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Interracial Relationships: The History, Growth, and Effects on Individuals and Society

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INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS: THE HISTORY, GROWTH, AND EFFECTS ON
INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY

By
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requirements for the
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Abstract

Interracial relationships are an often overlooked and misunderstood issue in the United States as well as in other countries. The percentage of these relationships are on the rise, not only involving African Americans and Caucasians, but also Latinos and Asians as well. A thorough study of the cultural concepts of interracial relationships will involve first defining the issue, looking at the prevalence and taking note of trends, reviewing the history and laws that brought this issue to the forefront, and thoroughly examining the positive and negative effects on individuals and society. The research on interracial marriages will help to increase knowledge about different races, empathize with personal experiences, aid others in adapting to relationships among races, and champion education on the effects of interracial relationships. Further research will continue with current trends that are receiving noteworthy attention such as the effects of media exposure, the concept of diverse genetics, ever changing approval/disapproval/attitudes, the application of race theories, and the growing amount of cultural diversity and opportunities afforded to individuals in interracial relationships.

Keywords: interracial relationships, interracial marriages

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Introduction	1
Literature Review	4
Definition of Interracial Relationships	4
Miscegenation	5
Prevalence of Interracial Relationships	6
Demographics	7
Interracial Children	9
History, Laws, Court Cases	11
Interracial Marriage Laws	12
Pace vs. Alabama	14
Perez vs. Sharp	15
Loving vs. Virginia	16
Cultural Attitudes/Approval/Disapproval	18
Individual States Approval	19
Individual Americans Approval	20
Race Theories	22
Positive Effects of Interracial Relationships	25
Cultural Exposure and Diversity	26
Increased media exposure and racial opportunities	29
Creation of Loving Day	33

Diverse Genetics	33
Negative Effects of Interracial Marriages	35
Racial Discrimination and Bias	35
Divorce Rates	39
Isolation	41
Health	44
Recommendations	47
Conclusion	49
References	51

Introduction

“When you are dealing with humanity as a family, there’s no question of integration or intermarriage. It's just one human being marrying another human being or one human being living around and with another human being” (X & Haley, 1992, p.181). These are the words of Malcolm X regarding every human whether they are black, white, brown, or red and how he/she relates to humanity. Malcolm X proposes that if every person acts humanely, there would be no issues surrounding intermarriage. There would be no questioning motives, no intolerance, and no prejudice. However, research shows that these words of Malcolm X are not reality for many in America and around the world. Interracial marriage has been and remains a topic of debate and social interest today. Race is correlated with power, and the power exerted over interracial couples is resulting in positive and negative outcomes. These outcomes are affecting individuals, couples, families, communities, and society as a whole.

This Malcolm X quote speaks volumes of how interracial relationships are seen in the world not only in the past but in the present as well. Regretfully, these relationships were perceived for hundreds of years as a threat to white supremacy. This perceived threat led to the banning of such unions in the United States and left many to think of the acts as deviant. However, with the growth in numbers of interracial marriages and the increase in racial diversity in recent decades, racial boundaries are beginning to lessen in U. S. society. This surge in racial diversity has been brought about by an increase in immigrants, transnational adoptions, and marital relationships between individuals of different races. An increase in racial/ethnic identities has helped to bring about a slight fade in the historical boundaries that have existed between groups of different races and ethnicities. However, many Americans are quick to note that while

some boundaries are fading, others still exist or are being formed that promote racial divide. For these racial groups, racism and discrimination is still a very big part of modern-day America.

The key to eliminate all boundaries is to first recognize their existence. Modern sociological research is promoting race as fluid in that it is neither static nor stable in its boundaries. Thus, this concept of fluidity defines how interracial couples, and others perceive their racial identity in one time, place, and circumstance and is apt to change with a change in context. This can lead individuals in interracial marriages into an opportunity to explore their individual and family racial identity in a new light. However, it can also reveal to interracial couples the external evaluation and judgment they are receiving from others with racist reactions and conversations. Couples report feelings and accusations of being more white or less black depending on their interracial makeup. This questioning of degree of blackness or whiteness is known as contextual “reracing.” This presents a challenge to racial identity that is dependent on context. Statements like this stifle identity exploration and labels the interracial experience as invalid. This concept of reracing results in individuals taking less pride in their own race and struggling to feel comfortable in sharing their own racial identity (Afful et al., 2015). Interracial relationships are but one example of where these racial boundaries continue to exist. It is an overlooked, and often misunderstood, issue in the United States as well as in other countries. The issue of interracial marriage has positive and negative effects on individuals and society and has evolved throughout the years.

Maya Angelou proudly claims a goal for all concerning relationships that involve mixed races and/or ethnic groups. “Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope” (Fusaro, 2014, p.102). Maya Angelou was a poet, writer, civil rights activist, and editor, working alongside Malcolm X and Martin

Luther King Jr. to bring about social change. These activists worked tirelessly to recognize and celebrate a change in the racial landscape of America. For too long, tension and conflict between races has resulted in a racial divide in the United States as well as other nations. A writer and activist can be used to acknowledge that divide and work to bring effective change. The writings of Angelou are described as "...lauded more for its depictions of Black beauty, the strength of women, and the human spirit; ... demanding social justice for all..." ("Maya Angelou," n.d., para. 7).

In the United States and around the world, what does being in an interracial marriage mean or imply? What are the effects or consequences? This paper will examine the research question of what are the positive and negative effects of interracial relationships on individuals and society, and how has these effects evolved over the years. It is important for others to understand and empathize with others regarding past, present, and future life experiences with interracial relationships and examine how these experiences have changed each individual's outlook on other races and cultures. Society's desire should be to continue to learn about different races, relate personal experiences on interracial relationships, help others to adapt to relationships among races, and to champion education on the effects of interracial relationships.

The percentage of interracial relationships is on the rise, not only involving African Americans and Caucasians but also Latinos and Asians as well (Livingston & Brown, 2020). This project will use examples from court cases, court rulings, and laws to show how the United States' views have evolved from years ago. One example being one of the most famous court cases: Loving vs. Virginia. One would predict that since the outcome of this court case legalized interracial marriages, culture rather than biology would become the criterion that separates racial differences. The most intimate meeting of culture occurs in interracial marriages and might lead

some to think that love is becoming colorblind. In this paper, we will discover that this shift in thinking has been slow to occur.

Literature Review

In order to study the positive and negative effects of interracial marriage on individuals and society, literature must be reviewed and analyzed to first ascertain the accepted definition of an interracial relationship and then to examine the prevalence of these relationships. Discovery of demographics of this sector of society as well as terms associated with this phenomenon will be studied for relevance. By considering the history, laws, and court cases that have revolved around the issue of interracial marriage, one can then move into a better understanding of the cultural attitudes, along with the approval/disapproval of such unions. Furthermore, the issues facing interracial children from these marriages will be considered. Finally, race theories that have been applied to the study of interracial marriages will be examined to discover their contribution to this body of research and scholarship.

Definition of Interracial Relationships

Interracial relationships can be defined in many ways according to many different sources. According to Webster, we must first define the term interracial as "...of, involving, or designed for members of different races" (Merriam-Webster, 1994, p.261). Interracial is viewed as being "mixed" with different ethnicities. In society today, interracial can be many different races - African American, Hispanic, Asian, Caucasian, and Latino to name a few. Webster then defines the term relationship as "...a state of affairs existing between individuals through kinship or a romantic or passionate attachment" (Merriam-Webster, 1994, p.411). When you connect these two terms together with Webster's definitions, you develop the definition for an interracial relationship- a state of affairs existing between individuals through kinship or a romantic or

passionate attachment that involves members of different races. An interracial relationship is viewed as people being connected and uniting two or more races as one. When looking for a definition for interracial relationship, the word often mentioned was miscegenation. A more complete understanding of this term and its implications for interracial marriages is necessary to have a complete definition.

Miscegenation

Another source used to define interracial relationships introduces the term miscegenation. According to *Britannica* (2018), miscegenation is defined as “the marriage, cohabitation, or interbreeding of people considered to be of different racial types” (para 1). It is a Latin term coming from *miscere* which means to mix and *genus* which means descent or family. This term is not used as frequently in today’s culture as it was in the past. It was especially prevalent during the Civil Rights Era during which interracial relationships really began to flourish. States like New York, New Jersey, Vermont, and Alaska never had any laws of miscegenation. However, states like Rhode Island, Kansas, Maine and eight more repealed their laws between 1887 or earlier (*Britannica*, 2018). Today, miscegenation is not commonly used due to being offensive to interracial couples. The terms now used are interracial, interethnic, or cross-cultural. Miscegenation is used now for referring to the time when laws banned interracial marriages and segregation was more prevalent. This time of segregation was ended with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A study of that time revealed the ranking of public attitudes regarding segregation in areas from least to most important. Findings revealed that Americans ranked segregation of least importance in public facilities, jobs, and courts and of most importance in police issues, politics, and marriage. This ranking also reveals the direction in which segregation barriers fell with marriage being the last to be legalized (Vinas-Nelson, 2017).

