INTERRACIAL DATING IN A “COLOR-BLIND” SOCIETY: ROMANTIC ATTRACTION AND IDEOLOGIES AMONG COLLEGE MEN

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

While there is a vast literature concerning interracial relationships, few investigations examine basic tenets of romantic attraction (e.g., similarity and familiarity) and intergroup ideologies (e.g. color-blind racial ideology or multiculturalism) simultaneously. The current study uses a person-perception or vignette methodology to explore the influence of ideologies on attraction in interracial romantic attraction among Black and White college men. After viewing the “profiles” of six women, participants indicated the extent to which they were attracted to each woman. Results indicate that although for both White and Black men perceived similarity was the greatest predictor of interracial attraction, ideology such as multiculturalism does hold predictive power above and beyond similarity. Additionally, analyses reveal that the relationships between the studied constructs vary by race. Implications and directions for future research are discussed.
In memory of Cora Benolia Griffin
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The racial demographic of the United States is rapidly changing such that before the next century it is predicted that 47% of the population will consist of individuals of color (Cherlin, 2001). One in ten heterosexual marriages in the United States consists of partners from different racial backgrounds, 18% of cohabiting heterosexual couples are interracial and 21% of same-sex couples living together are interracial (Jayson, 2012). Few would argue that this is a sharp contrast to the era of anti-miscegenation laws of the early half of the 20th century. However, the sharp increase in interracial relationships should not imply that we exist in a post-racial society in which these types of relationships are universally accepted. Indeed, there are regional, generational, and racial differences in the prevalence of interracial relationships. In at least one state (Louisiana), individuals have been denied a marriage license because of the implications of their interracial union (Foster, 2009), in another region of the country a Protestant church voted to ban an interracial couple from leading worship services in the church (Estep, 2011). And yet, in the midst of overt challenges to interracial relationships, there are internet dating websites devoted to those interested in dating someone of a different race (e.g., InterracialDating.com).

Much of the research seeking to understand interracial relationships has been grounded in relationship research. Often these studies have sought to challenge some of the commonplace beliefs and stereotypes about interracial relationships. Researchers have challenged the notions of rebellious White youth seeking exciting experiences with “exotic” others. They have challenged beliefs that interracial relationships are about fulfilling sexual desires and have engaged in conversations of upwardly mobile people of color obtaining a trophy White partner as a token of status-caste exchange. These contentions and more have been studied and have led to an understanding of who is more likely to enter into these relationships and what characteristics
of the other draw them to one another. This line of inquiry has ultimately come to the conclusion that interracial relationships are like intraracial (same race) relationships and has, in ways, depathologized these unions. However, an understanding of interracial relationships that is limited to the romantic dynamic of these unions offers an incomplete picture.

It is important that we also understand interracial relationships in the context of intergroup relations. Among White men, political conservatism has been associated with a decreased interest in interracial relationships. Researchers have identified that political conservatism is representative of an ideology that promotes group separation. A more detailed exploration of the impact of ideologies, specifically ideologies regarding race and group differences, can only help to expand our knowledge of interracial relationships.

Social scientists have identified two types of ideologies regarding group differences, those which support group separation and those which value group equity. These ideologies are understood in the context of a racial hierarchy that exists in the United States. Ideologies that promote separation also reinforce the status quo that gives the greatest benefit and status to Whites and disadvantages people of color; these ideologies include political conservatism and color-blind racial ideologies. Alternatively, multiculturalism is a hierarchy attenuating ideology in that it supports equal group status as well as an appreciation for differences. Studying ideologies may lead to identifying new influences on interracial relationships.

By jointly exploring the role of attraction and ideologies in romantic relationships, the current study seeks to add to a more nuanced understanding of interracial relationships, one that understand attraction as an intergroup phenomenon that does not minimize group difference on influential variables. The current study was organized around three clusters of inquiry, each with its own set of hypotheses and research questions:
Does similarity influence romantic attraction?

_Hypothesis 1:_ Men will report more attraction toward women of their same race relative to women of a different race.

_Research Question 1:_ Is there a racial difference in the extent to which men report greater attraction to women of the same race compared to women of a different race?

_Hypothesis 2:_ Men will report more similarity toward women of their same race relative to women of a different race.

_Research Question 2:_ Is there a racial difference in the extent to which men report greater similarity to women of the same race compared to women of a different race?

Does familiarity influence romantic attraction and perceived similarity?

_Hypothesis 3:_ Greater interracial contact will be associated with greater attraction toward women of a different race.

_Research Question 3:_ Is interracial contact associated with attraction toward a woman of the same race?

Do individuals’ intergroup ideologies influence romantic attraction and perceived similarity?

_Research Question 4:_ Do political conservatism, CBRI, and Multicultural Ideology predict interracial and/or intraracial attraction?
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

At their core, interracial relationships are two things: intimate partnerships and microcosms of intergroup interactions. However, studying these components independently provides an incomplete understanding of interracial relationships. Research that examines interracial relationships only as another type of romantic relationship minimizes the racialized social context. On the other hand, research that examines these unions as another type of cross group interaction overlooks the level of intimacy that is unique to romantic relationships. Research seeking to expand our understanding of romantic interracial relationships should reflect the reality that these unions are intimate pairings altered by the social implications of race.

Most studies on interracial relationships are situated within relationship research (e.g., Forry, Leslie & Letiecq, 2007). We have gained information about romantic attraction within interracial relationships and who is more likely to date a member of a different race. The majority of this research has examined couples with one Black and one White partner. We can better understand interracial relationships by examining fundamental aspects of romantic attraction (i.e., proximity and familiarity, similarity, and physical attraction) and the ways in which they may function differently by race and gender. Another promising avenue towards a better understanding of interracial relationships is through the study of individuals’ beliefs about race. More specifically, exploring the role of people’s ideologies about or values related to race introduces an intergroup dynamic that is influenced by socio-historical events.

One important contextual variable that influences interracial relationships is the racial landscape of the United States. It is projected that by the year 2050 Whites will only slightly be the numerical majority in the U.S (52.5%). In 2050, racial groups such as Hispanic, Black, Asian and Native American will make up nearly half of the U.S. population. Consequently, there will
likely be more contact between members of different races than in more homogenous ones, especially in areas with high immigration traffic such as the Southwest and Pacific coast. A growth in diversity will increase the likelihood of dating someone outside of one’s racial group. Currently in the U.S. there is a rapid increase in interracial unions. As of 2005, marriages between Black and White partners have increased five-fold since 1960, marriages between Asian and White partners have increased 10 fold, and there are three times as many marriages between White and Hispanic partners today than there were in 1970 (Rosenfeld & Kim, 2005).

Yet, the number of interracial unions is below what would be expected given population statistics. Empirical investigations into why the discrepancy exists have been conducted in a piecemeal fashion and have not integrated the central components of interracial relationships. Examining phenomena that exist across all types of interracial unions (e.g., Black-Latina, White-Asian, or Black – Native- American) may have some utility- especially when one considers the different pairings of race and gender. However, it may be more prudent to study one type of interracial relationship at a time. It is evident from Rosenfeld and Kim’s (2005) findings that there are differential rates of interracial relationships; a likely result of the historical differences among people of color in the United States. The difference in the occurrence of interracial relationships could imply differences in social opposition to the union or greater sentiments of taboo for one type of relationship compared to another. As such, the current study will focus on Black – White interracial relationships because they are the most studied in the literature and because researchers have suggested that the United States racial hierarchy holds Blacks at the bottom and Whites at the top (Sidanius, Levin, Federico,& Pratto, 2001). The respective order of Blacks and Whites creates the greatest social distance of any other groups and has implications for the influence of one’s personal ideologies as they relate to attraction (Hraba,
Radloff, Gray-Ray, 1999). For example, it could be argued that if one endorses group separation then there would be an aversion to interracial relationships and a lesser attraction toward others of a different race. Hence, the purpose of this study is to identify how race and personal ideology influence interracial attraction.

