**compliment partner, accommodate to partner**) [**culture of appreciation and respect**]

In the additional excerpt below from the same couple (#21), they remain consistent in conveying we-ness in their interaction because they come to a *compromise over child rearing* and respectfully come to a decision by the end of their discussion. They demonstrate Reid et al.'s (2006) we-ness definitions of integration of viewpoints, and recognizing the primacy of the relationship over their own needs as they ultimately agree on being happy for their children regardless of their choice of mate:

> W: It's not up to us anyway with our kids. It's gonna be who they prefer. You know, that's the compromise. (**interracial relationships, compromise**)
> M: OK, and that's fine. We just don't want them to – I hope that where you and I can be in agreement, is that we don't want them to be afraid of meeting people and learning to get along with folks (**interracial relationships, perspective justification**) [**Reid: integration of viewpoints**]
> ...
> W: So on that big day of the wedding or whatever, no matter what nationality their mates are, we should be happy for them? (**clarification**) [**Reid: primacy of relationship over self**]
> M: I want to be happy for my children. I want them to make good selections. (**nonracial contextual factors noted**)

> W: Bottom line, if (name) or (name) came in with someone other than an African American, eventually I would embrace them I suppose. Because of their personality, not because of their color. (**partner perspective integration, humor) [Reid: integration of viewpoints]**

Additionally, while several couples alluded to themes of racism in their discussions of stereotypes and childrearing, only one couple (couple #1) in this sample chose to discuss a lived experience of racism. This couple chose to discuss their differing perspectives on the same incident and explore whether racism played a role, which applies to ideas of racial identity and racial socialization. The partners display we-ness, because they illustrate a *respectful exchange of perspectives*, and a reflection upon each partner's part in the discussion below:

> M: I was probably a little anxious and somewhat insecure **(perspective realignment, vulnerability shown to nonjudgmental partner)**
> F: It was something how each of us had a different response…You thought it was a racial situation and I thought it was somebody who might have been handicapped…**(perspective comparing, evaluating out-group person) [antidote: accept responsibility, culture of appreciation and respect; Reid: integration of viewpoints]**
> M: That's interesting now when I think about it…that's probably why I responded like that **(compromise, perspective justification, partner perspective validation) [Reid: integration of viewpoints]**

This couple demonstrates several antidotes to the four horsemen including taking responsibility for your feelings and perspectives as well as showing appreciation and respect for one's partner and his or her perspective. They also demonstrate an element of Reid et al.'s (2006) definition of we-ness – integration of viewpoints. In this excerpt the male partner *shows vulnerability* about his experience of racism, while taking responsibility for his response, and both partners respond positively to each other by *validating alterative perspectives*.

Religion/values. While religion represents a source of strength for many African American couples, the study participants illustrated how it can also be a divisive topic during couple discussions. Several couples from the sample chose to discuss topics relating to religion, and approached the topic in varying ways. In this small sample, there were no examples of couples that discussed religion in a unified way.

One couple (couple #10) chose to discuss a disagreement about church and religion,

particularly why there are so many more women than men in church. Their discussion indicates

separateness as the female partner uses a *gender-race-based criticism*, which implies that

African Americans of her partner's gender are negative in this way, and she includes him in that

stereotype:

> M: Why do you think there's so many more Black women in church than Black men? (**religious or spiritual reference, gender experiences, request elaboration**)
> W: Because Black men have issues with being told what to do. I mean Black men…(**gender criticism**)
> M: And why? Why? Why? (**request elaboration**) [**defensiveness**]
> W: I don't know if it's just Black men, but I've never been around a lot of White men, because you guys have issues just when you have to find a place you don't want to stop and let somebody tell you how to get there. You don't like being guided you like being in control. (**gender criticism**) [**horseman: criticism**]
> M: You don't mean me personally, but you mean…are you? Are you talking about the people that are in my type of church? (**clarification, elicit partner criticism**)
> W: Your type of people I'm talking about. People that don't like to be told what to do. (**gender criticism**) [**criticism**]

In this way, this excerpt reflects a similar pattern to many of the above discussions about

stereotypes within a discussion of religion. The female partner further emphasizes this point

when the she says, "your type of people I'm talking about" in response to the male partners

attempts to gain clarification. Rather than characterizing her partner as unique, the female partner

continues to group her partner in a general criticism of Black men. The statement "your type of

people" clearly illustrates the female partner separating herself from her male partner. Finally,

while the male partner is attempting to understand her criticism, he exhibits defensiveness,

another of the four horsemen, when he responds, "And why? Why? Why?" rather than

attempting to respectfully exchange perspectives or accept responsibility for any role in this

conflict.

Another couple (couple #11) also discusses religion in a divisive way. The couple seems

to display several of the four horsemen throughout their discussion below:

> W: You just have to respect the fact that I'm a Christian and there's certain things I want to do. Sometimes it doesn't hurt for you to do it with me. Like, going to church and not talking and acting like you really don't want to be there. (**partner criticism, partner unfair**) [**horsemen: contempt, criticism**]

> M: Well I really don't want to be there. (**perspective justification**) **[defensiveness]**
>   …
> W: Yeah, I'll just go to church and ignore you. You stand there with a smirk on your face and be a jackass. (**partner criticism**) **[contempt]**
> M: See now that's not right. (**partner unfair**)
> W: That's right. (**anger or frustration, statement of disagreement**) **[defensiveness]**

First, the female partner seems to express contempt when she states, "sometimes it doesn't hurt to do it with me. Like, going to church and not talking and acting like you don't want to be there," because she seems to convey some *sarcasm* and *a relative position of superiority*. In response, the male partner displays defensiveness as he responds, "Well I really don't want to be there." Later in the excerpt above, the female partner displays criticism and contempt, using name-calling, and then displays defensiveness when the male partner tries to justify his position. Finally, the most significant element that seems to make this couple stand out as an example of a discussion lacking we-ness is how the male partner criticizes the nature of the relationship itself in addition to criticizing his partner, below:

> M: I do feel like I'm holding back on myself a bit because there's a lit of stuff that I like to read and learn about and I know you don't want me to…I do feel like…you forcing some of what you want on me (**constraining partner, problem identification, partner unfair**) **[horseman: criticism]**
> F: Yes it is but I'm sick and tired of saying my point over and over again…(**anger and frustration, frequent complaint**)

In addition to displaying the horseman of criticism, the male partner's above statements seem to be in opposition to Reid et al.'s (2006) definition of we-ness that includes recognizing the primacy of the relationship over the self. In contrast to this concept, he is attempting to prioritize his own needs and sense of self over the relationship.