Prevalence of Interracial Relationships

The prevalence of interracial relationships has increased over the years as the rules, laws, and perceptions have changed throughout the United States and throughout the world. Actually, this prevalence has increased with each generation. According to the United States Census, “...the percentage of married-couples’ households that are interracial or interethnic grew across the United States from 7.4 to 10.2 percent from 2000 to 2012-2016” (Rico et al., 2018, para. 2). This 10.2% of all married people represents 11 million people in total who are involved in interracial marriages. This number is even higher among newlyweds. In 2015, among newlyweds in the United States, 17% were interracial marriages. This is a huge increase from only 3% in 1967 and is double the rate from 1980 (Rico et al., 2018). Even though these marriages are seeing a rise in current society, they still constitute a minority when compared to all wed couples. In 2010, of all wed couples, 8.4% were interracial unions (Afful et al., 2015). However, this number continues to grow and will continue to increase as there are more ethnicities in the United States.

Research has concluded that immigration waves have increased the number of potential mates available from outside one’s racial/ethnic group. These increasing numbers are not only African Americans and Caucasians, but also Asians and Hispanics. Importantly, 29% of Asian newlyweds, 27% of Hispanic newlyweds, 18% of black newlyweds, and 11% of white newlyweds were interracial relationships; this number is even higher among these racial groups when they are US-born (Livingston & Brown, 2020). Interestingly, acts and laws that have excluded immigrants from the United States have had a similar effect of increasing interracial marriages. At the opposite end of increased immigration, the Chinese Exclusion Act limited the number of Chinese allowed into the U.S. Even though typical potential mates for Chinese

individuals were limited, the Chinese population began to reach out to other races and ethnicities and thus also led to an increase in interracial marriages (Doering, 2014).

When studying the commonalities of racial pairing, Pew Research noted that the most common intermarriage pairings were among whites and Hispanics at 42%, whites and Asians at 15%, and whites and blacks at 11% (Livingston & Brown, 2020). The location of intermarriages varies across the United States. For metropolitan areas, Honolulu has the highest percentage at 42% of newlyweds being interracial followed by Las Vegas at 31%, Santa Barbara at 30%, and the lowest rates in Asheville, North Carolina and Jackson, Mississippi at 3% (Simpson, 2017). Caution must be taken when viewing census percentages and statistics. Some data classifies interracial marriages based on race only and not ethnicity, while others classify based on both. Furthermore, some datasets do not classify based on the mixing of ancestries.

Demographics

Demographics that relate to interracial marriages involve location, education, and gender. Metropolitan vs. rural location plays a part in some percentages regarding interracial relationships. Among whites, those living in metropolitan areas are more likely to be involved in interracial marriages than those living in rural areas with a difference of 18% to 11%. This trend is reversed for Hispanics and Asians and does not vary for blacks. Regarding education, 14% of individuals with a high school diploma or less, 18% with some college experience, and 19% of college graduates were in interracial marriages. Regarding gender, different racial groups have differing interracial involvement. In the black community, black men are twice as likely to marry interracially than black women at a rate of 24% to 12%. However, in the Asian community, women are more likely to have interracial marriages than Asian men at a rate of 36% to 21%.

These statistics regarding gender differences and interracial marriage have led to the development of the term, “marriage squeeze” (Bialik, 2020). This term is used primarily in the black community and is known as the unavailability of suitable marriage partners for black women. Overall, research has shown black women to have an overwhelming low approval rate of interracial marriages. Black women view this as a form of mate competition in which they are on the losing end. In their view, the most eligible and favorable black males choose to marry outside of the black race and appear to be making this choice at an alarming rate. Black women perceive this as a challenge to their black identity and a way that black males are not being true to their ethnic roots. In fact, some view marrying outside of one’s racial group as a proponent of supporting a racist society. This leaves black females who wish to marry within their race with less partner options. Therefore, a significant percent (43%) chooses to not marry at all (Bialik, 2020).

Research into these findings continues to help to explain these gender, location, and education variances. Some possible explanations that have been proposed include public perception and racial composition in metro vs. rural areas. Residents in urban areas perceive interracial marriages as good for society at 45%, compared to positive perception in rural areas at 24% (Balwit, 2017). In addition, racial composition and diversity have been linked to the prevalence of interracial marriages. The greater diversity of races, the more likely for interracial relationships to develop. Along with location, size, and diversity, the history of a community plays a part in the prevalence of interracial relationships. Research and public opinion surveys relate findings of interracial couples locating in areas where they are more readily accepted and where a positive reputation exists toward interracial relationships. Some couples have listed areas such as Minneapolis-St. Paul as meeting these criteria. Therefore, it is realized that a large

population of interracial couples live there. By these findings, research has realized that consideration to the impact of interracial relationships is affected by not only when the relationship exists, but also where the relationship exists (Afful et al., 2015).

Interracial Children

As the percentage of interracial marriages increases, the percentage of multiracial children increases also. Cardwell (2021) notes that the "...multiracial population is one of the fastest-growing demographic groups in the country" (p. 206). In 2000, this group accounted for 2.4% of the population. For the 2010 census, this segment had grown enough to account for almost 9 million people (Afful et al., 2015). Literature reviewed concerning interracial children described this population as complicating the racial landscape (racist view) or complementing the landscape (culturally diverse view). This is just one example of the polar dialogue that exists in the scholarship of interracial relationships. As with interracial marriages, variance is noted among states. Overall, 14% of infants (children younger than 1 year of age) are multiracial with a marked increase from only 5% in 1980. Again, these numbers of interracial children follow along with the percentages of interracial marriage as far as the racial/ethnic combinations: most common is white and Hispanic parents at 42%, 14% white and Asian, and 10% white and black (Bialik, 2020). These numbers also vary considerably among states. According to the Pew Research Center, "44% of infants in Hawaii are interracial and 28% of infants in Oklahoma and Alaska are interracial" (Bialik, 2020, para. 6). A large separation from these percentages occurs in Vermont where only 4% of infants are interracial (Bialik, 2020).

These numbers will continue to increase and will bring about many issues for Americans and others around the world. One example that denotes this increase in racial diversity is updates to the 2000 United States Census form. The Office of Management and Budget decided to

include additional options for questions about race identification that allow individuals to self-identify their racial backgrounds. Options include a multiracial category which includes a check all that apply option and some other race category (Dunleavy, 2004). When filling out a form about race, parents of “mixed” or multiracial children will have to choose multiple boxes indicating that their child is of a multiracial background. This is a sign of the cultural diversification that is occurring in our society.

Interracial relationships result in a more diverse cultural background for the spouses, and even more so for the children. Children of interracial marriages experience what it’s like to live with parents from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. For instance, a child may live with an African American dad and a Caucasian mom or vice versa. Any other racial mixture would also be applicable. This allows the children to experience different meals, discipline techniques, and possibly even different religions. The child’s experiences will also create a larger world perspective for him/her. An African American parent may teach his/her child about the Underground Railroad, Rosa Parks, Black History Month, and many other important events in history. A Hispanic parent may teach his/her child about Joseph Hernandez the first Hispanic member of Congress, the Battle of the Alamo, the Spanish-American war, or even celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. These important events in history make up a diverse United States and a diverse childhood experience.

Biracial children are affected by many challenges throughout their lives such as identity confusion. These children may often categorize themselves to fit in more with the black community as they are pushed away from the white communities. This leads to shame, emotional isolation, and even depression in these children. In making these decisions, the children are asked if they are white or black when filling out personal forms about their race which in this

case, they check both. Children may also be questioned about cultural celebrations, dress, and food that relate to race. If they are unsure about the history or importance of such distinct cultural items, then they may be perceived with scrutiny.

History, Laws, Court Cases

Interracial relationships were not welcomed in the early sixteen hundreds in the new land of America. Historical research relates that the first marriage between two races of people was thought to be the union of John Rolfe and Pocahontas in 1614. This union between a white plantation farmer and an American Indian was based on the condition of her release from captivity of English settlers. This marriage sparked the beginning of initiatives against interracial marriages based upon many things, but mainly upon the preservation of racial integrity. Unions between whites and Indians was one source of tension; however, a bigger issue was the relationships that occurred between masters and slaves. Between 1661 and 1725, most colonies in early America banned interracial marriage and begin to raise racial barriers, threaten abolitionist causes, endanger social order, and question racial distinction (Vinas-Nelson, 2017).

The first legal interracial marriage in the United States was between William Allen, an African American professor, and Mary King, a Caucasian student. William Allen was born around 1820 to a white father and free mulatto mother. He was a well-educated man, who fought for racial equality, abolition, and African American importance in society. While teaching at New York Central College, Allen met Mary King, a student. The couple faced many trials at the beginning of their courting, leading them to marry and move to England to start a new life. While living in England the couple enjoyed teaching poor boys and girls and Allen even became a principal of Caledonian Training School. This couple foreshadowed the upcoming plight of many interracial couples. For their safety, they fled America to live in England and to never

return. This would prove to be the outcome for many couples-banishment and abandonment (Elbert, 2002).

Interracial Marriage Laws

The history of banning interracial marriages starts in 1664 when the state of Maryland passed the first law. Though this law claims to establish the existence of Negro slavery, it also speaks largely of the occurrence of interracial marriages and the consequences thereof. The following quotation is written in modern English, whereas the original law in 1664 was written in native colonial English.