The aim of the current research is to join two separate lines of inquiry about interracial relationships. To achieve this aim it is important to begin with well-established and impactful constructs in each field. I first summarize the research on interracial relationships that has been grounded in relationship research. The review begins with an overview of the robust area of attraction and includes an examination of the central tenants of romantic attraction including familiarity and proximity, similarity, and physical attractiveness. The discussion of physical attractiveness is an exploration of the differing implications of interracial attraction for Whites and Blacks as well as differences based on sex. Subsequent to the discussion on relationship research is an exploration of research on intergroup dynamics. I include a discussion on racial ideologies and their implications for interracial attraction. The literature review is then concluded with an explicit stating of the purpose of the study and the research questions and hypotheses.

**Interracial Relationships and Relationship Science**

Generally, romantic relationships imply mutual interest between partners and some degree of attraction (Miller et al., 2007). To understand romantic attraction is to understand a crucial component of relationships. There are parallels between attraction in intraracial relationships and in interracial relationships, but there are some differences. Below, I discuss the similarities between these two types of relationships in proximity and familiarity and similarity – followed by a discussion of the subtle and overt differences (the meaning of physical attractiveness and sex) and their implications.
**Proximity and familiarity and romantic attraction.** Simply being physically close or near another person can lead to an increase in attraction in romantic relationships or liking in platonic relationships. In a classic study, Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) found that men residing in campus housing were nearly twice as likely to identify the man living next door as a close friend than the one living two doors down and were four times as likely when compared to the man living four doors down. Physical closeness to another has been studied as proximity within relationship science and it operates to increase attraction through an increased likelihood of exposure. As people have repeated contact with one another, they become more familiar and their attraction toward the other may increase. This is true in friendships and in romantic relationships (Miller, Perlman, & Brehm 2007).

To extrapolate to interracial relationships, if one considers proximity and familiarity as they relate to exposure to outgroups, one can gain an appreciation of how repeated exposure to a different race may lead to an increased willingness to date a member of that race. Indeed, research has found that individuals who have consistent contact with members of a different race, either in their neighborhoods, academic institutions, or religious organizations, are more willing to date a member of another race, and are more likely to have dated a member of another race in the past (Yancey, 2002; 2007). It is likely though, that some degree of intimacy with members of another race is important as well. To support this assertion, Clark-Ibanez and Felmlee (2004) found that increases in network diversity of friends were associated with significant increases in interethnic dating.

Taken together, the research on proximity and familiarity is quite similar to social psychology’s work regarding the contact hypothesis which proclaims that exposure to outgroups can reduce prejudice (Allport, 1954). Although Allport’s (1954) theory asserted that there were
four necessary parameters that resulted in reduced prejudice, a recent meta-analysis conducted by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) have found that it is only essential that there are cross-group friendships to reduce prejudice. It is possible that the more contact one has with members of another race, the greater the reduction in prejudice and the greater the likelihood that he or she may date someone of a different race. The increased attraction and subsequently willingness to date are especially pronounced when one develops friendships with people of other races (Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee, 2004)

**Similarity and romantic attraction.** Another factor in attraction is similarity. We are attracted to others who are similar to us (Mcpherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Individuals who share our values, goals, weight and even last name are more likely to draw us toward them than those who are not like us (see Miller et al, 2007 for a review). Finding commonalities with another person among things such as values, attitudes, and goals requires time. However, there is an immediate indicator of similarity that is important in romantic attraction. Similarity in race has particular implications for attraction. Tenney, Turkheimer, and Oltmanns (2004) found that race mattered for ratings of liking among Black, White, and biracial or other race participants. In this study, military personnel reported more attraction toward members of their same race than members of a different race after they had completed basic training. Similarity in race has implications for romantic attraction in that it may lead to the assumption of other similarities. For example, one may assume similar tastes in food, music, or even religious practices. While these customs relate not necessarily to race, but rather to ethnicity and culture, the physical markers of race such as phenotype and facial features can be the basis of assumptions regarding ethnicity. For example, Hendrick, Bixenstine, and Hawkins (1971) found that when White participants who were high in prejudice viewed an interaction between Black and White men, they perceived
themselves as more similar toward the White male confederates than the Black male confederates, this was not found to be true among men with low prejudice. Bergeron and Zanna (1973) administered bogus profiles to university participants and manipulated the extent to which the attitudes agreed or disagreed with each participant’s attitudes on controversial topics. They found that same group membership was a significant predictor of interpersonal liking above and beyond similarity in ideology. In a more recent study, Tenney, Turkheimer, and Oltmanns (2009) surveyed Air Force personnel during basic training and found that similarity in racial group was a significant predictor of attraction even when considering personality characteristics. In essence, “this person looks like me, I suspect they are similar to me, and so, I am somewhat more inclined to pursue this person.” Regardless of whether these assumptions are correct, race, because it is such a salient characteristic of an individual, can influence one’s attraction to another.

**Physical attractiveness and romantic attraction.** Another immediate influence in romantic attraction is physical appearance. Research has shown that there are some “universal” aspects to what makes one physically attractive such as a symmetrical face, proportionate facial features, and even a specific waist to hip ratio of .7 for women and .9 for men (Buss, 2004). However, it is important to note that there are differences based on race and gender. The predominant standard of beauty for women within the United States is Eurocentric and emphasizes a slim build, fair skin, and light-colored eyes (Hamilton, Mintz, & Kashubeck-West, 2007). People of color, however, do not universally endorse these standards. For example, Black women tend to have higher BMIs than White women, but are more likely to be satisfied with their bodies than White women. Additionally, heterosexual Black men tend to prefer heavier women to the Eurocentric thin ideal (Siciliani & Pride, 2003). This implies that, at least within Black society, there exists a standard of beauty that is different than the Eurocentric ideal.
Men and women’s perceptions of high physical attractiveness of another tends to lead to the perception of other desirable traits. Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972) found that when men and women were exposed to a physically attractive person, they judged that individual to have higher levels of other good qualities such as kindness, strength, sensitivity and better character than an unattractive person. Men and women even went on to endorse beliefs that more attractive individuals would have more prestigious futures and would even live more fulfilling lives than less attractive individuals. This phenomenon, referred to as the beauty bias or “What is beautiful is good” has been replicated in more recent studies (Cheng, Ferguson, & Chartrand, 2003; Langlois et al., 2000) and can have an influence on initial attraction in romantic relationships. Assuming a person has other desirable qualities increases benefits that could be gained from dating that person, making that person a more attractive option.

Given the research on what is physically attractive and how it may influence attraction, there are likely to be differential implications for Whites and people of color who date members of another race. For example, people of color who have a White partner may value Eurocentric ideals of beauty over standards of beauty within their own race; this may be indicative of self-deprecation or internalized oppression. As stated earlier, some researchers have even suggested that White men and women interested in people of color were neurotic or perceived people of color as exotic (Brayboy, 1966).

**Interracial attraction among White Americans.** Examining interracial attraction among White daters has generated some highly debated theories. As European-American standards of beauty are the most widely valued standards of beauty within the United States, scholars have investigated the hypothesis that instances of White – Non-White relationships consist of a rebellious White partner (Brayboy, 1966). Also included in this hypothesis is the notion that
Interracial relationships are emotionally immature and inherently unstable. An alternative hypothesis within the literature is that White – Black interracial relationships are purely sexual unions. This historical theory posited that Whites and people of color in romantic relationships exoticize the other. This theory, similar to the one on White rebellion, is endorsed among the populous. In fact, Lalonde, Giguère, Fontaine, and Smith (2007) created a measure to explicitly measure the extent to which individuals endorsed stereotypes about interracial relationships. Items in this scale included statements such as “Whites who date Blacks are rebelling against their parents” and “White women who date Black men are drawn to their physical attributes.” The exotic hypothesis is often referred to as “jungle fever” and was even the title of a 1991 movie exploring an interracial relationship between a White woman and a Black man (Lee, 1991).