Chapter IV: Discussion

This study contributes to the literature by examining the way African American couples discuss race qualitatively and in their use of pronouns. No relationships were found between the use of *we* and relationship satisfaction, although *I* did have some association with satisfaction. Qualitatively, this study provided excerpts from transcripts to illustrate the how Black couples demonstrate we-ness and separateness across topics within race-theme problem-solving discussions. The themes that emerged represented high stakes area in the literature about relationship outcomes, including stereotypes, childrearing/racial socialization, and religion. The results of this study have important implications for demonstrating how mainstream couples research, such as Gottman & Gottman's (2008) horsemen manifest in unique ways for Black couples. The findings can also contribute to advances in both understanding the mechanisms behind race differences in relationship quality, and to better help Black couples navigate potentially difficult race-related topics.

Notably, the use of *we* pronouns was not related to couple satisfaction throughout the transcripts. These findings may be related to the task itself, discussed further in the limitations, or because *we* was used in various forms (e.g. we as a couple, as a race, or as a family of origin). When *we* is used to refer to one's race or family, rather than referring to the couple context, it seems that this would be unrelated to couple we-ness; however no clear patterns emerged within the analysis.

Some positive relationships were found between *I/you* pronouns and female partners' relationship satisfaction. These findings may support the usefulness of *I* pronouns in problem-solving discussions, which has some support in prior research (e.g. Simmons et al., 2005). The "disagreement and resolution" problem-solving task might lend itself more to exchange of

perspective (I think/you think) than to a discussion of the partners as a unit (we think), since the

latter would not fit the disagreement instructions. Because the task within the current study, like

the problem-solving task used by Simmons et al. (2005), encouraged each couple to discuss a

topic of disagreement, it would make sense that couples able to effectively share perspectives, an

I/you-based task, would report greater satisfaction. With respect to Gottman's Four Horsemen

discussed in the qualitative element of this study, the use of *I/you* pronouns in more satisfied

couples could be related to Gottman's proposed antidotes to criticism and defensiveness of

talking about your feelings using I-statements and taking responsibility for part of the conflict.

These uses of *I* are in line with the discussion task in this study. Further, this pattern may have

been more pronounced if *I* and you were measured separately, because while I-statements

represent taking responsibility and illustrating feelings, you statements may represent criticism

statements. Finally, Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson (1998) also found relationships

between relationship quality and whether males take in their wives' influence. This finding could

be illustrated in the pattern above, in which males are incorporating their female partner's I-

statements, and men's use of "you" may represent this incorporation of their wives' influence.

       The couples in this sample chose to discuss varying topics for the exercise, thus a

strength of this study is that one can see the way that positive and negative features are apparent

across multiple race-related themes for African American couples. In addition, since the

discussion task instructed couples to select a topic of disagreement, the findings highlight

popular race-based areas of contention among Black couples. Notable common theme categories

included stereotypes, childrearing and racial socialization, and religion. Consistent with the

literature (e.g. Kelly & Floyd, 2001, 2006), the emergence of these common themes suggests that

the manifold historical and structural barriers faced by Black couples must be successfully

navigated to promote intimacy. Therefore, the foregoing research findings of Gottman's (1999) four horsemen (criticism, defensiveness, contempt, stonewalling) and their antidotes can manifest in topics that are particularly important to African American couples. Furthermore, the prominent patterns that emerged within and across these themes highlight the unique ways that Black couples may demonstrate the patterns found in mainstream couples research (e.g. Gottman, 1999). Several overarching patterns across themes include the interaction traps that arise from stereotype application to one's partner, the potential for a pathway from racial criticism to defensiveness (two of the Four Horsemen), and the alternate potential for positive race-based affirmation to evoke further positive interaction. The unique implications for these patterns within in each specific theme will be described in further detail below. Drawing from the basis in couples research about the negative implications of endorsing negative stereotypes, it is likely that this would also apply when partners endorse these apply these negative stereotypes to their partner's parenting style.

A large number of the couples in the sample (12) incorporated stereotypes into their discussions, and several prominent patterns emerged about the ways that couples conveyed separateness or we-ness in stereotype discussions. First, it became apparent that stereotype application for several couples acted as a racialized version of criticism, one of Gottman's (1999) horsemen. Several subtypes of racialized criticism also emerged. The first subtype was race-gender criticism, in which one partner applies a stereotype that all African Americans of opposite gender are negative in this way, and conveys a message of "*I* (the partner speaking) include *you* in that stereotype." Other subtypes of racialized criticisms within stereotype discussions included labeling a partner's actions as fitting with a stereotype, and implying a racialized criticism without using the stereotype term. An interaction pattern emerged in several couples in which

use of a race-based criticisms led to partners' defensiveness. While it may seem a natural

response to be defensive when one's partner applies a negative stereotype to him or her, this

pattern of race-based criticism and defensiveness may be a dangerous cycle for African

American couple stability, given that defensiveness is one possible indicator of relationship

instability (Gottman, 1999). Therefore, this pattern indicates couple separateness.

In contrast to the above examples of the Four Horsemen in stereotype conversations,

several positive patterns emerged in couples that also discussed stereotypes. For example, several

couples included context in their discussion, which helped to either soften or positively reframe a

negative stereotype. As discussed above, stereotypes of African American individuals have

developed from a sociohistorical context. It may be helpful for couple unity in the face of

negative stereotypes if partners are aware of the shared sociocultural factors that have

contributed to negative societal attitudes towards African Americans. This understanding may

mitigate the harshness of gender-based stereotypes. Several partners exhibited a positive

interaction pattern in which including context or positively reframing a negative stereotype

results in a partner's display of appreciation or warmth. This seems to represent an opposing

pattern to the above negative pattern of criticism to defensiveness, and shows an example of

what couples can do well when faced with a race-based problem.