[F]orasmuch as diverse freeborn English women forgetful of their free condition and to the disgrace of our Nation do intermarry with Negro slaves by which also diverse suits may arise touching the [children] of such women and a great damage doth befall the Masters of such Negroes for prevention whereof for deterring such freeborn women from such shameful matches, Be it further enacted by the authority advice and consent aforesaid that whatsoever freeborn woman shall intermarry with any slave from and after the last day of his present Assembly shall serve the master of such slave during the life of her husband, and that the [children] of such freeborn women so married shall be slaves as their fathers were. And be it further enacted that all the [children] of English or other freeborn women that have already married Negroes shall serve the masters of their parents til they be thirty years of age and no longer (Head, 2021, para. 3-4).

This law addresses the occurrence of white women marrying black men; however, the occurrence of white men and black women in a relationship is not addressed and left unpunishable. The punishment for a free woman marrying a black slave was that she herself would then be a slave. Also, the children from this union would be slaves. In essence, the

freeborn white woman was giving up her freedom to enter such a relationship. This law left many unanswered questions for several different groups of people.

After the enactment of this law in Maryland, Virginia banned all white men and women from marrying black men and women in 1691. After Maryland's law was not clearly stated, Virginia was not going to make that mistake. This law stated either an English man or woman is not to intermarry black, mulatto, or Indian. Virginia had made it clear that the couple would be banished along with any children. Maryland agreed that this law was stated correctly and added a similar policy. The colonial government even added punishment for any minister involved in performing interracial ceremonies. The minister would be punished by paying large fines to the government. During 1725, the next state to pass the banning of interracial marriages was Pennsylvania. However, by 1780 the state granted that free black people would get equal rights as others in the state. This was seen as one of the first steps in the process to abolish slavery (Head, 2021).

Rep. Andrew King, a Democrat from Missouri, attempted first to ban all interracial marriages in all 50 states in 1871. His proposal would be accomplished through a constitutional amendment. The second attempt to ban interracial marriage in all fifty states using a constitutional amendment was made by Rep. Seaborn Roddenbery, a Democrat of Georgia, in 1912. The last and final attempt was made by Senator Coleman Blease, a Democrat from South Carolina. Like the ones before, he failed in 1928. These attempts at banning interracial marriage by a constitutional amendment were worded in the following manner:

That intermarriage between negroes or persons of color and Caucasians or any other character of persons within the United States or any territory under their jurisdiction, is forever prohibited; and the term 'negro or person of color,' as here employed, shall be

held to mean any and all persons of African descent or having any trace of African or negro blood (Head, 2021, para. 21).

Of note in the language of this legislation is the replacement of the concern with slavery with the concern of racial blood lines. This distinction of classifying individuals based on having negro or African blood would become known as the One Drop Rule. This One Drop Rule was upheld and expanded in the 1924 Racial Integrity Act which stated that marriages between whites and any person who had a trace of anything other than Caucasian blood would not be honored. This principle would prove to discriminate against individuals and groups throughout the 20th century. Socially and legally, black individuals would be placed into a racial classification system based on predetermined blood lines (Afful et al., 2015). Interracial children were labeled as mulattos and quadroons and were designated to the lowest racial category in the assumed racial hierarchy. By late 2000, every state had legalized interracial marriage; however, Alabama's State Constitution still contained language that had to be addressed. Section 102 of the state's constitution stated "...the legislature shall never pass any law to authorize or legalise any marriage between any white person and a Negro or descendant of a Negro" (Head, 2021, para. 34). This was overturned by a ballot referendum; however, individual citizen's attitudes were harder to change. While attempts to change the U.S Constitution failed, a series of Supreme Court cases worked to change the laws concerning interracial marriages. These court cases would take many years to accomplish their end result (Head, 2021).

Pace vs. Alabama

The first of many cases to follow revolving around interracial relationships was the case of Pace vs. Alabama which was decided on January 29, 1883. This case actually began in 1881 and was based on an African American man, Tony Pace, and a white woman, Mary Cox. The

couple lived together and were convicted of committing adultery by the state of Alabama in violation of Section 4189 of the Alabama code, which prohibited living together in adultery or fornication and reads as follows:

[I]f any white person and any negro, or the descendant of any negro to the third generation, inclusive, though one ancestor of each generation was a white person, intermarry or live in adultery or fornication with each other, each of them must, on conviction, be imprisoned in the penitentiary or sentenced to hard labor for the county for not less than two nor more than seven years (Head, 2021, para. 15).

The state of Alabama sentenced them to two years in prison. They appealed their case to the United States Supreme Court in hope of overturning this conviction based on a violation of the 14th Amendment-no state shall deny any person equal protection of the laws. Pace and Cox claimed their conviction was unconstitutional based on unequal statutes and punishment for white couples, black couples, and interracial couples. Their penalties were more severe than indicted couples who were of the same race and color. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the state of Alabama by a unanimous decision. The court stated that discrimination did not occur based on both parties being convicted equally without regard to skin color. This ruling made people begin to question whether the government can interfere, legislate, and prohibit marriages between races. The precedent set by this Supreme Court decision would last 81 years before it was formally argued again (Head, 2019).

Perez vs. Sharp

Another case that raised attention for interracial relationships was the case of Perez vs. Sharp in 1948. This case was the first to argue that miscegenation laws in the United States were unconstitutional and opened the door for future cases to fight for marriage rights with equal

access. This case involves a Mexican American woman, Andrea Perez, and an African American man, Sylvester Davis, who met in 1942. They suffered from a long-distance relationship but, after years of waiting, decided to marry. They were both raised as devout Catholics in areas of Los Angeles. Sylvester's neighborhood was known as the Black Belt, and Andrea's neighborhood as Dogtown. By the mere name of these neighborhoods, one can see the discrimination and intolerance that existed. California was in a state of flux at this time due to a growing demand for workers and the migration of different races to the state. The law in the state of California did not allow the marriage of a white person with someone of a different race. Even though Andrea identified as a Mexican American, she was classified as white by the state of California. Of special note is that the state of California would classify immigrants (Mexican, Chinese, Filipino) as white in this instance; however, the states would classify them as non-white for school placement, public places, and other segregated activities. Perez hired an attorney to represent them in their case which progressed to the California Supreme Court. The court voted 4-3 in favor of Perez and Davis and focused its findings on the impairment of an individual's rights by not being able to marry a person of his/her choice. Justices in this case began to discuss the issue of color blindness which would prove to be a cultural concept that is still argued today in race cases. The effects of *Perez vs. Sharp* were not largely acknowledged at first as many states refused to enact its findings (Lenhardt, 2011).

Loving vs. Virginia

The court case that set precedence for all other future cases regarding interracial marriage occurred in 1967 in Virginia. Beginning in 1958, an African American woman, Mildred Jeter, married a Caucasian man, Richard Loving in the District of Columbia. This was in full concordance with the laws of the District. However, upon moving to the state of Virginia, the

couple were in violation of Virginia state laws which stated that interracial marriages were banned and fully punishable by law. The couple was indicted by the state courts and was ordered to leave the state of Virginia for a period of 25 years and to not return to the state as a married couple. The Loving's obeyed this ruling and left Virginia to reside in the District of Columbia. However, upon visiting family in Virginia, the couple was arrested again. The Loving's appealed their case to Attorney General Robert Kennedy, the ACLU, and then on to the United States Supreme Court. The couple wanted justice not only for themselves but also for the many other couples who were not treated fairly for loving someone of a different race. They based their argument on a violation of the fourteenth amendment that pertains to equal protection for all under the law. The Supreme Court ruled on June 12, 1967, in a unanimous decision that interracial marriages were legal across the United States and that marriage was a fundamental right for individuals. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote:

The freedom to marry has long been recognized as one of the vital personal rights essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men...To deny this fundamental freedom on so unsupportable a basis as the racial classifications embodied in these statutes, classifications so directly subversive of the principle of equality at the heart of the Fourteenth Amendment, is surely to deprive all the State's citizens of liberty without due process of law (Head, 2021, para.30)

Laws in 16 states that prohibited interracial marriage were eliminated; however, the implementation of this law was slow, and the fear associated with interracial marriages and racial anxiety continued to persist. Opposition believed this ruling was an overextension of the government's powers and was an overt push against white supremacy. This case set precedent for many cases to follow and has become a symbol for equality and overcoming prejudice. The

impact of this case was great in that it helped to weaken segregation and perpetuate the civil rights movement (Vinas-Nelson, 2017).

Cultural Attitudes/ Approval/ Disapproval

Even though the results of these cases brought legalization to interracial relationships, the attitudes of American society may prove to be slower to change. Gradually, Americans are beginning to realize that interracial relationships are a positive aspect of a growing society with cultural diversity. In 2010, only 24% of Americans felt that interracial marriages were a good aspect for society; however, by 2017, this percentage had improved to 43% (Afful et al., 2015). As one might predict, this approval is stronger among the younger generations and more educated (at least a bachelor's degree). With this improvement, comes a decrease in personal opposition to interracial relationships. In 1958, almost a decade before *Loving vs. Virginia*, 94% of Americans disapproved of interracial marriages. However, in 2000, this number had decreased to 31% of individuals opposed to a family member marrying someone of a different race. Furthermore, in 2016, this had shrunk to 10% with the biggest decline occurring among nonblacks (Bialik, 2020).