Investigations into the implications of interracial attraction among Whites have had some mixed results. Using a national sample of Black-White marriages, Lewis, Yancey, and Bletzer (1997) found that some racial factors were at play in the decision to marry. These racial factors included being more physically attracted to people of a different race and ease of talking to someone of a different race. But, Lewis et al. (1997) concluded that these racial factors were not as important as non-racial factors such as common interests and economic similarity. They found that racial factors were negatively associated with other variables associated with interracial marriage (i.e., level of education and premarital interracial dating). Lewis et al. (1997) also claimed support for their assertion because not every couple identified racial factors while all indicated non-racial factors in their reasons for marrying. Through secondary analyses, Yancey (2003) investigated whether men and women who have sex with people of a different race have more liberal attitudes about sex than those whom have never had sex with someone of a different
Participants were asked to indicate if they had ever had sex with a person of a different race and were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed that sex should occur only in marriage, only in a committed and loving relationship, or as a recreational activity. He found that among Black and White participants who had sex with a White and Black person respectively, there was no difference in attitudes about when sex is appropriate compared to those who only have sex with same race partners. However, he did find that among White participants who have had sex with non-Black people of color, there was a tendency to hold less of a traditional (no sex before marriage) attitude than other White participants who had either had sex with White or Black partners.

**Interracial attraction among Black Americans.** For people of color, interracial dating may be an indicator that other psychological phenomena are at play. As a minority group exposed to White ideals of beauty, people of color may come to internalize these standards and take them on as their own. There is a vast literature on internalized oppression among racial and ethnic minority groups. For example, some racial identity models describe over-identification with the dominant group and an unawareness of racism (Bailey, Chung, Williams, Singh, & Terrell, 2011). Internalized oppression has been explored as assimilationist attitudes, been associated with over-identification with the dominant group, and has even been linked to anti-Black sentiments among Blacks (Cokley, 2002).

One can consider relationship research that studies the caste-status exchange model as an investigation of internalized oppression. This model recognizes a racial hierarchy within America the places Whites at the top, Blacks at the bottom and other people of color in the middle. The argument is that lesser caste members attain higher success or socioeconomic status and exchange the resources that they have acquired for the prestige and social benefits of having
a White partner (see Foeman & Nance, 2002 for a review). While this offers an explanation for the historical observation that intermarriages often consisted of a higher SES status person of color and a lower status White partner (Kalmijn, 1993), a consensus within the literature has not been reached. For example, Fu (2008) put forth the argument that this reality exists because of increased similarities between partners as a result of their SES (e.g., similar education levels, job prestige and income). Fu’s (2008) assertion is supported empirically with use of US census data which shows that, with the exception of Asian men and White women pairings, partners in other interracial unions have equivalent education, job prestige and income.

**Interracial attraction and gender.** Additional research on heterosexual interracial relationships indicates that men are more likely to date a person of a different race than women (Yancey, 2007). However, even this consistent finding in the literature is complicated by the race of the man. White women are perceived, within the larger society, as more desirable than women of color (Makkar & Strube, 1995). As such, for men of color, dating a White partner may be more appealing than dating a member of their own race or of a different racial minority group as hypothesized in the status-caste exchange model. Presumably, for White men there are no socioeconomic benefits of interracial marriage. Fu (2008) explicitly investigated differences in SES among interracial and intraracial White men, and found that intraracially married White men had more education, income, and job prestige than any other demographic variable explored. This area of research implies that for men interracial unions are less likely to afford higher prestige.

The current research will focus on the romantic attraction of men because this group is likely to have greater variability in their willingness to date interracially. To elaborate on this justification, women receive more pressure from social networks regarding whom to enter a
romantic relationship with (Frankenberg & Chase, 1993). The difference in social network influence may be an artifact of gender differences whereby women disclose more information about their relationships (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). If women are more receptive to the feedback of the social network, then the norm of endogamy may also be more influential.

**Summary of relationship research.** Relationship research has revealed much about interracial relationships, but there is still a dearth of knowledge. Because of relationship research, it is apparent that mechanisms of romantic attraction such as proximity and ultimately familiarity or contact, similarity, and physical attractiveness are as noteworthy in interracial relationships as they are in intraracial relationships. However, it is as apparent that race influences how each of these mechanisms operates and each mechanism’s implication for interracial dating. To expand our knowledge of interracial relationships, it may require an exploration of how the social construction of race influences the process of romantic attraction. For example, why is it that some can develop a life-long romantic relationship with a person of another race, yet another despises interracial marriages? Why is it that two people with similar backgrounds and socialization around race and romantic relationships share divergent views? At the societal level, why is it that the rate of White – Non-White marriages is far below the expected rate based on population statistics (Rosenfeld & Kim, 2005)? Why is it that partners in intermarriages across populations of color experience more distress than those in intraracial relationships (Bratter, 2006)? These are questions that are important to ask regarding interracial relationships, but that research focusing solely on relationships cannot appropriately address. Examining the field of intergroup science is valuable to help address questions similar to these in that it can introduce individual differences that influence one’s propensity to date a member of another race. 

**Romantic Relationships and Intergroup Research**
At the core of interracial relationships is the reality that these relationships reflect microcosms of intergroup interactions. One way of examining this reality is to explore the ways in which people conceptualize the importance of race via their ideologies. The connection between interracial dating and ideologies is a complex one, and one that, ironically, has its beginnings in relationship research. Previous research has found that, among Whites, those who are more politically conservative are less willing to date members of another race (Yancey, 2002). While most would argue that they hold no prejudices toward people of color as it is no longer viewed as socially acceptable to do so, higher conservative values are associated with negative attitudes toward interracial dating (Johnson & Jacobson, 2005; Yancey 2007). Though well documented, explanations of the association between conservatism and opposition to interracial dating among Whites have only recently been explored. Eastwick, Richeson, Son, and Finkel (2009) argued that political conservatism is representative of a type of ideological system that perpetuates group differences and is threatened by cross-group relationships, but no equivalent investigation has been conducted regarding Black interracial dating.

The study of ideologies is promising for enriching our understanding of interracial relationships. Ideologies are systems of beliefs that dictate the way an individual views the world and guide his or her behavior. In the context of intergroup relations, they can dictate one’s perception of what is an appropriate way of addressing group differences and what is and is not an appropriate level of interaction. Each of these components, how we address differences and what is an acceptable level of interaction with others, has an important influence on interracial relationships. In the remainder of this section, I introduce three ideologies that will be explored in this study; political conservatism, color-blind racial ideology, and multiculturalism. These
Ideologies are discussed within the framework identified by Sidanius, Levin, Federico, and Pratto (2001).

**Ideologies.** Ideologies are important to study in the context of interracial relationships because of their explanatory power regarding intergroup relations (e.g., what is an appropriate level of contact with others). Sidanius et al. (2001) conceptualized ideologies regarding race as either hierarchy enhancing or hierarchy attenuating. They wrote that hierarchy enhancing ideologies within the United States work to uphold a social structure that not only separates individuals based on group membership, but also perpetuate a hierarchical structure. These ideologies also reinforce “group based social inequalities” such as access to resources and are often couched within beliefs that group separation is ideal and are characterized with anxiety toward any threat to the hierarchical social structure; a lack of support for affirmative action policies is often cited as an example of the manifestation of a hierarchy enhancing ideology or other legitimizing ideology. One can imagine that there might be an objection to interracial relationships because a person is uncomfortable with the ambiguity of a biracial child. In fact, one of the reasons given by former Louisiana justice of the peace for denying an interracial couple a marriage license was his “concern” for the children of such a relationship (Foster, 2009). Hierarchy attenuating ideologies are the opposite of enhancing ones in that they seek to undermine and challenge the hierarchy. Supporting affirmative action policies or striving to value all groups equally both act as hierarchy attenuating stances.