The above positive and negative stereotype-based patterns likely have consequences for

couple intimacy and satisfaction, which is in line with the ways in which stereotypes are

connected to relationship intimacy in the research. For example, research has shown how

distressed African American married couples were more likely than non-distressed couples to

endorse negative racial stereotypes of African Americans (Taylor & Zhang, 1990) and that the

endorsement and internalization of negative African American stereotypes was inversely

associated with marital trust and marital adjustment for husbands (Kelly & Floyd, 2006). In addition, the negative discussion patterns around stereotypes are consistent with Gillum's (2007) findings that Black men who endorsed stereotypes about Black women had less successful relationships. This research is in line with the idea of connecting "The Masters and Disasters" of race-based relationship conversations to stereotype endorsement and application. The findings that some couples discussed these stereotypes in a more unified, supportive way, are in line with some research findings that African Americans may critically approach stereotypical portrayals to recognize, contest, and oppose stereotypes that they believe demean themselves and other members of the black community (Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards, & Stevenson, 2014).

Like with stereotype discussions, the couples in the sample approached the themes of childrearing and racial socialization with varying degrees of separateness or we-ness. Within this theme, most of the couples' discussions included an intersection of race-related values and parenting, which connects to the idea of racial socialization. Certain couples chose to approach this theme by connecting stereotypes to parenting, and this interaction of themes often conveyed the above criticism to defensiveness pattern of separateness. Unique manifestations of the four horsemen also emerged from childrearing and racial socialization discussions. These included criticisms of one's partner's child-rearing or racial socialization decisions, and unilateral parenting decisions, which demonstrate stonewalling one's partner's perspective. Positive patterns within this theme included compromising on racial socialization, complimenting partner's parenting, and showing appreciation or respect toward the partner's choice and rationale. These patterns often arise from an exchange of sociocultural or historical experiences. Further, it is important to note how these positive patterns helped couples to navigate parenting disagreements while still exhibiting we-ness. We-ness does not require consistent agreement, and

it is likely that the aforementioned distinct personal histories have resulted in different opinions, particularly toward parenting.

Couple discussions illustrating the intersection between child rearing and race-related values are important because it is likely that the both the content and the tenor of messages between partners trickle down to children. The consequences of the above interaction patterns can also be linked to research on the links between child-rearing, socialization, racial identity, and numerous individual and couple-based outcomes. Research has shown how racial socialization is a critical parenting topic for African American parents (e.g. Dunbar, Perry, Cavanaugh, & Leerkes, 2015; Henry, Lambert & Bynum, 2015; Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006; McNeil Smith, Reynolds, Fincham, Beach, 2015), and thus the way that partners navigate the intersection between race and childrearing is important. Racial socialization is related to many important outcomes for children, such as emotional adaptation (Dunbar et al., 2015). Parents' racial socialization conversations can also contribute to children's racial identity, which is important because racial identity can act as a protective factor for adolescents, and can influence intimacy in the context of romantic relationships (Willis et al., 2007). While there is little research on the influence of co-parenting patterns on relationship satisfaction, particularly in relation to race, the couples who demonstrated we-ness within this theme are in line with Don, Biehle, & Mickelson's (2013) findings connecting perceived parenting agreement to relationship satisfaction for females. Therefore, parental consensus regarding racial socialization has implications for both the couple relationship and for children's adjustment.

No couples discussed religion in a positive way, but this may be due to the fact that couples were instructed to engage in a problem-focused exercise. It is likely that couples for

whom religion is a unifying factor would not choose to discuss it in this context. The findings for couples that discussed religion are contrary to Marks (2008) finding that couples use religion as a positive resource, and suggest that one must not assume that religious couples are automatically more satisfied in their relationships. Religion may act as a strength for many couples because it represents a shared meaning system and a shared positive activity for partners. However, as represented by the couples in this sample that discussed race in a more separate way, differing views on how partners ascribe meaning to religion and church-going could undermine the power of religion as a protective factor. Therefore, there may be limits to the positive effects of religion on relationship quality, which is consistent with Bryant, Wickrama, Bolland, Bryant, Cutrona & Stanik (2010)'s discussion of how level of mismatch in religiosity may adversely effect relationship satisfaction. Specifically, they suggest that a mismatch in religious beliefs may create stress that could become a source of conflict. A similar pattern of criticism to defensiveness also emerged within the topic of religion.

Surprisingly few couples choose to discuss lived experiences of racism. Within the presented study, the theme of lived racism was incorporated into the racial socialization category, as it fit with the racial socialization idea of how to deal with race or racism in society. Given the way that racism has the potential to negatively affect intimacy and trust, it is possible that couples shy away from bringing racism into their romantic relationship. An additional explanation may be that those who are oppressed become habituated to oppression such that they stop using it as an explanation for things, even when it is warranted or elicited. As such, perhaps the individuals in this sample had more difficulty generating examples of lived racism because they have been forced to become accustomed to racism as a consistent part of their experience. However, examining the way in which a couple can constructively discuss racism by exchanging

and respecting partners' perspectives can provide insight into how therapists working with African American couples can stimulate positive couple discussion. As discussed in the research, racism can hinder intimacy if individuals act out the negative effects of racism on their partner when lacking an appropriate outlet. Racism can also instill in African American partners a sense of mistrust that can carry over to the relationship context. Finally, it is important for Black parents to be able to discuss realities of racism with their children.