Research that supports a positive change in attitude among Americans concerning interracial marriages was conducted by a Gallup poll in 2013. Telephone interviews were conducted from June-July of 2013 with 4,373 adults representing all fifty states responding. Sample bias was addressed by ensuring that landlines as well as cell phones were utilized in the interviews, and the interview was conducted in two languages- English and Spanish. This poll is credited as being "...one of the largest shifts in public opinion" (Newport, 2013, para.1). In 1958, only 4% of Americans approved of black-white marriages. In fact, this is the first time that Gallup had ever measured this aspect of public opinion. In 2013, 87% of Americans reported

approving of black-white marriages. A breakdown of findings reveals that those giving higher approval were blacks at 96%, younger individuals, and those with residence in the western region of the United States. Those giving lower approval ratings were whites at 84%, older individuals (65 or older), and those with residence in the South (Newport, 2013).

Individual States Approval

The ruling of *Loving vs. Virginia* called for many states to change not only their state constitutions but also their individual resident's approval or disapproval. Sixteen states saw their anti-miscegenation laws overturned by *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. This finding correlates with research that reveals acceptance of interracial marriages is lowest in the South and Midwest. Therefore, states in these regions were the last to rescind these laws. Other interesting findings in looking at this topic is the number of states who never had miscegenation laws and those who had repealed these laws early in their existence. Nine states never had any laws of this type: Alaska, Connecticut, Hawaii, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Eleven states repealed anti-miscegenation laws in 1887 or earlier. Some even repealed these laws before achieving statehood. Pennsylvania took bold action by repealing anti-miscegenation laws as early as 1780, followed by Massachusetts in 1843, Iowa in 1851, Kansas in 1859, New Mexico in 1866, Washington in 1868, Illinois in 1874, Rhode Island in 1881, Maine and Michigan in 1883, and Ohio in 1887. Between 1948 and 1967 (prior to *Loving vs. Virginia*), fourteen states had already repealed anti-miscegenation laws with these states even including a wide array of races: Native Americans, Filipinos, Asians, East Indians, and native Hawaiians, as well as African Americans: California repealed in 1948,

Oregon in 1951, Montana in 1953, North Dakota in 1955, South Dakota in 1957, Colorado in 1957, Idaho and Nevada in 1959, Arizona in 1962, Utah and Nebraska in 1963, Wyoming and Indiana in 1965, and Maryland in 1967 (Tennessee Secretary of State, n.d.).

These findings reveal the movement to repeal anti-miscegenation laws that spread across the country from North to West and then eventually South and Midwest. This correlates to the hypothesis that acceptance and approval is highest in the western region of the United States. Research attributes causation of this low acceptance and approval in the South to the strong southern history of intense segregation and violence (Afful et al., 2015). Even though states were repealing these laws as early as 1780, many states and individuals would not recognize these new laws until the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Loving vs. Virginia*. The thought at this time by some was that state laws were not the law of the land and could go unnoticed until the law was changed by the federal courts. As these laws were passed, changes in people's attitudes toward interracial marriages also began to occur (Tennessee Secretary of State, n.d.).

Individual Americans Approval

Even though the number of interracial marriages has increased dramatically since 1967, this number is still low compared to marriages of same race individuals. Currently, close to 80% of new marriages and 90% of all marriages are between individuals of the same race (Garcia et al., 2015). Therefore, one can conclude that while growth has occurred in this societal trend, there remains room for more. As mentioned above, only 10% of Americans disapprove of interracial marriages; yet, what do their actions say. Research is showing that our behavior is lagging in relation to our attitude.

Current researchers are studying the causes and theories behind this slow growth in our behavior vs. our attitude. Garcia et al. (2015) examined whether respondents favored or opposed

interracial marriages and then questioned whether the respondent had received someone of another race to their home for dinner recently. This study was looking directly at the concept that many Americans say those oppose miscegenation laws; however, their actual involvement with other races is minimal or kept at a distance. Data was obtained from the GSS (General Social Surveys) for the years 1972-2012. Findings from this study revealed that only 50% of Americans state that they have had a member of another race for dinner, yet they do approve of interracial marriages. Thus, the statement of saying one approves of interracial marriages is not being supported by our actions to reach out to other races. This study concluded that this contradiction between attitude and behavior was greater among older Americans, whites, lower socioeconomic status, and lower education level. The authors further concluded that by these noted results and differences, racial prejudice continued to exist (Garcia et al., 2015).

Djamba and Kimuna (2014) presented research that dove even deeper into personal feelings about interracial marriages. This study examined measures of individual attitudes rather than overall public opinion. This study investigated real family situations and not just the abstract. Questions were asked more directly of respondents on how they would feel if a member of their own family married outside of his/her race. Data was obtained from the GSS (General Science Surveys) for the period of 2000-2012. Respondents were asked to respond to a Likert scale that ranged from strongly favor to strongly oppose. Results found that personal attitude/approval/disapproval changed very little over the twelve years of the study. In 2000, 49% of black respondents favored interracial marriages for a member of their own family, whereas in 2012 this percentage had only grown to 53.7%. For whites, in 2000 only 22.8% favored a member of their own family marrying outside of his/her race. This percentage grew to 26.3% by 2012. Further findings noted that women, younger individuals, singles, those living in

the West, and those identifying as liberal politically were more likely to favor members of their family marrying outside of their race.

This study reinforced some research that proposes- while overall societal attitude is measured as changing positively regarding interracial marriages, this approval varies when individuals are questioned more closely. With less than 1% of all married couples being in a black/white relationship, one can see that many are not ready for these changes in their own family. Some studies boast approval ratings of up to 60% of personal family members marrying outside of race; however, again in action, only 35% say that this has actually occurred in their own families. Djamba and Kimuna (2014) account for these differences in attitudes and behavior by analyzing various theories. They seek to explain racial exogamy by drilling down into individual experiences rather than asking questions that are too broad for understanding and too general for identifying racial intolerance. They review assimilation theories and social distance theories; however, they also further examine these theories to include a term they identify as status caste exchange. In this exchange, individuals marry into other races to increase their mobility within the caste system and to move up within the system. They also review the demographics of cultural pluralism which identifies the diversity of races and multitude of immigrants within society. They look to these theories to see if they can account for the reasoning behind differences in attitudes and behaviors (Djamba & Kimuna, 2014).

Race Theories

Research has applied various theories to the cultural concept of interracial marriages. Social distance theories and assimilation theories, as well as others, have been applied to explain the various aspects of this concept. Social distance theories relate that an increase in social distance between two racial groups will increase the amount of racism and prejudice between

groups. Similarly, a decrease in social distance will decrease the amount of racism and prejudice. This distance between social groups can be literal as in spacing and residence location. Thus, the outcome we see with minority racial groups largely congregated in urban areas, large metropolitan cities, and point of entry cities (immigrants). Distance can also be symbolic with the racial caste system. In this system, the term “color grading” comes into play. This term refers to the value that American society places on lighter skinned individuals over darker skinned individuals. By this concept, one can see that Blacks would be placed at the bottom of the racial caste system and white at the top. Hispanics, Asians, and others would fall in the middle. Therefore, one can theorize that interracial marriages between the two opposite ends of the spectrum (blacks and whites) would face the greatest discrimination, disapproval, and opposition. Marriages between other races would face less of these issues and thus be more acceptable.

Other concepts that are discussed in social distance theories are group boundaries and in-group/out-group dynamics. Group boundaries refers to the likelihood that individuals within a group or race are willing to accept an individual from outside their group or race. Research shows that blacks are more accepting of other races outside the group, whereas whites are less accepting. Dynamics relating to an in-group/out-group concept refers to the likeness and differences perceived by individuals inside the group against individuals outside the group. The fewer differences noted between the two individuals (races), the more likely the individual is to be accepted into the group. Socioeconomic status, education, and physical appearance all play a part in this dynamic (Garcia et al., 2015).

Research by Durkin et al. (2012) revealed how children in their early school years were able to separate individuals into racial categories: an in-group with members of their same

race/ethnicity and an out-group with members of different races/ethnicities. In addition, at this early age, children were able to show preferences for other children of their in-group and prejudice against children they deemed as belonging to an out-group. Children would make choices or allocate rewards favored toward the in-group. Even though children did not automatically dislike the out-group, they would quickly move to dislike and discrimination against the out-group if a perceived threat or feeling of competition developed. These findings have also been demonstrated in adults and help to reach the conclusion that group membership is deemed important at a very early stage in life.

Assimilation theories claim that immigrants or racial minority groups seek to assimilate (to take in or to resemble) the dominant culture in a society. For America, assimilation theorists claim that the dominant culture is white and other groups seek to assimilate to that group. In years past, this may have been the case; however, with the growing number of immigrants and racial minority groups in America, this dominant culture could be on the verge of change. The process that individuals undergo to assimilate in a culture is called absorption. Therefore, those individuals who have similar cultures and appearance with the dominant culture will assimilate faster than those who have vastly different cultures and physical appearance. Research asserts that the level of acceptance of interracial marriages in a society can serve as a gauge to the extent of assimilation. The increase in the number as well as the acceptance of interracial marriages can be used as a gauge to study the extent of assimilation that has occurred in society plus the degree in which racism and discrimination have lessened or improved.