**Political conservatism.** One consistent ideology that has been negatively related to interracial dating among White men is political conservatism. Using the novel technique of speed dating research in relationship science, Eastwick et al. (2009) found that more conservative Whites were less willing to date a Black partner than more liberal Whites and that
more conservative Blacks were more willing to date a White partner compared to more liberal Blacks. They also found that even liberal Whites preferred White partners, but that their ingroup bias was not as strong when compared to conservative Whites. Taken together, these results suggest a nuanced influence of an ideology complicated by race. First, endogamy is a strong norm for both Black and White men. Additionally, political conservatism may indicate a stronger attraction toward White women or a weaker attraction toward Black women. These findings are not unique to this study.

The research on interracial relationships was advanced when scholars began to go beyond reporting findings and started speculating as to why the findings about political conservatism and interracial dating were so consistent. Eastwick et al. (2009) extended their study of interracial relationships by theorizing about this common finding. Eastwick et al. proposed that White, politically conservative speed-daters were less likely to be interested in interracial dating because their political views represent an ideology that perpetuates group separation and social dominance. They posited that interracial relationships are a threat to the social structure as they challenge the notion of group separation. Furthermore, because political conservatism is often related to social dominance orientation – a type of legitimizing ideology that has also been linked to an aversion to interracial relationships (Lalonde et al., 2007) – Eastwick et al.’s assertion encourages investigations of other legitimizing ideologies such as color-blind racial ideologies.

**Color-blind racial ideology (CBRI).** From the layperson’s perspective, CBRI conjures images of an even handed society in which race is not a factor in people’s lived experiences because it should not and does not matter. Sentiments such as “I don’t see race when I look at you” are thought to be ideal within the greater population. However, while social scientist would agree that race should not matter, the sentiment that it does not matter gives pause. Much
research has concluded that although overt forms of racial discrimination are no longer (e.g., racial slurs, or segregation) – or are at least less - socially acceptable, there are still differential access to resources and opportunities as a factor of their race. That is, scholars believe that institutional forms of differential treatment still exist. Because CBRI espouses the belief that race does not matter, it, in effect, endorses the hierarchal structure in the same way that SDO and political conservatism do. As such, CBRI is a legitimizing ideology (see Neville, 2009 for a full argument).

It is important to note one stark difference between CBRI and other legitimizing ideologies. CBRI, unlike other legitimizing ideologies such as social dominance orientation, directly addresses beliefs about race. This difference makes an investigation of CBRI as it relates to interracial relationships not only a logical next step, but also a conceptually and socially interesting one. Because those who endorse a CBRI believe that they are unaffected by race, one would expect CBRI to be unrelated to interracial dating because race does not matter. However, if there is this link between systems justifying attitudes and an aversion to interracial dating than we would expect CBRI to be associated with a decreased interest or willingness to interraccially date, at least among White men who are positioned at the top of the hierarchy. It should be noted that although legitimizing ideologies in regards to interracial relationships have been studied in White participants, parallel explorations in people of color are far less prevalent. In the one exception at the time of this study, no relationship between social dominance orientation and interracial dating attitudes was found among Black participants (Lalonde et al., 2007).

**Multiculturalism.** It is important to explore not only ideologies that may deter interest in interracial relationships, but also those that may make one more open to such unions, namely multiculturalism. Multiculturalism could be considered a hierarchy-attenuating ideology as it
emphasizes equality across group membership and is a sharp contrast with CBRI as the former acknowledges the importance of culture in people’s lived experience. Once more, nothing – or at least very little – is known about whether or not a multiculturalism may have an effect on one’s dating preferences. George and Yancey (2004), in the sole investigation of the relationship between multiculturalism and interracial relationships performed logistic regression analyses wherein multiculturalism and assimilationist ideologies were criterion variables, a procedure and conceptualization that is different enough from the current study that relevant conclusions cannot be drawn.

**Purpose**

An investigation into interracial relationships is needed to provide an accurate account of the influence of their two central components; their nature as an intimate relationship and as an intergroup interaction. To increase our understanding of interracial relationships, we must study the dynamics of romantic attraction in an intergroup context. This way of conceptualizing interracial relationships has only begun to be explored in the literature (Eastwick et al., 2009), but is promising. The current project explored whether attraction in romantic relationships was influenced by principles of attraction and intergroup ideologies. More specifically, the project explored the way that similarity (with race serving as a proxy) and familiarity (contact via the diversity of one’s social network) and intergroup ideologies (i.e., political conservatism, CBRI and multiculturalism) influenced men’s attraction in relationships. This investigation explicitly explores men because of the novelty and complexity of its methodology and because men have been consistently found to report a greater willingness to develop a romantic relationship with a partner of a different race. The current study was organized around three general framing questions:
Does similarity influence romantic attraction?

*Hypothesis 1:* Men will report more attraction toward women of their same race relative to women of a different race.

*Research Question 1:* Is there a racial difference in the extent to which men report greater attraction to women of the same race compared to women of a different race?

*Hypothesis 2:* Men will report more similarity toward women of their same race relative to women of a different race.

*Research Question 2:* Is there a racial difference in the extent to which men report greater similarity to women of the same race compared to women of a different race?

Does familiarity influence romantic attraction and perceived similarity?

*Hypothesis 3:* Greater interracial contact will be associated with greater attraction toward women of a different race.

*Research Question 3:* Is interracial contact associated with attraction toward a woman of the same race?

Do individuals’ intergroup ideologies influence romantic attraction and perceived similarity?

*Research Question 4:* Do political conservatism, CBRI, and Multicultural Ideology predict interracial and/or intraracial attraction?
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were 124 Black (N=62) and White (N=62) college men from a large Midwestern university. The sample consisted of volunteers recruited from classrooms to participate in an internet based study regarding heterosexual college men’s dating behaviors. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 – 21 years (M= 19.0, SD= 1.0).

Materials

Each participant read and rated eight profiles modified from Man, Rojahn, Chrosniak, and Sanford (2006). Man et al. (2006) created the original profiles for research investigating the effects of physical disabilities on romantic attraction. For the purposes of this study, information about a physical disability was removed from the profile. Each of the eight profiles was accompanied with a color photograph of a woman: three Black, three White, one Asian, and one Latina. The current research investigated Black-White interracial relationships and so the Latina and Asian woman profiles were used as filler profiles. The women in the photographs volunteered to have their photographs used for the purposes of this study. Each volunteer was contacted through either a social networking website or a dating website about volunteering for the current study. The women who responded were provided with a hyperlink that outlined the purpose of the current study, how their photographs would be used, and provided the contact information of the researchers should they decide to withdraw their consent. The volunteers then provided their email address as consent for the use of their image and were given opportunity to upload a different photograph to the researchers for the purposes of the study. Participants viewed each of the eight profiles; the order of profiles was counterbalanced and yielded 6 different orderings of the survey. Within the survey, the photographs of the women were
assigned to profiles such that no two surveys contained the same pairings of photographs and profiles. In total there were six versions of the survey and participants were randomly assigned to one of the six versions. Example profile narrative:

I am a 19 year old photography major and enjoy listening to jazz and reading poetry. While on family vacations or out with friends, I always have my camera ready for those unexpected shots. I use photography to raise benefits for organizations that are committed to helping pediatric cancer survivors. In addition to attending the University, I also enjoy spending time babysitting for local families.