In examining any connections between the qualitative and quantitative elements of this study, there does not seem to be a clear connection at this time between couples' DAS scores and patterns consistent with the asserted "Masters" or "Disasters." The partners with the highest and lowest DAS scores of the sample are displayed in Tables 8 and 9. There were three couples in which both the male and female partner fall in the top five DAS scores, and three couples in which both partners fall in the bottom five DAS scores. There were no couples in which the male and female partner represented opposite extremes in DAS scores. One of the couples (#17) in which both partners fell in the bottom five DAS scores also conveyed separateness in their discussion, and one male who scored in the bottom 5 (#11) scored in the bottom 5, but his partner did not. One male (#13) and one female (#2) who scored in the top five of DAS scores were also part of a couple demonstrating we-ness. All other couples in the top or bottom five of DAS scores, who served as examples above (#s 3, 4, and 7) had a mismatch between DAS score and we-ness or separateness. Because Gottman's research considered longitudinal relationships, it is possible that these discussion patterns may have a stronger relationship with long-term relationship outcomes. In addition, it is possible that stronger, more satisfied couples are better able to negotiate strong sentiments or soothe each other outside of the context of an 8-minute discussion.

Finally, it also may be that these relationships are complex. For example, some couples, like couple #14, both accept the stereotype that Black women are controlling, and also soften it by noting the context, thereby rendering simple pronoun-counting coding systems as less sensitive to these important nuances. For example, in this study, the use of different negative patterns (e.g. Gottman's criticism and/or its racially-based manifestation of partner stereotyping) often did lead to partner defensiveness (e.g. couples 4, 7, 10, 11, 16, and 18), even if it was not associated with overall relationship quality. The use of sequential analyses in future studies may reveal more complexity, in that those analyses enable researchers to determine the likelihood that one type of statement of partner A will be followed by a particular type of statement by partner B. Such negative exchanges may operate cumulatively over time (Gottman, Markman, & Notarius, 1976).

Implications

This study contributes to the literature by providing a preliminary demonstration of the ways in which Gottman's (1999, 2008) research is manifest in unique ways for Black couples. This has important implications for developing a clearer understanding of the mechanisms that contribute to race differences in relationship satisfaction. This study also provides insight into how clinicians can better incorporate race into clinical work with Black couples and individuals. To work with Black couples, therapists should enhance their understanding of how these couples speak about race-related disagreements in order to help couples discuss race constructively. First, clinicians working with this population should be aware of the high-stakes topics that may arise as contentious for Black couples in order to bring them up sensitively, or help couples to navigate them as they come up. In particular, clinicians should educate themselves about the relevant stereotypes and their historical origins. Therapists should also conduct a thorough

assessment to understand each partner's perspective on how race affects them as individuals and as a couple, and their views on childrearing and religious involvement. Clinicians should also be able to notice instances of the Four Horsemen within these discussions, and help the couple acknowledge these communication patterns and to more effectively communicate about their differences.

Limitations

The findings are derived from a small, non-generalizable, convenience sample, which limits the external validity of the study. Further, the mean DAS score for the sample falls above the DAS cutoff for non-distressed couples, therefore, the findings do not provide insight into discordant couples. This may also be related to the previous limitation, because a larger and more generalizable sample may have provided a larger range of DAS scores and thus may have more power to detect the hypothesized associations. The use of couples with an above-average level of relationship satisfaction may have an impact on both the qualitative and quantitative findings. For example, with respect to the Four Horsemen observed in the sample, it may be possible that satisfied couples are better able to overcome these communication patterns with other positive relationship behaviors that were not observed in the 8-minute discussion. In addition, a standardized coding system was not used to determine the examples of the Four Horsemen discussed in the findings. There are several limitations of the problem-solving task given to couples, as it was utilized in the context of the present study. The couples were instructed to discuss a race-related disagreement rather than a couple-related issue. This instruction likely naturally led couples to conduct a "you think-I think" discussion. Finally, the task instructions included five specific examples of race-related discussion topics. While couples were allowed to select their own issue, the provided list or the wording of the suggestions may

have directed topic choices such that different themes may have been more prominent if all couples selected independently.

Future Research

Future studies should examine the concurrent and longitudinal relationship outcomes for "masters and disasters" of race-themed discussions (Gottman & Gottman, 2008), to determine how these ways of navigating we-ness and separateness are associated with a variety of relationship outcomes for Black couples. Further research should also seek to develop a more standardized coding system for determining instances of race-based we-ness and separateness in a larger sample of couples. As discussed in the qualitative findings, and Table 5, codes indicating we-ness might include differentiating partner from stereotype, positive reframe of stereotype, race-based compliment, and respectful resolution on race disagreement. Codes indicating separateness might include stereotype application to partner, race-gender criticism, indignation about stereotype application, and race label. Further, future studies should examine whether the use of we across different contexts, including couple, family, gender, in-group, have different implications for couple and individual-level outcomes.

With respect to the findings surrounding couples' discussions of childrearing and socialization, future research on this population should examine differential outcomes for children when parents are more we-focused or separate-focused. This research should examine the connections between racial socialization, childrearing, and couple satisfaction.

In addition, it would be useful to examine pronoun use for African American samples when couples are instructed to discuss the relationship, and compare this to the findings when the couple is discussing race. In order to develop a richer understanding of how pronoun use relates to relationship satisfaction in this sample, it is necessary to conduct future research with a larger

sample and with a variety of discussion tasks. This would help determine whether interventions that approach pronoun use, such as systemic constructivist couple therapy (SCCT), explored by Reid et al. (2006) would be useful with African American couples. Further, future analyses of pronoun use in this population, it would be useful to separate *I* from *you* in the pronoun variables, since these pronouns may represent different constructs, rather than a combined idea of separateness.

Conclusions

In sum, this study makes an important contribution toward linking the unique sociocultural context of African American couples with the established patterns in the research with mainstream samples. In particular, we establish clear examples of how communication patterns, such as Gottman's (1999) Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, may manifest in distinct ways within race-themed discussions. The positive and negative interaction patterns within a race-informed framework contribute to a preliminary understanding of the race-based relationship "Masters and Disasters." This data has important implications for understanding the linkages between how the race-related factors that influence Black couple relationships shape interactions, and how patterns that derive from these interactions can in turn influence relationship quality. This works supports the conclusion that the types of interactions that couples have, particularly around race, may be windows into the underlying dynamics of Black couple relationships, and the ultimate success or dissolution of those relationships. Furthermore the findings outlined above illustrate the need for additional research with this sample to clarify the nuances of race-based communication among Black couples. Future study will help clinicians to more effectively and sensitively work with this population and help set the stage to conduct more culturally-sensitive and strengths-based research.