Assimilation theories also point to seven phases that a society must go through for full assimilation of races to occur. The first phase is cultural assimilation in which subordinate groups or races learn the dominant culture. The second phase is structural assimilation. This

occurs when members of the subordinate group are beginning to be accepted into primary and secondary social structures (schools, businesses, etc.). The third phase is marital assimilation in which no difference is noted in the acceptance of same race vs. interracial marriages. The fourth phase is identification assimilation in which the children of interracial marriages are accepted by society. Attitudinal-receptional assimilation is the fifth phase and is categorized by major increase in the attitudes and reception of all races and thus a decrease in prejudice based on race or ethnicity. The sixth phase is behavioral-receptional assimilation in which a decrease is noted by society in the acts or behaviors of discrimination based on race or ethnicity. The seventh and last phase is civic assimilation. This is characterized by the disappearance of power and value conflicts between racial groups. One can conclude from the progression of these phases that marital assimilation helps a society to transform and change in a positive way. American researchers have debated the placement of the American society into a particular phase. Recognition is given that barriers persist, and that American society has not reached civic assimilation (Garcia et al., 2015).

Positive Effects of Interracial Relationships

In society today, interracial relationships are credited with many positive and negative effects on individuals and society. Seen as such a profound issue in recent society, interracial marriages have brought about many positive outcomes for those individuals involved in such relationships. As noted from previous history, laws, and court cases, these effects have been wrought from hardships and trials faced by brave men and women. Through these hard times and years of trail blazing, individuals in the 21st century are finally being able to experience some outcomes that prove to be beneficial. Positive effects resulting from interracial marriages

include improved cultural exposure and diversity, increased media exposure and racial opportunities, creation of Loving Day, and diverse genetics.

Cultural Exposure and Diversity

Historically, interracial marriages have been viewed in American society as belonging to two different points of view: Cultural conservatism and Egalitarianism. These views have helped to shape not only others' attitudes concerning interracial marriages, but also individuals who are involved in interracial marriages ability to be exposed to varying cultures. Culture is the beliefs, values, and attitudes held by individuals and societies. The culture we are exposed to influences our behavior, communications, and actions. The individuals that make up a society can choose to seek ways to change the existing culture or cling to the existing culture. Those individuals who choose interracial marriages are looking to change or expand society's culture in order to increase exposure and diversity. They are looking to expand the margins of their ingroup to appreciate the diversity of their society. This view of integrationsism of interracial couples into mainstream society may prove to be an avenue to decrease discrimination and racism. Cultural conservatism views hold to the tenets of tradition, social order, conformity, and obedience. Egalitarianism looks to the attributes of equality, benevolence, and love (Dunleavy, 2004).

Research has been able to conclude that advocates of cultural conservatism tend to oppose interracial marriages in hopes of conserving their traditional culture and ways. Due to this unwillingness to change, these individuals, at times, have been seen as harboring racist motives due to their view of interracial marriages as socially unacceptable and/or taboo. However, advocates of egalitarianism tend to support interracial marriages in hopes of supporting cultural diversity and exposure. These individuals are seen as more accepting and are labeled as progressives and nonracist (Dunleavy, 2004).

The blending of two or more races in an interracial marriage exposes individuals to a wider range of cultures and diversity among peoples. Individuals who participate in these relationships are opening themselves up to a wider range of cultures and ways of life. This requires a degree of openness, honesty, and vulnerability on the part of these individuals and families. Each individual in a marriage brings to the union a set of values, beliefs, and customs. These are the things they have experienced in their life, the way of doing things in their families, and the values they have learned as a result. In an interracial marriage, there is a greater likelihood that these values, beliefs, and customs will be different between the individual partners (Dunleavy, 2004). Life experiences and ways of doing things will be different for different families and races; therefore, the values that are held by each partner will be different. These differences exist for many marital unions, but they are much more pronounced for interracial marriages.

Couples, individuals, and families must all work to increase their knowledge about varying customs which include holidays, religion, dress, language, and foods. What one race or culture values as important or necessary may not be viewed in that light by another race. For instance, the celebration of holidays may be totally distinct. One race or culture may value large holiday celebrations with many family members and friends, while another may value quiet family time with just a small number. Some cultures may look to the materialistic side of each holiday as valuable, while others may look to the spiritual side as meaningful. Religion can vary among races too. Not only will the particular denomination of Protestant, Catholic, etc. vary, but also the prescribed ways of worship and religious activities can differ. One culture may desire daily religious activities, while others favor only weekly or even yearly religious attendance. Perhaps the most variance in customs that is seen daily is the differences in dress, language, and

foods. Couples in interracial marriages must be willing and open to experience new foods and ways of cooking, learn new forms of language slang and verbiage, and be open to particular styles of dress. Favorite foods, seasonings, and flavors may be foreign to one partner in the marriage. This is true also for various styles of clothing and the belief on how to dress for certain social occasions. In addition, certain forms of slang, idioms, or dialect may have different meanings for different races and may be used acceptably in certain varied social situations. However, a willingness to experiment with taste, dress, and language will bring about a much needed feeling of acceptance for each partner in the union. Also, a willingness to learn and expose oneself to other cultures will prove to be favorable to the individuals in an interracial marriage.

Fears that some individuals have concerning increasing cultural exposure and diversity may stem from the idea of lost identity. This is a valid fear that some individuals hold concerning opening themselves up to different cultures and losing their own identity. The concepts of cultural diversity relate closely to the term “melting pot” culture. While this blending and melting of cultures does serve to increase diversity, it also can create a feeling of fear and threat to one’s own culture. Individuals in interracial marriages do not want to be seen as abandoning their own unique cultures and ways of life and, therefore, may be hesitant to open themselves up to change. Just as some early immigrants and slaves were resistant to the powerful push to assimilate into American culture, some individuals in interracial marriages are also apprehensive about this cultural change. To overcome these fears and apprehensions, partners within interracial relationships must be open and honest with each other. Dialogue about differences in cultures and the reasoning behind these differences must be carried out continuously. In addition, each member must continually check him or herself for racial biases, use persuasive influence

fairly and correctly, and communicate needs and misunderstandings openly. By doing so, couples in interracial marriages will come to appreciate the benefit of increased cultural exposure and diversity that their union brings and be excited about the new opportunities that it brings (Doering, 2014).

Increased media exposure and racial opportunities

One of the most influential avenues and pervasive sources to bring about change in attitudes and perceptions of interracial marriage is the media. Forms of media include television, films, music, newspapers, and magazines which are capable of sharing a great amount of information in a relatively quick time frame. In recent years, portrayals of people of racial minorities and people being involved in an interracial relationship have exploded across media platforms. A rise in the number of interracial marriages has necessitated this rise in attention. This burst of displays have helped to improve public approval, negate stereotypes, and decrease forms of discrimination that exist with interracial marriages. These changes have especially been noted in the younger generation that has witnessed the sweeping change brought about by these media platforms. Along with the benefits of increased media exposure, individuals have also noticed an increase in opportunities for racial minorities and individuals involved in interracial relationships. Better job opportunities, career advancements, and increased educational opportunities have been noted in certain sectors of society.

Today, it appears that interracial couples are seen everywhere, including commercials on television, main actor roles in movies, or in the local communities. This has not always been the case. In 2013, Cheerios ran a commercial that portrayed a white mother, black father, and multiracial child. Such opposition arose around the commercial, that Cheerios had to halt airing of the advertisement (Afful et al., 2015). Recently, there has been a noted increase in the

widespread use of interracial couples in movies and commercials on television. One such example for movies is the Hallmark Channel. Typically, seen as a wholesome channel for movies with a romance and comedy twist, the Hallmark Channel has portrayed interracial couples in many different venues. For example, *Christmas with the Darlings* has cast members which include an interracial couple involving Katrina Law, a multiracial woman of Taiwanese, German, and Italian descent and Carlo Marks, a Caucasian man (Cyran, 2020). Another well-known Hallmark movie of 2020 is *Jingle Bell Bride*. The cast members include Julie Gonzalo, a Caucasian woman, and Ronnie Rowe Jr., an African American man (Harmon, 2020). These movies are just the beginning of how diverse Hallmark and other well-known channels are becoming.

Many television shows have opened the doors to diversity such as *Station 19*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *The Bachelor*. A famous television couple from *Grey's Anatomy* that is well-known by Americans is Avery, an African American man, and Kepner, a Caucasian woman. This couple faces many tragedies throughout the show including losing a child, getting divorced, and learning to love other people. The spotlight that this couple shared was seen around the world to eliminate old prejudices and break down racial barriers (Rhimes et al., 2021). The television show, *The Bachelor*, has had an African American man, Matt James, on the show and *The Bachelorette* has had the first African American woman, Rachel Lynn Lindsay Abasolo as desirable candidates (Fleiss, 2021; Gale, 2021). These television shows have men and women of different races and ethnicities (Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and multiracial) meet, intermingle, and perhaps fall in love. These shows portray no discrimination based on race for the development of interracial relationships and has helped American society become more accepting of diversity as it relates to romance.