Twelve men (seven White and five Black) independently rated the physical attractiveness of 12 women: four White, four Black, two Asian and two Latina. The women were rated on scale labeled “Very Unattractive”, “Unattractive”, “Slightly Unattractive”, “Slightly Attractive”, “Attractive” and “Very Attractive”. These ratings were then quantified from one to six with a score of six corresponding to “Very Attractive” ratings. The final photographs were chosen based on comparable mean levels of attraction across all judges.

Measures

Demographics

Participants completed a demographic questionnaire created for this study. The questionnaire requested participants’ age, sex, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity. There were separate questions for race and ethnicity.

Familiarity/Contact

To examine interracial contact, participants were asked to indicate the racial/ethnic backgrounds of their current friends on a scale from 0 (none) to 4 (all or almost all). This type of index has been used in previous research (Neville, Coleman, Falconer, & Holmes, 2005). Participants provided ratings for five racial/ethnic groups; Black/African American, Asian/Asian
American, Hispanic/Latino, White/European American, and Native American/American Indian. For this investigation, out-group contact was obtained by using participants’ responses regarding Black members in their social network for White men, and responses regarding White members of their social network for Black men.

**Perceived Similarity**

Participants responded to three items created for this study to assess the extent to which they perceived each target to be similar to themselves on a 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*) Likert-type scale. The three items were “I believe this person and I would share many of the same values (e.g., political and family), “I believe this person and I would have similar interests and tastes (e.g. movies, food, hobbies)”, and “I do not believe this person and I would agree on cultural topics (e.g. music, dress, religion)”, reverse coded. These items were presented after viewing each of the eight profiles. Participants’ responses to these items were grouped based on the race of the woman. Initially, the measure for perceived similarity toward White targets was estimated to have a poor internal consistency (alpha = .57), while the internal consistency of similarity towards Blacks was acceptable (alpha = .78).

Examining the data revealed that the reverse coded item on the similarity scale (“I do not believe this person and I would agree on cultural topics (e.g. music, dress, religion)”) performed poorly. The item-scale correlation for each of the reverse scored items (one per each critical profile and six in total) was negative. Likewise the inter-item correlations for the perceived similarity toward Black and White women were negative between the reverse scored items and the other items used to assess similarity. Additionally, statistics indicated that deleting each of the reverse coded items would increase the reliability of the overall scale. The decision was made to delete the reverse coded item for each critical profile. This correction increased the internal
reliability of the perceived similarity measure toward the profiles of both White and Black targets, alpha toward White = .89 and alpha toward Black = .93.

**Ideologies**

**Political conservatism.** To ascertain participants’ conservatism, a procedure similar to Abromowitz (2011) was employed. Participants responded to an 9-item ideology measure that asked participants to identify how liberal/conservative they perceived themselves to be and their level of support of eight policy issues; the repeal of the Don’t Ask Don’t Tell military policy, health care reform, expansion of SCHIP, the economic stimulus program, federal funding of stem cell research, federal funding of clean energy research and development, financial reform, and raising taxes on upper income households. This scale, developed from the American National Election Studies’ Evaluation of Government and Society Study, has shown good internal consistency α = .92. It is ideal for the current study because it assesses political conservatism as a hierarchy enhancing ideology as most of the policies are a hierarchy enhancing policy – though not all are related to race. Participants responded to each item using a 7-point Likert-type scale to indicate their support of each policy – 1 (*strongly oppose*) to 7 (*strongly support*). A mean of participant’s reverse scored responses was computed higher scores indicating greater conservatism, α = .84.

**Color-blind racial ideology.** As a measure of the extent to which the men endorse the belief that race is or should be a non-issue in society, participants completed the Color-blind Racial Attitudes Scale (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Brown, 2000; CoBRAS). The CoBRAS is a 20-item measure containing three subscales: Racial Privilege – unawareness of White Privilege (e.g. “Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.”), Institutional Discrimination – an unawareness of discrimination at the institutional level
(e.g. “Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin”), and Blatant Racial issues – an unawareness of racial discrimination (e.g. “Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.”). Items on the CoBRAS are rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). Using collegiate samples of White, Black, Latino, and Asian participants, Neville et al. (2000) found the CoBRAS to have good reliability in the total score; alpha range .84-.91 and found that each of the CoBRAS subscales were within acceptable range as well; Racial privilege α = .71 -.83, Institutional Discrimination α = .73 - .81, and Blatant Racial Issues α = .70 - .76. The CoBRAS was also found to have convergent validity as it was found to be associated with the Modern Racism Scale (α = .52), The Multidimensional Belief in a Just World scale (α =.61), and the Global Belief in a Just World scale (α = .53). Since Neville et al.’s (2000) validation study, the CoBRAS has shown consistent internal reliability, alpha estimates have ranged from .79 (Poteat & Spanierman, 2008) - .88, (Gushue, 2004). There is some psychometric support for the CoBRAS among Black Americans; alpha estimates range from .70 (Neville et al., 2005) to .74 (Barr and Neville, 2009) among Black college aged students. CoBRAS. Alpha estimates for this study were CoBRAS total = .81 for the White subsample and .76 for the Black subsample.

**Multiculturalism.** As a measure participants’ endorsement of multiculturalism, the Multicultural Ideology scale of the Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies project was used. Originally used in Berry and Kalin, (1995). The Multicultural Ideology scale is a 10 item, 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) designed to assess participants’ beliefs about cross-cultural interactions, (e.g., “A society that has a variety of ethnic and cultural groups is more able to tackle new problems as they occur”, and “We should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country.”).
Use of the Multicultural Ideology scale originated in Canada (Berry & Kalin, 1995) and has been used in numerous countries. In studies conducted outside of Canada, the Multicultural Scale has shown to have acceptable reliability, Cronbach’s alpha estimates range .82 - .88 (Arends-Toth, & Van De Vijver, 2002; Verkuyteni & Brug, 2004) and to be associated with greater endorsement of integration policies (Yijala & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2009) among European youth. However, the Multicultural Ideology scale has not been utilized within a college-aged American population, but was shown to have acceptable reliability in the current study overall alpha was estimated at .84.-White subsample $\alpha = .82$, Black subsample $\alpha = .85$.

**Attraction**

Romantic attraction was measured using five items used in Eastwick et al. (2009). The wording of the items were slightly altered for the purposes of the current study (e.g., “I would be excited to get to know my interaction partner better,” was worded “I would be excited to get to know her better” and “I would be interested in going on a date with my interaction partner,” was worded “I would be interested in going on a date with this person”). Participants completed the measure of attraction after each of the eight profiles using a 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 9 (Strongly Agree) Likert-type scale. These items were shown to have good internal consistency for capturing attraction in an interracial context, $\alpha = .88$ among Black and White men responding to a White woman target and $\alpha = .84$ among the same sample when responding to a Black woman target. In the current study, participants responses were grouped based on the race of the women depicted and a mean for attraction toward Black ($\alpha = .95$) and White ($\alpha = .95$) targets was obtained.

**Procedure**
Participants were recruited through classrooms and instructors via email. Researchers contacted instructors of several classrooms via email about a research project examining college men’s dating behaviors. Instructors were provided with an email to send to their students that disclosed the voluntary nature of the study as well as the opportunity to receive research participation credit or a chance to win one of four $50 Visa Gift cards. Researchers also recruited participants through a flyer on campus that included the web address for the study. In order to secure an equal number of Black men participants, the researchers also entered into classrooms of African-American studies classes, which tend to have higher enrollment of students of color than other general courses. The researchers also sent recruitment emails to the identified leaders of several student organizations and college fraternities.