Appendix A

Table 1

Characteristics of the sample

	Males	Females
Age	37.41 (SD=13.06)	34.74 (SD=12.28)
Satisfaction (DAS)	109.10 (SD=15.76)	108.22 (SD=15.22)

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: Pronoun Use

	Mean (SD)
Male I Words	84.53 (37.75)
Male We Words	9.62 (7.48)
Female I Words	82.46 (36.65)
Female We Words	9.15 (7.94)

Table 3

Pronoun Correlations

	Male DAS	Female DAS
Males - We	0.102	0.225
Females – We	0.183	-0.010
Males – I	0.162	**0.397****
Females – I	0.169	**0.369***
Combined - I	0.212	**0.477****
Combined - We	0.151	0.193

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 level
* Correlation is significant at 0.1 level

Table 4

Plan of Qualitative Analyses: Proposed Definitions of We-ness and Separateness

	Gottman Four Horsemen:	Gottman Antidotes	Reid et al. (2006) We-ness
Definition	- Criticism: attack character of partner - Defensiveness: self-protection in the form of righteous indignation - Contempt - Stonewalling: listener withdraws	- Complain without blame - Accept responsibility - Culture of appreciation and respect - Self-soothe	- Empathic anticipation of partner's experience and thoughts - Integration of viewpoints - Recognizing primacy of relationship over self
Expected open codes	- Confrontation - Avoid discussion, - Backhanded compliment - Challenge partner - Compare partner unfavorably with self - Cross-complaint - Elicit criticism - Escalation - Sarcasm stereotype application - Gender criticism	- Vulnerability shown - Compliment partner - Warmth to partner - Humor - Self-soothe	- Empathy, - Compare partner favorably with self, - Partner perspective integration, - Partner perspective validation

Table 5

Results: Patterns of Positive and Negative Ways to Discuss Race

Discussion Pattern: Horseman	Subtypes:	Codes Include:
Criticism: Racialized criticism, including partner in negative stereotype	*Subtypes of Racialized Criticism Across Themes:* • Include opposite-sex partner in negative race-gender stereotype (specific racialized criticism) • Labeling partner's actions as confirming stereotype • Implied stereotype • Criticism of racial socialization • Criticism of partner's child-rearing	*Criticism codes include:* partner criticism, stereotype application/acceptance
Defensiveness: Rebuttal of partner's race-based opinion	*Subtypes of Racialized Defensiveness:* • Refusal to incorporate other view • Righteous indignation about stereotype application/perspective justification • Feeling misunderstood by stereotype application	*Defensiveness codes include:* statement of disagreement, perspective justification, feeling misunderstood, partner unfair, partner criticism, elicit partner criticism, protection impulse (of self)
Contempt: demonstrating superiority to partner on racial issue (may or may not be using stereotype labels)	*Subtypes of Racialized Defensiveness:* • Sarcasm • Name-calling • Labeling	*Contempt codes include:* partner criticism
Positive racial discussion patterns per antidotes and Reid et al.'s (2006) definition: racialized culture of appreciation and respect with integration of partner's race-based viewpoints	*Subtypes of Positive Patterns:* • Include context to justify negative stereotype • Positively reframe stereotype • Race-based compliments • Show warmth in response to partner's positive pattern • Positive affirmation • Respectful exchange of	*Positive codes include:* compliment partner, partner perspective validation, protection impulse (of partner), humor, empathy, Black pride, life hardship, necessity based nontraditional role, vulnerability shown to nonjudgmental partner

	perspective/validate partners perspectives • Taking responsibility for feelings/showing vulnerability • Compromise in child-rearing	

Table 6

Qualitative Transcript Excerpts Included, by Theme and by Separateness or We-ness

Category: Theme, Separatess/We-ness	Couple Numbers
Stereotypes: Separateness	Couple 4 Couple 7 Couple 18
Stereotypes: We-ness	Couple 13 Couple 3 Couple 14
Child-rearing/Racial Socialization: Separateness	Couple 16 Couple 27 Couple 17
Child-rearing/Racial Socialization: We-ness	Couple 2 Couple 21 *Couple 1
Religion: Separateness	Couple 10 Couple 11
Religion: We-ness	None

*Couple 1 falls within broader theme of racism, which has been incorporated into racial socialization for purposes of the current study

Table 7

All couples in sample in numerical order, theme of discussion, whether included as example in

results

Couple Number	Primary theme of Discussion (Secondary theme if applicable)	Excerpt Included (Yes/No: Separateness or We-ness)
1	Racial Socialization/Racism	Yes: We-ness
2	Child-rearing/racial socialization (Stereotypes)	Yes: We-ness
3	Stereotypes	Yes: We-ness
4	Stereotypes	Yes: Separateness
5	Child-rearing/racial socialization	No
6	Misc. in-group/out-group values	No
7	Stereotypes	Yes: Separateness
8	Misc. in-group/out-group values	No
9	Misc. in-group values (Children)	No
10	Religion (Stereotypes)	Yes: Separateness
11	Religion	Yes: Separateness
12	Child-rearing/racial socialization	No

13	Stereotypes	Yes: We-ness
14	Stereotypes	Yes: We-ness
15	Misc. in-group/out-group values	No
16	Child-rearing/racial socialization (Stereotypes)	Yes: Separateness
17	Child-rearing/racial socialization	Yes: Separateness
18	Stereotypes	Yes: Separateness
19	Misc. in-group/out-group values (Child-rearing/racial socialization)	No
20	Misc. in-group/out-group values	No
21	Child-rearing/racial socialization	Yes: We-ness
23	Misc. in-group/out-group values	No
24	Misc. in-group/out-group values (re: family members)	No
25	Misc. in-group/out-group values	No
26	Misc. in-group/out-group values	No
27	Child-rearing/racial socialization	Yes: Separateness