Along with, or because of, increased media exposure, racial minorities and individuals involved in interracial relationships have noted an increase in opportunities within society. This relates to not only jobs and careers, but also education. By placing these individuals in media roles or by representing oneself in reality television, society is seeing lawyers, doctors, and even happy families existing in interracial relationships. In social psychology, Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001) categorize this exposure as a form of prejudice reduction. By frequently exposing the public to minorities represented as admirable members of society, automatic negative attitudes have been lessened. Individuals are seeing members of their racial group or ingroup represented in a positive light, and this is proving to be very empowering to the minority racial groups. To be effective, these techniques must be repeated so to produce long lasting effects and must include varied minority groups that have been the targets of discrimination and prejudice. These techniques are needed to offset the long standing pro-White media that has been passed down from years of segregation and has been readily accessible to viewers for years.

Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001) conducted research that examined avenues of prejudice reduction and noted the steps of a relearning process that must occur for attitudes, stereotypes, and biases to be changed. The steps to this relearning process include first to become aware of any personal bias; then to be motivated to change by feelings of guilt, empathy, or insight; and finally, to utilize cognitive resources to implement corrective strategies. Evidence demonstrated that a prime factor in shaping these attitudes, stereotypes, and biases is social context clues. What people are seeing, watching, and interacting with will greatly affect their ability to reduce prejudices. Therefore, the increased media attention for interracial marriages will aid in bringing about diverse social context clues and thus effect productive change. Through the results of this study, automatic prejudices and preferences have been deemed malleable instead of

unchangeable. Through constant and repeated exposure, media platforms have a strong impact on breaking down long held bias and discrimination. Historically, the mass media has been known for promoting negative stereotypes for minorities and women. By frequently highlighting a particular race or gender in a negative way, media platforms have been criticized as aiding to the tactics of discrimination and racism. The current aim of research is to study a more balanced approach in who receives media attention and examine the effects of decreasing stereotypes and prejudices. Media attention is therefore deemed a very powerful tool for interracial couples and society as a whole (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001).

Many perceive the younger generation as being more open-minded to change. This generation has seen a great number of changes throughout the course of history from learning new technology to changing world events. These individuals in society are changing the outlook for diversity and learning to understand more about the different cultures each race brings to the table. Thus, after continued media exposure and increased positive interactions in the public with interracial couples, bias and prejudice are shrinking, and opportunities are improving. These couples are being portrayed as loving, happy families that meet the societal norms of providing shelter, food, and clothing for their family by holding careers and degrees in respectable fields. Not only are these couples being portrayed in this manner, but this situation is also a reality for many. Twenty-eight percent of physicians belong to a racial minority; 26.5% of law firms are minority owned; and 45.2% of the college student population are people of color (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2019). This positive effect of interracial marriages is bringing about progress in rearranging social order and suppressing negative stereotypes.

Creation of Loving Day

June 12 has been designated as Loving Day in the United States as of 2004. This is the anniversary of the 1967 United States Supreme Court decision in the case of Loving vs. Virginia. This case, as mentioned earlier, declared that all remaining anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional and that marriages between different races of individuals were legal. Chief Justice Warren is noted in the majority opinion as “...the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual, and cannot be infringed by the State” (Vinas-Nelson, 2017, para. 4). Although Loving Day is not recognized as a national holiday, the intent of the day is to celebrate the spirit of multi racism, and the advances made in interracial relationships and marriages. It is also a day for reflection on the enormous sacrifice that couples endured to love and marry whomever they wished. This holiday is observed annually so that current and future generations will not forget the progress of this cause. This day reflects the tone and spirit that Juneteenth is known for, the celebration of the end of slavery in America. This holiday also serves to revisit that spirit to keep it alive for future generations. When celebrating this day, people spread love, kind deeds, and cherish the Lovings for standing up for their beliefs. Couples also celebrate by posting their interracial love stories online as well as interracial barriers that they have overcome or are currently dealing with. This is to inspire other interracial couples to stand with them and celebrate. The primary focus of Loving Day is to fight racism that still exists today and to commemorate one of the civil rights cases of our nation that spoke to the very heart of an individual’s fundamental rights and existence (Tucker, 2006).

Diverse Genetics

Research on genetic diversity has, at times, been inconclusive and contradictory. Ongoing debate and research continue the links between race, genetics, and diseases. Since early times,

science has attempted to tie race to physical traits. In fact, by studying genomes and physical traits, scientists in some fields have classified race by as many as 3 to over 50 racial groups (Phillips et. al., 2007). However, social scientists examine race through the Racial Formation Theory as a socially constructed concept that is not tied to a biological perspective (Afful et al., 2015). Race is not an internal or biological trait for an individual. Rather, race is dynamic, changing, and molded from the environment surrounding an individual. Race is not a sum of physical characteristics or display of stereotyped actions. The social science field points to the dangers of using race as a label based on physical characteristics and warns of the social implications that result when individuals are discriminated against based on these race labels. Labels are used to place people in groups, create a power struggle between the privileged and less valuable, and then justify the oppression that others experience. Examples of these labels include “Negro” and “African American” and the meaning attached to these words. These racial meanings have changed over time and will continue to change based on the context in which they are used. These labels and meanings affect how individuals are treated (Afful et al., 2015).

While these studies are ongoing, one thing that is a surety is that the mixing of human groups and genetic exchange is not new. What is new is the rate of this genetic mixing and exchange. Since prehistoric times, species have survived through adaptations and natural selection. Genetic exchange has helped people groups to adapt and evolve, while others have become extinct. With the increase in contact through trade, war, and changing climates between groups of people, the exchange of genes and genetic material is occurring along with the exchange of ideas and materials. This increased rate of mixing is due to the current globalization trend of societies. People are more mobile than ever. With an increase in travel and a surge in interracial marriages and interracial children, the world is experiencing a reshuffling of the

population. In addition, with this increase in movement of people and people groups, a higher number (244 million in 2015) of people than ever before are living in areas in which they were not born (Balwit, 2017). This may prove to be beneficial to some people groups, yet detrimental to others because they are living where they are not biologically suited. The benefits of diverse genetics and genetic exchange will allow beneficial traits in a population to be carried over to the next generation. Examples of this include disease resistance, less fatal genetic disorders, survivability of chronic conditions, and the combination of rare traits that prove to be advantageous. This positive effect of interracial marriages seeks to break down the racial distinctions between groups of people and to capture some of the potential positive outcomes of diverse genetics.

Negative Effects of Interracial Relationships

As with any societal issue, interracial marriages have also brought about many negative outcomes for those individuals involved in such relationships. While interracial relationships have wrought many positive outcomes for society, negative effects have also occurred. However, as a society, leaders and individual citizens aim for the positive effects to outweigh the negative effects. By working to reverse the negative effects and to promote the positive effects, individuals in society can move to a higher level culturally. Negative effects of interracial relationships include racial discrimination and bias, divorce rates, isolation, and adverse health effects.

Racial Discrimination and Bias

Throughout history, interracial marriages have faced extreme forms of discrimination and bias. Some interracial couples and families have related incidents of open hostility, derogatory comments in public, antagonistic social media posts or forums, negative stereotyping, and racist

attitudes. This has resulted in increased social pressures on couples and a perception that their relationship and/or marriage is relationally and socially inappropriate. These feelings have been perpetuated over time to the point that some members of society look to interracial marriages as “...a threat to American values...and a threat to American morality” (Cardwell, 2021, p. 214). Individuals and couples have related a feeling of being dehumanized and a fear of persecution from others because of racial discrimination and tension. Much opposition from members of society left many to feel that these types of unions were taboo.

Facing social and state sanctions, individuals involved in interracial relationships were made to feel as if it was “us against the world.” To educate others about the “us” in this phenomenon, many have attempted to teach others about the social institutions of race and family and the interdependence of these two on each other. Family is one of the foundational units of society; therefore, it serves as a primary avenue for its members to learn effective socialization techniques and skills. Unfortunately, it can also serve a place where racism and discrimination are learned. Family narratives from interracial couples and increased interactions with these couples have helped to educate and shape others’ views of interracial marriages. These views can be shaped positively or negatively. If shaped positively, society can grow and flourish as many benefit from shared experiences. If shaped negatively, society is left with various forms of discrimination, racism, and bias. Living in a racialized world, individuals have begun to use racial socialization strategies to better understand race discrimination and bias. These strategies include examining family narratives and interactions through a racial lens. This lens challenges the dominant ideologies of society by allowing individuals to have firsthand knowledge of the experiences of interracial couples rather than relying on existing attitudes or perceptions. Preconceived ideas are often erroneous and result in negative stereotyping and bias.

Interracial couples experience more exposure to their partner's race and therefore are made aware of the positive and negative conditions that exist. This requires a level of openness by partners as they experience partner-perceived discrimination and ways to combat it. The basis for such discrimination and bias often centers around and is increased or decreased based on the races involved in the interracial union. According to the 1960 and 2010 U.S. Census Bureau reports, the highest rate of interracial marriage occurred between Caucasian males and Asian females. This pairing was followed by black males and white females. However, the rate of approval for these pairings of races is less favorable and more discriminatory for black/whites than Asians and thus results in more detrimental effects on blacks than Asians. This occurrence brings about more controversy for individuals with black partners. Blacks report an awareness of this increased resistance and negative attitudes for their particular race and relate a feeling of giving up their racial heritage for the good of the relationship (Cardwell, 2021).