In all recruitment efforts, potential participants were provided with the web address for the current study. Upon reaching the web address for the survey, participants were presented with an informed consent letter. If participants consented to the study, they were directed to click a hyperlink indicating that they were 18 years of age and understood the risks and benefits of the study. The hyperlink for each participant was randomized to connect him or her to one of the six unique orderings of the survey.

Three participants who did not identify as Black or White heterosexual men were omitted from the analysis in this study. Participants rated each profile using the measure of attraction immediately after viewing the profile, as well as the measure of similarity. Next, participants completed the CoBRAS, Multiculturalism Scale, and political conservatism scale in a randomized order before arriving at the end of the survey. Participation lasted for 15-20 minutes. Following the completion of the survey, participants were prompted to choose whether they wanted to receive research participation credit or enter for a chance to win one of four $50 Visa
gift cards – approximately a 1 in 30 chance. Those who chose to enter into the lottery were provided with a hyperlink to another website where they could enter their email address in order to enter the lottery. This procedure ensured that participants’ responses were not connected to their email address.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Variable Names

When testing the study hypotheses, it is necessary to examine means for the entire sample, as well as means for the racial subsamples. In instances, in which analyses include the entire sample and require a within-subject analysis, we will refer to the overall mean ($n=124$), as the Grand mean (e.g. Grand attraction toward Black women or Grand perceived similarity toward White women). In instances in which the race of the participant matters, we will exclude the word “grand” from the variable name.

Data Screening

The variables in the study were examined for outliers and violation of the assumption of normality. Analyses indicated that all of the variables of interest did not violate the assumption of normality, as the measures of skewness and kurtosis were between the -1 to 1 threshold. Boxplots revealed that there were no outliers as all responses were within two standard deviations of the mean. Additional analyses for violations of the assumption of normality and outliers were conducted separately for the Black and White men samples. Among the subsample of Black men, two measures were found to be leptokurtic; attraction toward White women (kurtosis = 1.04) and perceived similarity toward White women (kurtosis = 1.01). Follow-up One-Sample Kolomogorov-Smirov tests indicated that these two variables did not differ significantly from a normal distribution $ATW\ p=.40$, $STW\ p=.30$. Among the White subsample, no variables were found to violate the assumptions of shape or distribution of normality.

Examining participants’ responses on the study variables by race identified a small number of outliers on three variables. Among White men, one participant reported a score greater than two standard deviations above the mean on the CoBRAS, and one participant
reported an *attraction toward White women* that was more than two standard deviations less than the group average. Among the Black subsample, two participants reported *attraction toward Black women* that was greater than two standard deviations below the group mean. For each of these outliers individual scores were replaced with the closest score available (Ratcliff, 1993).

**Descriptive statistics**

Forty-one percent of the participants indicated that they were in a current romantic relationship (*n* = 51). Of those who responded about their dating history (*n* = 120), fifty-four participants (43.5%) indicated that they were currently or had previously been in an interracial romantic relationship. Two participants indicated that they had never been in a romantic relationship.

**Preliminary Analysis**

Tables 1 and 2 report the zero-order correlations among the study variables. Among White men (Table 1), *multicultural ideology* and *perceived similarity toward Black women* were positively associated with *attraction toward Black women* (a small and large relationship respectively). Additionally, a moderate positive relationship was found between *interracial contact* and romantic *attraction toward Black women*. Color-blind racial ideology was found to have a small negative association with *attraction toward Black women*. Regarding intraracial attraction, a large positive relationship was found between *perceived similarity toward White women* and *attraction toward White women*.

Zero-order correlations with the Black subsample (Table 1) indicated a small and positive relationship between *perceived similarity to White women* and *romantic attraction toward White women*. Similarly, a small and positive relationship was found between *multicultural ideology* and *attraction toward White women*. Regarding *intraracial attraction*, a small positive
relationship was found between *interracial contact* and *attraction toward Black women*.

*Perceived similarity toward Black women* was found to have a large and positive relationship with *attraction toward Black women*; a small and positive relationship was found between *multicultural ideology* and *attraction toward Black* women. Finally, *CBRI* was found to have a small and negative association with *attraction toward Black* women among the Black men in the study.

Examining the responses of the entire sample, analyses indicated moderate *Grand attraction toward Black* and *White women* in the study (*M*=4.46, *SD*=1.49). A within-subject *t*-test indicated that there was no difference in the *Grand attraction toward Black* (*M* = 4.54, *SD* = 1.79) and *Grand romantic attraction toward White women* (*M*=4.36, *SD*=1.58), *t*(123) = 1.19, *p*=.24. Participants perceived moderate levels of similarity with the women depicted in the study. The *Grand perceived similarity toward Black women* (*M*=3.39, *SD*=1.21) was greater than the *Grand perceived similarity toward White women* (*M*=3.12, *SD*=1.06), *t*(123) = 2.53, *p* <.05; this indicates that, as a whole, the sample perceived more similarity toward Black women than White women. Additionally, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted with the attraction scores for each of the central profiles to determine if one woman was rated as more attractive than the others. Analysis indicated that there were no significant differences in the rating of one woman compared to the other women *F*(1,122)=.177, *p* >.05.

**The Influence of Similarity on Romantic Attraction**

To test Hypothesis 1, stating that men would report greater romantic attraction to women of the same race, a within-subject *t*-test was conducted. For the simplicity of interpretation, two indices of attraction were computed. Participant attraction toward Black women was recoded into either an intraracial index for Black men or an interracial index for White men. A similar
procedure was conducted for ratings of attraction toward White women with the score being recoded into an index for intraracial attraction for White men and interracial attraction for Black men. The *intraracial* and *interracial* index served as dependent variables. The results of the within-subjects *t*-test indicated support for the hypothesis as the *Grand intraracial attraction* score (\(M=4.90; SD = 1.65\)) was greater than the *Grand interracial attraction* score (\(M = 4.00; SD = 1.64\)), \(t(1,123)= 7.88, p<.001\), effect size *Cohen’s d* =.70.

To investigate whether there are racial differences in the extent to which men are more attracted to women of the same race (Research Question 1), a difference index was created for which subtracted ratings of *interracial attraction* from ratings of *intraracial attraction*. A between-subjects *t*-test was conducted with race of the participant serving as the independent variable. The analyses suggested that there were no racial differences in the extent to which Black men and White men were more attracted to women of their same race compared to women of a different race, (\(M = 1.10; SD = 1.41, M = .76; SD =1.20\), respectively), \(t(120)=1.76, p >.05\).

A within-subjects *t*-test examining participants’ perception of similarity using indices similar to those used to test Hypothesis 1, for supported Hypothesis 2. This analysis indicated that *Grand perceived intraracial similarity* (\(M = 3.56; SD = 1.07\)) was greater than *Grand perceived interracial similarity* (\(M = 2.95; SD = 1.13\)), \(t(1,123) = 6.21, Cohen’s d = .53\). This meant that men perceived more similarity toward women of the same race than women of a different race.

Research Question 2, is there a racial difference in the extent to which men perceive more similarity toward women of their same race than women of a different race was also assessed using an independent samples *t*-test with a difference index between intraracial and interracial ratings. The results indicated that the difference among Black men in perceived *intraracial* and
**Predicting Romantic Attraction**

To test Hypothesis 3, which predicted that contact with members of another race would be related to greater interracial attraction, two separate simultaneous regressions were conducted separately for White and Black men. These regressions also were designed to explore research Question 4, Do interpersonal group ideologies (i.e., political conservatism, CBRI, and multicultural) predict interracial and/or intraracial attraction. *Interracial contact, CBRI, political conservatism and multicultural ideology* were entered as predictor variables and the *interracial* and *intraracial attraction* variables served as the criterion variables. Previous interracial dating experience was also entered as a dummy coded predictor, such that a score of 1 indicates previously interracial dating experience. Among White men, the overall model was significant for *interracial attraction* $F_{(4,57)} = 2.63, p < .05$, Adjusted $R^2 = .12$, however none of the ideologies were found to be significant predictors (Table 2). A significant model without significant predictors can be an indicator of high multi-collinearity among predictor variables. Analyses of condition indices and variance proportions indicated that high multi-collinearity was found among respondents *CBRI* and *multicultural ideology* scores. Following recommendations from Grimm and Yarnold (1995), the simultaneous regression was conducted with one of the variables removed, but this procedure did not yield a significant predictor. Among White men, the model predicting *intraracial attraction* was not significant, $F_{(4,57)} = 1.18, p > .05$ (Table 2).