Table 8

Highest DAS Scores for Male and Female Partners

Ranking	Highest Male DAS: Couple # - Score (partner's DAS)	Highest Female DAS Couple # - Score (partner's DAS)
1	19 - 136 (f=115)	*7 - 137 (135)
2	*12 – 136 (f=122)	2 - 125 (114)
3	*7 – 135 (f=137)	4 - 122 (102)
4	13 – 126 (f=113)	*9 - 122 (121)
5	*9 – 121 (f=122)	*12 – 122 (136)

Table 9

Lowest DAS Scores for Male and Female Partners

Ranking (lowest in sample is 1)	Lowest Male DAS: Couple # - Score (partner's DAS)	Lowest Female DAS Couple # - Score (partner's DAS)
1	5 – 74 (f=120)	20 - 66 (98)
2	11 – 88 (f=102)	6 = 83 (99)
3	*15 – 91 (f=98)	3 = 83 (105)
4	*8 – 94 (f=98)	25 =94 (98)
5	*17 – 97 (98)	*8/15/17 = 98 (m=94/91/98)

*Indicates a couple where partners were both in the top or bottom five scores

Appendix B

Figure 1. Race-related discussion topics for adapted problem-solving task

Can choose your own issue or pick from list of issues:
- Different ideas as Black mothers and fathers of how to raise Black kids in a White society
- Differences in racial views (politics, how Black people should behave, dress, or speak)
- Disagreements about whether or not racism or discrimination happened to one of us
- Disagreements about how to deal with racism or discrimination
- Expressing negative stereotypes or complaints about each other (Examples: Black men are too insecure and you can't count on them, and Black women are too controlling and don't need a man)
- Other (describe): _____

Figure 2. African American Stereotype Definitions (Stephens & Phillips, 2003)

Stereotypes From Hip-Hop Culture:
- Freak: a sexually aggressive exotic female who wants sex without attachments,
- Gold digger: uses hypersexuality for material gains
- Diva: a prima donna focused on receiving attention, surrounds with people who will worship and adore. Often seen as "having an attitude" where they see themself as someone to worship, also viewed as "high-maintenance." Divas' sexuality is sultry/tempting but not explicit
- Dyke: a woman who resists males' sexual overtures, choose to be involved with women
- Gangster Bitch: woman who uses violence/aggression and/or sexuality to support and protect men. Actively participates in hip-hop culture
- Sister Savior: sexuality is grounded in the African American church – sex is to be avoided because of moral issues it poses due to religion. Projects a demure, obedient attitude
- Earth Mother: embody Afrocentric political and spiritual consciousness, celebrates diversity of body sizes, natural hair textures, skin colors. Develops strong sense of self, often intimidating
- Baby Mamma: script enacted once a child is born to a single mother, may have bond with father of the child, viewed as outcome for ay of the other scripts

Foundational Stereotypes:
- "Jezebel:" a sexually promiscuous and seductive young female who uses sexuality to gain attention, love and material gains
- Mammy: portrayed as the African American slave or domestic servant, nurturing toward the White family, an asexual and non-threatening being. Physically portrayed as overweight and dark-skinned with very African features.
- Welfare Mother: mother who breeds children uncontrollably, and offspring become a burden on society. Welfare mother collects government checks and reproduces poverty.

- Matriarch:" a female who emasculates men – overly aggressive, and unfeminine; in line with description of "ghetto" African American females
  - "Ghetto:" one who is aggressive, or who stands out through being loud or flamboyant.

References

Adams-Bass, V.N., Bentley-Edwards, K.L., & Stevenson, H.C. (2014). That's not me I see on

TV…:African American youth interpret media images of Black females. *Women,*

Gender, and Families of Color, 2, 79-100.

Adimora, A.A., & Schoenbach, V.J. (2005). Social context, sexual networks, and racial

disparities in rates of sexually transmitted infections. *The Journal of Infectious Diseases,*

191, S115-S122.

Aron, A., McLaughlin-Volpe, T., Mashek, D., Lewandowski, G., Wright, S.C., & Aron, E.N

(2004). Including others in the self. *European Review of Social Psychology, 15*, 101-132.

Bethea, S., & Allen, T. (2013). Past and Present Societal Influences on African

American Couples That Impact Love and Intimacy. In *Love, Intimacy, and the African*

American Couple. (pp. 20-59). East Sussex, UK: Routledge.

Bontempi, J.M.B., Eng, E., & Quinn, S.C. (2008). Our men are grinding out: A qualitative

examination of sex ratio imbalances, relationship power, and low-income African

American Women's Health. *Women & Health, 48,* 63-81.

Boyd-Franklin, N. (2003). *Black Families in Therapy: Understanding the African American*

Experience. New York: Guilford Press.

Bridgewater, P.D. (2005). Ain't I a slave: Slavery, reproductive abuses, and reparations. *UCLA*

Women's Law Journal, 14, 89-162.

Bryant, C.M., Wickrama, K.A.S., Bolland, J.M., Bryant, B.M., & Cutrona, C.E., Stanik, C.E.

(2010). Race matters, even in marriage: Identifying factors linked to marital outcomes for

African Americans. *Journal of Family Theory and Review, 2 (3),* 157-174.

Buehlman, K.T., Gottman, J.M., & Katz, L.F. (1992). How a couple views their past predicts

their future: Predicting divorce from an oral history interview. *Journal of Family Psychology, 5,* 292-318.

Bulanda, J. R., & Brown, S.L. (2007). Race-ethnic differences in marital quality and divorce. *Social Science Research, 36,* 945-967.

Carey, M.P., Senn, T.E, Seward, D.X., & Vanable, P.A. (2010). Urban African-American men speak out on sexual partner concurrency: Findings from a qualitative study. *AIDS and Behavior, 14,* 38-47.