With existing racial discrimination and bias, interracial couples and families develop a sense of mistrust not only of members outside of their group, but also of members within their own race and families. It is very damaging to family dynamics when race and racism are allowed to penetrate within the very interpersonal context of marriage. The United States has traditionally been a monocentric society centered around white supremacy. Therefore, interracial couples are categorized in society by the various races that they represent. Many times, couples and individuals are stereotyped by the physical characteristics (skin color, etc.) of one or both of its members. This stereotyping based only on a phenotype such as skin color is known as colorism and is the basis of many racial discriminatory acts (Cardwell, 2021).

How interracial families respond to discrimination and racism varies according to the dynamics of each family. Some may respond by ignoring acts/statements and distancing

themselves from others, while others may work to educate others and open lines of dialogue. The response of ignoring or avoiding others used by interracial couples is termed a “blocking strategy” (Afful et al., 2015). Individuals relate experiences of being treated differently once others find out they are involved in an interracial relationship. They are no longer a white person, but rather viewed as a “white person who is in an interracial relationship” (Afful et al., 2015, p. 667). Therefore, an individual’s personal identity and social identity is altered based on their relationship and their audience. The internalization of this concept affects one’s self-concept and can weaken the way an individual views himself/herself and how they relate to society. Either response of ignoring/distancing or attempting to educate does not erase the feelings of confusion, anger, and hurt that come from discrimination. However, these negative outcomes can be lessened by seeking to identify interracial marriages as normal, viable options for couples and to encourage individuals to explore the option of interracial relationships.

Research focused on reducing discrimination and prejudice for interracial couples has found mixed results. According to Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001), a prevailing theme has been the push to increase interpersonal contact with couples of different races. This thinking promotes the idea that once individuals and couples can interact more often and more freely, long-held stereotypes and prejudices will decrease. A key to these increased interactions is that individuals must realize that many biases and prejudices are shaped by previously learned information. This information may be learned from childhood families, college experiences, or work-related colleagues. Many assume these racial attitudes are unchangeable due to their long standing in an individual’s socialization process. An individual must make a conscientious effort to let go of false information and stereotypes and actively learn and empathize with individuals of all races

and walks of life. This is imperative for chronic negative attitudes to be changed and for these changes to be enduring (Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001).

Divorce Rates

Research has shown that when comparing overall marriages, interracial marriages have a higher rate of divorce than same race marriages. These findings have left many to conclude that the rate of divorce is increased if couples cross racial boundaries. In addition, studies have found that these divorce rates appear to be highest for couples in white/black marriages over other combinations of races. In particular, the pairing of white women married to black males appears to have the greatest likelihood of divorce at 1.62 times more likely to divorce as compared to same race white couples (Bratter & King, 2008). These rates of divorce for interracial marriages have remained steady over the timeframe of when such type marriages became legal in 1967 to now. Furthermore, these high rates of divorce have left many couples to think that they are destined to fail.

There are many causes of divorce such as age difference in partners, history of divorce within the family especially with parents, level of education or income, and difference in race or cultural backgrounds and values. Any one of these factors or a combination of factors have been attributed to divorce. Consequently, interracial marriages, being between two different races of people, already have one causative factor by their own virtue. Research has also linked divorce for interracial marriages with marital satisfaction and an interdependence theory (Afful et al., 2015). Couples who have a high amount of interdependence in their relationship will seek to depend on each other more and to act and make decisions in the best interest of each other. Due to the external social forces that interracial marriages face, it is very important for each member of the union to consider his/her partner's thoughts, actions, motives, and needs. These forces

make it imperative that interracial couples learn to negotiate and sacrifice in their relationship. The key to this success is to downplay any racial differences and to focus on the new shared couple identity that has developed because of the interracial marriage. This interdependence theory proposes that this exchange of mutual dependence will increase marital satisfaction and lessen the chance of divorce. This theory concludes that marital satisfaction is positively correlated to interdependence. If this interdependence fails, couples will allow the outside forces of racial differences and discrimination to affect marital quality and thus have the chance of ending in divorce (Afful et al., 2015).

In a study by Kroeger and Williams (2011), relationship satisfaction and divorce were measured in relation to black exceptionalism. The concept of black exceptionalism asserts that blacks continue to be segregated from other racial groups; and that while racial boundaries are shifting in the United States, blacks are still distinguished from all other race groups. Blacks report more rigid social boundaries than other racial groups. While boundaries appear to be shrinking for Asians and Hispanics, blacks report a slower progress in boundary dissolution. According to blacks, this results in a leaning to more whiteness for Asians and Hispanics and more discrimination and prejudice for blacks. This phenomenon has been termed, “social whitening” (Kroeger & Williams, 2011, p. 402). Even though most other minority groups have assimilated into mainstream society, blacks maintain that this assimilation is a blending with the white majority. Thus, a thought process has developed that declares all racial groups can be classified into two categories: black and non-black. Interracial marriages that submit to this line of thinking often experience lower levels of relationship satisfaction due to family disapproval and social disapproval. A result is that the individual well-being is affected in interracial relationships. From this theory, one can conclude from a supported hypothesis that due to higher

levels of disapproval for black-nonblack relationships above any other racial combination, decreased levels of marital satisfaction and divorce can result. This disapproval is the result of the perception that the norms for social relationships/marriages have been violated. The study by Kroeger and Williams (2011) reported a 1 ½ times lower satisfaction in relationships of this nature. A prediction by research has been made that increased social disapproval will bring about decreased relationship commitment and satisfaction and thus dissolution of the marriage. Therefore, interracial couples experience negative consequences in the form of relationship outcomes due to black exceptionalism.

Isolation

One of the most profound effects that is reported by couples in interracial marriages is the feeling of isolation that occurs when their relationships are deemed unacceptable by family and society. This isolation can occur from family, friends, coworkers, members of faith, and social acquaintances. Couples report loss of contact with family and friends and a feeling of being socially unacceptable. The couple's identity and how they interact with each other and others is negatively impacted by feelings of isolation and separation. Many have related that this struggle in family relationships have turned family units into sites of conflict and discord. In the end, these feelings of isolation and separation, as well as occurrences of strong disapproval, become internalized in interracial couples and alter their perception of self and family identity. Many have reported feelings of conditional love in that family members only love a part of them and not the entire couple, thus leaving them with feelings of a broken sense of self-worth. Many couples accept this reality of conditional love, yet never fully recover from it. The family sector has typically been known as a place to experience love and safety. By not being supported within

their own family units, interracial couples experience a fragmented self-identity and internal tension regarding self-worth (Afful et al., 2015).

One explanation for these feelings of isolation is attributed to confusion coming from mixed feelings and signals. The interracial couple experiences this confusion regarding which race they belong to or fit in with. When two or more races are involved in a union, the couple feels pulled in different directions. This is due to them experiencing life events and circumstances from perspectives that are different racially. Different beliefs and values may result in conflict and leave the couple to question how to function cohesively in multiple racial groups. Some couples have even related a sense of push and pull between interracial family members. Several are noted as having the following experience, “In this house, I act this way; in the other house I act this way” (Cardwell, 2021, p.216). This tug of war leaves the individual unable to choose freely and may even leave feelings of guilt. This guilt is a result of accepting or rejecting one racial culture over the other. This leaves many interracial couples to relate feelings of invalidation, loneliness, and frustration with being misunderstood. Other times, confusion may result when couples are treated inconsistently in situations. When they are together, they are treated one way; and when they are apart, they are treated another way. This inconsistency in treatment may also occur with or without their children, as well as in friendly or hostile environments. This leaves the interracial couple to identify themselves differently in various contexts and locations (Afful et al., 2015).

Confusion weakens the ties between race, family, identity, and support. Based on skin color or other attributes, individuals within interracial marriages may question themselves as to “...true membership in either of their parent groups” (Cardwell, 2021, p.209). This confusion is even multiplied with the addition of multiracial children in the relationship. The family identity

and extended family identity can be shaken with children who resemble or fail to resemble one side of the family or the other. Color of the skin or other attributes leave some children to be confused as to whether they are fully black, fully white, fully Asian, or what. The struggle to authentically identify with one group or the other leaves many families and individuals with feelings of isolation. Distrust and distancing of family members may also result as minority races may be unsure of the motives of the majority race, which often is predominantly white. This occurrence is often termed a suspicion of whiteness (Cardwell, 2021).

Another explanation for these feelings of isolation and separation is attributed to racism. The experiences of racism can occur internally or externally with families. Many interracial couples relate stories of uncomfortable slurs and situations that occur within personal family gathering as well as public areas. Perhaps the most damaging and memorable occur within the intimate family unit. Family members may avoid or ignore others, point out and ridicule differing physical features, question customs, and may even show favoritism to like race family members. These forms of racism may be subtle or outright, yet still leave the individual to feel separated from his/her family. Some individuals describe their experience within their own families as being "...the epitome of not being seen" (Cardwell, 2021, p.212). At times, when racism and discrimination are very damaging, couples may resort to distancing and estrangement as a way of protection. In this protective act, preservation of the family unit is safer if they are shielded from racist and difficult family members.