Among Black men, the overall model predicting *interracial attraction* was at the threshold of significance, $F_{(5,56)} = 2.36, p = .05$. In this model, both previous *interracial dating experience* and higher levels of *multicultural ideology* predicted greater *interracial attraction* ($\beta$s
=.28 and .33 respectively; Table 3). The model predicting *intraracial attraction* was also significant \( F(5,50) = 6.67, p < .001 \). *Interracial contact* and *CBRI* were found to be significant predictors of intraracial attraction, \( \beta = .5 \) and \( -.31 \) respectively indicating that greater *interracial contact* predicted greater *intraracial attraction* and that greater *CBRI* predicted less *intraracial attraction* (Table 3).
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In the current study, I investigated the impact of contact, similarity and racial ideologies on heterosexual college men’s romantic attraction toward women of their same race and women of a different race. As predicted, participants reported greater romantic attraction and greater perceived similarity toward women of their same race compared to women of a different race. These findings are consistent with previous research that investigates the norm of homogamy. They reflect the reality that the majority of committed relationships consist of same race partners. However, the results of the current study do not echo findings in earlier research that Black men are more willing to date a member of a different race than White men (Qian, 1999; Yancey, 2002).

Within the Black subsample, the model predicting intraracial attraction was significant. Greater endorsement of color-blind racial ideology predicted decreases in intraracial attraction among Black men. This finding suggests that, among Black men, the more strongly they endorse an ideology that perpetuates group separation and denies the existence of systemic and institutional forms of racism, the less attraction they felt toward the Black women. This finding is not unlike the discovery of Eastwick et al. (2009), who found a statistical trend for more politically conservative Black men to be less willing to date a Black woman partner in a speed dating environment compared to those who identified as liberal. In both the Eastwick et al. (2009) study and the current research, a hierarchy enhancing ideology was associated with less intraracial attraction among Black men.

The above interpretation implies a type of self-deprecation among Black men with high hierarchy enhancing ideology, but there is an alternative explanation. It was noted in Eastwick et al. (2009) that a lower intraracial attraction does not necessarily equate to a preference for a
partner of another race. Likewise, the results from the current study suggest less intraracial attraction among Black men may be an artifact of a less complex understanding of racism and not necessarily a lack of attraction toward Black women. For example, someone high in CBRI may be less likely to challenge mainstream U.S cultural messages than someone who is acutely aware that the messages he receives privilege one group over others. The former may take these messages at face value and begin to idolize the norms and values of the mainstream. This may lead to an appreciation or identification with the culture and standards of the mainstream. On the other hand, a person who is aware of the biases and has a more complex understanding of racism may reject the mainstream message of Eurocentric ideals and endorse other ideologies about race.

The model predicting *interracial dating* among Black men, was equal to the alpha cutoff of .05. The results of the simultaneous regression are promising and contribute new information to our understanding of interracial attraction. Among Black men, an ideology that explicit addresses cultural differences was found to be associated with an increased propensity to date someone of a different race. This finding that greater *multicultural ideology* predicts interracial attraction is unlike any other finding that addresses ideologies and interracial relationships as other programs of study have identified ideologies that hinder one’s willingness to date someone of a different race (e.g., Eastwick et al. 2009; Lalonde et al. 2007). This finding is especially important as previous research has examined ideologies that indirectly assess beliefs about intergroup dynamics (i.e. hierarchy enhancing ideologies that covertly maintain a racial hierarchy).

Among White men, there were no significant predictors in the model predicting interracial attraction although the overall model was significant. An examination of the
collinearity statistics suggested that *multicultural ideology* and *CBRI* exhibited high multicollinearity, signifying that these items tapped the same construct. However, removing either predictor did not yield a clearer understanding of the data. It may be that individuals simultaneously hold hierarchy enhancing and hierarchy attenuating beliefs and that among White men neither has an influence on interracial attraction. While such a conclusion is possible, it would not explain the zero-order correlations that found both *CBRI* and *multicultural ideology* to be negatively and positively associated with attraction toward Black women, respectively.

Alternatively, the complex finding may be an artifact of social desirability among the White subsample. While the CoBRAS has been found to be unrelated to measures of social desirability (Neville et al. 2000), the Multicultural Ideology Scale has not undergone similar psychometric tests. If an individual were to score highly on a measure that indirectly measures a type of racial bias (CoBRAS), and because of social desirability also scores highly on a measure that blatantly assesses attitudes toward group equality (MIS) the results may be difficult to decipher without proper controls. If social desirability is an influence in the results among the White sample, it could be considered an individual difference variable which would still allow for the zero-order correlations found among attraction toward Black women and *CBRI* and *multicultural ideology*.

In light of the difficulties in interpreting the simultaneous regression, there were promising correlations within the White subsample. The pattern of correlations among *CBRI* and other study variables lend support for *CBRI* as a hierarchy enhancing ideology. *CBRI* was inversely related to interracial contact and was inversely related to attraction toward Black women, promoting group separation. Among Black and White men the acknowledgement and valuing of diversity was associated with greater interracial attraction. These results are unique in
the study of romantic relationships as no other research program has investigated the nature of hierarchy attenuating ideologies on romantic attraction.

One might conclude that multiculturalism may lead individuals to assess their attraction not by ignoring the race of the other, but rather may lead to an “all things considered” assessment of romantic attraction. This would suggest that race was a positive influence on interracial attraction. The results found here are consistent with Lewis et al. (1997) who found that individuals in interracial relationships cited both racial and non-racial factors in their decision to date someone of a different race. However, by that same token, the results relating multicultural ideology to interracial attraction could also offer support for the early theory that partners in interracial relationships exoticize the other and that interracial relationships are superficial infatuations with differentness (i.e., jungle fever). Continued research is needed to understand the nature of the relationship between these variables.

While many of the findings of the current research were either predicted, explicitly explored, or replicated previous research, there were some unexpected results. For example, contact with members of another race predicted stronger intraracial attraction among Black men. It may be that for the Black men in this study being exposed to White Americans highlighted differences between the two racial groups and reinforced their identification with other Blacks. Understanding this finding is complicated as greater contact with Whites was also associated with being more politically conservative and Eastwick et al. (2009) found that political conservatism among Black men led to a decreased attraction toward Black women. However, in the current study contact is associated with both increased conservatism and romantic attraction; and political conservatism had no direct association with interracial romantic attraction among Black men.
Limitations

Although the current study adds to our understanding of interracial relationships and attraction, it is not without its limitations. One crucial limitation is the sample used in the current study. Because the younger population has been theorized to be the most accepting of interracial relationships and attraction (Rosenfeld & Kim, 2005, Yancey, 2009) and men have reported greater willingness to date a person of different race (Yancey, 2002), the sample would seem ideal for examining the constructs in the current study. However, using this select group of individuals to study heterosexual attraction only offers half of the picture. Furthermore, the participants in this study were from one university and were obtained through classroom recruitment as well as targeted recruitment through student organizations.