Carey, M.P., Spector, I.P., Lantinga, L.J., & Krauss, D.J. (1993). Reliability of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. *Psychological Assessment, 5,* 238-240.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013). CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities Report – United States, 2013. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/other/su6203.pdf.

Chambers, A.L. & Kravitz, A. (2011). Understanding the Disproportionately Low Marriage Rate Among African Americans: An Amalgamation of Sociological and Psychological Constraints. *Family Relations, 60,* 648-660.

Couch, K.A., & Fairlie, R. (2010). Last hired, first fired? Black-white unemployment and the business cycle. *Demography, 47,* 227-247.

Don, B.P., Biehle, S.N., & Michelson, K.D. (2013). Feeling like part of a team: Perceived parenting agreement among first-time parents. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 30(8),* 1121-1137.

Donovan, R. A. (2007). To blame or not to blame: Influences of target race and observer sex on rape blame attribution. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 22,* 722-736.

Dunbar, A.S., Perry, N.B., Cavanaugh, A.M., & Leerkes, E.M. (2015). African American

parents' racial and emotional socialization profiles and young adults' emotional

adaptation. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 21(3),* 400-419.

Fassinger, R. (2005). Paradigms, Praxis, Problems, and Premise: Grounded Theory in

Counseling Psychology Research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52,* 156-166.

Fosse, N.E. (2010). The repertoire of infidelity among low-income men: Doubt, duty, and

destiny. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 629,* 125-

143.

Gillum, T.L. (2007). "How Do I View My Sister?" Stereotypic views of African

American Women and Their Potential to Impact Intimate Partnerships. *Journal of Human

Behavior in the Social Environment, 15,* 347-366.

Goff, P.A., & Kahn, K.B. (2012). Racial bias in policing: Why we know less than we should.

Social Issues and Policy Review, 6, 177-210.

Gottman, J. M. (1999). The marriage clinic: A scientifically based marital therapy. New York,

NY: Norton.

Gottman, J.M., Coan, J., Carrere, S., & Swanson, C. (1998). Predicting marital happiness and

stability from newlywed interactions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 60,* 5-11.

Gottman, J., Markman, J., & Notarius, C., (1977). The topography of marital conflict: a

sequential analysis of verbal and nonverbal behavior, *Journal of Marriage and the

Family, 39*, 461-477

Gottman, J., Notarius, C., Gonso, J., & Markman, H.J. (1976) *A couple's guide to

communication.* Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Gottman, J. M. & Schwartz Gottman, J. (2008). Gottman method couple therapy. In Gurman, A.

S. (Ed.). (2008). Clinical handbook of couple therapy (4th Ed.) (pp. 138-164). NY: The

Guilford Press.

Grange, C.M., Brubaker, S.J., & Corneille, M.A. (2011). Direct and indirect messages African

    American women receive from their familial networks about intimate relationships and

    sex: The intersecting influence of race, gender, and class. *Journal of Family Issues, 32*,

    605-628.

Greenwald, A. G., Poehlman, T. A., Uhlmann, E., & Banaji, M. R. (2009). Understanding and

    using the Implicit Association Test: III. Meta-analysis of predictive validity. *Journal of*

    Personality and Social Psychology, 97, 17–41.

Harper, G.W., Gannon, C., Watson, S.E., Catania, J.A., & Dolcini, M.M. (2004). The role

    of close friends in African American Adolescents' dating and sexual behavior. *The*

    Journal of Sex Research, 41, 351-362.

Harris-Lacewell, M. (2001). No place to rest: African American political attitudes toward the

    myth of Black women's strength. *Women & Politics, 23,* 1-33.

Henry, J. S., Lambert, S. F., & Bynum, M. S. (2015). The protective role of maternal

    racial socialization for African American adolescents exposed to community violence.

    Journal of Family Psychology, 29, 548-557

Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the politics of*

    Empowerment, Second Edition. New York, NY: Routledge.

Holmes, M.D., & Smith, B.W. (2008). *Race and Police Brutality: Roots of an Urban Dilemma.*

    Albany, NY: State of New York Press.

Hooks, B. (2004). *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity.* New York: Routledge.

House, J. S., & Williams, D. R. (2000). Understanding and reducing socioeconomic and

    racial/ethnic disparities in health. In B. D. Smedley & S. L. Syme (Eds.), *Promoting*

    health: Intervention strategies from social and behavioral research (pp. 81-125).

    Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Hughes, D., Rodriguez, J., Smith, E.P., Johnson, D.J., Stevenson, H.C., & Spicer, P. (2006).

Parents' racial/ethnic socialization practices: A review of research and agenda for future

study. *Developmental Psychology*, *42(5),* 747 - 770.

Hunter, A.G., & Davis, J.E. (1992). Constructing gender: An exploration of Afro-American

men's conceptualization of manhood. *Gender & Society, 6,* 464-479.

Ispa-Landa, S. (2013). Gender, Race, and Justifications for Group Exclusion: Urban

Black Students Bussed to Affluent Suburban Schools. *Sociology of Education, 86,* 218-

233.

Kelly, S. (2004). Underlying components of scores assessing African Americans'

racial perspectives. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 37,* 28-40.

Kelly, S. (2006). Cognitive-behavioral therapy with African Americans. In G.Y. Iwamasa & P.A.

Hayes (Eds.), *Culturally responsive cognitive-behavioral therapy: Assessment, practice,*

and supervision (pp. 97-116). Washingon, DC: APA.

Kelly, S., & Floyd, F.J. (2001). The effects of negative racial stereotypes and

Afrocentricity on Black couple relationships. *Journal of Family Psychology, 15,* 110-123.

Kelly, S., & Floyd, F.J. (2006). Impact of Race Perspectives and Contextual Variables on

Marital Trust and Adjustment for African American Couples. *Journal of Family*

Psychology, 20, 79-87.

Kelly, S., Maynigo, P., Wesley, K., & Durham, J. (2013). African American communities and

family systems: Relevance and challenges. *Couple and Familiy Psychology: Reseach and*

Practice, 2, 264-277.