Interracial marriages that prove to be successful have learned to implement racial support within a mostly monoracial society. Strategies that have proven to be successful in reducing isolation and separation issues within a family include healthy family dynamics, unbiased social contexts, and strong parental support. Psychologically, parents have been represented as the

primary source of support in an individual's life; therefore, this parental support is keenly important. It is a key factor within the immediate interracial family as to how the interracial couple supports their multiracial children. In addition, it is crucial in how the parents of the interracial couple support them as adults involved in an interracial relationship (Cardwell, 2021).

Another technique used by families to strengthen family identity and assist interracial marriages in being successful is the telling of family narratives. These personal narratives demonstrate how to overcome hardships and respond to racism based on personal experiences. Older family members seek to help younger family members to prepare them for encounters with bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Within these families, stories are told and retold to immediate and extended family members and are passed down from generation to generation. These narratives also serve to unite families around traditions that positively shape family identity and connect them to their heritage. By sharing experiences and stories, individuals in interracial marriages feel validated, acknowledged, and valued. By asking questions and seeking other points of view, families of interracial couples can seek to understand the unique choices, challenges, and benefits that come from being in an interracial marriage (Afful et al., 2015).

Health

Historically, a significant amount of research has been conducted to examine the benefits of marriage on health outcomes. Overall, marriage is linked with the following health benefits: longer life expectancy, less mental health issues, and a higher overall health rating. This beneficial effect of marriage is known as the marriage protection effect, and it correlates with the marital resource model (Yu and Zhang, 2012). This model subscribes to the claims that marriage results in better health, more economic resources, increased psychological well-being, and increased health promotion for individuals that are married.

However, studies have concluded that the marriage protection effect may not be applicable across all marital unions, especially those of an interracial makeup. Therefore, research has currently begun to hypothesize that interracial marriages have a significant impact on the health of its individual members; and a gap in mortality may exist between marriages of interracial couples and marriages of same race couples. While scholarship acknowledges this hypothesis about interracial marriages, it does still recognize that the protection effect offered even by interracial marriage is better than no protection effect received by widowed, divorced, and single individuals. This thinking aligns with the marital strain model and looks to examine causes of relationship dissolution, separation, and divorce (Yu and Zhang, 2012). A common denominator found in research is that the discrimination, isolation, and disapproval associated with interracial marriages leads to excess stress on couples. In fact, the greater degree of separation, prejudice, and racism that is experienced by an individual directly influences the degree of negative health outcomes reported. This increased stress from higher social pressure and social strain equates to impaired physical and mental health. Research has consistently found that increased stress has negative effects on one's physical health. Headaches, digestive problems, exhaustion, and trouble sleeping are but a few of the adverse effects that stress has on an individual's body. While these physical effects are valid, the majority of research on the health of interracial couples has centered around mental health and well-being (Cardwell, 2021).

Kroeger and Williams (2011) found that individuals in interracial relationships experience more depressive symptoms and lower mental vitality than individuals in same race relationships. This was particularly true for couples in white/black pairings. The stigma that surrounds these relationships, disapproval from family/society, and less relationship satisfaction affect the occurrence of depressive symptoms. Relationship satisfaction and

approval/disapproval is directly correlated to mental health. Relationship satisfaction and approval are positively associated with mental health, while disapproval is negatively associated with mental health. In addition, social networks, that are important factors in health maintenance, are often strained in interracial marriages. The marital resource model asserts that increased support for individuals results in health advantages. Without adequate support systems, interracial couples' mental health will suffer (Kroeger & Williams, 2011).

One phenomenon that research has shown to significantly affect mental health is the dilemma of forced choices. Individuals in interracial marriages are often forced to make choices between racial identities and cultures. This dilemma can lead to increased stress on the individual and couple. In addition, forced choices lead to adverse mental health symptoms. Depression, anxiety, and an overall feeling of decreased well-being result in poor psychological outcomes. This phenomenon is similar to the culmination of stress effect on individuals which relates to a higher mortality risk for interracial couples. In addition, psychological distress has been linked with a higher mortality risk. Overall, research by Yu and Zhang (2012) asserts that interracial marriages "...consistently suffer higher mortality risk than their same- race counterparts" (Yu & Zhang, 2012, p.8). In the study of life expectancy, scholarship has thoroughly examined the gender gap of mortality and concluded that women have longer life expectancies than men. In addition, the education gap of mortality with the more educated living longer than the less educated has been thoroughly addressed. Research has also noted a racial gap in life expectancy with the risk of death being 1.26 times higher for blacks than whites (Yu & Zhang, 2012). In the research conducted by Yu and Zhang (2012), with these gaps (gender, education, SES) of mortality controlled, they were able to conclude that individuals in interracial marriages have a higher mortality risk than individuals in same race marriages. In fact, Yu and Zhang (2012)

proposed the death risk for interracial couples was 1.38 times higher than for endogamous couples. Therefore, a positive relationship between mortality and interracial marriage status exists.

Recommendations

The concept of interracial marriages has been researched from a variety of different theoretical frameworks and through multiple lens of sociological ideology. The positive and negative effects of interracial marriages on individuals and society as a whole presented within this paper are not exhaustive. Future implications for research include further examining the stigma of interracial marriages and broadening to a larger scale exploration of the issues surrounding this experience. By studying couples and families through their life course, research will bring new knowledge of the changes that occur in interracial marriages across a lifespan. In addition, more racial groups need to be brought into the scholarship. Obviously, the black/white relationship has received greater attention due to long held prejudices and biases. Therefore, most of the research centers around the black/white relationship and its implications. Other racial pairings exist far more frequently and deserve a closer look into their intricacies. Some literature regarding census data from 1960-present noted that white/Asian relationships occur the most frequently. So, by widening the racial lens, researchers can broaden this study to be more inclusive. In addition, as the multiracial population continues to grow, it is imperative to include these individuals in future research to ascertain how the construction of race has changed over generations. Additionally, further research on interracial marriages in other countries would complement the existing data found in the United States and broaden the scope. As the incidence of interracial marriages continues to grow as well as the population of multiracial people continues to rise, analyst must continue to broaden categories and seek further studies on the

impact of race on families, health, and society. This research must broaden the scope of study to include a social lens that is not entirely focused on same race marriages as the norm by which we compare all other marriages.

One technique that has proven to provide rich data is the capture of personal narratives. Future research on interracial marriages should focus on utilizing this qualitative technique to go deeper into more personal accounts and obtain up close, actual stories of interracial couples' lives. Everyday interactions with individuals inside the family and without can offer incredible insight to the personal, social, political, and educational issues faced by interracial couples. Studies should focus on broadening the context of communities to examine where these relationships flourish and struggle. Through open discussion and education, individuals and society will reap the benefits of increased awareness of these unique circumstances. Possibly, change will continue to occur in mindsets, thought processes, beliefs, and values.

Finally, the recent scholarship surrounding the concept of race as a social construct must continue to be studied and investigated. Race research is monumental to the development of self identity and family identity. By being able to shape this construct and realize the flexibility of racial identity that exists in interracial marriages, research will offer an avenue to reinforce the positive and change the negative. Racial boundaries will continue to erode, and it is imperative for science to capture the new insights that will be found as society reproduces the concept of race. In the end, the goal for research on interracial marriages should be to strengthen the unique ties to race and to the marriage itself.

Conclusion

The research reviewed in this paper have thoroughly examined the concept of interracial relationships. To begin to examine a concept, one must start by defining the issue and learning any new terms that are brought to light. In the defining of interracial relationships, the term of miscegenation was discovered and analyzed. We were able to conclude that this term was especially used in times of segregation and has given way to more acceptable terms such as interracial, interethnic, and cross-cultural. Further examination of the prevalence of interracial relationships was able to reveal an increase in this phenomenon, as well as an increase in the multiracial population as a whole. An in-depth look at the laws and court cases concerning interracial marriages that have transpired through history unveiled some of the hardships faced by many of these trail blazers who fought for equality. A final classification of positive and negative effects of these relationships revealed racial theories that have been tested and further research that needs to be done.

Will the negative effects of interracial marriages be erased soon? Does the increase in interracial marriages point to a sign of hope for the future? A future that holds an end to racism. Further research will reveal those findings in the future; however, individuals hold the key to this change. By allowing flexibility in racial identities, individuals involved in interracial marriages will gain character strength to challenge the existing race system. Even though interracial couples may be seen as a challenge the racial system, they still must live within it. This involves times of access and ostracism, silence and voice, purity and corruption, and a feeling of us and them. The breakdown of this classification system could see a result where everyone will see two loving individuals represented in a marriage and not only two representatives of race. Love may appear color blind in interracial marriages, and the individuals involved may appear to be

defying racial classifications; however, these couples' desire is for racial invisibility. This would offer them the privilege of not being classified by their race in their social worlds.

Some sectors of society have even employed scare tactics to downplay racial progress. Phrases like "the browning of America" (Cardwell, 2021, p. 217) have been used to remind society how that race, racial identity, and family identity are being affected in interracial marriages. With phrases like this, many of these interracial couples have been accused of trying to escape their race. When in reality, they are trying to return to it. In this way, interracial marriages are changing the face and look of the United States by breaking down racial categories and barriers. With this progress, perhaps a new version of the American family will emerge. This new version will be a blend of cultural differences and will change with time and space.

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