In obtaining an equivalent number of Black participants, we canvassed student organizations that highlighted racial and ethnic identification among Black and African-American students; this approach to recruiting may have skewed our results among the Black subsample as men who belong to these organizations may differ from those who do not. For example, high group identification among the current sample may have led to the unprecedented stronger same race preference among Black men compared to the White men of the sample. While efforts were made to secure a more diverse sample of Black and White men for the current study such as flyers across campus, that many of the participants were recruited through student organizations, courses on race studies and through other manners of convenience limit the generalizability of the study.

Another concern of the current study is the tradeoff between internal and external validity. While great thought was given in the design and random assignment of participants to versions of the survey and the pairings of pictures with profiles, it could be argued that the rating
of romantic attraction toward the targets is contrived. Indeed, similarity and ultimate attraction toward another individual is fostered over time (Miller et al., 2007). Theories such as social penetration theory suggest that only through an increase of breadth and depth of conversation does liking increase. In the context of the current study, participants were asked to indicate romantic attraction with only a photograph and a short four to five sentence description. This limits the information that participants can gain about the women. In a live interaction, these participants would have been able to ask questions that are important to them and that would have provided perhaps more relevant information in their decisions about romantic attraction.

Unfortunately, conclusions about causality cannot be deduced as this is a cross-sectional study. While several associations were found between ideologies and romantic attraction, exactly how these relationships function is unclear. For example, among White men it is as plausible that less contact with Blacks leads to higher CBRI which decreases romantic attraction as it is that CBRI, as a legitimizing ideology, leads to group separation and subsequent decreases in perceived similarity and romantic attraction. Furthermore, complicated relationships such as the influence of contact on ideology and attraction among Black men can only be speculated about in the current study.

One last limitation of the study is that it only examined interracial attraction among Black and White heterosexual men. As has been noted here and elsewhere, the changing demographic of the United States opens the door for attraction across all racial groups, including White – non-White attraction as well as non-White interracial attraction. The majority of research on interracial relationship focuses on Black and White relationships. Given that a significant aspect of the current study incorporated theory about the U.S. racial hierarchy, examining attraction across the two groups for which there is the greatest social distance (Hrab, Radloff, Gray-Ray,
1999) is the most practical way to explore the study variables. However, in theory, these dynamics are present between all racial groups and warrant exploration in other pairings as well. By examining only heterosexual men, the current study cannot speak to the experiences of a majority of people who are either women or part of the gay or bisexual community.

**Future Directions**

To address the limitations of this study, future research could duplicate the current design using different populations; for example women and individuals who identify as either lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Similarly, examining responses across different combinations of interracial attraction such as White-Latino/a or Black-Asian would also be a step forward in this line of research. Future studies that explore different interracial combinations could prove especially informative and fruitful as different racial groups occupy different places in the U.S. racial hierarchy and their endorsement of hierarchy enhancing or attenuating ideologies might vary accordingly. The intersection of race and gender in interracial relationships has been explored in previous research with interesting results. For example Yancey (2009) found, among a large sample of internet daters, vast differences in group members interest in dating specific races that varied by both race and gender. As an example, he found that among heterosexual White men, participants were most willing to interracially date Asian women and least willing to date Black women, but that among heterosexual White women, participants indicated the least amount of interest in Asian men.

A more substantial contribution would begin to address some of the questions that the current study raises. For example, a qualitative investigation consisting of interviews or focus groups that explores how multiculturalism can be simultaneously linked to interracial attraction and intraracial attraction among Black men would be an appropriate next step. Discovering how
those high in *multicultural ideology* discuss relationships and race in relationships may illicit themes or attitudes different than those low in the construct. Alternatively, a longitudinal study examining changes in contact and ideologies and their impact on romantic attraction would also be beneficial in addressing the concerns raised by the current study.

**Conclusion**

It can be gleaned from this study that among college men interracial attraction is most greatly associated with perceived similarity. In interracial attraction among White men, hierarchy enhancing ideologies are inversely associated with attraction and perceived similarity. This is true especially when these men are endorsing a color-blind stance in which they believe they are unaffected by race and that racism does not exist. Among Black men CBRI was associated with less attraction toward women of the same race. If it is truly the intention of these men to evaluate others fairly, they may have to challenge their current ideologies and adopt an approach to race that acknowledges differences in lived experience while simultaneously valuing said differences. While multiculturalism does value diversity, it may not be a complete solution to understanding attraction. The research on liking emphasizes the importance of perceived similarity and in the current study multiculturalism is not associated with perceived similarity across the entire sample. This leaves open the possibility that interracial attraction in relationships is influenced at least in part by an exoticizing of the other or perhaps an excitement and curiosity about someone different than the self.

Overall this study contributes to our understanding of interracial relationships by examining ideologies as well as relationship constructs of attraction among Black and White men. Consistent with previous research, men reported greater attraction and perceived similarity toward women of their same race. In examining the impact of ideologies about race, differences
were found in both the endorsement and influence of hierarchy enhancing and attenuating ideology based on the race of the participant. Among White men, CBRI was correlated with a decrease in interracial attraction and predicted a decrease in intraracial attraction among Black men. Additionally, among Black men multicultural ideology was a significant predictor of attraction but not among White men. This series of results indicates that understanding interracial relationships as both intimate relationships and intergroup relations requires specific investigations that consider differences based on race and likely gender as the implications of interracial attraction are influenced by constructs other than universal components of romantic attraction.

Relationship research that investigates interracial attraction and relationships should move away from disproving misconceptions about interracial relationships and emphasizing the ways in which these unions are similar to intraracial relationships and begin to explore the potential differences. This line of research does not have to focus on ideologies of partners, but could also explore how societal impressions of interracial relationships possibly hinder willingness to date someone of a different race, how interracial couples develop support and/or seek out other interracial couples, or how interracial couples discuss the racialized experiences of one or both partners to name a few.
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### Table 1

**Correlation Matrix by Race of Participant**

#### White Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Item 1</th>
<th>Item 2</th>
<th>Item 3</th>
<th>Item 4</th>
<th>Item 5</th>
<th>Item 6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interracial Contact</td>
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<td>0-4</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.82</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.57**</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Political Conservatism</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>-.26*</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Attraction toward Black</td>
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<td>1.50</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>-.31*</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>6. Attraction toward White</td>
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<td>.95</td>
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<td>.67**</td>
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#### Black Participants

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>α</th>
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<th>Item 3</th>
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<td>-.07</td>
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<td>.12</td>
<td>.66**</td>
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*p<.05; **p<.01
Table 2  
*Summary of Simultaneous Regression Predicting Interracial and Intraracial Attraction among White Men*

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<th>Model and Variable</th>
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<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>.65</td>
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<td>Interracial Contact</td>
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<td>1.31</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Intraracial Attraction**<sup>b</sup> |    |      |      |       |           |
| Interracial Dating | .27 | .44 | .09 | .60 | .73       |
| Political Conservatism | -.21 | .13 | -.24 | -1.59 | .71       |
| CBRI | .00 | .02 | -.03 | -.15 | .47       |
| Multicultural Ideology | .24 | .37 | .10 | .65 | .65       |
| Interracial Contact | -.021 | .23 | -.01 | -.10 | .73       |

<sup>a</sup> $F_{(5,56)} = 2.63$, $p < .05$, Adj. $R^2 = .12$.

<sup>b</sup> $F_{(5,56)} = 1.18$, $p > .05$.
Table 3
Summary of Simultaneous Regression Predicting Interracial and Intraracial Attraction among Black Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model and Variable</th>
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<td>2.08*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interracial Contact</td>
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<td>.83</td>
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</table>

*a F(5,56) = 2.36, p = .05, Adj R² = .10
*b F(5,56) = 6.67, p < .001, Adj R² = .32.

*= p < .05; **= p < .001.