Kelly, S., & Shelton, J. (2013). African American couples and sex. In K. S. K. Hall and C. A.

Graham (Eds.), *The cultural context of sexual pleasure and problems: Psychotherapy*

with diverse clients. New York, NY: Routledge.

LaTaillade, J.J. (2006). Considerations for treatment of African American couple relationships. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy, 20,* 341-358.

Lawrence-Webb, C., Littlefield, M., & Okundaye, J. (2004). African American intergender relationships: A theoretical exploration of roles, patriarchy, and love. *Journal of Black Studies, 34,* 623-639.

Marks, L.D., Hopkins, K., Chaney, C., Monroe, P.A., Nesteruk, O., & Sasser, D.D. (2008). "Together, We Are Strong": A Qualitative Study of Happy, Enduring African American Marriages. *Family Relations, 57,* 172-185.

Massey, D.S., & Denton, N.A. (1993). *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mauer, M. (2011). Addressing racial disparities in incarceration. *The Prison Journal, 91(Suppl),* 87S-101S.

Mutegi, J. (2013). "Life's first need is for us to be realistic" and other reasons for examining the sociocultural construction of race in the science performance of African American Students. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 50,* 82-103.

Orbuch, T. L., & Eyster, S. L., (1997). Division of household labor among black couples and white couples, *Social Forces*, *76*, 301-332.

Pfeifer, Michael J. (2004). *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874–1947*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Phillips, T.M., Wilmoth, J.D., & Marks, L.D. (2012). Challenges and conflicts…strengths and supports: A study of enduring African American marriages. *Journal of Black Studies, 43,* 936-952.

Pyke, K.D. (1996). Class-based masculinities: The interdependence of gender, class, and interpersonal power. *Gender & Society, 10,* 527-549.

Reid, D.W., Dalton, E.J., LaDeroute, K., Doell, F.K., & Nguyen, T. (2006) Therapeutically

induced changes in couple identity: The role of we-ness and interpersonal processing in

relationship satisfaction. *Genetic, Social, and Gneral Psychology Monographs, 132,* 241-

284.

Sampson, R.J. (2009). Racial stratification and the durable tangle of neighborhood inequality.

Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 621, 260-280.

Seider, B.H., Hirschberger, G., Nelson, K. L., & Levenson, R.W. (2009). We can work it out:

age differences in relational pronouns, physiology, and behavior in marital conflict.

Psychology and Aging, 24, 604-613.

Simmons, R. A., Gordon, P.C., & Chambless, D. L. (2005). What do "you" and "I" say about

marital health? *Psychological Science, 16,* 932-936.

Slatcher, R.B., Vazire, S., & Pennebaker, J.W. (2008). Am "I" more important than "we"?

Couples' word use in instant messages. *Personal Relationships, 15,* 407-424.

McNeil Smith, S., Reynolds, J. E., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2015). Parental

experiences of racial discrimination and youth racial socialization in two-parent African

American families. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 22(2),* 268-276.

South, S.C., Krueger, R.F., & Iacono, W.G. (2009). Factorial invariance of the Dyadic

Adjustment Scale across gender. *Psychological Assessment, 21,* 622-628.

Spanier, G.B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality

of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38,* 15-27.

Stanik, C.E., & Bryant, C.M. (2012). Marital Quality of Newlywed African

American Couples: Implications of Egalitarian Gender Role Dynamics. *Sex Roles, 66,* 256-

267.

Stanik, C. E., McHale, S.M., & Crouter, A.C. (2013). Gender Dynamics Predict

Changes in Marital Love Among African American Couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 75,* 795-807.

Stephens, D. P., & Phillips, L. D. (2003). Freaks, Gold Diggers, Divas and Dykes: The socio-historical development of African American female adolescent scripts. *Sexuality and Culture, 7*, 3–47.

Stephens, D.P., & Phillips, L. D. (2005). Integrating black feminist thought into conceptual frameworks of African American adolescent women's sexual scripting processes. *Sexualities, Evolution, and Gender, 7,* 37-55.

Suite, D. H.,La Bril, R., Primm, A., & Harrison-Ross, P. (2007). Beyond misdiagnosis, misunderstanding, and mistrust: Relevance of the historical perspective on the medical and mental health treatment of people of color. *Journal of the National Medical Association, 99,* 879-885.

Thomas, A.J., King, C.T. (2007). Gendered racial socialization of African American mothers and daughters. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families, 15,* 137-142.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2003). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2003. Washington, DC: Bernan.

U.S. Census Bureau (2012). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2012. Washington, DC. Retrieved July 6, 2014, from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014). Unemployed persons by marital status, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, age, and sex. Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat24.pdf.

Utsey, S. O. (1999). Development and validation of a short form of the Index of Race-

Related Stress-Brief version. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 32*, 149-166.

Ward, M.L., Hansbrough, E., & Walker, E. (2005). Contributions of Music Video Exposurer to Black Adolescents' Gender and Sexual Schemas. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 20,* 143-166.

Williams-Baucom, K.J., Atkins, D.C., Sevier, M., Eldridge, K.A., & Christensen, A. (2010). "You" and "I" need to talk about "us": Linguistic patterns in marital interactions. *Personal Relationships, 17,* 41-56.

Willis, J.T. (1990). Some destructive elements in African-American male-female relationships. *Family Therapy, 17,* 139-147.

Wills, T.A., Murry, V.M., Brody, G.H., Gibbons, F.X., Gerrard, M., Walker, C. et al. (2007). Ethnic Pride and self-control related to protective and risk factors: Test of the heuristic model for the strong African American families program. *Health Psychology, 26,* 50-59.

Wittenbrink, B., Judd, C. M., & Park, B. (1997). Evidence for racial prejudice at the implicit level and its relationship with questionnaire measures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72(2)*, 262-274.

Woodward, C. V. (1974). *The strange career of Jim Crow (3rd ed.)*. New York: Oxford University Press.